

# ORANG JAWA



Population	Major Religion	Language
10,000	Islam	Bahasa Malaysia

## Who are the Orang Jawa?

The Orang Jawa ('people of Java', also known as 'Javanese') migrated from Central Java, Indonesia, to Malaysia from 1880 to 1930. They migrated to seek a new life away from the Dutch colonists who ruled Indonesia at that time. Today the Orang Jawa live throughout Peninsular Malaysia in parts of Perak, Selangor, and Kedah. There are also isolated communities in coastal areas of Sabah. Some Jawa have even gained influential positions in society. The Chief Minister of Selangor traces his roots back to Orang Jawa ancestors.

The Jawa language is being spoken less and less among today's younger Orang Jawa. Most of them have either never learned it or cannot remember how to speak it.

## What are their lives like?

Recent generations of Orang Jawa who live in cities have assimilated with the general Malay culture. In the past their parents were farmers, construction workers and timber workers. Now they also work as bankers, pilots, engineers, accountants, and politicians. They are known to be efficient and industrious. Some Orang Jawa in Selangor work as Islamic religious teachers.

In some villages, the Orang Jawa maintain their identity and traditions. People from other Malay people groups who marry into an Orang Jawa family sometimes call themselves Orang Jawa, or Jawa Peranakan. Apart from growing their own vegetables and raising poultry, some villagers have also started their own tourism programs to promote the Javanese way of life.

The Orang Jawa are a very hospitable people, usually inviting visitors to share a meal with the family. Families are often quite large, some having between 10 and 17 children. Marriages are grand affairs that

sometimes last up to three days. The giving of love gifts to the newlyweds is common. Emphasis is placed on helping one another during weddings rather than receiving large sums of money. As the Orang Jawa have become more successful in life, their desire to recover their cultural Javanese roots has grown.

## What do they believe?

The Orang Jawa are predominantly Sunni Muslims. During weddings and circumcision rituals they perform the *jedur* (songs of praise to the prophet Mohammed) which is compiled in a book called *Silawatan*. They also perform the *kempling* (a type of dance giving praise to *Allah*) during religious occasions.

During the performance, they use a tool made from lamb's wool and wood. The Qur'an is read before and after the dance, and it takes a group of between ten to twenty people to perform it. The *kempling* performance is an opportunity for the Orang Jawa to get together to build ethnic solidarity and unity. It is also a time for discussing the challenges faced by the villages.

## What are their needs?

The Orang Jawa have a strong Islamic background. Pray that communication bridges into their culture could be used to meet the spiritual needs. Pray that the lives of committed believers will be a positive influence and could bring about good relationships with Orang Jawa people.