

# Some Siamese Ghost-lore and Demonology.

BY A. J. IRWIN.

In all countries and at all times there seems to have existed some belief in spirits or ghosts, and Siam is not an exception to the general rule. There is no doubt that among most classes of people in this country beliefs are held in the existence of spirits good and bad, both of this world, and, to a much more limited extent, of other worlds. These spirits are referred to by the general term "pi" (ผี) to which is added the name of any particular spirit alluded to, as "pi ruen," "pi pa." The subject is one that is of interest to many, partly from the wish to learn the ideas regarding such matters of those amongst whom we live, and partly from the desire to obtain data for comparing their beliefs with those existing in other countries with which we are acquainted. The subject of spirits—the belief in them, and the worship of them—is however a very wide one, and no claim is made to touch on more than the verge of it in this paper.

There is a good deal of difficulty in collecting information about such matters. Persons holding certain beliefs may not wish to speak of them, especially if they think that the particular "pi" under discussion is anywhere in the neighbourhood. Again two or more persons may each in describing the same "pi" give a different account of its appearance or attributes. Perhaps also the same "pi" may have different faculties assigned to it in different parts of the country. It is quite probable that many members of the Siam Society may have collected, or come across, information on this subject which is quite at variance with statements made hereafter in this paper, but which may be quite as well, or even

much better authenticated. The writer must be taken as giving but a brief account of certain matters about which he thinks he has ascertained the beliefs that generally obtain, in order that, by attracting discussion, corrections, or further contributions, a more precise and extended knowledge of the subject may be gained.

Whether the existing Siamese literature on the subject is of wide extent or not is unknown to the writer. He has been able to find only one printed work which deals with it, namely, a pamphlet called "Concerning the power of ghosts" (ว่าด้วยอำนาจผี) written by H. R. H. the late Prince Sri Sao-wa-pang, mainly, it seems, for the purpose of explaining how the appearance and effects attributed by the ignorant to certain "pi" can be shown to arise from purely natural causes. The writer has found this pamphlet useful inasmuch as it sets forth the appearance and attributes of some of the "pi" hereafter referred to. He presumes that on these points H. R. H. would be likely to possess most accurate information, and when in doubt has either accepted, or stated, the Prince's description.

Spirits, ghosts, fairies, demons, or speaking collectively, "pi" may be divided into three classes: "Pi" which are the ghosts of the dead, or "astral bodies" of the living; "pi" which exist on their own account, and do not originate from human beings, though in some cases they may be under the control of a human being; and thirdly "pi" belonging to other worlds, who are never seen or heard on earth, but whose existence is to some extent believed in.

The following are some of the "pi" included in the first class. Under the general term "pi lawk" (ผีหลอก) seems to be included what are usually meant by the word 'ghosts' in English. They are spirits of dead persons who haunt a locality, or inhabit and appear in certain houses, chiefly old and abandoned ones, or in ancient ruins. "Pi lawk," however, always appear with the intention of misleading and frightening people, and seem to have the power of making their presence not only seen but felt. For instance a "pi lawk" might sit on the end of your bed, and

pull your toes, The following story is related as an example of the power of "pi lawk," and is at all events an instance of how a belief in them may arise. Some years ago an official in the consular service of a foreign power went to stay at a town in the interior of Siam. Here he was lodged in an empty house close to that occupied by the High Commissioner. His servants slept downstairs, and a sentry was posted in front of the house. The top part of the house was capable of being completely closed, except for a door entering from the verandah the room in which he slept. The stair-case was inside the house, and the lower story being completely shut up at night, no one outside the house could then ascend by it. The first night he was there, having carefully closed and fastened the windows of his bed room, leaving only the door unclosed, he retired to bed. In the middle of the night he was rudely awakened by being pulled out of bed on to the floor. On examining the windows they were found to be still fastened, as well as the door downstairs. Next day, suspicions being naturally entertained that some one had been playing a practical joke, complaint was made to the Commissioner, but after investigation nothing could be found out, and the foreign gentleman remained in the house. He, however, was a man of resource, and he determined to detect, if possible, his nocturnal assailant, so before retiring to bed the next night he carefully sprinkled flour all over the floor of his bed room. He then extinguished his lamp, got into bed, and remained awake. About midnight he heard a slight noise, felt what were seemingly human hands seize his ankles and was again pulled on to the floor. He rose and grasped at his assailant, who escaped, probably through the doorway. The servants were called, and lights were brought, and behold the tracks of the intruder were there, but tracks that clearly indicated that they were made by a "pi." They were in the form of an almost perfect circle some two inches in diameter, with small, apparently human toe marks, on one side. The rest of the track showed marks such as would be made by the corrugations in the skin of a human foot. Still no clue whatever to the owner of the feet could be found. The foreign representative and the Commissioner agreed that the only thing to do was to lend the former another residence, where he remained unmolested for the remainder of his stay in the town. The neighbours, especially those who had

seen the tracks in the floor, were all satisfied that a "pi lawk" had driven him from his former lodging.

In the same town in which the foregoing occurrence took place an acquaintance of the writer also met what he took to be a "pi". Returning home late one night from a neighbouring house with a lamp in one hand, and leading by the other a large and fierce 'Haw' dog, he had almost reached the foot of the steps leading to his house when the dog hung back and refused to go on. He turned to drag at the animal's collar, when he perceived it was glaring at something behind him. Following the direction of its eyes, he saw sitting on his heels a few feet away a small boy about half a metre high, and absolutely snow white from head to foot. He realised that this was something unearthly, his heart stopped beating, and he simply stood and stared at the boy for, as it seemed to him, about three minutes, when he came to himself, and made a bolt upstairs. Unfortunately in his fright he did not look where he was going, and struck his head against a screen at the top of the steps. This stunned him, and his friends hearing the noise came out and picked him up. He did not recover from the fright for six months, during which all his hair fell off. He considered that on account of the injury to his health the thing he saw was probably a "pi lawk."

