

## MISSIONARY ATLAS PROJECT

### Latin America

#### Panama

##### Basic Facts

Name: conventional long form: *Republic of Panama*

conventional short form: *Panama*

local short form: *Panama*

local long form: *República de Panamá*

*Total population* 3,000,463 (July 2004 est.)

Panama's population is growing, at a rate of 1.3 percent, with about 20 births and 6 deaths per 1,000 population (2004). In addition, greater numbers of Panamanians live in the cities due to their desires for better jobs, education, government services, and urban amenities. The transit zone contains well over 1 million people (*Panama City, Colón*, and their expanding suburbs). The urban population, estimated at 57 percent in 2002, is expected to rise to 60 percent by 2010. The entire area of Panama has around 40 inhabitants per sq km (102 per sq mi), but density is nearly three times higher in the transit zone and drops to fewer than 3 persons per sq km (8 per sq mi) in the province of *Darién*, the least populated region.

*Age structure--0-14 years:* 30.2% (male 461,427; female 443,932)

15-64 years: 63.6% (male 967,490; female 940,344)

65 years and over: 6.2% (male 88,611; female 98,659) (2004 est.)

*Population Growth rate* 1.31% (2004 est.)

*Birth Rate* 20.36 births/1,000 population (2004 est.)

*Gender Ratio* at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female

under 15 years: 1.04 male(s)/female

15-64 years: 1.03 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.9 male(s)/female

total population: 1.02 male(s)/female (2004 est.)

*Life expectancy at birth--* total population: 72.14 years

male: 69.82 years; female: 74.56 years (2004 est.)

##### ***National Motto***

Panama's national motto, "*Panama, Bridge to the World, Heart of the Universe,*" speaks to its strategic location that has made it a melting pot of the world.

##### ***Location***

Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean. Panama lies between the coordinates of 9 00 N, 80 00 and shares borders with Colombia 225 km. and Costa Rica 330 km. The coast line measures 2490 km. The land in the interior is

mostly steep, rugged mountains that are crossed by rolling upland plains. The coastal areas are largely plains and rolling hills.

### ***Administrative Divisions***

Panama is divided into administrative divisions that include 9 provinces (*provincias*, singular - *provincia*) and 1 territory\* (*comarca*); *Bocas del Toro*, *Chiriqui*, *Cocle*, *Colon*, *Darien*, *Herrera*, *Los Santos*, *Panama*, *San Blas*\*, and *Veraguas*

### ***Literacy***

*Definition:* age 15 and over can read and write

total population: 92.6%

male: 93.2%

female: 91.9% (2003 est.)

### ***Language***

The official language is Spanish but many Panamanians are bilingual. English is widely used. Some use of indigenous languages remains (see People Groups section of this Profile).

### ***Government***

*Constitutional Democracy.*

*Executive Branch*

*Chief of state:* President -- The president is both the chief of state and head of government

*Head of government:* The president is both the chief of state and head of government

*Cabinet:* The Cabinet is appointed by the president

*Elections:* president and vice presidents elected on the same ticket by popular vote for five-year terms; election last held 2 May 2004 (next to be held May 2009)

*Legislative Branch*

Unicameral Legislative Assembly or *Asamblea Legislativa* (71 seats; members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms)

*Judicial Branch*

Supreme Court of Justice or *Corte Suprema de Justicia* (nine judges appointed for 10-year terms); five superior courts; three courts of appeal

*Political Parties*

*Arnulfista Party* or PA; *Civic Renewal Party* or PRC; *Democratic Change*; *Democratic Revolutionary Party* or PRD; *National Liberal Party* or PLN; *National Renovation Movement* or MORENA; *Nationalist Republican Liberal Movement* or MOLIRENA

### ***Economy***

Panama's economic life rests heavily on the US dollar and on a well-developed services sector that accounts for three-fourths of GDP. Services include operating the Panama Canal, banking, the *Colon Free Zone*, insurance, container ports, flagship registry, and tourism.

A slump in Colon Free Zone and agricultural exports, the global slowdown, and the withdrawal of US military forces held back economic growth in 2000-03. The government has been backing public works programs, tax reforms, new regional trade

agreements, and development of tourism in order to stimulate growth. Unemployment remains at an unacceptably high level.

Gross National Product reached purchasing power parity - \$18.62 billion (2003 est.). The growth in the GNP 3.2% with purchasing power parity - \$6,300 (2003 est.)

The percentage below the poverty line stands at 37% (1999 estimate). *The* lowest 10% of the population uses 1.2% of the GNP while the highest 10% of the population enjoys up to 35.7% (1997).

The work force of 1.1 million includes a shortage of skilled labor, but an oversupply of unskilled labor (2000 est.)

Unemployment in May 2004 stood at 4.1 %. The unemployment rate had reached as high as 14.7% in January 1990. As recently as January 2001 unemployment stood at 9%.

### ***Urbanization***

Around 55 percent of the population of Panama lives in the urban areas. The largest city is *Panama City* (with its suburb of *San Miguelito*) which boasts a population of 463,093 (2000). The Panama City metropolitan area also includes the cities of *Tocumen*, *Arraiján*, and *La Chorrera*. The 2000 population of other major cities was: *Colón* (52,286) and *David* (76,481). Other regional cities include *Santiago*, *Penonomé*, and *Chitré*.

*Panama City* has grown so rapidly that it has outstripped its urban services, especially transportation. New toll roads were begun in the mid-1990s to alleviate traffic problems, and the government began privatizing major utilities in the hope of attracting new investments. *Colón*, which has been in an economic depression since the 1960s, shows high rates of unemployment, crime, and social disorder. The other cities have not experienced major problems.

### ***Religion***

Roman Catholics claim 85% of the people while 15% are Protestant (*CIA Factbook*, 2004). Johnstone counts 75.25% Catholic, and 15.10 % Protestant (*Operation World*). In addition Johnstone points to 3.50% Muslim, 3.00 % non-religious, 2.10 % Buddhist, 1.27 % Baha'i, 1.00% Sikh, 0.50% traditional ethnic, 0.29% Hindu, 0.25% Jewish. The Church of Jesus Christ of Later Day Saints (Mormons) is strong (42 congregations and 17,400 members) while the Jehovah's Witnesses claim 195 congregations with 9650 members.

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/pm.html>; Johnstone, *Operation World*; <http://www.economagic.com/em-cgi/data.exe/bls/la/lausm60150003>; [http://encarta.msn.com/text\\_761577478\\_\\_42/Panama.html](http://encarta.msn.com/text_761577478__42/Panama.html)

## ***History of Panama***

### ***Prehistory***

Estimates of the number of Indians who inhabited the isthmus when the Spanish explorers arrived vary greatly but the population was likely considerably greater than that of contemporary Panama. Some Panamanian historians have suggested that there might have been a population of 500,000 Indians from some sixty "tribes." Other researchers have concluded that the *Cuna* in the pre-historic period alone, numbered some 750,000. These first humans, descendants of migrants who had crossed a land bridge from Asia to North America, entered Panama at least 10,000 years ago. Some remained in Panama, while others continued to South America. After the beginning of agriculture and stone

tool making, Panama's native population grew and developed impressive cultures. The early indigenous people are best known for their beautiful gold jewelry, beads, and multicolored pottery, left behind in *huacas*, or burial mounds. In addition to farming, they hunted and fished for food, and traded goods among villages. Most lived in thatched-roof huts, similar to those in which many of their descendants live today.

Three primary Indian groups—the *Cuna*, *Guaymí*, and *Chocó*—practiced communal land ownership and practiced extensive farming. They raised corn, cotton, cacao, various root crops and other vegetables, and fruits and in addition engaged in hunting and fishing. These Indians were skillful potters, stonecutters, goldsmiths, and silversmiths. Their ornaments, including breastplates and earrings of beaten gold, reinforced the Spanish myth of *El Dorado*, the city of gold.

### ***Arrival of the Spanish***

*Rodrigo de Bastidas*, a wealthy notary public from Seville, was the first of many Spanish explorers to reach Panama. He sailed westward from Venezuela in 1501 in search of gold and explored some 150 kilometers of the coastal area before heading for the West Indies. A year later, *Christopher Columbus*, on his fourth voyage to the New World, touched several points on the isthmus. One was a horseshoe-shaped harbor that he named *Puerto Bello* (beautiful port), later renamed *Portobelo*.

In 1508 the king of Spain, *Ferdinand V*, awarded settlement rights in Panama to explorer *Diego de Nicuesa*, and within a few years colonies were established along the Atlantic coast. *Vasco Núñez de Balboa*, a member of *Bastidas's* crew, who had settled in Hispaniola (present-day Dominican Republic and Haiti), stowed away on a voyage to Panama in 1510 to escape his creditors. *Balboa* worked his way to some prominence in Panama. Panama's importance to the Spanish Empire increased in 1513 when explorer *Balboa* led an expedition across the isthmus from the Atlantic and became the first European to see the Pacific Ocean from the Americas.

The expedition departed on September 1, 1513, with 190 Spaniards--among them *Francisco Pizarro*, a pack of dogs, and 1,000 Indian slaves. After twenty-five days of hacking their way through the jungle, the party gazed on the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean. *Balboa*, clad in full armor, waded into the water, named the sea the *South Sea*, and claimed the ocean and all the shores on which it washed for his God and his king. *Balboa* led some 800 Spaniards who lived on the isthmus on an exploration to the western areas of Panama. Within a few years, the many jungle perils had killed all but 60 of these settlers. Finally, the Spanish population at *Antigua del Darién* (*Antigua*) founded the first city to be duly constituted by the Spanish crown, deposed the crown's representative, and elected *Balboa* and *Martin Zamudio* co-mayors.

