

BAREND JAN TERWIEL

The ‘Soul’ of the Tai Re-Examined
The Khwan Concept and Tham Khwan
Ceremony of the Tai-Speaking Peoples

Edited by:
BENJAMIN BAUMANN

GALDA VERLAG



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MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TOWARDS THE REGION

Volume 9

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ABOUT THE SERIES

Developments in the field of area studies — goaded by the analytical deconstruction of world regions as such — have deeply affected the knowledge production on societies and cultures located in these politicized compartmentalization of the globe. With this series, the editors and authors wish to contribute to a reformulation of area studies that emphasizes the continuing epistemic value of contextualized knowledge production that is firmly rooted in concrete places. Starting with the notion of Southeast Asia, books published in this series will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of regionality based on a multidisciplinary approach. The series represents an outlet for young scholars intending to publish their degree theses and dissertations; and for established scholars who are looking for a place to republish out-of-print books, edited volumes or themed collections of their own papers and articles. We also invite scholarly collectives to publish collaborative works or edited volumes on topics that usually will not attract the attention of big presses due to their transdisciplinary orientation or the niche character of their topic. Our overall motivation is to maintain Southeast Asian studies as a critical and self-reflexive academic field.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE FORMER MONK'S MAGIC

I started to study Thailand in the early 2000s. Although my major was anthropology, I soon realized that I wouldn't be able to deepen my understanding of Thailand, my initial motivation to study anthropology, by solely relying on the courses offered at the anthropology department of Freie Universität Berlin. However, when during my first semester I learned about the possibility to study Thai studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, I decided to also enrol in this program as my second major, although it meant to commute between the two universities. At that time, I still couldn't believe that something like Thai studies was taught at a German university. The focus seemed too narrow and the country geo-politically too irrelevant to justify the existence of an autonomous field of study or an individual department at a German university focused solely on a single country in Southeast Asia.

However, shortly before I enrolled at the Institute of Asian and African Studies, the institute's vision of area studies had changed dramatically. The philologically based and historically oriented Thai studies, Vietnamese studies, Burmese studies, Khmer studies and Indonesian studies programs previously taught at the institute vanished and became subsumed under the encompassing label of Southeast Asian studies.¹ When I enrolled in the programme, I didn't care much about this recent re-imagining of area studies. As long as I was able to study Thailand and learn Thai, everything seemed fine for me. I quickly realized, however, that just because a language is taught in an area studies department, this doesn't necessarily mean that cultural, social and historical seminars about the speakers of this language are also provided. Some

¹ This is an ongoing process, as the institute has recently also abandoned its BA and MA programs in "Southeast Asian Studies" and now only offers BA and MA degrees in "Area Studies Asia/Africa".

of my fellow students with the same country-specific interests responded to this absence by moving from Berlin to Hamburg, where they enrolled in the more philologically oriented vision of Thai studies that continues to be taught there under the label *Thaistik* by the Department of Languages and Cultures of Thailand and Laos.

Barend Jan (Baas) Terwiel was until his retirement in 2007 head of this department and it was from my friends who moved there and praised him as a teacher that I first heard about him. I always envied them when they told me about Baas' seminars and how he used an interdisciplinary approach that combined anthropology, history and manuscriptology to illuminate aspects of Tai culture for his students. Because I self-financed my studies and had a well paying student job in Berlin, it was not an option for me to move to Hamburg. Therefore, I never had a chance to meet Baas during my undergraduate training. However, I read *Monks and Magic*, his famous book on everyday religious rituals in Central Thailand, and various other books and articles written by him as a student. I thus developed my personal sense of him by reading widely in his scholarship, and he became the German eminence of Thai Studies in my imagination.

Baas retired one year before I finished my undergraduate training, and he later moved from Hamburg to Berlin. This was really fortunate for me, as he decided to visit the Institute of Asian and African Studies when I was working there on a proposal for my doctoral research project. Baas initially planned to meet Vincent Houben, who hired me as a part-time lecturer and supervised the crafting of my research proposal. As Vincent was still in a meeting that day, he asked me to welcome Baas instead of him. I used the opportunity to explain to Baas the goals of my doctoral research project, in which I intended to look at the ethnic identity of Thailand's Khmer-speaking minority in the lower Northeast and how it is reproduced through popular religious rituals. We had a long conversation about my research project that day, and Baas offered me his help and support.