The "pi am" (ผีอำ) is a "pi" which comes and sits on the chest or liver, or perhaps treads on a person just as he or she is dropping off to sleep, usually in a strange place, such as the sala of a wat, when on a journey. The person afflicted can only groan or emit inarticulate sounds while the "pi" is there, and cannot speak until it departs. The description given of this "pi" reminds one of what is spoken of in English as nightmare. The "pi pret" (ผีเปรต) is a giant among "pi" varying in height from ten to sixteen metres. It is the ghost of one who was an evil doer when alive. Its mouth is exceedingly small, even as the eye of a needle, so that it can never satisfy its hunger. The consequence is that its appearance is that of a skeleton. It cannot speak, but can make a noise like a whistle. There is one such "pi," which is said

to have been seen by many people, that appears at night in the Chinese graveyard on the Windmill Road. "Pi tai hong" (ผีตายโหง) are the ghosts of those who have died sudden and violent deaths, such as deaths caused by weapons, by falling from a tree or building, or in child birth. The distinction between "pi tai hong" and "pi tai ha" (ผีตายห่า) does not seem to be very well marked. Some say they are the same. The ghosts of persons who have died suddenly of disease, such as cholera, may be perhaps described more correctly as "tai ha" than "tai hong." Both kinds are distinctly malevolent, and go about terrifying and deceiving people. Thus their presence in any place becomes quite well known. This knowledge is most useful to those sorcerers, or witches, who are interested in "pi prai" (ผีพราย), or "pi put," (ผีปูด), for the "pi prai" seems to be a sort of essence of a "pi tai hong." The sorcerer goes at night to the spot haunted by the "pi tai hong," and by incantations he causes it to appear. He then takes a torch or candle and places it under the chin of the "pi," from whom the melted fat presently drops and is caught in a plate or other convenient vessel by the sorcerer. This fat he mixes with sweet smelling oils, and repeats incantations over it, so that it becomes a powerful charm which can be used in various ways, such as to drive men mad, or to attract the love of women. This removing of its fat, or essence, does not seem to inconvenience the "pi tai hong," who apparently will come up to be roasted whenever any one arrives with sufficient power to summon it. Another somewhat different description, given in the pamphlet "Concerning the power of ghosts," states that the "pi prai" is obtained from the skull, or hair, or oil drained off as aforesaid, from persons who have died suddenly, and who may be supposed to be authors of a "pi tai hong." With any of the above mentioned materials in his possession the sorcerer can raise a "pi prai," which he keeps, and nourishes by offerings of food. This "pi prai" he can send forth to harm his enemies, or to possess them. Sometimes the "pi prai" is sent forth to possess a person merely that its master, the sorcerer, may be called in to exorcise it. It is specially mentioned that those

decapitated by order of the king, or those who die of cholera, do not give rise to "pi tai hong" of sufficient strength to provide "pi prai." The "pi prai" itself does not possess any power which all resides in the person of its owner. There would seem to be many kinds of "pi prai," and their properties seem similar to those of the "pi pawp" who will be mentioned later on. A "pi prai" acting under orders can enter, and possess a human being, but several kinds of "pi" seem to have this power. If a person is possessed it may not therefore necessarily be by a "pi prai." It may be interesting here to give an account of an exorcising ceremony which actually took place in a case where a man was said to be possessed, and was certainly not in his right mind.

A certain official in a government department, about two hours after eating his evening meal, arose and began talking wildly and nonsensically, threatening to pull the house down, and generally behaving like a lunatic. His friends tried to calm him, but at last seeing plainly that an evil "pi" had entered into him, they proceeded to call in a witch doctor to drive away the demon. The doctor took an ordinary iron nail, and pressed the point of it very lightly down on the upper part of the last joint of one of the patient's big toes. The afflicted man, who was being held by his friends, instantly howled as if in pain, as though his toe was being pierced through. In reality the point of the nail hardly made an impression on the skin. The doctor then seized the toe, and squeezed it hard with the intention of forcing forth the "pi" through the hole supposed to have been made by the nail. He then took the nail, and drove it into a piece of wood in entering which it was supposed to pass through the body of the demon, and thus cause it to be destroyed, or to enter into the nail. The latter was then hurled far away. Within fifteen minutes of this ceremony the patient completely recovered his senses and normal condition. The facts of the man going out of his mind, and of what the doctor did to him can be substantiated by witnesses known to the writer. The "pi kuman" ( 屍 嬰 魂 ) is the spirit of an infant who dies in the womb, or shortly— in perhaps a day or two—after birth. If precautions are not taken to bury such a child in a proper manner

its "pi" may return, and entering into the mother may cause her death. The correct method of burying an infant, in order to prevent the return of its "pi kuman," is to double it up, and place it in a large rice pot the top of which is closed by paper or leaves on which some charm or prayer in Pali has been written.

The "pi krasu" ( <sup>๕</sup> ๕ ๕ ๕ ) is one about which the writer has not found it easy to get information which is quite satisfactory, as different conceptions of it appear to exist. Although it is, by name at least, known to every one as a very common "pi," its attributes seem to vary considerably. One account says it exists in the bodies of certain women. When such a one sleeps it goes out of her mouth, and wanders about in search of food. It likes to eat the dirtiest matters, and does no harm to human beings. Its distinguishing marks are a head the colour of fire, about the size of the electric light lamps in the streets of Bangkok, and a tail about half a metre long of a bluish colour, like that of burning alcohol. From this description it would appear to be like a large luminous tadpole some sixty centimetres long. Another account is different from this. It states that the "pi krasu" is a demon that possesses certain women, apparently witches, who are spoken of as "penn krasu." When a woman in the neighbourhood is about to be confined the demon issues forth at night and consumes the entrails of the child in the womb, thus causing it to be still born. It may also, it is said, enter into and consume the entrails of a living person, thus causing death. A "pi krasu" is naturally a most unpleasant neighbour. Any one "penn krasu" may be known by the following signs. She has a sleepy appearance, with unblinking eyes that do not show the reflection of any one she looks at. In order to avoid this being noticed she will never look any one in the face. It would seem, if this is so, that she must be somewhat difficult to detect. "Krasu" are said to be found mostly among Mawn and Malay women. An informant of the writer who had seen what he believed to be a "pi krasu" issuing forth on a nocturnal expedition from a village where many "krasu" were said to live, described it as a luminous ball about the size of a foot ball followed by several moving sparks like fire flies. When one "penn krasu" is about to die she must get some one to eat some of her

spittle, otherwise she cannot pass away, but lingers in agony. Her daughter is usually the one who out of pity performs the operation, thus allowing her mother to die in peace, but becoming "krasu" herself in turn. Thus being "krasu" is more or less hereditary. It is doubtful whether the second description given above of the "pi krasu" is not properly applicable to the demon known as "pi chamawp" (ผี ฉามวป). Others say the latter is merely the ghost of a woman who has died in the jungle, and haunts the neighbourhood where she died. There her misty figure may be seen wandering about, but it does no harm to any one.

