

Arab and Japanese Universities: The “Culture-bound” vs. the “Culture-free” Position

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(Received on March 26, 2004)

Abstract

Aspects of the organizational culture of four universities, two in Japan and one each in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, are discussed and compared. The paper argues that organizations established in countries sharing similarities in national cultures are likely to be characterized by similar values, beliefs, and assumptions, in short, that similarities in national cultures are likely to nurture similarities in organizational cultures. Japan and Arab countries are similar with respect to several cultural dimensions; thus, the organizational cultures of the four universities are expected to reflect such similarities. While the findings provide some support to the “culture-bound” position it is nevertheless premature to entirely dismiss the “culture-free” argument, as aspects of organizational culture in the universities examined appear to be the product of organizational variables rather than socio-cultural factors.

I. Introduction

There is certainly no shortage of comparative organizational and management studies in literature. However, the inclusion of Arab countries in such comparative studies has, so far, been the notable exception than the norm (Miller and Sharda, 2000; Sidani and Gardner, 2000); indeed, it has been noted that less than one percent of the 236 articles published in the ten year period between 1990 and 1999 in a prestigious international journal focused on an Arab country in the Middle East (Robertson, Al-Habib, Al-Khatib, and Lanoue, 2001). An even more rare exception is comparative research involving Arab countries and Japan; save a sole MBA thesis (Williams, 1983), we have been unable to find other comparative studies in organizations and management related to Arab countries and Japan. The present article takes a small step in attempting to fill this gap by comparing organizational cultures in universities in Japan and the Arab world. First though some qualifying notes and clarification of terms are due.

What almost everyone intuitively knows that is, that attitudes, norms, values and customs

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vary between countries has been strongly supported by empirical evidence in a growing body of literature suggesting significant cultural differences between countries. While one certainly needs to keep in mind that deviations from the “mainstream” do occur even in a homogeneous culture as illustrated by the existence of sub-cultures, for instance the sub-culture of teenagers or professionals in certain fields that make each of these groups more similar than different to its counterparts across countries, the term “national culture” or simply “culture”, notwithstanding its limitations, will be used in this paper to refer to the “pattern of basic assumptions taken for granted and considered valid by a human group. The assumptions are deeply held resulting in the “collective programming of the mind” distinguishing one human group from another” (Hofstede, 1984).

Organizations, not unlike countries, are also known to be characterized by their own culture that is, the distinct identity manifested in the form of physical artifacts but also, and far more importantly, embedded in less visible values and beliefs shared among organizational members. There is no shortage of definitions of organizational culture (Moorhead and Griffin, 2001) ranging from the very simple thus appealing but difficult to operationalize, such as “the way we do things around here” (Deal and Kennedy, 1982) to the more elaborate for instance, “what is typical of the organization, the habits, the prevailing attitudes, the grown-up pattern of accepted and expected behavior” (Drennan, 1992) or, “a dominant and coherent set of shared values conveyed by such symbolic means as stories, myths, legends, slogans, anecdotes and fairy tales” (Peters and Waterman, 1982). However, in our opinion, Schein (1992) has offered the most sophisticated definition of organizational culture yet. According to him “... organizational culture is not the overt behavior or visible artifacts that one might observe if one were to visit the company. It is not even the philosophy or value system, which the founder may articulate or write down in various ‘charters’. Rather it is the assumptions which lie behind the values and which determine the behavior patterns and the visible artifacts such as architecture, office layout, dress codes and so on”. We prefer Schein’s definition and distinction of three levels of organizational culture that is, artifacts, values, and assumptions, as it allows its operationalization. As an organization, a university has its own “organizational culture”.

As widely recognized in literature, people, whether as individuals or members of an organization, are likely to feel uncomfortable and experience difficulties in adjusting when placed in a culture in which values, beliefs and customs are different from their own (Feldman and Thompson, 1992; Linowes, 1993). Thus, the culture of an organization needs to be compat-

ible with the culture of the country in which it is located for that organization to function well (Redding, 1994; Rollinson, 2002). Further, it has been suggested that patterns of behavior in organizations are likely to differ because differences in national cultures result in different attitudes and values (Adler, 1997). Rephrasing the above, we would like to propose that organizations operating in countries sharing similarities in national cultures are likely to be characterized by similar values, beliefs, and assumptions; in short, similarities in national cultures are likely to nurture similarities in organizational cultures. The remaining of the paper will discuss our proposition by focusing on four universities, Waseda University and Asia University in Japan, and American University of Beirut (AUB) and King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia respectively.

