

# Siamese (Central Thai)

also known as “Thai”, “Siamese Tai”, “Syam”, “Tai”, “T'ai”

Data source: eHRAF

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Entry tags: Religion, Buddhist Traditions, Indic Religious Traditions, Indic Buddhist Traditions, Nikāya Buddhism (mainstream Buddhist schools), Later schools, Theravāda, Southeast Asian Religions

The Siamese/Central Thai live in the central alluvial plain of Thailand, and are primarily of the Buddhist faith. This entry focuses specifically on the community of Bang Chan (ca. 1950), which lies about 31 kilometers northeast of Bangkok. Bang Chan was established in the 19th century, and is currently under the jurisdiction of Thailand's constitutional monarchy (an absolute monarchy until 1932). The central institution of Bang Chan is the Buddhist temple. Like many other Central Thai communities, the majority religion is Buddhism, with a minority group of Muslims.



Date Range: 1930 CE - 1960 CE

Region: Chao Phraya (Menam) River Alluvial Plain

Region tags: Asia, Southeast Asia, Thailand

This entry focuses on the community of Bang Chan circa 1950. Bang Chan lies in the central alluvial plain of Thailand, and is located about 31 kilometers northeast of Bangkok.

## Status of Participants:

✓ Elite    ✓ Religious Specialists    ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

## Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

– Source 1: Divale, W. 2004. Codebook of Variables for the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample. *World Cultures: The Journal of Cross-Cultural and Comparative Research*.

Online sources for understanding this subject:

– Source 1 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ao07-036>.

– Source 1 Description: Hanks, Lucien M. (Lucien Mason). 1972. “Rice And Man: Agricultural Ecology In Southeast Asia.” *Worlds Of Man*. Chicago, Ill.: Aldine Atherton.

– Source 2 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ao07-007>.

– Source 2 Description: Janlekha, Kamol Odd. 1956. “Study Of The Economy Of A Rice Growing Village In Central Thailand.” *Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms*.

– Source 3 URL: University Press. <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ao07-008>.

- Source 3 Description: Sharp, Lauriston, and Lucien M. (Lucien Mason) Hanks. 1978. "Bang Chan: Social History Of A Rural Community In Thai." Cornell Studies In Anthropology. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell
- Source 1 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/ehrafe/>
- Source 1 Description: eHRAF World Cultures
- Source 2 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ao07-037>
- Source 2 Description: Hanks, Jane Richardson. 1965. "Rural Thai Village'S View Of Human Character." Felicitation Volumes Of Southeast-Asian Studies Presented To His Highness Prince Dhaninivat Kromamun Bidyalabh Bridhyokorn...On The Occasion Of His Eightieth Birthday. Bangkok, Thailand: Siam Society.
- Source 3 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ao07-004>
- Source 3 Description: Phillips, Herbert P. 1966. "Thai Peasant Personality: The Patterning Of Interpersonal Behavior In The Village Of Bang Chan." Berkeley And Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Source 1 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ao07-001>.
- Source 1 Description: Hanks, Jane Richardson. 1963. "Maternity And Its Ritual In Bang Chan." Data Paper. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, Department of Asian Studies, Southeast Asia Program.
- Source 2 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ao07-011>.
- Source 2 Description: Textor, Robert B., Cornell University. Southeast Asia Program, and Yale University. Southeast Asia Studies. 1973. "Roster Of The Gods: An Ethnography Of The Supernatural In A Thai Village." Ethnography Series. New Haven, Conn.: Human Relations Area Files.

## General Variables

### Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

Notes: A small Muslim minority is present in Bang Chan, comprising about 8% of the population. Additionally, Bang Chan is fairly close to the larger city of Bangkok, and an all-weather highway constructed after World War II further promoted easy communication between the village and the metropolis. (Textor, 1973:2-5, 18).



Is the cultural contact accommodating/pluralistic:

– Yes

Notes: "Petty trade is carried on by many local people, often on a part-time basis. Also active are numerous itinerant Chinese peddlers from outside the village. A market town and district administrative center, Minburi, lies some three miles away, and local people do much of their heavier shopping there. Farmers sell their surplus rice mainly to Chinese middlemen, who in turn sell it to larger dealers (Textor, 1973:5).



Is the cultural contact neutral:

– Yes

Notes: Relations between people of other backgrounds and religions was neutral in Bang

Chan. "In 1954, 1700 persons (336 families) lived in Bang Chan. Muslims, comprising 10 per cent of the population, lived as fully Thai citizens in all parts of the community in economic and social symbiosis with Buddhists. A few ethnic Chinese had married into Thai families and were accepted" (Hanks, 1963:4).



Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– No

Notes: "Bang Chan is indeed a placid community because no family has the organizational means or the quality of familial cohesiveness necessary to assume a dominant social, political, or economic position" (Phillips, 1966:38).

Does the religion have official political support

– Yes

Notes: "Buddhistic lore is transmitted by a highly organized, government-backed hierarchy of disciplined full-time specialists: the monks. Brahmin priests have in the past also had organization, government support, special costumes, and elaborate ritual designed to inspire confidence and respect" (Textor, 1973:221).

## Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Estimated population, numeric: 1600

Notes: "This natural community [of the Buddhist temple in Bang Chan] embraced a population of some 1600 Buddhists as of 1956. Interspersed among these Buddhist households are the residences of some 150 Muslims who, with other co-religionists, attend mosques nearby" (Textor, 1973:8).

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (% of sample region population, numerical):

– Estimated population, percentage of sample region: 90

Notes: Textor (1973:18) indicates that the majority of Bang Chan's population is Buddhist, with a minority of about 8% Muslim individuals, and an even smaller minority of people subscribing to other religions.

Nature of religious group [please select one]:

– Large official religious group with smaller religious groups also openly allowed

Notes: "Theravada Buddhism is the official religion of Thailand (95 percent of the population); there are also Muslims (4 percent), and small numbers of Christians, Hindus, Confucians, and animists" (eHRAF World Cultures, Central Thai Culture Summary).

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: "These monks [of the Bang Chan temple] are under the control of an abbot, who is in turn controlled by senior monks at the commune (tambon), district (amphoe), provincial (cangwàd), regional (phâag) and national levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy" (Textor, 1973:8).

↳ Is there a hierarchy among these leaders:

– Yes

Notes: "These monks [of the Bang Chan temple] are under the control of an abbot, who is in turn controlled by senior monks at the commune (tambon), district (amphoe), provincial (cangwàd), regional (phâag) and national levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy" (Textor, 1973:8).

↳ "Regional" leaders who oversee one or more local leader(s) (e.g. bishops):

– Yes

Notes: "These monks [of the Bang Chan temple] are under the control of an abbot, who is in turn controlled by senior monks at the commune (tambon), district (amphoe), provincial (cangwàd), regional (phâag) and national levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy" (Textor, 1973:8).

↳ A single leader for the religious group that oversees all other leaders in the sample region:

– No

Notes: Multiple senior monks oversee other leaders. "These monks [of the Bang Chan temple] are under the control of an abbot, who is in turn controlled by senior monks at the commune (tambon), district (amphoe), provincial (cangwàd), regional (phâag) and national levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy" (Textor, 1973:8).

↳ A council or group of leaders for the religious group that oversees all other leaders in the sample region:

– Yes

Notes: "These monks [of the Bang Chan temple] are under the control of an abbot, who is in turn controlled by senior monks at the commune (tambon), district (amphoe), provincial (cangwàd), regional (phâag) and national levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy" (Textor, 1973:8).

↳ Estimate how many levels there are in the hierarchy of religious leadership:

– Number of levels [numeric value]: 7

Notes: (Textor, 1973:8).

## Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also "oral

scriptures" (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– Yes

Notes: "Bang Chan had for years heard preaching from Buddhist scriptures" (Hanks, 1963:18).



Are they written:

– Yes

Notes: The scriptures are orally transmitted, as well as written. "Bang Chan had for years heard preaching from Buddhist scriptures" (Hanks, 1963:18).



Are they oral:

– Yes

Notes: The scriptures are orally transmitted, as well as written. "Bang Chan had for years heard preaching from Buddhist scriptures" (Hanks, 1963:18).

## Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– Yes

Notes: SCCS Variable 66, Large or Impressive Structures, indicates that monumental religious or ceremonial buildings are present (Murdock and Wilson, 1972; retrieved from Divale, 2004).

## Beliefs

### Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Notes: The spirit is called "ph<sup>~</sup>ii" (Textor, 1973:222). "...the indigenous concept of khwan-soul is generally distinct from that of phii. In particular, khwan-soul applies only to living persons or, by extension, to living plants...Ceedtaphuud-Soul is associated primarily with this life and only secondarily with the period after death" (Textor, 1973:225).

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: There is a belief in afterlife in the sense that the soul continues to live after the body dies. However, the afterlife is a cycle of reincarnation. "In this universe and on this earth, individuals, each a unique and independent entity, were born to live and die, over and over again, throughout eons of time. They bore no relation to each other. Separate and autonomous, each was in charge of his own destiny. All beings formed a single grand scale of existence from demons in hell, through such lowly

creatures as worms and insects, upward through dogs, cats, buffaloes, and elephants to mankind, then on up to angels and gods in the last paradises before the peace of Nipphn (Nirvana)" (Hanks, 1963:27).