*Balboa* proved to be a good administrator. He insisted that the settlers plant crops rather than depend solely on supply ships, and *Antigua* became a prosperous community. Like other conquistadors, *Balboa* led raids on Indian settlements, but unlike most, he made friends with the conquered tribes. In fact, he took the daughter of a chief as his lifelong mistress.

*Balboa's* enemies denounced him in the Spanish court, and King *Ferdinand* appointed a new governor for the colony, then known as *Castilla del Oro*. The new governor, *Pedro Arias de Avila*, who known as "*Pedrarias the Cruel*," charged *Balboa* with treason. In 1517 *Balboa* was arrested, brought to the court of *Pedrarias*, and executed.

In 1519 *Pedrarias Dávila*, as Spanish governor, founded *Panama City* on the Pacific coast. Many of the region's native peoples were killed by Spanish colonists or by diseases brought by the Europeans, while others fled to remote areas. Panama quickly became a crossroads and marketplace of Spain's empire in the Americas.

It was from Panama that Conquistador, *Francisco Pizarro*, sailed south to conquer the great empire of the Inca in Peru in the 1530s. The silver and gold of the Inca, spices, and other commodities were shipped from South America to Panama City, carried across the isthmus, and loaded onto fleets of treasure ships bound for Spain. This route to the Caribbean harbor of *Portobelo* became known as the *Camino Real* (Royal Road).

*Pedrarias's* governorship proved to be disastrous. Hundreds of Spaniards died of disease and starvation in their brocaded silk clothing. Thousands of Indians were robbed, enslaved, and massacred. Thousands more of the Indians succumbed to European diseases to which they had no natural immunity. After the atrocities of *Pedrarias*, most of the Indians fled to remote areas to avoid the Spaniards. The Roman Catholic Church, and particularly the Franciscan order, showed some concern for the welfare of the Indians, but on the whole, church efforts were inadequate to the situation.

The Indians, nevertheless, found one effective benefactor among their Spanish oppressors. *Bartolomé de las Casas*, the first priest ordained in the West Indies, was outraged by the persecution of the Indians. He freed his own slaves, returned to Spain, and persuaded the council to adopt stronger measures against enslaving the Indians. He made one suggestion that he later regretted--that Africans, whom the Spaniards considered less than human, be imported to replace the Indians as slaves.

Panama's importance in trade led to development of a wealthy merchant class. Panama also became a major shipment point in the slave trade, sending most African captives on to other colonies. But slaves who remained in Panama formed the foundation of its black population. The treasure that passed through Panama in these decades provided great wealth but attracted intense piracy. Sir Francis Drake in the period 1570 and Henry Morgan in the 1660s made periodic and successful raids on the Panama area.

The Buccaneers reported the ease with which the isthmus could be crossed. These reports suggested the possibility of digging a canal. Drawn by these possibilities, William Paterson, founder and ex-governor of the Bank of England, organized a Scottish company to establish a colony in the *San Blas* area with intents to investigate the canal possibilities.

Paterson landed on the Caribbean coast of the *Darién* late in 1698 with about 1,200 followers. The colonists were well received by the Indians (as was anyone not Spanish), but poorly prepared for life in the tropics with its attendant diseases. Their ideas of trade goods--European clothing, wigs, and English Bibles--was of little interest to the Indians. These colonists gave up after six months, unknowingly passing at sea reinforcements totaling another 1,600 people. The Spanish reacted to these new arrivals by establishing a blockade from the sea. The English capitulated and left in April 1700, having lost many lives, mostly from malnutrition and disease.

Because of its close trade ties with Peru, Panama was originally part of the *Viceroyalty of Peru*, the Spanish government unit for most of its South American colonies. After 1718, however, Panama was put under the newly created *Viceroyalty of New Granada*, which covered present-day *Colombia*, *Venezuela*, and *Ecuador*. Because the capital in *Bogotá* was distant and its authority weak, Panama largely governed itself. The treasure fleet,

meanwhile, sailed less frequently and then stopped altogether as other routes became open with the result that Panama no longer enjoyed the riches of the empire.

### ***Colombian Rule***

Spain's American empire broke apart as the movement for Latin American independence swept through the colonies in the early 1800s. Panama's liberation from Spain moved slowly. Revolutionaries from other colonies, however, did not hesitate to use Panama's strategic potential in revolutionary maneuvers. *General Francisco Miranda* of Venezuela, who had been attracting support for revolutionary activities as early as 1797, offered a canal concession to Britain in return for aid. *Thomas Jefferson*, while minister to France, also showed interest in a canal, but the isolationist policies and the concentration on expansion by the United States prevented serious consideration.

Patriots from *Cartagena* attempted to take *Portobelo* in 1814 and again in 1819, and a naval effort from liberated Chile succeeded in capturing the island of *Taboga* in the Bay of Panama. Panama's first act of separation from Spain came without violence. *Simón Bolívar's* victory at *Boyacá*, on August 7, 1819, clinched the liberation of *New Granada*. The Spanish viceroy fled Colombia for Panama, where he ruled harshly until his death in 1821.

His replacement in Panama, a liberal constitutionalist, permitted a free press and the formation of patriotic associations. Raising troops locally, he soon sailed for Ecuador, leaving a native Panamanian, Colonel *Edwin Fábrega*, as acting governor of Panama. Colonel *Fábrega* declared independence from Spain in 1821 and decided to become part of the newly independent *Republic of Colombia*. Under the *1821 Constitution of Cúcuta*, Panama was designated a department with two provinces, *Panamá* and *Veraguas*. With the addition of *Ecuador* to the liberated area, the whole country became known as *Gran Colombia*. For the next 82 years the Panamanians lived in uneasy isolation from the central government, often making their own laws, frequently staging revolts, and occasionally declaring their independence. They grew apart culturally and materially from the rest of Colombia, becoming less religious, more liberal in politics, and more open to outside influences than Colombians.

By the mid-1800s events from outside the region began to affect Panama. Britain, and the United States, began to compete for the rights to control transit across Central America. The preferred route for a canal was in either Panama or Nicaragua. American businessmen took the lead in 1848 when they gained rights to build a railroad across Panama, which was completed in 1855. The discovery of gold in California brought a flood of prospectors seeking quick access, and for years the Panama Railroad was the most profitable in the world. Businesses to serve travelers flourished, providing a boom for Panamanian merchants.

With the railroad came U.S. intervention. Rebellions against Colombian rule and violence between local factions occurred frequently. In addition, the increase in the number of U.S. citizens and businesses created tensions with Panamanians. As a result of these tensions, the United States frequently sent its Marines to Panama to preserve law and order and to protect U.S. lives and property. Although still a province of Colombia, Panama was on its way to becoming a U.S. protectorate.

### ***Independence and the Canal***

The further history of Panama is closely linked to the canal that had been proposed at various times. In the late 1870s, French diplomat *Ferdinand de Lesseps*, who had built

the Suez Canal in Egypt, called a conference in Paris to design and raise money for a Central American canal. He began to raise money privately for a sea-level canal in Panama and started work in 1882. The project faced equipment delays, tropical diseases, financial problems, and poor planning. In fact, the *Lesseps'* canal design was impossible to build with the technology available at the time. His effort experienced bankruptcy in 1888 and was replaced with a holding company to protect the interests of investors. The project, however, had brought Panama a more diverse population, including many Caribbean blacks who came to work on it.

Three abortive attempts to separate the isthmus from Colombia occurred between 1830 and 1840. The first was undertaken by an acting governor of Panama who opposed the policies of the president, but the Panamanian leader reincorporated the department of Panama at the urging of *Bolívar*, then on his deathbed. The second attempted separation was the scheme of an unpopular dictator, who was soon deposed and executed. The third secession, a response to civil war in Colombia, was declared by a popular assembly, but reintegration took place a year later.

Naval operations during the Spanish-American War (1898-1901) convinced President *Theodore Roosevelt* that the United States needed a canal between the oceans. This interest culminated in the *Spooner Bill* of June 29, 1902, providing for a canal through the Isthmus of Panama. The *Hay-Herrán Treaty* of January 22, 1903, declared that Colombia consented to such a project in the form of a 100-year lease on an area 10 kilometers wide. This treaty, however, was not ratified in *Bogotá*. The United States, therefore, determined to construct a canal across the isthmus and, in order to implement the plan, encouraged the Panamanian separatist movement.

By July 1903, a revolutionary junta had been created in Panama. *José Augustin Arango*, an attorney for the Panama Railroad Company, headed the junta. *Manuel Amador Guerrero* and *Carlos C. Arosemena* served on the junta from the start. Five other members, all from prominent Panamanian families, were added. *Arango* was the brains of the revolution, and *Amador* was the junta's active leader.

With financial assistance from *Philippe Bunau-Varilla*, a French national representing the interests of *de Lesseps'* company, the Panamanian leaders sought to take advantage of United States' interest in the isthmus. In October and November 1903, the revolutionary junta, with the protection of United States naval forces, carried out a successful uprising against the Colombian government. The United States acted under the *Bidlack-Mallarino Treaty of 1846* between the United States and Colombia. This treaty provided that United States forces could intervene in the event of disorder on the isthmus to guarantee Colombian sovereignty and open transit across the isthmus. The United States, thus, prevented a Colombian force from moving across the isthmus to Panama City to suppress the insurrection.

President Roosevelt recognized the new Panamanian junta as the de facto government on November 6, 1903. Five days later *Philippe Bunau-Varilla*, as the diplomatic representative of Panama (a role he had purchased through financial assistance to the rebels) and who represented the French canal company, concluded the *Isthmian Canal Convention* with Secretary of State *John Hay* in Washington. *Bunau-Varilla*, who had not lived in Panama for seventeen years before the incident and never returned, negotiated and signed the treaty, wrote the Panamanian declaration of independence and constitution, and designed the Panamanian flag while residing in the Waldorf-Astoria

Hotel in New York City. Panamanian nationalists greatly resented the terms of this treaty and these decisions became a source of continuing controversy in Panama's history. *Panama City* and *Colón* were both small relatively unknown towns when the United States canal builders began in 1904. A single railroad stretched between the towns, running alongside the muddy scars of the abortive French effort. The new builders were haunted by the ghosts of *de Lesseps'* failure and the 25,000 workers who had died on the project. These new builders were able, however, to learn from *de Lesseps'* mistakes and to build on the foundations of the previous engineering. The most formidable and imperative task that the North Americans faced related to the need to alleviate the deadly mosquitoes and the Yellow Fever they carried.