There is also lack of agreement as to all the characteristics of the "pi kahang" (ผี กะหาง). This is a "pi" having the appearance of a man but with feathers and a tail like a bird. Some say it is harmless, and merely goes about searching for filth to eat. Others say it is a kind of male "krasu" of the malevolent type. We shall close this account of "pi" who may be said to be derived from dead or living persons with a reference to those known as "Chao pi" (เจ้า ผี) or spirit lords. Some of these, known as "teparak" (เทพารักษ์) who reside in the small shrines of brick or wood known as "tamasan," or "San Chao" (ศาลเจ้า), appear to have become identified with the spirits of more or less important persons who are dead, or with the spirit of the founder of the "San Chao." Some "San Chao" erected by Chinese seem to be put up merely in order to catch any spirits that may be wandering about homeless. On the presumption that some such have entered the "San Chao" offerings can then be made there with a view to obtaining favours, or they may be prayed to for whatever is desired. Very often a person, whom the "Chao pi" enters and possesses at times, is attached to a "San Chao," and with proper persuasion will go into a fit and act as an oracle. Such a person is known as "Me mawt kawn sawng" (แม่ มด คน ทรง) if a woman, or "Paw mawt kawn sawng" (พ่อ มด คน ทรง) if a man. When the fit comes on it is said "Chao Kao" or the "lord enters" her or him. It is through the words or acts of such a "kawn sawng" that the



spirit of a "San Chao" can be traced to its former possessor. At the little shrine on the road from Tarua, at the foot of a small hill close to Praputtabat (known as "Kao Tawk"), such a spirit is said to reside known as "Chao paw kao tawk," (originally "Chao paw tawk kao"), being the "Chao pi" of some member of the Royal family who was killed many years ago by falling down the hill. Some "Chao pi" have no shrines, but from the very efficient way in which they grant requests made in prayers addressed to them their existence is ascertained. Such a one is "Chao paw damm tung" who wanders at large in the fields at the back of Wat Dawn and Wat Sutitaran (Wat Lao), opposite Messrs. Windsor & Co.'s premises in Bangrak. This spirit is that of a man who was murdered there many years ago.

Connected with the subject of "pi" is that of the witchcraft known as "kun" (กุน) which possesses a man. By this he is compelled each week to send out a piece of some substance, such as leather or flesh, which goes off and lodges in some other person, and if not removed by incantations will cause him harm. If he does not get rid of the "kun" thus once every week, it will injure himself. The person affected by the substance sent forth is said to "tuk kun" (ถูกกุน). Both the sender and receiver seem to be unfortunately situated. The writer quite recently heard of a case of a man who "tuk kun" in the neck, but luckily a good monk was able to remove it in time to prevent much harm.

We now pass to the consideration of the second class of "pi," who may be described as existing of themselves, and not deriving their origin from human bodies, dead or alive. First among these we may mention "pi ruen" (ผีเรือน) the guardian angel, or spirit, of the house. One of these is attached to every house. Sometimes it may be heard speaking or grumbling to itself. Very rarely a glimpse of it, in the form of a man, may be caught. Outside of the house we find in many Siamese compounds a "san prapum" (ศาลพระภูมิ) or spirit box, being a little wooden shrine on the top of a pole, usually at the back of the house. This is erected to

the "Prapum Chao ti" (พระภูมิเจ้าที่), a guardian "pi" of the land. Going further afield we come to the "pi kamot" (ผีโคมด) which appears in the form of a red star seen on the plains at night by people passing to and fro. In the wet season boatmen losing their way steer for it thinking it is a house, and perhaps come to grief. Similarly it misleads wayfarers. It would seem to be the same as what is known as a "Will o' the wisp" in England. Its appearance does not seemingly differ largely from that ascribed to the "pi krasu." Akin to the "pi kamot" is the "pi pung tai" (ผีพุ่งไต้), a sort of shooting star that goes back and forth in the atmosphere at night. It must not be confounded with the falling stars known as "tewada chuti" (เทวดาจุติ), that is, "tewada," or angels, coming down to become mortals. By some it is said to arise from the tail of the green snake known as "ngu kio hang mai" (งูเขียวหางไหม้), or the green snake with the burnt tail. People say there is such a snake, but whether it is the ordinary green snake whose tail has become withered, or a special breed, with a permanently burnt-appearing tail, is unknown to the writer. This snake is said to have been seen at fishing stakes by fishermen who saw the appearance known as "pi pung tai" arising from it. The matter is one on which some of our naturalist members might perhaps give us some information. It is said to be unlucky to see a "pi pung tai."

In the jungle we hear of the "pi pong kang" (ผีโป่งค้าง)- This "pi" has the appearance of a black monkey. It comes and sucks the blood from the big toe of a sleeper in the jungle. It frequents the heavy tree jungle. Persons sleeping in such jungle are recommended to sleep with their feet touching, in order to guard against these demons. Of similar habits to the "pi pong kang" is the "pi kawng koi" (ผีกองกอย), which also comes and sucks blood from the feet of sleepers in the jungle. Should one, who has thus been sucked, die it is said the "pi" has eaten him. This "pi" is evidently in reality some sort of vampire bat. Possibly black

monkeys may be in the habit of sucking or biting the toes of sleepers, thus giving rise to the story of "pi pong kang;" or else persons who have been sucked by bats on waking and seeing monkeys about may have attributed such acts to them. The "pi cha kla" (မြီး ဂဏ္ဍ) is a demon in the form of a cat. It is a jungle "pi." Demons of this kind are kept by certain jungle sorcerers who have the power of sending them to injure their enemies.

