

Prospective LDS Outreach Case Studies

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Prospective LDS Outreach in Kalimantan, Indonesia

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Overview

Inhabited by 13.8 million people in 2010,[1] Kalimantan comprises the majority of the island of Borneo that is under the jurisdiction of Indonesia. Kalimantan is divided into four administrative provinces (Central, East, South, and West Kalimantan). Other areas of Borneo not under the administration of Indonesia include East Malaysia and Brunei. Austronesian peoples originally settled Kalimantan followed by Malays and Chinese. The Dutch colonized Kalimantan during the late nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. Japan occupied Kalimantan during World War II. Indonesia has administered Kalimantan since its independence from the Netherlands in the mid-twentieth century. Major ethnolinguistic groups include the Malay, Dayak peoples, Banjar, Chinese, and various peoples from Java and other islands who arrived during the twentieth century such as Javanese and Madurese.

This case study reviews the history of the Church in Kalimantan and provides recommendations for establishing a future LDS presence. Challenges for future growth are identified. The growth of the Church on other major island of Indonesia is reviewed and the growth and size of other nontraditional outreach-focused Christian groups that operate in Kalimantan is summarized. Limitations to this case study are examined and prospects for future growth are discussed.www.replica2u.me

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LDS Background

As of mid-2013, the Church has never established a presence in Kalimantan. The Church has had an official church presence in East Malaysia since the late 1990s and an unofficial presence in Brunei since the 2000s. Kalimantan has pertained to the Indonesia Jakarta Mission since the organization of the mission. In 2013, all four Kalimantan provinces pertained to the Manado Branch in extreme northeastern Sulawesi. Few very, if any, Kalimantan natives have appeared to join the LDS Church. Any Kalimantan natives have likely joined the Church on Java or in other countries in Southeast Asia.

Recommendations

Mission president or senior missionary couple visits in search of isolated members and investigators and evaluating prospects for assigning full-time missionaries constitutes the first step towards establishing an LDS presence in Kalimantan. Mission leadership visits to the most populous cities in Kalimantan and to locations relatively easy to access from Java where known members and investigators reside can accomplish several important tasks such as providing ecclesiastical support and encouragement to members and investigators, assessing local living conditions and tolerance for Christian missionary activity, and identifying which locations would appear most favorable for assigning full-time missionaries. Targeting several of the populous cities poses the most practical method for the initial establishment of the Church due to greater accessibility from Java where mission headquarters are located and due to higher population densities than smaller cities, towns, and rural areas. There are nine cities with over 100,000 inhabitants including Banjarmasin (576,413), Samarinda (505,664), Pontianak (501,843), Balikpapan (440,552), Palangkaraya (148,139), Tarakan (147,030), Banjarbaru (145,929), Bontang (118,405), and Singkawang (113,656). Several of these cities present good prospects for organizing member groups and assigning full-time missionaries. Major cities where there are sizable numbers of Christians or where smaller cities, towns, or rural areas with traditionally Christian ethnolinguistic groups are nearby present some of the greatest opportunities for long-term growth on Kalimantan.

There are sizable Christian minorities in all four Kalimantan provinces. Christian populations and native peoples pose some of

the greatest opportunities for outreach due to fewer societal restrictions on conversion to other faiths. Unlike their Muslim counterparts, Kalimantan Christians already possess many theological similarities with Latter-day Saints thereby facilitating the understanding of missionary lessons and the Church's restoration claims. Traditionally residing in south-central Kalimantan, the Ngaju people number 890,000[2] and are approximately 80% Christian.[3] The establishment of an LDS missionary presence in Palangkaraya could provide some outreach to areas populated by the Ngaju. Located in West Kalimantan in lowland areas south of Pontianak on the Kapuas River delta, the Kendayan number 321,000 in Indonesia[4] and approximately half are Christian.[5] The assignment of missionaries to Pontianak could provide some outreach to the Kendayan people.