After the failures of several civilian commissions, President Roosevelt turned the project over to the United States Army Corps of Engineers, guided by *Colonel George Washington Goethals*. *Colonel William Crawford Gorgas* was placed in charge of sanitation. In addition to the major killers--malaria and yellow fever--smallpox, typhoid, dysentery, and intestinal parasites also threatened the newcomers.

Because the mosquito carrying yellow fever was found in urban areas, *Gorgas* concentrated his main efforts on the terminal cities. "*Gorgas gangs*" dug ditches to drain standing water and sprayed puddles with a film of oil. They screened and fumigated buildings and even entered churches to clean out the fonts of holy water. They installed a pure water supply and a modern system of sewage disposal.

*Gorgas's* work is credited with saving at least 71,000 lives and some 40 million days of sickness. The cleaner, safer conditions enabled the canal diggers to attract a labor force. By 1913 approximately 65,000 men were working. Most were West Indians, although some 12,000 workers were recruited from southern Europe. Five thousand United States citizens filled the administrative, professional, and supervisory jobs. The authorities established a paternalistic community, The Canal Zone, to provide these men with the American comforts and amenities to which they were accustomed.

The most challenging tasks involved in the actual digging of the canal were cutting through the mountain ridge at *Culebra*, building a huge dam at *Gatún* to trap the *Río Chagres* and form an artificial lake, and building three double sets of locks--*Gatun Locks*, *Pedro Miguel Locks*, and *Miraflores Locks*--to raise the ships to the lake, almost twenty-six meters above sea level, and then lower them. On August 15, 1914, the first ship made a complete passage through the canal.

### ***Panama/United States Relations***

Much of the history of Panama revolves around the relationships of Panama and the United States and most of these relationships reflect to some degree conflicts around the Canal. Panamanian patriots particularly resented the haste with which *Bunau Varilla* concluded the treaty. Nonetheless, the Panamanians, having no alternative, ratified the treaty on December 2. Approval by the United States Senate came on February 23, 1904. The rights granted to the United States in the so-called *Hay Bunau -Varilla Treaty* were extensive. They included a grant "in perpetuity of the use, occupation, and control" of a sixteen kilometer-wide strip of territory and extensions of three nautical miles into the sea from each terminal "for the construction, maintenance, operation, sanitation, and protection" of an isthmian canal. Furthermore, the United States was entitled to acquire additional areas of land or water necessary for canal operations and held the option of



exercising eminent domain in Panama City. Washington gained all the rights, power, and authority over the territory to the entire exclusion of Panama.

From 1903 on, Panama had two governments, one for the republic and another for the Canal Zone. The republic was subordinate to the government of the U.S. zone in every way—financially, militarily, and administratively. Panama adopted a constitution and elected its first president, *Manuel Amador Guerrero*, in 1904. But in fact, the chief engineer of the canal construction works and then the governors of the Canal Zone oversaw affairs in Panama. They made sure that nothing impeded the maintenance, security, and operation of the canal. Panama's independence was strictly limited. The Republic of Panama became a de facto protectorate of the United States through two provisions whereby the United States guaranteed the independence of Panama and received in return the right to intervene in Panama's domestic affairs. For the rights it obtained, the United States was to pay the sum of US\$10 million and an annuity, beginning 9 years after ratification, of US\$250,000 in gold coin. The United States also purchased the rights and properties of the French canal company for US\$40 million. Colombia was the harshest critic of United States policy at the time. A reconciliatory treaty with the United States providing an indemnity of US\$25 million was finally concluded between these two countries in 1921. Ironically, however, friction resulting from the events of 1903 was greater between the United States and Panama. Major disagreements arose concerning the rights granted to the United States by the treaty of 1903 and the Panamanian constitution of 1904. The United States government subsequently interpreted these rights to mean that the United States could exercise complete sovereignty over all matters in the Canal Zone. Panama, although admitting that the clauses were vague and obscure, held that the original concession of authority related only to the construction, operation, and defense of the canal and that rights and privileges not necessary to these functions had never been relinquished.

Construction of the canal, from 1904 to 1914, brought more than 150,000 people to Panama. These immigrants changed the country's ethnic and cultural composition. They included a large number of black West Indian laborers, some European workers, and some Americans. During Panama's early years, President *Belisario Porras* tried to build the nation, constructing roads, hospitals, schools, and other facilities. *Porras*, leader of the Liberal Party, achieved a working relationship with the U.S. authorities and dominated the country's government until the late 1920s. However, resentment of U.S. domination grew among some Panamanians.

Panama faced a home-made secessionist problem. The *Cuna* of the *San Blas Islands* were no more willing to accept the authority of Panama than they had been satisfied to accept the authority of Colombia or Spain. The Panamanian government exercised no administrative control over the islands until 1915. At that time, forces of the Colonial Police, composed of blacks, were stationed on several islands. Their presence, along with a number of other factors, led to a revolt in 1925.

In 1903 on the island of *Narganá*, *Charlie Robinson* was elected chief. He began a "civilizing" program. Robinson was joined by a number of young men who had been educated in the cities on the mainland. These "Young Turks" demanded modernization. They were actively supported by the police who engaged in shameful atrocities. By 1925 hatred for these modernizers and for the police was intense throughout the *San Blas Islands*.

The situation intensified the factionalism that resulted when Panama separated from Colombia. A leader of one faction, *Simral Coleman*, with the help of American explorer, *Richard Marsh*, drew up a "declaration of independence" for the *Cuna*. The revolution began on February 25, 1925. During the rebellion, about twenty police personnel were killed. Within a short time, a United States cruiser appeared and with United States diplomatic and naval officials serving as intermediaries, a peace treaty was concluded. The most important outcome of this rebellion was a treaty that in effect recognized *San Blas* as a semiautonomous territory.

Dissension in Panama increased over the sovereignty issue. Acting on an understanding of its rights, the United States had applied special regulations to maritime traffic at the ports of entry to the canal and had established its own customs, tariffs, and postal services in the zone. These measures were opposed by the Panamanian government. By 1920 the United States had intervened four times in the civil life of the republic of Panama. These interventions involved little military conflict and were, with one exception, at the request of one Panamanian faction or another.

At the end of the 1920s, United States policy toward intervention was revised. In 1928 Secretary of State *Frank B. Kellogg* repeated his government's refusal to countenance illegal changes of government. In the same year, however, Washington declined to intervene during the national elections that placed *Florencio H. Arosemena* in office. The *Arosemena* government was noted for its corruption. The United States once again declined to intervene when a coup d'état was undertaken to unseat *Arosemena*. Though no official pronouncement of a shift in policy had been made, the 1931 coup d'état--the first successful one in the republic's history--marked a watershed in the history of United States intervention.

The never-ratified, *Kellogg-Alfaro Treaty of 1925*, was rejected not only by Panama (in 1927) but also by the League of Nations. A main problem area was that of demanding automatic Panamanian participation in any war the United States found itself in. The United States became increasingly concerned with the stability of governments in the Caribbean. This led to a change in the policies of the United States.

The gradual reversal of United States policy was heralded in 1928 when the Clark Memorandum formally disavowed the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. In his inaugural address in 1933, *President Franklin D. Roosevelt* enunciated the *Good Neighbor Policy*. That same year, at the Seventh Inter-American Conference in Montevideo, the United States expressed a qualified acceptance of the principle of nonintervention. In 1936 the United States approved this principle without reservation. Change was evident.

### ***The Arias Years 1931-1968***

In this new openness of the United States for non-intervention in Latin American events Panama found a new opportunity for action. In 1931 a secret nationalist organization, *Acción Comunal* (Common Action), designed and promoted a coup and held elections for president. A group of reformers, headed by *Harmodio Arias Madrid*, assumed direction of the government and sought to make it more effective. In contrast to the elite families that had always ruled Panama, Arias and his family came from a modest rural background, and their success marked the rise of middle-class Panamanians into government leadership.

Under *Arias*'s presidency (1932-1936) and those of his successors, the police force became stronger, the economy began to diversify, the university was established, and Panama took on a new sense of national pride. In 1936 the United States and Panama negotiated treaty changes that ended the U.S. right to intervene in Panama's affairs and its right to appropriate more land. The treaty also increased the annual payments the United States made to Panama.

*Arias*'s younger brother, *Arnulfo Arias Madrid*, became president in 1940 and intensified policies to strengthen the nation and oppose U.S. power. He fostered a greater sense of nationalism among Panamanians. He contended that Panama was more than a canal and had a national destiny beyond serving the United States. *Arias* insisted that the United States negotiate as an equal with Panama for new treaty concessions. He resisted U.S. efforts to establish new military bases in Panama during World War II (1939-1945). Actually, *Arias* was sympathetic to some European fascist governments of that time. He introduced a new constitution that gave him a longer term in office and revoked the citizenship of non-Hispanic immigrants.

The initial term in power of *Arias* was brief. Under his presidency, the National Police were given more weapons and a bigger role in politics. Ironically, it was the police who deposed him in a coup in 1941 and later would overthrow him twice more and rig elections to defeat him. By the mid-1940s, the commander of the police had the power to choose and depose presidents as he wished.