Jungle "pi" or "pi pa" (မြီး ပါ) seem to have many attributes, but perhaps the following tale may refer more particularly to the "pi cha kla." The writer once met an ancient village headman who lived on the edge of the jungle. He had had only one wife to whom he had been married nearly fifty years, and he said his life had been a happy one, and he had really never known trouble. On enquiry it turned out he had had nine children, but only five were alive. When asked if he did not consider the loss of four children a calamity, he replied that three of them had arrived at one birth, and that as no one could expect a woman to rear triplets they naturally died. As to the other son who died, no one could save him, as his death was caused by "pi." He went three days journey into the jungle with some other young men to find a suitable place to feed their cattle for a time. They clearly selected a bad place, as they were annoyed by "pi," who kept appearing and disappearing round their camp in an inexplicable manner, cats and other animals, where no such cats or animals could be reasonably expected to be. How could they be other than "pi"? At all events the party thought they were, and returned home. The old man's son was never the same as before, and in two months sickened and died of dysentery. When asked if this was not a natural disease to die of, the old man refused to believe it. His son would never have died of it if it had not been for those "pi." "Pi pa," or jungle demons, are a most interesting class of spirits, and many are the tales told of them, and in their hearts the jungle men really seem to hold them in considerable respect. There are the "pi pa" who haunt certain places in the jungle, where those who try to live there, or who even sleep there for a night, are attacked by diseases such as fever and dysentery. These are caused

by demons who often thus kill those who intrude on their haunts. These demons are not seen, but the effect of their presence is evident. It would seem that the whole jungle is inhabited by "pi" who may or may not be malevolent, but whom it is at all events wise to be on good terms with. An instance of this occurred to the writer. He had shot a deer which fell in some bushes, and was dragged forth by a local native who, with some of his friends, was assisting in the hunt. This man then proceeded to cut a small piece of the foot, the lip, the tongue, the eyelid, and the ear of the dead animal. These he took and cast down on the spot where the deer had fallen. When asked the meaning of this performance he replied "penn sinn" (เปนนสิน) or "it is the price." When asked the price of what, no further information except "penn sinn" and again Oh! "penn sinn" could be obtained. At last when directly asked if the offering was for the "pi" they admitted it was without any hesitation, thus leading one to believe that they themselves preferred not to mention the word "pi" in that neighbourhood. The offering was evidently intended to compensate the local "pi" for the loss of the deer, or to propitiate it so that it might not be angry at the deer being killed in its domain. Then there are the "pi pa" who appear in the form of various animals, with an awkward habit of becoming invisible, or disappearing at will. The most interesting perhaps of these is the tiger that assumes the shape of a young and lovely woman. It appears as a woman to the hunter watching for game on his perch in a tree, and entices him down, when it becomes a tiger and rends him. The following tale was told by an old "pran" (พราน), or hunter upcountry. He and a younger companion were sitting up one moonlight night on a "hang" (ห้าง), or perch, made in a tree, watching for game. Presently a young woman appeared under the tree, entered into conversation with them, and endeavoured to induce the younger man to descend. But his older and more experienced companion was on the alert. After trying to dissuade his companion from descending, he told him he thought it would be more comfortable if he and the girl had a couch to sit upon, that he would cut some branches to make one and throw them down

to the girl, and when she had arranged them his friend could get down. This was agreed to. He then cut off a branch and threw it down to the woman, who, instead of picking it up with her hand, proceeded to stoop down and grasp it with her teeth. His suspicions were confirmed, and he at once fired his gun at her. His aim was true, and when the smoke cleared away they saw a tiger lying dead where the woman had been. One may remark that it would be curious for him to relate such a story with all seriousness, unless he thought that some, at least, of his hearers were fully prepared to believe it.

The “pi pawp” (ผีปอป) is a demon held in great respect among the Lao “pung kao” and the Ka (ดาว พุง ชาว แด ชาว). It has got no body but is under the control of its owner. How the owner first obtains such control, or how he knows he has got a “pi pawp” under control, is not clear. Probably he thinks he would like one, and prays for one to come. Part of the duty of the owner is to feed the demon with offerings of food. The food is not consumed. Possibly the “pi” lives on the odour of it. By praying and offering food, and then experimenting, one could no doubt ascertain the fact of control. This demon can do nothing against the will of its owner, of whom it is afraid. He can will it to go forth and injure, possess, make mad, or even kill his enemies; to change the hate of another to love, or love to hate. It seems, however, that if its owner is afraid of any one, his “pi pawp” also becomes afraid, and can do no harm to such a one. When the friends of a person attacked by a “pi pawp” find it out, the correct thing to do is to send for an exorciser to get rid of it. A clever exorciser can draw forth and catch the demon, but a real expert will not only do this, but will even send it back to harm its original owner. If the latter is a strong magician he will find this out, and in turn send another demon forth to defeat the one now under the control of the exorciser, and so it goes on until victory rests with the stronger. One can imagine that a man with a high reputation as a dealer in the occult might make a reasonable income among those who believe in “pi pawp.” The “Pi Nang Tani” (ผีนาง ตะนีน) is a female spirit inhabiting the banana tree known

as the "klue tani." The fruit of this tree contains edible seeds, but they are not much grown in the neighbourhood of Bangkok, presumably on account of their unpleasant attributes in the way of "pi." The bud of this kind of banana tree is different from the ordinary inasmuch as it comes out at the side of the trunk. Witches and sorcerers of sufficient knowledge have the power to call up from the bud, when its top opens, a "pi" in the form of a beautiful young woman. She is useful as an adviser on matters connected with gambling, such as lucky numbers, and can even be sent about to carry out the sorcerer's orders. She goes about at night. Some of these "pi" are malevolent, and some are not. It is advisable to cut down these banana trees when the fruit is gathered in order to destroy the abode of this "pi."

"Pi Nang Mai" ( ผีนางไม้ ) or female tree spirits, are spirit bodies residing in certain big forest trees, such as the "mai takien." It is said teak trees do not harbour them. They are good hearted fairies, and sometimes when monks are on a pilgrimage and leave their begging bowls at the foot of such a tree, the "pi nang mai" will fill them. If the tree be cut down, and taken away by some one to build a house the spirit is thus let loose, and may come to live in the house, much the same as a "pi ruen" is said to.

