

Research Note

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The Global Distribution of Baha'is in the 1940s

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Abstract

This note provides a summary of information presently available on the extent and distribution of the Baha'i communities around the world during the 1940s.

I have previously provided brief notes on basic Baha'i statistics during the 1920s and 1930s.¹ This present note continues that study into the 1940s, summarizing the information presently available. As before, I have utilized the data provided by the *Bahā'ī World* series – in this case, volumes 8–11, which give lists of local spiritual assemblies and Baha'i groups and localities for 1939–40, 1943–4, 1945–6, and 1949–50.² These enable us to gain some sense of the differential distribution of the Baha'i Faith worldwide during the period.

1. Global distribution

When global Baha'i statistics first began to be published on a regular basis in the 1920s, there were clear differences in the nature of the data from Iran, North America (the USA and Canada) and the rest of the world, the Iranians providing lists of centres and 'administrative divisions'; the North Americans only lists of local spiritual assemblies and organized groups; and the Geneva-based International Baha'i Bureau putting together figures for all local spiritual assemblies and centres elsewhere. This makes proper global figures difficult to prepare, with the Iranian figures seeming to omit most local assemblies, the North American figures omitting unorganized groups and isolated individual Baha'is, and the rest of the world figures not differentiating between organized groups (if there were any) and isolated individuals.

A roughly uniform global standard was adopted in two stages: first, from 1935 onwards, the North American figures included unorganized groups and isolated individuals, and then, from 1943 onwards (during the period covered by the present article), the Iranian figures differentiated local spiritual assemblies. Unlike North America and Iran, most of the rest of the world figures continued not to differentiate between groups and isolated individuals, however. Nevertheless, from 1943 onwards, we can for the first time provide truly global figures for local assemblies and the total number of 'Baha'i centres' (local assemblies, groups and isolated individuals). For the present article, only the assembly figures for 1939 are anomalous, representing the

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USA

1. Peter Smith, 'The Global Distribution of Baha'is in the 1920s', *Baha'i Studies Review* 14 (2008) 107–20, and 'The Global Distribution of Baha'is in the 1930s', *Baha'i Studies Review* 15 (2009) 115–32.
2. BW 8: 688–712 (1939); 9: 652–78 (1943); 10: 552–82 (1945); 11: 520–74 (1949). The abbreviation 'BW' is here being used for the successive volumes of *The Bahā'ī World* (vols. 2–12, 1928–54 (rpt. Wilmette IL: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 1980–1).

sum of 'administrative divisions' in Iran and local assemblies elsewhere (with the Iranian divisional centres being treated as the equivalent of local spiritual assemblies in the rest of the world).

Countries and territories

By 1925, a Baha'i presence had been established in 27 countries and colonial territories throughout the world, not counting separately the long-established Baha'i communities of the Caucasus and Turkestan, which were an integral part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. By 1930, this figure had risen to 42, and by 1939 to 64, an overall increase of 37 since 1925 (Table 1). In the Middle East, there were by then Baha'is in 8 countries and territories: Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey and the mandated territories of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan (modern-day Jordan); in North Africa, in Egypt, the Sudan and Tunisia (3 territories); in sub-Saharan Africa, in South Africa and [Southern] Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) (2); in Asia apart from the Middle East, in India, Burma, China, Hong Kong and Japan (5); in the Pacific, Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii (then an overseas American territory) (3); in the Americas, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, the Panama Canal Zone, Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Canada and the United States (21); and in Europe, in Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain (the United Kingdom), Hungary, Iceland, the Irish Free State (Ireland), Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, Yugoslavia and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (with Baha'is in European Russia as well as in the Caucasus and Turkestan) (22).

By 1949, the world total was 90, a net increase of 26, with Baha'is now newly established in 30 countries and territories but 4 territories no longer having recorded Baha'i localities. The newly opened territories comprised 7 in what I have termed the Faith's 'Islamic heartland' (the Aden Protectorate, Bahrain, Dubai, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia; 1 in North Africa (French Morocco); 6 in sub-Saharan Africa (Abyssinia [Ethiopia], the Belgian Congo, Eritrea, Gold Coast, Kenya and Nigeria); 7 in Asia (Pakistan, Ceylon, Indonesia, Philippines, Siam [Thailand], Singapore and Formosa [Taiwan, Republic of China]); 2 in the Pacific (Fiji and French Polynesia [Tahiti]); 4 in

Region	1925	Changes by 1930	Changes by 1939	Changes by 1949
Middle East	[6] Iran Turkey Iraq Syria Lebanon Palestine *Also communities in the Caucasus and Turkestan (both USSR)	[+1 = 7] Transjordan	[+1 = 8] Afghanistan	[+7 = 15] Aden Protectorate Bahrain Dubai Kuwait Oman Qatar Saudi Arabia
North Africa	[2] Egypt Tunisia	[2]	[+1 = 3] Sudan	[+1 = 4] Morocco (French)

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Table 1 (continued)