II. The Arab world and Japan: Cultural similarities

It is beyond the scope of this section to discuss all possible similarities (and differences) in the culture of Arab countries and Japan. Rather, drawing mostly on ground-breaking research on comparative analysis of cultures, such as that of Hofstede (1991), and Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), we aim to compare the “Arab” and the Japanese culture with respect to selected cultural dimensions such as collectivist orientation, relationships to other people, importance of context and interpersonal space, and patterns of communication; the comparison suggests that, contrary to what one might be inclined to believe, Arab countries and Japan are, in at least some important aspects, culturally similar. While referring to “Arab” culture, some generalizations are inevitable as the Arab world is extensive spanning from the Atlantic edge of Africa through the northern part of the continent to the Persian Gulf and from Sudan to the Middle East. Although doubts have been expressed regarding how much “Arab” certain countries in the region, for instance Lebanon (Sidani and Gardner, 2000) or Morocco (Ali and Wahabi, 1995) can be considered, and caution has been urged on attempts to oversimplify the complexity of Arab culture (Ali, 1998), we tend to side with Weir’s (2000) view that Arab countries are, by and large, culturally homogeneous; thus, we will be using the term “Arab” while aware of its limitations. Japan, on the other hand, is considered one of the most culturally homogeneous countries; therefore, valid conclusions can be drawn from the comparison of dimensions of the two cultures.

Hofstede’s research (1991) on cultural differences and their impact on management suggests that Arab countries and Japan share a high collectivist orientation; Arab countries were

ranked in 26/27 place with a 38 index while Japan was ranked in 22/23 place with an index of 46 with respect to the “value” dimension of individualism/collectivism. It should be noted that both Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, where two of the universities discussed in this paper are located, were included in Hofstede’s study. A high collectivist orientation means that there is a preference for group as opposed to individual decision-making while group harmony, consensus and cooperation are valued higher than individual initiative. In collectivist societies, there is emphasis on compliance, obedience, shared responsibility, along with preference for consultative and participative decision-making styles that maintain and reinforce consensus. Rewards are based on tenure and loyalty to the group and motivation derives primarily from a sense of belonging while the role of leadership is to foster a supportive atmosphere and group culture thereby facilitating team effort and integration.

Empirical studies in Arab countries tend to confirm Hofstede’s findings. For example, the collectivist orientation of Arab people, loyalty and commitment to the group, such as the immediate or extended family or the business organization, as well as the preference of Arab managers for participative and consultative decision making have been noted (Ali; 1992: Ali, Taqi, and Krishnan; 1997) although elsewhere Ali (1993) has drawn a distinction between the consultative and the pseudo-consultative decision-making styles arguing that Arab managers, espousing some element of authoritarianism, actually prefer the latter. Studies in Jordan argue that local companies suffer from an excessive lack of delegation of authority and that a participative leadership style is not appreciated by Jordanian managers (Al-Faleh, 1987; Al-Rasheed, 2001); this is consistent with Muna’s (1980) observation regarding Arab managers that is, while consultation may take place, decisions are never made jointly with subordinates and are not delegated down the hierarchy. Arab managers show concern for friendly relationships and harmony within the group, exemplified by their preference for handling interpersonal conflict on the basis of collaboration between the parties involved (Elsayed and Buda, 1996), but they also demand loyalty, obedience, and compliance from subordinates suggesting a social distance between managers and employees which may be attributed to beliefs about authority in Islamic societies (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993).

In a widely influential work on comparative analysis of culture Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) have argued that different cultures can be compared by looking at basic “orientations” members of a culture group exhibit towards the world and other people; examination of two of these orientations that is, relationship to others and temporal focus of human activity reveals similarities between the Arab culture and the Japanese culture. One’s relationship to others

may be characterized as hierarchical and collectivist for both the Arab and the Japanese cultures. This translates into respect for seniority and authority, as determined by age, family, and sex, a feature of many Arab countries (Barakat, 1993; Ali and Wahabi, 1995), and preference for hierarchical communication and tall organizations (more pronounced in Arab countries) with systems and structures that bind the individual to the group. Members of a group tend to be reserved towards outsiders treating them with suspicion while relationships within the group influence attitudes towards work and superiors (Al-Faleh, 1987). Regarding the temporal focus of human activity, the Arab culture is said (Al-Rasheed, 2001) to be mostly past-oriented (probably more so than the Japanese culture) as illustrated by the respect for precedence, age and the authority that goes with it, need for continuity and a certain aversion to change, and reliance on past experience in decision making (Deresky, 1994: 441–443; Mead, 1998: 24–27); past orientation, however, does not imply fatalism (Ali, 1998).

