

MISSIONARY ATLAS PROJECT
Middle East

Bahrain

Snap Shot

Country Name:
Bahrain

Country Founded in:
1971

Population:
688,345 (includes 235,108 non-nationals)

Government Type:
Constitutional Hereditary Monarchy

Geography/location in the world:
Bahrain is located in the Middle East. It is made up of one larger and 34 smaller islands off the eastern shore of Saudi Arabia in the Persian Gulf. Bahrain is 3.5 times the size of Washington D.C., with a total of 665 sq km.

Number of people groups:
15

Picture of flag:



Religion Snapshot:

Muslim (Shi'a and Sunni) 81.2%

Christian 9%

Other 9.8%

All religions and % for each:

Hindu 6.25%

Non-religious 0.69%

Baha'i 0.22%

Jewish 0.10%

Buddhist 0.07%

Government interaction with religion:

The government of Bahrain allows expatriate Christians to worship formally and informally. All Bahrainis are considered Muslim and it is illegal to evangelize among the Muslim population.

Basic Facts

Country Name:

Bahrain

Demographics:

The population of Bahrain is 688,345, this number includes 235,108 non-nationals. The birth rate is 18.1 births per 1,000, death rate is 4.08 per 1,000. The population is 1.27 males to females. Life expectancy is 74.23 years. HIV prevalence is 0.2%. Less than 200 people have died from HIV/AIDS. 62% of the population is Bahraini, 37.6% non-Bahraini.

Language:

Arabic, English, Farsi, and Urdu

Society/Culture

Bahrain has a high standard of living. The population has grown fairly rapidly which has put a strain on the water supplies and housing. As a result, the cost of living has been raised which has led to poorer Bahrainis living in substandard conditions. The government has begun building *Mdinet Hamad* outside of *Manama* to alleviate overcrowding. This area encompasses 3,212 acres and includes over 12,000 homes.

Arab values rest in loyalty to one's family. Arabs are traditionally descendants of nomadic people. Thus there has always been a strong emphasis on family. Bahrainis are very loyal to their tribes. Family is often the center of a Bahraini's life.

Bahrainis are not as conservative in Islamic practices as many of their Gulf neighbors. Women have never been strict about completely covering themselves in public. Most women still cover their heads in public and wear modest clothing. Western clothing is becoming more popular in the larger cities of Bahrain but men can still be seen wearing the *thobe* which is the white outer robe that reaches the ankles.

Women in Bahrain are fairly active. The upper class that can afford higher education and also hire help to take of their responsibilities in the home are the predominate women in the workforce. This means the lower-classes are more traditional. Polygamy and divorce are legal but rarely occur. Arranged marriages are becoming infrequent.

Most Arabs have very long names that include their given name, father's name and grandfather's name on their father's side and then their family name. Women do not take their husbands name in marriage. Muslim given names are generally religious such as *Muhammad* after the prophet or *Fatima* after Muhammad's daughter. If the Arab family is Christian they typically take western names.

Bahrainis celebrate Islamic holidays which are set following the lunar calendar. The most well known is Ramadan, a forty day fast. Muhammad stated that during this time evil was chained up and the gates of heaven are opened, thus the jinn's (devils or demonic powers) influence over people who correctly follow the fast are lessened. The First of Muharram is the Muslim New Year. Friday is the Muslim holy day and most businesses close. New Year's Day on January 1 is and National day on December 16 are celebrated.

Arab culture places great importance on hospitality. To adapt well in an Arab society one must be able to pick up on discreet signals. It is considered rude to ask a personal question as are direct refusals. One should only use the right hand in accepting or giving objects to an Arab, the left hand is considered unclean. It is common for members of the same sex to hold hands and touch in public but you will never see members of the opposite sex (even married couples) touching in public.

Most conversation will take place before a meal and most Bahrainis do not talk during the meal. Coffee is served after the meal then guests will leave. Coffee will also be served to guests when they enter to home it is not sweetened and usually flavored with cardamom. Most meals will include basmati rice. Pork and alcohol are forbidden in Islam. Lamb and chicken are frequently served with a variety of fresh vegetables.

