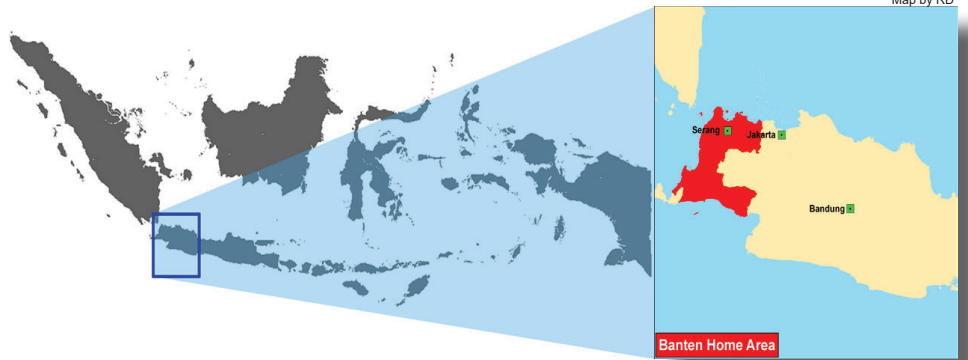


# BANTEN



Photo by RD



Map by RD

Demography	Sunda Language	Status
Location: Banten	Bible: Yes	Believers: <2,800
Population: 3.100.000	Jesus Film: Yes	Engaged: Yes
Major Religion: Islam	Online Media: Yes	Indigenous Church: 0

## Identity and Location

When Indonesians hear “Banten”, they often think of a variety of mystical arts. The Banten are basically Sunda people who have had a different identity since the 15th century establishment of the Banten Kingdom, which broke off from the Padjajaran Kingdom of West Java. The Banten live in Banten Province in the southwest of the island of Java. Currently, most Banten live in the regencies of Pandeglang, Serang, Lebak, and western Tangerang, as well as the cities of Cilegon and Serang. Since 2000, Banten has become its own province, separate from West Java. The Banten speak a dialect of the Sunda language. This dialect is regarded as less polite and less sophisticated than the dialect spoken by Sunda living in West Java.

## Society and Culture

The Banten grow rice and other crops such as coffee, cloves, jengkol beans, bananas, and durian (a fruit with pungent odor and thick, spiky shell). Cooperative groups work the land. One type of group is the *royongan*; in the *royongan* workers are not paid directly. Instead, their wages are pooled and saved by the community elder to be used for the repair of the mosque and Muslim prayer houses.

Another form of cooperative work is called *liluran*, which is helping one another work the rice field without any expectation of payment. Cooperative work arrangements are also used for repairing roads, bridges, and other public facilities. This cooperative work is required of all community members, and any household who does not participate is assessed a fine.

The Banten leadership is composed of three elements: formal leaders (*umaroh*), Muslim religious leaders (*ulama*), and leaders of the traditions and culture (*jawara*). These three groups play an important role in forming the local political system. The village’s kinship relationships are cultivated and developed by the village leaders, who are very respected and honored. Other

village matters are handled by the leaders who take care of matters related to administration, irrigation, logistics, and religion.

Ancient Banten is still of great interest, particularly for historians and archaeologists, as it is one of the famed kingdoms of the past. Banten has many tourist attractions, such as a nature preserve and the great Mosque of Banten, where the tombs of Banten’s sultans are placed at the south and north of the mosque. A nine-level rock (15 meters high) is reportedly a relic from the Megalithic Era. As a tourism area, Banten is open to the outside world, but their traditions and culture are still protected.

## Beliefs

From the 15th century establishment of the Sultanate of Banten until today, the majority of the Banten have been Muslims. They are faithful Muslims, but still practice black magic and occult power. This can be seen in the famous art of Banten known as *debus*: through the use of certain mantras the body of a practitioner can be made invulnerable to physical blows, fire, and sharp objects. Many people from different regions of Indonesian come to Banten to learn these spells or to ask for help. The Banten are known as people who have great occult knowledge.

## Needs

Most Banten make their living as farmers or merchants. In both cases, they need to be prepared to face stiff competition in this modern era. They need better educational facilities, as well as joint business ventures with outside companies to achieve a higher level of competitiveness. Additionally, the Banten living in remote areas such as Panjang Island in Banten Bay need development to overcome poverty.