

The Khmer of Cambodia

It was 4 am. Amidst the chanting of the monks, Narith and his wife joined the procession of people circling the temple grounds. All carried trays of leaf-wrapped sticky rice balls and sweets affixed with incense sticks, a single lit candle and a small paper 'spirit flag'. This was the annual Pchum Ben Festival, where the Khmer believe that the spirits of the dead are allowed to return briefly to their former homes. The people began casting the rice balls and sweets onto the ground. As Narith scattered the food offerings from his tray, haunting images of his late family - his parents, eldest married brother and his sister-in-law and their two children, second older brother, elder sister and younger sister - flashed in his mind. All had perished in the Khmer Rouge genocide, their remains possibly lying in unmarked mass graves. Hastily blinking back his tears, Narith fervently hoped that their souls would be comforted by his offerings.

The **Khmer** (population: 14.03 million) are Cambodia's main ethnic group. Their ancestors established the powerful Angkor civilization that controlled Southeast Asia. A vicious civil war from the late 1960s to early 1970s led to the communist Khmer Rouge reign of terror from 1975-1979. This ended with the 1979 Vietnamese invasion but was followed by a devastating famine. Possibly two million **Khmer** lost their lives during these nightmarish years. Many survivors remain emotionally traumatised to this day.

The **Khmer** practise a form of Theravada Buddhism which blends elements of Hinduism, animism and ancestor worship. While **Khmer** churches can be seen in major cities such as Phnom Penh, only 3.2% of the **Khmer** profess to be Christian. Cult groups such as the Mormons are also making inroads.

- Pray for God's mercy to be revealed upon the **Khmer**. Pray especially for the many who carry deep emotional wounds from their country's tragic history.
- Pray for the Light of God's Truth to dispel the spiritual forces of death, violence and spiritual deception over the **Khmer**.
- Pray for the continued growth and maturity among the **Khmer** believers that they will boldly share their faith with other **Khmer** people.

This is a series of useful prayer profile compilations to pray for people groups collated from various online sources. Please click on the links below for more info:
<https://joshuaproject.net/>, <http://www.globalprayerdigest.org/>,
<http://asiaharvest.org/people-group-profiles/>