Sub-Saharan Africa	[1] South Africa	[+2 = 3] South West Africa [Southern] Rhodesia	[-1 = 2] - <i>South West Africa*</i>	[+6 = 8] Abyssinia Belgian Congo Eritrea Gold Coast Kenya Nigeria
South, East and SE Asia	[4] India Burma China Japan	[+3 = 7] Dutch East Indies Philippines Hong Kong	[-2 = 5] - <i>Dutch East Indies*</i> - <i>Philippines*</i>	[+7 = 12] Pakistan Ceylon Indonesia Philippines Siam (Thailand) Singapore Formosa (ROC) - <i>Hong Kong*</i>
The Pacific	[3] Australia New Zealand Hawaii (US overseas territory)	[+2 = 5] French Polynesia (Tahiti) Fiji	[-2 = 3] - <i>French Polynesia (Tahiti)*</i> - <i>Fiji*</i>	[+2 = 5] Fiji French Polynesia (Tahiti)
The Americas	[3] Brazil Canada USA	[3]	[+18 = 21] <i>7 in South America:</i> Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela. <i>7 in Central America:</i> Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, the Panama Canal Zone. <i>4 in the Caribbean:</i> Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica	[+4 = 25] Columbia Paraguay Panama Puerto Rico
Europe	[8] Austria France Germany Great Britain Italy Sweden Switzerland Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (European Russia)	[+7 = 15] Denmark Netherlands Hungary Irish Free State Norway Poland Yugoslavia	[+7 = 22] Albania Belgium Bulgaria Czechoslovakia Finland Iceland Romania	[+3, -3 = 22] Luxembourg Portugal Spain - <i>Albania*</i> - <i>Austria*</i> - <i>Romania*</i>
World totals	27	+15 [= 42]	+27, -5 [= 64]	+30, -4 [= 90]

Table 1: Countries and territories in which there were Baha'is in 1925, 1930, 1939 and 1949.

Key: * = Territories in which there were no longer recorded Baha'is.

3. Several other territories are listed separately in *Bahā'ī World*, but if they were effectively integral parts of the countries by which they were administered I have not listed them here. They comprise Aḥsā and the Hijāz (both part of Saudi Arabia), Baluchistan (in British India and subsequently Pakistan), Manchuria (China) and Corsica (France).

the Americas (Columbia, Paraguay, Panama and Puerto Rico); and 3 in Europe (Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain).³ The territories in which there were no longer a Baha'i 'presence' were Albania, Austria, Romania and Hong Kong.

Localities and local spiritual assemblies

As noted in the previous articles, the total number of listed localities in which Baha'is reside provides us with a crude measure of Baha'i distribution worldwide whilst the figures for local spiritual assemblies are an indication of the degree of administrative consolidation. Neither set of figures reveals the total number of Baha'is in a particular place. A locality may represent a single isolated Baha'i (e.g. the lone Baha'i in Iceland) and a local spiritual assembly may represent a community of no more than its own nine members, but a listed locality or assembly may also represent a very large community (e.g. perhaps tens of thousands of people in a city such as Tehran).

By 1939, there were Baha'is living in 1142 recorded localities worldwide. A decade later, by 1949, the total had more than doubled to 2315 (Table 2). Throughout the period, the largest concentrations were in Iran, with 560 localities rising to 713 and North America (here including Hawaii) with 367 localities rising to 1196 – together 81 to 82 per cent of the world total. Given the more rapid growth in locality numbers in North America, its share of the total had increased from 32 to 52 per cent over the period, whilst that of Iran had fallen from 49 to 31 per cent. Of the other world regions, Europe had increased from 91 to 142 localities (8 to 6 per cent); the 'Islamic heartland' excluding Iran from 46 to 69 (4 to 3 per cent); Asia excluding the Middle East from 36 to 98 (3 to 4 per cent); Latin America and the Caribbean from 22 to 70 (2 to 3 per cent); Australasia from 17 to 19 (1.48 to 0.8 per cent); and sub-Saharan Africa from 3 to 8 (0.3 per cent). In terms of rates of increase, the highest were for the Americas, with a more than tripling in the number of localities over the decade (x 3.26 for North America, x 3.18 for Latin America and the Caribbean). There were also marked increases in both Asia (x 2.72) and sub-Saharan Africa (x 2.67) – albeit that the total number of African localities remained insignificant. The increases for Europe (x 1.56) and the Middle East and North Africa (x 1.29 including Iran, but x 1.5 excluding it), by contrast, were quite modest. Only in Australasia (x 1.12) was there effectively no growth.

As to local spiritual assemblies, there were 124 recorded worldwide in 1939 – 146 if we include the 22 Iranian administrative centres. This increased to 494 in 1943 (the first year when Iran started to fully report assembly numbers and we have comparable Baha'i administrative statistics for the whole world), and to 595 by the end of our period in 1949. Leaving out the Iranian figures, the increase over the decade was from 124 to 324 assemblies (x 2.61). After the Iranian figures are included, they constituted a massive share of the world total (58 per cent in 1943, 57 per cent in 1945 and 46 per cent in 1949). Of the rest of world, North America was clearly the major assembly location (86 in 1939, 187 in 1949, equivalent to 69 and 58 per cent of the non-Iranian totals respectively). Of the others, 14 assemblies in Europe were increased to 41 by the end of the decade; 11 in the Middle East and North Africa to 15; 8 to 35 in Asia; 4 to 10 in Australasia; 1 to 35 in Latin America and the Caribbean; and 0 to 1 in Africa. In terms of