Additional ethnolinguistic groups present good opportunities for receiving LDS missionary outreach. The sizable Chinese minority in West Kalimantan could be reached by the assignment of Chinese Indonesian or Chinese Malaysian full-time missionaries. The Church has experienced good success extended Chinese-specific outreach in neighboring East Malaysia and may benefit from coordinated Chinese-directed outreach in some major cities in Kalimantan. Some ethnolinguistic groups predominantly follow traditional religions and appear favorable for receiving LDS outreach. Located in extreme eastern Central Kalimantan, the Ma'anyan number 150,000[6] and predominantly follow traditional religious beliefs. Approximately 25% of Ma'anyan are estimated to adhere to Christianity.[7]

Mission and area leaders may find success establishing a permanent LDS presence in Kalimantan by requesting some Indonesian families from Java to relocate to major cities in Kalimantan. This tactic has not been utilized by mission and area leaders around the world for many years due to concern over active families becoming inactive if they relocate to cities where there is no previous church presence. Difficulty assimilating into a new city, finding employment, distance from friends and family, and safety concerns are potential problems that have dissuaded church leaders from implementing this tactic in Indonesia. There are few approaches that offer as much potential for church growth and permanent outreach expansion as active Latter-day Saint families moving to locations without a preexisting church presence due to member-missionary opportunities for family members to find and teach new friends and acquaintances. This approach must be carefully evaluated by church leaders, specifically in the process of selecting "planter families" who are requested to move to a new city in order to ensure that these families would be appropriate for this assignment. The Church has experienced some of its greatest growth through member families moving to previously unreached locations, starting small congregations, and reaching out to the local population. Coordination from mission leaders to purposefully and tactfully select particular families and locations could yield good results in an era of stagnant outreach expansion for the Church in Indonesia.

Challenges

Extremely limited missionary manpower in the Indonesia Jakarta Mission poses the greatest barrier to extending outreach to Kalimantan. The number of missionaries in the mission is finite as very few foreign missionary visas have been issued to the Church for many years and no increase in the number of Indonesian members serving full-time missions has occurred within the past couple decades. The mission has maintained an official missionary presence in only a handful of cities on Java and in one city each on Sulawesi (Manado) and Sumatra (Medan). Within the last decade, the mission has focused on helping districts reach the qualifications to become stakes resulting in few resources dedicated to expanding outreach elsewhere. In the early 2010s, mission leaders refocused mission efforts from Java to Manado, Sulawesi and Medan, Sumatra as a result of two of the three member districts becoming stakes. Greater attention and resources could consequently shifted elsewhere as stakes operate without any direct supervision from the mission president and operate largely independently from the mission as a self-sufficient administrative unit. The mission added multiple missionary companionships in both Manado and Medan, greatly increasing the proselytism vision outside of Java but this may result in a reduced likelihood for mission leaders to open Kalimantan to formal missionary efforts as resources are channeled into forming centers of strength in Manado and Medan.

Very few, if any, Latter-day Saints appear to reside in Kalimantan. The Church largely avoids opening locations where there are no known members due to concern of missionaries having no previous members to provide fellowshipping of new converts and no preexisting local leadership base. These concerns - coupled with the geographic isolation of future missionaries on Kalimantan from mission leaders based on Java - suggest that any LDS establishment on Kalimantan to not be within the foreseeable future.

Many of the ethnolinguistic groups native to Kalimantan exhibit strong ties to Islam or Hinduism. Most predominantly Muslim peoples present no realistic opportunities for LDS missionary activity due to cultural and societal norms that forbid conversion from Islam. Consequently the majority of the Kalimantan population would be unreached by the Church as most the population is Muslim. The Banjar are one of the largest ethnolinguistic groups native to Kalimantan with over 3.5 million people.[8] The Banjar are homogenously Muslim with the estimated number of Christians comprising less than 0.01% of the population.[9] Ethnic Malays number in the millions and are staunchly Muslim. The Malayic Dayak number over half a million people and exhibit strong ties to Islam.[10] Additional ethnolinguistic groups with at least 100,000 people that are traditionally Muslim include the Bakumpai and Lawangan.

