Bap: Comparing the Understanding of Sin in Thai Culture and in the Catechism of the Catholic Church

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Introduction

Language is of primary importance in inculturation as it is the medium for the people's articulation of their faith. Understanding the language of a people is critical in learning about their rich expressions of faith. It is primarily through words that faith is articulated and made central to how people receive, understand, and concretely express spirituality in their daily life.

The understanding of *bap* or sin among many Catholics in Thailand today does not seem to express the Church's doctrine fully and faithfully. For instance, there is the tendency to only emphasize sin as a transgression of the Church's commandments and precepts without further deepening. Thus, there is a need to revisit the notion of sin that integrates both the teaching of the Church and Thai cultural nuances. Each can mutually complement the other in enriching the understanding of sin in the Church and the popular culture towards a deeper knowledge, understanding, and expression of faith, especially for the Thai Catholic faithful.

Sin in Thai Language and Culture

In order to delve into a deeper comprehension of substantial concepts such as *bap*, its articulation in the language is one of

the fundamental elements that should be first considered. As Jose Mario Francisco puts it, "It has been generally acknowledged that words have multiple meanings, and our study must turn to how the words are used in ordinary contexts.[1]" Language and all its elements derive their meaning from a larger system of social structures.[2] Hence, it is crucial that people become aware of how they have been shaped by their social structures, cultures, and traditions.

For instance, the Church teaches that "sin is an offense against God… Sin sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it."[3] However, in Theravada Buddhism, sin or *bap* is a general term denoting evil deeds or bad deeds that bring about suffering and spiritual deterioration.[4] Because Thai Catholics are subject to both influences, there is a need to address differences like this so that their catechetical formation will avoid a false or inadequate understanding of sin and be rooted in their culture.

Although the meaning of *bap* among the Thais has been much discussed, a systematic study of this theme needs to be done. Given this insufficiency, the author attempts to come up with at least an intelligible description and analysis of the

1 Jose Mario C Francisco, "Too Much 'Soul': Points and Counterpoints from Culture," in *Theology and Science, from Science and Religion…and Culture in the Jesuit Tradition: Perspectives from East Asia*, edited by Jose Mario Francisco and Roman Miguel de Jesus (Australia: ATF Press, 2006), 135.

2 James Fieser and Damuel Enoch Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre and Beyond: A History of Philosophy* (Philippines: 2003), 495.

3 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC): Definitive Edition based on the Latin "Editio Typica" (Manila: Word & Life Publications) no. 1850.

4 Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P. A. Payutto), *Dictionary of Buddhism*, 34th ed., (Bangkok: The Tripitaka Foundation for Education and Peace, 2016), 235. See also วศิน อินทสระ (Wasin Intrasara), พุทธจริยศาสตร์. พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๓ (*Buddhist Ethics*, 3rd ed.,) กรุงเทพมหานคร: ทองกวาว, ๒๕๔๑ (Bangkok: Thong Kwaw, 1998), 258.

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multi-layered meaning of *bap* in Thai culture, from popular expressions—religious sayings, songs, films, and television dramas—to discovering the meaning of *bap* in people's lives.

Formal Definitions of *Bap* in the Thai language

In the contemporary Thai Royal Institute Dictionary, the term has at least three substantial meanings with it. The first definition states that "*bap* is a violation against religious laws and teachings." Secondly, it refers to an evil act or evil. Thirdly, it is used as an adjective describing any evil act and is synonymous with bad or evil.[5] These definitions see *bap* as the violation of Buddhist religious laws. The implication is that to be a good person, one should not break laws. In other words, good persons are those who follow (the way of) the laws. Initially, the association of *bap* with the violation of religious laws is more outstanding than the second meaning, which simply indicates that sin is an evil act. Therefore, *bap* and religious laws are correlated, but each one has no clear meaning without the other.

Meanwhile, the meaning of *bap* in the Tripitaka goes beyond mere observance of external religious laws. It goes to the level of life condition, sensitivity to pain, and the state of life. According to the Tripitaka,[6] *bap* (บาป) or sometimes *bapa* means "evil" which is "dharma that leads to the path of

5 พจนานุกรม ฉบับราชบัณฑิตยสถาน พ. ศ. *2554*(*Thai Dictionary of the Royal Institute*, 2011), s. v. "บาป" or "sin," by ราชบัณฑิตยสถาน (Royal Academy), https://dictionary.apps.royin.go.th/ (accessed 28 June 2019). All translations are mine otherwise further noted.

6 Tripiṭaka is the traditional term for the Buddhist scriptures, meaning "Three Baskets." The version canonical to Theravada Buddhism is generally referred to in English as the Pali Canon. Mahayana Buddhism also holds the Tripiṭaka to be authoritative. The Tripiṭaka was most likely composed between about 550 BCE and about the start of the Common Era, likely written down for the first time in the 1st century BCE.

declination and evil and unpleasant situation, and it causes the actor or the doer troubles and sufferings."[7] Those who commit evil are deemed sinners or evil-doers, yet this includes all other immoral acts, bad things, misconduct, and evil deeds, bad consequences and deterioration. The word *bap* literally means evil, endangering, causing trouble, and suffering.[8] It is "karma" or *kamma* of an individual which leads one to suffer. It is also a kind of "dharma" which absolutely leads the actor or sinner to destruction.[9] Its meaning emphasizes suffering and "unsatisfactoriness" more directly. Initially, the concept of *bap* was more related to suffering, which causes unhappiness and lack of serenity in one's life. There would be a great shift in the meaning of bap from human suffering to the violation of religious laws from hereon.

It is in this context, however, that the dynamic dimension of bap is elaborated. As already mentioned, *bap* is always in the form of karma or *kam*. The Pali term *kamma*, literally, means "action" or "doing." Any kind of intentional action, whether mental, verbal, or physical, is regarded as *kamma*. It covers all that is included in "thought, word, and deed." Generally speaking, all good and bad actions constitute *kamma*. In its ultimate sense, *kamma* means "all moral and immoral volition" (*kusala akusala cetanā*). Involuntary, unintentional, or unconscious actions, though technically deeds, do not constitute *kamma*, because volition, the most important factor in

7 วศิน อินทสระ (Wasin Intrasara), พุทธจริยศาสตร์. พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๓ (*Buddhist Ethics*, 3rd ed.,) กรุงเทพมหานคร: ทองกวาว, ๒๕๔๑ (Bangkok: Thong Kwaw, 1998), 258.

8 หนังสือพระบาฬีลิปิกรม ภาค หนึ่ง,สอง,สาม, พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๒ (Pra Pali Part I, II, III, 2nd ed.), มหามกุฏราชวิทยาลัย, มูลนิธิ.กรุงเทพมหานคร: มหามกุฏราชวิทยาลัย ๒๕๓๒, ๑๑๖๙ (Mahamakut Buddhist University (Bangkok: Mahamakut University, 1989), 1169.

9 Phajon Kamchusang, "Papa: An Analytical Study in The Concept of Theravada Buddhism," *The Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* vol. 26 no. 1 (January-June 2005): 67.

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determining *kamma*, is absent.[10] The Buddha once said, "I declare, O Bhikkhus, that volition (*cetanā*) is *kamma*. Having willed, one acts by body, speech, and thought."

When *bap* happens in thought, it is usually well connected with speech and an act by the body, which is normally observable. Therefore, "what is called *bap* must be originated from the body, speech, and thought (or will) with evil intention."[11] Volition is a decisive factor in determining what *kam dee* (good karma) is and what *kam chua* (bad karma) is. The idea of *kam* interwoven with the concept of *bap* is of substantial significance, because, in Thai popular expressions of *bap*, the word would interchange with *kam*; thus, the use of both words to form just a single word *bap-kam* to equate with *bap.*

Aside from these given definitions of *bap*, there are also other definitions from contemporary distinguished Thai teachers and scholars whose works have influenced Buddhist academic studies. In the Bali-Thai dictionary of Thavee Thammatad, *bap* is defined as "sin, evil, obscenity, bad, degrading, or things that good persons must keep themselves away from."[12] The Thai-Bali-Sanskrit lexicon of His Royal Highness Krom Pra Chanthaburi Naruenaj defines *bap* as "evil, sin, demerit, and *kamma* of the causer of suffering and obscenity."[13] Or *bap* means simply bad, sinful, or evil.[14]

10 Narada Mahathera, *The Buddha and His Teachings*, Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc. (Taipei, Taiwan: the Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1998), 265, quoted Anguttara Nikāya iii, p. 415, The Expositor, part I, 117; Atthasālini, p. 88.

11 Phajon Kamchusang, "Papa: An Analytical Study in The Concept of Theravada Buddhism," 67.

12 Luang Tepdarunanusid (Tawee Thammatuch P. 9), *Thai-Pali Dictionary*, 6th ed., (Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University, 1991), 237.

13 Chantaburi Naruenaj, *Pali – Thai – English – Sanskrit Dictionary*, 4th ed., (Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University, 1994), 521.