After the funding for my research project was granted and I became a research associate at the Institute of Asian and African Studies, I initiated a Thailand Study Group together with Serhat Ünalı, a fellow PhD student working on Thai politics. Together we organized several workshops, a lecture series and various symposia. Baas was usually one of our distinguished guests, filling the void created by the absence of a professor specializing on Thailand at the institute. Over the years we met regularly, either during one of the events of our study group or during one of the many events the Royal

Thai Embassy in Berlin organized. Sometimes Baas would also invite us to his apartment to browse through his extensive private library. One of the most remarkable meetings I fondly recall was after I returned from a prolonged fieldwork trip and we discussed for nearly a day the video footage of rituals I had recorded, trying to see similarities and differences between rituals he knew from Central Thailand and what I had observed in Buriram Province. During these discussions of my fieldwork material, I talked not only to a senior anthropologist but also to a former monk, who was able to see things in the ethnographic material that usually elude the eye of a lay spectator.

Later during my PhD research I received an invitation from the journal *Aséanie* to review the fourth and revised edition of *Monks and Magic* published by NIAS Press in 2012 with the new subtitle *Revisiting a Classic Study of Religious Ceremonies in Thailand*.² I accepted the invitation and decided to read the revised manuscript during my upcoming fieldwork to fill the many idling periods anthropological fieldwork in a rural community in Thailand's Northeast entails.³ This was another fortunate coincidence as many ritual practices I had encountered during previous periods of fieldwork and was now observing again, were nearly identical or closely related to the rituals and ceremonies Baas observed in a rural village in Central Thailand during the late 1960s. I now recognized and understood many details that I may have overlooked or simply ignored initially, only because I re-read *Monks and Magic* in the field. However, I also know now that I misread certain ritual details during that time, due to my in-depth engagement with *Monks and Magic*. The ritual practices Baas described for rural Central Thailand in the late 1960s looked astonishingly similar to the ritual practices I observed in rural Buriram 50 years later. Nevertheless, details differ and localized interpretations are not necessarily congruent, since they have been shaped by the peculiarities of time and place and idiosyncratic village traditions, as my later analyses revealed.

This localized variability is an essential aspect of ritual, and it seems especially relevant when we study Tai-speakers and their regional neighbours in Thailand and beyond. I think this interpretive point becomes even more

² Benjamin Baumann, "Review of "Monks and Magic: Revisiting a Classic Study of Religious Ceremonies in Thailand", by Barend Jan Terwiel (2012), *Aséanie* 28, 2012, pp. 210–214

³ The impression of excessive idling is an aspect of ethnographic fieldwork that especially newcomers to the anthropological endeavor seem to struggle with. It took quite a while until I developed ways to cope with these long stretches of time in which nothing ostensibly significant for my research seems to happen and use them productively, either for recreation, writing or reading. Reading Baas' book in the field with the intention to draft a review was certainly a moment that sharpened my sense of the benefits and dangers that reading an ethnography in the field can entail.

obvious when we examine the studies we have gathered together in this volume. All of these studies address a crucial aspect of the lifeworld of all Tai-speakers, but local variation is great and a unified analysis seems problematic. Baas' comparative anthropological project and his encyclopaedic method, which compiles information from written primary and secondary sources to provide an overview of phenomenon that seem otherwise totally heterogenous, may appear to many readers as an outdated approach and reminiscent of "armchair anthropology". However, through the compilation of Baas' texts in this volume I hope to show that this is a misconception, and that there is a lot to gain from such a comparative project.

Crucial to Baas' method, furthermore, is how he always tries to contextualize the material he gathers from written sources with his own ethnographic observations and experiences. This methodological approach is not only limited to the time he spent first as a monk and later as a layman in a rural village in Central Thailand, but also includes his field trips to the Tai-speakers of India's Northeast. As the textual requirements of scientific publications rarely leave room to detail the contingencies that characterize anthropological fieldwork, in this re-publication of Baas' research we decided to add biographical notes that illuminate the circumstances that produced some of the studies compiled in this volume.

