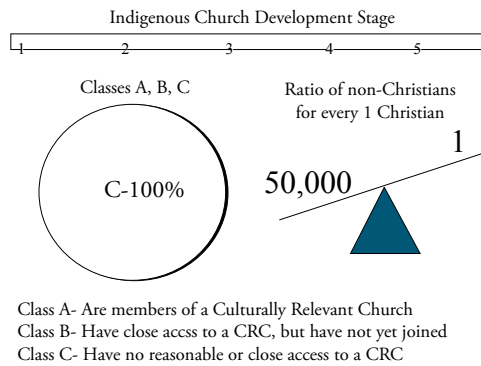




Quick Facts

Population: 1,700,000
 Afghanistan: 1,500,000
 Iran: 200,000
Location: Central NW Afgh.
Lang. Family: Iranian
Religion: Sunni Islam
Believers: 0.002% (MBB)
Scriptures: None
Ministry Tools: None
Church Status: 0
Mission Status: 1
MS Subgroups: 20+



Identity: The Aimaq are a complex cluster of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes with various ethnic origins, which today speak related dialects of SW Persian and have been strongly influenced by Turko-Mongolian culture and language. There are at least 20 unique tribal ethnicities, and 250 sub-tribes combined in the cluster.

Lifestyle: The chief economic resource of the Aimaq are their herds of sheep and cattle. Those that live on the fertile Badghis plains are able to grow wheat, cotton, melons and grapes. Grazing for herds is optimal in the spring and summer. After which, professional shepherds are employed to take the herds into the lower steppes. Those Aimaq living in the Ghor mountains have smaller herds due to the severe winters they endure which require livestock to be kept in stables.

Customs: Women have a much higher status in Aimaq tribal societies than in

other Afghani peoples. Unlike the Pashtun tribe, women are allowed to sit with men and voice their opinion. Girls over 18 are free to reject marriage proposals, and prospective grooms must serve their bride's family for two years before they are married. However, through the influence of ultra-orthodox Muslim clergy, these practices are being curtailed in major cities like Herat.

Religion: The Aimaq tribes are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school, unlike their Persian-speaking cousins which are Shiite. However, like the Shiites the Aimaq are fond of saint veneration, and visiting their tombs to give offerings and make requests by depositing their wishes on a sheet of paper. They also continue to practice rain-dance ceremonies, performed by young virgin girls. In Iran the government has made an effort to forcibly convert the Aimaq to Shiism.

Christian Outreach: There has been little effort to reach the Aimaq due in

part to the instability of the region over the last two hundred years caused by a tug-of-war between the Iranians, Russians, and British. Following the American invasion of Afghanistan, a team has been assembled that is in the beginning stages of initiating ministry among this totally unreached people cluster.

How to Pray:

☞ There has been little research among the Aimaq since the 1979 Soviet invasion. Pray for those seeking to ascertain the status and location of all the Aimaq peoples in order to develop appropriate strategies for reaching them.

☞ The complexity of the Aimaq will require a ten-fold increase in missionary personnel among them. Pray for the deployment of missionary teams among the 9 major tribal confederations.

☞ There are no Christian resources in the Aimaq language. Pray for the translation of the gospels which will enable the production of the Jesus Film and facilitate radio broadcasts.

☞ Pray for continued stability in Afghanistan, and for open doors to reach every Aimaq tribe, especially in the strategic city of Herat.

**Every year
 13,000 Aimaq die
 without Christ.**

MAJOR AIMAQ SUB-GROUPS



Sub-Group	Population	% of Total
Char Aimaq	1,140,000	66%
<i>Taimani</i>	540,000	31%
<i>Firuzkuhi</i>	250,000	15%
<i>Hazara-Aimaq</i>	200,000	11%
<i>Jamishidi</i>	150,000	9%
Lesser Aimaq	560,000	34%
<i>Timuri</i>	300,000	17%
<i>Tabiri</i>	60,000	5%
<i>Kipchak</i>	55,000	4%
<i>Zuri</i>	45,000	3%
<i>Maleki</i>	35,000	2%

TAIMANI

The largest of the Aimaq tribes derives its name from its founder, Taiman, who was a Kakar Pushtun from Balochistan. He founded the confederation in the Ghor mountains around the middle of the 17th century, bringing together various ethnically diverse nomadic clans into a strong military coalition. His descendants form the basis for the tribe's aristocracy, which although having lost much of their absolute power, still carry enormous influence. There are at least 100 sub-tribes among the Taimani.

FIRUZKHUI

This tribal confederation claim to be of Pashtun descent, and derive their name, which means "Turquoise Mountain," from the capital of the 13th century Ghorid dynasty. The Firuzkhui participated in slave raids organized by the Turkmen against the Hazaras. Captured slaves were sold to the Turkmen for export to Uzbek markets. There are 42 sub-tribes among the Firuzkuhi.

HAZARA-AIMAQ

The Hazara-Aimaq are Sunni Muslims, unlike other Hazaras in Afghanistan which are Shia. They are the most "persianized" of the Hazara tribes and the most "mongoloid" of the Aimaq. Their inclusion among those designated as Char-Aimaq (from *Chahar*, meaning four) is not due to any formal coalition with the other three groups. The slave raids by the Sunni Turkmen against the Shia Hazara also affected the migration patterns of the Sunni Hazara, who, while not participating in those raids with the Firuzkhui and Jamashidi, decided to avoid the conflict altogether by migrating further east. There are 38 sub-tribes among them.

JAMASHIDI

Though the smallest of the Char Aimaq, the Jamashidi are the most heterogenous, with 67 sub-tribes. Their tribal founder, Jamashid, was a Persian who was appointed as a warden over the Badghis region under Shah Abbas II in the 18th century. The Jamashid were the most affected by the quests of Persia, Russia, and Britain for control of Badghis, which possesses a fertile agricultural basin. Conflict over the region forced the Jamashi, who were moving towards a sedentary lifestyle, into a virtual "nomadic diaspora." Many migrated into Persia and have now become incorporated into the Timuri tribal confederation. Over the past few decades the Afghan Jamashidi have shifted from using the Yurt (a Turkic-Mongol tent) to the Pashtun style "black tent." At the same time, of all the Aimaq, they have strived the most to maintain independence from the Pashtun dominated Afghan government.