We have hitherto been dealing with two classes of spirits having their abode among us on earth, but there is another third class of "pi" who are spoken of as dwelling in other places, heaven and hell, even though such beliefs may be opposed to the teaching of the Lord Buddha. Some of them are familiarly known by name and reputation to every one. The characteristics of others are known perhaps only to the more learned. Chief among such "pi" is "Tau wet-suwann" ( ท้าวเวศ สุวรรณ ) known to all fairly educated persons. He is the "nai" or master of all such spirits. He is described as being like a "yakk" ( ยักษ์ ) or fierce looking giant and he carries an iron club. His abode is in heaven. He is said to have the power of casting a certain charm which inflicts small-pox on children. Another spirit, not perhaps well known to the illiterate

is "Praya Machurat" (พระยา มัจจุราช), the King of Death, who acts as director of hell under "Tau-wet-suwann." He is the judge who apportions the punishments of those spirits who do wrong. He keeps registers in which he enters the evil deeds of human beings, so that proper punishment may be inflicted. "Nai Ariyaban" (นาย อริยบาต), commonly known as "Pra yom praban" (พระ โยม พระ บาต), is chief jailer in hell, and punishes according to the orders of "Praya Machurat," the spirits of evil doers. "Prakan" (พระ กาด) is well known as the "pi" who issues orders as to the deaths of human beings when their time has come to die. He is described as being black in colour with red clothing. The subject of spirits belonging to the third class is, however, connected somewhat with religious beliefs, and requires one more learned than the writer to do justice to it.

The matter of the making of charms and spells, and the wording of incantations and appeals to spirits, has not been dealt with in this paper, which the author now closes in the hope that some other member of the Siam Society may be induced to give us the results of investigations in that direction.



## ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY.

## DISCUSSION ON MR IRWIN'S PAPER,

A meeting of the Society was held at the Rooms of the Engineering Society of Siam on the evening of Thursday the 3rd October, 1907. The President, Dr. O. Frankfurter, was in the Chair.

At the outset the PRESIDENT said:—

Our correspondent Professor Finot has addressed to the Society a letter in which he draws the attention of its members to the work taken in hand by the Society for the conservation of Angkor Wat. Reference to the excellent work proposed by the Committee has already been made in the Local Press, and I am sure that the work proposed will, as it deserves, meet with full appreciation on the part of our members. The papers in the case are on the table and Mr. Belhomme will undertake to communicate the adhesion of any Member to the Committee in Paris.

I have now to introduce Mr. Irwin, who has prepared a paper on Siamese Ghost-Lore and Demonology. The subject which he has chosen is one which I suppose appeals to everyone independently of the views which we may hold on the supernatural or that which is incomprehensible. It requires therefore no long introduction, as I am sure that the discussion which will follow the reading of the paper will enable those versed in medicine, law or folklore to give to our Society the benefit of their experience.

Mr. R. W. Giblin then read Mr. Irwin's paper.

The PRESIDENT said :

I am sure I am only echoing the view of the Society in thanking Mr. Irwin for his interesting and clear paper. The subject which he has chosen is one on which little information existed. We find of course frequent reference in the works of foreigners to the belief in witchcraft and especially Professor Bastian has already in the chapter which treats on the " Phantasie Welt des Uebernatuerlichen " in his *Reisen in Siam*, given a very full report on this lore, but as was usual with this scholar the way in which the facts are brought forward make the reading scarcely attractive and it is difficult to get a clear view on the subject.



Mr. P. A. Thompson in his sympathetic book "Lotus Land" has also some interesting reference to this subject.

It may, however, be less known that the old law of Siam recognises the existence of these demons, and it ordains that if a case against them can be proved they shall be put to death and their property confiscated whilst on the other hand the wrongful accuser was also severely punished. However not much faith was put in the impartiality of the judge in this respect, and one of the first enactments at the commencement of the present dynasty in Chula:sak : 1146 (1794) was that all cases having reference to demonology and witchcraft should be sent to Bangkok for investigation and judgment ( Kotmai, ed. Bradley, Bangkok, vol. 1, 402 )

I may mention in this respect that in the reprint of the law by Prince Rajburi, the Prince simply says, " the laws having reference to this subject are no longer in force, and students are referred to Bradley's edition."

In the same category as the law on witchcraft falls the law which forbade formerly the settling between two occupiers of land for fear of the intervention of the spirits, and very strict details were given as to how responsibility was to be shared in case of death, or misfortune to the former owners. That law was only formally repealed in 1246, although it seems not to have been put in force.

Mr. R. BELHOMME said:—One and all of us while listening to this interesting paper, must have been carried back to the days of our youth when, with eyes fixed upon the speaker and ears intent upon the wonderful feats of spirits and Ghosts, Gæni and monsters, we were listening to the familiar fairy tale.

Men are but mere grown up children, as the old saying goes, and if, for the educated minority, wonderland has vanished; yet the vast majority of mankind are still believers in the supernatural, of which Ghostlore and Demonology form such an important part.

Indeed, sceptical as we may have grown, do we not experience here to-night the revival—after a long rest—of our Meetings, the ghost of which Mr. Irwin has so artfully revived, much to the discomfort of your humble Secretary, but to the great delight of our distinguished President, and audience.

In all countries and at all ages, Ghost lore and Demonology have flourished and are responsible for many a masterpiece in literature, painting and music. That of the West we need not dwell upon here to-night, and in the few remarks which I have to make I shall endeavour to complete what has already been said by laying under contribution a work recently published, by order of the Governor-General of French Indo-China, which work contains the Ethnographic data collected in all the districts of Tongking. \* The compiler of this work is an old friend of our Society: Commandant Lunet de Lajonquière and the task of compiling the volume must for ever stand as evidence of his personal knowledge and competent discrimination. My notes contain, therefore, nothing original and are merely given to-night with the hope that they may form an addition to the subject of our Meeting, an addition all the more useful since they mainly relate to the tribes of the Thai race, known as "the Thos," which inhabit northern Tongking.

It is not a part of the religious precepts of either Confucianism, Buddhism or Taoism to believe in spirits, ghosts or Demonology. But Confucianism expressly bases its precepts on the family ancestors and their permanent presence in the midst of the family. The spirit of the dead *tsou-sien* (Hak Ka) is constantly guarding the living and leads by their side an existence dependent on theirs.

An extension of this principle in the minds of the uncultured, ignorant population easily leads to the belief in ghosts and to Demonology.

