



Paul Hattaway

Location: More than 8,500 Indonesians are located in four provinces of southern China. About 4,000 live on Hainan Island, with nearly the same number located in Fujian Province. A few hundred Indonesians live in southern Guangxi, and one small group has recently settled south of Kunming in Yunnan Province. The main body of Indonesians were placed in the Xinglong Overseas Chinese Farm on Hainan Island, an area good for coffee, pepper, coconut, and rubber production.

Identity: In 1952, 20,000 overseas Chinese refugees moved to Hainan Island after the Communist government issued an invitation for overseas Chinese to return to the “Motherland.” The refugees from Malaysia were ethnic Han Chinese and have assimilated back to China easily. Today they are counted as part of the Han Chinese nationality by the government. Many of the

Indonesians, however, were not of Chinese descent at all. Today they call themselves *Oran Toraja*, which means “people from Toraja.” They have remained an ethnolinguistically distinct people group. One observer noted, “Not only do the villages speak Indonesian, but also their lifestyle remains Indonesian.”¹

Language: The majority of Indonesians in China came from the Toraja region in Sulawesi. Although Sulawesi is an ethnically diverse island — home to 114 distinct Malayo-Polynesian languages² — the Indonesians who migrated to China decided to speak standard Indonesian. Many are also proficient in English.

History: An additional 1,500 Indonesians came to China in the early 1960s after the failed Communist coup in Indonesia. The Chinese authorities resettled one group on Hainan Island and

the other in Fujian Province. They encountered great hardship upon arrival in China. “Many of the new arrivals broke down in tears.... They were not farmers; they had to learn from the beginning how to plant crops and reap harvests.”³

Customs: Ethnically, many of the Indonesians in China were from one of the tribal groups in the Toraja Mountains. They have largely forsaken their traditional clothing and customs, although some families remember their heritage on special occasions. During the Cultural Revolution, “although life was hard, they were still able to maintain a personal and ethnic identity.”⁴

Religion: Although Islam is the state religion of Indonesia, the immigrants to China are not Muslims. Most came from the heavily Christianized Sulawesi Islands.

Christianity: Close to half of the Indonesians in China profess faith in Christ. The remainder are nonreligious. On Hainan Island the Indonesians meet in their own churches, both official and underground fellowships.⁵ During the 1960s Christian worship was banned and many of the Indonesian believers were persecuted. The Indonesian church on Hainan Island is strong and meets nearly every day of the week. Since the mid-1980s Christian leaders from Sulawesi have come to Hainan to encourage and train the Indonesian believers.



Population in China:
 8,500 (1997)
 8,830 (2000)
 9,980 (2010)
Location: Hainan Island, Fujian, Guangxi, Yunnan
Religion: Christianity
Christians: 4,000

Overview of the Indonesians

Countries: Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Netherlands, China, USA

Pronunciation: “In-do-nee-seun”

Other Names:

Oran Toraja, Indonesians: China

Population Source:

8,500 (1997 AMO);
 140,000,000 in Indonesia (1993);
 37,000 in Saudi Arabia (1993);
 10,000 in Netherlands;
 8,000 in Singapore (1993);
 2,520 in USA (1975)

Location: Hainan Island; Fujian; Guangxi; Yunnan

Status: Officially included under Han Chinese

Language: Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian, Western Malayo-Polynesian, Sundic, Malagic, Malayan

Dialects: 0

Religion: Christianity, No Religion

Christians: 4,000

Scripture: Bible 1974; New Testament 1968; Portions 1955

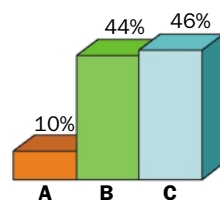
Jesus film: Available

Gospel Recordings: Indonesian #00035

Christian Broadcasting: Not available in China

ROPAL code: INZ00

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Were evangelized but did not become Christians
C = Are adherents to any form of Christianity