The strong emphasis in Arab culture on masculine role attributes is mediated by the need to establish a good working relationships with one’s direct superior, to cooperate and work well with others, and to have employment security (Weir, 1999); such feminine and “high relationship” attributes suggest that, while Arab countries are lower on the masculinity dimension compared to Japan’s top ranking. Arab managers may be considered close to the feminine side of the masculine/feminine dimension as they are concerned with the establishment of friendly relationships among people (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993) and fulfillment of socially imposed obligations towards family and members of a larger work, including one’s work associates; this reflects the affiliation-oriented nature of Arab culture (Yasin and Stahl, 1990; Tayeb, 1997). Personal, family, clan, and group ties are extremely important in Arab countries. In a work setting, such ties may result in invasion of one’s private life by organizations while making employees emotionally dependent on the organization they are part of (Elsayed and Buda, 1996). Interpersonal ties produce intense loyalties (Ali, 1993) binding people within systems of traditional and personalized authority structures in which advancement often depends more on non-work related factors such as someone’s family position, affiliations, and connections rather than the person’s own skills and merit (Al-Aiban and Pearce, 1993). Respect for seniority and authority is unsurprising in this context as the two are typically associated with more power hence the prospect and expectation on the part of subordinates to receive favors bordering on nepotism.

Cultural similarities between Arab countries and Japan are also found with respect to context as both are known to be high-context cultures, Japan’s culture even more so than that of

Arab countries (Munter, 1993: 72), cultural similarities between the two can be found. In high-context cultures, feelings and thoughts are not explicitly expressed and key information is embedded in the context rather than made explicit (Deresky, 1994: 441–442), people depend heavily on the external environment, situation, and non-verbal behavior in creating and interpreting communications and one needs to be able to read between the lines and interpret covert clues as much meaning is conveyed indirectly. Because of the strong and implicit ties binding people to organizations, information spreads freely, informally and rapidly in high-context cultures. Further, high-context cultures are characterized by relatively long-lasting relationships, a clear distinction between members of the group and outsiders with a premium placed on one's loyalty to the group, and managers are personally responsible for the actions of their subordinates while agreements tend to be spoken rather than written (Mead, 1998: 29–30).

Looking at two further cultural dimensions, verbal interaction and non-verbal communication, similarities between the Japanese culture and Arab culture become evident. Arabs, not unlike the Japanese, avoid getting directly to the topic preferring instead to loop around; they start with social talk, discuss business for a while, loop round to general and social issues, then back to business, and so on (Deresky, 1994: 442). An attempt to “get down to business” right away, without first going through some obligatory small talk, which is intended to establish rapport between the parties, is likely to be frowned upon, considered a sign of rude behavior and impatience, by Arabs and Japanese alike. With respect to non-verbal communication, Arab countries and Japan are high-contact cultures, Arab countries even more so than Japan. The line between “private” and “public” space is not as clearly drawn for Arabs and Japanese compared to Americans; thus Arabs and Japanese tend to keep a much shorter interpersonal distance even during business meetings than a North American or Western European is accustomed to (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2001: 113–114).

Having presented similarities between the Arab countries and Japan, with respect to important cultural dimensions, the question of the role of national culture in the shape and operation of organizations comes inevitably under the spotlight. However, despite the lively debate, that has been going on for over three decades, the issue whether culture has an impact on organizations and management remains unresolved (Redding, 1994; Miller and Sharda, 2000). On the one hand, the “culture-free” position argues that relationships among the major components of organizational structure are similar across different cultures (the structuralist argument) while, on the other hand, the “culture-bound” position maintains that management and organizational structure is essentially the product of socio-cultural forces (the culturalist

argument). With respect to “Arab management”, it has been argued (Atiyyah cited in Weir, 1999) that, previous research findings to the contrary notwithstanding, the culture-bound position is unfounded. Significantly though, it is also recognized that, although culture does not offer a full explanation, it nevertheless provides an underlying substantiation for explanations that may turn out to be very varied (Weir, 1999: 69–70). Our position is very similar to Tayeb’s (1988; 1997) that is, since an organization is a social system operating within the context of a particular society, it cannot be totally immune from broader socio-cultural forces. The impact of these forces extends not only to the “soft stuff”, that is the way members of the organization relate to each other that even culture-free proponents are prepared to accept, but it may also extend to the “hard stuff”, that is systems, structure, and process as these are decided and set in place by human beings.

III. Methodology

The authors has spent a total of 17 years between the four universities teaching and/or completing graduate studies (3 years at Waseda, 5 at Asia, 4 at KFUPM, and 5-since 1997- at AUB), . Thus, the author had the opportunity to observe and actually “live” the organizational culture of each university for a relatively long period of time. To moderate the author’s “subjective” views on the organizational culture of the four universities, the assistance of former and current colleagues in the universities researched was solicited. Between February and October 2002, more than one hundred e-mail messages (safely stored in a disk!) were exchanged between the author and a total of 31 former colleagues, 10 at Waseda, 12 at Asia, and 9 at KFUPM, affiliated with a business/management faculty or department; in these exchanges, the author requested the views of colleagues regarding aspects of organizational culture in the respective university and often asked them to elaborate on and clarify their response. In addition, copies of the Organization Culture Profile (the OCP is explained later) were e-mailed to the 31 former colleagues requesting them to select ten values most representative of their university; 26 colleagues filled the on-line OCP questionnaire, 8 at Waseda, 10 at Asia, and 8 at KFUPM. Having numerous opportunities to informally find out the views of current colleagues on organizational culture, and given the sensitivity of the topic, OCP questionnaires were not distributed among AUB faculty.