14 Pin Mutukan, *Buddhism Part III* (Bangkok: Klang witthaya, 1984), 10-11.

Lastly, in the Buddhadhamma authored by Phra Prayudh Payutto, *bap* literally denotes things that pull the doer down into a wicked state. In general, it means being salacious or obscene.[15]

These definitions offered do not have much difference from the Tripitaka's. Nonetheless, another concept of *bap* emerges from the definition of the scholars, which has something to do with "obscenity" or "salaciousness." *Therefore, Bap has multi-dimensional aspects of meaning and emphasis, ranging* from suffering to religious violation and obscenity. The motivation of committing *bap* originates from *ki-laed* or passion, a complicated condition consisting of love, avarice, anger, and lust, innately established in human beings. *Ki-laed* is the root of *bap* that lures or causes humans and animals to do evil. In other words, it is bad dharma.[16]

Bap in Buddhist Sayings

There are several Buddhist sayings widely used in different public domains, especially in colloquial language. Nonetheless, the three sayings in this research were particularly chosen because they contribute to further understanding of the concept of *bap.*

This first saying, *Tham Dee Dai Dee, Tham Shua Dai Shua* (ทำดีได้ดี ทำชั่วได้ชั่ว), which literally means "good deeds result in good outcomes; bad deeds result in bad outcomes" is one of the most common proverbial expressions people invoke in casual conversations. This happens whenever they hear

15 Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P. A. Payutto), *Dictionary of Buddhism*, 11th ed., (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2002), 334.

16 Phajon Kamchusang, "*Papa*: An Analytical Study in The Concept of Theravada Buddhism," 67.

news about crime, corruption, or sinful incidents happening in society. There are many examples of this proverb used in different contexts. Here are two examples:

> …my mother always taught me *Tham dee dai dee tham chua dai chua* (you do good things, you get good results, you do bad things, you get bad results in return) and my brother had never been enthusiastic about any religious proverb teaching. He once told me, 'In all religions, they have the same and only thing to say or to teach, that is, *tham dee dai dee tham chua dai chua*. And that is my religion. Period.'…[17]

The concept of *bap* in this saying focuses on the immediate action of an individual and its result. It also emphasizes the instantaneous cause and effect of every action, reflecting the idea that good and bad are the results of one's own action, much like a natural law, i.e., the law of karma. The emphasis is on the consequence of an external action rather than the internal deterioration of the mind and soul. The emerging idea expressed in the contemporary Thai context has shown that *each individual's bap is subjective*.

> Buddhism's 'law of karma' states that one lives on the fruits of one's own deeds. These days there have been numerous news reporting about people getting their karma in return for their being corrupt. These corruptions are prevalent in business and politics, social oppression etc. This is good news, especially for those believing in the very well-known teaching *tham dee dai dee tham chua dai chua*… [18]

17 นิธิ เอียวศรีวงศ์ (Nithi Aewsriwong), "ทำดีได้ดี ทำชั่วได้ชั่ว" (Tham Dee Dai Dee Tham Chua Dai Chua) บทวิเคราะห์ มติชนสุดสัปดาห์ ฉบับวันที่ 14-20 ตุลาคม 2559 (Matichon Weekly, 14-20 October 2016), https://www.matichonweekly.com/in-depth/article_12074 (accessed 20 December 2019).

18 Editorial, "Kod Haeng Kram Tham Chua Dai Chua'" (the law of karma: if one does bad, one gets bad result in return), *Siamrath*

In the expression of this short passage, the idea of *dee* (good) and *shua* (bad) is appropriated as a finished outcome called "karma"—the outcome of good and bad actions that rebound subjectively to an individual. For instance, if persons are corrupt in doing business, their sinful actions will eventually cause them certain forms of life deterioration. As the Great Buddha once said,[19] "Bhikkhus, beings are the owners of their *kamma*, the heirs of their *kamma*; they have *kamma* as their origin, *kamma* as their relative, *kamma* as their resort; whatever *kamma* they do, good or bad, they are its heirs. This, bhikkhus, is that exposition of the Dhamma on creeping." [20]

The second saying, *Hai Thuk Kae Than, Thuk Nnan Tueng Tua* (ให้ทุกข์แก่ท่าน ทุกข์นั้นถึงตัว), is literally translated as "You cause suffering to others, that suffering returns to you." This religious proverb annotates the predominant concept of *kam* by underlining the imposition of *dhuk* (suffering) on others and that *dhuk* will return later on to the imposer. Together with this saying is another one equipped with a similar idea, *kong kwean kam kwean*" (กงเกวียนกำเกวียน). A good example of how this proverb is applied to the societal context is when a famous newspaper, *Thairath,* titled one of its articles written by Nitikaroon Mingruchiralai as *Hai Thuk Kae Than, Thuk Nan Tueng Tua*. The article mainly criticized the improper treatment of the US government, boycotting other countries like India and China by increasing import duty whenever they were not pleased. Because of it, many countries are now increasing their import duty for the US

online, 28 April 2017, https://siamrath.co.th/n/14232 (accessed 20 December 2019).

19 Tipritaka volume 24: Pali Roman Sutta Pitaka, vol 16: Sutta. Aṅ. (5): dasaka-ekādasakanipātā, http://www.84000.org/tipitaka/read/v.php?B=24&A=6876&Z=6957&pagebreak=0, translated https://suttacentral.net/an10.216/en/bodhi (accessed 20 December 2019).

20 Ibid.

as well. This misconduct of the United States to others has finally returned to affect the lives of many Americans.[21] Thus, as implied by the author, this serves as a good example of how such saying is used even in today's socio-political context.

Another concrete example of how this saying remains substantively prominent in Thai culture and consciousness drama is its inclusion in the elementary school curriculum as early as *Matthayom* 5 (grade 5). It has been reinvented into a story for children, which later became a popular folktale.[22]

> Once upon a time, there was a Buddhist nun who lived in a small village. Every morning, she would rise up early to make merit by offering food for Buddhist monks. Praying every morning and evening was her routine. This nun always had her catchphrase *thukkhato thukkha tha nang* (what goes comes around) whenever she uttered. So, the people of that village sarcastically called her the *thukkhato thukkha tha nang* nun. Near her house lived a habitual drinker who often got disturbed by the daily prayer of the good nun. Wishing to testify if what she said was really true, this drunkard had an evil plan. He asked his wife to cook fish soup for the nun the following morning. This drunkard secretly put croton seeds he prepared in the soup. The following day, he asked his wife to give the soup to the nun without his wife knowing his evil plan. When the wife offered soup to the nun, she accepted it, but she did not eat it because she just finished her

21 This article is already summarized. For its full content see Nitikaroon Mingroochiralai, "Hai Thuk Kae Tan Thuk Nan Tueng Tua," *Thairath Online*, 9 October 2018, https://www.thairath.co.th/news/foreign/1392394.

22 This proverb is considered to be a must-learn lesson in Thai subject. By all means, almost every Thai student should memorize this teaching and put it into practice. In order to teach the students and they remember it by heart, Praya Sriharaj Ritthikrai had composed a short story or folk tale named "Kthukkhato Thukkha Tha Nang" (ยายชีทุกขโต) easy to elucidate the meaning of this proverb to children.

> meal. So, she kept it for lunch. When lunchtime was approaching, the nun suddenly changed her mind. Instead, she asked a boy to deliver this soup to a monk in the nearby temple. The monk accepted it and told the boy to keep it in a food cupboard, waiting for temple boys to arrive and eat together. This boy was the son of the drunkard. At the time, the boy felt hungry, so, waiting for no one, he secretly consumed the soup alone. After having finished the soup, the boy got a grave stomachache. He seriously threw up many times until he fainted. Everybody panicked and got scared. So, the monk called up the boy's parents. When the drunkard arrived, he trembled with fear asking for the cause of diarrhea. 'He ate the fish soup given by the nun,' the monk replied. The drunkard was speechless, bringing his son back. He had his son drink coconut juice he prepared as an antidote for the nun. 'How did you know that our son gets poisoned because of croton seeds?' asked the wife. 'I just know,' replied the drunkard. After that day, this habitual drinker never dared to defy the nun again. And he believed that the teaching of *thukkhato thukkhata nang* is true. In the end, this man repented and did good things to the nun and others around him.[23]

The main concept conveys a more complicated idea of how one's concept of sin or *bap* is initially formed. As a matter of fact, this concept of bap is more connected and concerned with its consequence rather than the action per se. In this saying, the term *bap* is not directly mentioned but is substituted by the term *thuk* or *dhuk* (suffering). In other

23 หนังสือเรียนภาษาไทยชุดพื้นฐานภาษา ชั้นประถมศึกษาปีที่ 5 เล่มที่ *1* (Basic Thai Language for Matthayom 5 Part I), ตามหลักสูตรประถมศึกษา 2521 (This lesson is arranged according to the syllabus of primary education) ฉบับปรับปรุง พ.ศ. 2533) พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์คุรุสภาลาดพร้าว กรุงเทพมหานคร: 2542, 1 (Bangkok: Kurusapa Press, 1999), 1. This is the writer's translation and paraphrase of the original.

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words, the aspect of *bap* in this saying focuses more on the "suffering" intentionally done to others. This wrongdoing of a deliberate wish for others' destruction will also cause similar devastation to the perpetrator. What is interesting about this story is the emphasis on the word *thuk* or *dhukka* in Bali, which means "suffering," "pain," "unsatisfactoriness,"[24] or "stress." *Bap* is not mentioned in the story, and *thuk* is used instead. But it is already assumed that the readers understand the action of causing suffering or unsatisfactoriness to others.