We thus find, among the Chinese, belief in the existence of spirits protectors of gateways and doors—*nen chen*. They are represented on the door panels in the form of Generals covered with armour and their duty is to guard the entrance against the evil spirits—*Koei*. By an easy extension of such protecting spirits originally meant for private dwellings we come to the protecting Genii of whole villages, whose duties were even consecrated by Imperial Chinese edict as bound to continue their existence for the virtue and good of their fellow inhabitants under the names of *chen-than* and *chin*. (Kuan Hoa—Sino-Annamite—Hak Ka.) Com. L. de Lajonquière tells us that the village of Phu Chay in Tongking possesses as *chin* a ghost named Pac-Tay who had been an hermit during many years in the neighbouring forest, living on wild fruit and roots. After his death a serpent and a tortoise issued from the body

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\* "Ethnographie du Tonkin Septentrional." Hanoï,

devouring the men and kidnapping the women and girls. Consternation became unbearable in the village and invocations to Chang-Ti resulted in the latter ordering Pac Tay himself to march against these monsters and exterminate them. Pac Tay did as ordered to, found the tortoise and the snake, enchained them and carried them into the upper regions, since which achievement he is invoked as a protecting genius, more especially against pirates.

In many of the inland districts, more especially in Tongking, heaps of stones and twigs are to be found along the main roads and passes ; these tumuli are formed by the individual contribution of every traveller who, by this slight offering of a pebble or branch of a tree, hopes to propitiate or drive away any possible bad luck. Such tumuli are known as Keo-But by the Thai, and Ta Fo ( great Buddha ) or Sia Fo ( small Buddha ) by the Chinese according to the importance of the road or pass. This, however, is in its nature a pious offering to Buddha and not a superstitious action towards the spirits, Genii or Ghosts.

We have seen above that Confucianism and the ancestral rites lead to spirit worship and ghost lore. Among the Thais the question stands either as an adaptation from the Chinese or, as in other countries, attributable to the love of the supernatural. The Thos have a legend that, at Hoang Su Phi, a woman foreign to the district came one day and died at the foot of the rock overlooking the village of Quan Ing Mai. No one troubled to attend to her or perform the burial rites. From that day a ghost was seen wandering over the hill and every one passing close to the rock was vowed to certain death. Offerings of rice, of fowls and all sorts of costly sacrifices had to be tried before appeasing this irate soul, after which, she suddenly became propitious and a pagoda stands to-day on the spot of her death, to which women desirous of a large and prosperous posterity resort.

This ghost, its occurrence, wicked ways, propitiation and ultimate attributes resemble closely the Chinese divinity of *Kuan In*—the goddess of goodness.

As regards the real phis, the Thais of Tongking classify them as follows :

1° The *phi tho cong* ( phi—spirit ; tho cong --lord of the earth, in Annamite ); and corresponds to the Chinese ( *T'ou-ti-kong* ).

He is the guardian of the earth and protector of the village. At

the entrance to every village a small building stands dedicated to him and the men, one for each family, assemble on the 1st and 15th of each month to offer him a copious meal which they partake of after having placed it on the altar.

According to one version this *phi-tho-cong* was formerly a great official who, having reached heaven after death, was annoyed because he could not find sufficient pig's heads to eat. The Jade Emperor, as a punishment for his voracity, sent him forth to stand at the entrance of every village with the following instructions: "Thou shalt remain there and thou shalt only have for food the pig's heads that may be brought to thee."

The *Tho cong* must be propitiated before every undertaking. A fowl must be sacrificed to him before purchasing a buffalo, otherwise the latter would infallibly be eaten up by a tiger or other wild beast.

Previous to building a house, an offering of a pig's head, two bowls of boiled rice, 5 joss-sticks and 5 cups of alcohol must be made to him

During the times of the pirates the leaders of an expedition planted their standards in front of his pagoda and led their men to his altar before which every one had to prostrate himself. These pagodas generally consist of an altar sheltered by a modest roof and are often surrounded by a cluster of trees the felling of which is strictly prohibited. Amongst the most dreaded *phis*, may be mentioned:

1° The *Phi met* or souls of people having died a violent death. There is the *Phi met toc nam* (ghost of the drowned) who calls the people on the banks of the rivers; the mere hearing of whose call is sufficient to cause sickness.

There is the *Phi met tai giao* or spirit of those who have fallen to the blows of the sword or knife.

2° The *Phi Xúông* or spirit of those who succumbed to violent death but only a few days after the accident or wound.

These two kinds of *Phis* are particularly nasty and cause many illnesses. Four times a month they wander over hills and lowlands; they preserve their human form, yet are invisible; they do not walk but fly; they keep their living likeness and are dressed just as they were at the moment of their departure from this life.

They generally haunt the spot of their death, beat, bite and attack all the passers by with the exception of their relatives and friends.

Mere contact with the atmosphere they permeate suffices to bring about illness ; but these spirits, after their worldly experience, are afraid of their murderer and avoid armed people

3° The *Phi-khai* or spirit of the chicken, known also to the Annamites under the name of *mà gà*.

This *Phi-khai* takes possession of people, especially women, and gives them the bad eye. Such people need henceforth but only blow over food in order to bring about all sorts of very grave illnesses on the partakers.

The origin of this species of spirit is thus accounted for in upper Tongking :

In the neighbourhood of Cao-Bang, in the district of Cu-son, on the road to Nuoc-hai, there formerly lived an old woman whose name was Ba Gian and whose abode was in the cave of Tien-Muon-Dong. This old woman, black and very slim, had a tongue of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  thuc or *sock* (75 centimetres) in length, by means of which she used to snap up all those that came within her reach. Alarm waxed strong over such wonderful misdeeds but all efforts, whether by force or persuasion, failed to get rid of the monster. One day, two brothers, Chanh Qui and Chanh-Kien, each provided with a sword passed within reach of the old woman. They were, as they expected, attacked by her and the fight between them remained undecided until dusk. On their way back to the village, the two brothers hit upon the thought to wash their swords with the blood of a black dog ( history does not tell us whether they found this black dog dead on the road or whether they killed him for the purpose ). Be that as it may, they returned next day to the old woman and resumed the fight against her, victory finally resting with them. One of the two brothers, Chanh Qui, cut her head off with one stroke and Chanh Kien, the other brother, cut her body in two ; the gruesome remains of the wonderful old monster being, by the two brothers, thrown into the Song Bang Giang river. So far so good, but it unfortunately happened that three peasants fished these remains out of the river, each independently of the others, and the descendants of these three peasants are to this day possessed by the " spirit of the chicken " or phi khai!