While writing my dissertation, I read most of Baas' texts. Some of them, however, are not easy to obtain, and I was again lucky that I could simply ask Baas for those publications that I could not find in a library. It was during that time that his comparative method, which looks at the similarities and differences in the ritual life of various Tai-speakers from Assam in the West and Annam in the East to Southern China in the North and the Malay Peninsula in the South, left a lasting impression on me that continues to shape my understanding of the localization of ritual practices in the region.⁴

When Galda Press asked me to become a member of the editorial board for a new book series dedicated to Southeast Asia, they also asked whether I had any suggestions for a book project. I immediately thought about Baas' sometimes difficult to find but important scholarship, and thus the idea for this volume was born. I think I had the idea for such a compilation in mind ever since I became deeply acquainted with Baas' work. I just needed a catalyst to formulate it. During the writing of my dissertation I began to

⁴ Benjamin Baumann "Reconceptualizing the Cosmic Polity: The Tai mueang as a Social Ontology" in B. Baumann and D. Bultmann (eds). *Social Ontology, Socioculture and Inequality in the Gobar South*. New York: Routledge, 2020b, pp. 42–66

more systematically read the scholarship about *khwan*, an essential aspect to understand conceptualizations of the concept of the person in Thailand but also Tai conceptualizations of sociality that I also encountered during my research with the Khmer-speaking population of Buriram Province. While drafting my dissertation, I still had not developed a satisfactory answer to the question what the *khwan* are. The concept is frequently mentioned in the anthropological literature, but detailed studies dedicated to the *khwan* and the rituals surrounding them are scarce. Most scholars seem satisfied with translations that identify *khwan* as 'soul', 'life force' or 'vital spirit' and usually cite the same sources over and over again to legitimize these renderings. Baas is frequently cited in this context, and he certainly counts as one of the experts in the field. I noticed, however, that only a limited number of his studies related to the *khwan* are mentioned, and that most scholars seem unaware of the richness of the material he has gathered on the phenomenon. It is this richness that simultaneously complicates the unequivocal translation of *khwan* as "soul" that we frequently encounter in texts on Thailand.

My intention with this volume was thus to collect all relevant scholarship that Baas has ever written on *khwan*, in order to make them more easily available for interested readers curious about the topic. While Galda Press was immediately convinced of the importance of the project, it took me a while to convince Baas, who initially did not see the benefit of the endeavour. Interestingly, it seemed as if he himself had lost track of everything he had ever written on the subject. It was only after I presented him with all the texts I had collected over the years and a structure of how I planned to arrange them, that he agreed to work on the project. Our goal with this book project ultimately became to complicate the conventional academic understanding of *khwan*.

For me, bringing this book to publication was certainly another lucky development, as I probably benefitted the most from the project. Looking back at my time as a student in Berlin, I certainly never dreamt about being in a position to compile such a book and to have an opportunity to have all the discussions with Baas that we had during the process. In the compilation and editing process, we were in a constant exchange during which I commented upon all the texts we compiled. I was thus not only able to ask all the questions I had, but also to suggest my own and sometimes contrasting readings of the material he gathered. Some of my suggestions finally found their way into footnotes, others became part of the comments to each text that Baas drafted to update his analyses. Overall, I am very thankful for this cherished opportunity

to study with and learn directly from Baas, and to collaborate so closely with him on a subject that fascinates both of us. I hope that others will also benefit from this compilation and our attempt to comment upon and order Baas' writing on *khwan* in a way that helps to illuminate new dimensions of this fascinating aspect of all T(h)ai worlds.

Benjamin Baumann

PRELIMINARY

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION, ALTERATIONS AND ETHNONYMS

The twelve pieces of writing that form the backbone of this book all use Thai and Tai sources. Thai refers to the main vernacular spoken in Thailand. Tai refers to the broader related languages spoken in south-eastern China, northern Vietnam, Laos, northern Myanmar, Yunnan and Assam.