The third saying, *Kam dai krai koh kam nan kuen sanong* (กรรมใดใครก่อ กรรมนั้นคืนสนอง) which means "any karma that is done [to others], that karma will return (to the doer)"[25] is an oft-quoted catchphrase in Thailand. The Great Buddha once said, "Any individual who commits an act whether bad or good sees in himself/ herself the karma attached to it. Those who do good acts will have good results, but those who commit bad acts will certainly receive bad results in return."[26]

24 Malcolm Huxter, *Healing the Heart and Mind with Mindfulness: Ancient Path, Present Moment* (New York:Routledge, 2016), 10. Quote: "dukkha (unsatisfactoriness or suffering) (....) In the Introduction I wrote that dukkha is probably best understood as unsatisfactoriness."

25 Another popular saying that shares similar connotation is "Koh kam tam khaen" (ก่อกรรมทำเข็ญ) which is an idiomatic verb which literally means "create karma and cause suffering," or virtually means cause suffering or dissatisfactoriness to others.

26 พระราชภาวนาวิสุทธิ์ (ไชยบูลย์ ธมฺมชโย), (Prarachapawanawisuthi, Chaiyaboon Thammachayo) พระธรรมเทศนา ใน บทความ "ธรรมเพื่อประชาชน: Dhamma for People," (A Sermon in Article "Dhamma for People"), DMC TV, 26 December 2011, http://buddha.dmc.tv/%E0%B8%98%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%B0%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%9E%E0%B8%B7%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%9B%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%8A%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%8A%E0%B8%99/%E0%B9%83%E0%B8%AB%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%97%E0%B8%B8%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%82%E0%B9%8C%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%81%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%97%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99-%E0%B8%97%E0%B8%B8%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%82%E0%B9%8C%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%B1%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%96%E0%B8%B6%E0%B8%87%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%A7.html (accessed 23 December 2019).

This prominent religious axiom still holds on to the popular concept of karmic law as in *hai thuk kae than thunk nan tueng tua*. Yet the idea of "karmic retribution" as a justifiable means for one's responsibility for evil or life-destroying acts done to others becomes manifestly accentuated. A substitution of the term *thuk*, "ทุกข์" (suffering) for *kam*, "กรรม" (karma) in *hai thuk kae than, thuk nan tueng tua* has also been observed. These two terms appeared to have been used interchangeably, signaling a significant interplay of their meaning and concept.

Bap in the Folk Tale Lilit[27] *Phra Lo* (ลิลิตพระลอ)

Lilit Phra Lo is one of the three stories considered as the best *lilit* of all time. Anonymously composed at the time of Ayutthaya kingdom[28] circa 15th century, *Lilit Phra Loh* has a great moral value, but it is also a religious teaching that has greatly influenced Thai people up to now especially through its being part of Thai language studies in primary school. This folktale is also representative of other folktales that aim to teach the same value, for instance, *Sang Thong* (สังข์ทอง), *Pikun Thong* (พิกุลทอง), *Pla Boo Thong* (ปลาบู่ทอง), and many more. In summary, *Lilit Phra Lo* goes like this:

Once upon a time, there were two kingdoms being antagonistic to each other, the Sruang kingdom and the Srong kingdom. Phra Lo, the king of the former, was so captivating

27 A kind of Thai stanza or verse composed of varying types of poetic feet or a narrative verse form, consisting alternately of poetry and "rai" (ร่าย) which is a kind of Thai verse.

28 Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, "Kham winitchai rueang phra lo lilit" (Verdict on Phra Lo Lilit), Nangsue bantuek samakhom wannakhadi (Annals of the Literary Society), 1, 5, 1932, https://vajirayana.org/%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%9E%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%AD/%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%B3%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%B3 (accessed 24 December 2019).

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and attractive that the two daughters, Phra Puen and Phra Paeng, of King Phichai Pitsanukorn of the Srong kingdom, were in need of viewing his shiny face. Consequently, Nang Ruen and Nang Roy, escorts of the two princesses, secretly besought a grand old man, Pu Chao Saming Prai, to lure Phra Lo with enchantments to come to Sruang. When spelled with charms, Phra Lo then bid farewell to his mother and his wife and left for the Sruang with his escorts, Kaew and Khwan. Having arrived at the Kalong River, Phra Lo cast lots to foresee his destination. It turned out negatively yet he still insisted on going to the Sruang kingdom. Along the way, a grand old man, Pu Chao Saming Prai, sent a spirit rooster to lure Phra Lo to a field in the palace. Captivated by the charming beauty of the rooster, Phra Lo followed the rooster until he reached the palace's field. The escorts of the two princesses, after seeing him, secretly led Phra Lo, together with his escorts, to the chamber of the princesses. When King Phichai Pitsanukorn knew about this, with great generosity, he was willing to feast a grand wedding for Phra Lo and his daughters. But the grandmother of Phra Puen and Phra Paeng still held grudges against Phra Lo because of their long-term being rivalry. She, therefore, falsely gave an order in the name of the king to apprehend Phra Lo, Phra Phuen, and Phra Paeng, and their escorts. They tried to fight back until death. Having received the news of his daughters' Phra Lo's, and the escorts' death, King Pichai Pitsanukorn was extremely infuriated with the grandmother of Phra Phuen and Phra. He immediately sentenced her, together with the soldiers who were part of the murder, to death. Pra Nang Boon Lue, the mother of Phra Lo, had sent her royal envoys to participate in the royal funeral of the king and princesses. Towards the

end, the two kingdoms had reconciled and become amicable to each other forever.[29]

Being one of the most explicit stories intended for the religious formation of the Thais, the folk tale cautions its hearers that whenever a hideous act is done to others, the same act will return to the perpetrator. *Bap* in this folktale is dishonesty, jealousy, and murder. *Lilit Pra Loh* is emblematic of Thai folktales, most of which embody the concept of *bap* in acts such as spousal infidelity and fits of jealousy among siblings or relatives that lead to murder. Nevertheless, those who do evil deeds to others get punished in various forms. *Bap* is associated with punishment. The conceptual theme of dishonesty and jealousy deliberately presented in this folktale brings about another dimension of sin, which is more "relational" and, at the same time, "emotional."

Bap in Thai Popular Songs

First, we look at the song *Bap Borisood* (Pure Evil/Pure Sin) released in 1987 and remains popular until today. The beautiful melody and melodic voice of the singers help to convey the message of the song.

> All human beings, both men and women, equally have good things and bad things. When first seeing each other, we all are showing presentable sides of ours to one another. 'I am a gentleman.' 'And I am a gentle lady.' '(The man) I don't smoke at all.' "(The woman) I am not fussy." Time elapses. The love (of both) is so sweet and beautiful. Both are committed to each other the love and the beauty of life.

29 Apart from being the Thai literature composed during the first Thai kingdom, Sukhothai, the story of Lilit Phra Lo has been popularized up to the present as an inculcated virtuous lesson and folktale for Thai people, especially the children.

> Therefore, marriage is bound both together. '(The man) I am still back home on time.' '(The woman) I am still a good housewife.' '(The man) I give all my earning to you.' '(The woman) I will spend it carefully.' Time passes longer, love becomes insipid. No more goodness to show off, each begins to be drawn to new trials, Thai boxing is all around. '(The man) I just drank with my friends.' '(The woman) I just came back from a party at my office ha!' '(The man) I just give you this (small) amount of money, ok!' '(The woman) But I am so burdened with many expenses!' When patience comes to an end, divorce is the best solution. This result extremely sucks, very bad. The unfortunate are the children.[30]

Contextually, *bap borisood* refers to malevolent acts that affect others, whether intentionally or unintentionally, causing them certain suffering in life. Within the song's context, *bap* is used to describe children left behind by their divorced parents. As such, they are passively submitted to *bap* by their own parents. *Bap*, coined with another term "*borisood*," is described as *bap,* which originates from parents forming bondage of chains that enslaves other persons related by blood, especially the children. This aspect of *bap* emphasizes the role of parents in taking care of their children. If they are not responsible for educating them, caring less even if they become a problem of society, that is also called *bap.* This shows another characteristic that has to do with the "social aspect of *bap.*"For instance, in the microcosm of a family, when problems take shape in a family, especially between a couple who has scarce knowledge of handling them, divorce is often the best option to get out of the situation. Nonetheless,

30 Carabao Band, "บทเพลงบาปบริสุทธิ์" (Folk song "Bap Borisood") in Welcome to Thailand Album, released 1987, genre Folk, Crabao Official, reposted 20 March 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6smQkMTn68 (accessed 24 December 2019).

the ones who get directly affected are the children. *Bap,* in this sense, affects others; the ones affected are not necessarily the ones committing it but those receiving others' *bap*.

Secondly, we look at *Bap Kam Mee Jing* (Sin and Karma are Real), a piece of Thai pop-modern song that has received surprising appreciation from various types of music hearers in 2009[31] and made its second appearance again in 2017 as an original soundtrack (OST) in a popular soap opera *Mia Luang* (principal wife).[32] The content of the song captures another emerging characteristic of *bap* in the context of marriage:

> Sleep well, my sister. Be happy with what you have stolen.
> You need to embrace (him) without shame.
> Whoever will get hurt, never care; another woman is in great pain,
> So what! No need to remember anything when you know it well yet still do it.
> It means that you intend to do; I dare not to dissuade you but a warning (that)
> Karma is for real, sooner it will return to you.
> The thing you have stolen is hot, if you're not afraid of being burned,
> it's up to you.
> You should not trust him, a cobra does not choose who to bite.
> How much I love him yet, he broke my heart.
> You see that.
> I know you're lucky, not really mad at you, I understand. Love blinds you;

31 "Bap Kam Mi Ching" (Karma is real), Kapook Highlight, https://hilight.kapook.com/view/39187 (accessed 26 December 2019).