4°. The *Phi can*, very rare but very wicked, are the spirits of great warriors who fell at war. Their abode is on big trees close to the spot where they died. Any one attempting to fell the tree will die an instantaneous death, or fall sick, according to the strength of the blow dealt to the tree. On the first day of each month this Phi quits his abode and rises up to heaven; the tree may then be cut down and the spirit will chose another one to dwell in on his return.

5°. The *Phi Mang* are the demons of perjurers. When litigation arises between two persons over a theft or crime, both parties appear before the *tho cong's* altar and swear solemnly as to their innocence, invoking death in case of perjury. The soul of the perjurer thereby becomes a *Phi Mang*, which Phi is supposed to attack only the members of his own family down to the farthest descendants. The *Phi mang* seem, however, to be active only during the intercalary months.

6°. The *Phi man* are the souls of those that have died from pain in the bowels. Their attributes are however mild, they only cause benignant illnesses and this only on the 1st and 15th of every month.

7°. The *Phi hon*. These spirits are responsible for plague, cholera and all other epidemic diseases. Their abode is in far away forests, and they only come out every 10 years or so.

8° The *Phi ka rong* are unconscious ghouls which, of an evening, place their big toe in their nose and roll about, like hoops, devouring the bowels of diseased people, newly confined women, the refuse of dogs and pigs and other rubbish. These Phi are attracted by the groanings of sick people. They are kept away by keeping lights burning and also by surrounding mosquito curtains with a cotton thread.

9° The *Phi ngo hai* are spirits in the possession of the Man tribes who send them to take possession of the bodies of the Tho tribes. Their manifestation assumes the shape of large knots which cover the body of the victim and the latter will eventually succumb if some one from the Man tribe does not come to the rescue. The treatment consists in biting the nodes and in incantations to the spirit.

10° The *Thu ngu*, or snake with a red crest. This *phi* bites people when crossing rice fields.

11° The *Thu ting* whose abode is up some tall tree. This ghost assumes the form of a handsome maiden, richly dressed in red and white,

who attracts young men, encouraging them to follow without ever being able to seize her, and suddenly vanishes with an outburst of ironic laughter. Needless to add, this highly attractive and cruel Phi only becomes visible at night time.

As my audience can see, the list is a long one, and I dread to think of what a victim possessing them all would be like. Apart from the last one—the fair maiden—whom many of us might be curious to make the acquaintance of—most of these Phis have some evil attributes and the sorcerers are in great demand for the purpose of expelling the *Ph's*. These sorcerers are known in Upper Tongking under the names of "*Pù giang*" or "*Pù Mo*." Their instruments and attire consist of: a hat or embroidered turban, a red coat highly ornamented, a row of bells, a pair of cymbals and a two stringed guitar. Commandant L. de Lajonquière describes to us, from notes supplied by Capt. Fesch, the proceeding as follows: When a Phi is believed to have taken possession of some person, the latter's father or some near relation carries the patient's turban or head gear to the *Pù Giang* saying: "My son was taken ill on the 7th day of the 11th month towards 3 p. m. I beg you to examine and discover the cause of the illness."

The *Pù Giang* places the turban on the altar of the Supreme Being and lights three joss-sticks. He then counts by following, in prescribed order, all the phalanxes of his fingers, thereby reaching the inspiration that on the afore mentioned date and hour the "*Phi met toc nam*" has caused the sickness. Seizing then the turban with the left hand, he lifts it above the burning joss-sticks, saying: "To-day so and so is sick owing to the *Phi met toc nam*; I beseech thee, O my Master, to help me nurse and cure the patient." He then breaks the 3 joss-sticks, wraps them up in the turban and hands it back to the applicant saying that the patient will be cured on the 12th hour of the night.

At the appointed hour the applicant must, in person, come and accompany the *Pù Giang* to the house of the patient for the purpose of expelling the *Phi*. When leaving his house, the *Pù Giang* must, at the foot of the stairs, draw a cabalistic sign or "*Cud*" in the direction of the 4 cardinal points. This is done in order that the four ferocious wild beasts may not see the *Pù Giang* during his journey. The performance must be repeated at the entrance to the patient's village, the *Pù Giang* saying: "I beseech thee "*tho cong*" to accompany me and help to cure the patient." After uttering these words, he rubs his mouth with his hands in order to drive away any impure breath.

He then turns towards the entrance to the village and with the right hand sketches out two characters, their meaning being "Kill the devil." After yet another cabalistic sign, this time with the foot at the door of the house, he enters and proceeds to feel the patient's head and back with the right hand, saying: "Your soul has now returned, you have recovered your strength and will in future fare as well as in the past." Here follow the ordinary ancestral offerings and rites after which the *Pú Giang* reads, out of his book, to the sound of the cymbals, the following invocation:

"See, to the North, king *Thanh-dê* has seized the soul of the patient snatching it away from the depth of the waters with the help of the king of the waters."

"See, to the West, king *Bac-dê* descends to take charge of the soul along with king *Long Wuong*."

"To the South, king *Sach-dê*; to the North, king *Hac-lê*; in the middle, king *Hoang-dê*; all three also come to claim the soul from king *Long Wuong*; 1000 soldiers accompany them bearing presents for the appeasement of the evil spirits." After some further cabalistic signs over the altar with 3 joss-sticks, the *P'u Giang* continues as follows:

"And now I see; the soul is stopped and will come back for all the spirits have graciously accepted the presents we have just offered to them. O Soul, return at once in order to protect the patient's body and restore to him health!"

With further cabalistic signs, written on pieces of wood or simulated with the hand, and with the slaughter of a chicken, the exorcism ends and the *Pú Giang* returns to his house not, however, before placing on the gate and four corners of the patient's residence and also at the entrance to the village small planks with cabalistic letters "*Ou i*" intended to drive away for ever the ghost or evil spirit.

Many socerers, however, either through ignorance or loss of memory replace the above incantations by dances, contorsions or shrieks to the sound of their cymbals, bells and guitars. The more recalcitrant the *Phi*, the greater their exertions.

On the invitation of the PRESIDENT, who expressed his pleasure at seeing him present for the first time at a meeting of the Society, the venerable Rev. SAMUEL J. SMITH made a few remarks inclusive of



personal experiences.