	Local spiritual assemblies (LSAs)					Total listed localities				
	1939	1943	1945	1949	Incr., 1939–49	1939	1943	1945	1949	Incr., 1939–49
Iran	22 ¹	286	291	271	n.a.	560	694	694	713	1.27
Rest of Islamic heartland	11	18	18	15	1.36	46	65	57	69	1.5
North America	86	130	146	187	2.17	367	868	902	1196	3.26
Europe	14	5	6	41	2.93	91	98	93	142	1.56
Australasia	4	3	4	10	2.5	17	15	23	19	1.12
Asia (excl. Middle East)	8	33	26	35	4.38	36	77	79	98	2.72
Sub-Saharan Africa	0	0	0	1	n.a.	3	5	6	8	2.67
Latin America & the Caribbean	1	19	23	35	35	22	58	39	70	3.18
Totals excl. Iran	124	208	223	324	2.61	582	1186	1199	1602	2.75
Totals	146	494	514	595	n.a.	1142	1880	1893	2315	2.03

Table 2: Local spiritual assemblies and localities by region, 1939–49.

Source: Calculated from BW 8: 688–712; 9: 652–78; 10: 552–82; 11: 520–74.

Notes: 1. LSA figures for Iran in 1939 are for divisional centres.

proportional increases, assembly numbers rose most dramatically in Latin America (x 35), but the increases in Asia (x 4.38), Europe (x 2.93), Australasia (x 2.5) and North America (x 2.17) were also significant. The increases in the Middle East and North Africa (x 1.36) and Africa (from 0 to 1) were quite modest, whilst the Iranian figures showed a slight decline (by 5 per cent) from 1943 to 1949.

2. Iran

As in the previous periods considered, during the 1940s, the majority of the world's Baha'is still lived in Iran, a fact reflected in Iran's pre-eminence in the world locality figures. It will also be noted that during the 1940s, there was a significant increase in the total number of localities recorded in Iran (from 560 to 713 over the 1939–49 period, an increase of 153, some 27 per cent) (Table 3). These locality increases were distributed across much of the country, with the most marked increase being recorded in the Tehran region (39 to 104 localities). Some regions recorded losses, however, notably Khurāsān (down from 93 to 63 localities – a loss of almost one-third). I assume that most of these changes reflect patterns of internal migration amongst Iranian Baha'is, but this is a topic that has yet to be adequately researched. The figures presented are

4. The system of regional administrative divisions was first adopted in 1927, originally with 17 regions, each with its own central town and associated towns and villages. The number of regions was raised to 22 in the late 1930s, and this arrangement was continued throughout the 1940s. See Smith's previous articles in this series.

consonant both with Baha'i endeavours to expand their presence across the country as a whole (internal planned migration known as 'homefront pioneering') and with out-migration from regions with lower economic prospects. They remind us of the urgent need for a proper study of Iranian Baha'i demography.

Although the Iranian Baha'is continued the distinctive system of regional 'administrative divisions' during the 1940s,⁴ they also now began to publish figures for the total number of local spiritual assemblies (from 1943 onwards). Despite the considerable wartime disruptions and suffering inflicted on the Iranian people, these were relatively constant in number (286 in 1943, rising to 291 in 1945 and then falling to 271 by 1949). The assemblies recorded were distributed across the entire country – even as far as Zāhidān in the remote south-east, but with the greatest concentration in Azerbaijan in the north-west. Overall, about two-fifths of the recorded localities had established local spiritual assemblies during this period.

Division ¹	Centre	Local spiritual assemblies (LSAs)			Total listed localities			
		1943	1945	1949	1939	1943	1945	1949
North-west		77	79	63	116	164	164	132
Azerbaijan (Ādhirbāyjān)	Tabrīz	37	39	33	56	64	64	62
Qazvīn (& Zanjān)	Qazvīn	9	9	7	14	23	23	21
'Irāq [Ajāmī]	Sulṭān-Ābād	8	8	5	9	20	20	18
Hamadān	Hamadān	17	17	12	28	39	39	21
Kirmānshāhān	Kirmānshāh	6	6	6	9	18	18	10
North		62	62	65	83	175	175	175
Tehran (Tīhrān)	Tehran	23	23	29	39	90	90	104
Sangsar (Sang-i Sar)	Sangsar	6	6	5	6	10	10	9
Gilān	Rasht	9	9	8	12	29	29	20
Sārī	Sārī	12	12	12	10	25	25	24
Bābul	Bābul	8	8	7	10	13	13	10
Bandar-i Jaz [Astarābād]	Bandar-i Jaz	4	4	4	6	8	8	8
North-east		25	26	26	114	88	88	83
Khurāsān	Mashhad	19	20	21	93	65	65	63
Qā'ināt	Bīrjand	6	6	5	21	23	23	20

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Table 3 (continued)

Central		91	93	82	197	208	208	237
Kāshān	Kāshān	12	12	11	18	21	21	19
Isfahan (Iṣfāhān)	Isfahan	28	30	27	60	72	72	76
Ābādih	Ābādih	13	13	11	28	25	25	46
Yazd	Yazd	27	27	24	62	48	48	62
Kirmān	Kirmān	11	11	9	29	42	42	34
South		31	31	35	50	59	59	86
Fārs	Shīrāz	20	20	22	27	31	31	45
Nayrīz	Nayrīz	2	2	3	-	4	4	3
Khuzistān	Ahvāz	6	6	5	23	18	18	31
Zāhidān	Zāhidān	3	3	5	-	6	6	7
Totals		286	291	271	560	694	694	713

Table 3: Baha'i administrative divisions and localities in Iran, 1939–49.