↳ Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: After completing all reincarnations, a soul reaches Nirvana (Hanks, 1963:27).

↳ Afterlife in specified realm of space beyond this world:

– Yes

Notes: After completing all reincarnations, a soul reaches Nirvana (Hanks, 1963:27).

Reincarnation in this world:

– Yes

Notes: "Bang Chan's Buddhists believe in an almost limitless number of reincarnations" (Textor, 1973:36).

↳ In a human form:

– Yes

Notes: See Sharp and Hanks, 1978:167.

↳ In animal/plant form:

– Yes

Notes: "In this universe and on this earth, individuals, each a unique and independent entity, were born to live and die, over and over again, throughout eons of time. They bore no relation to each other. Separate and autonomous, each was in charge of his own destiny. All beings formed a single grand scale of existence from demons in hell, through such lowly creatures as worms and insects, upward through dogs, cats, buffaloes, and elephants to mankind, then on up to angels and gods in the last paradises before the peace of Nipphn (Nirvana)" (Hanks, 1963:27).

↳ Reincarnation linked to notion of life-transcending causality (e.g. karma):

– Yes

Notes: "Ultimately, like every other living thing in the world, the nature of the heart and mind is a manifestation of kam (the law of Karma). The heart of the meritorious individual differs from that of the non-meritorious. Persons of great merit are long-lived, intelligent, successful, highborn, wealthy in worldly goods, and compassionate. Because merit determines the moment of birth, their astral influences are auspicious" (Hanks, 1965:80).

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for specific details.

↳ Cremation:

– Yes

Notes: "When a Buddhist villager dies, he will be ceremonially cremated at the wat [village temple], where the monks will chant on behalf of his successful reincarnation" (Textor, 1973:8).

↳ Secondary burial:

– Yes

Notes: SCCS Variable 1850, Secondary Bone/Body Treatment: Original Scale. Code=6, "secondary contact with the body or bones is the preferred means of disposal for all or nearly all adult members of the society" (Schroeder, 2001; retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Other intensive (in terms of time or resources expended) treatment of corpse :

– Yes [specify]: Suppressing Rite

Notes: "When someone dies, if the surviving family members fear the corpse ghost, they will invite a doctor to perform the Suppressing Rite. The doctor in this case is usually the undertaker. He always uses a khaathaa [ritual]. In some cases, he also uses a pointed wooden tooth (lûug khrâad) from a harrowing bar, which he fastens under the ropes used in shrouding (mád traas'ang) the corpse" (Textor, 1973:418).

Are formal burials present:

– No

Notes: Formal burials and funeral ceremonies are present among the Bang Chan Buddhists, but the body is cremated and not buried. After cremation, "the kinsman then takes a bone [of the deceased] home to keep in an urn, while the undertaker disposes of the remainder" (Sharp and Hanks, 1978:166).

## Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

Notes: Supernatural beings are present among the Siamese/Central Thai of Bang Chan. See questions below for details.

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– No

Notes: Various supernatural beings are present, but there is no evidence for a supreme high god. The Buddha is a central figure to members of the religious group, but is not characterized as a high god. Ethnographic Atlas Column 34: High Gods, indicates that "a high god is absent or not reported in substantial descriptions of religious beliefs" (Murdock, 1967).

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– Yes

Notes: There are many types of previously human spirits present among the Siamese/Central Thai of Bang Chan; see Textor, 1973:209-215

↳ Human spirits can be seen:

– Yes

Notes: "...the phii [human spirit] generally lack definition in terms of being necessarily of one sex or the other; they are not usually defined in terms of a fixed abode with specified characteristics; nor do they usually find manifestation or depiction in fixed material form. For such reasons, any Bang Chanite is quite free to "see" a ghost tonight, and tell his friends and family about it tomorrow morning. To be sure, the form that that ghost is claimed to have assumed, the noises it is said to have made, and the harm or mischief it is alleged to have wreaked, must stay within certain culturally prescribed implicit limits in order to be credible – but these limits are generally much wider than in the case of other types of anthropomorphic supernatural objects" (Textor, 1973:218). "Ghosts of people can manifest themselves in various forms, including a number of animal forms. The only one of these forms that has become culturally standardized, however, is the snake (nguu)" (Textor, 1973:342).

↳ Human spirits have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "Except for the "New Year's" ghosts, which are strictly for fun, all ghosts are capable of punishing the actor, while only about half of them can produce even a single reward. The most common punishments are those reflecting generalized anxieties: scaring, bothering, and illness-or-death by whatever means" (Textor, 1973:217).

↳ Human spirits can reward:

– Yes

Notes: "Except for the "New Year's" ghosts, which are strictly for fun, all ghosts are capable of punishing the actor, while only about half of them can produce even a single reward" (Textor, 1973:217).