Relations between the United States and Panama took on menacing proportions in 1948. The War Department decided to hold most of the bases for an indefinite period. The Department of State took cognizance of growing nationalist dissatisfaction in Panama and in December 1946 sent *Ambassador Frank T. Hines* to propose a twenty-year extension of the leases on thirteen facilities. When *President Jiménez* authorized a draft treaty over the opposition of the foreign minister, Panamanian resistance and resentment increased tremendously. The Panamanian National Assembly meeting in 1947 which was designed to consider ratification was met by a protesting mob of 10,000 Panamanians armed with stones, machetes, and guns. This opposition to the treaty led the deputies to vote unanimously to reject the treaty. By 1948 the United States had evacuated all occupied bases and sites outside the Canal Zone.

National Police Commander *José Antonio Remón* installed and removed presidents, not only without opposition but at his own discretion. Working behind the scenes he denied to *Arnulfo Arias* the presidency he apparently had won in 1948 and then installed *Arias* in the presidency in 1949. He engineered the removal of *Arias* in 1951. Meanwhile, *Remón* increased salaries and fringe benefits for his forces and modernized training methods and equipment. In effect, *Remón* transformed the National Police into a paramilitary force and the National Police became an army.

Police involvement in politics came to a head in 1952. Police commander *José Antonio Remón*, after years of determining the presidency, became convinced he could do a better job than the civilians. He ran for office and was elected honestly. *Remón* continued many of the policies of the *Acción Comunal* reformers-- diversifying the economy and developing industry and agriculture to reduce Panama's dependence on the canal. He further strengthened the police, making it more like a military force and renaming it the National Guard. New treaties were negotiated to give Panama more benefits from the canal. *Remón* also built a strong coalition of political parties. He organized the *National*

*Patriotic Coalition (Coalición Patriótico Nacional--CPN)* and ran successfully as its candidate for the presidency in 1952. *Remón* followed national tradition by enriching himself through political office. He broke with tradition, however, by promoting social reform and economic development. His agricultural and industrial programs temporarily reduced the country's overwhelming economic dependence on the Canal and the zone. His influence ceased when he was assassinated in 1955.

Relations with the United States had been deteriorating in the late 1950s. Panamanians grew increasingly frustrated over U.S. control of the Canal Zone and their country's lagging development. They were encouraged by the successful revolution in Cuba and the 1956 seizure of the Suez Canal in Egypt. Anti-American demonstrations increased. More serious confrontation, known as the flag riots, arose in 1964. In these movements, violence broke out over attempts to fly the Panamanian flag in the Canal Zone as a symbolic gesture. Over 20 people were killed and the United States and Panama temporarily broke off relations. The confrontations persuaded the United States to begin negotiations to replace the unpopular 1903 treaty. Completion of the effort, however, took 13 years.

### ***The Torrijos Era 1968-1981***

Public order declined during the mid-1960s, as the economy stagnated and government demonstrated an inability to administer the nation. Public frustration with the situation helped *Arnulfo Arias* win the 1968 election. When he threatened to dismiss some leading officers of the National Guard, they overthrew him after ten days in office. Two officers, *Boris Martínez* and *Omar Torrijos Herrera*, led the coup and formed a ruling council, or junta. By early 1969 *Torrijos* assumed full control of government and announced a revolutionary program.

The *Torrijos era* brought Panama a mixture of military rule, social and economic reforms, and a more vigorous, left-wing foreign policy. *Torrijos* suspended the constitution and eventually replaced it with one that gave him full powers as head of state for six years. Disbanding the National Assembly, he governed by decree, outlawed political parties, and used the National Guard to repress opposition. However, he won popularity for his social and economic policies and, more importantly, for confronting the United States over control of the Canal. He also established ties with Cuban leader *Fidel Castro* and the rebel *Sandinistas*, who were fighting the dictator of Nicaragua.

United States secretary of state *John Foster Dulles's* unqualified statement on the Suez issue on September 28, 1956 worsened matters. Dulles said that the United States did not fear similar nationalization of the Panama Canal because the United States possessed "rights of sovereignty" there. Panamanian public opinion was further inflamed by a United States Department of the Army statement in the summer of 1956 that implied that the 1955 treaty had not in fact envisaged a total equalization of wage rates. The United States attempted to clarify the issue by explaining that the only exception to the "equal pay for equal labor" principle would be a 25-percent differential that would apply to all citizens brought from the continental United States. Tension mounted in the ensuing years.

Tensions between Panama and the United States, with most of the difficulties resting on problems with the Canal, persisted and increased during the 1950s and 1960s. Relations hardly improved in the 1970s. Efforts by President John Kennedy in the United States and Panamanian leaders *De la Guardia* and *Roberto Chiari* in Panama failed to totally

clear the problems. The situation was not helped by statements such as Henry Kissinger's public declaration in September 1975 that "the United States must maintain the right, unilaterally, to defend the Panama Canal for an indefinite future." The statement provoked a furor in Panama. A group of some 600 angry students stoned the United States embassy. The Canal problem would require a new turn in diplomatic agreements.

The Panamanian negotiating team was encouraged by the high priority that President *Jimmy Carter* placed on rapidly concluding a new treaty. Carter added *Sol Linowitz*, former ambassador to the OAS, to the United States negotiating team shortly after taking office in January 1977. Carter held that United States interests would be protected by possessing "an assured capacity or capability" to guarantee that the canal would remain open and neutral after Panama assumed control. This view contrasted with previous United States demands for an ongoing physical military presence and led to the negotiation of two separate treaties. This changed point of view, together with United States willingness to provide a considerable amount of bilateral development aid in addition to the revenues associated with Panama's participation in the operation of the canal, were central to the August 10, 1977 announcement that agreement had been reached on two new treaties.

United States president *Jimmy Carter's* hope for a new relationship with Panama "based on friendship and mutual respect" was politically explosive at home. The proposed treaties shifted control of the Panama Canal from the United States back to Panama but allowed the United States to continue guaranteeing the neutrality of the Canal Zone. Debate over the treaties polarized those who were eager to address long-standing Panamanian grievances and those advocating continued safeguards for U.S. interests. After one of the longest treaty debates in history, the U.S. Senate ratified the *Panama Canal Treaties of 1977* by a one-vote margin in April 1978.

Under *Torrijos*, the government intervened more strongly in the economy, introducing land reform and pro labor policies, and encouraging international banking to establish a base in Panama. Openly attacking the wealthy upper class of Panama, *Torrijos* recruited middle- and lower-middle-class citizens to staff the upper ranks of government. Panama's international banking industry was growing as a result of eagerness of foreign banks to lend money. *Torrijos* used this cash flow to create state-run industries and utilities, to expand social services, to increase building projects (schools, clinics, and housing), and to aid farmers. These measures, while popular, contributed to a large national debt and economic growth slowed.

The hallmark of the *Torrijos* years was the negotiation of new treaties with the United States to replace the controversial 1903 canal agreement. On September 7, 1977, Carter and *Torrijos* met in Washington to sign the treaties in a ceremony that also was attended by representatives of twenty-six other nations of the Western Hemisphere. The Panama Canal Treaty, the major document signed on September 7, abrogated the 1903 treaty and all other previous bilateral agreements concerning the canal. The treaty was to enter into force six months after the exchange of instruments of ratification and to expire at noon on December 31, 1999. The Panama Canal Company and the Canal Zone government would cease to operate and Panama would assume complete legal jurisdiction over the former Canal Zone immediately, although the United States would retain jurisdiction over its citizens during a thirty-month transition period. Panama would grant the United States

rights to operate, maintain, and manage the canal through a new United States government agency, the Panama Canal Commission. The commission would be supervised by a board of five members from the United States and four from Panama; the ratio was fixed for the duration of the treaty. The commission would have a United States administrator and Panamanian deputy administrator until January 1, 1990, when the nationalities of these two positions would be reversed. Panamanian nationals would constitute a growing number of commission employees in preparation for their assumption of full responsibility in 2000. Another binational body, the *Panama Canal Consultative Committee*, was created to advise the respective governments on policy matters affecting the canal's operation.

These new treaties provided that the canal would be turned over to Panama on December 31, 1999. This treaty called for 60 percent of the Canal Zone to be turned over to Panamanian control in 1979 but allowed the United States to retain some military bases until 2000. The treaty also provided that more money from canal tolls would go to Panama. The agreements provoked opposition in both countries. Many Panamanians objected that the treaties did not go far enough, while many Americans felt the canal was U.S. property that was being given away. Both nations ratified the treaties in 1979. Once the treaties were signed, *Torrijos* stepped down as head of government and began to reinstate civilian rule in Panama. He formed the *Democratic Revolutionary Party* (PRD), which provided backing for his civilian figurehead president. But *Torrijos* retained control of the National Guard and remained the dominant figure in Panama's politics until he died in a plane crash in 1981.

### ***The Post-Torrijos Era 1981-1982***

The death of *Torrijos* deprived Central America of a potential moderating influence during a time that region was facing increased destabilization, including revolutions in Nicaragua and El Salvador. His death also created a power vacuum in his own country and ended a twelve-year "*dictatorship with a heart*," as *Torrijos* called his rule. He was succeeded as Guard commander by the chief of staff, *Colonel Florencio Florez Aguilar*, a *Torrijos* loyalist.

Although *Florez* adopted a low profile and allowed *President Royo* to exercise more of his constitutional authority, *Royo* soon alienated the *Torrijos* group, the private sector, and the Guard's general staff. All of these parties rejected his leadership style and his strongly nationalistic, anti-United States rhetoric. *Royo* had become the leader of leftist elements within the government, and he used his position to accuse the United States of hundreds of technical violations in the implementation of the canal treaties.

The general staff considered the Guard to be the country's principal guarantor of national stability and began to challenge the president's political authority. *Royo* attempted to use the PRD as his power base, but the fighting between leftists and conservatives within the party became too intense to control. The country's many and diverse political parties, in spite of their mutual discontent with the regime, were unable to form a viable and solid opposition.

