Shia Muslims Around the World

Africa

Ghana:

Ghana is located in the West of the African continent and lies on the Atlantic Ocean. The capital city of Ghana is Okra. The population of Ghana is approximately 20million. Ghana has a democratic republican government, and their spoken language is English in addition to internal languages.

The religions practiced in Ghana include Islam, where 40% of the population follow the faith. 30% of the population are Christians, and the remaining 30% of the population follow other religions.

The majority of the Muslims in Ghana are situated in the north of the country, where they are approximately 80% and are in cities such Okra, Kowmasey, Barnkahowfar, Takowradee, Teema and Balack. The majority of the inhabitants are followers of the Sunni faith.

The majority of the Sunni Muslims in Ghana are followers of the Malki School of thought. However there are also Hanbali, Shafiee and Shia Muslims in Ghana.

In the 1980, the Shia school of thought spread rapidly in Ghana, this was due to the Lebanese Shia's who migrated to Ghana and set up their businesses there.

The population of Shia's in Ghana approximately one million, and they are scattered over a wide area, they are found in places such as Okra- the capital city of Ghana, Tamaleey, Kowmasey and also in Owfaseey where the whole population of this city converted to Shia Islam.

The Islamic centre for the Youth followers of Ahlulbayt, Imam Hussain(AS) foundation and al-Kawthar Foundation are all located in the capital city Okra as well as in other cities in Ghana. In the city of Owfaseey there is the mosque of Imam Ali al-Sajjad (AS) and in Okra there is the mosque of Ahlulbayt(AS), the mosque of Rasool Allah (PBUH) and the mosque of Imam Jaffar al-Sadiq (AS).

The activity of the Shia's in Ghana are vast, they include teaching the youth Islamic classes, where the majority of the students then leave Ghana and migrate to other places to continue to higher level educations, these places include Iran and Syria. The Islamic centres celebrate and commemorate the deaths and births of the Imams and prophets as well as engage in other Islamic festivals. The Shia's have many newspapers and magazines such as al-Kawthar magazine which is published in the English language, in the capital city Okra, there is a huge library which has many books concerning the household of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

The activities which the Shia's participate in has allowed the spread of the Shia school of thought across Ghana, and has allowed individuals to learn about the message of Shia Islam, for this reason many Muslims have converted to Shia Islam and many non-Muslims have converted to Islam.

Tunisia

Tunisia is located north of the African continent. Tunisia is surrounded by countries such as Algeria and Libya. The capital city of Tunisia is Tunis. The population of Tunisia is approximately 9 million. The government in Tunisia is a republican government. The spoken language in Tunisia is Arabic as well as the French language which is spoken amongst a large number of the Tunisian people. The most practised religion in Tunisia is Islam, however there is approximately 1% of Jewish and Christian believers.

The majority of the Muslims in Tunisia are followers of the Maliki school of thought and approximately 85% of the Muslims follow this school of thought, there also exist a minority number of believers of the Shia school of thought. The Sufi belief is also amongst the minority of Muslim faiths in the country.

The Islamic history in the country is old, the year 57 AD was the first established holy site for Muslims in the city of Qirawan and from there the Islamic faith spread rapidly across Tunisia. In Qirawan there is the mosque of Aaqaba son of Nafih al-Sahibeey al-Jaleel, it is this individual who established the mosque in the year 50AD.

The roots of Shia Islam in Tunisia was before the Fatimid empire, and the Shia faith spread via the city of al-Mahdia al-Tunisia. The 'Berber' people were the first people on this land and it is through them that the message of Ahlulbayt spread.

The Shia faith has recently spread in Tunisia. The 'Berber' people, were originally the first people on Tunisian land, they also had a specific role during the time of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (AS), and they were killed, tortured and hurt as were the people of al-Madina by the Umayyad dynasty.

It can be said the belief in the Household of the Prophet(PBUH) spread into Tunisia during the 1950's / 70's, after Tijani al-Samawi left to Iraq, it is when the light of Shia Islam started shining Tunisia.

Today the Shia belief is found across many cities and villages in the country, if not all the cities and villages. The cities which have a major population of Shia's are Qafsa, and the state of Qabass, Soosaa, al-Mahdia and in the capital city Tunis.

The activities of the Shia, include celebrating and commemorating the births/ deaths of the Holy infallibles (AS), publications of literature concerning the belief as well as other

activities. There are some Shia from Tunisia who studies Islamic theology in Iran and Syria. Amongst the respected Shia scholars in Tunisia is Sayed Mohammed al-Tijani al-Samawi and Sheikh Mobarak Baghdash.