↳ Human spirits can punish:

– Yes

Notes: "Except for the "New Year's" ghosts, which are strictly for fun, all ghosts are capable of punishing the actor, while only about half of them can produce even a single reward. The most common punishments are those reflecting generalized anxieties: scaring, bothering, and illness-or-death by whatever means" (Textor, 1973:217).

↳ Human spirits have memory of life:

– Yes

Notes: "There is an unstandardized belief among some villagers that the winjaan [spirit] of a dead parent is sometimes worried about the welfare of his or her children



(pen hùang lùug) – as any good parent should be – and, therefore, tends to linger around the family house for a while after death" (Textor, 1973:231).

↳ Human spirits possess/exhibit some other feature:

– Yes [specify]: Formlessness of personality

Notes: "This relative formlessness of personality is to turn associated with a relative informality, variability, and unpredictability in the mode of interaction between actor and ghost, or ghost and actor" (Textor, 1973:218).

↳ Human spirits communicate with the living:

– Yes

Notes: Textor, 1973:219

↳ In dreams:

– Yes

Notes: See Textor, 1973:315

↳ Communicate with living through other means:

– Yes [specify]: Possession

Notes: "...the ghost's actual entry into a villager's body, from inside of which it will communicate with onlookers through the possessee's mouth, arms, and body" (Textor, 1973:219).

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: Including beings such as Mother Earth, Mother Eater, Phra Air, Phra Fire, and Rice Mother. (See Textor, 1973, various pages including 520 and 591)

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– No

Notes: Non-human supernatural beings can indirectly reward and punish humans, as well as influence weather events (Textor, 1973, various pages including 520, 591, 608).

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: Non-human supernatural beings can reward and punish humans, as well as influence weather events (Textor, 1973, various pages including 520, 591, 608). "The actor who prays (àthídh̃aan) to this [Mother Earth] might receive rewards of a bountiful rice harvest, or general protection" (Textor, 1973:591). "Possible punishments [from Mother Earth] are a worse-than-average harvest, and the withholding of general

protection" (Textor, 1973:591).

↳ Mixed human-divine beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: The Buddha (also referred to as Lord Buddha) is the central figure to Buddhism. This enlightened individual realized how to break the indefinite cycle of reincarnations and ultimately reach Nirvana. By following his teachings, Buddhists seek to accrue merit and further climb the spiritual ladder towards Nirvana. (see Sharp and Hanks, 1978:96).

## Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– No

Notes: "The Buddhist universe operated on a principle of immutable law. Each person received his just due, suffering for his own sins, enjoying reward for his virtue. There was no personified deity to help, forgive, or blame. Moreover, attachments were the cause of sorrow. Because existence was fraught with desires, all life was basically painful. Even flashes of happiness by their cessation caused sorrow" (Hanks, 1963:27). Supernatural monitoring is not clearly present in the Buddhist belief system. However, supernatural beings (such as ghosts) are present, and will mete out punishment and rewards for certain behaviors. In this way, "supernatural monitoring" acts as a guide for ideal behaviors, and is linked to cosmic order rather than specific beings.

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Yes

Notes: Supernatural monitoring is not clearly present in the Buddhist belief system. However, supernatural beings (such as ghosts) are present, and will mete out punishment and rewards for certain behaviors. In this way, "supernatural monitoring" is present in a loose sense and acts as a guide for ideal behaviors."The realm of the ghosts is, then, a peculiarly and broadly punitive one" (Textor, 1973:264). Additionally, supernatural monitoring is, in this case, more related to cosmic order than specific retributive beings. See questions below for more detail.

↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for specific details.

↳ Done only by high god:

– No

Notes: Ethnographic Atlas Column 34: High Gods, indicates that "a high god is absent or not reported in substantial descriptions of religious beliefs" (Murdock, 1967).

↳ Done by many supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: Many different types of ghosts are capable of punishment, including ancestral ghosts, House Ghosts, Ghost Lord of the Place, Ghost Lord of the Field, and others. (see Textor, 1973, various pages including 264-274, 322, 340).

↳ Done through impersonal cause-effect principle:

– Yes

Notes: "A longer-term risk is ignorance of sin which prolongs and intensifies suffering. A sinful person may be reborn into greater than human suffering as a dog, a buffalo, or a leper. Men do well to learn that the cosmos is a place of perfect justice where laws of natural morality operate. The workings of justice are sometimes delayed, but the ruthless tyrant who lives on in his golden palace will most certainly receive his punishment by the time of his next incarnation. Man must be taught that good conduct leads to diminished suffering. An industrious cultivator, if very virtuous, may be reborn a civil official or, if unusually virtuous, a guardian spirit. This knowledge came from the great teacher, the Lord Buddha, whose immensely virtuous conduct in many lives achieved the ultimate reward of peace through nonexistence" (Hanks, 1972:104).