IV. Levels of organizational culture at the four universities

Schein (1992) has considered organizational culture in terms of three levels that is, surface manifestations, values, and basic assumptions; each level differs in terms of its visibility and accessibility to individuals. The discussion of the organizational culture of the four universities in this section is based on Schein’s conceptualization.

IV-a. Surface manifestations: What meets the eye

Some statistics about the establishment, structure, and size of the four universities are presented in table 1.

Table 1. The four universities at a glance

University	Waseda	Asia	KFUPM	AUB
Established	1882	1941	1963	1866
Structure	Schools; undergrad. (10) graduate (15)	Faculties (4), Graduate schools (3)	Colleges (6), Graduate college (1)	Faculties (5), School (1)
Head	President (elected; can serve a maximum of 2 four-year terms)	President (appointed by board of trustees)	Rector (appointed by government; serves at its pleasure)	President (appointed by board of trustees; serves at its pleasure)
Student number	51000	5500	7000	6500
F/T Faculty	1100	430	800	600
Admin. staff	760			4000
Campus location	Urban	Suburban	Suburban	Urban
Campus access	Free	Free	Restricted	Relatively free

Surface manifestations, though not the organization’s culture itself, but simply its most accessible and visible aspect (Schein, 1992: 9) include artifacts, ceremonials, rituals, language, myths, mottoes, physical layout, stories, symbols, as well as patterns of behavior; in short, surface manifestations include “what meets the eye”.

Although the youngest of the four universities KFUPM is nevertheless the most traditionally looking in its outward appearance, as the influence of classical Arab architecture is evident on practically every single building on campus. On the other hand, reflecting perhaps the multi-cultural heritage of Lebanon, there are few, and scattered across campus, signs of Arab

architecture at AUB. As for the two universities in Japan, there is practically nothing distinctively native in the physical layout save a tiny Japanese-style garden adjacent to the faculty lounge of Waseda. To some extent, this reflects the desire to construct buildings resembling those in European and North American campuses as these two regions provided the model for the establishment of universities in Japan following the country’s opening up to the outside world.

One feature shared by all four universities is the centrality of the administration building, located on roughly equal distance from the four corners of the respective campuses. Together with AUB’s clock tower and KFUPM’s impressive water tower, administration buildings at the two universities are imposing “landmarks” more elaborately decorated compared to other buildings; these structures will immediately catch the attention of someone who visits the campus for the first time. By contrast, administration buildings at the two Japanese universities are modest and inconspicuous and someone who visits the campus for the first time can easily miss them. This may well be a reflection of the relatively modest status of university administrators in Japan.

Regarded as the leading university in the Middle East and Japan’s top private university, AUB and Waseda respectively, enjoy a high reputation and prestige. Both universities take great pride in their origins making every effort to maintain traditions by means of ceremonies, rituals, symbols, and mottoes. New students are encouraged to embrace the “spirit” of Waseda or AUB, in some way setting themselves apart from the rest of the society. In ceremonies, Waseda students wear a patented and distinctive square cap as a symbol adding to their sense of belonging and identity while the attempt to cultivate the feeling of an “AUB-ite” among students is all too evident in the pages of the student newspaper and other student publications at AUB. Founding day, opening, and graduation ceremonies, are important events in the calendar of both universities, perhaps even more so at AUB where faculty are individually invited by the president to attend. Waseda and AUB are thus keen to stress their distinct identity and create a sense of a “Waseda person” or “AUB person” among faculty and students.

Despite its auspicious beginnings and prestige (established by King Faysal) and considered the top university in the Persian Gulf), KFUPM appears to make little effort to stress tradition and inculcate students with any particular identity. The graduation ceremony, the only ceremony held at the university, is a short, mundane affair lacking the pomp of similar ceremonies at AUB and Waseda. In contrast to the latter two universities, that have named

buildings after their founders who are seen as “heroes” personifying values and beliefs and, to some extent, acting as role models for emulation, KFUPM’s attempt to stress tradition and build a distinctive character among its faculty and students is far more modest. Without an auspicious name associated with its establishment and little especially noteworthy in its tradition, Asia University makes no particular effort towards identity-building among its constituencies by means of ceremonies or symbols.

