

Tausug



Quick Facts

Population: 1,000,000

Philippines: 850,000

Malaysia: 150,000

Location: Sulu Archipelago

Lang. Family: Bisayan Malay

Religion: Sunni Islam

Believers: 0.05% (MBB)

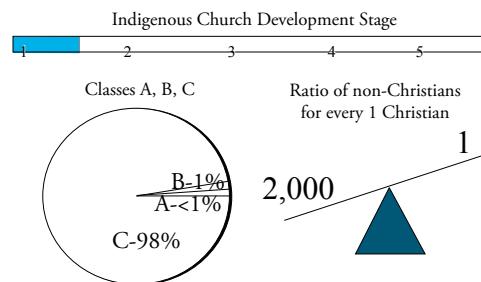
Scriptures: NT

Ministry Tools: JGT

Church Status: 1

Mission Status: 1

MS Subgroups: 4



Identity: The Tausug are a sea-faring Malay people, whose name means “people of the sea-current.” They are scattered throughout coastal areas of the Sulu Archipelago (which is enclosed by the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia), though they have become concentrated on the island of Jolo, just south of Mindanao.

Lifestyle: Formerly, the Tausug were pirates, as well as traders with the Chinese and Arabs. The Tausug were greatly feared for their participation in the slavetrade, a practice which is rumored to persist even today. They fiercely resisted the Spanish and American colonization, and were the organizers of a resistance movement against the Philippine government, which still continues. This has left Jolo, and the Tausug regions largely undeveloped and impoverished, with dim prospects.

Customs: Special taboos are observed related to pregnancy, such as not bath-

ing in sea-water, which is believed to prevent a still-born baby. Births usually occur in homes, and for this reason most Tausug do not have a birth certificate. This fact is often used by Catholic employers in Mindanao to discriminate against Muslim Tausugs seeking a job.

Religion: The Tausug were first introduced to Islam through Arab and Muslim Chinese (Hui) traders in the 13th century. Around a century later, Sufi missionaries from Iraq were successful in bringing the majority of the Tausug into Islam. They have retained a unique view of the afterlife in which God sends all men to a type of purgatory to be punished for sins committed while on earth before they can enter heaven. Folk healers with spiritual powers to heal the sick continue to operate as an integral part of Islam, incorporating Arabic chants and charms into their practice.

Christian Outreach: Almost all missionary personnel have been evacuated

from the Sulu-archipelago region due to the unrest in the region, and the constant threat of kidnapping. Short-term mission outreaches by Filipino believers has resulted in hundreds of positive responses to the gospel, especially in Zamboanga city on the mainland of Mindanao. However, there has not been sufficient long-term efforts to see a Tausug church established despite these signs of increased openness.

How to Pray:

❖ In a recent showing of the Jesus Film, the leaders of over 100 Tausug families accepted the invitation to receive Jesus as Savior. Pray for wisdom in how best to follow up with these leaders, and that many extended family-based fellowships might be established throughout this community.

❖ The economic conditions of the region force most adult men to look for work overseas. This problem has affected the ability of missionaries to train leaders. Pray for a creative solution to this problem, which must be handled very delicately.

❖ Many new believers are forced to flee from their communities. Pray for a permanent witness, especially on the island of Jolo.

**Every year 9,000
Tausug die
without Christ.**