When *Florez* completed twenty-six years of military service in March 1982 and was forced to retire, his own chief of staff, *General Rubén Darío Paredes*, replaced him. *Paredes* considered himself to be *Torrijos's* rightful successor and the embodiment of change and unity. Indications exist that *Torrijos* had been grooming *Paredes* for political office since 1975. *Paredes* considered himself a "strong man." Immediately the new

Guard commander asserted himself in Panamanian politics and revealed plans to run for the presidency in 1984. Many suspected that *Paredes* had struck a deal with Colonel *Manuel Antonio Noriega Moreno*, who had been the assistant chief of staff for intelligence since 1970. According to this deal, *Noriega* would assume command of the Guard and *Paredes* would become president in 1984. *Paredes* publicly accused *Royo* for the rapidly deteriorating economy and for stealing millions of dollars from the nation's social security system by government officials.

July 1982 saw growing labor unrest that led to an outbreak of strikes and public demonstrations against *Royo's* government. *Paredes* claimed that "the people wanted change" and acted to remove *Royo* from the presidency. With National Guard backing, *Paredes* forced *Royo* and most of his cabinet to resign on July 30, 1982, *Royo* was succeeded by *Vice President Ricardo de la Espriella*, a United States-educated former banking official. *De la Espriella* announced the National Guard as a "partner in power." In August 1982, *President de la Espriella* formed a new cabinet that included independents and members of the Liberal Party and the PRD. *Jorge Illueca Sibauste*, *Royo's* foreign minister, became the new vice president. Meanwhile, *Colonel Armando Contreras* became chief of staff of the National Guard. *Colonel Noriega* continued to hold the powerful position of assistant chief of staff for intelligence--the Panamanian government's only intelligence arm. In December 1982, *Noriega* became chief of staff of the National Guard.

### ***The Noriega Rule 1983-1989***

In November 1982, a commission was established to draft a series of proposed amendments to the 1972 Constitution. The *PRD* supported the amendments and claimed that they would limit the power of the Guard and help the country return to a fully democratic system of government. These amendments were approved in a national referendum held on April 24, 1983. These decisions were considered to be positive steps toward lessening the power of the National Guard. The National Guard leadership actually surrendered only the power it was willing to give up.

In 1983 *Manuel Antonio Noriega* seized the leadership of the National Guard and took power. Although he did not hold a political office, as commander of the military he controlled the government. *Noriega*, by astute and ruthless tactics, increased the size and strength of the military, which he renamed the *Panama Defense Forces*. He also greatly increased his power and the power of the Defense Forces over the nation and its economy.

In 1984, *Ardito Barletta*, a University of Chicago-trained economist and former minister of planning and former vice president of the Bank was elected President in a contested election. *Ardito Barletta* was considered well qualified for the presidency, but he lacked his own power base. The United States government, acknowledging that the election results were questionable, declared that *Ardito Barletta's* victory was an important forward step in Panama's transition to democracy.

The President instigated an investigation into the torture and murder of a popular figure, *Hugo Spadaforas*, in 1985. *Spadaforas* had accused *Noriega* of being involved in drug trafficking. *Noriega* used *Barletta's* ineffectiveness as an excuse and pressured him to resign on September 27, 1985, after only eleven months in office. The *Spadaforas* incident was probably more central to *Noriega's* move against *Barletta* than the ineffectiveness of the administration. *Barletta*, on the power of *Noriega*, was succeeded

the next day by his first vice president, *Eric Arturo Delvalle Henríquez*, who announced a new cabinet on October 3, 1985.

The *Noriega* years were characterized by widespread corruption, the repression of political opposition, and a troubled economy. *Noriega* made little pretense of following the constitution and participated in rigged elections. *Noriega* used the military to imprison, torture, and sometimes kill his opponents and also was linked to the international narcotics trade. He was accused of helping smuggle drugs and launder money for Colombian drug cartels.

Relations with the United States deteriorated. *Noriega* had been a longtime informant for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, and he helped U.S. officials supply arms to conservative forces in Nicaragua. But by the late 1980s, *Noriega's* dictatorship and his alleged links to the international drug trade caused the United States to withdraw its support for his government. At the same time, street demonstrations began to occur regularly in Panama City.

The U.S. government increased pressure on *Noriega* and attempted to force him to surrender power. The United States imposed a trade embargo, vetoed international loans to Panama, and finally withheld its annual canal payments. In 1988 a U.S. court in Miami, Florida, indicted *Noriega* on drug-related charges. Panamanian president *Eric Delvalle* attempted to dismiss *Noriega* but instead *Delvalle* found himself removed from office. In the presidential election of 1989, *Noriega* nullified the results when he discovered the vote was moving in favor of the opposition candidate, *Guillermo Endara*. Tensions between *Noriega's* forces and U.S. troops in Panama steadily increased. President *George Bush* invaded Panama on December 20, 1989, with the stated goals of arresting *Noriega* to face drug charges, of restoring democracy, and of protecting American lives. This force of U.S. troops marked the largest U.S. military operation since the Vietnam War (1959-1975). More than 27,000 troops, including 13,000 already stationed in Panama, joined in the operation. With an arsenal of tanks, aircraft, and high-technology weapons, the overwhelming force of the U.S. military defeated Panamanian troops within days and captured *Noriega*, who was taken to the United States for trial. The Panama invasion proved as traumatic as it was controversial. It violated both international law and U.S. government policy against intervening in another nation's internal affairs. The invasion was, never the less, welcomed by many Panamanians as the only way to rid the country of a dictator that the United States had supported for many years. *Noriega's* headquarters in Panama City was destroyed but the surrounding poor neighborhood of *El Chorillo* caught fire and burned to the ground, leaving thousands homeless. Several hundred Panamanians, many of them civilians, died in the fighting. The invasion's final result brought to a low point the 86 years of difficult relations between Panama and the United States.

### ***Panamanian Control of the Canal 1989-2002***

The United States established a caretaker government in Panama upon the fall of *Noriega*. The new president was *Guillermo Endara*, the leading *Arnulfista Party* candidate in the election that *Noriega* had annulled. Actually U.S. advisers wielded great power in this government. They arrested police officers and reestablished order. The United States also provided a large aid program, amounting to nearly \$1 billion, to help Panama recover from the invasion and years of economic sanctions. In spite of United States support and help, *Endara* never achieved much authority as president. The



economy strongly recovered and Panama's military changed into a civilian police force—both eventualities restored public confidence and safety.

In the 1994 presidential election *Ernesto Pérez Balladares*, the candidate of *Noriega's* former party won a surprising victory. *Balladares*, a U.S.-trained banker, received a third of the popular vote. The new president embraced a program of economic reforms, including measures to reduce the size of government, sell public enterprises, create more jobs, and reduce some labor protections. He also sought to attract foreign investment, end protectionism so Panama could carry on more global trade, and renegotiate the large national debt.

Meanwhile, Panama created the *Interoceanic Regional Authority* to administer lands and buildings turned over by the United States. Designed to be nonpolitical and efficient, the agency was seen as an indicator of Panama's ability to manage a major facility like the canal. In the mid-1990s, the *Panama Canal Authority* was formed to actually take over duties of managing the canal in 1999. Beginning in 1990, a Panamanian citizen served as chief administrator of the canal, and some 97 percent of the canal labor force was Panamanian. Both countries strove to achieve a smooth, trouble-free transition.

*Pérez Balladares* attempted to attract foreign, especially Asian, investment to develop the lands and military bases being turned over to Panama. His greatest challenges were to maintain public order and confidence, create new jobs while privatizing the economy, reduce corruption in his government, and maintain friendly relations with the United States. In August 1998 Panamanian voters rejected a proposed constitutional amendment *Mireya Moscoso de Gruber*, to allow *Balladares* to serve a second term in office. In May 1999 widow of former president *Arnulfo Arias*, won the country's presidential election. On December 31, 1999, Panama assumed control over the Canal, military bases, and all adjacent facilities, giving it authority over all its territory for the first time in the nation's history.

On May 2, 1999, *Mrs. Mireya Moscoso* was elected to a five-year term as president. Since entering office, the *Moscoso* administration has been trying to reduce the country's public debt while alleviating poverty by funding social projects. However, fiscal restraints, namely the Fiscal Responsibility Law which stipulates that the public-sector debt cannot exceed 2% of GDP in a given year, may make it difficult for the government to implement these programs in their entirety. Along with a sluggish economy, Panama's unemployment remains high, at an estimated 13.2% in 2002.

### ***Panamanian Elections 2004***

Panama held its Presidential election May 2, 2004. *Martín Torrijos* a Panamanian politician was elected President of Panama. *Torrijos*, the candidate of the *Democratic Revolutionary Party* (PRD), ran under the banner of the *Patria Nueva alliance*, with the support of the smaller *People's Party* (PP). *Torrijos* won the presidential election with about 47% of the vote, defeating three rivals. His closest challenger, former President *Guillermo Endara* of the Solidarity Party, conceded defeat after finishing 17 percentage points behind *Torrijos*. Along with *Torrijos*, voters also elected his two vice-presidents, who run on party tickets in conjunction with the presidential candidates.

*Torrijos* is the son *Omar Torrijos Herrera* who served as Panama's *de facto* president from 1968-1981. Although *Omar Torrijos* was a radical nationalist, *Martín Torrijos* is described as a centrist who favors a market economy and a free-trade agreement with the west. The younger *Torrijos* studied political science and economics at Texas A&M

University. He served in the administration of President *Ernesto Pérez Balladares*. During the presidential election, the younger *Torrijos* capitalized on his father's legacy, reminding his audiences repeatedly that it was his father who persuaded the United States to transfer control of the Panama Canal to Panamanian ownership and control. The new President assumed office 1 September 2004.

