

MONKS AND MEDIUMS: RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM IN NORTHERN THAILAND

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Dedicated to

JANE RICHARDSON HANKS AND LUCIEN M. HANKS, JR.

with deep respect and the feelings of joy and
privilege in knowing them through their scholarship,
and in their work and leisure.

The Expansion of Urban-based Spirit Mediumship in Theravadin Buddhist Societies

Spirit mediumship has enjoyed a rising tide of popularity in urban areas of northern Thailand, particularly in the neighboring towns of Chiang Mai, Lamphun and Lampang. Estimates by spirit mediums who have been in practice for over 25 years suggest that between the late 1950s and late 1970s there was a six-fold increase in the proportion of spirit mediums per 1000 population. By 1987 there were approximately 250-300 in Chiang Mai town (Irvine 1984:317). This dramatic change in religious behavior needs to be accounted for. The explanation for similar urban-based patterns of medium proliferation in Burma and in Sri Lanka may

account for the numeric increase, but does not address the inherently paramount issues of gender relationships¹ or of religious syncretism. Both Spiro (for Burma) and Obeyesekere (for Sri Lanka) use a functional argument: they see the shaman's practice of divination as providing an element of predictability that contravenes the change and luck that are characteristic of life in the modernizing urban environments of post-World War Two Southeast Asia (Obeyesekere 1967; Spiro 1978:208).

My first purpose is descriptive. A case study of unorthodox behavior of a small clique of spirit mediums and monks in urban Chiang Mai demonstrates both the flux of contemporary urban Thai religion and a fundamental concern with power in the informal sector of Northern Thai society.

Spirit Mediumship in Urban Northern Thailand

The terms for spirit medium in northern Thailand, *maa khii* and *jaw song*, refer to lay persons who invite spirits

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Thirty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Inc., Chicago, Illinois, 22 March 1986, in a panel dedicated to Jane Richardson Hanks and Lucien M. Hanks, Jr. Plans to publish the panel papers in a Festschrift were cancelled in 1990.

to take possession of their human bodies in order to speak and act through them to human beings. Both terms translate as a "horse ridden"² by a spirit, signifying that the medium is a means by which spirits move among humans. *Maa khii* is a local term; *jaw song* is the term preferred in Central Thailand and in the Standard Thai language. *Jaw song* also signifies that the possessing spirit is of princely or holy status, and the medium, correspondingly, of a more elite status than the common *maa khii*.

The mediums are usually female.³ Their sex contrasts with that of the popular urban cults of the 1970s and 1980s—the *jaw phoo* cults, the *samnak phuu sawan* (Koon-nhu 1978; Yagi 1986), and the *moo tham* of the rural Northeast (Tambiah 1970).

A person's initial possession is involuntary and frightening to new mediums. As they gain experience in the role, mediums in Chiang Mai give Brahman-Buddhist justification for practicing it.⁴ They explain that by offering their bodies as temporary vehicles for the formless *winyaan*, Brahmanistic essences that are between incarnations in the cycle of rebirths, the mediums give the *winyaan* opportunity to perform merit-making acts. The gain in the *winyaan's* store of merit brings its next incarnation closer. Thus the mediums believe that both the *winyaan* and the medium gain merit through their relationship, and living humans benefit from the good deeds performed by the *winyaan*-possessed medium as well.

The increasing prevalence of spirit mediumship is but one of a number of recent changes in religious roles in the context of northern Thai society. Keyes (1975) has reported a decline in the prevalence of temporary service in the monkhood in urban areas. He has associated this decline with the spread and secularization of education in the country. My medium informants say that the proportion of males who are spirit mediums has increased in the past 15 to 20 years. How these two trends may be interrelated warrants further study.