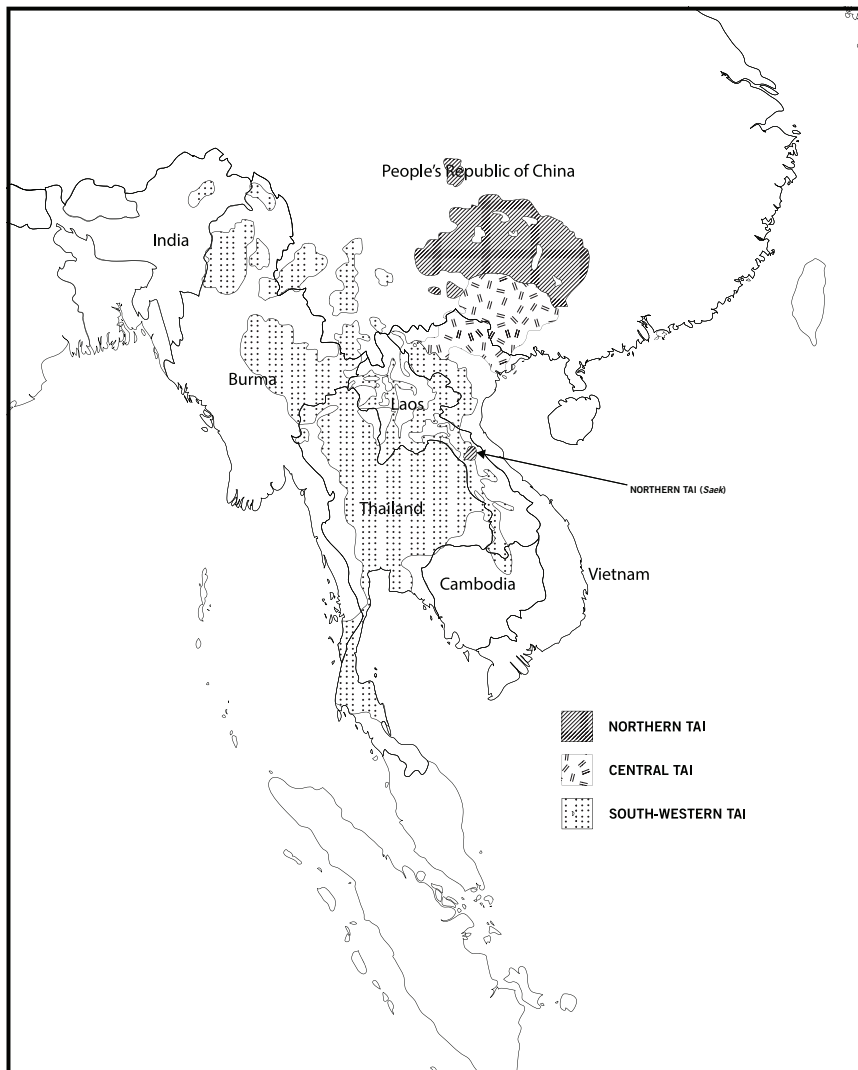
In the 1960s and 1970s several anthropologists, myself included, chose the transcription system devised by Mary Haas when they wrote Thai. This system uses a phonemic rendition, showing the actual pronunciation of Thai words, whereby long vowels are doubled and four markers indicate with which of the five tones a word has to be spoken.⁵

I used the Haas system in my PhD dissertation submitted in December 1971 as well as in several publications in the seventies and eighties, including the article here reproduced as Text 4. The Haas system competed with an early version of the Royal Thai General System of Transcription, which does not indicate tones and makes no distinction between long and short vowels but eventually gained widespread acceptance.

When transliterating Thai words in this book, I use the 1999 version of the Royal General System throughout, but in order to assist readers unfamiliar with the Thai language with at least an idea how a Thai word could be pronounced I have marked long vowels with a macron. I considered adding tone marks, but the computer refused to place tone marks above a macron.

The twelve texts compiled and commented upon in this book were written over a time span of almost fifty years. When they were written for journals I had to conform to their rules of referencing. Therefore, if the texts were reprinted in their original form they would display a confusing hotchpotch

⁵ Mary R. Haas (compiler), *Thai-English Student's Dictionary*, Kuala Lumpur, London and Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1964.



MAP 1 The distribution of Tai languages in three groups

of transcriptions and referencing. Therefore, I went through them with a fine comb and made many changes in transcription and referencing in order to present a unified appearance.

This is also true for the various transliterations found in the literature for the word *khwan*. In order to enhance readability and increase the text's coherence, I have unified the spelling of *khwan* when appropriate.

When I thought it necessary to add a clarifying remark, this is indicated by a bracketed addition.

Given the sheer age of some of the texts reproduced here and the changing conventions of academic writing, some formerly used analytic concepts were replaced by concepts that seem more appropriate from the vantage point of the present. Most of these changes are also indicated by a bracketing of the newly inserted passages.