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for specific reasons for supernatural punishment

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– Yes

Notes: "The ancestral ghosts might punish the actor for failure to pay proper respects, but are never capriciously or wantonly malicious" (Textor, 1973:310).

↳ Done randomly:

– Yes

Notes: The Water Ghost and Epidemic Ghost seem to cause harm for no specific reason (Textor, 1973:382).

↳ Other [specify]

– Yes

Notes: "The Buddhist universe operated on a principle of immutable law. Each person received his just due, suffering for his own sins, enjoying reward for his virtue. There was no personified deity to help, forgive, or blame. Moreover, attachments were the cause of sorrow. Because existence was fraught with desires, all life was basically painful. Even flashes of happiness by their cessation caused sorrow" (Hanks, 1963:27). Humans themselves are responsible for their own mystical punishment or reward.

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: Punishments in the afterlife consist of reincarnation as inferior life forms, or into inferior realms. See questions below for specific details.

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of reincarnation as an inferior life form:

– Yes

Notes: "Progress toward Nipphan [Nirvana] was not assured but had to be earned. With sinful behavior a person might be catapulted back to being a beast. He who stole would 'be born and die 500 times before he could even grow up' (Hanks, 1963:27).

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of reincarnation in an inferior realm:

– Yes

Notes: "Progress toward Nipphan [Nirvana] was not assured but had to be earned. With sinful behavior a person might be catapulted back to being a beast. He who stole would 'be born and die 500 times before he could even grow up.' Almost everyone had to be sent to purgatory where demons carried on tortures until he had suffered enough to be released for rebirth. The evil spirits ( phii) that wandered frighteningly in Bang Chan were part of the legions whose job was to increase deserved suffering on this earth" (Hanks, 1963:27).

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime:

– Yes

Notes: The most common form of supernatural punishment is fear, possession, or a supernatural being revoking support for an individual. See questions below for more details on supernatural punishment in this lifetime (Textor, 1973, various pages including 322)

↳ Punishment in this life consists of crop failure or bad weather:

– Yes

Notes: "A second punishment in this class is that [the House Ghost] will spoil the actor's home festival (ngaan taam bân) by bad weather" (Textor, 1973:320).

↳ Punishment in this life consists of extreme sensory displeasure:

– Yes

Notes: The Ghost Lord of a particular place, the Ghost Lord of a particular field, the Snake Lord of a particular place "are of the "strong" (raeng) type of supernatural power, and all are capable of some sort of punishment involving psychological upset, whether by scaring, by bothering, or by causing fear" (Textor, 1973:326).

↳ Punishment in this life consists of sickness or illness:

– Yes

Notes: Ghosts can cause illness; for example, a House Ghost might possess an

individual and cause sickness if the individual failed to pay sufficient ritual respect (Textor, 1973:320).

↳ Other [specify]

– Yes

Notes: Extreme fear: "The only punishment this [Snake Lord] can inflict is to cause "fear" (tògcaj), a punishment more severe than scaring or bothering, and one that no other supernatural object is capable of inflicting" (Textor, 1973:344).

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– Yes

Notes: Supernatural monitoring is not clearly present in the Buddhist belief system. However, supernatural beings (such as ghosts) are present, and will mete out punishment and rewards for certain behaviors. In this way, "supernatural monitoring" is present in a loose sense and acts as a guide for ideal behaviors, and, in this case, more related to cosmic order than specific retributive beings.

↳ Is the cause/purpose of supernatural rewards known:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for specific details.

↳ Done only by high god:

– No

Notes: Ethnographic Atlas Column 34: High Gods, indicates that "a high god is absent or not reported in substantial descriptions of religious beliefs" (Murdock, 1967).

↳ Done by many supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: Many types of ghosts can reward, such as ancestral ghosts, Ghost Lord of the Place, Ghost Lord of the Field (Textor, 1973, various pages including 322, 334, 340)

↳ Done through impersonal cause-effect principle:

– Yes

Notes: "A longer-term risk is ignorance of sin which prolongs and intensifies suffering. A sinful person may be reborn into greater than human suffering as a dog, a buffalo, or a leper. Men do well to learn that the cosmos is a place of perfect justice where laws of natural morality operate. The workings of justice are sometimes delayed, but the ruthless tyrant who lives on in his golden palace will most certainly receive his punishment by the time of his next incarnation. Man must be taught that good conduct leads to diminished suffering. An industrious cultivator, if very virtuous, may be reborn a civil official or, if unusually virtuous, a guardian spirit. This knowledge came from the great teacher, the Lord Buddha, whose immensely virtuous conduct in many lives achieved the ultimate reward of peace through nonexistence" (Hanks, 1972:104).