Bahrain has been home some of the most well-known writers in the Persian Gulf, including Ibrahim al-'Urayyid and Ahmad Muhammad al Khalifa. More contemporary poets include Qasim Haddad. Hamdah Khamis, another well-known writer, is a female journalist and poet.

Muslim art is found primarily in architecture especially in mosques. Depiction of the human form is forbidden so calligraphy has become a predominate art form. The Q'uran is most often the subject of calligraphy.

Soccer is the national sport and was introduced by the British in the nineteenth century. Tennis, water sports and some ancient sports such as horse-racing and camel-racing are enjoyed. Camping is surprisingly a well-enjoyed activity by many families in Bahrain.

Government:

The government of Bahrain is constitutional hereditary monarchy. The capital is Manama. There are twelve municipalities that are administered from Manama.

The legal system is based on Islamic law and English common law. King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa has been chief of state since March 6, 1999, his son Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad was born October 21, 1969 and is the heir apparent. The Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa has been head of the government since 1971 when Bahrain became independent of the UK. The cabinet is appointed by the monarch as is the prime minister.

Economy:

Petroleum and processing make up 60% of Bahrain's exports and 30% of the GDP. Bahrain is facing economic difficulties as oil and underground water resources are depleted.

Unemployment among younger Bahraini's is also a problem. The labor force is 370,000 and the unemployment rate is about 15%. Agriculture makes up a mere 0.7% of Bahrain's GDP, industry is 41% and services are 58.4%. Industries include petroleum processing and refining, aluminum smelting, offshore banking, ship repairing, fertilizers, and tourism.

Highly developed transportation and communication facilities that have made Bahrain home for numerous multinational firms with businesses in the Gulf.

In 2004 a Free Trade Agreement was signed with the United States. Bahrain was the first Gulf state to enter such an agreement. The agreement must be ratified before it is enforced.

Bahrain's economy relied heavily on the pearling industry until 1930 when Japanese cultured pearls were introduced. Bahrain also has an abundant source of fresh-water which is very rare in the gulf region. Oil was discovered in 1932 and boomed in 1980 which led to greater wealth for this small Gulf state.

Although Bahrain has many modern amenities, the hospitals and educational facilities are dependant on foreign workers.

Literacy:

Bahrain is 89.1% literate. Males are 91.9% literate, females trail slightly at 85%. These percentages include people over the age of 15.

Land/Geography:

Bahrain is an archipelago of 35 islands 15 miles off the coast off Saudi Arabia. Only five of these islands are inhabited. The inhabited islands include Bahrain also known as as-Awal, Muharraq, Sitrah, Umm al-Nassan, Jidda, and Nabi Salih. Jidda is used as the Bahraini prison. The 27 minor islands include the Muhammadiyah Islands and the Hawar Islands which are disputed territory between Bahrain and Qatar. There is a total of 678 miles of coastline.

The capital is Manama. A causeway connects Bahrain to the island of Muharraq which is where the ruling family lives. A bridge connects Sitrah and Bahrain.

Freshwater is found in artesian wells at the north end of Bahrain Island. Freshwater also bubbles up in the ocean.

Temperatures range from 50⁰ F to 120⁰ F. It is fairly humid 80% in the summer and 90% in the winter but there is only about 7.6 inches of rainfall each year. No rainfall has been recorded in the months of June through September.

In the winter the winds are called *shamal* and they blow from the southeast. In the summer the winds, called *gaw*, blow from the southwest. Dust storms are frequent in the summer months.

Plant life includes date palms and other desert plant life. Oryx, ibex, and gazelles are protected in a wildlife refuge. There are also typical small desert animals including desert rats, snakes, lizards, mongoose, and rabbits.

Bahrain is made up of 35 islands off the western coast of Saudi Arabia in the Persian Gulf. The country's capital Manama is on the main island, also called Bahrain. The total land area is 273 sq miles.

