



## Reaching Muslims in Asia: Southern Thailand The Land of Smiles

Thailand, the “land of smiles,” is predominantly known as a Buddhist nation, with golden temples and saffron robed monks scattered throughout the whole nation. Buddhism is also recognized as the state religion and thus it is often said “to be Thai is to be Buddhist.” However, what is often overlooked about Thailand is that there’s another segment of the population who for hundreds of years have resisted assimilation into the Thai Buddhist culture.<sup>1</sup>

### The Muslims of Thailand

These people form about 5% to 10% of the nation’s populace, and number over 4 million. They are the Muslims of Thailand, a mixed race sharing a common bond in their Islamic faith. They can be found from the far north of Thailand to its most southern tip, and have little to no exposure of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The majority of Thai Muslims live in the southern region and are mostly of Malay decent. The Southern Muslims are broken into two main groups: the Malay speaking Pattani people of the three most southern provinces, and the Pak Tai (southern Tai dialect) speakers of the remaining southern provinces. Besides Muslims in the South, there are significant Islamic communities in Bangkok, the nation’s capital, and in the northern provinces of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai. The Islamic communities of Bangkok are an ethnically mixed group, while the northern province Muslims are primarily ethnic Chinese. The Cambodian Cham, a small and usually overlooked community lives mostly in Bangkok as well as in the Northeast of Thailand.

### Community of Thailand

Most Malays are rural people and live in close knit communities and small villages known as kampungs. Fishing, rubber and rice farming are the main industries but tourism is a fast growing industry in the peninsular. The typical Malay family has a distinct and ordered structure in which the father is the undisputed head. Conversion from Islam is seen as not only a rejection of the religion but of the culture and family.

In Thailand there is relative religious freedom but this could change with more Muslims entering into Government positions. Work with the Pattani Malay started in 1952 with market-place evangelism, literature drives, medical and leprosy clinics. **Presently there are very few mission agencies, and probably no national churches working specifically among the Muslims of Thailand. To reach these people within the next decade a special mission thrust is needed. Church planting teams must be raised up and trained to reach these Muslim communities.**

### Background on Thailand (World Factbook)

A unified Thai kingdom was established in the mid-14th century. Known as Siam until 1939, Thailand is the only Southeast Asian country never to have been taken over by a European power. A bloodless revolution in 1932 led to a constitutional monarchy. In alliance with Japan during World War II, Thailand became a US ally following the conflict. Thailand is currently facing armed violence in its three Muslim-majority southernmost provinces.

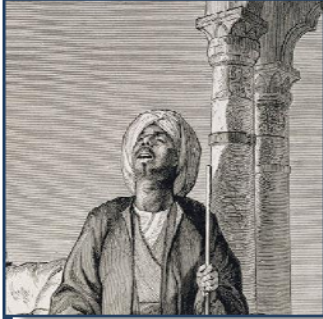


## Prayer Points:

- Pray for more workers to be sent to the Muslims in Thailand and for wisdom to know how to communicate the gospel effectively within the people's cultural context (Matthew 4:18-20).
- Pray that the Thai church would receive a burden to reach Thai Muslims in a way that is both culturally relevant and Biblical.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit would bring both conviction of sin and revelation of the person of Isa Al-Masih to the Muslims of Thailand (Isaiah 60:1-2).

References: <sup>1</sup> Today's material adapted from <http://www.30-days.net/muslims/muslims-in/asia-east/thailand/>

## Resources: Adhan – the Cry from the Minaret



Have you ever heard the Adhan – the call to prayer – from a local mosque? Some consider it hauntingly beautiful, while others just find it haunting. Have you ever wondered what they are saying in that flowing Arabic chant? Find out this and much more in a new, free online resource at [CMOCanada.org](http://www.cmocanada.org). In this resource you'll find the Qur'anic admonition regarding the adhan, what the Hadiths (traditional sayings with spiritual authority almost equal to the Qur'an) *and how Believers in Jesus can answer the cry from the minaret*. In addition to this resource, you'll find other free resources recently added for your use. Blessings be upon you as you answer the Adhan – the call to prayer. [If your pdf software doesn't support active url web links, copy and paste this to your web browser: <http://www.cmocanada.org/resources/> ]

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