Being members of a public organization, all students, administrators, and faculty (with the exception of foreign professors) at KFUPM don the white Arab attire keeping in line with traditions and norms of the country. The influence of norms and tradition, but of a different sort, is evidenced in the attire of faculty in the Japanese universities. In this case, faculty are always dressed in business suites and clothes, as this is considered the appropriate attire; the same is also true for graduate students. This situation is in contrast to the prevailing norm of informality regarding attire at AUB where few professors only dress formally. However, the attire of administrators is apparently subject to norms transcending national boundaries; in all four universities, administrators, especially the higher-ranking ones, dress formally. One might speculate that the attire of administrators reflects the norms of a distinctive sub-culture.

IV-b. *Below surface manifestations: Values*

Values that is, enduring beliefs in a mode of conduct and broad tendencies to prefer a certain state of affairs, give a distinctive identity to an organization as they affect the basic assumptions that according to Schein (1992) lie at the heart of organizational culture. Shared organizational values provide a common direction for members of the organization and guidelines for their behavior, hence, they are considered a key factor in achieving high organizational performance. One way to describe shared values in an organization is by means of the organization culture profile (OCP) that includes fifty-four statements expressing a value (O’Reilly III, Chatman, and Caldwell, 1991; Sheridan, 1992). However, such a large number of values can be confusing and of little use when several organizations are compared; thus, we have focused upon the ten main values for each university making comparison between the four institutions easier. As explained in the methodology section, 26 former colleagues in three universities selected the ten values most representative of their own university; the culture profile of the universities presented in table 2 is based on the responses of these colleagues.

There are seven values common to the culture profile of the two Japanese universities, Waseda and Asia (formality, stability, predictability, being rule-oriented, low level of conflict,

Table 2. Main culture values at four universities

University	Main culture values
Waseda	Formality, stability, predictability, being supportive, being rule-oriented, security of employment, attention to detail, low level of conflict, being team-oriented, tolerance.
Asia	Formality, stability, being easygoing, predictability, being careful, being rule-oriented, low level of conflict, being team-oriented, being people-oriented, tolerance.
KFUPM	Informality, stability, being easygoing, predictability, being careful, being rule-oriented, security of employment, low level of conflict, being team-oriented, emphasizing a single organizational culture.
AUB	Formality, stability, predictability, being aggressive, being careful, being demanding, being rule-oriented, low level of conflict, being results-oriented, tolerance.

Source: Adapted from C. A. O’Reilly III, J. A. Chatman, and D. F. Caldwell. “People and organizational culture: A profile of comparison approach to assessing the person-organization fit”. *Academy of Management Journal*, 34, 1991, p. 516.

being team-oriented, and tolerance). The culture profile of the two universities in Arab countries, KFUPM and AUB, is more variant defined by five common values (stability, predictability, being careful, being rule-oriented, and low level of conflict). Looking across countries, four values namely, stability, predictability, being rule-oriented, and low level of conflict, are common in the culture profile of all institutions while three more values that is, formality, team orientation, and tolerance define the culture profile of three universities. Thus, the culture profile indicates broad similarities among the four universities.

The values presented in table 2 can help us understand the type of organizational cultures in the four universities. Although a typology of organizational cultures that everyone accepts has yet to be produced, Hooijberg and Petrock (1993) have proposed a useful framework that includes four pure types of organizational culture namely, bureaucratic, clan, entrepreneurial, and market; the four types derive from the combination of two variables that is, formal control orientation, ranging from stable to flexible, and focus of attention, ranging from internal functioning to external functioning. A bureaucratic culture is characterized by stability, predictability, enforcement of rules and regulations, and formality (Morand, 1995); sharing most of these values, the four universities have a bureaucratic culture. However, Waseda, KFUPM and, to a lesser extent, Asia also exhibit features of a clan culture as they share values of security of employment, intended to reward an individual’s long-term commitment (loyalty), low level of conflict, and team-orientation, largely the products of peer and normative pressures as

well as of the socialization process.

While AUB's organizational culture is partly bureaucratic underlined by values of formality, stability, predictability, and being rule-oriented, it also includes elements of a market culture. This type of organizational culture is characterized by contractual relationships between the organization and employees, clearly defined obligations for each party, while specific rewards are promised for a certain level of performance. Security of employment is neither explicitly (by means of tenure) nor implicitly (by means of social practice) offered; thus, employees' loyalty, as long as they can find employment opportunities elsewhere, is not taken for granted by the organization. AUB's partly market-oriented culture, underlined by values of being aggressive, demanding, and results-oriented, is reflected in the unique practice of demoting faculty who, after a certain number of years, have not been promoted.

