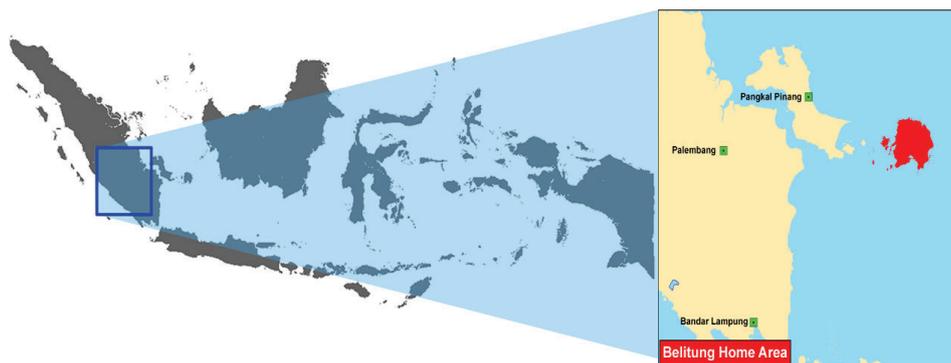


# BELITUNG

Map by RD



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Demography	Belitung Language	Status
Location: Bangka Belitung Population: 110.000 Major Religion: Islam	Bible: No Jesus Film: No Online Media: No	Believers: < 30 <sup>(586)</sup> Engaged: Yes Indigenous Church: 0

## Identity and Location

The Belitung live on Belitung Island in Bangka-Belitung Province. This island is in the South China Sea, of the east coast of Sumatra, to the southeast of the island of Bangka. Belitung island consists of low flat land with a few hills, such as Tajam Laki and Tajam Bini. Some areas have small rivers and lakes that can be found near old tin mines. The Belitung call themselves Urang Belitong.

The Belitung language is a branch of the Malay language cluster. A distinctive feature of their language is that it does not have the letter 'h' and that they use the letter 'e' (as in the vowel in the word 'bet') at the end of words that normally end with an 'a'. For example hujan (rain) becomes ujan, putih (white) becomes pute, and apa (what) becomes ape. Another distinctive feature is that they use derived terms from two or more words. For example, hendak kemana (where do you want to go) becomes nakmane.

## Society and Culture

Belitung island is considered important because of its tin mines. Many earn their livelihood from mining tin and kaolin (a soft white clay essential in the manufacturing of china and porcelain). Others work as traders, fishermen, boat builders, iron smiths or office workers.

*A village consists of a group of families called a keleka. The keleka is led by a traditional chief and his assistants and has its own regulations.*

Only a small part of the land is suitable for rice cultivation. Planting rice is usually done with slash-and-burn farming techniques. Besides dry rice farming, they also plant corn, cassava, sweet potatoes, and banana

trees. Other crops include rubber, pepper, cloves, and coconut.

The handicraft industries developed by the Belitung are porcelain, ceramic, and rattan crafts. The traditional Belitung house is built on wooden supports with bark walls and roofs of sago palm leaves. They also build temporary villages near the jungle to be used during the harvest. After the harvest is over, they return to their own homes.

The ancestry of the Belitung can be traced through the line of either the father or the mother. A village consists of a group of families called a keleka. The keleka is led by a traditional chief and his assistants and has its own regulations. The religious leader is a shaman who leads the religious ceremonies of the village.

## Beliefs

The Belitung adhere to Islam which came to the area around the 17th century. Besides Islam, many Belitung also believe in animism and superstitions. These beliefs are focused on seeking protection through magic by either appeasing or controlling both good and bad spirits. This can be seen in their ceremonies for working the rice fields, fishing, and weddings. They still believe in magical forces that inhabit sacred places. They also have many taboos.

## Needs

The Belitung need guidance to develop their job skills. The small industries that already exist, such as handicrafts and ironworking, need more professional management so that they can achieve greater success. This would release them from economic dependence on tin mining, whether by corporations or the local community.