

Pakistan has no defining cultural heritage. It occupies the “no-mans-land” between ancient Persian and Indian Empires. It has been overrun by Dravidian, Indo-Aryan, Greek, Scythian, Hun, Arab, Mongol, Persian, and British Empires. It holds over ninety distinct ethnic groups. Over three quarters of these are Indo-Aryan (Punjabi-related - 56%, Sindhi - 12%, mostly urban Urdu speaking Muslim immigrants from India - 8%, northern tribes - 2%, Sindh tribes - 1%). Under one quarter are Indo-Iranian (Pashtun - 13%, Baluch - 4%, Persian - 1%). The Dravidian Brahui comprise under 2%.¹

The most important factor uniting this amorphous diversity against world powers and Shiite and Hindu neighbors is Sunni Islam.

Religion and Politics

Islam is Pakistan’s official state religion. Section 20 of the Constitution orders that “Every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice, and propagate his religion.” Section 31 orders the state to facilitate Muslims in living according to the dictates of the Quran, and Section 36 demands the state “safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of minorities.”²

Section 295 C of the penal code illuminates the nature of constitutional “rights and interests.” It states, “Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name



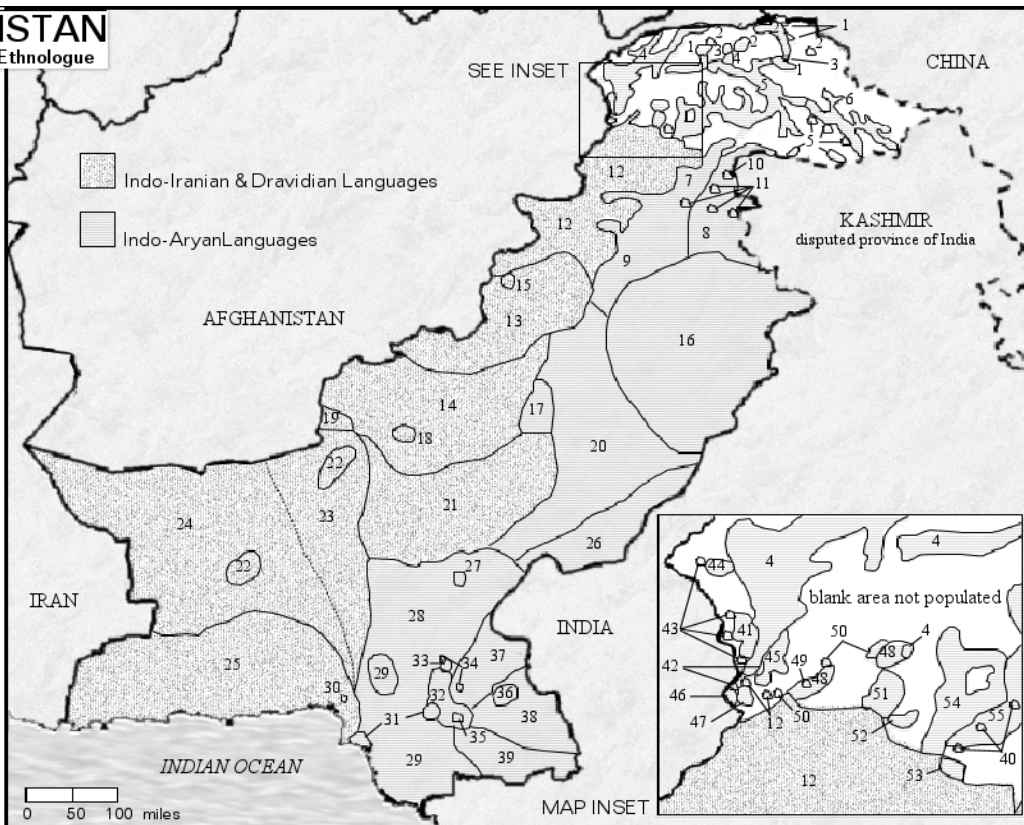
of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), shall be punished with the death sentence.”³ Accused violators of this “blasphemy law” who become trapped in a vicious legal struggle for their lives average 200 per year.⁴

Rivalry between traditionalists and modernists currently divides Pakistan. Prime Minister Musharaaf and his military backed Pakistan Muslim League–Quid-e-Azam (PML-Q) support the United States and its war on terrorism. His government sponsored Central Institute of

LANGUAGES OF PAKISTAN

sources: Global Mapping International & SIL Ethnologue

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|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Burushaski | 29. Jadhali |
| 2. Wakhi | 30. Lasi |
| 3. Domaaki | 31. Urdu |
| 4. Khowar | 32. Kachi Koli |
| 5. Shina | 33. Vaghi |
| 6. Balti | 34. Bagri |
| 7. Northern Hindko | 35. Wadiyara Koli |
| 8. Pahari-Potwari | 36. Tharadari Koli |
| 9. Southern Hindko | 37. Southern Marwari |
| 10. Kashmiri | 38. Dhatki |
| 11. Gujari | 39. Koli Parkari |
| 12. Eastern Pashto | 40. Chlisso |
| 13. Central Pashto | 41. Kalasha |
| 14. Southern Pashto | 42. Kanwiri |
| 15. Omari | 43. Kati |
| 16. Western Panjabi | 44. Yidgha |
| 17. Khetrani | 45. Phalura |
| 18. Waneci | 46. Gawar-Bati |
| 19. Hazaragi | 47. Dameli |
| 20. Saraiiki | 48. Kalami |
| 21. Eastern Balochi | 49. Kalkoti |
| 22. Dehwari | 50. Gujari |
| 23. Brahui | 51. Torwali |
| 24. Western Balochi | 52. Ushojo |
| 25. Southern Balochi | 53. Bateri |
| 26. Northern Marwari | 54. Badeshi |
| 27. Sansi | 55. Indus Kohistani |
| 28. Sindhi | |



