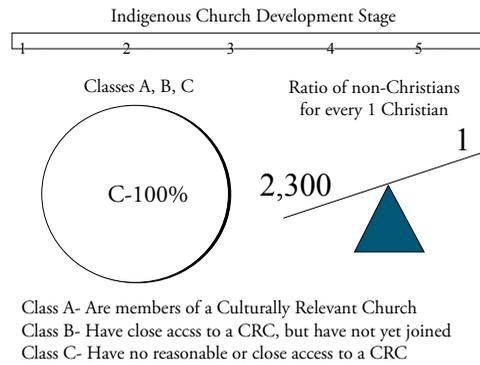




## Quick Facts

**Pop. in Iran:** 3,500,000  
**Location:** Mazandaran Prov.  
**Lang. Family:** Indo-Iranian  
**Religion:** Shia Islam  
**Believers:** 0.04%  
**Scriptures:** None  
**Ministry Tools:** GR  
**Church Status:** 0  
**Mission Status:** 1  
**Churches:** 0  
**Organizations:** 1  
**MS Subgroups:** 4



**Identity:** The Mazanderani, also known as Tapurian, are an Indo-Iranian people, closely related to the Gilaki. Archaeological evidence reveals a continuous 3,500 year old civilization in their homeland of Mazandaran. Their language resembles Persian, but due to its geographic isolation did not come under the influence of Arabic and Turkish languages.

**Lifestyle:** The Mazanderani enjoy a thriving agricultural economy, which has greatly benefited from the influx of oil revenue into the region. They are famous for breeding Arabian horses, as well as for a breed of humped cattle, and buffalo. Fisheries in the Caspian Sea harvest the world's finest caviar, and Mazandaran rice is considered to be the standard of quality in Iran. Other important agricultural crops include tea, fruit, and cotton.

**Customs:** The Mazanderani have a rich history of folk music, many of

which have a “work-related” origin, and were sung while performing particular tasks. The *catouli*, which literally means “cow out to graze” is characterized by its rhythmic pauses which allow the singer to breathe. Another song, the *kale hal* was sung while baking, and the *charvardari* while riding on horseback.

**Religion:** The Mazanderani were the last to convert to Shia Islam of the major Iranian peoples. They belong to the Ithna Ashari, or Twelvers, sect of Shiism. The Twelvers believe in twelve imams which followed the prophet Muhammad and carried out the Prophet's instructions in an infallible manner. The twelfth Imam, also known as the Mahdi, is prophesied to reappear in the “end-times” and has a cult of veneration surrounding him. This cult has been increasing among young people who believe the Mahdi will liberate Jerusalem.

**Christian Outreach:** There are isolated Mazanderani believers, and there may

be underground fellowships. The first outreach to them began through the efforts of an Armenian pastor. The church he established was forcibly shut down after they refused to comply with laws requiring them to report converts from Islam. When one of his converts was sentenced to death, the pastor led an international campaign to bring to light religious persecution in Iran. He was assassinated in 1995.

## How to Pray:

☞ Only one mission agency is working among the Mazanderani to establish a church-planting movement. Pray for wisdom in deploying personnel in this highly restricted-access nation and region, and for open doors in every major city, especially Sari and Babol.

☞ Pray for God's blessing on efforts by Armenian evangelical believers to reach the Mazanderani. Pray for boldness and creativity, and that the underground church which they have been forced to establish might become a model for the future Mazanderani house-church movement.

☞ Pray for the development of discipleship and evangelistic resources, especially the Bible, Jesus Film and radio.

**Every year 32,000 Mazanderani die without Christ.**