

## OMAN

In Oman there are 35 distinct people groups. Following are two of the groups.

### **Baloch, Southern**



The Southern Baluch of Oman are part of a larger Baluch community of eight million. Their homeland lies in the southern areas of Baluchistan and Sind Provinces in southern Pakistan. They began migrating to the Arab lands 70 years ago when oil was discovered there. Their name, "Baluch," is shrouded in controversy. Some say it means "nomad," while others claim that it means "the cock's crest." Some have traced their origins to Nimrod, son of Cush (Noah's grandson). While some things are uncertain, we do know that they first moved to the region in the twelfth century. It was during the Mogul period that their territory became known as Baluchistan.

Despite the disrupted contact with their homeland, the Baluch in Oman have maintained their ethnic and linguistic distinctions. The various Baluch groups speak different languages, each with distinguishing traits. These languages have been classified as Eastern, Western, or Southern Baluchi.

What are their lives like?

Arabs constitute the bulk of the population of Oman, but significant minorities of Indians, Pakistanis, and East Africans are found in the principal ports. The majority of the population is Ibadhi Muslim; Sunni Muslims form the other major religious group. The Southern Baluch compose approximately one-fifth of the country's population.

Arabic is the official language of Oman. Although the majority of the country's adult population was illiterate in 1970, the national education program has expanded

rapidly since that time. New schools for children have been built, and adult literacy programs have been established.

Agriculture in Oman is dominated by the cultivation of export crops, primarily dates and limes. Some grains and vegetables are grown for local consumption, but most food must be imported.

The traditional Baluch economy is based on a combination of farming and semi-nomadic shepherding. While survival techniques may vary, each community tries to keep a wide variety of animals and grows many different crops.

Baluchmayar is the honor code by which the Baluch live. Principles such as extending hospitality and mercy, dealing with one another honestly, and offering refuge to strangers are very important. These beliefs are preserved through both songs and poetry. Children learn proper behavior by watching their elders and are taunted whenever they misbehave.

What are their beliefs?

Ibadhi Islam is the state religion of Oman, but religious minorities have freedom of worship. However, no outreach to the unreached indigenous population is officially permitted. Although the Baluch are a scattered people, they all follow Islam. Most are Sunni Muslims, but underneath their Islamic faith is a strong undercurrent of animism (belief that non-human objects have spirits). Prior to the coming of Islam, the Baluch were probably followers of Zoroastrianism, an ancient Persian religion. Because of the mixture of old religions with Islam, the Baluch tend to be less devout than the more orthodox Arabs.

What are their needs?

Oman is ruled by a sultan, who is advised by an appointed cabinet. The country has no constitution, legislature, or political parties. The judicial system is based on the law of Islam. A chief court and court of appeals are located in the city of Masqat.

In Oman, both the urban educated and the rural illiterates have had little exposure to the Gospel. In addition, according to Islamic law, a Muslim who professes faith in Jesus Christ can be put to death. That fact may partially explain the small number of Southern Baluch converts in Oman.

The New Testament and the Jesus film are available in the Baluchi language. However, if these tools are to produce lasting fruit, they must be accompanied by much prayer.

Prayer Points

- \* Ask the Lord to soften the hearts of Oman's leaders to the preaching of the Gospel.
- \* Ask the Holy Spirit to grant wisdom and favor to the missions agencies that are focusing on the Southern Baluch.

- \* Pray for many opportunities to show the Jesus film to the Southern Baluch.
- \* Pray that Jesus will reveal Himself as Lord to the Southern Baluch.
- \* Pray that God will greatly multiply the efforts of the Southern Baluch believers as they share Christ with their friends and families.
- \* Ask God to raise up intercessors who will stand in the gap for the Southern Baluch.
- \* Pray that strong local churches will be raised up among the Southern Baluch.



Country: Oman

Continent: Asia

Region: Middle East and North Africa

Persecution Rank: 28 (Only top 50 ranked, 1 = highest persecution ranking)

10/40 Window: Yes

Population in this Country: 443,000

Largest Provinces: Masqat

Total Provinces on file: 1

Location within Country: Mutrah area

Affinity Bloc: Iranian-Median

People Cluster: Baloch

People Name General: Baloch, Southern

Primary Language: Balochi, Southern

Primary Religion: Islam

Religion Sub-division: Sunni

% Christian Adherents: Data not available

% Evangelical: Data not available

### **Arab, Gulf**



The Levant Arabs originally settled all over the Arabian Peninsula and later migrated to North Africa. Today, several hundred thousand Levant Arabs live along the northern edges of the Arabian Desert. They are spread from Israel to Kuwait and as far east as Iran. "Levant" is a broad term that includes several groups of Arabs: the Jordanian, Palestinian, Iraqi, Arabic Jewish, Chaldean, and Syrian Arabs.