The decrease in number of Buddhist monks parallels a decline in traditional animist practice. In a recent work, I reported that ancestral cults (*phii puu yaa*) in Chiang Mai town were on the wane (1984; cf. Wijeyewardene 1977). Since ancestral cults are territorial, being based in the ancestral home (Turton 1972; Wijeyewardene 1977), I interpreted this demise as a function of economic conditions that have favored the sale of inherited property. In contrast, the spirit medium cults now on the rise in northern Thailand serve not ancestral spirits, but *thewadaa*, the spirits of figures of regional or national, historical and religious significance. *Thewadaa* derive from the Brahmanical system of deities. Although it is believed that people still may be possessed by *phii* (a lower class of spirit who may perpetrate evil or good), *jaw song* mediumship involves *thewadaa* instead of *phii*.

Both the ancestral spirits and the *thewadaa* are described by their adepts as benevolent guardians of the moral order. However, the two types of spirit differ in several important ways:

1. According to Hindu-Buddhist cosmology, ancestral spirits belong to the worlds of *phii*, humans and animals, whereas *thewadaa* belong to the heavens (*deva loka*) that are inhabited by the gods (cf. Tambiah 1977: 36-39). According to the *Pitaka* (Pali Canon), *thewadaa* pay homage to the Buddha and receive instruction from him, whereas *phii*, being lesser and often evil entities, are controlled and exorcised by Buddhist monks (Tambiah 1970:43, 202, 341);
2. Ancestral spirits (*phii puu yaa*) are not identified as individual entities, whereas *thewadaa* who possess humans are—in fact they are known by name;
3. The functional domain of ancestral spirits is limited to the domestic sphere and lower worlds, whereas that of *thewadaa* extends to larger society and the karmic cycle;
4. The worldly attachment of ancestral spirits is to a particular place, the ancestral home, whereas that of *thewadaa* is to a human being who serves as medium; and,
5. The prospect of economic gain is not a factor in the custodianship of ancestral spirits, but is a real and attractive incentive for the mediums of historical spirits.

Society's deemphasis on *phii* and simultaneous elaboration of *thewadaa* suggests a process of religious upgrading, from the localism of animism to the scope of a world religion, Hinduism. There is other evidence for this phenomenon in the Chiang Mai municipal government's institutionalizing the observance of *wan khaw Inthakhin* in the 1960s. This day acknowledges the origin myth of the city, commemorating the founding of the city by the Hindu god Indra (Sanguan 1972:117-160; Wijeyewardene 1971:213-216). Since that time, the governments of most other northern provinces have rehabilitated the *lak muang* (city posts) of their capital cities.

Among the various recent changes in the nature of spirit mediumship in Chiang Mai, I will focus upon only one, one that presents a cultural paradox: a *female* spirit medium who receives Theravada Buddhist monks as clients.

The Problematic Event

A monk kneels before a woman who sits elevated on a platform before him (Figure 1). In terms of the ethnography of Thailand, and of Theravadin societies of Southeast Asia, this event presents a double paradox. The customary relationship between the two sexes is reversed, as is that between Buddhism and animism. These reversals vest power where power normally is not, and morality where morality normally is not—in the "subordinate sex" and in a folk cult rather than a state religion (Bullough 1974; Kirsch 1982). The reversals raise questions about the validity of our arguments and assumptions concerning the social and moral supremacy of orthodox Buddhism over folk religion, and of maleness over femaleness in Theravadin societies. The paradoxes may



Fig. 1. Theravada Buddhist monk kneeling before a female spirit medium: Chiang Mai, July 1978. Photograph courtesy of Marjorie A. Muecke.

present a paradigm for the ethnography of syncretism in religion in Thailand.

The occasion of this problematic event was in itself unusual. It was the celebration of the major Buddhist observance, *wan khaw phansaa*, the first day of Lent, by a group of spirit mediums. Normally, spirit mediums in Chiang Mai participate in Buddhist ritual only as do ordinary laity, with the exception that they also pay respect at their domestic Buddha altars before becoming possessed by a spirit. Once possessed, they do not participate in Buddhist ritual. They thus recognize functional boundaries between two forms of religion, folk Brahmanism and Buddhism.