A qualifying note is due at this point. At KFUPM, local faculty, that is Saudi nationals, are offered tenure while their foreign colleagues are employed on a contract basis. Notwithstanding the discrepancy in employment status, security of employment was selected by both foreign as well as Saudi colleagues as one of the ten main values defining the organizational culture of this university (of KFUPM's 8 respondent's, 5 are foreigners and 3 Saudis). This may be explained considering KFUPM's practice of almost automatic contract renewal as long as faculty perform satisfactorily. On the other hand, faculty at AUB do not consider security of employment one of the main values defining the organization (both local and foreign faculty are employed on a contract basis); the realization that one will be terminated unless promoted does apparently shape faculty perceptions of the values featuring in the organizational culture of this university.

IV-c. *At the core: Basic assumptions*

In Schein's (1992) opinion, organizational culture is not so much the visible artifacts, or even the values, but rather the basic assumptions lying behind the values and shaping the visible artifacts. The basic assumptions refer to invisible and preconscious understandings individuals hold regarding human behavior, nature of reality, and the relationship of the organization to its environment. Thus, Schein's fundamental view is that organizational culture is the "taken for granted" shared meanings and basic assumptions among members of the organization. Difficult as they are to access, basic assumptions may, at least partly, be illuminated by looking at normative beliefs that is, beliefs and thoughts about how members of an organization are expected to approach their work and interact with others; thus, organizational

culture may be described in terms of normative beliefs held by members of the organization. Three general types of organizational culture have been identified (Cooke and Szumal, 1993) that is, constructive, passive-defensive, and aggressive-defensive; each type is associated with a different set of normative beliefs. Our attempt to draw the culture profile of the four universities, as defined by main normative beliefs, is presented in table 3.

Table 3. Normative beliefs at four universities

University	General type(s) of organizational culture	Main normative beliefs
Waseda	Constructive	Self-actualizing Humanistic-encouraging Affiliative
Asia	Constructive Passive-defensive	Affiliative Approval
KFUPM	Passive-Defensive	Dependent Conventional Approval
AUB	Passive-Defensive Constructive	Dependent Conventional Approval Affiliative

The terms used in table 2 need to be clarified at this point. Organizations with a constructive culture, underlined by self-actualizing, humanistic-encouraging, and affiliative normative beliefs, are generally those organizations that value quality over quantity, creativity, individual growth as well as task accomplishment. These organizations are managed in a person-centered and participative way and emphasize constructive interpersonal relationships while members are expected to be friendly, supportive, and open to influence in their dealings with each other. Organizations with a passive-defensive culture, defined by dependent, conventional, and approval normative beliefs, are bureaucratic, hierarchically controlled, non-participative, conservative, and traditional. As decision-making in these organizations is centralized, members are expected to conform, do only what they are told, follow the rules, and make a good impression to their superiors. Interpersonal relationships are, at least on the surface, pleasant as conflict is avoided.

Waseda and KFUPM have rather clear-cut types of organizational culture, constructive the former, passive-defensive the latter. In contrast, Asia and AUB are characterized by a combination of two general types of organizational culture that is, constructive and passive-defensive.

Asia's organizational culture is a balanced mixture of the constructive and passive-defensive types, reflected in the two main normative beliefs, affiliative and approval, and expressed in the emphasis placed on relationship building, avoidance of conflict, and for going along with fellow members of the organization. Indeed, concern for avoiding conflict and for establishing good interpersonal relationships with colleagues and, more importantly with senior and more powerful members, is often carried to extremes at Asia; this is because friendly interpersonal relationships and conflict avoidance are considered essential requirements weighing heavily on someone's advancement in the faculty and administrative hierarchies of the university. In this context, merit is seen as playing a secondary role in one's career.

AUB's organizational culture is mostly passive-defensive, underlined by dependent, conventional, and approval normative beliefs, partly moderated by the constructive culture reflected in the affiliative normative belief. The university is a traditional and bureaucratic organization characterized by a mismatch in the delegation of authority and responsibility to lower ranking employees, who, though held accountable they are not often provided with authority commensurate with their responsibilities. Although facilitating coordination among academic units, the centralized decision-making dampens initiative resulting in preoccupation with strict adherence to regulations and policies. Centralization of authority and power in conjunction with the absence of grievance procedures and employment security lead to the creation of an environment where "going along" with others and "following policies and rules" is considered the natural thing to do in order to be on the "safe" side. Meanwhile, lack of transparency in decision-making accentuates the perception that one's advancement depends, to no small extent, on pleasing those in positions of authority.

V. Putting the findings in context

The establishment of AUB and Waseda, the two oldest universities, is related to the "West" (read the US for AUB, while rather vaguely defined in the latter's case). AUB's establishment is probably the earliest example of the introduction of the American educational model to the Middle East. The establishment of Waseda heralded the beginning of the introduction of modern sciences to Japan and determination to "catch-up" with the West following the abandonment of the country's isolationist policy and opening up to the outside world. Given such notable beginnings it is understandable that traditions are revered and important milestones are commemorated with pomp at both universities. At the surface level at least,

the influence of the “West” is reflected in the absence of any signs of indigenous architecture at the Waseda campus and the relative scarcity of Arab architectural features at the AUB campus.

