

Alromaithy, Dr. Abdulhamied, *Nose to Nose: Highlights of the Culture of Arabia*

Abu Dhabi, UAE, 2008. www.culturearabia.net, DVD, ISBN 978-9948-03-789-7, 85€00

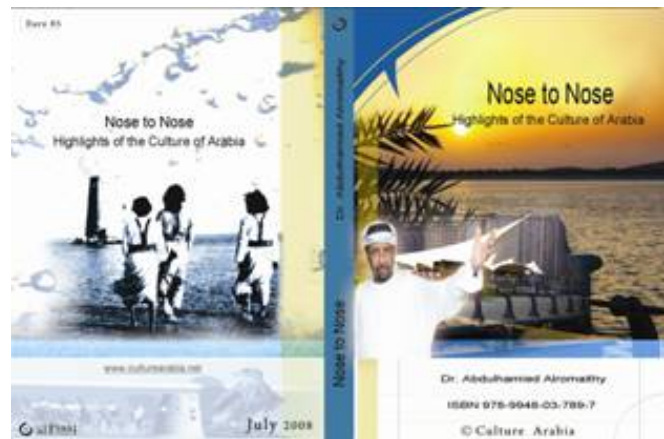
Length 56 mins.

Reviewed by Dr. George F. Simons at www.diversophy.com

Dr. Abdulhamied Alromaithy is your welcoming host to Arabia in this well illustrated presentation addressing some important do's and don'ts for working and living in Arabia. Far from being a formal academic lecture, the speaker has chosen to answer and explain the common questions that are raised again and again by people starting to learn about Arab culture.

The presentation opens with a definition of Arabia—which set of Arab cultures are we talking about? Maps of the Gulf Arab states clarify the geographical and cultural focus. Thus grounded, we can move on to discuss of what is appropriate and good taste in interactions with our Arab colleagues on both a business and social basis, dimensions that go hand and hand in this part of the world.

Why *Nose to Nose*? The author explains touching noses as one of several Arab forms of greeting, the one most practiced by people of Bedouin origin. The title gets attention, and grabbed me in the sense that my limited experience of the Arab was one of unexpected closeness and difference at the same time.



In addition to the focus on common questions and dilemmas for those dealing with Gulf Arabs, I particularly appreciated and enjoyed the illustrations, pictures and film footage accompanied by contemporary Arab music, which illustrated points in the presentation, and also served to make transitions from one topic to another. Camera work of the lecture and contemporary illustrations is excellent. Those of us who are aficionados of old-time snapshots and film understand that the quality and sharpness of these and the segways between them are sometimes less than we would hope for, yet they are invaluable in providing perspective.

A word about the host himself—Abdulhamied, or “Hamied,” as he instructs you to call him as you become acquainted, is an informal but informed and serious but friendly presence throughout the DVD. You are quickly at home with him and feel that he is at home with you. Besides his clear understanding of his own background culture, he has been around the world and is ready to meet you and your questions about Arabia on your own terms.

The DVD is not a replacement for comprehensive cross-cultural training or coaching. It is rather an effective ice-breaker, an “opening session” that puts the user at ease by acquainting him or her with some of the more basic behaviors and sights, forms of address, greetings, dress, social etiquette and communication patterns that he or she will observe and engage in almost immediately when entering the Arab cultural space. The DVD, in fact, triggers further questions and piques the newcomer’s interest in learning more. In sum, *Nose to Nose* is an excellent investment for trainers and educators in a cultural field where there is very little user-friendly information.