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GOD'S WORD FOR ISAN MINISTRY NEWSLETTER

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*A Faith-based Ministry Sustained Through the Prayers, Freewill Gifts, and Partnership of God's People*

## Thailand's Triune Belief System

### *Buddhism Being A Thin Veneer*

by Ron Myers

We who trust Christ as personal Lord and Savior believe in the Trinity (or *Godhead*), according to Scripture: Our Heavenly Father; His Son The Lord Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit who dwells within the heart and life of every true, born-again believer.

The Thai also have a three-fold belief system which I've mentioned in past newsletters. Their *trinity* consists of *Poot, Pram, and Pee*. *Poot* means Buddhism, *Pram* is Brahminism, and *Pee* stands for Animism. Animism is the belief in having to continually appease and avoid the ever-lurking *evil* spirits, making People's lives miserable—unforeseen calamities, bad luck, sickness, and death. In cultural anthropology terms their trilogy is called Syncretism—the inter-meshing of two or more different belief systems. Syncretism and spirit appeasement is practiced around the world among all heathen cultures, ethnic peoples and religions in various forms—even in cultural Christianity. What do Santa Claus and Christmas trees have to do with the birth of the Christ Child? Or, what do bunnies and Easter eggs with Christ's Resurrection?

From destitute Isan peasant farmers to super-rich Bangkok business owners, all Thai Buddhists live according to this interwoven cultural trilogy with its sequential levels of prominence. Onlookers see interaction with the spirit world as topping their list of importance. Interlocked with Brahminism (belief in amulets, charms, spells, and incantations). Lastly is Buddhism (*a thin but colorful veneer over their Brahmanism and Animistic spirit appeasement beliefs and practices*). Spirit shrines are erected on every plot of land, even Buddhist temple grounds. Shrines in peasant villages are ultra-simplistic. Whereas, those of middle- and upper-class Thai are more costly and elaborate. Those on industrial complexes and 5-star hotels can be as large and intricate as a small house—all to appease and appeal to territorial owner spirits. In actuality, these are fallen angels—powerful demonic beings that control and enslave lives by fostering tedious systems of taboos and false beliefs.

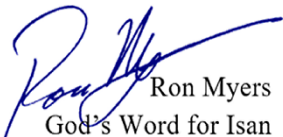
Spirit shrines, where territorial owner spirits reside, are in every city. Each has a human caretaker-mediator or intercessor. Does that remind you of Christ? Satan loves to impersonate God because he desires to be God (Isaiah 14:12–15). These shrines are where Thai go to pray, asking for healings, good success, protection, and winning lottery numbers. *Spirit Doctors* mediate between people and the spirits. The following is a monolog to an evil spirit by a *Spirit Doctor*, who was called upon by the family for a small price to dedicate their infant baby boy to the spirits.

*"Bless this baby! Keep the 32 resident spirits firmly with him! May he live long!"* As she spoke, she tied a white cotton thread around the young infant's wrist being cradled in his young mother's arms at his first month's ceremony—done to ward off unforeseen calamities. Meanwhile, relatives and neighbors wait to speak blessings over the child, as they tie cotton strings around the child's wrist (Brahmanism). Spirit doctors like Auntie Gaew also relate the spirit's wishes to take a small offering to the Buddhist temple to further insure the child's wellbeing. String-tying is also done in a harmless fashion as a bond between friends. It's also done to wish well on those about to travel afar.

In some ways the Buddhist populace of Thailand's Northeastern or Isan region are indistinguishable from their Central Thai cousins. Isan comprises a third of Thailand's total population and land mass. Every Isan youth is educated by the standard government curriculum. Some speak Central Thai at their workplace. At home, however, they are quite different from the Central Thai populace since they speak the same language as the Lao as well as share a common cultural heritage since Isan was annexed from Laos a couple centuries ago during a skirmish. Also, sticky rice is their staple food, and they observe the same animistic practice of string tying for spiritual protection as the Lao.

The Thai see the Isan as *ignorant* hicks. Actually, poor soil and climate have created an economic disadvantage for Isan peasant farmers. That stigma is fading as the Isan are now perceived as equally smart and respected as Thailand's default labor force. Many seek work across Thailand and in other countries. Bangkok taxi drivers, waitresses, or construction workers are likely to be from Isan, having left their beloved agrarian heritage to seek a more prosperous existence. Yet, both the Thai and Isan are in bondage to the beliefs I describe here. They show interest in the Gospel when presented in a way that piques their interest, like dialoging about origins, intelligent design, and Jesus as their Creator.

Thank You for Being a Loyal Supporter,

  
Ron Myers  
God's Word for Isan

www.IsanBible.org, www.LaoBible.net

Only God's love for these lost souls for whom Christ died and rose again can deliver them from the clutches of darkness. **Ask Him** to set whole families free from spiritual bondage. **Pray** too that God will raise up leaders strong in faith and doctrine who will bring in a spiritual harvest of ten-thousands of Isan people in this generation. What a joyful privilege you have! Your prayers help extend Christ's Kingdom and hasten His return. **Pray** that His Spirit will melt both Thai and Isan hearts towards the truth; so many more will be saved and seated at the marriage Supper of the Lamb!