Just two weeks prior to this entering Lent ritual, however, another spirit medium in Chiang Mai did the unprecedented by sponsoring a Buddhist celebration that was attended almost exclusively by spirit mediums. Based on the power of her primary possessing spirit (*jaw thip jet sii*, said to be the younger brother of the 17th century King of Ayudhya, Narai), she was reputed to be the senior spirit medium of the city. She held *phiti thoot phaa paa* (lit. "take forest cloths") whereby laymen make merit by offering robes and necessities to monks; the ceremony is preceded by merry processions. She said she sponsored this ceremony to make merit for her daughter who had died the previous year at age 32. Before the ceremony, the hostess medium invited the abbot of the receiving *wat* (monastery) to her home to make offerings to him. After the abbot left, she and the other spirit mediums let themselves be possessed. There followed as ebullient a mediums' party as ever, and then a major parade of the merry-making mediums from the medium's house to the *wat*. Once inside the *wat* compound, all the mediums depossessed themselves before soberly entering the *vihaan* for the Buddhist ceremony. They too thus observed a behavioral boundary between animism and Buddhism.

The entering Lent ritual held by the spirit mediums did not conform to Buddhist protocol for the ritual. It was celebrated at night, as are most possession but no ordination

rituals,⁵ on Thursday (commonly considered teacher's day), 28 July 1978 (B.E. 2521), at the home of the spirit medium pictured [Figure 1]. Monks' observance of the beginning of Lent had already been celebrated during the day the previous week in monasteries throughout the country. There were few participants in this domicile-based Lent-entering ceremony: eleven spirit mediums (nine women and two men) each of whom were possessed for the ceremony, and three monks and two anthropologist observers, who were not so possessed.⁶ The Lenten period would be observed for 49 days instead of the usual three months. The hostess medium later explained that this difference was not a break with Buddhist practice, but rather an expression of fundamentalist Buddhism since, she said, the Buddha himself had fasted for 49 days.

I will now describe the characteristic roles of the participants in the entering Lent ritual: the mediums, the *thewadaa*, and the monks.

The Mediums

The mediums were all mature, experienced practitioners. They differentiated themselves from the other mediums in the city on the basis of what they perceived as their superior Buddhist morality. They described themselves as *borisut* or "pure," citing as evidence their abstention from liquor and their following the Precepts. The hostess medium in particular claimed to have no worldly desires, for food, sex or material goods. A high level of morality, they said, was prerequisite to being selected for possession by a *jaw*. They used the term *jaw song* exclusively when referring to themselves as mediums. They defined their relationship with each other in terms of the kinship that their respective *jaw* shared to the same *khruu*.

Spirit mediumship in Chiang Mai involves a three-tiered hierarchy of humans and supernatural entities: the human or spirit medium ranks lowest; above her/him are the various benevolent *jaw* who regularly take possession of the medium (the 11 Lent-observing mediums counted 64 such spirits among them); and above these spirits are the *khruu* (teacher spirits) [Figure 2].

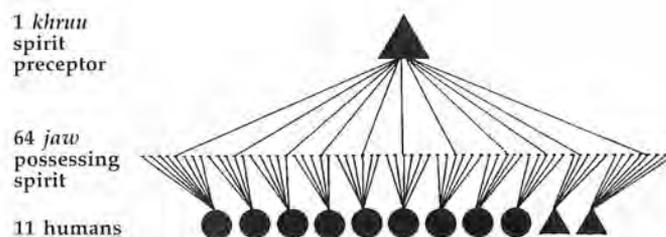


Fig. 2. Hierarchy of spirit mediumship in Chiang Mai.

The mutual bonds of their respective *jaw* to the same *khruu* have brought the mediums together and given them a moral kinship that is the basis for their social interaction. The mediums expressed their sense of difference from other mediums in Chiang Mai in their patterns of socializing. They often rebuffed invitations to the annual parties (*ngaan liang yai*) that follow upon the solemn and fairly private annual *phitii kaan yok khruu* (ritual to honor the preceptor spirit of other mediums; see Grow, this issue). This group considered themselves and their *jaw* above the frivolous display and bawdy abandon that raucously characterize the dance parties, as well as above the petty competition for recognition among the lesser mediums derogatively referred to as *maa khii*, who hold and attend the parties.