History

Bahrain means "two seas" and is named this because of the freshwater that bubbles to the surface of the saltwater just off the coast. The freshwater was believed to add luster to pearls of the area. Pearl diving was an important aspect of the economy before the discovery of oil in the early 20th century.

It has been suggested that Bahrain could have been the Biblical Garden of Eden. Bahrain was also mentioned in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* which was Sumerian tale written between 2100-2000 BC. Bahrain was the island where heroes went after they died to live in eternal bliss.

Bahrain has the largest cemetery in the world with burial mounds dating from 2500-1800 BC. These graves have been pillaged for more than 3,000 years and few archeological artifacts remain.

Bahrain has been a strategic port in the Persian Gulf throughout history. It has had a safe port from prevailing winds in the gulf. The freshwater has made it a fertile land that has supported

urban settlements throughout history. It was an important trade center between Mesopotamia and the Indus valley in 2300 BC. Bahrain was part of the Babylonian empire as early as 600 BC.

Until 1521 Bahrain was a part of *Ahsa*, *Qatif*, and *Awal* which is now the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. This region stretched from Kuwait to Oman. Present-day Bahrain in ancient times was known as *Dilmun* and the northern coast of Arabia was referred to Bahrain. When the Portuguese took control of Awal they separated it from the rest of the region and these islands are the present day Bahrain.

Bahrain has been under Persian rule at various points throughout history from ancient times until more recent times. Portugal laid claim to Bahrain in 1521 until 1602 when the Bahrainis forced them out. The al-Khalifa family the current ruling family claimed the islands in 1782. The al-Khalifa family is related to the al-Sabah ruling family of Kuwait and although more distantly, also the al-Saud family the ruling family of Saudi Arabia.

Pirates were common in the Persian Gulf and they used Bahrain as a launching port from which they attacked. Britain entered into an agreement with Bahrain in order to safe guard their ships. This benefited Bahrain by providing protection of Bahrain's sovereignty from Iran. This agreement was in effect until 1968 and by 1971 all British troops were removed from Bahrain.

Oil was discovered early in the 1930's and the changes it made on Bahrain were great. There was rapid modernization and improvements on the small island. Relations with Britain became more important and the British moved more troops inland. Charles Belgrave was appointed as an advisor and he established modern education.

After World War II there was an increasing dissatisfaction with British. Riots were started in Bahrain. The United Nations was brought into the situation and Iran's claims to Bahrain were rejected. The British withdrew in 1971.

Bahrain claimed independence on August 15, 1971. The 1972 constitution provided for parliament which was referred to as the National Assembly, an election was held in 1973 which was the first in the nation's history. In 1975 the National Assembly was disbanded as members were suspected by the king to be involved in subversive activities.

In 1981 Iran attempted a coup on the small nation but failed. In 1994 violent rioting began when Shi'a Islamists feeling that the government was acting unjustly, forty people were killed.

Emir Sheik Isa ibn Sulman al-Khalifah died in 1999. Sheik Hamad ibn Isa al-Khalifah succeeded his rule of four decades. Emir Sheik Hamad ibn Isa al-Khalifah changed the traditional monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. He brought about several changes including relaxed censorship and draconian laws. Women were granted the right to vote and stand for election in 2002. No women were elected to office. Since no women were elected six were appointed to the Shura Council. The Shura Council also includes representatives from the Jewish and Christian communities of the nation.

Christian History

Christian bishops were present in Bahrain as early as the third century. There were several Christian communities located along the borders of the Arabian Peninsula but with the rise of Islam these communities disappeared.

Modern Christian history in Bahrain begins with the Arabian Mission. The Arabian Mission, which is associated with the Reformed Church of America, became a formal organization in 1889. Samuel Zwemer was a founder and one of the first missionaries sent out by this organization. He arrived on the Arabian Peninsula in 1890.