32 "Mia Luang" (The Principal Wife), in La Korn Chong Sam, Ch3Thailand, https://www.ch3thailand.com/%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%8A%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%873/second/428/%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%B5%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%AB%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%87.html (accessed 26 December 2019).

> It blocks your conscience; you are not shameful.
> Do whatever you can in order to get him, no matter who will get hurt.
> No mercy. Good or bad, you don't care.[33]

In the context of the song, *bap* (*kam*) is implicitly described as an act of interfering with others' love life and causing them separation. It is worth noting that kam is used with bap as one word to underscore the certainty of receiving *kam* (an action of the same kind) in return: a similar love-betraying action. Consequently, *bapkam,* as implied by the song, contains an idea of an attached consequence of a harmful act emotionally done to others, especially heartbrokenness. It still exists and will return to the doer. This aspect of *bap* is associated more with love affairs. Intentionally composed to educate the Thais about the "religious truth" of karmic teaching,[34] it emphasizes the "fidelity of the spouses" to each other in the context of marital love, as opposed to "adultery."

Thirdly, we analyze the song *Tha Leuk Dai* (If I Could Choose)[35]

33 Song "Bap Kam Mee Ching" (Karma is real), sung by Pan Tanaphorn Waekprayoon, Kapook Musicstation, https://musicstation.kapook.com/%E0%B8%9A%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%9B%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%B5%E0%B8%88%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%87_%E0%B8%9B%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99%20%E0%B8%98%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%9E%E0%B8%A3%20%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%9B%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%B9%E0%B8%A3.html (accessed 27 December 2019).

34 "Bap Kam Mee Ching Raeng Mai Kraeng Chai Click Talom Talai… Pung Taloo Lak Saen" ("Karma is real" Its popularity is rated by more than hundred thousand views), Khao Ban Teung, (8 July 2009), https://www.ryt9.com/s/prg/605545 (accessed 27 December 2019).

35 Song "Tha Luek Kurd Dai" (If I Could Choose) composed and arranged by Narongwit Taechatanawat and Porramet Murnsanid, Chandelier Music, Youtube: Ch3Thailand Music www.เพลงละครช่อง3.com, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1LWRZjTYxA (accessed 28 December 2019).

> I hate myself for I was born to be like this; for being a person without pride and dignity like this, I never wanted to be so. I want to be a good person; I don't want to be despised over and over. I want to have a good memory of myself; I don't want to be hurt. If life could ever be chosen, who would have wanted to be like this; my heart is hurt indescribably. If I could ever choose, I want to delete this part of my life; and begin life anew with someone who is truly good. Is there anyone who understands me? If you were I, you would understand the real reason. This might be the **karma** I have committed; it's time for me to repay.

There is no mention of the term *bap* in the song, not even once. However, the prevailing concept of *bap* is still present as an overarching concept in "karma" or *kam* in Thai. The substitution of *kam*, instead of *bap*, already presupposes the act of *bap* done previously, with the consequence taking place. This karmic theme brings about the theme of wrong-doing committed in the past: the doer needs to repay for the acts previously done. Therefore, the emerging concept of surrendering oneself to one's own destiny because of an evil deed done in the past is inevitable.

Bap in Films, Soap Operas, and Television Dramas

The films, soap operas, and television drama series we shall be treating here represent the countless films, TV dramas, and soap operas popularized in Thailand. The main contents of these forms of popular entertainment revolve around the teaching of *bap* and *kam*. Nonetheless, each underscores the emergence of *bap* from a different aspect. Thus, these films and TV dramas epitomize the rest of their kinds, which convey resembling messages in one way or another.

The locally-made horror-drama, *Arbat*[36] (Offence, Sin, or Infringement)[37], caused nationwide controversy in Thailand, especially with the Buddhist religion, because it exposed the negative behavior of monks and novices. The aim of the film was primarily to teach about karma in Buddhism. Many scenes show how monks violate the rules of Buddhist behavior by drinking alcohol, smoking, and having relations with women. In summary, the story goes like this:

> There was a young man named Son who did not quite care much about his life and future. He was forced by his parents to be ordained a monk for some concealed reasons. While staying in the temple to learn and practice Dharma, Son kept on transgressing the monk's laws by secretly smoking and drinking alcohol. He, in fact, did not care about the monkhood he had carried. Furthermore, Son clandestinely developed a relationship with Fai, a young girl who lived in a neighboring village. Son kept on doing these things as if there was no wrong without knowing that every action of his had brought him into a mysterious situation. During nights, Son began to see visions of the past tragic events happening in the *kuti* (monk's dwelling) where he was staying; he saw ghosts. He began to see two different kinds of ghosts. The first kind is 'Pret.' it is a palm tree-tall lady ghost who, according to Buddhist belief, committed grave sins when she was still a human being. Secretly, she had a sexual relationship with a monk in that temple for years until she got pregnant and bore a child. Because of what she did, she could not resist her conscience; she finally decided to hang herself. Aside from

36 *Arbat* (อาบัติ) means "falling from the goodness." It refers to the violation or infringement of Buddhist monks to the laws established by Buddha for the practice of the monks.

37 *Arbat* (อาปัติ or อาบัติ) also known as "Karma" in English is a horror-drama film directed by Kanittha Kwanyu and produced by Baramyu. This film was released to the public on 16 October 2015. It was selected as the Thai entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 89th Academy Awards in 2017 but it was not nominated.

> this, Son also saw a monk ghost. When he was still alive, he connived with the monk who had a secret relationship with that lady (who died and became a *pret*). However, that monk murdered him for the reason that the secret would be kept for good. The secret was finally disclosed. Through all these events, Son began to understand his own story of which was the main reason why he was forced by his parents to the monkhood. In fact, Son, because of his carelessness, killed a little girl in a car accident. His parents were afraid that Son would get revenged by the spirit of the little girl who followed him in every footstep. Hence, they forced him to live the monkhood, hoping that he would be spared from this karmic law. Understanding his situation, Son willingly remained a monk. This was done because of the belief that through the merits gained by means of good deeds done as a monk, those spirits (of the lady, the monk, and the little girl) would be freed from their entanglements.[38]

The term *arbat* literally means an "offense or infringement of Buddhist monks against the laws of the Buddha."[39] The concept of *bap* in this well-known, publicly criticized film is directly associated with the Buddhist religion, particularly with monks' violation of the ordinances. Thus, the emerging concept of *bap* is the "violation of religious teaching" of Buddhist monks or nuns and extends to Buddhist adherents who are asked to observe religious precepts for Buddhist laymen. This view of *bap*, grounded on religious laws, shows its "objectiveness" in that bap depends not only on internal interpretation but also on the external observance of certain religious regulations.

38 This is the writer's paraphrase of the original.

39 Royal Academy, s. v. "อาบัติ" or "Arbat," Thai Dictionary of the Royal Institute, 2011, http://www.royin.go.th/dictionary/index.php (accessed 30 December 2019)

https://publications.lst.edu/

On the other hand, *Keun Bap Prom Piram or* "Macabre Case of Prom Pi Ram" is a relentless but memorable dramatization of a 1977 rape-and-murder case that later inspired a novel.[40] The movie debuted in July 2003[41] and was awarded "best film" in the same year by the Thailand National Film Association Awards. The story goes:

In 1977, the body of a young woman, Samnian, is discovered along the railway track in the central plains of Thailand. She was raped and strangled. Two honest police officers are conducting the investigation. At first, the clues are meager: the victim is a traveler on the Bangkok-Chiang Mai train who wanted to go to Uttaradit; she had no ticket, so she was expelled from the train in the wilderness at the station of the small village of Prompiram; it is a pretty young woman visibly a little retarded mentally. At first, the investigators come up against a wall of silence. Then gradually, the languages are loosened, and the case takes a considerable extent. The crime exceeds the understanding in its horror. An influential local politician tries to smother the affair. This film is about the police investigation into this case which is 100% true and was eventually solved.[42] This hideous crime has brought unforgettable ignominy to the people of Prompiram, especially when they found out that the youngest criminal was nine years old and the oldest was 65 years of age.

In this movie, the concept of *bap* suggests "sexual molestation and hideous rape and murder." In this aspect, *bap* not

40 Russell Edwards, "Macabre Case of Prom Pi Ram," Film Reviews, Variety, 2004, https://variety.com/2004/film/reviews/macabre-case-of-prom-pi-ram-1200536366/ (accessed 30 December 2019).

41 Film "Kuen Bap Prom Pi Ram" (Macabre Case of Prom Pi Ram), released 25 July 2003, Siamzone, https://www.siamzone.com/movie/m/1356 (accessed 30 December 2019).

42 "The Macabre Case of Prompiram," (Kuen Bap Prompiram) directed by Manop Udomdej, Letterboxd, 2003, https://letterboxd.com/film/the-macabre-case-of-prompiram/ (accessed 30 December 2019).

only means rape and murder of the lady but also signifies disrespect for another's dignity and dehumanizing human values, especially for women. Its implicit concept of *bap* reveals a more humanistic view, emphasizing respect for the human person.

