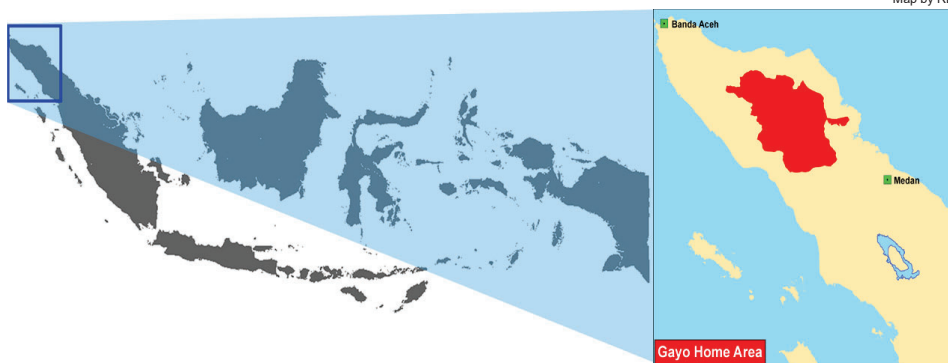


GAYO



Photo by RD



Map by RD

Demography	Gayo Language	Status
Location: Aceh Population: 330.000 Major religion: Islam	Bible: No Jesus Film: No Online Media: No	Believers: < 20 ⁽⁵⁶⁰⁾ Engaged: Yes Indigenous Church: 0

Identity and Location

The Gayo live in a remote mountain region near the center of the Special Islamic Province of Aceh. They especially live along the Bukit Barisan range of mountains, many of which are over 12,000 feet high. The Gayo people mostly live in the regencies of Aceh Tengah and Aceh Tenggara.

The Gayo language has two dialects: Gayo Lut and Gayo Luwes. The Gayo people do not have a written language. Their history and important stories have persisted as oral tradition.

Society and Culture

The Gayo derive most of their income from farming, especially coffee. Other sources of income include fishing and harvesting jungle products. They have also developed skills in ceramics, weaving mats and weaving cloth. Another item for which they are famous is Kerawan Gayo, a colorfully patterned fabric adorned with gold weave.

Gayo houses, called umah, are made from lumber and large leaves. Several related families typically live together in the same house. There is often a separate room called the meresah, where boys approaching adulthood, hired hands, bachelors, and adult male guests sleep. The meresah can also be used as a study room and for religious prayers or devotions.

Among Gayo forms of art are saman and didong, which combine dance, poetry, and vocal performance together. In addition to the recreational and artistic expression value of saman and didong, they also serve functions as ways to advance education, preserve traditions, and maintain balance in the community's social structure.

Gayo marriage laws forbid marrying within a nuclear family, but allow marriage between cousins. Most Gayo men marry women from their own area. This intentional practice helps ensure that the man marries someone he knows well, and that the family of the bride can be close enough to help whenever she needs it. Marriage must be agreed upon by both extended families. Polygamy is not forbidden by tradition, but is very rarely practiced. Divorce and remarriage are relatively common among the Gayo.

Beliefs

Most Gayo people are Muslim, but their understanding of and sense of allegiance to Islam are not strong. Most Gayo people believe in good spirits, evil spirits, and powerful holy people – both living and dead. They set out drink and food offerings for the spirits and for the holy people and for their ancestors.

Needs

The Gayo people need basic medical help and instruction because they lack practical knowledge of health and medicine. The central government does send some medical help, but it is not sufficient to fill the need.



Gayo custom cloth

The Gayo also need practical help with controlling erosion and landslides. There aren't enough trees and vegetation growing naturally to prevent landslides on the mountains.