Comparative Growth

The Church has experienced no progress expanding outreach on other major islands in Indonesia. All but three LDS branches operate on Java and no new congregations have been organized on Java for many years with the exception of a couple member groups. The Church has operated its sole branch on Sulawesi (Manado) for nearly three decades with little progress augmenting the number of active members until the past few years. In Sumatra, the Church has maintained its sole branch in Medan for nearly two decades and has experienced extremely slow growth. In Papua, the Church briefly operated a small

branch in the mid-2000s but closed the branch due to active members relocating elsewhere. The Church recently organized its first branch on Bali but has not appeared to extend any overt missionary activity on the island. A member groups has also recently begun meeting in Batam but no formal missionary activity has occurred in this location.

All other nontraditional proselytizing Christian groups report an active presence in Kalimantan. Some Christian groups claim a noticeable percentage of the population as members. For example, evangelicals claim nine percent of the Ngaju population.[11] The Seventh Day Adventist Church is one of the largest denominations. In 2012, Adventists reported 4,180 members, 48 churches, and 36 companies in the Central, East, and South Kalimantan[12] and 4,676 members, 18 churches, and 75 companies in West Kalimantan.[13] Within the past decade Adventists have reported declining membership and stagnant congregational growth in Central, East, and South Kalimantan but steady increases in membership and sudden, rapid increases in congregations in West Kalimantan. Adventists appear to translate printed materials into only one indigenous language in Kalimantan (Dusun Witu). Jehovah's Witnesses report at least 13 congregations in Kalimantan including five congregations in Central Kalimantan, five congregations in West Kalimantan, and three congregations in East Kalimantan. All Witness congregations conduct services in standard Indonesian or English.[14] Witnesses do not appear to translate any proselytism materials into indigenous languages spoken in Kalimantan although several indigenous languages spoken in East Malaysia have Witness translations such as standard Dusun and Iban.[15]

Limitations

The Church does not publish official membership figures for Indonesia by major island group or administrative division. It is unclear whether any member group operates in Kalimantan and whether there are any isolated members who reside in the four Kalimantan provinces. The Church has extended outreach to some indigenous peoples on Borneo in East Malaysia but it is unclear whether indigenous Austronesian peoples in Kalimantan would exhibit similar levels of receptivity to missionary activity if extended one day. It is unclear how local populations would respond to LDS missionary activity as the Church has never established an official presence in Kalimantan.

Future Prospects

The outlook for the initial establishment of the Church in Kalimantan appears favorable within the medium to long term due to a sizable Christian minority, a large population, the size and rapid growth of the Church in neighboring East Malaysia suggesting similar results may occur in Kalimantan, and relatively low levels of religious conflict compared to other areas of Indonesia. However, no noticeable increase in the number of full-time missionaries serving in the Indonesia Jakarta Mission suggests that no imminent LDS establishment will occur within the foreseeable future. A future church establishment in Kalimantan will most likely occur when small numbers of active Latter-day Saints relocate to the island and reside within the same city. Any overt action by mission leaders to open Kalimantan to missionary activity will require a redistribution of the limited numbers of full-time missionaries assigned to the mission or an increase in the number of Indonesian Latter-day Saints serving missions who are assigned to serve within their home country.

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[3] "Dayak, Ngaju, Biadju of Indonesia," joshuaproject.net, retrieved 7 August 2013. http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=13329&rog3=ID

[4] "Kendayah," www.ethnologue.com, retrieved 22 August 2013. http://www.ethnologue.com/language/knx

[5] "Kendayah," Joshua Project, retrieved 22 August 2013. http://www.joshuaproject.net/languages.php?rol3=knx

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[7] "Daya, Maanyak, Ma'anyan of Indonesia," Joshua Project, retrieved 22 August 2013. http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=13176&rog3=ID

[8] "Banjar," www.ethologue.com, retrieved 16 August 2013. http://www.ethnologue.com/language/bjn

[9] "Banjar of Indonesia," www.joshuaproject.net, retrieved 16 August 2013. http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=10658rog3=ID

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[11] "Dayak, Ngaju, Biadju of Indonesia," joshuaproject.net, retrieved 7 August 2013. http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=13329&rog3=ID

[12] "East Kalimantan Mission (2001-Present)," www.adventiststatistics.org, retrieved 15 August 2013. http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=C_EKLM

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[15] "Featured Items," jw.org, retrieved 15 August 2013. http://www.jw.org/en/publications/