Meanwhile, the whole setting and purpose of the soap opera, *Krong Kam,* portrays the reality of lives that are inexorably entangled with the dynamics of karma. The story revolves around a family and particularly a mother raising her four sons. The authoritarian mother intervened in every aspect of her sons' lives, eventually arranging the marriage of all of them. For fear of hurting the mother, the four sons obeyed their mother's desire. However, the whole story did not end up as beautifully as she had intended. After the marriage, each son tried to live his life as he wanted to. All their marriage ended up short-lived and eventually shattered as each family began to encounter problems. And, certainly, the one who was hurt the most was the mother. The following passages selected from this television drama capture some significant concepts of *bap* which would be discussed later. Several parts of this drama mention "*bapkam*" in different contexts.

The young lady:	"Will you not be responsible for what you have done?"
The young man:	"I have told you to abort the child. Tell me how much you want?"
The young lady:	"You are so bad. How can you talk like this?"
The young man:	"Go away! Get out of here!"
The young lady:	"Don't you dare think that you will live a happy life. This sin (bapkam) will follow you. You will never find prosperity in your whole life."

The young man: "Go away. Get out of here!"[43]

These conversations taken from one of the many drama episodes express simply yet clearly the understanding of bap in people's lives. Happiness in life will be achieved or not, depending on what one has done in life. Abortion is mentioned in this dialogue. Committing abortion is sinful, and, in doing so, the life of the one committing abortion is inevitably attached to the deterioration of life due to *bap*. This understanding implies that *bap* or wrongdoing committed will ascertain degeneration of happiness, prosperity, power, or fame for the rest of one's life.

Another example of the same concept is repeated repeatedly towards the end of the drama emphasizing the significance of its teaching to drama audiences. However, the following scene appears to expand the drama's notion of *bap kam* as bringing negative outcomes upon the perpetrator and the children or succeeding generations.

Raenu: "Mom, I am so sorry. Please forgive me for bringing shame to our family."

Mom: "You need not mention this again. On the other hand, I am very much thankful to you for not foolishly and viciously planning to abort the child. Otherwise, this sin (bap) will follow you in your next world (next incarnation). And now the child is born, we have to try our best to take care of it." [44]

43 FIN "Bapkam Ni Mueng Nee Mai Pon…Cheewit Mueng Cha Ha Kwam Cha Roen Mai Dai" (You cannot escape this karma…you will never find progress and happiness in life), Krong Kam, Ch3Thailand, Youtube, 8 April 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSl-frctNS4Q (accessed 31 December 2019).

44 FIN "Hak Chat Na Mee Ching Noo Kho Kurd Ma Ten Look Mae Eek" (If there is next life, I wish that I will be born as your daughter once again), Krong Kam, Ch3Thailand, Youtube, 4 March 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPPSsbD8snM (accessed 31

Bap is shown as legitimate punishment one deserves for previous wrongdoing.

> Aathong: "I had never thought that Pilai is a revengeful person." Mom, if you can forgive her, please do so. Mom, please!
>
> Mom: "Actually, every (bad) thing that had happened in our family happened so because of me. I predetermined all your lives according to my own decision-making, and I never opened my eyes or cared whether you liked it or not, you were happy or not. All of these I did because I wanted to keep my face (my fame), so I did not accept Renu, and I wanted to win over Chai (her eldest son). That's why I asked you to marry Pilai. So what happened now! Everything is destroyed, destroyed. So pathetic! I am really stupid! (crying). "
>
> Aathong: "Mom, don't mention it. It already happened.
>
> Mom: "Your dad reminded me so many times, but I never even once listened to him; I never understood. I not only fall into the pit of hell but also pull all of you down to hell with me. Grandma had cursed me that my family would be ruined and broken, she told me that. Now it becomes true. (crying hard) Mom, mom, I am sorry. I accept…I accept karma alone. Don't let my children be heirs of these karma. Don't let these karma continue to my children and my grandchildren, please! I accept everything."[45]

December 2019).

45 FIN "Ban Bae Tong Lom Chom Hai Prau Phoo Ying Yang Koo"

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Bap kam is an evil act done to others, and it returns to the doer and gets passed on to the next generation. The law of karma is pretty much focused. The presence of suffering in life has its root from one's deeds in the past. Surrender and acceptance of the outcome are the key to living one's life. The implication here is that *bap* is a predetermination that foreshadows one's destiny before he or she is born, which in any case requires one's "surrendering." In a sense, there is no room for one's freedom in choosing what to be and what to do. The concept of *bap* in this expression shows its social aspect as well.

This dramatic scene highlights and articulates the people's understanding of *bap* in a very realistic way. After having been faced with difficulties, concerns, or serious problems in life, one seems to effortlessly attribute one's present life to wrongdoings in the past and acknowledge such with resignation as one's own fault. *Kam* (karma) is believed to overshadow every aspect of life. By extension, it can also punish other people related to the direct perpetrator.

The last TV series we shall examine is *Mirror Reflects Karma: Klong Pridsana* (The Mysterious box)[46] that personifies *kam* as a judge or policeman pursuing justice on behalf of the victims. This concept of *kam* in the *Mirror Reflects Karma* is portrayed in a more aggressive, active, and dynamic

(The household of mother (in law) declined because of such a kind of woman like me), Krong Kam, Ch3Thailand, Youtube, 29 April 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMnMnCQTC0c (accessed 31 December 2019).

46 The Mirror Kra Chok Sa Thon Kram (the mirror reflects karma) is a TV drama series popularly watched nationwide. It was televised every Sunday from 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM. The Mirror Kra Chok Sa Thon Kram Ton Klong Prissana," (the mirror reflects karma: the mysterious box episode) was televised on 14 October 2018 via Chong Sam (Channel 3), one of the most popular and influential free-to-air television networks in Thailand.

way. The plot of this series can be summarized as follows:

There was a female taxi driver who was taking a passenger to his home. After some time, the passenger realized that this taxi driver was trying to cheat on the meter fare, so he forged a plan to tell the driver that he lost his diamond ring in the taxi. He asked the driver to stop over at a convenience store to buy a flashlight. While the passenger was inside the convenience store, the taxi driver became greedy, so she drove away thinking that she would own that ring and leaving the passenger behind, not knowing that it was the plan of the passenger. The taxi driver intended to keep that diamond ring for herself planning to sell it for her daughter's tuition fee and other expenses in the house. One day while she was about to sell that diamond ring, unaware of what is going on around her, she almost got hit by a car. She was able to manage herself from being hit by the car, but she almost got killed by a sharp wood carcass thrown along the street. Suddenly, the taxi driver became aware of what her daughter always reminded her of becoming a good mother, not a vicious one like she has been. Because one day, the karma she acted would come back to her. Realizing what she was doing, she changed her mind and spent time searching for the owner. She then met the man, the passenger who lied to her about the diamond ring and returned the ring to him. Out of luck thought the man, he kept it for himself and planned to give it to his girlfriend. Nonetheless, when his girlfriend knew the truth, she got mad and asked him to find the real owner. Otherwise, she would break up with him. Out of fear of breaking up, the man or the passenger and the taxi driver were looking for the real owner until they finally found him unconscious in a hospital with his girlfriend crying beside his bed. The real owner of the diamond ring got hit by a car after he got off the taxi. After

realizing that he forgot his ring in the car, he ran after the taxi but unfortunately got hit by a car. After the two, the taxi driver and the passenger returned the ring and saw the owner of the ring become conscious, they both went home to live with their loved ones with great joy and happiness.[47]

Bap kam, which emerges in this drama simply denotes "bad intention" (though not yet concretized). Correspondingly, this emergence of the concept of *bap* shows another dimension which is very personal and subjective. It is rightly so as it precisely deals with the act and the "impure thought" or "volition" of the person. *Bap kam* is what people are afraid of when it decides whether to do good or bad. It works almost like a policeman patrolling and warning people not to violate any laws or commit sin against others, preferring good to bad. Otherwise, *bap kam* will harm the person in one way or another and make the person's life miserable. The cognition of *bap kam* functions like a person's conscience that keeps on reminding him or her of what kind of life he or she should live based on good ethics and a formed conscience.

In these examples, we see how the understanding of *bap* is popularly expressed as "suffering" or its "infliction on

47 "The Mirror Kra Chok Sa Thon Kram Ton Klong Prissana," (the mirror reflects karma: the mysterious box episode), Doo Rai Karn Yon Lang (watching from back-up video over the internet), Ch3Thailand, 14 October 2018, https://www.ch3thailand.com/%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A2%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%AB%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%87/program/64473/The-mirror-%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%88%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%97%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A1---%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%99-%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%A5%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%87%E0%B8%9B%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%A8%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%B2.html (accessed 3 January 2020).

others." Each notion is derived from the context where such suffering takes place. For instance, in the folktale Lilit Pra Loh context, bap resonates clearly with certain immoral acts like dishonesty, jealousy, and murder, which will lead one's life to destruction, even to death. Moreover, we observe that the interweaving terms bap, thuk, and kam are used interchangeably to describe *bap* as suffering, pain, and dissatisfaction.

Thus we realize that in the Thai mindset, the understanding of *bap* cannot be grasped comprehensively without the fundamental "law of karma". *Bap* and karma are intertwined. However, karma itself is not *bap* but its consequence. The idea of the law of karma or "karmic retribution" predominates the notion of *bap* in Thai culture.

The Concept of *Bap* in Thai Catholicism

Bap in the *Kam Son Christang*

Soon after they arrived in 17th century Siam, Catholic missionaries began translating important doctrines into the vernacular. Mgr. Louis Laneau (1637-1696) wrote several books, one of them being the "Catechism for Children and Adult."[48] Unfortunately, almost all of his books have disappeared.