Resting upon a long history, pioneering beginnings in education, and reputation and influence extending to a wider geographical area, Waseda and AUB define their role beyond the narrow confines of the advancement of knowledge to include the inculcation of a distinctive “spirit” and development of an identity among members of the academic community, in particular students. Identity-building involves the whole person, from outward appearances, for example Waseda’s distinctive cap for male students, and “AUB-ites” standard photo pose sitting on the stairs of the main gate, to the adoption of a value system, the fundamental values of human life at AUB and respect for individuality at Waseda, to character-building and the development of social responsibility. By contrast, KFUPM and Asia, with a relatively short history and origins related to meeting market demand for certain professions, are almost entirely concerned with producing employable graduates although Asia, shows an interest in promoting values by encouraging students to adopt the spirit of self-reliance.

Looking at the administration buildings at Waseda and AUB, one difference is worth noting between the two universities. That is, compared to Waseda’s modest and hardly noticeable administration building, the one at AUB stands out from all other buildings on campus thanks to its location (facing the main gate), distinctive Arab architecture, restricted access (one has to check with security guards to enter while combination locks are attached to doors to most offices), and attention the gardens surrounding it receive on a daily basis. AUB’s administration building featuring prominently in the university’s home page, promotional material and other publications, is regarded the “soul” of the university. While the prominence of AUB’s administration building may be seen as a reflection of the elevated status of the university administrators, it may be suggested that it also helps to further reinforce their status.

The organizational values of Waseda include team orientation, commitment (reflected in security of employment), and affiliation. There is also formality and adherence to rules and regulations; however, authority and centralized decision making appear to be discouraged at Waseda. This is evidenced in the decentralized organizational structure of the university, made up of 25 undergraduate and graduate schools each headed by a dean. Furthermore, the substantial autonomy faculty enjoy with respect to teaching, research, and professional activities is a good indication of the discouragement of authority. Remuneration at Waseda mirrors the Japanese norm of seniority-biased rewards that, in conjunction with the prevalence of the tenure system, suggests that performance rewards is another discouraged value. Thus, charac-

terized by decentralized power and relatively egalitarian reward norms (typically, the older the faculty, the higher the rank and salary), Waseda is a “collegial” organization in Kabanoff’s and Holt’s (1996) typology of organizational values; this is consistent with the partly clan culture of the university as discussed previously.

AUB’s partly market-oriented culture, underlined by values of being aggressive, demanding, and results-oriented, (faculty who perform have their contracts renewed and may get promoted, those who do not are demoted or terminated) leaves little scope for values such as commitment and affiliation (unsurprising in the absence of tenure), or team orientation (given the university’s competitive environment, everyone is on his/her own). Thus, commitment, affiliation, and team orientation are discouraged at AUB; instead performance rewards, and authority, the latter reflected in the centralized, faculty-based, organizational structure, appear the values endorsed. AUB is almost the exact opposite of Waseda as it is characterized by centralized power and relatively equitable reward norms (however, thanks to secrecy regarding salary ranges and other personnel issues, the notion that the reward system adheres to equitable norms was generally met by disbelief from colleagues). In terms of the Kabanoff and Holt (1996) model, AUB can be classified as an “elite” organization. This is in line with perceptions AUB’s own community and local society appear to hold about the university.

KFUPM’s values include team orientation, commitment (reflected in security of employment), and affiliation (as good interpersonal relationships are expected and taken for granted). The chairman of a department enjoys unquestionable authority over faculty (an indication of this authority is that a professor’s grades for a course may be altered at the discretion of the chairman). Holding unquestionable authority over subordinates is also true for all levels of administrators, thus the participation of the former is limited to issues of minor importance. Strict adherence to minute bureaucratic rules severely restricting professors’ autonomy weighed heavily in the decision of a few US former colleagues to quit the university. With centralized power and egalitarian reward norms (no significant salary discrepancies within the same rank) KFUPM exhibits the features of a “leadership” organization. As far as Asia is concerned, it resembles Waseda, that is, it too can be termed a “collegial” organization. Interestingly, none of the four universities exhibits characteristics of a “meritocratic” organization (Kabanoff and Holt, 1996); Waseda is the closest to being such an organization if it was not for its practice of remunerating and promoting faculty largely on the basis of length of service and age, effectively discouraging performance rewards.

