

The Kisar of Indonesia



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The 50 square mile island of Kisar looks like a fort. The outer perimeter is a coral rock cliff with a hill separating the inner island (where the people live) and this outer cliff. Moving around the island the occasional corridor cuts through the outer hill to the interior. The only town, Wonreli, is located about one mile from the west coast and almost two miles from the south coast. The government offices function here as well as the open air market three days per week.

The 12,000 people on the island speak two separate languages: Kisar - 10,000 speakers and Oirata - 2,000. The island is divided up into 20 village areas of Kisar speakers and 2 village areas of Oirata speakers. They also speak Indonesian and Ambonese Malay,

There are many Kisar people scattered throughout Indonesia. It's hard to determine exact figures probably there are between 15,000 and 20,000 Kisar people living in other parts of Indonesia. There are Kisar people even living in the USA and Europe. The water supply on the island of Kisar will only sustain around 12,000 which no doubt explains this tendency for Kisar people to seek jobs off the island. There are many Kisar people who have become government workers all over Indonesia from school teachers, to lawyers to boat captains, boat personnel and hired help in many Chinese-run stores.

Most all children go to one of Kisar's 14 elementary schools until at least the sixth grade. There are also two junior high schools and one high school. When asked why it is important to be able to read their language, the answer is: "Because when we read our own language we immediately understand the writing's meaning."

Primary Religion:

Christianity

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

7%

Churches:

1 using Kisar

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

New Testament

Population (date):

~30,000 (2015)



KISAR HOMELAND



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Call Themselves Christian (%)	98%
Believe in their traditional religion (%)	most
Bilingualism	<p>High Indonesian use: government circles, education, church</p> <p>Ambonese Malay: home, education circles (when teachers want to explain in a way that most will understand), church when the trying to make sure the message is understood, I think the Kisar people are the most bilingual in this realm. For many kids however the primary language would be Ambonese Malay and secondary Kisar. Teachers are mostly from Kisar and speak the vernacular language but do not teach using the vernacular.</p> <p>Vernacular: home, play (both Kisar and Ambonese Malay), Most villages are homogenous. Two languages on the island force the use of the common market language (Ambonese Malay) when buying and selling at the market.</p>
Number of Communities	20
Number of Churches	Between 20-30 congregations, estimate
Churches that use the vernacular	None, maybe 1
Response to the Gospel	Stable, appearance is business as usual. Lots of syncretism which has resulted in misunderstanding often unclear national translation. Hopefully a turn-around will happen as the vernacular scriptures are used more. I would say indifference probably most describes the main church body.
Is The Word Of God Translated?	The New Testament was published in 2008.
Hindrances To Scripture Use	Overcoming decades of non-vernacular use bias that was promoted by the dominant church. Pastors are normally not speakers of the vernacular language. Vernacular scripture has been available since 2009 and the church is being encouraged by leadership to use the vernacular.
Other forms Of Gospel Presentation	Audio-visual Bible overview from Global Recordings Network.
Cross-cultural Missionaries Needed	Perhaps the best way to reach the majority of Kisar would be through working with the dominant church. There is definitely a need for evangelism on Kisar but it would be nice if it could come through the dominant church. It would be very slow going for cross-cultural missionaries to come into the Kisar well-churched environment.