How Culture is Like an Iceberg

Communicating Across Cultures

Out of Awareness

Just as 9/10ths of an iceberg is below the surface of the water, so is 9/10ths of culture out of conscious awareness and thus has been termed "Deep Culture."

Oral tradition feeds on deep culture.

- Rules of decency
- Concepts of food
  - Ideals governing child-raising
  - Approaches to problem-solving
  - Patterns of group decision-making
- Notions of modesty
  - Conception of past and future
- Conception of beauty
  - Relationship with animals
  - Patterns of visual perception
  - Conceptions of cleanliness
  - Conception of justice
- Concepts of humor
  - Courtship practices
  - Incentives to work
  - Definition of sin

Patterns of group decision-making
- Preference for competition / cooperation
- Patterns of superior/subordinate relations
- Roles in relation to status by age, sex, class, occupation, gender, kinship and so forth
- Attitudes toward the dependent
- Notions about logic and validity
- Arrangement of physical space

Patterns of handling emotions
- Conception of status mobility
- Attitudes toward elders
- Notions of adolescence
- Social interaction rate
- Notions of leadership
- Conversational patterns in various social contexts
- Tolerance of physical pain
- Nature of friendship

Cosmology
- Tempo of work
- Ordering of time

Body language
- Theory of disease
- Facial expressions

Conception of "self"
- Eye contact behavior
- Definition of insanity
- Definition of obscenity

...and much, much more.

"This hidden area underlies our behavior, influences our perceptions, and is out of our immediate frame of reference - until we plunge beneath the surface - or perhaps like the Titanic, encounter it unexpectedly." - Sharon Rhuly