Panama faces decisions relating to the continuance of the operation of the Panama Canal. Because shipyards are increasingly building mammoth vessels — some as much as 40 feet wider than the locks at the Pacific entrance to the canal — shippers worry that the passage will soon become a relic.

But now, after years of study, a radical new project to expand the walls of the 90-year-old canal is to be unveiled. The project, which would have to be approved in a national referendum, would cost billions of dollars and employ thousands of workers, from ditch diggers to engineers. Andrada said the result would be "a great relief." It would speed up the crossing, he wrote in an e-mail from aboard the ship, and help prevent damage to the 33,500-ton ship's hull. Panama's incoming president, *Martin Torrijos*, already throwing support to the plan, has said that determining the canal's future is the country's "most important decision of the century."

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## ***People Groups***

The location of the isthmus dictates the region as a transit zone and this transit nature has eventuated in a large measure of ethnic diversity. This diversity, combined with a variety of regions and environments, has given rise to a number of distinct subcultures. Current reality is that these sub-cultures are often diffuse in the sense that individuals are frequently difficult to classify as members of one group or the other, and statistics about the groups' respective sizes are rarely precise. Panamanians nonetheless recognize racial and ethnic distinctions, and consider them social realities of considerable importance. While the official language of Panama is Spanish, some 14 languages can be heard in the nation. Some 79.2% of the population speaks Spanish.

For several centuries after the arrival of the Spanish, the population size remained stable. The indigenous people declined steadily because of disease and dislocation, as a growing number of Europeans settled in the region, bringing with them African slaves. Beginning with construction of the Panama Railroad between 1850 and 1855, however, Panama's population grew rapidly. The railroad and then the French and U.S. canal projects, from 1881 to 1914, attracted huge numbers of immigrants, mostly from the West Indies, seeking jobs and economic opportunities. Throughout the 20th century, immigrants arrived from all parts of the world, especially the Americas, Europe, and Asia. Today Panama's cities, where most newcomers settle, are melting pots of many nationalities and ethnic groups.

Spanish Speaking Peoples

### ***Ladinos (Mestizo)***

The Ladino population, often called *Mestizo*, numbers 1.9 million and is easily the largest of the people groups in Panama. These people are usually Spanish-speaking Roman Catholics. Ethnically, the majority of the population is mestizo (mixed Spanish and Indian) or mixed Spanish, Indian, Chinese, and West Indian.

### ***Antillean Blacks***

*Antillean Blacks* in Panama number around 400,000. A majority of them (270,000) speak Spanish while some 130,000 primarily use English. Many follow Christianity but others practice a syncretism of western and African religious practices.

Black laborers from the British West Indies came to Panama by the tens of thousands in the first half of the twentieth century. Most were employed in the isthmus transportation system, but many came to work on the country's banana plantations. By 1910, the *Panama Canal Company* had employed more than 35,000 Blacks. These workers formed the nucleus of a community separated from the larger society by race, language, religion, and culture.

The Antillean community continues to be marked by its immigrant, West Indian origins. Some observers note that Antillean families and gender ideals reflected West Indian patterns and those Antillean women were less submissive than their *mestizo* counterparts. The Antilleans were originally united by their persistent loyalty to the British crown, to which they had owed allegiance in the home islands. Many migrated to Panama with the intention of returning home as soon as they had earned enough money to permit them to retire. This apparently transient status, coupled with cultural differences, further separated them from the local populace.

Another alienating factor was the hostility of Hispanic Panamanians, which increased as the Antilleans prolonged their stay and became entrenched in the canal labor force. They faced racial discrimination from North Americans as well. The hostility they faced welded them into a minority united by the cultural antagonisms they confronted.

The cleavage between older and younger generations is particularly marked. Younger Antilleans who opted for inclusion in the Hispanic society at large generally reject their parents' religion and language. Newer generations --educated in Panamanian schools and speaking Spanish well-- identify with the national society, and enjoy a measure of acceptance there. Nevertheless, there remain a substantial number of older Antilleans who were trained in schools in the former Canal Zone and speak English as a first language. They are adrift without strong ties to either the West Indian or the Panamanian Hispanic culture. Isolated from mainstream Panamanian society and increasingly removed from their Antillean origins, they exist, in a sense, on the margins of three societies.

In common with most middle- and many lower-class Panamanians, Antillean blacks value education as a means of advancement. Parents ardently strive to give their children a good education because education and occupation underlay the social hierarchy of the Antillean community. At the top of that hierarchy are ministers of the mainline Protestant religions, professionals such as doctors and lawyers, and white-collar workers.

Nonetheless, even a menial worker can hope for respect and some social standing if he or she adheres to middle-class West Indian forms of marriage and family life, membership in an established church, and sobriety.

The National Guard, formerly known as the National Police and subsequently called the Panama Defense Forces (*Fuerzas de Defensa de Panamá*--FDP), has served as a means of integration into the national society and upward mobility for poorer blacks (Antilleans and Hispanics). These Black people were recruited in the 1930s and 1940s when few other avenues of advancement were open to them.

### ***Caucasian Spanish Speakers***

### ***Indigenous, Amerindian Peoples***

Amerindian, indigenous peoples make up around 8.1% of Panama's population and speak some 11 different languages. Most of the indigenous peoples live apart from the majority of Panamanians, and relations between the two groups are often hostile. Censuses show Indians to be a declining proportion of the total population. The figures are only a rough estimate of the numbers of Indians in Panama. Precise numbers and even the exact status of several smaller tribes are uncertain, in part because many Indians are in the process of assimilation.

Language, although the most certain means of identifying a person as an Indian, is by itself an unreliable guide. There are small groups of people who speak only Spanish and yet preserve other indigenous practices and are considered Indians by their neighbors.

The Indian population is concentrated in the more remote regions of the country, and for most tribes, isolation is a critical element in their cultural survival.

Indian education has often been carried out by missionaries. The national government made a late entry into the effort. By the late 1970s there were nearly 200 Indian schools with nearly 15,000 students. Nevertheless, illiteracy among Indians over 10 years of age was almost 80 percent, in comparison with less than 20 percent in the population at large. Education remains a need among the Indian populations.

There are 5 indigenous groups in Panama: Kunas on the San Blas Islands-Caribbean coast, Chocoe (divided linguistically into 2 groups-Embera & Wounaan) in the province of Darien, Guaymies (Ngobe Bugle) in the provinces of Chiriqui, Bocas del Toro & Veraguas, Teribes & Bokotas (Buglere) in Bocas del Toro province.

#### ***The Guaymi (Guiaymi)***

The Guaymi, who claim a population of over 123,000 in Panama, represent slightly more than half of the Indian population. Other members of the group live in Costa Rica. They inhabit the highlands near the Costa Rican border and are believed to be related to Indians of the *Nahuatlán* and *Mayan* nations of Mexico and Central America. The Guaymi Indians were concentrated in the more remote regions of *Bocas del Toro*, *Chiriquí*, and *Veraguas*. The divided nature of their territories resulted in the *Guaymi* residing in two sections that were climatically and ecologically distinct. On the Pacific side, small hamlets were scattered throughout the more remote regions of *Chiriquí* and *Veraguas*. On the Atlantic side, the people lived along the rivers and in coastal environments.

Europeans made contact with the *Guaymi* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Spanish colonial policy attempted to group the Indians into settlements (*reducciones*) controlled by missionaries. This policy enjoyed only limited success in the area of modern Panama. Although some Indians converted to Christianity and gradually merged with the surrounding rural *mestizo* population, most simply retreated to more remote territories.

The *Guaymi* show little concern about linguistic purity and have adopted a wide variety of words of Spanish origin. On the other hand, they strongly preserve indigenous religious beliefs and practices.

#### ***Kuna (Cuna)***

The *Kuna (Cuna)*, the best known indigenous group of Panama, have the most interaction with other peoples but preserve their culture, even when living away from their ancestral region. They number over 48,000.

The Cuna, now found mostly in the *Comarca de San Blas (Kuna Yala Region)*, an indigenous territory or reserve considered part of *Colón Province* for some official purposes, have been categorized as belonging to the Caribbean culture. Their origin continues to be a subject of speculation. Some ethnologists have indicated the possibility of a linguistic connection between the name *Cuna* and certain *Arawak* and *Carib* tribal names. The possibility of cultural links with the *Andean Indians* has been postulated, and some scholars have noted linguistic and other affinities with the *Chibcha*.

Like other indigenous peoples, the Kuna produce crafts, such as their handmade *Molas*. Also like other Amerindian populations, the *Kuna* are generally very poor compared to the rest of Panama's population. Kuna culture is very rich in rites and traditions. Extensive missionary work has produced a sizeable Christian presence among the *Kuna*.  
*Embera*

The *Emberá-wuonán* or *Chocoes*, who number some 12,000 (Joshua Project gives 7000 population), live in the *Darién National Park* in communities within the forest. They are also found in the department of *Choco* in Colombia. In Panama they inhabit the same areas as the Indigenous group *Waounan* with whom they share many cultural similarities. The *Chocó* appear to be related to the *Chibcha* of Colombia.

The *Catio (Katio)* form a small splinter group (Joshua Project places the population at 40) of the *Embera*. The *Catio* speak an *Embera* type language. The larger group of *Embera* is often called the *Northern Embera*.

The *Embera* have largely accepted Christianity but also practice elements of their traditional religions.

They continue their ancestral hunting, fishing and food harvesting customs, as well as living in their traditional huts. The *Embera* occupy the southeastern portion of *Darién* along the border with Colombia. Most are bilingual in Spanish and *Chocó*. They reportedly have intermarried extensively with Colombian blacks and appear to be in a state of advanced acculturation.