Mr. W. R. D. BECKETT referred to the mounds of stones mentioned by Mr. Belhomme as being raised to the Pi in Tongking, every passer by adding to the mound. These, he said, were very plentiful in the north of Siam. They were generally on a rising ground, and he had noticed them very often at the frontier of villages. People would not tell him any thing about such mounds, there being a reluctance to mention the word "Pi." The "Pi Panang" might be added to Mr. Irwin's list, from the north. It is a goblin that lives on the tops of hills dividing watersheds. At a very wooded spot on the watershed between the Menam and the Mekong, the people passing all left their stones to the "pi pinang" who lived there. With regard to what Mr. Irwin had said of the "pi ruen," he might add that in some parts of the north every doorway has a spirit; and in all villages in the Nongkai district to every house there is attached a small spirit house for the special spirit of the family.

The Rev. Dr. E. P. DUNLAP said that in the Peninsula there were other "pi" not mentioned in Mr. Irwin's list. "Pi pisat," for example, sent out and spread great epidemics of disease over the country. Now no one had struck a harder blow at this class of superstitions than His Majesty the King. Some time since when there was great terror over an announcement that "pi" were to cause epidemics in the district of the Banpakong river, the King issued a proclamation that did much good. It guaranteed that these prophecies would not be fulfilled, and gave much salutary advice on the subject. Among other "pi" known in the Peninsula was that named Noraa. Originally this was a player Prince who had a travelling theatrical band and his spirit takes possession of people to this day. That is a matter of great fear in the Peninsula, and he had himself known a family in the island of Samooie afflicted by the effects of this superstition. Touching on another point mentioned by Mr. Irwin, he might state that the green snake with a dark red tail was well enough known in the Peninsula. The "Pi nang mai" had been referred to by Mr. Irwin as a benevolent fairy. But in addition there was supposed to be a very evil spirit inhabiting trees, called "pi mai." People were afraid to cut certain trees or to use the wood of them in their houses. He might add that one of the strongest books against the various theories of spirits that he had seen was written by a Siamese. It was noteworthy too that charms had been to a great extent discarded, and were now never seen among the higher class of people. Thirty years ago one could have made a very interesting

collection of charms from the higher class, including even Royalty. But it would be very difficult to-day to find them among that class of people.

The Rev. JOHN CARRINGTON said he had seen a good many curious things in this country and heard a good deal more. Some years ago he was making a tour on a canal below Ratburi, which comes out to the river again before you come to Meklong; and at one place where he stopped he was told of a young Siamese woman who had been taken down into the earth there, and no one could rescue her. If the story was true, the natural explanation was that the young woman found herself in a quicksand; but the people there explained it as the work of spirits. He had seen a cure of possession undertaken with a knife: beginning at the head they worked it down to the feet, with incantations; and when they got to the feet, the spirit was supposed to have been driven away. He had seen a case of a cure of a young woman at Ayuthia by the pouring of water. But that was to be explained by mere mental excitement, the patient being worked up into a nervous condition. Mr. Irwin had referred to the putting of the body of a dead infant into a rice pot, which was then covered over; he might have added that it was then put on the river.

The Rev. Dr. DUNLAP said he remembered one fellow who was making his living by acting as a spirit and as the protector of people against the spirit. He fostered the idea of a tree being inhabited by spirits, and then bravely took frightened people past the tree. In another instance of the kind a young woman who wished to have the body of her dead sister cremated, played, an insistent ghost till her parents consented to the cremation.

The PRESIDENT, in this connection, recalled the fact that at the end of 1891 prophets arose who predicted all sorts of calamities, such as fire, in Bangkok, and some of the fires so predicted actually broke out. Then on January 12th, 1892, a proclamation was issued by the King threatening all prophets with whipping and the punishments provided by the old Law, and stating that already in the reign of Phra Nang Klao when a fire broke out which had been predicted by an inspired person the incendiary was beheaded. It was only necessary to remind these inspired persons of the punishment which was in store for them when prophecies ceased.

The proclamation can be found in the official Gazette of 109, vol. vii, page 375.

Dr. BEYER thought the belief in ghosts went through the nobility, and was not confined simply to the "ratsadon." He asked if this belief in ghosts was practically a doctrine of their religion or not. He knew that the belief was not properly in Buddhism. But was it not currently taught by their priests? And was the belief not much more wide-spread than had been admitted so far? In medicine, as they knew there were the "moh pi," who treated diseases by exorcism.

The Rev. Dr. DUNLAP replied that, in the introduction he had written to the Trai Pidok, His Majesty the King took a strong stand against all spirit worship, and upheld a purely ethical Buddhism. But the Buddhist priests did, as a matter of fact, believe in the worship of the "Pi."

Mr. IRWIN said he did not think the educated class of Siamese believed much in spirits, but the educated class was a small class. There was no doubt, too, that belief in the "pi" was inculcated in every second sermon preached in the Wat sala. The preacher told his hearers that they ought to do right, and that if they did wrong they were likely to come across Nai Ariyaban or some other "pi." But personally he thought it was an advantage to have these beliefs generally held. The mere belief in making merit, without any idea of punishment, would not keep people from doing wrong. In conclusion Mr. Irwin thanked Mr. Giblin for the very clear way in which he had read the paper, and added that the production of the paper was also very much due to Mr. Giblin's help and insistence.

The Rev. JOHN CARRINGTON said the body of a person whose spirit had departed was called "pi" and there was a logical connection between this and the idea of a "pi" entirely separated from any body. As a matter of fact they found the same condition of things in European countries. The coloured people in America were great believers in ghosts, and even in enlightened Europe the same beliefs were to be found. The belief was based no doubt on a perversion of the truth, and it was an interesting question whether first of all the word was applied to the body whose spirit had left it, or whether the superstitious belief came first and the name was transferred to the dead body. For himself he was inclined to think the term was first of all applied to the body, and then people imagined they saw and felt some one or some thing to which the same name was given. Anyhow, the better people were educated and christianized, the less there was of this superstition.

Mr. VAN DER HEIDE asked if the various "pi" they had heard of were individual spirits, or species of spirits, or both. Also they had heard a great deal of information about the relations between the "pi" and human kind, but nothing about the popular belief as to the relations between the spirits themselves.

Mr. IRWIN replied that the names were generic with the exception of the purely mythical "pi" like Tau Wet-suwann and Phya Machurat.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to Mr. Irwin for his very able paper.