In 1796, the first-ever catechetical book in the Land of Siam titled *Kham Son Christang* (Christian Catechism) was published, where the word *bap* was already used to translate *peccatum*.[49] In this early Thai catechism, *bap* is discussed in

48 Historical Archives, "พระสังฆราช หลุยส์ ลาโน," (Bishop Laneau), Historical Archives Archdiocese of Bangkok, 2015, http://catholichaab.com/main/index.php/2015-09-22-02-42-26/biography/2015-09-22-08-08-12/455-louis-laneau (accessed 3 December 2019).

49 Cf. "Kam Son Christang," printed by French missionary (printed at

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the Tridentine question-answer format. And though a formal definition is not explicitly provided, the book nonetheless provides a sufficient discussion of *bap.*



Figure 1: The first Catechetical book, *Kham Son Christang*, published in 1796

Bap as Worldly Attachments and Refusing God

"Question: Why did God create us?"
"Answer: God created us for Godself, to know Him,

Sancta Crus Church, Bangkok, 1796), 16.

to love Him, and to attain happiness with Him in heaven forever."

"Question: In what way can we attain eternal happiness?"

"Answer: Only one way, that is, through knowing Him, loving Him, doing His will. The more we do this, the happier we are."

"Question: How is that so?"

"Answer: Because we are born to know God, to love Him, to serve Him and put our heart in Him like a fish in water. It is happy in there; outside of it (water) is suffering."

"Question: Aren't our lives happy here (on earth)?"

"Answer: For how long have we been happy? All are pathetic and are the cause of bap (sin) and punishment. Retribution is for those who do not know and understand."

"Question: Can money, wealth, possessions, and prestige of this world be sufficient for us to live a happy life?"

"Answer: Not at all. The more we own these worldly things, the more unceasingly we hunger. And the more we hunger, the more suffering occurs in our hearts."[50]

Avidity, avarice, anger, pride, concupiscence, and so on circulating in the heart makes disturbance and suffering. The more one possesses worldly things, the more one becomes afraid of death. A heart that is attached to earthly things losing the love for God and has fallen in *bap* (sin) must die, and God will judge. That's pathetic."[51]

"Question: How can humanity fall into bap (sin)?"

"Answer: Their faculty or knowledge is blinded, their heart is weakened and devious. They are impinged by sensuality."

50 Cf. "Kam Son Christang," 24-28.
51 Ibid., 30.

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> "Question: How is their faculty blinded?"
> "Answer: They are blinded because what is good, they thought it was bad. And what is bad, they thought it was good. They are so blinded that they have forgotten God, their Creator."[52]

Though not directly defined, *bap,* according to the *Kham Son Christang*, is related to "knowing God, loving Him, and doing His will." It further expounds that those who fall into *bap* are those whose "faculty or knowledge is blinded, their heart is weakened and devious," therefore, "they are impinged by sensuality." When they are blinded, "they have forgotten God" by allowing themselves to be lured by worldly possessions. Not all temporal possessions and fame are bad in themselves, but rather it is the heart refusing God that makes it *bap*. To know God is the linchpin of the whole section on *bap* in the book. Thus, it implies that not knowing God is *bap* per se.

Bap as Disobedience to God

The *Kham Son Christang* continues to expand the meaning of *bap* as follows:

> But humans disobey God; they live in *bap* (sin). Therefore, God punished them by letting them live on their labor. They are bound to sickness, suffering, and death. This is the result of their disobedience to God, their Creator.[53]

Disobedience to God is central to the emergence of *bap* in human history. Hence, *bap* is described further as "not following God's will" and refusing "to know, to serve and to

52 Ibid., 32.
53 Ibid., 36-37.

love God." On the one hand, this concept of bap widens the scope of its meaning in the context of a relationship with God. On the other hand, it can also narrow down the categorization of what is *bap* to refusing Jesus and his Church, given the notion that it is only through Jesus Christ and "through" his Church that one can come to know God and follow His will.

Bap as Suffering

> "Question: Humans are living in *bap* (sin); they abandon God. How does God punish them?"
>
> "Answer: If they do not *tham bap*[54] (commit sin), they will not lose their lives. If they serve God, they will live happily in this world. And God will ascend them to heaven alive to attain happiness forever. But humans disobey God; they live in *bap* (sin). Therefore, God punished them by letting them live on their labor. They are bound to sickness and suffering, and death. This is the result of their disobedience to God, their Creator."[55] "Furthermore, if humans are not aware and repent for their *bap* (sin), returning to their Creator, serving Him, doing His will and confessing their *bap* (sin) when they are still on earth, He (God) will punish them by throwing them into hell where fire blazes eternally."[56]
>
> "Answer: Not at all. The more we own these worldly things, the more unceasingly we hunger. And the more we hunger, the more suffering occurs in our hearts."[57]

54 *Tham bap* is a verb form of bap, which is noun. Therefore, *tham bap* is equivalent to "commit sin" or "sin" in verb form.
55 Ibid., 36-37.
56 Ibid., 37.
57 Cf. "Kam Son Christang," 24-28.

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Avidity, avarice, anger, pride, and concupiscence, and so on circulating in the heart makes disturbance and suffering. The more one possesses worldly things, the more one becomes afraid of death. A heart that is attached to earthly things losing the love for God and has fallen in *bap* (sin) must die, and God will judge. That's pathetic."[58]

The existence of suffering is seen as a consequence of sin as explicitly stated in the Scriptures: "[God said]…cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread until you return to the ground…"[59] Hence, *bap* is associated with the idea of suffering not as *bap* in itself but as punishment from God for the first sin humans had committed. Suffering can appear as physical sickness, psychological illness, and death. It is not confined only to the temporal level. It is also connected with eternal suffering in the fire of hell. As mentioned in the *Kam Son Christang*, *bap* is likewise associated with the idea of "hell" as punishment for those who do not know God, love Him, and serve Him:

> (He) came down from heaven to redeem humanity from *bap* (sin) and the hands of evil spirits. He is the only way for all of you to praise Him, to forsake *bap* (sin), to do merit…, to be saved from hell, and to live with Him in heaven forever.[60]…Furthermore, if humans are not aware and repent for their *bap* (sin), returning to their Creator, serving Him, doing His will, and confessing their *bap* (sin) when they are still on earth, He (God) will punish them by throwing them into hell where fire blazes eternally.[61]

58 Ibid., 30.
59 Genensis 3:17-19.
60 "Kam Son Christang," edited by Surachai Choomsripan (Bangkok: Assumption Press, 1997), 16-17. (หนังสือคำสอนคริสตัง เรียบเรียงโดย คุณพ่อสุรชัย ชุมศรีพนธ์ (กรุงเทพมหานคร โรงพิมพ์อัสสัมชัญ), 16-17).
61 Ibid., 37.

This concept of *bap* in the *Kam Son Christang* illustrates a very significant theme of catechetical formation during this period. Its origins in the Council of Trent (1545-1563) emphasize "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" (outside the Church there is no salvation).[62] As expressed in the words of the Council:

> If anyone does not confess that the first man, Adam, when he had transgressed the commandment of God in Paradise, immediately lost the holiness and justice wherein he had been constituted; and that he incurred, through the offense of that prevarication, the wrath and indignation of God, and consequently death, with which God had previously threatened him, and, together with death, captivity under his power who thenceforth had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil, and that the entire Adam, through that offense of prevarication, was changed, in body and soul, for the worse; let him be anathema. [§1][63]

Bap in the Thai edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

The Thai edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* came out in 1994 and defines *bap* "as an act that contradicts reason, truth, and right conscience. It is an act that offends God's love and fellow human beings caused by a perverse attachment to certain objects. *Bap* (sin) destroys human nature and human solidarity."[64] Following the definition of St.

62 *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies*, Orlando O. Espín and James B. Nickoloff, eds., (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2007), 439.

63 Fred Noltie, "Trent on Original Sin," The Supplement: Catholic Commentary, (10 July 2009), https://the-supplement.blogspot.com/2009/07/trent-on-original-sin.html (accessed 5 December 2019).

64 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก ภาค 3 ชีวิตในพระคริสตเจ้า พิมพ์ใช้ภายใน (Catechism of the Catholic Church Part III: Life in Christ), แผนกคริสตศาสนธรรม อัครสังฆมณฑลกรุงเทพฯ (Printed for

https://publications.lst.edu/

Augustine, it is often understood as "words, deeds, or desires against the eternal laws." *Bap* is an offense against God. It sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it.[65] The first *bap* is disobedience, a revolt against God, desiring to become like God.[66]

Furthermore, *bap* can be classified according to the will, the act, or the virtues they oppose, by excess or defect; or the commandments they violate. They can also be categorized depending on whether they concern God, neighbor, or oneself. They can be divided into spiritual and carnal *bap*, or in thought, word, deed, or omission. The root of *bap* is in the heart of man and woman, in their free will, according to the teaching of the Lord[67]: for out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These defile a man and a woman.[68]

As far as the Church's definition of sin is concerned, it is translated through the term *bap* in conveying the meaning of sin from Christian concepts. The definition of sin translated as *bap* in the Thai edition of the Catechism does not seem to change substantially from the original definition given by the Church.

Internal Use only, Catechetical Center of Bangkok Archdiocese, 2003), 469. The English translation of the Thai Edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church used in this thesis is credited to the Definitive Edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994.

