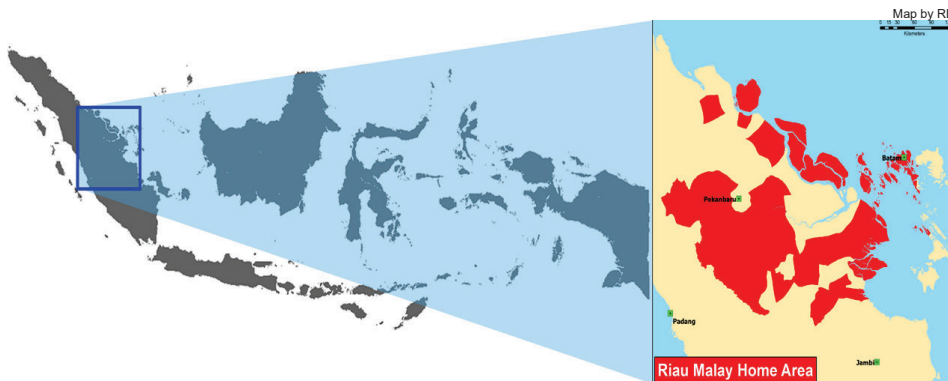


RIAU MALAY



Photo by TK



Demography	Riau Malay Language	Status
Location: Riau Population: 1.825.000 Major Religion: Islam	Bible: No Jesus Film: No Online Media: No	Believers: < 30 ⁽¹¹³⁰⁾ Engaged: Yes Indigenous Church: 0

Identity and Location

The Riau Malay are the largest ethnic group in the provinces of Riau and Riau Islands. Nevertheless a number of other ethnic groups live among them and interact with them, with each group guarding its culture well. These groups include the Minangkabau, the Jawa, and the ethnic Chinese. The Riau Malay language is part of the Malay language cluster. Some smaller groups also live among the Riau Malay, including the Talang Mamak, Sakai, Bonai, and Sea People.

The Riau Malay language is a variation of Malay, and has two dialects. One dialect is used in the islands and near the coast, while the other dialect is used on the Sumatran mainland. The Riau Malay language is used in traditional poetry, local proverbs, magic incantations, legends, romantic stories, and other forms to express the feelings of the people.

The Riau Malay region of Sumatra encompasses a large area. While most Riau Malay live on the mainland of Sumatra, other Riau peoples live on the 3,214 small islands that comprise the province of Riau Islands. The two most developed islands in that province are Batam and Bintan, approximately 30-45 minutes by boat from Singapore.

Society and Culture

The Riau Malay people make a living as fishermen and farmers. For those living on the islands, their way of life depends more on the ocean. Farming is limited because of inefficient farming methods.

Most Riau Malay live in wooden homes built on stilts (to avoid floods) along a river, shoreline, or road. Some of them build houseboats, placing a house on a floating

raft. Besides functioning as houses, these can also be used as small stores.

Historically, the Riau Malay have adhered to a bilateral lineage system in which lineage is traced through both the mother and the father. Some only use a patrilineal (from the father's side) system, which is a result of Islamic teaching. Some others only follow a matrilineal (from the mother's side) system, due to Minangkabau influence. The basic family unit consists of the mother, father, and unmarried children.

Beliefs

The Riau Malay have been influenced by Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and European cultures. Islam now influences almost every aspect of present-day life for the Riau Malay and parents emphasize religious education over formal education, particularly in primary school. At the same time, many common practices indicate the strong adherence to traditional spiritual beliefs—for example, potions used to ward off evil spirits. A shaman (called a bomo) is normally asked to drive out evil spirits which are believed to be the cause of sickness.

Needs

Their standard of living is far below that enjoyed by more recent immigrants to the Riau Province. This is ironic given that this province gives more money to the central government's budget than any other province, with the exception of East Kalimantan. Also much of their land has been taken over by plantations which are springing up around Riau. Burning of forests and swamps to open new land occurs every year. Because of this, there is a need to work together closely with the Riau Malay community to increase their understanding of law and economics.