Islamic Research promotes moderate application of the Quran and Muslim legal tradition through training teachers for government schools.

The Majlis Muttahida-e-Amal (MMA) is an alliance of six opposition anti-Western, pro-Taliban Muslim parties calling for puritanical reformation in order to obtain God's blessing and national prosperity. The cleric inspired popular movement to purify state-sponsored Islam and a government agenda to annex the majority Muslim Indian state of Kashmir make cracking down on extremist preaching, education, and financing difficult.

Together, in 2002, MMA fundamentalist parties held enough parliamentary seats to block Musharaaf's bid for constitutional modifications so that he could hold uncontested power until 2007. To stay in power Musharaaf must appease the MMA which is making the following demands.⁵

- ♦ reform state policy on arts and entertainment.
- ♦ reform the national education system.
- ♦ reform the banking system.
- ♦ promote the *shalwar kameez* (traditional clothing), and require it in schools & colleges.
- ♦ make Friday a weekly public holiday.
- ♦ repeal the ordinance monitoring madrassas and pledge them government funding.
- ♦ submit all legislation to the Council of Islamic Ideology for review.
- ♦ surrender the right of presidential pardon for offenses involving rape, adultery, drinking alcohol, and gambling.
- ♦ establish a "department of vice and virtue" to enforce standards of decency.

Religion and Social Services

Most Pakistanis are poor. Over sixty percent of adults are illiterate (mostly women), and over thirty percent of the people meagerly survive on under one dollar per day.⁶ Seventy percent of the houses are made from materials like sunbaked clay, cardboard, corrugated tin, and pieces of gunnysack.⁷ Social services are not publicly funded but left to Islamic charitable organizations called *wakfs* which conform to theological agendas.⁸

Religious and Minorities

Matters concerning non-Muslims fall under the Ministry of Minority Affairs. Christians, Hindus, scheduled castes, Sikhs, Buddhists, Bahais, Parsis (Zoastrians), Ahmadis, and tribal groups are constitutionally defined as minorities.

Ahmadis (also called Qadianis) belong to Ahmadiya. This Shia sect got started near Lahore in 1889. It has spread throughout Pakistan and sent missionaries around the world. In 1974, the Muslim World League declared it heretical. Pakistan's 3 million Ahmadis are most numerous around Lahore and Kashmir.

Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists numbering close to 2 million remain strong in the province of Sindh despite the tendency since 1947 to migrate to India.

Several small tribes like the Gagre, Kohli, and Bhil (numbering just a few hundred thousand) continue practicing traditional ethnic religions.

The percent of atheists and those claiming to practice no particular religion is less than 0.1. Parsis and Bahais are also under 0.1 percent. Jews have a synagogue in Karachi.

Christians comprise 2.5 percent of the population. Over 80 percent of these are Punjabi peoples descended from illiterates who converted out of low caste Hinduism in the early 1900s. Nearly 30 percent of Christians are Roman Catholic. Nearly 50 percent are Protestant. The rest are in independent indigenous congregations.⁹



Men wearing *shalwar kameez* traditional clothes

Religious Changes and Outreach

Average annual growth of Evangelical Christianity is approaching 7%.¹⁰ Each year over 12,000 leave Islam. Small indigenous churches are being established among Sindh, Pashtun, and Urdu peoples. Also converting to Christianity are people of Hindu scheduled castes in Sindh province and southern Punjab. Martyrs for faith in Jesus Christ average over 1000 per year.¹¹

Over 60 Christian agencies from more than 20 countries are ministering in Pakistan. Radio broadcasts, Jesus Films, and audio Scriptures exist in many Pakistani languages.¹²

NOTES:

1. Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World*, 2001, p. 500.
2. *World Christian Encyclopedia*, Oxford Univ. Press, 2001, v. 2, p.573.
3. Asia Human Rights Commission, www.ahrchk.net/hrsolid/mainfile.php/1998vol08no06/1437
4. Ahad Ibrahim, "Misuse of Blasphemy Law," www.Dawn.com, 23 Jul 01.
5. "MMA proposes 17-point agenda to settle LFO issue" *Pakistan Tribune*. Islamabad, 31 May 2003, www.paktribune.com/news/index.php?id=27050

6. "Pakistan at a Glance," www.worldbank.org
7. *World Christian Encyclopedia*, v. 2, pp. 570-71.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 571.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 571-72.
10. Johnstone, p. 501.
11. *World Christian Encyclopedia*, v. 2, pp. 573, 835.
12. *Ibid.* v. 2, pp. 573.