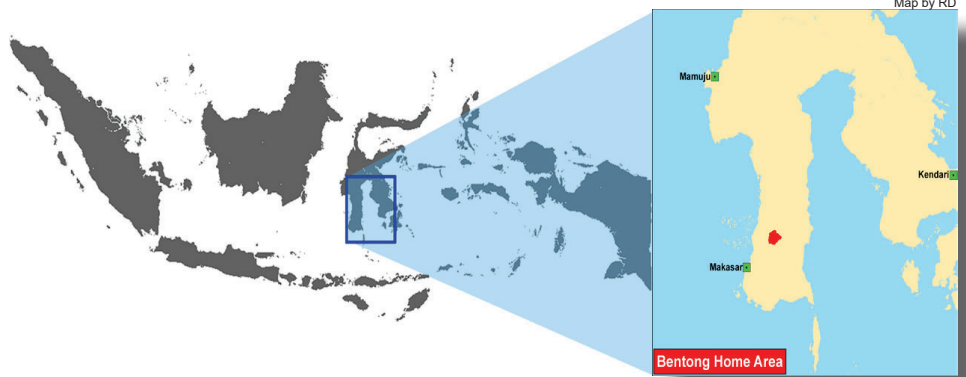


BENTONG



Photo by RD



Map by RD

Demography	Bentong Language	Status
Location: South Sulawesi Population: 25.000 Major Religion: Islam	Bible: No Jesus Film: No Online Media: No	Believers: < 100 Engaged: Yes Indigenous Church: 1

Identity and Location

The Bentong people (also called To Bentong) are located inland, east of the city of Pangkep in the South Sulawesi. They live in five villages in the Camba district: Rompe Gading, Limam Pocoe, Labuaja, Lebbo Tenggae and Laiya. The Bentong language is part of the larger Makassar language cluster, which also includes the Coastal Konjo, the highland Konjo, Selayar, and the Makassar language itself

According to the Bentong, they are the descendants of a marriage between the prince of Bone and the princess of Ternate. Other sources state that the Bentong are descendants of the Bugis and Makassar peoples. The latter is evidenced by apparent influence in Bentong culture from both Bugis and Makassar cultures. Bentong are nomads and the government considers them an “underdeveloped” society.

Society and Culture

The Bentong live in a hilly area 400-500 meters above sea level. This area has dense forest underbrush, with limited land available for wet and dry rice fields. Until 1975 there were no real roads in this area, only narrow footpaths to connect them to the outside world.

Elements of traditional beliefs are still maintained, namely belief in ancestral spirits, sacred objects and sacred locations. This system of worship is referred to as arajang.

By and large, the Bentong live as farmers and fishermen. Their primary crops include dried coconut meat (kopra), rice, and various forest products. The Bentong marriage system calls for marriages among people of the same group. A young man desiring to marry a woman outside his own group must first marry a woman within his own group. In their tradition, the groom gives a bride price. In the past, this bride price took the form of land or cloth. After getting married, newlyweds may live near either

the groom’s or the bride’s family.

Beliefs

The Bentong are followers of Islam. Marriage and burial ceremonies are done in accordance with Islamic laws. Nevertheless, elements of traditional beliefs are still maintained; namely belief in ancestral spirits, sacred objects and sacred locations. This system of worship is called arajang. They believe this system will bring safety and it must be done to avoid being cursed. Arajang objects such as a keris (traditional ceremonial knife), spear, shield, umbrella, and the like are only brought out at certain times for worship, specifically at the king’s inauguration, marriage ceremonies and natural disasters.

Other forms of worship involve showing respect to the pantansa (a small yellow house that symbolizes the gods). This ceremony is conducted in the rice fields during the planting season and is led by the pinati (a traditional healer/shaman who acts as a mediator between humans and the ancestral spirits).

Needs

The Bentong need help in management of farming so they can achieve more significant yields. They also need better education, since neither Bentong adults nor children have had many educational opportunities.^(E-RD)



Photo by RD

Bentong tomb of sacred