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## An ethnosemantic study of ghost terms in Thai

Previous studies show that Thai people's ways of life and traditions from birth to death are related to ghosts. Most of the studies deal with the role of ghosts in Thai society, but there has been no study on ghost terms in Thai, which would reflect the ghost system in Thai thoughts. Thus, this study aims to analyze the system and categorization of terms for ghosts and spirits in Thai. Componential analysis and folk taxonomy, which are methods in the ethnosemantic approach, are adopted for the analysis.

The population of this study is Wat Suan Kaew Community, Tambon Bang Len, Amphoe Bang Yai, Nonthaburi Province, a representative of a mainstream Thai community. Fifteen purposively selected informants were interviewed. The result of the analysis shows that there are 59 ghost terms representing 51 types of ghost. Some ghost types are represented by more than one term. The componential analysis of the terms reveals that there are ten dimensions of contrast, which distinguish one of the terms from others. They are: "form", "good / evil", "appearance", "condition of death", "dwelling", "duty", "age", "food", "gender", and "specialty". The outstanding dimensions which cover all the terms are "form", "good / evil" and "appearance".

The findings also show that all the ghost terms can be categorized into five hierarchical classes: **unique beginner**, **life-form**, **generic**, **specific**, and **varietal**. There is only one unique beginner term – *phi&i1* 'ghost+spirit'. There are two life-form terms: *phi&i2* 'ghost' and *winyaan* 'spirit'. As for generic ghost terms, there are three terms: *phi&i3* 'man ghost', *phi&i-sa&aN-theewadaa* 'good spirit', *phi&i-ha&a-saataan* or *phu&ut-phi&i-piisa&at* 'bad spirit'. Thirty five specific ghost terms were found e.g., *naaN-ma&ay* 'female tree spirit', *phi&i-pa&a* 'forest demon', *phi&i-taay-ho&oN* 'spirit from violent death', *pre&et* 'evil tall spirit', etc. There are 13 sub-specific ghost terms, such as *ca&law-mE&E-say* 'female banyan tree spirit', *ca&law-mE&E-makha&am* 'female tamarind tree spirit', *naaN-taanii* 'female banana tree spirit', *phi&i-na&am* 'water demon', *the&lep* 'male deity', and *the&lep-thidaa* or *naaN-fa&a* 'a female deity', , etc.

It should be noted that Thai people conceive ghosts as human. Indeed, most types of ghosts have a human shape and some are even human themselves. Thai ghosts are distinguished by their kindness or badness, sex, age, dwelling place, and the food they take.

Furthermore, it is found that Thai people have negative attitudes towards ghosts as can be seen from the meanings of ghost terms. They find ghosts frightening, disgusting, accepting bribes, having misfortune as a result of karma. However, ghosts are seen as a means of controlling society.