In some of the articles presented in this book the occurrence of a particular ritual detail is scanned for the widely dispersed Tai-speaking peoples. These are located as far West as Assam, and in Southern China and Vietnam to the east; as far north as Yunnan and in the Malay Peninsula in the south. The nomenclature of these Tai-speakers in the academic literature is complex. Frequently, a term is mentioned with which a Tai-speaking group calls themselves, while on other occasions ethnographers use an ethnonym that outsiders assign to that group. When I began fieldwork in Thailand in 1968, the standard guide to the ethnic labels of Mainland Southeast Asia was *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia* by Lebar, Hickey and Musgrave,⁶ and therefore my surveys began with the Western groups then the Southern groups, followed by Central Mekong, Central Upland and ending with the Eastern groups.

Ethnographers have adopted different nomenclatures over time, mirroring changing political landscapes, theoretical developments in the field and a growing scepticism towards any attempt to delineate ethnic groups and their boundaries in the region.⁷ Fifty years ago, it was common practice to lump all Tai-speaking peoples of Myanmar together under the label Shan, disregarding the fact that this obscured a whole range of ethnonyms, such as the Khamyang, Phakey and Khamti of Assam who feature prominently in this book. The most

⁶ Frank M. Lebar, Gerald C-. Hickey and John K. Musgrave, *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia*, New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1964.

⁷ For a relatively early, but nevertheless critical assessment of the concepts "ethnic group" and "ethnicity" as well as their appropriatedness in the region see Keyes' (1979) edited volume on the Karen in the Thai-Burmese borderlands, but also Baumann's (2017) more recent dissertation on the Khmer-speaking population in Thailand's lower Northeast.

dramatic changes in nomenclature concerned those who in *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia* were called the “Eastern groups” of the Tai-Kadai, living in the Chinese provinces of Guizhou and Guangxi and near the Chinese border in northern Vietnam. Those that were called the “Eastern groups” of Tai-speakers 1964 were listed as “Chung-chia, Chuang, Tung-chia, Tho, Trung-chia, Nung and Nhang”. The changes in their current designation were caused not only because the Wade-Giles system of transliterating Chinese has been replaced with Pinyin, but also since the overall assessment of how these groups are related has changed. In more recent ethnographic texts they are therefore quite differently designated. In a series of recent publications David Holm groups them together as Zhuang, Bouyei, Nùng and Tày.⁸ In order to keep the information as found in the original ethnographic sources, I decided not to list them under the new labels.

Where an original footnote did not make sense without consulting the context in which it was written, I changed the text. Such sections are also placed between brackets.

⁸ David Holm, “Mogong and Chieftaincy in Western Guangxi and Southeast Asia”, *Asian Ethnology*, Vol. 18 (2), 2016, pp. 1-17. See also his, “Crossing the Seas’: Indic Ritual Templates and the Shamanic Substratum in Eastern Asia”, *Sino-Platonic Papers*, No. 281, 2018, and “Literate Shamanism: The Priests Called Then among the Tày in Guangxi and Northern Vietnam”, *Religions*, Vol. 10 (1) 2019, Article 64.

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INTRODUCTION

This book consists of articles and sections of larger texts dealing with the Tai concept *khwan*. The texts gathered in this compendium volume were published during the forty years between 1975 and 2015. It was Benjamin Baumann's suggestion that it might be worthwhile to see how I first came across the concept and how, over time, I was confronted with it in various contexts and how that changed my perception of its complex meaning over the years.

At first I was reluctant to adopt the theme again and dedicate an entire book to it, thinking there would not be sufficient material, and from memory, I believed there would be too much repetition. However, Baumann explained how contemporary anthropologists working in Thailand still struggle to translate Thai ideas related to *khwan* and he sent me a list of my texts that could be used in such an exercise. This included several items I had overlooked or simply forgotten.

Still not wholly convinced of the viability of the exercise, I began re-reading notes I had written more than forty years ago. The oldest ones went back to the late 1960s when I was engaged in anthropological fieldwork in a rural community in Central Thailand. In order to elucidate what I wrote on *khwan* at that time, I wrote a short introductory note on the unique opportunities I had been given to partake in a great variety of rituals by being admitted as a Buddhist monk.