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– Yes

Notes: "Ghost Lord of the Place, and Ghost Lord of the Field provide the actor with protection for his house-yard and his rice-field, respectively. Both of these [supernatural beings] must be ritually supplicated, or such protection might not be forthcoming, and indeed, punishment could result" (Textor, 1973:325).

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in the afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: Reward in the afterlife consist of reincarnation as superior life forms, or into superior realms. "If the individual lives generously and makes much merit (bun) in this life, then he will be rewarded by enjoying the good things of life in the future – that is, in the future of this life, and in an indefinite number of future lives" (Textor, 1973:36). See questions below for specific details.

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of eternal happiness:

– Yes

Notes: After completing all reincarnations, a soul reaches Nirvana (Hanks, 1963:27).

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of reincarnation as a superior life form:

– Yes

Notes: "The insight of the Buddha showed the way to break the sorrowful eternal cycle of rebirth and reach Nipphn [Nirvana]. The Buddha perceived that meritorious behavior caused one to progress up this ladder of existence toward freedom from incarnation. In each life merit ( bun) could be accumulated by compassionate behavior: caring for priests, and being kind and generous to persons less able to care for themselves. With merit one's next life was happier and freer of restrictions" (Hanks, 1963:27).

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of reincarnation in a superior realm:

– Yes

Notes: "The insight of the Buddha showed the way to break the sorrowful eternal cycle of rebirth and reach Nipphn [Nirvana]. The Buddha perceived that meritorious behavior caused one to progress up this ladder of existence toward freedom from incarnation. In each life merit ( bun) could be accumulated by compassionate behavior: caring for priests, and being kind and generous to persons less able to care for themselves. With merit one's next life was happier and freer of restrictions" (Hanks, 1963:27).

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in this lifetime:

– Yes

Notes: Textor, 1973, various pages including 322, 325, 334

↳ Reward in this life consists of healthy crops or good weather:

– Yes

Notes: "Ghost Lord of the Place, and Ghost Lord of the Field provide the actor with protection for his house-yard and his rice-field, respectively. Both of these [supernatural beings] must be ritually supplicated, or such protection might not be forthcoming, and indeed, punishment could result" (Textor, 1973:325).

↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced health:

– Yes

Notes: "Besides the curing of illness and the gaining of general protection, there is a third reward that an actor might receive from Ghost Lord of the Place, namely miscellaneous ad hoc assistance, either as the result of supplication or of contracting" (Textor, 1973:334).

↳ Other [specify]

– Yes

Notes: "...there is a third reward that an actor might receive from Ghost Lord of the Place, namely miscellaneous ad hoc assistance, either as the result of supplication or of contracting" (Textor, 1973:334). "The most important form of ad hoc assistance that Ghost Lord of the Field can provide concerns the health and proper functioning of the actor's all-important buffaloes" (Textor, 1973:341).

– Yes

Notes: "...the only reward that the groom or bride can gain from the interaction [propitiation ritual to inform ancestors of marriage] is simply the maintenance of relations with his or her ancestral ghosts" (Textor, 1973:322).

## Norms and Moral Realism

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for details

↳ What is the nature of this distinction:

– Weakly present

Notes: "The Buddha perceived that meritorious behavior caused one to progress up this ladder of existence toward freedom from incarnation. In each life merit ( bun) could be accumulated by compassionate behavior: caring for priests, and being kind and generous to persons less able to care for themselves. With merit one's next life was happier and freer of restrictions" (Hanks, 1963:27). Merit is a guide for behavior that eclipses both conventional and moral norms. However, moral codes are clearly present in the Buddhist faith, making the distinction between conventional and moral norms present, but the concept of merit characterizes this distinctions as weakly present.

↳ Are specifically moral norms prescribed by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: The Buddhist religion has a moral code (see Textor, 1973:12).

↳ Specifically moral norms are linked to impersonal cosmic order (e.g. karma):

– Yes

Notes: "The Buddha perceived that meritorious behavior caused one to progress up this ladder of existence toward freedom from incarnation. In each life merit ( bun) could be accumulated by compassionate behavior: caring for priests, and being kind and generous to persons less able to care for themselves. With merit one's next life was happier and freer of restrictions...Progress toward Nipphan was not assured but had to be earned. With sinful behavior a person might be catapulted back to being a beast." (Hanks, 1963:27).

↳ Specifically moral norms are linked in some way to an anthropomorphic being:

– Yes

Notes: "The Lord Buddha gave man knowledge of the moral law of the universe. Man stands free to reject it and be reborn as man or animal, or to accept the knowledge and decrease his suffering by rebirth as a superior being" (Sharp and Hanks, 1978:121).