The Shia belief was able to spread in Tunisia due to the availability of open minded people and the lack of extreme individuals as well as the high level of educated people which is found amongst the population of Tunisians.

Asia

Pakistan:

Pakistan is a country located in Asia. Pakistan is surrounded by countries such as Afghanistan, Iran and India. The capital city of Pakistan is Islamabad. The population of Pakistan exceeds 160 million. The Pakistani government is an Islamic government. The spoken languages among the Pakistani population are Urdu, Punjabi. However, the formal language of the country is English. The literal meaning of the word 'Pakistan' is the pure land, the purity from the Hindus when the country became separated from India in the year 1947

The population of Muslim in Pakistan is 97%, the remaining 3% are Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, and Sikhs. The majority of the Muslims are believers of the Sunni faith, and 74% are followers of the Hanafi school of thought and remaining Muslims are followers of the Shia School of thought.

The Shia population in the country of Pakistan contribute to approximately a quarter of the whole population. The Shia's are distributed throughout the country, they are found in such places: Multan, Jhang, Faisalabad, Karachi, Hyderabad, Peshawar and Rawalpindi. The majority of the population found in the north of the country are followers of Ahlulbayt, where they form 80% of the population in places such as Baltistan and Gilgit. The presence of Shia in Pakistan stems back from the eighth century, where the Shia school of thought was spread by scholars. Amongst the great scholars who spread the message of Ahlulbayt in Pakistan was Qazi Noorullah al-Shushtari and other Ulama.

Regardless of the fact that the Shia contribute to only a quarter of the population, the Shia have a huge impact on the politics and cultural activities of Pakistan. The Shia also have a high influence on all levels of the inhabitants of the country. Many of the ministers of the country are Shia's, the most important being the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah as well as many generals in the military were followers of Ahlulbayt.

The cultural activities of the Shia in Pakistan is also highly regarded, many of the magazines and newspapers which are published are done by Shia, such publications include al-Thagalayn.

Pakistan plays host to many educated Shia scholars, as well as many religious schools. The social activities of the Shia in Pakistan are likewise very active, where they spend a lot in the establishment of schools mosques and Islamic centres.

The Shia in Pakistan have a very firm hold on their belief, this is aided by the fact that in every city or village you will find an Islamic centre and a mosque, where the followers of Ahlulbayt celebrates/commemorate Islamic ceremonies.

The Shia of Pakistan have many holy site, one such site is that of Imam Ali (A.S.) in Parachinar.

Publications concerning Ahlulbayt has spread rapidly throughout Pakistan, especially books of those individuals who were guided to the truth, by this way the truth of Ahlulbayt is being told to the people of Pakistan.

Indonesia:

Indonesia is a collection of many islands and is located south east of Asia, between Australia and Malaysia. The capital city of Indonesia is Jakarta, and the population of the country is 210 million, there formal spoken language is the standard Indonesian language; however there exist 400 different languages spoken collectively within the different cities in Indonesia. Indonesia is a democratic republican country.

Indonesia is considered to have the highest population of Muslims, 89% of the population is Muslim, the remainder are Christians 8% where they are situated in the northern areas of Indonesia, and the percentage of Hindus in Indonesia is approximately 2% where the majority of them live in the area of Bali and the remainder of the population are Buddhists.

The establishment of Islam in Indonesia is considered to be old, the time Islam entered was during the fourth century, and furthermore, during the sixth century the spread of Islam was at its peak by aid of the traders/businessmen from India.

The majority of Muslims in Indonesia are Sunni's, the Shafeeie school of thought is considered to be the vastest followed school of thought. The other schools of thought which are apparent in Indonesia are Hanafi, Malki, Hanbali and the Shia School of thought with a few Sufis(such as the Naqshabandi and Tijanya). The Indonesians are considered to be firm followers of their belief, and this is shown by the number of mosques they have in the country- there exists greater than 550 thousand mosques.

The history of Shia's in Indonesia started in the fourth century, amongst them are the grandchildren of Ali son of Imam Jaffar al-Sadiq (AS) who resided in this country and many of the men married the princess-daughters of the kings in area, to the extent that some of the

men obtained a very high position in the monarchy.