When re-reading my first article, written for the 1978 Anthropological Congress in New Delhi, an article that was wholly devoted to the concept *khwan*, I realized how its presentation and reception had triggered the fateful first journey to Assam, which produced a wealth of new data. In order to

explain how I got involved in later periods of fieldwork, I first ordered all contributions chronologically, and linked all texts with short autobiographical notes. When I sent an early draft to Baumann, he encouraged me to elaborate. In addition, he suggested adding to some texts an occasional remark assisting a future reader to follow the developments in the way I wrote and thought about *khwans*.

During more than three years various drafts of the manuscript were sent to and fro between Baumann and myself. Gradually, I began to see that indeed, the prolonged periods of re-reading my ethnographic vignettes, the relevant literature and reflecting on the wide range of situations where the *khwans* play a role justifies a new publication wholly devoted to T(h)ai conceptualizations of the nonhuman potencies known as *khwan* by all Tai speaking groups. The outcome of our mutual exercise we present in this book. It throws light on an indelible aspect of Tai culture. Notably, *khwans* were not absorbed into Buddhist thought. Indeed, I have become convinced that *khwans* form an essential part of a parallel ideology or as Baumann would call it an animist 'social ontology' or 'language game' that continues to structure everyday life in contemporary Thailand despite the formal hegemony of Buddhism.¹⁰ If we want to understand Tai conceptualizations of sociality we, therefore, have to understand the Tai concept *khwan*.

¹⁰ Benjamin Baumann "Reconceptualizing the Cosmic Polity: The Tai mueang as a Social Ontology" in B. Baumann and D. Bultmann (eds). *Social Ontology, Socioculture and Inequality in the Gobar South*. New York: Routledge, pp. 42-66, 2020b. See also his, "Enunciating ambiguity: Thailand's phi and the epistemological decolonization of Thai Studies", *South East Asia Research*, Vol. 30 (2), pp. 161-179.

1

THE CONCEPT “KHWAN”

According to Phraya Anuman Rajadhon the concept *khwan* (Thai: ขวัญ) is probably of Chinese origin. It derives from a word that sounded (in what he called “old Chinese”) something like “kwun” or “gwun”, meaning a ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’.¹¹ In other publications he defined the word as “an individual’s soul, spirit, morale, or life-force”,¹² but like many other authors none have come up with a satisfactory simple translation.

The linguist Fang Kuei Li found the word among seven Tai-speaking groups and decided that it belonged to the set of Proto-Tai words that began with the consonants “*xw-”, and he gave as its basic meaning the term “spirit”.¹³

In the Siamese dictionary of 1854 the term is spelt “ขวัญ” and translated in three separate entries:

1. “top of the head”
2. “angel living in the head”
3. “satisfaction required by honour, character etc., satisfaction for an insult.”¹⁴

¹¹ Phya [Phraya] Anuman Rajadhon, “The Khwan and its Ceremonies”, *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. 50, Part 2, 1962, p. 120. Baker and Pasuk referring to Phraya Anuman’s article translated *khwan* with “soul”. See Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit (translators), *The Tale of Khun Chang Khun Phaen*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2012, p. 11. Baumann: Junko Iida argues that Phraya Anuman made a mistake as the correct transliteration of the Chinese word (魂) is “hun” and not “kwun”. Iida, Junko. “Tying the Hand: Life Sustaining Technique in Northern Thailand.” *Asiatische Studien-Études Asiatiques* 71, no. 1 (2017): 306.

¹² Phya [Phraya] Anuman Rajadhon, *Life and Ritual in Old Siam; Three Studies of Thai Life and Customs*, New Haven: HRAF Press, 1961, p. 189.

¹³ Fang-Kuei Li, *A Handbook of Comparative Tai* (Oceanic Linguistics Special Publication No. 15), Hawaii: The University Press of Hawaii, 1977, pp. 240–241. He also found *khwan* (identified as “spirit, soul”) in five Sui dialects. See Fang-Kuei Li, “The Tai and the Kam-Sui Languages”, *Lingua*, Vol. 14, p. 163.

¹⁴ D. J. B. Pallegoix, *Dictionarium Linguae Thai sive Siamensis Interpretatione Latina, Gallica et Anglica*, Paris, 1854, (facsimile, made by the Department of Education in Bangkok in B.E. 2542 [1999] on the occasion of the king’s 72th birthday), p. 321. Alabaster warned that this dictionary “...is a dangerous guide in the translation of recondite words, used in religious and metaphysical treatises;” (Henry Alabaster, *The Wheel of the Law. Buddhism Illustrated from*

For the verb *tham khwan* Pallegoix provides two separate meanings:

1. To give satisfaction for an insult, to make a compensation to the honour etc.
2. To protect against evils by superstitious rites.