Zwemer decided to build a station in Bahrain after touring the southern coastal areas for a short time. A mission hospital was founded in 1902. It was long believed that medical missions would be a key factor in reaching the Muslim world. The hospital struggled to retain medical staff for the first few years but gave the mission a legitimate role in Bahraini society. Amy Zwemer began work among Muslim women in Bahrain in 1896 which was the first continued effort by American women to reach Muslim women for Christ. The Arabian Mission placed a strong emphasis on the distribution of Scriptures; the Bible Society has a center in Bahrain that is staffed by volunteers.

Islam is the state religion and it is illegal to convert Muslims. Therefore, no Bahraini nationals confess to be Christian. There are many secret believers. Most Christians are expatriate workers from India, Britain, and the USA. There are some Arab Christians from Jordan, Palestine, and Syria.

Religions

Non-Christian

Islam

Islam is the state religion and comprises about 82% of the population or some 510,000. Islam reports an annual growth rate of + 2.1%. Shi'a Muslims far outnumber Sunni Muslims. Although the Shi'as outnumber the Sunnis by about two thirds the Sunnis enjoy positions of influence and power. The Shi'ite community forms a lower-class. Shi'ites holds many of the menial jobs.

Islam literally means "submission to the will of God." It was founded in the middle of the seventh century by Muhammad. Muslims believe that Muhammad was the prophet through whom God revealed the law of Islam. Muslims do not view Muhammad as divine. They recognize Jesus Christ as a prophet but not as divine. The heart of Islam is found in the *shahada* which states "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of God."

By the time of Muhammad's death in 632 AD the form of Islam was fairly established. There are basically three elements. The first element is the revelation which is the *Qu'ran*. The second element is the confession of the *shahada*. The third element is the pillars of Islam. The Four pillars are prayer, alms giving, fasting, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca.

In 655 AD the Sunni and Shia sects developed through a controversy over who would take spiritual leadership after Muhammad's death. The Sunnis followed the caliph Abu Bakr and then Umar following Abu Bakr's assassination. The Shia sect followed Ali, Muhammad's cousin. The succession of leaders continued until the 12th Imam. Shias accept the Qu'ran but also have a sunna of their own that is made up of the hadith and also sayings of their imams. The Shia sect has undergone many separations as well, which lead to the denomination of the Twelvers, Mustali Ismailis and other groups.

Male authority is traditionally very important. Property is inherited by the oldest son. Women's position is lower than the male position but it was an improvement from their position in the animist religion that was practiced before the coming of Islam. Although many wives were allowed in past years it was ruled that there should be fair and equal treatment of all the wives. Purdah, which is the protection or seclusion of women in Muslim societies, was put into place to protect the purity of the women. It was the man's responsibility to protect his wife and daughters. Purdah is still practiced in varying degrees from the partially covering (wearing long sleeves and head coverings) to almost complete seclusion of the women in the home.

Hinduism

Many of the Indian expatriate workers are Hindu. Hindus make up 6.25% of the population of Bahrain or around 39,000. The group has a growth rate of only +0.07%. Hinduism is often considered the world's oldest religion. It is a difficult religion to define and to study. There is no founder, no creed, and no absolute truth.

Hinduism is considered a henotheistic religion. This means there is belief in one supreme god and there are countless manifestations of this god in various forms which gives rise to the 330 million gods that are worshiped throughout the Hindu world. Three of the principle gods are Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma. *Brahma* is seen as the creator, *Vishnu* is the preserver, and *Shiva* the destroyer.

Hindus believe in an endless cycle of rebirth. *Moksha* is the ultimate goal of life. Moksha is the deliverance from this endless cycle.

Baha'i

Baha'i has a relatively small following in Bahrain as it accounts for around 0.22% of the population or some 1400 persons. The group is increasing at + 3.4 % which is a percentage greater than Islam. Baha'i is considered an offshoot of Islam, similar to the way Buddhism is born out of Hinduism. The Baha'i are monotheistic. They see Adam, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, Zoroaster, Krishna and Buddha all as prophets and having revealed a specific but incomplete portion of God's message.