Source: Calculated from BW 8: 708–12; 9: 672–7; 10: 574–81; 11: 542–63.

Notes: 1. The division into geographical regions (North-west, North, North-east, Central, South) is my own.

3. The 'Islamic heartland' apart from Iran

Compared to Iran, the rest of the region I have termed the 'Islamic heartland' (the Middle East and Afghanistan, North Africa and the old Imperial Russian provinces in the Caucasus and Central Asia), had relatively few established centres or assemblies during our period (See Table 4). Although the once thriving Baha'i communities in Asiatic Russia now had little recorded presence (only a few symbolic locality figures and no local assemblies whatsoever), the Baha'i presence in much of the Arab world was successfully continued, with an overall increase in locality figures from 38 to 54 over the period, including a significant increase in the number of localities in the old-established Baha'i community of Egypt (up from 18 to 28) and newly established localities in the Arabian peninsula (Aden, Bahrain, Dubai, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia – separately recorded as Aḥsā and the Ḥijāz) and Morocco. The Iraqi Baha'i community briefly disappeared from view in the 1949 figures – an omission responsible for the decline in the total number of local assemblies in the region in the immediate aftermath of World War II (down from 18 in 1945 to 15 in 1949). Local assemblies were newly established in Afghanistan and Sudan at this time, however. As for most of the 1930s, conditions in Turkey made it impossible for the Baha'is to re-establish their local spiritual assemblies there. There were still no Baha'is in Algeria, Libya, Yemen, the Hadhramaut or the smaller Trucial Sheikdoms.

	Local spiritual assemblies (LSAs)				Total listed localities			
	1939	1943	1945	1949	1939	1943	1945	1949
Iran (Persia)	22 ¹	286	291	271	560	694	694	713
Turkey	0	0	0	0	5	6	3	7
Afghanistan	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	2
THE ARAB WORLD								
Iraq	3	9	6	0	5	17	14	0
Palestine/Israel	0	0	0	0	6	7	8	4
Lebanon	0	0	0	0	2 ²	1	1	1
Transjordan/Jordan	1 ³	2	2	2	3 ³	2	3	5
Syria	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Aden Protectorate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Bahrain	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Dubai	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Kuwait	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Oman	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Qatar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Saudi Arabia ⁴	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	3
Egypt	4	3	7	7	18	22	17	28
Morocco (French)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sudan	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	3
Tunisia	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sub-totals	11	18	18	14	38	56	50	54
SOVIET ASIA								
Caucasus	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
Turkistan	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
Sub-totals	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	6
Totals excluding Iran	11	18	18	15	46	65	57	69
Totals	33	304	309	286	606	759	751	782

Table 4: Local spiritual assemblies and localities in the 'Islamic heartland', 1939–49.

Source: Calculated from BW 8: 688–712; 9: 652–78; 10: 552–82; 11: 520–74.

Notes: 1. LSA figures for Iran for 1939 are for divisional centres. This includes an additional two divisional centres listed in the address list (BW 8: 712).

2. The 1939 data for Transjordan are listed together with those for Palestine (both territories were part of the British mandate).

3. The 1939 data for Lebanon are listed together with those for Syria (Both territories were part of the French mandate).

4. The Saudi data are listed separately for Hasā and Hijāz.

	LSAs				Total listed localities			
	1939	1943	1945	1949	1939	1943	1945	1949
Canada	4	10	11	16	15	43	47	84
USA	82	120	135	171	352	825	855	1112
Totals	86	130	146	187	367	868	902	1196

Table 5: Local spiritual assemblies and localities in North America, 1930–39.

Source: Calculated from BW 8: 688–712; 9: 652–78; 10: 552–82; 11: 520–74.

4. North America

Outside of Iran, the most important Baha'i community in the world continued to be that of 'North America' (the United States of America and Canada), linked together under a single Baha'i administration until 1948. Reviewing the figures for the two countries together (Table 5), we can see that, as earlier in the 1930s, this was a period of rapid expansion both in the number of localities – more than tripled from 367 in 1939 to 1112 in 1949, and in the number of local assemblies – more than doubled from 86 to 187. Expansion in Canada was especially marked, with much higher relative figures of growth (x 5.6 and x 4.0 for localities and local assemblies respectively). The North American Baha'is remained predominantly American, however, albeit that the Canadian 'share' of the total local spiritual assembly and locality figures went up from less than 5 per cent for both in 1939 to almost 8.6 and 7.6 per cent respectively in 1949.