The rites that Bishop Pallegoix from his Catholic perspective identified as “superstitious” are a central concern in this book,

In Bradley’s *Dictionary of the Siamese Language* which appeared nineteen years after Pallegoix’s, the word is also spelt “จ้วน”, which leaves open the question why in contemporary Thai the word is spelt ending with the anomalous vowel *yo-ying* (ยฺย).¹⁵ Bradley states that the first meaning of *khwan* is a whorl in the hair. As second meaning he mentions that it is “a state of well-being”. The matter of compensation is not mentioned in his list of expressions that contain the word *khwan*.¹⁶

The authoritative Royal Institute dictionary presents three basic meanings for the one lexeme, which can be translated as:

1. A whorl, or patch of hair growing in a circular direction
2. Fortune, well-being, goodness
3. An invisible substance of which it is believed that it is in a person from birth throughout his life. People believe that when the *khwan* lives with someone he is fortunate, feeling well and healthy.¹⁷

This is followed by a great number of expressions that contain the word *khwan*, from which I present some examples:

Khwanmueang (ขวัญเมือง), the strength of the realm

Khwanchai (ขวัญใจ), to be strong

Khwandī (ขวัญดี), to be in good spirits

Khwantā (ขวัญตา), a pleasure to the eye

Khwanōn (ขวัญอ่อน), to be timorous, to be weak

Khwanhāi (ขวัญหาย), the *khwan* is lost.

Khongkhwan (ของขวัญ), a present, a gift

Siamese Sources, Westmead: Gregg International, 1971 (facsimile reprint of the 1871 edition, p. 223).

¹⁵ The vowel “yo-ying”, when placed at the end of a syllable, is pronounced as the final consonant “น”. This occurs rarely, usually when words of Khmer derivation, such as *khân* (คราน), meaning “attractive”, are written in Thai. I suspect that the lexicographer who first spelt the word as จ้วน assumed the word to be of Khmer origin, but it is also possible that this person was influenced by the fact that the standard Thai word for “soul” is *winyān* (from Pali *viññāna*), which in Thai is spelt วิญญาณ with *yo ying* duplicated.

¹⁶ B. Bradley, *Dictionary of the Siamese Language*, Bangkok, 1873 (facsimile Bangkok: Khurusapha, in B.E. 2514 [1971], p. 88.

¹⁷ *Photchanānukrom chabap Rāṭchabanthitsathān Ph. S.*, 2525, p. 132 [my translation].

Three expressions are listed under the rubric “to be frightened, or startled”:

Khwanbin (ขวัญบิน), the *khwan* flies (away)

Khwannī (ขวัญหนี), the *khwan* flees

Khwannidifō (ขวัญหนีดีฝ่อ), the *khwan* flees making the gallbladder shrink

For the expression *tham khwan* which is used widely in connection with binding, and securing the *khwan* to a body, the Royal Institute dictionary gives only a single mention that establishes a link to the prime meaning in Pallegoix’s dictionary, namely *kānsia ngoen khā prap hai kae phū thūk tham rāi* (การเสียเงินค่าปรับให้แก่ผู้ถูกทำร้าย) which means “to pay a fine to compensate for harm done to a person”.

In McFarland’s Thai-English dictionary the aspect of compensation is mentioned twice. The first mention is *khā tham khwan* (ค่าทำขวัญ) which he translates as “a compensation for injury done” but literally means “the price of *tham khwan*”. The second mention six lines later, under the rubric *tham khwan* (ทำขวัญ) he gives a more extensive description: “to make a compensation or to atone for an injury (whether moral or material) to a person or thing”.¹⁸ In the literature that was scanned for this book I have not come across a researcher addressing this feature of the *khwan* or *khwan*-related rituals. In the final chapter of this book the compensatory aspect will be taken up again.

Many more expressions containing the word *khwan* are listed in the Royal dictionary, but the short list suffices to show how deeply the concept is embedded in general parlance. The listed expressions show, furthermore, that the concept is crucial to indicate emotional states of being.

While I do not doubt that indeed a circular pattern in the hair is sometimes called a *khwan*, and that the word can also be translated with “fortune” or even “beauty”, it is the above-mentioned third prime meaning of “an invisible substance of which it is believed that it is in a person from birth throughout his life” that is the most important in everyday life. This would fit in with *Phraya Anuman*’s description as well as Li Fang Kuei’s etymology.

