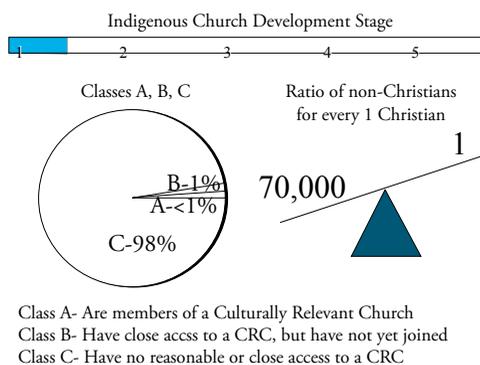


Gilaki



Quick Facts

Pop. in Iran: 3,500,000
Location: Gilan Province
Lang. Family: Iranian
Religion: Shia Islam
Believers: 0.0001% (MBB)
Scriptures: Portions
Ministry Tools: JGT
Church Status: 1
Mission Status: 1
MBB Churches: 5 D-Groups
Organizations: 1
MS Subgroups: 1



Identity: The Gilaki are an Indo-Iranian people closely related to the Mazanderani and the Talysh. They have occupied the southern coast of the Caspian Sea along the Elburz mountains for thousands of years. These natural fortifications have kept them independent and culturally distinct from other Indo-Iranian peoples.

Lifestyle: Around half of the Gilaki live in cities and half in the countryside. The region’s climate is known as “moderate Caspian” and is characterized by generally pleasant weather and plentiful rainfall. In rural areas, rice, tobacco and tea are cultivated. They are also known for their silk production, which has an ancient history in the region. Their major city, Rasht, is an important manufacturing and distribution hub for agricultural products, as well as soap and glass.

Customs: Traditionally, the Gilaki were fond of building their villages

along steep slopes, which afforded them a strategic advantage if attacked. One famous mountain village, Masuleh, is built on such a steep slope, the flat roofs of the houses on one level are used as pathways and courtyards for the houses on the next level above. An estimated two million tourists come to visit this small village every year.

Religion: The Gilaki began converting to Shia Islam around the 10th century. The faith was deepened and strengthened under the leadership of the 13th century mystic, Sheikh Zahed Gilani, whose Sufi order (Zahediyeh) had a profound impact on the entire Caspian region. His tomb continues to draw large numbers of spiritual pilgrims who seek answers to their prayers and a blessing by leaving offerings at the shrine.

Christian Outreach: The Gilaki have shown significant positive response to the gospel, and to such an extent that one Iranian Christian leader remarked,

“Iran is the crack in Islam and Gilan is the crack in Iran.” However, the growth of believers among them has prompted a wave of persecution and recently an entire family was arrested for meeting in a “house-group” fellowship. They are still being held (including their children) without charges.

How to Pray:

☞ After years of neglect the Gilaki now have a church-planting mission agency focused on reaching them, a Christian radio broadcast, and the Jesus film. Praise God for these development and intercede for those whom God has called to pioneer the gospel among this receptive people.

☞ Pray for those believers who are under surveillance for their faith. Ask God to give them wisdom and courage to continue His work in spite of intimidation, threats and possible imprisonment.

☞ With the exception of portions in Luke, the Bible has yet to be translated in Gilaki. Pray for a team to be raised up to address this need in the next few years.

☞ Pray for effective follow-up with the many thousands who have shown positive response to the gospel.

**Every year 31,000
 Gilaki die
 without Christ.**