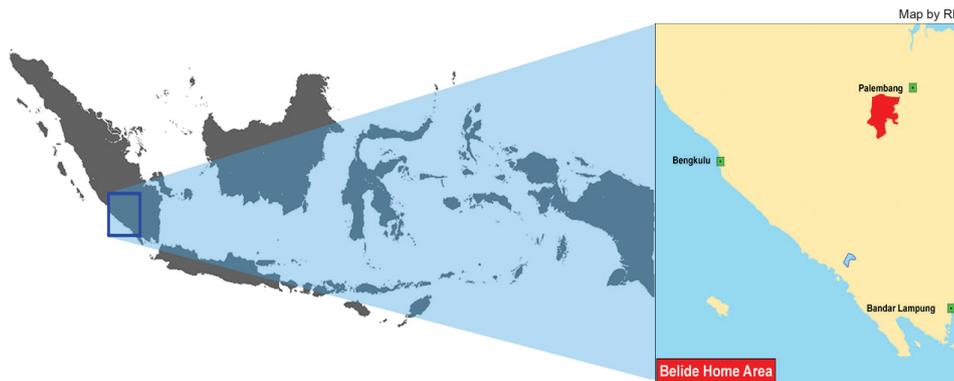


BELIDE



Photo by RD



Demography	Belide Language	Status
Location: South Sumatera	Bible: No	Believers: 0
Population: 82.500	Jesus Film: No	Engaged: Yes
Major Religion: Islam	Online Media: No	Indigenous Church: 0

Identity and Location

The Belide live in 58 villages in the Muara Enim Regency of South Sumatra Province, in the districts of Gelumbang and Lembak. Even in their home area, the Belide people live alongside the Javanese, Rambang, Meranjat and Ogan people.

The Belide area is between 0–100 meters above sea level. Most of the area is vast coarse grassland. The distance from the Belide area to Muara Enim, the capital of Muara Enim Regency, is about 2.5 hours. Travel to the city of Prabumulih takes about 1 hour, and to Palembang (the capital of South Sumatra), about 2 hours..

Society and Culture

The Belide people have their own Belide language, which is part of the Ogan language cluster, having many similarities. They can easily understand the Ogan, Meranjat, Lematang, Enim and Rambang dialects. The Belide also speak and understand the Palembang language. However they do not understand dialects of the Pasemah cluster such as Semendo, Lintang, Empat Lawang and Lembak. But with some study they can easily learn these dialects also.

The Belide differ from other groups in that they still retain their settlements as in the past, along a riverbank and far from a main road.

The Belide also possess a form of writing called Tulisan Ulu, a syllabary system in which each symbol represents a syllable. Only a few older people still remain who use this kind of writing.

Most Belide live in traditional houses raised above the ground on wooden or brick columns. Only a few are building houses that are not raised above the ground. Most of them build houses that look terraced, because the part of the house below the platform is also made into a home.

Beliefs

Belide people say, “We are all Muslims.” However, a great many of them still retain many animist and spiritist beliefs and taboos. For example, residents are forbidden to grow durian (a large fruit with a spiky shell) in some parts of the Belide area because, according to a local legend, one of their ancestors was killed when a durian fell and struck him. As a result, a curse was placed on anyone who grows durian trees in the surrounding area. Thus, residents of this area do not cultivate durian, although it could grow well here.

The Belide also observe superstitions regarding bathing. A person who bathes in the river may not turn their back to the river, but must face the river. They believe that a person who breaks this taboo will die. The Belide are also not allowed to get in the river to bathe. They must stay on the riverbank and take water for bathing from the river with a dipper instead of swimming in the river. They also have a taboo against spreading rice to dry in the road. Rice can be laid to dry in other places, such as the yard around one’s house, but may not be dried in the road.

These examples demonstrate a syncretistic form of Islam, incorporating traditional animistic beliefs which appear more dominant than Islamic teaching.

Needs

Even though the Trans-Sumatra highway passes through the Belide area, the Belide tend to not access the benefits of modernization. They prefer to live next to rivers or other bodies of water rather than near the main roads. They could be greatly helped by efforts to raise their awareness of the resources available to them in their area.^(E-RD)