



**Population:**

1,138,300 (2000)  
1,274,800 (2010)  
1,428,000 (2020)

**Countries:** Myanmar, Thailand

**Buddhism:** Theravada

**Christians:** 10,000

## Overview of the Mon

**Other Names:** Talaing, Mun, Teguan, Taleng, Aleng, Takanoon, Mou, Rmen, Rman, Peguan

**Population Sources:**  
1,053,000 in Myanmar (2003, Joshua Project II)<sup>1</sup>

120,000 in Thailand (2000, J Schliesinger [1995 figure])

**Language:** Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Monic

**Dialects:** 3 (Mataban-Moulmein [Central Mon]; Pegu [Northern Mon]; Ye [Southern Mon])

**Professing Buddhists:** 85%

**Practising Buddhists:** 60%

**Christians:** 0.8%

**Scripture:** Bible 1928; New Testament 1847; Portions 1843

**Jesus film:** available

**Gospel Recordings:** Mon; Mon; Thailand; Mon; Takanoon

**Christian Broadcasting:** available

**ROPAL code:** MNW

More than 1.2 million Mon people live along the Myanmar-Thailand border in Southeast Asia. The majority (more than a million) live in the delta regions east of Yangon (Rangoon) in the country of Myanmar. A further 120,000 Mon dwell on the Thai side of the border, especially in Kanchanaburi, Phetchaburi, Ratchaburi, Pha Nakhon Sri Ayutthaya, Lopburi and Nakhon Ratchasima. These provinces are located north and south of Bangkok. The Mon in Thailand are also widely known as the Talaing.<sup>2</sup> In the 1931 census of Burma (Myanmar) the Mon numbered 336,728 people.<sup>3</sup> This Mon group is not related to the small Indo-European

Mon tribe of Ladakh, India.

The Mon established the first truly great civilization in the region, with the power of the Dvaravati Kingdom peaking between the 5th and 8th centuries.

The Mon are acknowledged as the original Buddhists in Southeast Asia, having accepted Buddhism from present-day Sri Lanka in the 5th century.

The Mon gave the region its first alphabet, based on the Indic-based Pali script.<sup>4</sup> In AD 769 the Mon founded a great city in northern Thailand on the site of today's Lamphun. By the mid-13th century, 'the Mon city-state of Haripunjaya had grown into the cultural and religious center of northern Thailand. The Mon . . . maintained contact with Ceylon [now Sri Lanka], and Theravada Buddhist schools taught Buddhism to other ethnic groups—the Lawa and the newly arrived Tai.'<sup>5</sup>

Later Mon history records constant warfare with the Burmese. They were finally

subdued in 1757, and their kingdom was demolished.<sup>6</sup> Many soldiers and civilians fled from the Burmese at the time. Most of those who crossed the border are the ancestors of today's Mon in Thailand. The rest of the Mon in Myanmar were steadily driven south by the Burmese until today most of them inhabit areas in the southern part of Mon State.

Linguistically, the Mon language comes from the Mon-Khmer branch, although less than 50,000 of the 120,000 Thailand Mon are still able to speak their mother tongue. Every year fewer Mon can read their script, making the 1928 Mon Bible increasingly

obsolete.

The Mon were the first Buddhists in Southeast Asia, and today the vast majority of people retain their belief in Buddhism.<sup>7</sup> 'Each Mon village has a monastery. Most male children become monks for a time around 10 years of age, and again at 20. At 21, they may choose a lifetime commitment as monks. Females may become nuns. The monastery and its servants are respected, and the local monastery also serves as the village school.'<sup>8</sup> Animistic practices also have

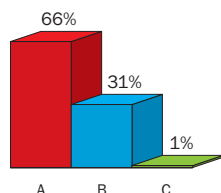
a place in everyday Mon life. The Mon 'give offerings to many spirits and observe several kinds of taboos. . . . Buddhist monks are often consulted for advice about the supernatural and they also act as astrologers.'<sup>9</sup>

Although the New Testament was translated into Mon as early as 1847, the gospel has made slow progress among them in both Myanmar and Thailand. Today there are an estimated 10,000 Mon Christians, but this total represents less than one per cent of the population. They remain an extremely needy unreached group.



Myanmar Faces and Places

## Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel  
B = Have heard the gospel but have not become Christians  
C = Are adherents to some form of Christianity