

The Rikou of Indonesia



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The Rikou are one of several language groups that live together on the small Indonesian island of Rote in well-defined areas established by historic kings. They live at the eastern tip of the complex dialect chain, which extends down the island. According to legend, the island’s name comes because a Portuguese sailor who was lost and a farmer asked where he was. The man who didn’t understand Portuguese introduced himself as “Rote”.

One of the Rikou people’s staple foods is a sweet, milky drink, *nirah*, that comes from a special variety of lontar palm. The people tap the palm during the five months of dry season each year, drinking the nirah directly and making it into sugar. The people also grow gardens during the wet season, catch fish, and raise pigs, goats, sheep and water buffalo. They use horses for transportation.

Today most Rotenese are professing Christians, many from families of numerous generations of Christians. Pastors use the Indonesian language Bible in services, but without understandable Scriptures, professing Christians lack the foundational truths that lead to practical applications for Christian living. Furthermore, a few Rotenese still practice traditional religion, while some have more recently converted from that practice.

Primary Religion:

Christian

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

Most

Churches:

Unknown

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

Portions

Population (date):

12,000 (2011)



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Response to the Gospel	Traders introduced the people of Rote to Christianity in the 1700s. Impressed by the Christian religion, three rulers went to the larger, more populated island of Java a few years later. There they became Christians, were baptized and attended three years of Bible school. When they returned to their island, they brought a copy of the Bible, written in the trade language. Setting up schools, they taught people to read, and soon Christianity spread throughout the island.
Estimated No. Christian Congregations	Today most Rotenese are professing Christians, many from families of numerous generations of Christians. A few Rotenese still practice traditional religion, while some have more recently converted from that practice.
Number Using Primarily Local Language in Services	Pastors use the Indonesian language Bible in services.
Is the Word of God Translated? Comment	Yes, the book of Mark In 2000, a retired pastor from nearby Timor introduced the Rikou people to the Scripture in Kupang Malay, a creole language used widely in the region. He challenged a cousin, who is a pastor in the area, to begin translation in the Rikou language. The community formed a team; they translated the Gospel of Mark, and published it in 2004.
Other Forms of Gospel Presentations Recordings: Radio: Bible Stories:	Mark 1-11, Music (Christian music & hymns) Radio spots and songs Easter story
Hindrances to Scripture Use	The complexities of the Rotenese writing system.
Language of Wider Communication or Trade Language	Indonesian

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Group Description

Population all countries

World Population	12,000
World Population (Date)	2011 (Ethnologue)

Geography & Environment

Location	Indonesia, an island nation in Asia. The Rikou are one of several language groups that live together on the small island of Rote in well-defined areas established by historic kings. They live at the eastern tip of the complex dialect chain, which extends down the island. Ethnologue: Nusa Tenggara Timur Province; East Rote island, Rikou, Landu, and Oe Pao domains.
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Language

Alternate Names	Eastern Rote, Ringgou, Rote, Rote Timur, Roti, Rotinese
Dialects	Rikou, Landu, Oe Pao (Oepao)
Percent Monolingual	
Other Mother Tongues	Indonesian, Kupang Malay
Linguistically Related	Bilba [bpz] , Dela-Oenale [row] , Dengka [dnk] , Lole [llg] , Rikou [rgu], Termanu [twu] , Tii [txq]
Neighboring Languages	Bilba

Economics

Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists
Products/Crafts	Gardens, catch fish, and raise pigs, goats, sheep and water buffalo

Education

Language Of Instruction	Indonesian
Comment	Some Rikou people are well-educated in Indonesian but not in their own language.

Religion

Religion and percent of population Mostly Christian; a few still practice the traditional religion

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Status of Christianity

History of Christianity

Year Began

1700s

By Whom

Traders

Significant Events

Impressed by the Christian religion, three rulers went to the larger, more populated island of Java to investigate it further. There they became Christians, were baptized and attended three years of Bible school. When they returned to their island, they brought a copy of the Bible, written in the trade language. Setting up schools, they taught people to read, and soon Christianity spread throughout the island

Religion and Response

Translation status

In 2000, a retired pastor from nearby Timor introduced the Rikou people to the Scripture in Kupang Malay, a creole language used widely in the region. He challenged a cousin, who is a pastor in the area, to begin translation in that language. The community formed a team and initiated Scripture translation in their own language. They translated the Gospel of Mark, and published it after a thorough checking process. This was dedicated in a community celebration in December of 2004. The team is now trained and ready to move ahead with a full translation project.