As in the 1920s and 1930s, there was considerable regional diversity in the Baha'i 'presence' within each country, but deliberate attempts to establish Baha'i localities and assemblies in all American states and Canadian provinces that had already met with a high degree of success were continued. Thus, in the USA, whilst there was only one state (West Virginia) with no recorded Baha'is in 1939, there were still 23 (out of 48) states without local spiritual assemblies (Table 6). By 1949, however, there were Baha'is in every state and only one state (Kentucky) still did not have a permanent local assembly (one had been briefly established earlier). Additionally, the non-contiguous territory of Alaska (not yet a state) also now had a local assembly. This said, the majority of Baha'i localities and assemblies continued to be found in those states that had the longest Baha'i 'presence' (the Pacific seaboard states, the eastern Midwest and the Northeast excluding parts of New England).

Census division and state	LSAs				Total listed localities			
	1939	1943	1945	1949	1939	1943	1945	1949
WEST	20	29	41	51	100	186	198	264
<i>Pacific (3)</i>	14	19	30	37	74	137	151	185
California	9	14	25	29	55	106	116	129
Oregon	1	1	1	1	5	10	10	16

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Table 6 (continued)

Washington	4	4	4	7	14	21	25	40
Mountain (8)	6	10	11	14	26	49	47	79
Arizona	2	2	2	3	9	16	14	19
Colorado	2	2	2	2	5	10	11	19
Idaho	0	1	1	2	2	3	2	9
Montana	1	1	2	3	4	4	6	9
Nevada	0	1	1	1	1	5	2	4
New Mexico	1	1	1	1	3	4	4	7
Utah	0	1	1	1	1	5	4	7
Wyoming	0	1	1	1	1	2	4	5
NORTH CENTRAL	32	39	44	55	102	268	286	340
West North Central (7)	4	8	11	12	20	50	52	54
Iowa	0	1	1	2	4	11	13	9
Kansas	1	1	1	1	1	6	5	6
Minnesota	2	2	3	3	5	12	13	11
Missouri	1	1	3	3	3	11	10	11
Nebraska	0	1	1	1	3	3	4	8
North Dakota	0	1	1	1	2	3	3	4
South Dakota	0	1	1	1	2	4	4	5
East North Central (5)	28	31	33	43	82	218	234	286
Illinois	9	10	11	15	25	67	66	79
Indiana	2	2	3	3	5	14	16	20
Michigan	5	6	7	9	22	58	62	64
Ohio	7	7	6	8	16	50	59	70
Wisconsin	5	6	6	8	14	29	31	53
NORTH EAST	19	27	24	37	82	231	243	310
Middle Atlantic (3)	14	16	13	24	48	146	153	209
New Jersey	4	4	3	10	10	48	49	69
New York	7	8	6	10	29	69	70	101
Pennsylvania	3	4	4	4	9	29	34	39
New England (6)	5	11	11	13	34	85	90	101
Connecticut	1	2	2	3	8	12	15	16

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Table 6 (continued)

Maine	1	1	1	2	8	13	13	14
Massachusetts	3	5	5	5	11	45	44	52
New Hampshire	0	1	1	1	3	6	9	8
Rhode Island	0	1	1	1	3	6	6	7
Vermont	0	1	1	1	1	3	3	4
SOUTH	9	22	23	25	63	136	137	184
West South Central (4)	1	4	4	7	19	28	27	41
Arkansas	0	1	1	2	5	8	7	11
Louisiana	0	1	1	1	2	3	3	6
Oklahoma	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	4
Texas	0	1	1	3	11	15	13	20
East South Central (4)	2	4	5	4	8	27	28	33
Alabama	0	1	1	1	2	9	12	7
Kentucky	0	1	1	0	1	5	5	7
Mississippi	0	1	1	1	2	5	3	8
Tennessee	2	1	2	2	3	8	8	11
South Atlantic (9)	6	14	14	14	36	81	82	110
Delaware	0	1	1	1	1	2	3	5
Florida	3	3	3	3	15	22	24	30
Georgia	0	1	2	2	2	11	11	11
Maryland	2	3	2	1	3	12	11	15
North Carolina	0	1	1	1	5	10	8	11
South Carolina	0	1	1	2	3	7	8	10
Virginia	0	2	2	2	6	14	14	21
West Virginia	0	1	1	1	0	2	2	6
Washington, DC	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
NON-CONTIGUOUS	2	3	3	3	5	4	7	14
Alaska	0	1	1	1	3	1	5	12
Hawaii	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2
US totals	82	120	135	171	352	825	855	1112

Table 6: Local spiritual assemblies and localities in the USA, 1939–49.

Source: Calculated from BW 8: 688–712; 9: 652–78; 10: 552–82; 11: 520–74.

	Local spiritual assemblies (LSAs)				Total listed localities			
	1939	1943	1945	1949	1939	1943	1945	1949
WESTERN								
Alberta	0	1	1	2	3	5	4	4
British Columbia	1	1	1	4	4	8	11	16
Manitoba	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	4
Saskatchewan	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	5
CENTRAL								
Ontario	1	1	2	4	3	9	13	31
Quebec	1	2	2	2	1	11	11	13
MARITIMES								
New Brunswick	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	5
Nova Scotia	0	1	1	1	1	3	3	3
Prince Edward Island	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	2
Newfoundland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	4	10	11	16	15	43	47	84

Table 7: Local spiritual assemblies and localities in Canada, 1939–49.

