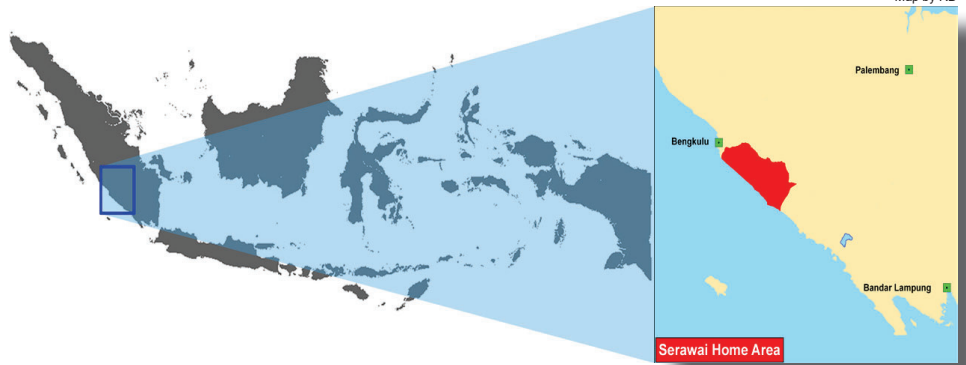


SERAWAI



Demography	Serawai Language	Informasi Suku
Location: Bengkulu Population: 320.000 Major Religion: Islam	Bible: NT Jesus Film: Yes Online Media: No	Believers: 2,000 ⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ Engaged: Yes Indigenous Church: Some

Identity and Location

The Serawai are a Malay group who live mostly in the regencies of South Bengkulu and Seluma in Bengkulu Province. They live in the districts of Seluma, Pino, Talo, and Manna districts. Some Serawai people also live in the city of Bengkulu and other cities in Bengkulu Province.

They are one of the poorest of the original inhabitants of inland Sumatra. Typically, Serawai call themselves Orang Selatan (People of the South), even though there are Kaur and Besemah people in this southern section of the province as well. The name Serawai comes from the word jawai, which means fisherman, so they are called "the Fishermen." The Serawai have their own language, which consists of the Talo and Manna dialects.

Society and Cultures

Rural Serawai live in wooden houses raised on stilts with thatched rooves made of leaves. The space below the house is used for storage or for keeping livestock. Villages are generally compact groups of homes situated along a roadside or riverbank. The upper part of the front of a house often has sun-shaped drawings symbolizing the light of Allah.

Tradition forbids a Serawai person's home from being directly across from the house of a sibling. Ancestral lines are drawn from both sides of the family. Determining where a couple lives after marriage depends on a formal agreement (kulo) between the couple and their families.

A small percentage of Serawai have been Christians for three generations and have formed Serawai churches.

The majority of Serawai make their living as rice farmers. To irrigate their rice fields, they depend on rain or a nearby river. Other crops include coffee, cloves, pepper, brown sugar, coconut, rattan, rubber,

fruits and vegetables. Recently, many Serawai have migrated to North Bengkulu to look for wider fields with better irrigation. When crops fail, they try farming in a different area of the province. Serawai villages that focus on fish farming have recently experienced rapid growth. Many Serawai people also work as traders, civil servants, teachers, members of the military, construction workers, and day laborers.

Beliefs

The vast majority of Serawai people are Muslims, but their day-to-day lives are influenced by older beliefs. They fear ma'sumai, a ferocious tiger that can assume human form, first attracting and then slaying its victims.

They also perform ceremonies connected to farming. Before planting, seeds are washed in the mendundang ceremony. Newly harvested rice stalks are bound together during the nuruni ceremony. These are performed to show that the rice plants are properly respected, so that the spirit of the rice plants will not leave their fields, thus preventing crop failure. At certain times, farmers offer goats at the graves of their ancestors or holy places.

A small percentage of Serawai have been Christians for three generations and have formed Serawai churches.

Needs

Serawai youth need motivation to continue their education. Many of them leave school before finishing junior high school. They also need skills and expertise to become productive citizens. In addition, the community needs to be introduced to better irrigation systems so they are not wholly dependent on the rains.

(E-RD)