

## Glossary of Thai and Buddhist Terms

*Ajan* — A title for a respected Buddhist monk or lay specialist regarded to be a teacher, religious instructor or adept in ritual lore.

*Arabant* — A Buddhist saint, regarded to have attained enlightenment and to be close to attaining the ultimate salvation of *nibbana*.

*Barami* — Charismatic prestige, believed to accrue from religious merit acquired in either this life or previous lives as a result of the perfection of forms of Buddhist ethical conduct.

*Bodhisattva* (Sanskrit) — In Mahayana Buddhism, a person who is generally regarded as having attained enlightenment, or is a saint on the path to enlightenment, and who has taken a vow to help other sentient beings to also attain spiritual awakening.

*Jao* — “Lord”, a common title in the names of honoured deities and spirits.

*Jao Mae* — “Lord Mother”, a common title in the names of honoured female deities and spirits.

*Kae bon* — A ritual to repay a deity or spirit after a requested boon or blessing has been granted.

- Kala-thesa* — “Time and place”, denoting the contextualized hierarchical separation of distinct bounded domains of social life and religious expression.
- Kathin* — Ceremony to offer new robes and other donations to Buddhist monks, regarded as an important opportunity for members of the laity to make merit.
- Keji ajan* — “Magic monks”; senior Buddhist monks revered for their expertise in meditation and ritual practice who are believed to possess the ability to magically empower (*pluk sek*) amulets, predict the future and provide protective blessings.
- Khatha* — An incantation or magical formula, often composed in a mix of Sanskrit, Pali and Thai, that is recited in prayers to seek the blessing of a deity or spiritual figure.
- Khun* — A noble title conferred by the Siamese king in the period of the absolute monarchy.
- Khwam-cheua* — “Belief”, a term that often refers to rituals and religious practices conducted outside the scope of monastic Buddhism. Now often paired with *sattha*, “faith” and contrasted with *sasana*, “religion”.
- Lak meuang* — “City pillar”, a ritual pillar installed in a shrine believed to be the residence of the protective deity or deities of a town or city.
- Latthi* — “Cult”, a belief viewed as inferior to an established religion (*sasana*).
- Latthi-phithi* — “Belief-ritual”, an academic term for “cult” or “cultic ritual”, a more formal synonym for *khwam-cheua*, “belief”, and *sattha*, “belief”, and contrasted with *sasana*, “religion”.
- Luang Phor* — “Reverend Father”, a title in the name of honoured Buddhist monks, often used for the abbots of Buddhist monasteries.
- Luang Pu* — “Reverend Grandfather”, a title in the name of honoured Buddhist monks who have spent many decades in the monkhood.
- Pha yan* — “Yantra cloth”, a rectangular piece of cloth inscribed with images of a deity or religious icon and *khatha* incantations. Like amulets, *pha yan* may be sacralized in *pluk sek* rituals

of magical empowerment and kept as protective wealth-conferring talismans.

*Phi* — A spirit or ghost.

*Phithi* — Ritual.

*Phra* — An honorific for a Buddhist monk, Buddha image, deity or royal figure.

*Phra Khreuang* — A term for amulets that have been sacralized in a *pluk sek* ritual and are believed to possess magical powers of protection and wealth conferral.

*Phuttha phanit* — “Commerce in Buddhism”, “Commercialized Buddhism”; a term used by reformist and doctrinal Buddhists to criticize the commodification of Buddhist ritual practice and the production and marketing of amulets and other “auspicious objects”.

*Pluk sek* — The ritual of magically empowering amulets and other “auspicious objects” (*watthu mongkhon*) conducted by a Buddhist monk, Brahmin or other ritual specialist regarded to have skills in *saiyasat* magical practice.

*Saiyasat* — “Magic”, the invocation of supernatural power in ritual practice, covering all dimensions of the instrumental knowledge and skills involved in ritual. *Saiyasat* is often used in a derogatory sense by secular and religious critics, who disparage it as “animism”, “superstition”, “mysticism” or “black magic”.

*Saksit* — Magical power and authority of a person, deity, icon or image acquired from *saiyasat* ritual or from an exalted religious status.

*San-jao* — The shrine of a deity or spirit.

*Sangha* (Sanskrit) — The Buddhist monkhood.

*Sasana* — “Religion”, denoting an institutionally established religion with recognized canonical texts, formalized doctrine and teachings and a specialist clergy, often used as a shorthand for “Buddhism” (*sasana phut*) and contrasted with *khwam-cheua*, “belief”, and *sattha*, “faith”.

- Sattba* — “Faith”, a term that often refers to rituals and religious practices conducted outside the scope of monastic Buddhism. Now often paired with *kbwam-cheua*, “belief”, and contrasted with *sasana*, “religion”.
- Somdet* — A royal-conferred title for senior monks in the administration of the Buddhist sangha or monkhood. Also a title for senior members of the royal family.
- Talat phra* — Amulet market.
- Tammak* — “Palace”, “abode”; a term often used to describe the shrine or temple of a spirit medium where possession rituals are conducted.
- Thao* — “Lord”, a title in the name of some deities and spirits.
- Thep* — A deity, often used to refer to gods from the Hindu pantheon, from the Sanskrit *deva*.
- Wai* — To show respect and honour to a person, deity or religious image by placing the palms of the hands together and bringing them to the level of the chest or head, often accompanied with a bowing of the head.
- Wai kbri* — “Honouring the teacher”, a ritual to honour teachers of ritual traditions as well as instructors in Thai classical music and dance, in which the spirit of the original teacher, often regarded to be a Brahmanical deity or sage, is invoked.
- Wat* — A Buddhist monastery.
- Wathu mongkhon* — “Auspicious objects”; a generic term for amulets and other objects that have been sacralized in a *pluk sek* ritual and are believed to possess magical powers of protection and wealth conferral.