

Omani Arabs



Quick Facts

Population: 2,000,000

Oman: 1,400,000

Tanzania: 200,000

Yemen: 150,000

UAE: 140,000

Religion: Ibadi Islam

Believers: 0.001%

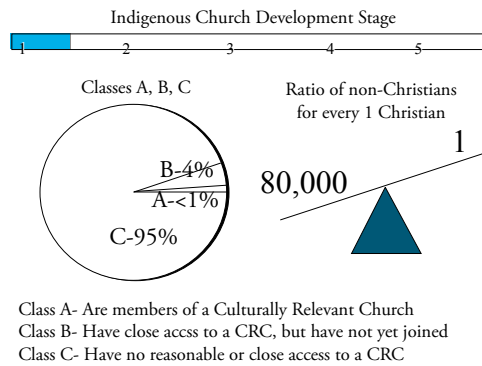
Scriptures: None

Ministry Tools: JR

Church Status: 1

Mission Status: 1

MS Subgroups: 15+



Identity: The Omani Arabs are the descendents of a Yemeni tribe (from which their name derives) that began to occupy present-day Oman around the 7th century A.D. They are divided into two major cultural groups, the coastal Omani and the *jibalis*, or mountain people. Multiple Arabic dialects are spoken, the largest of which are Omani Hadari and Dhufari.

Lifestyle: Before the discovery of oil in 1964, Oman's economy was mostly agricultural. Farming is still a significant way of life for about 20% of the population, though an increasing number of Omani are moving to the cities or seeking employment elsewhere in the Gulf region. The government has done much to reinvest oil revenues into the country's infrastructure, and is seeking to rebuild the agricultural sector and the fishing industry in the Gulf.

Customs: Omani dress is unique in the Muslim world. The traditional

dress for women is brightly colored with attached adornments, and consists of a dress over loose slacks. Men wear a robe and a turban, and some still tuck a curved, broad dagger in their waistband.

Religion: The Omani converted to Ibadi Islam in the 7th century. They are the only group and nation in which Ibadism has a majority. Traditionally the Ibadi have taught that only they will enter into heaven. Unlike the Sunnis they teach that the Quran is created and that there is no redemption from hell. They also teach that only the "true imam" can lead them. Thus for many periods the Omani did not congregate, for lack of a recognized righteous leader. Today, the Ibadi have modified their teachings for the sake of broader Islamic unity. Despite their historic sectarianism, they are regarded as the least fanatical, and most progressive of all Muslim sects.

Christian Outreach: The famous Protestant missionary to Muslims, Samuel

Zwemer, began work among the Omani Arabs in 1890, and much was done in the areas of education and medicine. However, there is still no Omani Arab church, and only a few, isolated believers. Three mission organizations are attempting to quietly disciple those who have come to faith in Christ.

How to Pray:

✞ Response to Christian radio broadcasts have been positive and it is believed that several radio-fellowships have been formed. Pray for these underground believers that God would enable them to grow and multiply throughout the country. Pray also that missionaries would be able to build trust with these believers who risk their lives to identify with Christ.

✞ The government of Oman has sought to keep fanatical Islam from taking root, and has become the most open of all Gulf states. Pray that this trend would continue, and for complete freedom of religion in Oman, especially legal authority for indigenous believers to assemble.

✞ Around 10,000 evangelicals are employed in Oman as contract workers. Pray for Christ's love to shine through their life-testimony.

Every year 18,000 Omani Arabs die without Christ.