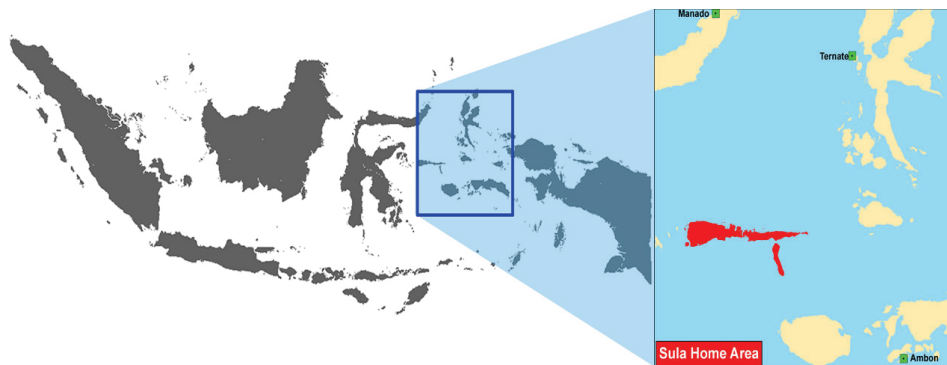


SULA



Photo by RD



Demography	Sula Language	Status
Location: North Maluku Population: 88.000 Major religion: Islam	Bible: Start Jesus Film: No Online Media: No	Believers: 0 (400) Engaged: Yes Indigenous church: 0

Identity and Location

Most Sula people (also often called Sanana people) live on the islands of Sulabesi and Mangole in the Sula Isles in North Maluku Province. The Sula language has three dialects. Firstly, the Fasei dialect which is spoken in villages in the south of Fasei Island. Secondly, the Falahu dialect, which is spoken in Falahu and Bega villages in Sulabesi Island as well as a few communities on Mangole Island. Thirdly, the Fangudu dialect which is found scattered through other villages in both Sulabesi and Mangole islands.

Three other languages spoken by the community in the Sula area are Kadai, Mangole and Taliabu. All three are closely related to the Sula language. In the past, the Sula isles were ruled by the sultanate of Tidore, and Sulabesi became a port of call for spice traders. Long before Europeans knew of these "Spice Islands," tobacco from North Maluku and nutmeg from Central Maluku were being traded in other parts of Asia.

With the coming of the Portuguese in 1511, extended conflict troubled the area. Finally the Dutch won this conflict and gained enormous profit from the spice trade, until its decline at the end of the eighteenth century.

Society and Culture

The Sula Isles have a tropical climate with a rainfall of 200-400 centimeters (79-156 inches) per year. A large part of the tropical rainforest which formerly blanketed most of the islands was cleared for logging to supply a plywood factory formerly on Mangole Island. Much of the land is now used for clove, cashew, coconut and chocolate production. The Sula people mainly live in the coastal areas, which are made up of beautiful beaches and mangrove swamps.

The Sula make their living by farming, fishing, shop keeping, provision of transportation and working as civil servants. Coconut trees are cultivated intensively. Copra, fish and spices are the main export commodities. There is currently no large-scale industry on the Sula Islands.

Beliefs

The Sula people are followers of Islam. However, they still maintain many deep animistic beliefs. They mix elements of traditional customs with Islam, such as worshipping at places they consider sacred in order to receive healing or other needs as a reward.

They also believe in guardian spirits which they believe can protect them when called by a shaman, and live in fear of the influence of evil spirits in their lives. Myths and traditional beliefs abound, requiring specific actions in order to appease the spirits.

Needs

The Sula islands' isolation has meant that little investment has been made in industry and technology. Employment opportunities on the islands are very limited.

Many more profitable businesses are owned and run by migrants from other areas. Implementation of improved farming techniques, facilitating marketing of products and improved transportation to regional centers could greatly improve the livelihood of the Sula people.

Health care on the islands is limited, and many people will only seek professional medical attention as a last resort after consulting traditional healers.