VI. Conclusions

No clear-cut picture emerges regarding the impact that similarities in Arab and Japanese cultures have upon surface manifestations of organizational culture in the four universities. On the one hand, pride in origins, naming of buildings after “heroes”, commemoration of important events, and development of a distinct identity among students at AUB and Waseda, could be attributed to the past-oriented, collectivistic, and hierarchical features present in both Arab and Japanese national cultures alike; however, this cannot explain why Asia and KFUPM are different compared to Waseda and AUB. A more plausible explanation can be offered by looking at surface manifestations of organizational cultures as outward expressions of distinct values lying deeper in each national culture. Thus, Japanese cultural values of frugality, modesty, and preference for the unpretentious and the “low-profile” may help explain the modest appearance of administration buildings at Waseda and Asia while concern with appearances and impressions, a noticeable characteristic of Lebanese culture but also of several other Arab countries, may be behind the construction of “landmarks” including the administration buildings at AUB and KFUPM, the clock tower of the former and the massive water tower of the latter.

Moving closer to the essence of organization culture, four values are common to the culture profile of universities across the three countries (Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon). Five values are common to AUB and KFUPM while the two Japanese universities are more similar sharing seven common values. All universities feature a mostly bureaucratic culture, characterized by stability, predictability, formality, and rule-orientation, with elements of a clan culture at Waseda, KFUPM, and Asia, while elements of a market culture are found at AUB. Although it may be tempting to attribute such values to the collectivist and hierarchical orientation of Japanese and Arab cultures nurturing compliance, obedience, respect for authority, team orientation, and avoidance of conflict, the fact that the very same values are known to be features of bureaucracies cannot be overlooked; thus, organizational variables, such as size, may provide an equally plausible explanation as socio-cultural forces. However, size alone cannot explain the nature of values, as an organization the size of Waseda would normally have been expected to have a purely bureaucratic culture rather than the partly bureaucratic-partly clan culture this university has.

With decentralized power and an egalitarian, seniority-based, reward system, Waseda and

Asia are, in Kabanoff's and Holt's (1996) typology, "collegial" organizations that stress team orientation, participation, commitment, and constructive interpersonal relationships while discouraging authority and performance rewards; this is consistent with the "clan" type of culture (Hooijberg and Petrock, 1993) whereby members exchange their loyalty for the organization's security. With the seniority system and life-time employment in place, Waseda and Asia can be considered the embodiment of a "Japanese" organization. However, the picture gets less clear-cut when the higher faculty turnover rate at Asia compared to Waseda, consistent with the general trend of higher faculty mobility rates in Japan's smaller size universities compared to large-scale institutions, is considered. Thus, the "taken for granted" basic assumptions at Waseda and Asia not only differ, but they can partly only be attributed to Japanese cultural values such as group orientation, loyalty, respect for seniority, and concern for establishing interpersonal relationships.

As a "leadership" organization (Kabanoff and Holt, 1996) characterized by centralized power and valuing authority, commitment, team orientation, and affiliation while discounting participation, KFUPM may be considered an "Arab" university reflecting broader societal values such as respect for authority and hierarchical relationships, obedience, loyalty and compliance, but also the affiliation-oriented nature of Arab culture, and concern for strong interpersonal relationships. Reflecting its origins, established by American missionaries, and explicitly stated objective of basing its educational perspective, methods, and academic organization on the American model of higher education, AUB, an "elite" institution (Kabanoff and Holt, 1996) valuing authority and performance rewards while discouraging commitment, affiliation, and team orientation, is less of an "Arab" organization compared to KFUPM and closer to a hybrid of Lebanese and American cultures. This may be attributed not only to the university's origins and educational orientation but also to the receptiveness and flexibility Lebanese society exhibits with respect to accommodating values from other cultures.

Comparing universities in Japan, one of the most culturally homogeneous countries, with universities in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, two "Arab" countries, different in many ways but sharing a common language and, for the majority of the latter's population, a common religion, utmost care must be exercised in interpreting findings; the task is not made any easier by the fact that AUB is not a "Lebanese" university but rather an "American" university established in Lebanon. Despite such difficulties, almost inevitable in cross-cultural comparisons, our broad proposition, that organizations established in countries sharing similarities in national culture are likely to be characterized by similar values, beliefs, and basic assumptions, is, partly at

least, supported by the findings. Admittedly, the paper has not considered dissimilarities between Japan and Arab countries, for instance Japan has the highest ranking in masculinity while Arab countries are moderately feminine, that could possibly account for differences in organizational cultures. We should, however, emphasize that while the “culture-bound” position is supported, it would be risky and premature to entirely dismiss the “culture-free” argument as aspects of organizational culture in the universities examined appear to be the product of organizational variables and even conscious choices made by leadership rather than cultural factors. This points to the need for developing more sophisticated and easier to operationalize concepts.

* The research of the paper was generously supported by a Grant from Sogo Kenkyu-sho (Institute of Advanced Studies), Hiroshima Shudo University in 2002.

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