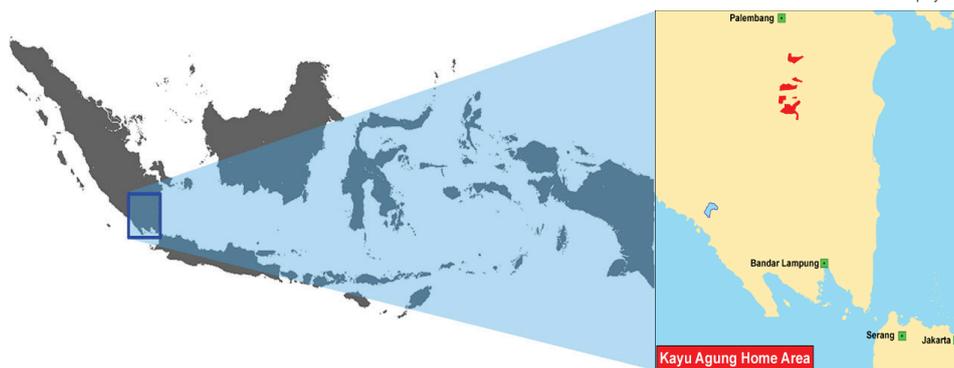


# KAYU AGUNG



Photo by RD



Map by RD

Demography	Kayu Agung Language	Status
Loc: Sumsel, Lampung Population: 22.000 Major Religion: Islam	Bible: NT Jesus Film: No Online Media: No	Believers: <5 Engaged: Yes Indigenous Church: 0

## Identity and Location

The Kayu Agung are located throughout the city of Kayu Agung and Ogan Komering Ilir district in the province of South Sumatra. Kayu Agung means “people of the noble wood.” They are not nomadic, but prefer to live in the same place their entire lives. There are currently about 23 Kayu Agung villages.

## Society and Culture

Kayu Agung houses have wooden walls and floors, with sago palm leaf roofs. The houses are usually raised several feet off the ground on top of wooden stilts. In their home area, the Kayu Agung live alongside the Komering, Rambang, and Ogan. The Kayu Agung mainly live along the Komering River, which passes through the Kayu Agung area. This area is still affected by tidal river flows, resulting in the river being called laut (“ocean” in Indonesian) by the community. The height of their area ranges between 0 to 500 meters above sea level, with only a few Kayu Agung living between 500 to 1000 meters above sea level. In the past this area was swampland, but now it is developed and has become an urban area.

The Kayu Agung speak Kayu Agung, which is part of the Lampung language cluster. Their language has two dialects, one of which is only used in one village: Kayu Agung Asli. The other dialect is used in all the other Kayu Agung villages. The dialect of Kayu Agung Asli is very close to the Komering language and in general Kayu Agung people consider their language close to Komering.

Like most other residents of South Sumatra, the Kayu Agung tend to be farmers. Most of them make a living from rubber tree plantations. Nevertheless, they also have other ways of making a living because most of their area is urbanized, unlike other nearby people groups who live in more rural settings. Livelihoods of the Kayu

Agung include being a merchant, office worker, teacher, and the like. Another way of making a living, for which the Kayu Agung are very well known, is to become a *duta* (lit. “ambassador”). A *duta* has a high social status among the Kayu Agung, due to his ability to get large amounts of money. In fact, the job of a *duta* is to be a top class criminal in large cities. Normally if a *duta* is about to leave his village, a special ceremony will be held and attended by his village community, to pray for his safety and success. Upon returning home, another ceremony will be held to give thanks for safety and success. Even religious leaders support the *duta*.

## Beliefs

Almost all Kayu Agung people follow Islam. However, many also hold traditional beliefs in the spirit world. The Kayu Agung believe that ancestral spirits can trouble humans. Because of this, before a body is buried they must cleanse it with flowers. The goal is to confuse the dead spirit so it forgets its way back to its former home. A shaman is highly trusted and is often requested to perform rituals for planting and harvesting. The Kayu Agung also consider some areas to be sacred places for the enthroned spirits of the departed.

## Needs

The high social status given to the *duta* represents one of the unhealthy values of the community in general which needs to be corrected. This value is very popular amongst the Kayu Agung. Good moral education could help to eliminate this cultural practice, at least among the younger generation. Because of this, there is a need to build awareness for opening other business opportunities which also produce a good income<sup>(E-RD)</sup>