### ***The Ngobe-Buglé***

The Natives of the ethnic group *Ngobe-Buglé (Guaymies)*, who have close ties to the *Guaymi*, inhabit the highlands of the provinces of *Chiriquí*, *Veraguas* and *Bocas* of the *Toro* where they live amidst green mountains and beautiful landscapes. Their feminine wardrobe presents a variety of colors and geometric forms while male attire presents the "*chaquira*" (a multicolor necklace) that can be acquired easily in their communities and crafts shops.

They still practice ancestral rites like the "traditional *Balsería*" and other rituals. Like other indigenous peoples, the *Ngobe-Buglé* have suffered discrimination and oppression by farmers and ranchers who encroach on their lands. Like other indigenous groups they farm, hunt, collect hardwood and other forest products.

In *Penonome*, descendants of the *Ngobe-Bugle* people have formed several communities. They are subsistence farmers lacking basic services such as water, electricity, education and health care. Leaders of the community were trained and organized in equipping the community with these services. An aqueduct brings water to the communities and electricity is provided utilizing solar energy. An agreement was reached with the Ministry of Health to provide health care, complemented by volunteer nurses and medical doctors from sponsoring congregations in the U.S. A school was built with funds obtained by the sale of coffee by a sponsoring congregation.

This group, though not actually Lutheran, worships in communities using some elements from the Lutheran rituals.

### ***Bókotás***

The *Bókotás* live near the *Ngobes* in a small indigenous community of the scattered in small villas similar to those that existed when the first settlers arrived on the Isthmus of Panama. This people group lives in eastern *Bocas del Toro* along the *Río Calovébora*. Linguistically, *Bókatá* speech was similar to *Guaymí*, but the two languages were not mutually intelligible. The tribe has not been as exposed to outsiders as had the *Guaymí*. In the late 1970s, there were virtually no roads through *Bókatá* territory; currently there is only a small dirt road passable only in dry weather.

### ***Téribé (Térriba)***

The *Téribé*, an indigenous community that inhabits the rough terrain of the *Bocas del Toro Province* in the mountains and the margins of the *Río Teribe*, number around 2200. The group is led by a "King" who governs the community by decree preserving the group's original traditions. Although moving toward acculturation, *Térrabe* will not use foreign words, even for non-indigenous items.

In the twentieth century, the tribe suffered major population swings. It was decimated by recurrent tuberculosis epidemics between 1910 and 1930, but population expanded rapidly with the availability of better medical care after the 1950s. Contact with outsiders also increased.

A Seventh Day Adventist mission was active in the tribe for years, and there was substantial acculturation with the dominant *mestizo* culture. By the late 1980s, the *Térraba* had abandoned most of their native crafts production, and their knowledge of the region's natural history was declining. They even looted their ancestral burial mounds for gold to sell. They refused employment on nearby banana plantations until the early 1970s, when a flood swept away most of the alluvial soil they had farmed. The *Guaymí* attempted to include the *Térraba* in *Guaymí* territory, but the *Térraba* stoutly resisted these efforts.

### ***Bribri***

The *Bribri* are a small group (around 2000) of the *Talamanca* tribe of Costa Rica. They have substantial contact with outsiders. Many are employed on banana plantations in Costa Rica, and Protestant missionaries are active among them, having made significant numbers of converts. Joshua Project considers as many as 74% being adherents to Christianity. They use their own *Bribri* language.

### ***Buglere (Bogota)***

Around 3800 *Buglere* (Boo-gle-day) live in an area that is isolated from the rest of the country. They inhabit a mountain area known as *Soledad*. There are no roads into the area and travel by sea is difficult to find. The New Tribes Mission in Panama has ministered among the *Buglere* since 1975. The estimate of 75% of the *Buglere* being adherents of Christianity is found in the literature.

The *Buglere* speak a language known to be in the *Chibchan Family*. *Chibchan* is the name of an indigenous language spoken in Colombia and Central America. The name is derived from the name of an extinct language called *Chibcha* or *Muisca*, spoken by the people who lived in the city of *Bogota* at the time of the European intrusion. However, genetic and linguistic data now indicate that the original hearth of *Chibchan* languages

and *Chibchan-speaking* peoples may not have been in Colombia at all, but in, *Costa Rico* and *Panama*, where one finds the greatest diversity in *Chibchan languages*.

### ***Waunana***

The *Waunana*, along with *Embera* and *Kuna* Indians, live in the *Darien National Park* area in Panama. The *Waunana* number around 3000 and still primarily practice their traditional religion.

Expatriate Peoples

### ***The Chinese***

The Chinese make up the largest of the Asian peoples in Panama numbering as many as 150,000. The Chinese are divided between Cantonese, Hakka, and Min Nan. While the Chinese in Panama are rapidly being assimilated, many still speak *Cantonese* or *Hakka*. They follow either Catholicism or traditional Chinese religion.

The Chinese were a major source of labor on the trans-isthmian railroad, completed in the mid-nineteenth century. Most went on to California in the gold rush beginning in 1848. Those who remained in Panama often owned retail shops.

They suffered considerable discrimination in the early 1940s under the nationalistic government of *President Arnulfo Arias Madrid*, who sought to rid Panama of non-Hispanics.

Some missionary work is directed toward the Chinese. Four Chinese missionaries serve this people and around four congregations work among them. The Baptists have a small effort among these Chinese people. Some of the Chinese communities remain unreached.

### ***East Indians***

As many as 106,000 East Indians who are mostly Hiundi-speaking live in Panama (according to Joshua Project). Most follow Hindu religion but some are Sikh and others Moslem. No known ministry is directed toward these peoples. Note: Johnstone lists 96,000 people from South Asia who are Gujarati-speaking and mostly follow Islam.

### ***Jewish***

Around 7000 Jewish people reside in Panama. A Panamanian Christian outreach, Messianic Association, Remnant of Israel, works among them. They are largely unreached by the gospel.

### ***Arabic People***

Three different Arabic People, the Lebanese, the Palestinian, and the Syrian, numbering a total of just over 17,000, live in Panama. These peoples are basically Islamic with less than 10% claiming Christianity. One observes with little effort to reach them in Panama.

### ***Italians***

Over 14,500 Italians live in Panama and are primarily in the Roman Catholic Church, religiously. Spanish and Italian are their main languages.

### ***United States Citizens***

Over 105,000 citizens of the United States still live in Panama. Many are retired United States citizens--mostly former Canal Zone officials--residing in *Chiriquí*. English is their primary language and most would claim some form of Christianity as their religion.

### ***Japanese***

Over 1200 Japanese people reside in Panama. By 1975, over 4500 converts to the Japanese sect, *Nichiren Shoshu (Soka Gakkai)*. All the followers of Soka Gakkai, of course, are not Japanese people. Many Japanese follow some form of Buddhism or Taoism.

Johnstone; [http://www.panamacanalcountry.com/indigenous\\_cultures.htm](http://www.panamacanalcountry.com/indigenous_cultures.htm) <http://wrc.lingnet.org/panama.htm>  
[http://encarta.msn.com/text\\_761577478\\_42/Panama.html](http://encarta.msn.com/text_761577478_42/Panama.html); <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Demographics-of-Panama>  
<http://home.earthlink.net/~shirwel/index.html?minoview.html>; <http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Chibchan%20languages>  
[http://www.elca.org/dgm/country\\_packet/panama/church.html](http://www.elca.org/dgm/country_packet/panama/church.html); Barrett  
<http://countrystudies.us/panama/30.htm>; <http://www.einternational.org/news/Mult/Mult303/unreached.html>

## ***Christianity in Panama***

Writers such as Johnstone count 88.09% of the population of Panama as Christian but also acknowledge widespread nominalism in both Catholic and Protestant churches. In spite of this nominalism, a new spiritual interest and responsiveness has been evident. Evangelicals have increased from 4.8% of the population (73,000) in 1970 to 18% (520,000) in 2000.

### ***Marginal Christian Groups***

#### ***Roman Catholic (Iglesia Católica en Panamá)***

The Roman Catholic Church claims to have 75.25% of the population in membership. This figure would equal 2,149,000 persons. Other estimates give the Catholic Church up to 85% of the population.

The Catholic Church in Panama formed a part of the first Latin American Catholic diocese, that of *Antigua*, in 1513. Franciscans were the first to bring Catholicism to Panama but were followed by Dominicans, Jesuits, Capuchins, and Augustinians by 1648. The Jesuits opened St. Francis Xavier University in 1674 but closed it in 1763 when the Jesuits were expelled from Panama. In 1973, Panamanian Priests and Sisters numbered 44 and 46 as compared to expatriate priests at 221 and sisters at 424. Today, over 70% of the priests and Sisters in the Catholic Church in Panama are expatriates. The Catholic Church has been steadily losing ground to Evangelicals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormons over the last years.

The majority of Panamanians are still, at least nominally, Roman Catholics. Roman Catholicism permeates the social environment both culturally and religiously. The devout regard church attendance and the observance of religious duties as regular features of everyday life, and even the most casual or nominal Roman Catholics follow the prevailing norms of the religious calendar.

Although some sacraments are observed more scrupulously than others, baptism is almost universal, and the last rites of the church are administered to many who during their lives had been indifferent to the precepts of the faith or its religious rituals.

In the mid-1980s, when nearly 90 percent of the population was Roman Catholic, there were fewer than 300 priests in the country. Virtually every town had its Roman Catholic Church, but many did not have a priest in residence. Many rural inhabitants in the more remote areas received only an occasional visit from a busy priest who traveled among a number of isolated villages.

As they approach manhood, boys tend to drift away from the church and from conscientious observation of church ritual. Few young men attend services regularly, and even fewer take an active part in the religious life of the community, although they continue to consider themselves Roman Catholics.