↳ Specifically moral norms are linked explicitly to commands of anthropomorphic being:

– No

Notes: Buddha provided moral law, but these laws are not commandments and people are free to follow them how they will. (See Sharp and Hanks, 1978:121)

↳ Specifically moral norms are have no special connection to metaphysical:

– No

Notes: There is a clear present to the metaphysical concept of Karma, see question above.

↳ Moral norms apply to:

– All individuals (any time period)

Notes: "The Lord Buddha was a teacher who showed the effects of good and evil deeds, hence guided the way to improvement of one's lot in this and coming existences. Not all people are ready to listen to his teachings; those who are not will suffer for their shortcomings. The community is unconcerned, for sin ultimately affects only the individual perpetrator" (Sharp and Hanks, 1978:95).

Are there centrally important virtues advocated by the religious group:

– Yes



Notes: The Buddhist religion emphasize several virtues and behaviors, see below for specifics.

↳ Ritual purity / ritual adherence / abstention from sources of impurity:

– Yes

Notes: See Textor, 1973:593

↳ Respectfulness / courtesy:

– Yes

Notes: "Congruent with this is a cultural value which strongly emphasizes keeping face-to-face relations smooth and polite. The villager's marked potential for feeling ashamed or embarrassed (aaj) when the proper style of face-to-face dealings is violated, serves powerfully to insure smoothness" (Textor, 1973:13).

↳ Independence / creativity / freedom:

– Yes

Notes: "Relatively speaking, the social organization of Bang Chan permits considerable individual freedom of choice. Congruent with this feature of social organization is the fact that the culture places a strong value on individual autonomy and choice...this same kind of freedom of choice applies in the supernatural domain" (Textor, 1973:7).

↳ Power / status / nobility:

– No

Notes: "Values for the Thai masses were not elite-centered. The Thai peasant could obtain prestige and come closest to achieving his spiritual ends by entering the Buddhist priesthood, a step which in itself involved no upward mobility" (Janlekha, 1956:30).

↳ Other important virtues advocated by the religious group:

– Yes [specify]: Non-violence

Notes: "...the Buddhist religion, whose moral code emphasizes non-violent behavior and, to a lesser extent, non-exploitative behavior" (Textor, 1973:12).

## Practices

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### Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

– No

Notes: No evidence for fasting was found in any of the reliable ethnographic sources used to complete this entry (eHRAF World Cultures, Central Thai Collection)

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– No

Notes: "...Buddhists had no food taboos..." (Hanks, 1963:125).

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No evidence for human sacrifice (including adults or children) was found in any of the reliable ethnographic sources used to complete this entry (eHRAF World Cultures, Central Thai Collection)

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No evidence for human sacrifice (including adults or children) was found in any of the reliable ethnographic sources used to complete this entry (eHRAF World Cultures, Central Thai Collection)

Does membership in this religious group require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household):

– No

Notes: Various small-scale rituals are present and important to the religious group, but participation in these rituals is not a requirement for membership. Such rituals include supplicating ghosts, household ceremonies, and agricultural rituals (See Sharp and Hanks, 1978, Chapter 8, Section 4: The Rites; Textor, 1973, various pages including 526, 593).

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

I.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– No

Notes: Large-scale rituals are present and important to the religious group, but participation in these rituals is not a requirement for membership (See Sharp and Hanks, 1978, Chapter 8, Section 4: The Rites; Textor, 1973, various pages including 526, 593).

## Society and Institutions

### Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– A state

Notes: The Siamese/Central Thai have four levels of jurisdictional hierarchy beyond the local community (Ethnographic Atlas column 33, Murdock, 1967; retrieved from Divale, 2004). Bang Chan was traditionally under the rule of Thailand's absolute monarchy, which became a constitutional monarchy after the 1932 revolution.

– Other [specify in comments]

Notes: "...there are in Bang Chan no castes, age-grade societies, occupational groups (other than the family), neighborhood groups, or groups expressive of village solidarity (such as councils or governing boards) which might impose a sense of obligation on the villagers, or to whose norms or functions the villagers might have to conform. [An exception to this is] a monastery lay committee whose functions are limited to the secular tasks of monastery administration, and membership in which brings prestige and Buddhist merit to a few selected members of the community" (Phillips, 1966:21).

## Welfare

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized poverty relief:

– Yes

Notes: "And the destitute came [to the temple] and received a portion of the food given to the priests" (Sharp and Hanks, 1978:140).

## Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– Yes

Notes: "Traditionally, most formal education in Bang Chan was conducted through the temple. Monks served as teachers, and instruction was largely limited to reading, writing, and calculating. This instruction reached only male children, many of whom lived in the wat as "wat-boys" (dèg wád) for periods up to several years" (Textor, 1973:15).