Baha'i is a fairly new global religion. It was founded in the nineteenth century in Iran by Baha'u'llah. Adherents see Baha'u'llah as the fulfillment of the Messianic promises in the

preceding religions. Individuals that follow this religion have been persecuted in Iran and other Muslim countries. There are between 5 and 8 million followers of Baha'i around the world.

Non-religious

The non-religious in Bahrain make up around 0.69% of the people or some 4200 persons. The non-religious groups are increasing at around +0.6% annually.

Jewish

Less than 1000 Jewish people live in Bahrain but their growth rate is reported as + 2.1% the same percentage growth as Islam.

Buddhist

Less than 500 Buddhists live in Bahrain but their growth rate is estimated as 8.6% probably most from immigration.

Jehovah's Witnesses

The Jehovah's Witnesses in Bahrain report two congregations and some 30 members but are thought to be increasing at almost 9% annually.

Christian

Christians are primarily expatriates and there have not been a large number of indigenous believers forming mission efforts to other nations or people.

The National Evangelical Church

The National Evangelical Church, a Reformed Church, has as many as 21 congregations and over 1200 members. The majority of American and Arab Christians are members of the National Evangelical Church.

The Malayalee Christian Congregation

The Malayalee Christian Congregation is primarily made up of Indian peoples. It is an interdenominational church. As leaders have been provided from India, the church has begun to

separate into specific denominations though there is still a connection with this church and special services may host all the groups.

The Anglican Church

The Anglican Church in Bahrain is mostly made up of British expatriates and runs its own school. It is affiliated with the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East. The Anglican Church has some 10 congregations with as many as 1800 members.

Mar Thoma Christians

The Mar Thomas Church reports 3 congregations and as many as 800 members.

Filipino and Asian Independent Churches

The churches among Filipino and Asians number as many as 24 congregations with over 2300 members. Evidence indicates that many of these congregations are house churches.

The Pentecostal Churches

Around 6 groups of Pentecostal Christians have as many as 9 congregations and 1200 members.

The New Apostolic Church

The New Apostolic Church exists in one congregation with around 65 members

The Seventh Day Adventist Church

The Seventh Day Adventist Church has one congregation and some 45 members.

Catholic/Orthodox

Roman Catholic

Catholics claim as many as 4.05 % of the people of Bahrain or some 5700 persons. The Catholic Church reports 11 congregations. The growth of the Catholics in Bahrain is + 1.9%. The Catholic prefecture of Arabia began in 1875. The Sacred Heart Church has been in Manama since 1938.

Coptic Orthodox

The Coptic Orthodox Church in Bahrain numbers around 800 members in a single congregation and is showing almost no growth.

Syrian Orthodox

The Syrian Orthodox Church reports one congregation and some 150 members.

People Groups

42658

Arab (7,029)

Alternate names: Baggara. The primary language of this people group is Standard Arabic. Islam is the main religion. The Bible, Jesus Film, gospel recordings and radio broadcasts are all available in Standard Arabic.

11297

Bahraini Arab (425,071)

Bahraini Spoken Arabic is the predominate language of Bahraini Arabs. The Bible, Jesus Film, gospel recordings and radio broadcasts are no available in Baharna Spoken Arabic.

The Bahraini Arabs are related culturally and religiously to the larger group of Arabs that are spread throughout Arabia and Northern Africa. As with other Arabs, Bahraini Arabs have traditionally been Bedouin.

Bahraini Arabs living on the main island, Bahrain, live a more urban lifestyle than Arabs living on outlying islands. Most Bahraini Arabs live in northern Bahrain, it is common to live in apartments or houses made out of cement and lime brick. In the villages it is common for Bahraini Arabs to live in thatched huts. Bahrain has been an important trade center for many centuries and this has given Bahraini Arabs much exposure to other cultures. Bahraini youth wear more western clothes and Bahrain's women are less restricted than other Arab women. Women prefer to wear conservative clothing but few wear the traditional abaya. Bahrain has long been criticized by main-land Arabs as being too liberal.