The gathering together of these mediums (*jaw song*) to observe the beginning and end of Buddhist Lent each year is atypical of spirit mediums because it denies customary boundaries between folk religion and Buddhism. It incorporates orthodox Buddhist ritual into Brahmanistic roles, and it gathers mediums together at a time outside the normal season of their annual ritual parties.

The Thewadaa

The mediums described their *jaw* as *thewadaa* (divine angels). *Thewadaa* rank very high in the laity's understandings of the hierarchy of the demons and gods. One spirit medium explained that the lowest of the spirits are those of persons who while incarnated committed some loathsome act such as cursing their parents or stealing from a *wat*. *Thewadaa* rank fifth up on a seven-tiered scale: they are the spirits of persons who when incarnated were good commoners, kings or monks. Above them is only Lord Inthakhin, the founding spirit of Chiang Mai, and above him, at the apex of the spirit hierarchy, the Hindu god Brahma. The highest ranking *thewadaa*, *arahat*, possess *idthi*, mystical power that is acquired through the practice of meditation and moral actions. *Idthi* is ascribed to ascetics and meditation monks because of their opportunity to practice meditation while ordained (Tambiah 1970:49, 324). It refers to a complex of power that transcends and transforms this life, and that, through sympathomimetic thinking, can be transmitted passively to others, as from *thewadaa* to mediums.

The *thewadaa* possessing the Lent-observing mediums are all the spirits of known historical or religious figures. The most famous possess the hostess medium and are the *khruu* for the *jaw* of the mediums present. The *khruu* spirits were King Saam Fang Kaen and Mogalaana. Both of these spirits were intimately associated with Buddhism in previous incarnations. **Saam Fang Kaen** was a fifteenth century king, reputedly the eleventh King of Chiang Mai. In his reign, 25 Tai monks were sent to Sri Lanka to study Pali. They were reordained as Theravadin monks there, and returned to Chiang Mai with two Sri Lankan "forest monks" who brought the Theravada sect of Buddhism to what is now northern Thailand. **Mogalaana** is also a famous figure in Buddhist history,

being known as the left-hand disciple of the Buddha, and as an *arahat*, one of saintly status that has entered the path to nirvana. The Buddha is said to have described him as "the chief of my disciples who possess magical power" (Warren 1973:221).⁷ According to the scriptures, Mogalaana can speak with spirits of all levels, those from hell to heaven.⁸

The Monks

The two monks were regular clients of the hostess medium. They came to her compound every month from other northern provinces (Mae Hong Son and Tak), where each was busy building his respective temple. They were both Chinese-Thai, one originally from Chiang Mai and the other from the Northeast (Korat). Both had been ordained in a district adjacent to Chiang Mai City. They explained why they had become *luuksit* (followers or pupils) to the spirit medium as follows:

Buddhism teaches to learn by experience. We want to know if there is life after death. If we cannot meditate well enough to arrive at the answer for this question, we can go to a spirit medium and see if there are *winyaan*: if there are, then there is life after death.⁹

For a monk to question the truth of reincarnation pushes Buddhist orthodoxy to an extreme. That laypersons may seek answers to such questions outside Buddhist teaching and practice reflects the great tolerance of Buddhism as practiced in Thailand. For ordained monks to do so is unprecedented.

The monks focused upon *winyaan* because it is a "life principle" that is commonly believed to survive a human after death and to have the potential for rebirth into a living form (JR Hanks 1963; 1965). It also is that which takes possession of the medium in spirit possession. A medium is predicated on the idea that spirits--*winyaan* and *phii*--exist and remain active in the world by possessing certain humans.

The monks had come to the spirit medium as they had many times before, to ask the spirit teacher's help (*khqg khanaa khruu*), to obtain *naammon* (sacral water) and *khaathaa* (magical prayers) for use in their own practices. This time they said they also came to participate in the medium's annual *yok khruu* ceremony. The *yok khruu* is a ritual that is conducted by individual spirit mediums, exorcists and *like* performers to honor and reconfirm their relationship with their *khruu*. During the solemn ritual, the human is possessed by the *khruu*. In the current case, the medium was possessed by the most senior of the spirits for whom she serves as medium. This spirit is the *khruu* to at least one of the participating mediums' usual possessing spirits. It was this same ritual occasion that the hostess and guest mediums labeled as *phitii khaaw phansaa* (entering Buddhist Lent ritual).