Is such education open to both males and females:

– No

Notes: "Traditionally, most formal education in Bang Chan was conducted through the temple. Monks served as teachers, and instruction was largely limited to reading, writing, and calculating. This instruction reached only male children, many of whom lived in the wat as "wat-boys" (dèg wád) for periods up to several years" (Textor, 1973:15).

Is formal education available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: "In the mid-1930s, shortly after the overthrow of the absolute monarchy, a vital event occurred: there was established in Bang Chan a government elementary school designed to provide four years of compulsory secular education to children of both sexes" (Textor, 1973:16).

↳ Is extra-religious education open to both males and females:

– Yes

Notes: "For the first time, educational requirements for boys were made uniform and, more important, girls too were legally required to be educated" (Textor, 1973:16).

## Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group:

– No

Notes: "...there are in Bang Chan no castes, age-grade societies, occupational groups (other than the family), neighborhood groups, or groups expressive of village solidarity (such as councils or governing boards) which might impose a sense of obligation on the villagers, or to whose norms or functions the villagers might have to conform. [An exception to this is] a monastery lay committee whose functions are limited to the secular tasks of monastery administration, and membership in which brings prestige and Buddhist merit to a few selected members of the community" (Phillips, 1966:21).

## Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 20: Food Storage, was coded as "none" (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Is water management provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: "Like most of the Chakri sovereigns of the past [Kings], Rama V and his successor, Rama VI (1910-1925), had canals dug extensively. In the adjoining provinces beyond Bang Chan, royal engineers laid out and supervised the digging of canals through the plains" (Sharp and Hanks, 1978:126).

Is transportation infrastructure provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: Bang Chan is fairly close to the larger city of Bangkok, and an all-weather highway constructed after World War II further promoted easy communication between the village and the metropolis. (Textor, 1973:2-5, 18).

## Taxation

Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

– No

Notes: Taxes and tithes are not officially levied, but contributions are expected. "Monks from the Bang

Chan Temple make daily alms rounds throughout the community, where they are patiently awaited by reverent Buddhist householders who make religious merit through contributions of food" (Textor, 1973:8).

Are taxes levied on the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: The government (a constitutional monarchy after 1932) levies taxes or tithes. "...there is much evident persistence of an earlier pattern in which the official extracts his living and his luxuries from local people on whatever basis proves most expedient" (Textor, 1973:12). "Not until 1952 were taxes aligned with land values rather than with land use. For the most part Bang Chan land was valued at 800 to 1,000 baht per rai [piece of land], with tax set between 2 and 2.50 baht per rai" (Sharp and Hanks, 1978:169).

## Enforcement

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized police force provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: "Accordingly, [after the king withdrew police duties from royal governors and turned them over to new salaried officers] a countrywide police force was organized in 1906" (Sharp and Hanks, 1978:126). However, this police force is not exactly effective in Bang Chan. "Modern police protection of life, limb, and property is (as of the mid-1950s) recent, limited, and not highly efficient. Government officials in general are not perceived as persons whose role is to protect the villager against exploitation" (Textor, 1973:12).

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– No

Notes: The Buddhist religion has a moral code, but not a formal legal code. (see Textor, 1973:12).

## Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– No

Notes: The religious group in question (Bang Chan Buddhists) does possess its own written language: the Old Cambodian Khaum script as a representation of Pali, the sacred language of Theravada Buddhism. However, this language is not distinct to Bang Chan as it is used by other Theravada Buddhists. (see Textor, 1973:14).

Is a non-religion-specific written language available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: The Siamese/Central Thai speak the Central Thai (Tai-Shan) dialect (eHRAF World Cultures,

Central Thai Culture Summary).

Is a non-religion-specific written language used by the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: "The Siamese and various of the other Tai cultures have been literate cultures for many centuries [literate in Tai], and the literate man has always been respected in Bang Chan" (Textor, 1973:14).

## Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Yes

Notes: Like the majority of Thailand's population, the Siamese/Central Thai are primarily wet-rice agriculturalists, with fishing and domestic animals (animal husbandry) providing a secondary sources of subsistence. A Buddhist temple may own no property, and monks may not provide food for themselves. Members of the temple community provide food for the monks (Hanks, 1972:108). Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.



Please characterize the forms/level of food production [choose all that apply]:

– Fishing

– Pastoralism

– Large-scale agriculture (e.g., monocropping, organized irrigation systems)

Notes: Like the majority of Thailand's population, the Siamese/Central Thai are primarily wet-rice agriculturalists, with fishing and domestic animals (animal husbandry) providing a secondary sources of subsistence. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.