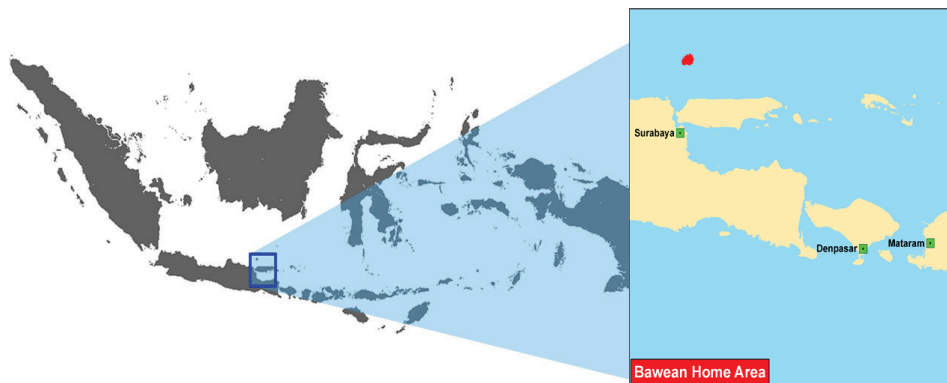


BAWEAN



Photo by JA



Demography	Bawean Language	Status
Location: East Java Population: 95,000 Major Religion: Islam	Bible: No Jesus Film: No Online Media: No	Believers: <10 Engaged: Yes Indigenous Church: 0

Identity and Location

The Baweanese people live on the island of Bawean. Bawean is an 80 square mile island located 75 miles north of the city of Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, in the middle of the Java Sea. Bawean has been known as the “island of women” because the majority of the population are women. This is because the men tend to seek employment in other lands. One man who worked for 20 years in Malaysia said, “A Bawean male is not considered an adult until he has stepped on foreign soil.” A significant number of Baweanese people live in Malaysia, possibly more than the 60,000 who live on the island itself. Other areas of Baweanese migration include Singapore where they are called the Boyanese people, as well as Perth Australia, the Riau islands of Indonesia and even Vietnam.

Society and Culture

The culture of “Merantau” (finding work in other lands) creates interesting dynamics for the Bawean people. On one hand, Bawean is a remote island, located far from modern Indonesian life, but on the other hand, Bawean people are very exposed to the world through their family members who migrate and then return to Bawean.

“A Bawean male is not considered an adult until he has stepped on foreign soil”

Although early settlers came from the island of Madura (as seen in the similarity of their languages), over the centuries the Baweanese have developed their own unique culture which they are very proud of. Cultural influences are evident from Madura, Java, South Sulawesi, Sumatra and Kalimantan. Because of this, an Indonesian journalist, Emmanuel Subangun, wrote in 1976 that the Bawean people are a “crystallization of Indonesian ethnic variety”. The main sources of income for those living and working on the island are farming and fishing. Others own small shops, make grass mats

from palm leaf as a local handcraft, or quarry the high quality onyx on the island for export and local sales. The East Java Provincial government wants Bawean to become a tourism destination so some residents are building small hotels and restaurants to accommodate tourists. However, most income on the island still comes from family members who live and work overseas, most often as seamen, and send money back to Bawean.

Beliefs

Originally the Baweanese embraced animistic beliefs, many of which they still practice today. Then Hindu and Buddhist influences entered the island until the 1600’s when Islam reached Bawean. Since then, the Baweanese have embraced Islam brought to them by Maulana Umar Mas’ud whose grave is now revered by local Muslim pilgrims. Their religious devotion is extremely strong and they pride themselves in the fact that 100% of the island’s inhabitants follow Islam. There are numerous mosques, prayer houses and Islamic schools in every village. Boys and girls from age six or seven receive religious instructions including reciting the Qur’an. At times the students live in the homes of a Kyai (Islamic teacher), as the Kyai is greatly respected by the Baweanese people.

Needs

Although the standard of living on the island is higher now than in many other isolated islands, there are still many unmet needs such as homes that still do not have indoor bathrooms. But there is electricity 24 hours a day, phones, computers, a bank and better transportation by boat and most recently, plane. As already stated, the tourism sector is being developed in light of Bawean’s natural beauty. These are assets that not only may improve Bawean’s economy but can open avenues to potentially reach the Bawean people. For though the name Bawean means rays of sunlight, her people still live in darkness, desperately needing the LIGHT. ^(E-RD & JA)