65 "บาปคืออะไร"(What is Sin?), แผนกคริสตศาสนธรรม อัครสังฆมณฑลกรุงเทพ (Catechetical Center of Bangkok Archdiocese), 13 December 2016, http://www.kamsonbkk.com/catholic-catechism/compendeum-catechism-of-the-catholic-church/7054-บาปคืออะไร (accessed 6 December 2019).

66 Ibid., 469-470.

67 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก ภาค 3 ชีวิตในพระคริสตเจ้า (Catechism of the Catholic Church Part III: Life in Christ)), 470-471.

68 Mt. 15:19-20.

Bap in Other Sections of the CCC

Aside from article 8, number 1849 of the CCC that gives its direct definition, other sections of the CCC expound further on the meaning of *bap* in a much more detailed manner.

To give a picture of the scope of its treatment, the following table lists the occurrences of *bap* found in the CCC.

Concordance of *Bap* in the CCC

- Involuntary ignorance #1860
- Lies #2484
- Violation of law #1949
- Harm to the community of believers #953
- Injury to the unity of the Church 817
- Separation of people from each other #845
- Sickness #1505
- Vice #1865
- Grave sins: capital sins #1866, #1876
- Anger #2302
- Blasphemy #2148
- Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit #1864
- Envy #2539
- Hatred #2303
- Malice #1860
- Murder 2268
- Neglect of Sunday obligation #2181
- Bap (sins) against faith #2088-89
- Bap (sins) against hope #2091
- Bap (sins) against love #2094
- Personal act #1868
- Bap khong sang kom (Social sin) #1869
- Threat to the unity of the Church #814
- Work of the flesh #1852
- Man sins freely #1739, #1874
- Bap (sin) as rejection of God #398, #415, #1487
- Seduction by the devil #391, #414-15
- Reality of bap (sin) #386-87
- Responsibility for the bap (sins) of others #1868

Bap Kam Nued (Original Sin), *Bap Nak* (Mortal Sin), and *Bap Bao* (Venial Sin)

The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language but affirms a primeval event: a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of mankind. Revelation gives us that certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents.[69] Tempted by the devil, man lets his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeys God's command. This is what man's *bap raek* (first sin) consisted of. All subsequent *bap* (sin) would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness.[70] By his *bap* (sin) Adam, as the first man, lost the original holiness and justice he had received from God, not only for himself but all human beings.[71] Adam and Eve would then transmit to their descendants a human nature wounded by their *bap raek* (first sin) and hence, would be deprived of original holiness and justice. This deprivation is called *bap kam nued* (original sin).[72]

Meanwhile, aside from original sin, we also speak of personal sins that people commit throughout life. These can be evaluated based on their gravity. The distinction between *bap nak* (mortal sin) and *bap bao* (venial sin) became part of the tradition of the Church.[73] *Bap nak* (mortal sin)[74] destroys

69 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 390.

70 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 397.

71 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 416.

72 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 417.

73 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1854.

74 Mortal sin results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying grace, that is, of the state of grace. If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and the eternal death of hell, for our freedom has the power to make choices for ever, with no turning back. See CCC no. 1861.

charity in the heart by a grave violation of God's law and turns humanity away from God.[75] For a *bap* (sin) to be mortal, some conditions must be met: grave matter,[76] commission with full knowledge, and deliberate consent.[77] *However, bap bao (venial sin)* allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it.[78] One commits *bap bao* (venial sin) when, in a less serious matter, he or she does not observe the standard prescribed by the moral law, or when he or she disobeys the moral law in a grave matter without full knowledge or without complete consent.[79] However, even though the *bap bao* (venial sin) weakens charity and merits temporal punishment, it does not break the covenant with God.[80]

Consequence and Punishment of *Bap* (Sin)

Death is a consequence of *bap* (sin).[81] The Church's Magisterium, as the authentic interpreter of the affirmations of Scripture and Tradition, teaches that death entered the world on account of man's sin.[82] Even though man's nature is mortal, God did not destine him to die. Death is contrary to the plan of God the Creator.[83] "Bodily death, from which man

75 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1855.
76 Grave matter is specified by the Ten Commandments see คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1857-1858.
77 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1853.
78 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1855.
79 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1862.
80 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1863.
81 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1008
82 Cf. Genesis 2:17;3:13, 19; Wis 1:13; Rom 5:12;6:23.
83 Cf. Wisdom 2:23-24.

would have been immune had he not sinned" is thus "the last enemy" of man left to be conquered.[84]

For Adam's descendants, *bap kam nued* (original sin) also means deprivation of original holiness and justice. Although human nature has not been totally corrupted: it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it and is subject to ignorance, suffering, and death. Concupiscence in Thai is called *kwam krai*. Baptism erases *bap kam nued* (original sin) and turns a person back toward God, but the *pon khong bap kam nued* (consequences) for the weakened nature persist in man and summon him to a spiritual battle.[85] The consequences of the first disobedience are the loss of the grace of original holiness,[86] the destruction of original justice, the weakening of control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body, and various conflicts in the union between man and woman.[87]

Meanwhile, personal *Bap* (sin) has a "double consequence." Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and makes us incapable of eternal life, leading to "eternal punishment." On the other hand, even if venial, every bap entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth or after death in "Purgatory."[88]

These sections of *bap* in the CCC truly expound its meaning in greater detail. However, the expositions are still largely confined to concepts of *bap* as disobedience to God, violation of His commands or laws, and turning away from Him.

84 *Gaudium et Spes*, 18§2; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:26.
85 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 405.
86 Cf. คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 399.
87 Cf. คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 400.
88 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1472

Comparing the Notions of *Bap* in Thai Language and Culture and in the Thai Edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

In the preceding sections, the concept of *bap* and its related vocabulary in the Thai language and culture and the official Thai edition of Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) have been discussed and presented. The author will make a critical comparison and analysis of this concept to explore and investigate some significant themes in both traditions. Similarities and differences, as well as its implications for catechetical formation will be included. However, this analysis does not intend to cover the whole geography of *bap* in Thai popular culture. Moreover, this analysis does not endorse choosing between the Church's teachings and the cultural expressions but to present the dynamic interaction of both that lingers in the lives and minds of Catholic Thais.

Bap as an Individual's Act of Personal Volition

In both official Catholic teaching and Thai popular expressions, the subjective character of *bap* is central. While Catholic teaching on the morality of human acts emphasizes the intention,[89] the object chosen, and the circumstances of the action,[90] Buddhist-influenced Thai popular culture anchors its understanding of *bap* solely on *cetana* (volition), which is intrinsically bound with the law of karma. In this schema, *bap* is contingent on a person's actions based on *cetana* aroused by the thoughts subjective to that person. Not every evil act, is considered *bap*, since not every act brings about karmic

89 In Pali and Sanskirt it is also *cetanā*. The Thai Catechism of the Catholic Church also translates "intention" as *cetana* (เจตนา).

90 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1750.

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consequences. Either good or bad action produces karma only when accompanied by feeling the pull of volition (*cetana*).

In contrast, involuntary or unconscious actions do not constitute karma, because volition, the most important factor in determining *kamma*, is absent.[91] This emphasis on individual moral responsibility based on karmic retribution instinctively becomes the norm of personal response to the issue of evil in society. The popular saying, *Tham dee dai dee, tham shua dai shua* (good deeds result in good outcomes, bad deeds in bad outcomes) becomes a paradigmatic expression that manifests people's belief in the reality of *bap* as both cause and effect.

Most significantly, *bap* expresses people's interior entity as desire, will, and intention, that is, *cetana*. Bap originates first from one's intention, mind, or will before it is actualized in the act.

Official Catholic teaching also holds that the morality of human acts subjectively involves intention. The *Kam Son Christang* elucidates this by stating that *bap* is a volitional desire to "refuse God" or turn away from "knowing God, loving Him, and doing His will." To refuse God implies that a person has freedom of choice to exercise one's "volition" to reject God or not. This volition forms the basis of corresponding responsibility.

This emphasis on volition is reflected in many Christian authors, both ancient and modern. Augustine describes sin as "any word or deed or thought against the eternal law."[92] In *A*

91 Philip Kapleau, *The Wheel of Death: A Collection of Writtings from Zen Buddhist and Other Sources on Death-Rebirth-Dying*, vol. 7 (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 20.

92 J. C. O'Neill, "Sin," in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, edited by Alan Richardson and John Bowden (Philadelphia:

Handbook of Theological Terms, Van Harvey defines actual sin as "any act, which includes thoughts as well as deeds, done in conscious and deliberate violation of God's will as expressed in the revealed or natural law."[93] Meanwhile, Andrew Song Park defines sin as a conscious offense against God or neighbors.[94]

In further understanding what constitutes *bap*, official Church teaching considers other elements such as object and circumstances. Choosing the morally good object, such as helping a person in need, involves knowing what is good and acting according to a correctly formed conscience. Considering the circumstances of the act entails space for the exercise of freedom. Though both these elements are external to the individual's volition and include limiting factors beyond personal control, including them widens the scope of what constitutes *bap* and the extent of a person's moral responsibility. Object and circumstance specify "the act of the will"[95] and constitute "elements that increase or diminish the moral goodness or evil of the human act" that involves the agent's responsibility.[96]

In contrast, Thai popular culture only factors *cetana* as the sole "locus of *bap*" because it is the only element that comes ultimately from the person's interiority. Significant Thai vocabulary like *jai* (heart)[97] or *chit jai* expresses what

Westminster, 1983), p. 539.

