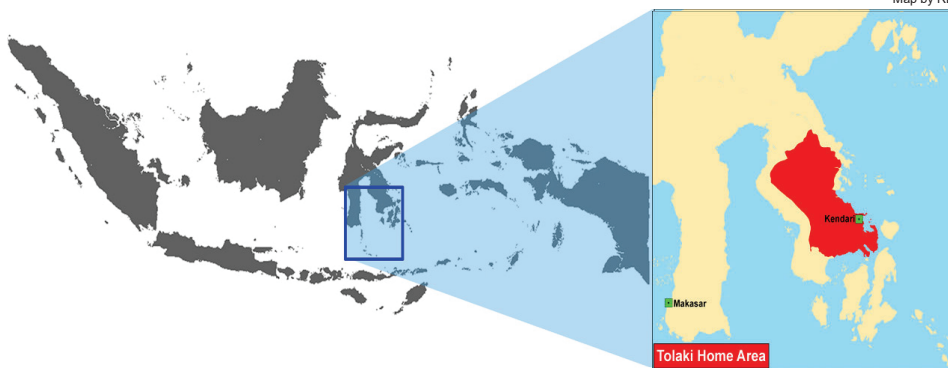


TOLAKI



Photo by RS



Map by RD

Demography	Tolaki Language	Status
Location: Southeast Sulawesi Population: 330.000 Major religion: Islam	Bible: Parts Jesus Film: Yes Online Media: No	Believers: <3.000 Engaged: Yes Indigenous church: Some

Identity and Location

The Tolaki live in several districts in the regencies of Kendari and Kolaka in the province of Southeast Sulawesi. They are one of the largest people groups in this province and live in almost 50% of the province. The Tolaki trace their heritage to the Mekongga kingdom on the west coast, and the Konawe kingdom in the east. Tolaki has two principal dialects, Konawe and Mekongga.

Society and Culture

The Tolaki are known for being very independent and having a simple lifestyle. Besides farming non-irrigated fields, the mainstay of this people group comes from the abundant natural forest products found in the vast forest in the region. Because of that, there is a phrase: "For the Tolaki, if you already have a house, sago and fish for the day, you've got enough!" In the developing city of Kendari, the identity of the Tolaki people group as the predominant group is still felt.

The lulo dance, a traditional Tolaki dance, highlights unity and brotherhood, and is still quite common at wedding celebrations and at official ceremonies of the local government.

The physical appearance of the Tolaki is very similar to the Dayak in Kalimantan of Chinese, with light skin, slanted eyes and straight black hair. The Tolaki formerly lived near Matana Lake, among the slopes of the Verbeek Mountains in Sulawesi. They later spread downstream, following the flow of the Konaweheha River and established two large kingdoms, Konawe and Mekongga in Wundulako. One proof of the glory of these kingdoms is the Tomb of King Sao Sao located in Wua Wua, not far from the heart of Kendari City. This tomb has now been designated by the local government as a Tolaki cultural heritage site.

The Tolaki highly value peace and avoid conflict. This

is illustrated in a rattan woven necklace called a kalo sara. The kalo sara with its lofty values and symbolic meaning, is one of the elements of the emblem of the city of Kendari, along with the brass gong and the cotton plant, which serve as symbols of the prosperity of the whole Kendari region.

Beliefs

Generally speaking, the Tolaki are Muslim, but traditional animistic beliefs are very much alive. They continue to perform several ceremonies that reflect their ancestral animistic worldview, for example, the monohu khau (cutting of the rice) ceremony. The Christian Tolaki have redeemed this ceremony as a way to publically give thanks to God for a good harvest. Another very lively ceremony, called manahu udhan, is performed especially in the village of Benua in Lambuya district. It takes place in an open field for three nights in a row, and is led by a shaman (called a mbusehe in the local language). This is usually conducted in September, a night before and a night after the full moon. The only thing used to illuminate the proceedings is the light of the full moon. Then the attendees, usually Tolaki farmers, dance arm-in-arm around a makeshift structure that holds the drums and other musical instruments. On the closing day, early in the morning, a ceremonial sacrifice of musehe is performed by the shaman. Another Tolaki custom is the meosambaki celebration for a child at seven days, as well as a celebration called mekui or mosere curu (cutting of hair) when a child is seven months old. There is another rite of passage celebration called me'eni for 15 year-old children.

Needs

The Tolaki who live in urban areas have an adequate standard of living. However, those living in the villages are isolated due to insufficient public transportation. ^(RD)