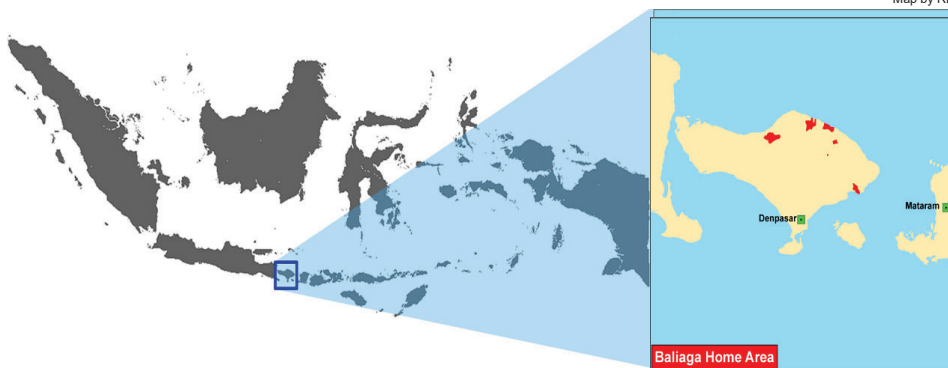


# BALIAGA



Photo by RD



Map by RD

Demography	Bali Language	Status
Location: Bali	Bible: Yes	Believers: <100
Population: 60.000	Jesus Film: Yes	Engaged: Yes
Major Religion: Hindu	Online Media: No	Indigenous Church: 0

## Identity and Location

The Baliaga are a small people group residing in several remote villages on the island of Bali. The culture, language, and religion of the Baliaga differ significantly from that of their Balinese neighbors. They are considered to be the original inhabitants of the island who strictly maintain the cultural traditions of their ancestors. This group was on Bali long before the 16th century arrival of the people group we now know as Balinese (who were actually Javanese Hindus from the Majapahit Kingdom in East Java, who moved to the island and called themselves the Balinese). Some Balinese hold this view of the Baliaga's history, while others consider them just Balinese people who are different. Regardless of those differing opinions, there is certainly a significant difference in the language and culture of the two groups, such that the Baliaga are considered a distinct group. Baliaga villages are not clustered together; they are scattered among Balinese villages in these locations: Bugbug Village in Karang Asem District, Tenganan Village in Manggis District of Karang Asem Regency, the villages of Pedawa, Tigawasa and Sidatapa in Banjar District of Buleleng Regency, Sembiran Village in Tejakula District of Buleleng Regency, and Terunyan Village in Kintamani District of Bangli Regency.

## Society and Culture

The Baliaga culture has a number of unique elements. For example, in the village of Terunyan, the inhabitants do not bury their dead underground. They put the bodies in bamboo cages and place them under a massive sacred banyan tree located within the village. The fact that there is no stench from the decaying bodies is attributed to the power of ancestral spirits.

Another unique aspect of the Baliaga culture is the Banua, Gebog Domas and Ulu Apad social-religious network. Banua are areas for religious rituals with a

certain economic status. Gebog Domas is a gathering at Pura Pucak Penulisan, a temple considered to be the end of the earth. Ulu Apad is a leadership structure in the community.

In the past, there were likely many Baliaga villages, but because of modern development and mixed marriages, the culture and inhabitants of many villages are no longer considered Baliaga. Because of this, the inhabitants of Baliaga villages now may not marry non-Baliaga people. For this reason, the number of Baliaga villages is diminishing over time and it's possible they will become extinct.

## Beliefs

It is difficult to distinguish between the culture and the religion of the Baliaga people because these two aspects are so intertwined. They themselves call their beliefs "Bali," but outsiders consider them Hindus. So their belief could be considered a syncretistic mix of Hinduism and Animism. Normally every family has a dadya (a family temple). They also perform religious rituals at Pura Padharman and Pura Besakih (the latter being the largest and main temple in Bali). Their animistic beliefs can be seen in their worship of ancestors. As mentioned, in one Baliaga village, dead bodies are not buried. They are kept above ground but do not decay.

## Needs

As in the rest of Bali, tourism is the best economic source for the Baliaga people. Their desire to maintain their distinct cultural "antiquity" is both key for a unique tourist industry and a challenge in the midst of the modern development required. The Baliaga need wise counsel to choose what things should be maintained and what should be developed.<sup>(RD)</sup>