

Who are the Makasar?

The Makasar heartland lies on the southwest peninsula of Sulawesi Island, Indonesia. Makasar subgroups also include the Konjo, who inhabit the slopes of Mt. Bawakaraeng and its eastern plains, and the Selayar on Selayar Island.

Makasar sailors and fishermen are known for their outstanding navigational abilities. Like their ancestors, these seafarers navigate using experience and intuition rather than tools like a sextant or compass. Makasar craftsmen build wooden ships up to 30 meters (90 feet) long, using only the blueprint in their heads.

Culture

Makasar homes are wooden, raised on stilts and clustered together in groups of 20 to 40. In the late afternoon, Makasar people sit on the front porch or by the roadside, chatting in small groups. In good weather, young people play soccer, volleyball or badminton. On weekends, city residents and visitors from smaller towns enjoy strolling through the modern shopping malls of Makassar, the provincial capital of South Sulawesi.

Ancient Makasar writings, the *Lontara*, are still preserved. Originally written on palm leaves, Lontara genealogies are consulted when planning weddings, as couples are encouraged to marry a distant relative of appropriate status. The writings also give directions for planting, harvesting and other essentials of Makasar life. Traveling storytellers keep traditional poetic hero myths alive, accompanying their recitals with a two-stringed lute.

Makasar people speak their own Makasar language as well as *Bahasa Indonesia*, the Indonesian national language.

Livelihood



For centuries, the Makasar have engaged in seafaring trade. Many Makasar also fish, sadly often using dynamite that damages coral ecosystems. In the district of Jeneponto coastal villagers produce salt by saltwater evaporation. Rice, corn and cassava are cultivated in the interior regions.

Makasar from across the area work in the capital city as tailors and seamstresses, cooks, mechanics, bus and pedicab drivers, shop assistants, housemaids and construction workers. Most lower-class inhabitants of Makassar are of Makasar ethnicity.

History

Makasar history dates back over 500 years. The 17th century saw the greatest period of the Makasar empire. They ruled from Borneo to the Moluccas and maintained settlements as far away as Singapore. They traded with New Guinea, the Philippines, Burma, Cambodia, China, Madagascar, Australia and India, and were for several decades the head of the greatest Muslim trading empire in Southeast Asia.

Beliefs

The Makasar are proud of their Muslim identity. Those who make the pilgrimage to Mecca secure religious and social status. Muslim brotherhoods are also very influential in urban areas.

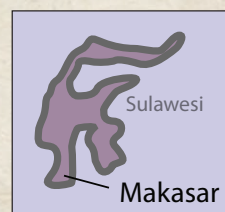


Many Makasar, though practicing Muslims, believe that their ancestors have ongoing influence over their lives. *Sanro* (traditional healers) are commonly consulted during illnesses, which are often attributed to sorcery, witchcraft or unfulfilled vows.

Although followers of Jesus have been reaching out to the peoples of Sulawesi for almost 100 years, less than 0.1% of the Makasar follow Jesus. Very few of the 100,000+ followers of Jesus in the city of Makassar (population 1.3 million) are of Makasar ethnicity.

Most Makasar followers of Jesus live in rural areas near the mountain town of Malino, on Selayar Island. In the late 1960s, about 2000 members of a Muslim sect on Selayar became nominal followers of Jesus, but unusual religious beliefs led many subsequently to embrace Hinduism.

For more information about the Makasar, visit: www.apeopleloved.com/makasar



Population: 2.2 million
 Location: South Sulawesi, Indonesia
 Languages: Makasar, Bahasa Indonesia

Prayer Points

Pray that Makasar who follow Jesus would form house fellowships. May they lovingly witness to relatives who oppose them, until those relatives become followers themselves.

Pray that Chinese-background followers of Jesus in Makassar would reach out to their Makasar neighbors and employees.

Pray for the daily short-wave radio broadcast in the Makasar language to reach many.

Pray for more native speakers to check Scripture translations. May these checkers be convinced by what they read.

Pray for more followers of Jesus to study the Makasar language and culture and to find jobs in Makasar communities. May they provide each other moral and spiritual support amidst the frustrations of reaching out. May God protect them from physical and spiritual challenges, and empower them to share the Good News.