The monks participated in the preparations for the ritual, repainting the hostess medium's Buddha image in gold. They placed the image on a pedestal to the right of the host-

ess medium after she had become possessed by Mogalaana and taken the most elevated seat in the room. Each monk "wai'd" to the newly possessed medium three times [Figure 1], then received her blessing: "she" cupped the head of each monk in "her" hands as "she" recited *khathaa* and blew on their heads, then "she" did the same over a bucket of water that each monk presented to "her," thereby sacralizing it into *naammon*.

After the possessing spirits had blessed everyone but the shocked anthropologists present, each monk performed a meditation dance of elaborate choreography that concluded with multiple sweeping *wai* executed to the whispered cadence of his prayers. The possessed mediums, dressed in silk and gossamer Chinese red head covering, short-sleeve shirt, and pants, then enacted a mock circumambulation, bearing candles and joss sticks in their prayer-positioned hands. Later the monks retired to their quarters in the domestic compound where the hostess medium, who was by then depossessed of her *khruu* spirit and repossessed by her usual spirit (*thewadaa*), joined them.

Interpretation

Despite the nomenclature used by the different participants to describe it, the ritual observed on this occasion was a replica of neither the Buddhist Lenten ceremonies nor the Brahmanistic *yok khruu* ritual, but rather a cross-over of the two. "Alms" in the form of betel, fruit, incense, candles and flower offerings were given to the *jaw* and *khruu*, not to monks.¹⁰ Circumambulation was inside a spirit medium's house, not outside around a Buddhist temple. *Yok khruu* offerings were the standard fare of *khruang buchaa*, not the expectable pig's head. Dancing was by monks who mimicked the sword dance (sans swords) of the standard *yok khruu* ritual, not by possessed mediums. Linguistic terminology was similarly inverted: the monks used spirit medium's Brahmanistic terminology to describe the ceremony—*phitii kaan yok khruu*—and the spirit mediums used Buddhist terminology to describe it—*phitii kaan khaw phansaa*.

The ambiguity posed by reciprocal transference of Buddhist and Brahmanistic ritual can be explained by what Tambiah (1970:369-70) has defined as a contribution of Hindus to Thai religion: "The double relationship to the divine through priesthood and possession." It was before Mogalaana, rather than the female hostess medium, that the monks knelt down, and from him rather than her that they received a blessing. Mogalaana and King Saam Fang Kaen were mentors, through the mediumship of the hostess medium, not only for the *jaw* possessing the Lent-observing mediums, but also for the monks.

Thus, the social-moral hierarchy involved actually places the mediums on the bottom rung, paying respect to the superior possessing spirits (*thewadaa*), as well as when defrocked/depossessed, to monks [Figure 3]. Above the mediums in the middle rung, both the *thewadaa* and the monks pay homage directly to the *khruu* or preceptor spirits. This



Fig. 3. Food offerings to *thewadaa* and to *khruu*. Photograph by Marjorie A. Muecke.

moral hierarchy is reiterated in expressive form. It is materially expressed in offerings of fruit by mediums only to *jaw*, and by monks only to *khruu*.¹¹

These bonds between spirits and humans were expressed in the idiom of kinship as well as of morality. For example, one of the monks said that his brothers in a former incarnation were now the *jaw* of two of the Lent-observing mediums (Irvine 1984:324). In effect, the monk thus equated his moral rank with that of *thewadaa* possessing the mediums [Figure 4].

The other monk was religiously related to the hostess spirit medium: she was his ordination mother (*mae buat*). Before becoming a monk, as a disbelieving youth, he had happened to visit her. When one of her possessing spirits spontaneously spoke to him in Chinese rather than in Thai, and recited obscure details of Chiang Mai history that he subsequently verified in his studies, he became a believer. His natural parents did not approve of his interest in spirit possession and dispossessed him of human parentage because of it. The medium encouraged the youth to study Buddhist meditation. This led to his becoming a monk and selecting her instead of his biological mother as his ordination mother.