Sunni Muslims make up the ruling family and the majority of the townspeople are Sunni. The Shi'ite community tends to live in the villages and not have much power.

42659

Gujarati (14,061)

Alternate Name: Zarabe. The Gujarati people speak Gujarati. The Bible, Jesus Film, gospel recordings and radio broadcasts are available in Gujarati.

Many of the Gujarati people are Hindu. Traditionally Hindus follow the caste system. Even though Gujaratis in Bahrain are immersed in Arab culture they have retained much of their culture, thus the caste system remains in some ways. There are also a large number of Muslim Gujaratis are allowed to marry only from certain groups.

42660

Gulf Arab (117,165)

Gulf Spoken Arabic is the primary language of Gulf Arabs and Islam is the primary religion. There is no Bible, Jesus Film, gospel recording or radio broadcasts available for Gulf Arabs in Bahrain.

42661

Jewish (801)

Judaism is the primary religion of the Jews living in Bahrain. They speak Standard Arabic. The Bible, Jesus Film, gospel recordings, and radio broadcasts are all available in Standard Arabic.

The Bahraini Jewish Arabs are fairly affluent and most are close to the ruling family of Bahrain. They have existed in relative peace in Bahrain, though in neighboring countries there has been a great deal of conflict. In 1948 when there are many protests due to the establishment of Israel as a nation the synagogue was destroyed. This act was not committed by Bahrainis but other foreigners who were in Bahrain at the time. Relationships between Jewish and Muslim Bahrainis have been for the most part a peaceful coexistence.

11302

Kurmanji (30,475)

Kurmanji speak Kurmanji also known as Northern Kurdish. Bible translations, the Jesus Film, gospel recordings are all available. Radio broadcasts are not available. Kurmanji are predominately Sunni Muslims.

The Kurds are divided into the Northern and Southern Kurds. The Northern Kurds are also called the Turkish Kurd, Yazidi, Yezidi, and Kermanji. Many live in cities and have a higher standard of living than those in Turkey. They are literate in Kurmanji, which is published. There are radio broadcasts in Kurmanji as well. Kurds in some areas, especially southern Kurds, are very poor. They have no politically recognized homeland, which has sometimes led them to be called "the Orphans of the Universe," however they have a strong ethnic identity. They are the largest ethnic group in the world without a country of their own. They are from an area sometimes called Kurdistan, which refers to a region covering southeastern Turkey, northeastern Syria, northern Iraq, and western Iran.

The Kurds have a rich history and consider themselves to be decedents of the Medes, which are mentioned in the Old Testament. Two of the most famous Kurds are King Darius, mentioned in the Old Testament book of Daniel, and Saladin, who retook Jerusalem in 1187 from the Crusaders. Like Saladin, the people in general, resist subjugation by other nations. They were conquered by the Arabs in the 7th century and have desired independence from their various rulers since that time.

The Kurds are often persecuted in Turkey and Iran. In Turkey, where almost half of all the Kurds live, the government has continued to refuse to recognize them as a separate ethnic group. In addition, until recent times, they made it illegal to speak Kurdish in public. The Iranian government has a history of persecuting this group, as does the Iraqi government. In Iraq, Kurdish villages have been destroyed, they were assaulted by chemical weapons, and many were forced into detention camps. They have fled to areas surrounding their former localities, seeking refugee. Currently Kurds campaign for an independent nation.

Today, most make a living by farming and raising livestock. Some live in permanent homes, however, some are still semi-nomadic. They move to the mountains during the summer and travel to the plains during the winter months. The Kurds are diverse and have differing tribal associations, lifestyles, and religious practices depending on where they live. The Kurds are tribal people. In the absence of a national Kurdish state and government, individual tribes are the highest source of authority for the people. In Kurd society, there is a clear division of labor by age and sex. Marriages are usually arranged and it is not uncommon for first cousins to marry. Upon marriage, the wife usually moves into the husband's household. Family is very important to the Kurds. Men are the ones who make the decisions and women are under the authority and protection of the men. A woman's honor is very important, so she must dress very modestly. Kurds value family loyalty and honor.

