Thai Muslims and their co-religionists in Sri Lanka and Burma provide three examples of Muslim minority communities living in Theravada Buddhist majority countries. Two of these communities are the ‘nationalist’ Thai Muslim community in Thailand and the Muslims of the southern states of Malaysia. The third is the Muslims of the former Siam (Thailand) and the new Republic of Siam (Thailand), which was a constitutional monarchy from 1932 to 1972.

Thai Muslims are a minority ethnic group located in the southern provinces of Thailand, especially in the border areas with Malaysia and Cambodia. They are descended from Muslim traders, scholars, and disciples who came to Thailand during the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya periods (1238-1767) to establish trade and religious missions. The first Muslim missionaries came to Thailand during the Sukhothai period, and the second wave came during the Ayutthaya period, particularly after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. The third wave of Muslim immigration occurred in the early 20th century, when many Muslims from various parts of Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, settled in Thailand.

The majority of Thai Muslims are Sunni Muslims, with a small number of Shia Muslims. The religion of Buddhism is predominant in Thailand, but Muslims are accommodated and have the right to practice their religion freely. The Thai state has always respected the religious freedom of its citizens, and the Thai Constitution guarantees the freedom of conscience and religion.

The political engagement of Thai Muslims on the national and international stages has been significant. Thai Muslims have participated in national politics and have formed political parties, such as the Wahdah (Unity) and the Democrat Party. These parties have played an important role in national politics, especially in the 1990s and 2000s.

Thai Muslims have also been active in the development of education and culture. They have established mosques and Islamic schools, and they have contributed to the development of Islamic education in Thailand. Thai Muslims have also played an important role in the promotion of Thai-Buddhist-Muslim relations.

In conclusion, Thai Muslims have a long and diverse history in Thailand. They have contributed significantly to the cultural, social, and political life of the country. Thai Muslims are a vital part of the Thai society, and their presence is an important aspect of the cultural diversity of Thailand.

Notes
2. Dr. Imtiyaz Yusuf, College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand. E-mail: imtiyaz@susu.uth.ac.th

Thai Muslims of Persian, Pakistani, Indonesian and Malaysian origin have been present in Thailand since the Sukhothai period (1238-1370). They came to Thailand primarily as traders, scholars and disciples. Their presence in Thailand has been continuous, except for the period of the Burmese invasion of 1767, when many Muslims fled to other parts of South-East Asia. The first wave of Muslim immigration to Thailand took place during the Sukhothai period, and the second wave occurred during the Ayutthaya period, especially after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. The third wave of Muslim immigration occurred in the early 20th century, when many Muslims from various parts of South-East Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, settled in Thailand.

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