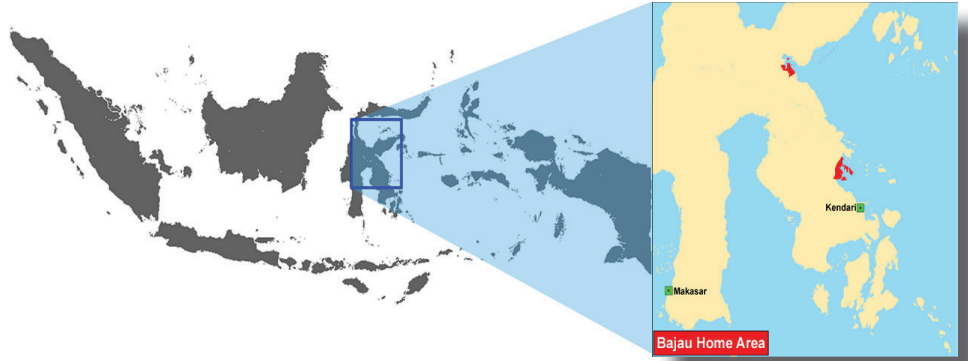
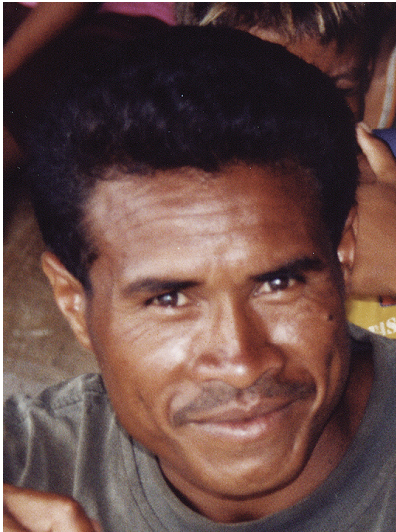


# BAJAU



Demography	Bajau Language	Status
Loc: Indonesia, Malaysia Population: 335.000 Major religion: Islam	Bible: Parts Jesus Film: No Online Media: No	Believers: 40 Engaged: Yes Indigenous church: 3 (home)

## Identity and Location

The Bajau (also known as the Bajo, Sama, orang Laut or Tauriji'ne') are a highly mobile seafaring people. Although the majority live in Indonesia, they also live in Brunei, Malaysia and the Philippines. In Indonesia they are spread across many island groups along the coasts of Sulawesi, Maluku, Kalimantan, Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB) and Nusa Tenggara Timor (NTT). Their high mobility has caused outsiders to call them "the sea gypsies." In Western Indonesia, the Duano people have a similar lifestyle and language as the Bajau, possibly indicating common ancestors. Their language is Bajau, which is part of the Malay cluster of languages, and is related to the Barito language of Kalimantan. Local dialects of Bajau can be very different in the different regions where they live. The Bajau language is also part of the linguistic group called "Sama Bajau" which includes the West Coast Bajau in the Sabah region of Malaysia, as well as the Filipino languages of Sinama, Mapun, Balangingi and Yakan.

## Society and Culture

In the past, the Bajau people were considered boat dwellers, though today very few still live in their boats on the sea. The Bajau mostly live along the seashore, riverbanks, coastal shallows and coral beds. Two to six families will often live and work as a group. They fish, cook, eat and work on their boats, using nets and equipment together. The marine life captured by the Bajau includes more than 200 types of fish. Their fishing method varies with the tides, monsoonal and local winds, currents, fish migration patterns, and the monthly lunar cycle. During moonless nights, fishing is often done with lanterns, using spears and hand lines. Today, fishing is primarily for market sale. Unsold fish are preserved by salting or drying. The boats used as family dwellings vary in size and construction. In Indonesia and Malaysia, boats average 10 meters in length and

2 meters in width. They are plank construction with solid keel and bow sections. All are equipped with a roofed living area made of poles and straw matting and a portable earthenware cooking stove, usually carried near the stern, used for preparing family meals. The boat-dwelling Bajau (in contrast to their neighbors) see themselves as non-aggressive people who prefer flight to physical confrontation.

## Beliefs

The Bajau are Sunni Muslims of the Shafi'i school. Claims to religious piety and learning are an important source of individual prestige. Onshore Bajau villages will always have a mosque. Owing to their nomadic way of life, many Bajau moorage groups lack mosques (mesjid) and must rely on other local mosques where they live as a minority group. Bajau youth are becoming more committed to Islamic practices, but animism is still very prevalent. Among boat dwelling communities in particular, community shamans (dukun) are assembled at least once a year for a public séance and nightly trance dancing. In times of epidemic illness, they are also called on to set a spirit boat adrift in the open sea beyond the village or anchorage site in order to remove the illness-causing spirits from the community. People regularly visit the shaman to seek healing or for a blessing of safety on their sea voyages.

## Needs

Education and health care are the primary needs of the Bajau. Most of the Bajau are illiterate and their young people frequently do not continue their education beyond elementary school because of their distance from available schools and the cost of transportation. They need schools and clinics closer to where they live Bajau. (E-JM & DM)