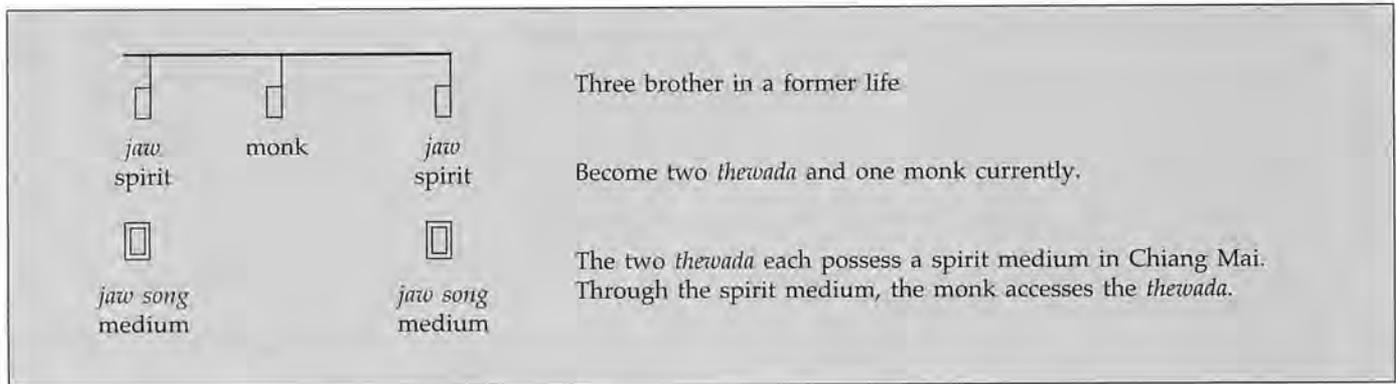


Fig. 4. Spiritual relationships of spirits, monks, and mediums.

The social organization of the Lent-observing mediums parallels the social organization of monks in the Buddhist Sangha. Both are relatively small groups of the moral elite. Both are hierarchically organized on the basis of the ability to detach self from this-worldly or bodily concerns, and to attain direct access to esoteric knowledge and moral wisdom. Both monks and mediums are socially acknowledged as privileged channels of communication between humans and the supernatural. Mediums who are *jaw song* and monks who are meditation monks number among the few of their respective religious domains that are acknowledged to have privileged access to *idthi*, mystical power. Both groups, mediums and monks, aspire to the same end, an end that each group complements the other in achieving. Monks, after all, are not permitted to become mediums, and mediums, usually by virtue of their gender (or if male, by virtue of their homosexuality; see Keyes n.d.) may not become monks. The end each seeks is the power of true understanding which in both the Brahmanistic and Buddhist perspectives involve an end to this-worldly attachment. Mediums achieve it by giving their bodies entirely over to another soul; monks achieve it through meditation. The hostess medium helped the monks by incarnating the Buddha's disciple and transferring his *idthi* to them; the monks helped the mediums with their achievement of moral excellence by teaching them Buddhist doctrine. What we have observed is a syncretic blending of a common goal from two religious traditions.

Dissociation is thus the paradigmatic intersection of the two traditions. In the Buddhist tradition, dissociation from the body is familiar through concepts of reincarnation and of the transitory nature of the body. In the Brahmanistic-animist tradition, dissociation is featured in the concepts of possession and soul loss. In Chiang Mai, notions of soul loss are particularly evident in the prevalent practice of the *suu khwan* (tying the soul to the body) rituals.