Girls, on the other hand, are encouraged to continue their religious devotions and observe the moral tenets of their faith. Women were more involved in the church than men, and the community and clerics accept this as a basic axiom. There is social pressure on women to become involved in church affairs, and most women, particularly in urban areas, respond. As a rule, they attended mass regularly and take an active part in church



and church-sponsored activities. Religious gatherings and observances are among the principal forms of diversion for women outside the home, and to a great extent these activities are social as much as devotional.

### ***Greek Orthodox Church (Iglesia Ortodoxa Griega)***

The Greek Orthodox Church in Panama reports 2 congregations with around 650 members. This compares with 1 congregation with 375 members in 1960.

### ***Non-Christian and Church-Type Groups***

#### ***Jehovah's Witnesses (Testigos de Jehová)***

The Jehovah's Witness group began in Panama in 1929. They have increased from 41 congregations and 1234 members in 1960 to 195 congregations with 9695 members in 2000. In addition the Jehovah's Witnesses claim over 28,000 attendees or adherents. They have moved from 0.36 percent of the population in 1960 to 0.98 percent in 2000.

#### ***Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (Inglesia de JC de los Santos de los UD)***

The Mormons have a long history in Panama. In 1900 they boasted 37 congregations with 7950 members. By 2000 they report 42 congregations with 17,460 members. The Church also reports over 33,000 adherents. Both the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons have been winning former Roman Catholics.

#### ***Christo-Pagans***

Barrett lists some 290,000 *Christo-Pagans* who are persons who follow a syncretistic religion made up of an amalgam of 17<sup>th</sup> Century Catholicism with their own traditional animistic religions and worldviews.

#### ***Church Groups***

The first Protestants to arrive in Panama were a group of 1,200 Scottish Presbyterians, who attempted to build a commercial colony on the Caribbean coast of the *Darien* Peninsula in 1698. This ministry was abandoned in late 1699. The next to arrive, in the 1890s, were Wesleyan Methodists who worked among Afro-Caribbean immigrants that settled in the *Bocas del Toro* region of the Caribbean coast. The United Methodist Free Church of England (1870s), the Jamaican Baptists (1880s), and the Jamaican Wesleyan Methodists (1880s) also began work among West Indian immigrants in Panama. The Anglican Church arrived in the 1850s during the construction of the Panama Railroad, and company officials helped to finance the construction of the first permanent Protestant church building in Panama, Christ's Church-by-the-Sea in *Aspinwal*, now called *Colón*, built in 1864-1865. This was the second-oldest permanent Protestant church in Central America, with the first being St. John's Anglican Cathedral in Belize City, built in 1825. Occasional Anglican-Episcopal worship services had been held in Panama since 1849, conducted by clergymen en route to the Gold Fields in California. These services led to the establishment of the first Episcopal congregation in 1851 in the port town of Taboga. An official "Isthmian Mission" of the Anglican Church was established in Panama in 1853, although missionary work was sparse until 1883. The growth in churches has been rewarding.

#### ***Christian Denominations***

##### ***Assembly of God (Asambelas de Dios)***

The Assemblies of God, who are noted as classical Pentecostals, began in Panama in 1967. They have increased from 83 congregations and 1200 members in 1970 to 450 congregations with 60,000 members by 2000.

### ***Anglican Church***

The Anglican Church in Panama reports 36,000 members in 2000. They had 5000 in 1900. The Anglicans' annual change stood at around 2.85 %.

### ***Lutheran Church Council (Consejo de Igls Lutheranas en CA & P)***

This Lutheran Church began in 1942 through the ministry of the Council of Lutheran Churches in Central America and Panama. The reports on the church are confusing as they claimed 21 congregations with 220 members in 1995 but only 5 congregations and 130 members in 2000.

### ***Baptist Convention (Convencion Bautista de Panamá)***

These churches, formerly associated with the Southern Baptist Convention from the USA, began work as early as 1855. In 1965 they reported 118 churches with 5500 members and in 1970 114 churches with 7000 members. In 1995 the group reported only 96 congregations with 6897 members.

### ***Salvation Army (Ejército de Salvación)***

The Salvation Army has ministered in Panama since 1904. In 2000 the Army reported 10 congregations with 320 members. Barrett numbers the Army at 1000.

### ***United Mennonite Evangelical Church (Hermanos Mennonitas, Iglesia Ev. Unidas)***

The Mennonite Church began in Panama in 1958. They work extensively among the *Choco* people (*Waunana, Empera*) in southwest Panama. In 2000 they report 13 churches and 900 members.

### ***Seventh Day Adventist Church (Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Dia)***

The Seventh Day Adventist Church began in 1905 in Panama. They have increased from 16 churches and 3898 members in 1960 to 147 congregations with over 35,350 members in 2000.

### ***Free Will Baptists (Iglesia Bautista Libre)***

The Free Will Baptists began work largely among the Darien Indians as early as 1962. The best estimate is that they now have 5 congregations with some 350 members.

### ***Central American Church (Iglesia Centroamericana)***

The Central American Church grew out of the ministry of the Central American Mission from the USA. This interdenominational group began in Panama in 1944 and now has 22 churches and over 600 members.

### ***Church of God, Anderson (Iglesia de Dios, Anderson)***

The Church of God began in Panama in 1905. This Church reported 60 congregations and 1550 members in 1970 but in 2000 only 13 churches and 125 members. Barrett reports 58 congregations with 1300 members in 1999.

### ***Church of God, Cleveland (Iglesia de Dios, Cleveland)***

The Church of God, Cleveland began work in Panama in 1935. In 1960 the Church reported 13 congregations with 800 members. By 2000, the number had increased to 180 churches with 12,275 members.

### ***Foursquare Gospel Church (Iglesia del Evangelio Cuadrangular)***

The Foursquare Gospel Church began ministry in Panama in 1927. In 1960 they reported 122 congregations with 9000 members. By 2000, the Church had 720 churches with over 54,000 members. The majority of the members are *Mestizos* but some 3% are Indians.

### ***The Nazarene Church (Iglesia del Nazareno)***

The Nazarene Church began in 1953 with ministry in Panama. In 2000 they report 37 churches with 2000 members.

***The Episcopal Church (Iglesia Episcopala De Panamá & Canal Zone)***

The Episcopal Church in Panama began in 1855. It has increased from 21 churches with 5000 members in 1960 to 29 congregations with 7000 members in 2000.

***The Methodist Church (Iglesia Metodista)***

Methodists have been at work in Panama since 1815. In 1960 the Methodists reported 11 churches and 490 members. By 2000, they reported only 8 congregations but 2200 members. In 1985 the Methodists had 44 churches and 2000 members and in 1988 91 churches with 4000 members.

***Churches of Christ (Iglesias de Cristo)***

The Churches of Christ had 9 churches and 700 members in 1960. These figures had increased to 115 congregations and 5000 members by 2000.

***Conservative Baptist Church (Misión Bautista Conservadora)***

The Conservative Baptist Convention work began in Panama in 1962. They report some 4 congregations with a total membership of around 50.

***The Evangelical Mission (Misión Evangélica de Panamá)***

The Evangelical Mission began work in Panama in 1958. They work extensively among the *Kuna* Indians on the *San Blas* Islands. In 2000 they reported 29 congregations with over 575 members.

***Indigenous Pentecostal Church***

The Indigenous Pentecostal Church has grown from 10 congregations and 1000 members in 1960 to 300 churches and 29000 members in 2000.

***Churches Among Indigenous Peoples***

Several of the denominational groups have some work among the indigenous peoples. Note the United Mennonite Church (above). Other groups are primarily working among the indigenous peoples.

***United Evangelical Church***

This church works largely among the Choco Indians. In 2000 they reported 4 congregations and 500 members.

***Guaymi Evangelical Church Association***

This group working primarily among indigenous people reported 18 churches and 720 members in 1960 but had increased to 34 churches with 5000 members by 2000.

***Ichthus International***

This group reported 25 churches and 750 members in 1960 but had increased to 36 congregations with 1080 members by 2000.

***New Tribes Mission***

New Tribes Mission had 6 churches and 600 members in 1960 but had increased to 50 congregations with 6000 members by 2000. New Tribes Mission (NTM) had three American missionaries kidnapped in Panama. The Mission concluded that the three were shot by their captors three years later.

<http://www.prolades.com/prolades1/cra/panama/panama.html>; <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/139/44.0.html>

***Missiological Implications***

1. Evangelical Christians should pray that a spiritual revival will sweep through the churches and other Christian groups in Panama to revive a spirit of evangelism among the peoples. The nominalism that infects the churches will never attract the vast numbers of peoples in the Isthmus.
2. Evangelical Christians should understand the strategic importance of Panama in the world and in Latin America. Panama is far more than simply another small country in Central America.
3. Evangelical Christians should seek out evangelists from the various people blocks, such as Japanese, Chinese, East Indian, Jews, Italians, Spanish, and other expatriate groups to share the Good News with these peoples. The strained relations between Panama and the United States may make the efforts of these missionaries more effective than workers from the United States. In many cases, the numbers of people among these expatriate groups far out-number the populations of the Amerindians who have consumed (and rightly so) much of the missionary energy of Evangelical groups.
4. Evangelical Christians should share with Panamanian Believers in the task of training workers for the churches. This training should not be focused solely on theological education designed to train pastors but on efforts to train the church membership as a whole in the task of Christian living and evangelism.
5. Evangelical Christians should aid Panamanian Christians in reaching out to the disillusioned masses in Panama. Many of these are university students who have lost confidence in the churches and church leaders. Others are members of the Roman Catholic Church who are not finding religious satisfaction in the Church. Still others are expatriates who are cut off from their home religious ties.
6. Evangelical Christians should train Believers to withstand the encroachment of other religious groups (*Baha'i*, *Soka Gakkai*, *Islam*) that are at work among the peoples of Panama.
7. Evangelical Christians should find ways to cooperate with Panamanian Churches to further the Lord's work in the important nation.