Traditionally, Kurds practiced a religion called Yazdanism, then later practiced Zoroastrianism. Today the Kurds are primarily Sunni Muslims. Kurd minorities have been associated with the secret and unorthodox sects of Islam. They are about 70% Muslim and 20% non-religious. There are few, if any known Christians among the Kurds in Bahrain. They have the Bible, Christian radio broadcasting, Gospel audio recordings and the Jesus film available in the Kurdi language, but not the dialect of Kurmanji.

11304

Persian (76,158)

The Persians of Bahrain primarily speak Western Farsi. The Bible, Jesus Film, gospel recordings and radio broadcasts are available in Farsi. Islam is the predominate religion among Persians. Most Persians are Shia Muslims of the Ithna Ashari denomination.

Poetry is a highly valued art form in Persian culture. Persian poetry insists on rhyme and meter. Qesmat (fate) is a common topic for literature and is also often discussed in everyday conversations. Persians often use the phrase "if God wills" when speaking of future plans.

The nuclear family is very important in Persian society. Traditional families are patriarchal, society as a whole is male-dominated. In public women are submissive although in the home women hold a considerable amount of power in making decisions. As in most Muslim communities men are responsible for the chastity of the women living in their homes.

Persians were Zoroastrians before Arabs invaded and Islam became the predominate religion. Zoroastrianism is the belief that there are two gods, one over good and one over evil and there is a constant battle between the two. In the 16th century the Islamic leaders began to play an important role in society and Shi'ite Islam became the religion of choice in Iran. There are very few Christian converts among Persians.

11303

Malayali (7,734)

The Malayali speak Malayalam. These people originate in south Kerala of India. Tradition holds that they were the Vellala caste of cultivators that migrated into the area. Malayali is their mother language. They involve themselves in agriculture, honey collection, cattle, and pig rearing. Christianity is their primary religion. The Bible, Jesus Film, Christian broadcasting, and audio recordings are available in their language.

46393

Saudi Arab (1,219)

Saudi Arabs' primary language is Najdi Spoken Arabic. They are primarily Muslim. There are not yet translations of the Bible, Jesus Film, gospel recordings or radio broadcast available in this dialect of Arabic. Saudi Arabs are also known as Gulf Arabs. Most live along the southern edge of the Arabian Desert in Yemen, The United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

Arab culture is traced to the nomads and villagers that lived in the Arabian Desert. From here some later migrated to Northern Africa. Arabs are perhaps most well known for their long treks across the desert and the raids on caravans crossing their paths. There are also Arabs known as fellahin who relied on farming and therefore lived a more settled life on the edge of the desert.

Traditionally Arabs lived in a long tent made from woven animal hair. They were divided into two parts, one side for women and children and the other side for the men and for entertaining guests. The women were responsible for most of the daily work while the men made plans for the group. Camels were very important for those that traveled in the desert. The farmers kept sheep and goats. Camels and goats both provide a main source of a Saudi Arabs diet. Milk, yogurt and butter called ghee are made from both camel and goat's milk. Meat is only served on special occasions Saudi Arabs pass inheritance to the next male family member and practice marriage within small social circles. Manual labor was considered degrading and so few Arabs take wage-paying jobs.

Ninety percent of Saudi Arabs are Wahhabi Muslims. They see themselves as the true followers of pure faith. There are no known believers among the Saudi Arabs in Bahrain. Conversion to Christianity is costly. It is likely that a convert will lose his family, job, honor, and even his life.

11306

Tamil (7,029)

Tamil is the primary language of the Tamil people. In Bahrain they are predominantly Muslim, although as a whole they are predominately Hindu. The Bible, Jesus Film, gospel recordings and radio broadcasts are all available in Tamil.