The shared method of detachment from the body renders gender a non-issue and makes the fact that a male knelt down before a female and let her hold his head in her hands "irrelevant." In their aspiration to the supernatural, both mediums and monks are beyond gender. In fact, gender has become irrelevant in their respective social roles as well, insofar as neither mediumship nor monkhood is a role that includes procreation. The monks' celibacy is approximated, if not matched, by the mediums' disinterest in reproduction.¹² The female mediums are either separated, widowed, or no longer able to bear children; many of the male mediums are considered effeminate or describe themselves as homosexuals. Being free of family ties and obligations as these Lent-observing mediums are is a prerequisite for the attainment of Buddhist wisdom, and is another way in which they gave evidence of their high moral status. According to the Ambattha Sutta, "Whoever...are in bondage to the notions of birth or of lineage, or to the pride of social position, or of connection by marriage, they are far from the best wisdom of righteousness. It is only by having got rid of all such bondage that one can realize for himself that supreme perfection in wisdom of righteousness. It is only by having got rid of all such bondage that one can realize for himself that supreme perfection in wisdom and conduct" (cited in Tambiah 1984: frontispiece).

If these *jaw song* and monks are beyond gender in their religious roles because their Buddhist behavior has enabled their detachment from their bodies, and if *jaw song* are perceived to verify the Buddhist theory of reincarnation, mediums and *thewadaa* may be a confirmation of, rather than a challenge to, Buddhist supremacy in Northern Thai religious syncretism. The mediums thus offer far more than predictability to their clients. They offer knowledge of the supernatural, and *idthi* (moral power).

NOTES

1 In another context (Muecke 1984), I have discussed the specificity of the role of spirit medium to the female gender, so do not do so here.

2 The horse metaphor is a common symbol for spirit possession in a wide variety of cultures (Lewis 1971: 58).

3 In Chiang Mai it is widely believed that women are generally "weak-hearted" (*jai oon*) in comparison to men who are generally "strong-hearted" (*jai khaeng*), although an individual of either sex may express the characteristic normally associated with the opposite sex. Males, whether boys or men, who are considered weak-hearted are often labelled effeminate (*kathoey*). Persons who are weak-hearted are typically easily frightened, worrisome, gullible, at risk of "wind illness" (*kaan pen lom*; Muecke 1979, 1980), and readily penetrated by possessing spirits. Hard-hearted people, in contrast, are thought to be fearless, stable and sure, and highly resistant to spirits. These are the terms in which the preponderance of female spirit mediums over males are usually explained.

4 My reports and interpretations are based upon ethnographic field work that I conducted in Amphur Muang, Chiang Mai. This

began in 1973-74 as a Fulbright Fellow and an NIMH Fellow, continued in 1977-78 as co-investigator (with Peter Kunstader) on a grant from the NICHD, and was followed up in short visits in 1982 and 1986.

5 Also see Golomb 1985:124, footnote #26.

6 The other anthropologist was Walter Irvine, then of S.O.A.S., University of London. He discusses this ritual briefly in his dissertation (1982: 347, 349) and elsewhere (1984). Although our observations of events concur, our interpretations of them vary because Irvine is primarily concerned with gender relationships, and I, with religious syncretism.

7 From the Anguttara-Nikaya, i. 14, as cited in Warren 1973.

8 "He goes to heaven and questions the deities concerning their previous karma, and then he returns and tells it to men: 'It is by having done thus and so that they now enjoy so great glory.' Also, he asks those who have been born in hell concerning their karma, and returning, he tells it to men: 'It is by having done such and such evil deed that they now experience so great misery'" (Translated from the Dhammapada, as cited in Warren 1973: 222).

9 Eight years later, the medium validated this statement. When asked how the monks became her followers she said, "They came to test out, like disbelievers, 'Are there really spirits? Does the medium really get possessed by spirits?' " (April 1986).

10 Similar offerings have been described among Khmer in central Cambodia (Kompong Chang Province) when Poree-Maspero observed a possession ceremony in 1969. She describes flowers, betel nut, incense and fruit being offered to three levels of beings: superior gods, ogres (*yakh*), and hermits (*rusi*) (1975). Zago discusses the Brahmanic origin of non-meat offerings for higher beings in Laos (1972: 340-341).

11 See note 10.

12 The hostess medium described her relationship to men: "I was never interested in men. My parents found my husband for me when I was 25 or 26. If they hadn't found him for me, I would not have known whom to have. Men couldn't ever come close to me—if they got too close, I'd hit them. When I was a girl, I went to the Winter Fair: some fellow touched me—I grabbed a hatchet and hit him! No man was going to get near me!"

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