The city of Acheh which is located in the north of Sumatra, was the centre for Shia's in Indonesia, and it is from there the Shia faith spread across Indonesia. The city of Kowal has a very high Shia population, and shortly after the independence of Indonesia, the government established an university in Kowal and called it, Shia Kowal university.

Recently, Indonesia has seen a strong Shia movement which are lead by highly intellectual individuals. Today the population of Shia's in the country is approximately one million, they are distributed all around the country, however, they are mainly found in Jakarta-which is the capital city of Indonesia, Bandanogh and Sowra. The Shia's of Indonesia are firm believers of their faith. Many of the Shia's in Indonesia have political roles in the government.

The Shia's of Indonesia's Islamic activities are vast, the spend vast amounts of money for the sake of spreading the teachings of AhlulBayt(AS) which are in the Indonesian language. They have a habitat of visiting the shrines of the fourteen infallibles also. There is a number of Islamic centres in Indonesia which belong to the Shia's such as the Al-Hadi(AS) Institute, Al-Jawad(AS) Foundation and Al-Bagir(AS) Foundation.

The many mosques which belong to the Shia in Indonesia, celebrate the births of the Imams and also commemorate the deaths of the Imams.

At this very moment in time in Indonesia, there is a strong movement for the conversion of individuals to Shia Islam amongst the educated specifically. There have been many pieces of literature written such as the Islamic brotherhood, answering al-Dawi, the tradition of the al-Thaqalyn and many books concerning the tragedy of Karbala. There are also lectures given regarding the Shia belief which attract people to the Shia belief.

South America

Brazil:

Brazil is located in the middle of the south American continent, its capital city is Brasilia. Brazil has a federal government. The population of Brazil is 170milion, the most frequent spoken language in Brazil is Portuguese, however, the French, English and the Spanish languages are also spoken in moderation. 89% of the Brazilian population are Christians of which the majority are catholic. The remaining 11% are of other faiths. The government has proclaimed Brazil as a country of democracy of faiths, where everyone can practice the faith they wish. The population of Muslim is not greater than 3 million, and they are largely located in west of Brazil, in Sao Paulo.

Islam reached Brazil through worshipers who migrated to Brazil from Africa, and also from immigrants during the Ottoman empire, where Rio Janeiro was a station were Muslim captives from Africa were brought to, this is how the city learned about Islam. The Portuguese colonisation helped stabilise the situation of Muslims in Brazil by stopping the killing of Muslims. One should note that one main factor which helped the stabilization of Islam in the area was the existence of Islamic and Arabic monuments. In the city of Bahia, which is predominant in immigrants from Africa, exists many scriptures in the Arabic language, there also exists Arabic words in the streets of Brazil. In modern history (in the late 50's) Brazil understood about Islam through businessmen from aboard. Islamic centres were established which celebrate many Islamic occasions. The first mosque to be built in Brazil was in 1950in the city of Sao Paulo, and today in Brazil there exists more than 60 Islamic centres and 40 mosques.

On the other hand, the existence of Shia is linked to the time of the Ottoman Empire, and the Shia escaped to Brazil to escape from military presence. The Shia first went to Argentina and then to Brazil. During the first half of this century, there occurred a mass immigration of Lebanese to Brazil, which lead to the increase of Shia Islam in the area. The population of Shia in Brazil is approximately one million, and they contribute to 40% of the Muslims in the country. They are generally situated in an area called Korotiba, where they have there own mosque- Imam Ali(AS) mosque, where both Sunni and Shia pray, also in Sao Paulo they have a mosque- Prophet of Allah Mohammed (PBUH), also there is an Islamic Centre- Imam Khomeini Centre.

The Shia in Brazil are free to indulge in their belief openly and freely, however, the Sunni, who have found themselves in a orthodox Christian society find it relatively difficult to practice their faith as openly.

The Shia have many activities, where they aim in funding the establishments of Islamic centres and organisation who preach the message of AhlulBayt(AS) i.e. Tableegh institutes. The Shia also publish many publications concerning the Shia school of thought. Many of the Shia books have been translated to the Portuguese language- such books include: Nahjul Balagha-Peak of Equivalence, The Woman's rights in Islam and many other publications.

In the past, the Shia's were not viewed with pleasure, do to propaganda made by oppositions of AhlulBayt(AS), however, today the Shia's in Brazil are treated with respect from both Sunni's as well as believers of other faiths. During the year, both Sunni and Shia scholars exchange visits with each other, and a theme of united Muslims is shown.