Source: Calculated from BW 8: 688–712; 9: 652–78; 10: 552–82; 11: 520–74.

As for Canada, only one province (Manitoba) still had no Baha'i presence in 1939, but five (out of nine) still had no local assembly (Table 7). By 1949, however, there were Baha'is in all the provinces, and local assemblies had also been established in all of them apart from Prince Edward Island. By 1949, a Baha'i locality (but no assembly) was also recorded for Newfoundland – a formerly independent dominion, which only became part of Canada in 1949. The non-provincial areas (the North-West Territories and the Yukon) still had no Baha'is.

5. Europe

By 1939, there were Baha'is present in 22 out of the then 29 European countries (roughly three-quarters), excluding the mini-states: Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino, the Vatican and Danzig, which are excluded from our analysis here (Table 8). Those countries in which there were then no Baha'is were Greece, the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg. There were then only 91 Baha'i localities recorded, just over one-fifth each in the two largest communities of Britain and Germany, and only 14 local assemblies across the whole continent – half (7) in Germany, 4 in Britain, and 1 each in Austria, Bulgaria and France. Compared to the well-developed Baha'i community of North America (which had originated at about the same time), Baha'i expansion in Europe, clearly, had been meagre.

	Local spiritual assemblies (LSAs)				Total listed localities			
	1939	1943	1945	1949	1939	1943	1945	1949
Albania	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0
Austria	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
Belgium	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2
Bulgaria	1	0	0	0	8	8	1	1
Czechoslovakia	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
Denmark	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	2
Finland	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
France	1	1	1	2	7	5	5	10 ¹
Germany	7	0	0	14	19	19	32	34
Hungary	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	1
Iceland	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Irish Free State	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Italy	0	0	0	1	3	3	2	6
Luxembourg	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Netherlands	0	0	0	1	4	1	1	4
Norway	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	2
Poland	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	1
Portugal	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Romania	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Russia	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Spain	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4
Sweden	0	0	0	1	3	3	1	3
Switzerland	0	0	0	2	5	4	4	12
United Kingdom	4	4	5	12	21	35	35	50 ²
Yugoslavia (Jugoslavia)	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Totals	14	5	6	41	91	98	93	142

Table 8: Local spiritual assemblies and localities in Europe, 1939–49.

Source: Calculated from BW 8: 688–712; 9: 652–78; 10: 552–82; 11: 520–74.

Notes: 1. Includes Corsica, listed separately.

2. Includes the Isle of Man, listed separately.

Then came the war, raging across much of the continent for six years (1939–45), and bringing disruption, as well as death and destruction on a massive scale. Only in Britain was significant growth possible under such circumstances – locality numbers increasing from 21 in 1939 to 35 in 1943. Elsewhere, numbers either declined or held constant – or at least were recorded as unchanged. By 1945, there were only 6 local assemblies still in existence – 5 in Britain and 1 in Paris.

At war's end, the massive task of reconstruction began, including – for the Baha'is – the task of re-establishing the German Baha'i community. With the aid of the American Baha'is, expansion across western Europe was also accomplished, so that by 1949, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain had all been opened to the Faith. Altogether, there were Baha'is residing in 142 localities across Europe by 1949, and 41 local assemblies had been established. Britain and Germany still dominated in the number of localities and assemblies (jointly 59 and 63 per cent of the respective totals), but apart from Austria, Finland, Iceland and Ireland, all western European countries now had at least one local spiritual assembly. Eastern Europe, by contrast, mostly newly placed under Communist rule, now saw the loss of any recorded Baha'i presence in Albania and Romania, a major diminution in the number of Baha'i localities in Bulgaria, and with the solitary (and brief) exception of Hungary, no local assembly formation at all.

6. Australasia

As in the 1920s and 1930s, the only relatively substantial Baha'i community in the Pacific at this time was that of Australia, which was linked with the tiny Baha'i community of New Zealand under a joint national spiritual assembly since 1934. The number of localities in the two countries together remained constant during our period at 17 (a small increase in Australia being offset by a significant decline in New Zealand) (Table 9). A Baha'i 'presence' was also restored in Fiji and Tahiti. Apart from American Hawaii, the rest of the Pacific remained devoid of Baha'is. In terms of local spiritual assemblies, there was an increase in Australia over the decade (from 3 to 9), and the Auckland assembly in New Zealand was maintained.

	Local spiritual assemblies (LSAs)				Total listed localities			
	1939	1943	1945	1949	1939	1943	1945	1949
Australia	3	2	3	9	13	12 ¹	16 ¹	16
New Zealand	1	1	1	1	4	2	6	1
Fiji	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Tahiti, French Polynesia	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Totals	4	3	4	10	17	15	23	19

Table 9: Local spiritual assemblies and localities in Australasia, 1939–49.

Source: Calculated from BW 8: 688–712; 9: 652–78; 10: 552–82; 11: 520–74.

Notes: 1. Includes Tasmania, listed separately.