The Tamil people are from southern India. Tamil cultural identity is fairly strong. It is primarily a linguistic identity. There are 74 million Tamils around the world. Many Tamil emigrants do not speak Tamil as their first language but retain a Tamil identity.

11307

Telugu (7,313)

Telugu is their primary language and in Bahrain Islam is the primary religion. The Bible, Jesus film, gospel recordings, and radio broadcasts are all available in Telugu.

The Telugu are originally from Andhra Pradesh. They are one of the most emigrated Indian communities abroad.

11308

Urdu (32,913)

Urdu is a term that describes a group of people that speak Urdu does not necessarily describe an ethnic group. The Bible, Jesus film, gospel recordings, and radio broadcasts are available in Urdu.

Urdu was developed during a 500 year period of Moghul rule in the Delhi region where Hindi had been the primary language. Urdu is written in Persian script but uses Persian and Arabic words. At the time the Persian language was used in the courts but Urdu was used in the army camps and the common population. As the Moghuls began to loose power the Persian language began to loose ground as well, Urdu became more widely used throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Hindi and Urdu are very similar the primary difference is Hindi is written in Sanskrit and Urdu is written in Persian script.

Urdu speakers emigrated to the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia in recent years. For the most part they retain the citizenship in the country of origin (primarily Pakistan and Northern India). They tend to send their earnings home to families and will eventually return home themselves.

Most Muslim Urdu people are burdened to maintain honor in society. Thus, purdah (seclusion or concealment of women) still exists, though it may be stricter in some cases than others. Western Christians are considered by many Urdu Muslims to have very low moral values.

Missiological Implications.

1. Evangelical Christians and Churches should view Bahrain as a strategic point from which to launch evangelistic and church starting efforts. Although Bahrain is a small country it has great potential for reaching the Muslim world. Since the Gulf War in the early 1990's Bahrain has become a political key in the Gulf. Islam is less strongly adhered to in Bahrain than any other nation. Because of this island nation's strategic placement and relationship with other highly Muslim nations it will have an important role in the evangelism of the Muslim world.
2. Evangelical Christians and Churches should build on the Christian foundations that exist in Bahrain. A considerable amount of Christian work, primarily in education and healthcare, was accomplished in the past century. Bahrain has a foundation of Christian work and through prayer great breakthrough could be made. The largest Arab Christian community in the Gulf states is in Bahrain.
Bahrain is more tolerant than its strict Muslim neighbor, Saudi Arabia. The causeway that connects Saudi Arabia and Bahrain makes travel between the two relatively easy. The increase in technology and transportation makes spreading the gospel easier now than it ever has been. But many Christians are becoming lazier in sharing their personal experience with God. Evangelical Christians and Churches should see the minorities in Bahrain as fertile fields for evangelism. Christian missions should support the house church movements that are growing among Filipino and Indian peoples in Bahrain.
3. Evangelical Christians and Churches should pray for and work with the Christians to evangelize among the 200,000 expatriate communities. Filipino and Indian groups make up many of these expatriate people. This personal witness in long term relationships with

people in Bahrain will be a key in winning them and the peoples from the Muslim world as well.

Evangelical Christians and Churches should encourage the local Christians in witness and Christian living. A fairly large Arab Christian population lives in Bahrain and could reap a tremendous harvest if they could be mobilized to reach their Arab Muslim neighbors. These Arab believers have fewer cultural barriers to overcome in relating the unreached Muslims of the area.

4. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seek to aid local Christians in Bahrain in lifestyle witness. Muslim people need to see true Christians living out their faith. The picture that most Muslims have of Christians is the media from the West, which should not reflect a life lived by faith and grace in Jesus Christ. Bahrain is an urban center where business throughout much of the gulf region is run. Many Christian expatriates from the West are living and working in Bahrain. Pray these workers to be passionate about sharing the good news.
5. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seek ways to strengthen the radio and Christian literature ministries that exist in and for the peoples of Bahrain.