Scholars consider Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula to be the original Arabs. The Arabian culture was developed by tribes of nomads and villagers who lived in the Arabian Desert for many centuries. It was also from there that Arab migrations began, eventually leading to the expansion of the Arab world.

The Levant Arabs have had a close association with Islam throughout their history; and today, all of them except for the Arabic Jewish Arabs are Muslims. The two main branches of Islam in the region are the Shi'ites and Shafiites. Most Levant Arabs speak an Arabic language called Arabiya, with varying local dialects. Others speak an Arabic language known as Mashriqi.

What are their lives like?

The Levant Arabs typically live in villages located near fertile regions; but they can also be found near mountain foothills in less arid regions. Although they have settled in towns or villages, they have held on to their tribal affiliations.

The various tribes are ruled by sheiks (Arab chiefs that are considered to be experts in Islam and in relating to the outside world). Their fortress-like villages can be easily defended. Each house has windows on all sides and is built facing the outside of the village. All goods and persons passing through town are strictly controlled.

Individual dwellings tend to be elaborately decorated, flat-roofed homes called "town houses." Lime wash and brickwork are used around the windows as a form of artistic design. The rooms usually have some type of carpeting, and when entering the house, one must leave his shoes at the door. The walls are lined with mattresses and cushions to sit on and lean against. A main reception room and a kitchen are located on the top floor. The flat roofs are used by the women for drying laundry.

Social life is extremely important to Arabs. They like to share a daily coffee time by sitting on the floor and drinking coffee from cups without handles. Their diet basically consists of wheat bread and porridge made with boiled meat or chicken.

Despite Islamic teachings, the reality of different classes of Arabs still persists. The type of clothing worn has become one of the determining factors. Levant tribesmen dress differently than other villagers and can be easily recognized. The women wear veils both in town and at home. Boys show that they are becoming men by changing their headgear and wearing daggers.

In spite of the fact that Muslims are allowed to have up to four wives, most marriages among the Levant Arabs are monogamous. In the past, all marriages were arranged by the parents; however, it is becoming more acceptable for young people to choose their own mates. Young girls are considered ready for marriage by age nine.

In recent years, many of the Levant Arab nomads have settled into mountain villages where they now raise grains, vegetables, coffee, melons, dates, mangoes, and pomegranates. Domestic animals are kept to supply milk and eggs.

What are their beliefs?

Almost all of the Levant Arabs are Muslims. Islam is a religion of works that is based on five basic "pillars." (1) A Muslim must affirm that "there is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet." (2) He must pray five times a day while facing Mecca. (3) He must give generously. (4) He must fast during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim year. (5) He must try to make at least one pilgrimage to Mecca in his lifetime.

Islam has greatly influenced the lives of the Levant Arabs. To preserve their people, they are only allowed to marry those inside their own group. Levant Arab society is patrilineal, which means that inheritances are passed down through the males. In this system, boys inherit more than girls. Since children are considered a family's greatest asset, females are valued for their ability to bear children.

What are their needs?

There is a great need for the Gospel to be preached among the Levant Arabs. Currently, there are only a few agencies ministering to these tribes.

At the present time, there are only a few known Christians within the Levant Arab community, with the largest number found among the Iraqi Arabs. Evangelization efforts among these tribes are challenging due to restrictions in many of the countries, as well as general antagonism towards Christianity. Prayerful intercession is the key to reaching them with the Gospel.

#### Prayer Points

- \* Ask the Lord to call people who are willing to reach out and share the love of Christ with them.
- \* Pray that God will raise up faithful intercessors who will stand in the gap for the Levant Arabs.
- \* Ask God to give the Levant Arab believers opportunities to share the love of Christ with their own people.
- \* Pray that their traditional Muslim culture will soften, creating open doors for the Gospel to be preached among them.
- \* Ask the Holy Spirit to open the hearts of these people towards Christians so that they will be receptive to the Gospel.
- \* Pray that God will reveal Himself to them through dreams and visions.
- \* Ask the Lord to raise up strong local churches among the Levant Arabs.
- \* Pray for translation of the Bible to begin in this people group's primary language.



Country: Oman

Continent: Asia

Region: Middle East and North Africa

Persecution Rank: 28 (Only top 50 ranked, 1 = highest persecution ranking)

10/40 Window: Yes

Population in this Country: 470,000

Largest Provinces: Ad Dakhiliyah, Al Batinah, Al Buraymi, Al Wusta, Ash Sharqiyah, Az-Zahirah, Masqat, Musandam, Zufar

Population in this Country: 470,000

Affinity Bloc: Arab World

People Cluster: Arab, Arabian

People Name General: Arab, Gulf

Primary Language: Arabic, Gulf Spoken

Primary Religion: Islam

Religion Sub-division: Sunni

% Christian Adherents: 0.60 %

% Evangelical: Data not available