7. Asia

Outside of the Middle East, the only major Asian Baha'i communities in 1939 were those of India and Burma, linked under a joint national Baha'i administration since 1923. There was a substantial increase in the number of localities in South Asia during our period, despite the massive disruptions occasioned by the partition of former British India into India and Pakistan in 1947 – from 23 in 1939 to 68 in India and Pakistan together in 1949 (almost two-thirds in India), with another 2 localities newly opened in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) (See Table 10). Local assembly numbers also increased – from 5 to 30 (22 in India, 7 in Pakistan and 1 in Ceylon), a six-fold increase. The associated Baha'i community of Burma – severely impacted both by the war, Japanese occupation and the traumas of the independence period – recorded modest gains: localities raising from 8 to 10 and local assemblies from 3 to 5. In the rest of South Asia, there were then no Baha'is in Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal.

In the rest of Asia, there were hardly any Baha'is during our period. There was a minimal Baha'i presence in East Asia, with modest increases in locality numbers over the decade – from 3 to 9 in Japan and from 1 to 4 in China. A single locality in Hong Kong was not recorded after 1939. In South East Asia, there had been isolated Baha'is in the Dutch East Indies (modern Indonesia) and the Philippines in the early 1930s, but it was not until 1943 that a Baha'i presence was again recorded in these territories. (As it was wartime and these were both areas under Japanese occupation, the accuracy of this data may be queried). By 1949, pioneering moves had also led to localities being opened in Siam/Thailand and Singapore. By this date, there were still no recorded Baha'is in Korea, Mongolia, Tibet, Formosa (Taiwan), Malaya, Sarawak, Sabah or in French Indo-China. No spiritual assemblies were recorded during these years in either East or South East Asia.

	Local spiritual assemblies (LSAs)				Total listed localities			
	1939	1943	1945	1949	1939	1943	1945	1949
South Asia								
India	5	30 ¹	24 ¹	22	23	63 ¹	58 ¹	48
Pakistan			7 ¹					20 ¹
Ceylon	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Burma	3	3	2	5	8	7	4	10
Sub-totals	8	33	26	35	31	70	62	80
South East Asia								
Dutch East Indies/ Indonesia	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Philippines	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2
Siam (Thailand)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

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Table 10 (continued)

Singapore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sub-totals	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	5
East Asia								
China	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	3 ²
Formosa (Taiwan)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 ³
Hong Kong	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Japan	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	9
Sub-totals	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	13
Totals	8	33	26	35	36	77	70	98

Table 10: Local spiritual assemblies and localities in Asia, 1939–49.

Source: Calculated from BW 8: 688–712; 9: 652–78; 10: 552–82; 11: 520–74.

Notes: 1. Includes Baluchistan, listed separately.

2. Indonesian independence was finally recognized by the Dutch in December 1949.

3. Siam was renamed Thailand in July 1949.

4. The People's Republic of China (PRC) was proclaimed in October 1949, including Manchuria (already a de facto part of the PRC). The three locations for China in 1949 do not include names and addresses. The one for Manchuria is a Japanese name.

5. Formosa (Taiwan) was incorporated into the Republic of China in 1945, and following the success of Communist forces in the civil war became almost the full extent of the ROC. The *Bahā'ī World* data for 1949 includes an entry for Formosa but no locality name.

8. Africa

The Baha'i presence in sub-Saharan Africa during this period was minimal, with only three localities in 1939 (Table 11). Two local spiritual assemblies which had existed earlier (in South Africa and South West Africa) had both lapsed during the 1930s, and after 1930, there were no longer any recorded Baha'is in South West Africa. A new country – Abyssinia (Ethiopia) – was opened to the Faith by 1933, but the Baha'i presence was uncertain in 1939 (Italy had launched a brutal and disruptive invasion of the country in 1935). By 1943, however, in addition to the continued presence of Baha'is in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, there was again a recorded locality in Abyssinia, and the Belgian Congo had been newly opened. By 1949, there were also Baha'is in Eritrea, the Gold Coast (modern Ghana), Kenya and Nigeria for a total of 8 localities across the entire continent south of the Sahara. A single local spiritual assembly had also been established (in Abyssinia).

	Local spiritual assemblies (LSAs)				Total listed localities			
	1939	1943	1945	1949	1939	1943	1945	1949
Abyssinia	0	0	0	1	-	1	1	1
Belgian Congo	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Eritrea	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Gold Coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

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Table 11 (continued)

Kenya	o	o	o	o	o	o	1	1
Nigeria	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	1
South Africa	o	o	o	o	2	2	1	1
Southern Rhodesia	o	o	o	o	1	1	1	1
Totals	o	o	o	1	3	5	6	8

Table 11: Local spiritual assemblies and localities in sub-Saharan Africa, 1939–49.

Source: Calculated from BW 8: 688-712; 9: 652-78; 10: 552-82; 11: 520-74.