Anthony Diller and Preecha Juntanamalaga define *khwan* as an ethereal entity thought to reside mainly in the head. “(K)hwan in traditional belief is quite prone to stray from the body (especially a child’s) during life, a condition thought responsible for various maladies; it must be ‘lured back’ and reestablished in the body through incantations and other traditional ceremonies”.¹⁹

¹⁸ George B. McFarland, *Thai-English Dictionary*, Stanford University Press, 1967, p. 145.

¹⁹ Anthony V.N. Diller and Preecha Juntanamalaga, “Full Hearts’ & Empty Pronominals in Thai”, *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, Vol. 10, 1990, p. 237.

When we look at *khwan* in other Tai languages, we find that the concepts “soul” or “spirit” prevail in attempts to translate its meaning. For example, Golap Chandra Borua in the first *Ahom-Assamese-English Dictionary* assigns *kh[w]an*’s first meaning as “duration of life, life; mind”.²⁰ In his *Ahom-Thai Dictionary* Prasert na Nakhon simply translated Barua’s entry into Thai.²¹ J. N. Cushing calls the *khwan* of the Shan a “fairy or spirit attached to a person from birth” and Sao Tern Moeng uses the same wording in the *Shan-English Dictionary* adding the words: “similar to a guardian angel”.²²

The Tai Neua, sometimes called “Chinese Shan”, live in Yunnan and near the northern border of Myanmar. For three of their dialects, the term *khwan* was equated with “spirit”.²³ For the Mueang [in northern Thailand], Davis translated the term with “psychic energy” but Wijeyewardene simply chose ‘soul’.²⁴

The dictionaries of the various Tai languages that are spoken in Vietnam also come close to assign similar meanings to the concept. Thus in the [White-] Tai-Vietnamese-English dictionary the word transcribed as “*khhoăn*” is rendered as “the spirit-soul, the spirits (numerous) which indwell a living person”.²⁵ For the Tai Dam the expression *phi khuôn* is equated with “soul”.²⁶

These dictionary entries omit to refer to the notion, widespread amongst Tai speakers, that a person has many *khwans*. It can be found, not only amongst the Central upland Thai, but also has been well attested in the literature on Laos and Thailand. The exact number of *khwans* varies from region to region, and sometimes from informant to informant. In his “Notes sur les familles patronymiques Thai Noires [Black Tai]” Lafont reached a total of thirty-two,²⁷

²⁰ Golap Chandra Borua [later he spelt his name as Barua], *Ahom-Assamese-English Dictionary*, Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press (under the authority of the Assamese Government), 1920, pp. 48–49.

²¹ Prasert na Nakhon, *Photchanānukrom Thai Āhom-Thai* (ประเสริฐ ณ นคร พจนานุกรม ไทยอาหม-ไทย), Silpakorn University, Ph.S. 2534 [1991], p. 12.

²² J. N. Cushing, *A Shan and English Dictionary*, Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press, 1914, p.138. Sao Tern Moeng, *Shan-English Dictionary*, Kensington, Maryland: Dunwoody Press, 1995, p. 68.

²³ Jimmy G. Harris, “A Comparative Word List of Three Tai Nüa Dialects”, in: *Studies in Tai Linguistics in Honor of William J. Gedney*, edited by Jimmy G. Harris and James R. Chamberlain, Bangkok: Central Institute of English Language, Office of State Universities, 1975, p. 209.

²⁴ Richard B. Davis, *Muang Metaphysics*, Bangkok: Pandora, 1984, p. 40. Gehan Wijeyewardene, *Place and Emotion in Northern Thai Ritual Behaviour*, Bangkok: Pandora, 1986, p. 176.

²⁵ Diêu Chính Nhim and Jean Donaldson, *Páp San Khhâm Pák Tãy-Keo-Eng*, Saigon: Bô Giáo-Dục Xuất Ban, 1970, p. 170.

²⁶ Baccam Faluang and Dorothy Fippinger, *Tai Dam-English; English-Tai Dam Vocabulary Book*, Eastlake: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1989, p. 313.

²⁷ P-B. Lafont, “Notes sur les familles patronymiques Thai Noires de So'n-la et de Nghia-lô”,