9. Latin America and the Caribbean

Baha'i expansion was particularly marked in Latin America and the Caribbean during our period. Up until the late 1930s, there had been hardly any Baha'is in the region, but by 1939 a surge of activity coordinated by the North American Baha'is had led to most of the countries of South and Central America being opened to the Faith, together with several islands in the Caribbean (Table 12). At that point, there was only one local assembly in the region, however (in Mexico City). By 1949, there had been a dramatic expansion, with the total number of localities being increased from 22 to 70 and of assemblies from 1 to 35. By that date, there were Baha'is in all parts of Central and South America apart from the then still colonial territories of British Honduras (Belize) and British, Dutch and French Guiana. In the Caribbean, there were Baha'is on all the main islands (Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Jamaica), but not yet on any of the smaller islands apart from the American territory of Puerto Rico. All the opened territories also had established local spiritual assemblies apart from Paraguay, Uruguay and the American Panama Canal Zone.

	Local spiritual assemblies (LSAs)				Total listed localities			
	1939	1943	1945	1949	1939	1943	1945	1949
Central America and the Antilles								
Costa Rica	o	2	1	1	1	3	1	2
Cuba	o	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Dominican Republic	o	o	1	1	1	1	1	1
El Salvador	o	1	1	1	1	6	1	3
Guatemala	o	1	1	2	1	1	1	2
Haiti	o	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Honduras	o	1	1	2	1	1	1	3
Jamaica	o	1	1	2	1	1	1	2
Mexico	1	3	1	2	2	9	3	4
Nicaragua	o	o	o	1	1	1	1	2

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Table 12 (continued)

Panama	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	2
– Panama Canal Zone	0	0	0	0	1	4 ¹	4 ¹	1
Puerto Rico	0	1	1	1	0	4	4	2
Sub-totals	1	12	11	17	12	33	21	27
South America								
Argentina	0	1	1	2	1	3	2	5
Bolivia	0	0	1	1	1	5	2	4
Brazil	0	0	1	3	2	4	2	5
Chile	0	1	2	4	1	4	3	14
Columbia	0	1	2	4	0	2	4	6
Ecuador	0	1	1	2	1	3	1	3
Paraguay	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
Peru	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	3
Uruguay	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Venezuela	0	0	1	1	2	1	1	1
Sub-totals	0	7	12	18	10	25	18	43
Totals	1	19	23	35	22	58	39	70

Table 12: Local spiritual assemblies and localities in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1939–49.

Source: Calculated from BW 8: 688–712; 9: 652–78; 10: 552–82; 11: 520–74.

Notes: 1. The Panama Canal Zone is listed under both Panama and the United States and Canada with separate localities. See BW 9: 658, 663, 666; BW 10: 558, 564, 569.

5. BW 8: 687.

10. National spiritual assemblies

By 1939, there were only seven Baha'i national spiritual assemblies: Iran (Persia), Iraq and Egypt in the Middle East; and joint assemblies for 'Great Britain and Ireland', 'India and Burma', 'the United States and Canada' and 'Australia and New Zealand'. Former assemblies for Germany and the Caucasus and Turkistan in Soviet Asia had been dissolved (in 1937 and 1939) as a result of anti-Baha'i policies adopted by their respective governments. There was also an 'International Baha'i Bureau' located in Geneva, which functioned as an international news centre for those parts of the world not represented by a national assembly.⁵

With some changes of name, the seven assemblies of 1939 continued to function throughout the 1940s (by 1943, 'Egypt' had changed to 'Egypt and the Sudan' and 'Iran' had reverted to 'Persia'; by 1945, 'Great Britain and Ireland' had changed to 'the British Isles'; and by 1949, 'India and Burma' had changed to 'India, Pakistan and Burma'). There were only two significant changes by the end of the period: the German national assembly was re-established after the end of the Second World War (in April 1946) and reappears from the 1945–6

assembly listing onwards (initially as 'Germany and Austria'), and the joint assembly for North America was dissolved into its component parts in 1948, with the Canadian Baha'is essentially gaining their administrative independence from their former dominant partner, and Canada and the United States thereafter having separate national assemblies.⁶

6. BW 9: 651; 10: 551; 11: 519.

11. Total population

As with the previous surveys, it is not yet possible to come to any firm conclusion about the size of the global Baha'i population during this period. Although there were some significant increases in the overall distribution of the Baha'is worldwide, particularly in Latin America, my impression is that many of these gains were the consequence of Baha'is moving to open new territories, and/or represented the conversion of tiny numbers of new Baha'is. I therefore do not see any reason to assume that the overall Baha'i population of the world was much different in the 1940s than the 1930s or even the 1920s, and my best 'guesstimates' for the earlier decades will do as well for our period for most of the world: perhaps 100,000–200,000 Baha'is in Iran, 5000 Baha'is in Soviet Asia and at most 2000 Baha'is in Turkey and the Arab world; and probably less than 1000 Baha'is in Europe, East and South East Asia, Australasia and sub-Saharan Africa combined. Given the evidence for growth in both the Americas (North and Latin) and in South Asia, I am willing to raise my estimates for these from 3000 each for the late 1930s to perhaps 4000–5000 each for the late 1940s. These guesstimates give us a maximum total of 11,000–13,000 Baha'is worldwide outside of Iran and the culturally cognate Baha'i communities of Soviet Asia.

As before, the fragile nature of these guesses must be emphasized, and it will only be through detailed and solid research into each of the national Baha'i communities of the period that we will be able to gain a proper picture of the extent of the Baha'i population.

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