93 Van A. Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1964), 220

94 Andrew Song Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (United States: Abingdon Press, 1993), 12.

95 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1751.

96 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1754.

97 "Jai" is a colloquial term sometimes used interchangeably with

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comes from "inside" the person. Not only does *jai* refer to the "heart" as an internal organ of the body, but as "emotions," "feelings," and "volition" (*tang jai*). For example, the Buddhist Luangta Maha Boowa[98] often preached *Bun bap prakot tii jai haeng diaw*,[99] which means "merit or demerit, all are from the heart."[100]

The understanding of *bap* from the Church's teachings helps widen this relatively "subjective" character of bap as found in Thai popular culture. Aside from considering *cetana* as the significant element of *bap*, official Catholic teachings assert that the object chosen and circumstance are also interrelated essential elements that are indispensable to what constitutes *bap* or not. However, this difference does not necessarily contradict the Thai notion of *bap* but complements it. Interestingly, up to this point, the emphasis of *bap* has not yet anchored on violation of laws but rather on the person's internal disposition.

"cetana." There are also other terms like "jai," "chit," "chit jai," and "cetana" to refer to something coming from inside the person; it is feelings, emotions or desires and so forth. Earnestly speaking, as Julia Cassanniti pointed out in her book "*Living Buddhism: Mind, Self, and Emontion in a Thai Community*," in fact "there is no word for emotion in Thai at all." There are also no English translations that can suitably capture these terms. People are just using these terms presupposing that contextually everyone understands each other.

98 Venerable Ajahn Maha Bua was a well-respected Thai Buddhist monk who was thought by many of his followers to be an Arahant (someone who has attained Enlightenment). He himself was considered a master in the Thai Forest Tradition. After his predecessor's death, he was considered to be the Ajahn Yai (head monk) of the Thai Forest Tradition lineage until his death in 2011. See Masters and Their Organisations, Theravada Thailand – Forest Monks Tradition, http://www.buddhanet.net/masters/mahaboowa.htm.

99 In Thai บุญบาปปรากฏที่ใจแห่งเดียว

100 Luangta Maha Boowa, "Bun Bap Prakot Ti Jai Haeng Diaw" (Merit and Demerit only Appear in the Heart), A Preaching for Laity at Wat Pa Ban Tad, 18 October 2008, http://www.luangta.com/thamma/thamma_talk_text.php?ID=5163&CatID=2 (accessed 3 July 2020).

Bap and Its Effects on the Individual's Life and Social Condition

In Thai popular culture, *bap* and its effects on individual and social life are essentially understood in the forms of *kwam thuk* (pain and suffering) brought about by the law of karma. In contrast, official Catholic teachings assert that *bap* and its effects on both individual and society arise from original sin, which brings about "death,"[101] "damage of unity and community,"[102] and "concupiscence."[103]

Given its socio-cultural background of Buddhist dominance, Thai popular culture views every act of *bap*, whether individual or social, as intrinsically associated with the experience of "suffering," "pain," "dissatisfaction," and "unhappiness" brought about by the "law of karma." At the heart of the Buddhist teachings, the reality of *dukkha* (suffering), the first of the Four Noble Truths,[104] is ever-present in human consciousness. It presents a "realistic" view of life and of the world.[105] Whenever a painful event occurs in one's life, one cannot but ask about its association to *bap* or *bap kam*. Ratnam asserts that "it (*dukkha*) includes not merely physical and mental suffering. At the same time, it also contains deeper ideas such as imperfection, impermanence,

101 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1008.

102 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 817.

103 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), nos. 405, 399.

104 The First Noble Truth is generally translated by almost all scholars as "The Noble Truth of Suffering," and it is interpreted to mean that life according to Buddhism is nothing but suffering and pain. Both translation and interpretation are highly unsatisfactory and misleading. It is because of this limited, free and easy translation, and its superficial interpretation, that many people have been misled into regarding Buddhism as pessimistic. See. Wapola, *What the Buddha Taught*, 16.

105 Wapola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (Oxford: One World, 1997), 17.

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emptiness, conflict, insubstantiality, unsatisfactoriness, and ignorance (*avijja*).[106] Therefore, according to Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, a famous and influential Thai ascetic-philosopher, the "fundamental principle of Buddhism…focuses solely on the elimination of suffering."[107] In order to be exempted from the effects of *bap*, one must extinguish the suffering, and the ultimate goal of Buddhism is to obtain "nirvana," the term used to describe the end of suffering and the cycle of reincarnation.[108]

In contrast, official Catholic teachings firmly hold that *bap* and its effects on both individual's life and social condition are related to original sin and its consequences in "death,"[109] "damage of unity and community,"[110] and "concupiscence,"[111] or "an inclination to sin."[112] Early Church Father Augustine of Hippo quotes the Book of Ecclesiasticus in pointing to pride as the source of all sin: "The beginning of human pride is to forsake the Lord; the heart has withdrawn from its Maker. For the beginning of pride is sin, and the one who clings to it pours out abominations. Therefore, the Lord brings upon them unheard-of calamities, and destroys them completely."[113] The CCC adds further that *bap* "scattered" and "led astray"

106 M. V. Ram Kumar Ratnam, *Dukkha: Suffering in Early Buddhism* (New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House, 2003), 46-47.

107 Buddhadasa Indapanno, "The Heart of Buddhism: The Total Message of Buddhism," (A lecture Note on Dhamma on a special occasion at the Dhamma Study Club, Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital, 17 December 1961), p. 4.

108 "Buddhism: Religious History and Beliefs," Butler University, Indiana, https://www.butler.edu/cfv/buddhism (accessed 23 July 2020).

109 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), no 1008.

110 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), nos 953, 817.

111 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), nos. 405, 399.

112 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), no. 1264.

113 Ecclesiasticus 10:12-13.

God's children.[114]

These two perspectives initially appear to be different. On the one hand, Thai popular culture views *bap* and its effects on the individual's life as pain and suffering. Moreover, it sees death, the loss of unity and relationship, and concupiscence under the karmic force that operates in human life. On the other hand, official Catholic teachings comprehend *bap* and its effects such as death, damage in unity and relationship, and concupiscence. It also views pain and suffering as a consequence of *bap* that is disobedience to God by humankind from its beginnings.

However, though each comes from different perspectives, these two ways of understanding *bap* and its effects do not contradict each other because they trace the ultimate source of *kwam thuk* (suffering, dukkha) in similar ways. As Wapola Rahula points out, suffering comes from "thirst" or "craving"[115]: it is the thirst for sense-pleasure, permanence, existence and becoming, and non-existence (self-annihilation).[116] In the Christian context, this thirst is also known as "pride," which C.S. Lewis considers "the essential vice, the utmost evil."[117] The Book of Genesis metaphorically expresses pride as the thirst to become like God,[118]or to turn away from Him. Hence, Lewis also speaks of it as "the complete anti-God state of mind."[119]

Therefore, *kwam thunk* is a consequence of this pride.

114 Cf. คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 845.
115 Wapola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 29.
116 Wapola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 29.
117 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1980), 121-122.
118 Cf. Genesis 3: 5.
119 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 121-122.

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In this way, craving in Buddhism and pride in Christianity complement each other in articulating the concept of *bap* in the Thai context. In addition, this complementarity opens the way to see suffering and pain in the wider context of "unity and relationship" and of their loss due to discrimination, injustice, and other related situations. Moreover, for the Christian, the meaning of suffering must be re-interpreted in the light of Jesus Christ's suffering. As Khawasiama propounds, "the significant Christian view of *dukkha* is self-denial, self-sacrifice or voluntary suffering for others."[120] Suffering becomes meaningful for Christians when it is seen in relation to the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ.

As to the social dimension, Thai popular culture views *bap* and its effects on the social condition as *kwam thuk* (suffering) of peoples, while Church teachings emphasize disharmony in community or society.

In Thai popular culture, the impact of *bap* as *kwam thuk* or *dukkha* (suffering) is articulated in relation to an individual's life and as the cause of direct pain and suffering to others. As Khawsiama points out, while there is personal *dukkha* in terms of pain, difficulty, fear, worry, and so on, social *dukkha* is the collective suffering of people.[121] It also involves social structures and institutions at large. David Kwansun Suh, a Minjung theologian, affirms that "*dukkha* is not only a metaphysical instability; it is also the result of social and political and economic instability."[122] As suffering affects humans both personally and communally, *dukkha* is a universal reality

120 K. M. Y. Khawsiama, "Towards a Theology of Dukkha: a Christian-Buddhist View on the Suffering of Ludu in Myanmar," *Asia Journal of Theology*, vol. 26 (2012): 117.
121 Ibid., 120.
122 David Kwan-sun Suh, *The Korean Minjung in Christ* (Hong Kong: CCA, 1991), 138.

of the daily experience of all humans bound by conditioned existence in a samsaric life.[123]

The theme of "suffering" becomes a multi-faceted reality that encompasses political, socio-cultural, economic, and, most recently, ecological aspects in the context of Thailand. For instance, when people experience suffering because of economic failure, ecological issues, or political injustice the *bap* that these politicians commit affects all other people in society. Moreover, the effect of *bap* can also take place within a family circle: from parents to children and children to grandchildren. As discussed earlier, Thai popular sayings emphasize the effect of *bap* on this family microcosm. They reiterate that the karmic consequences of *bap* affect the agent and the agent's kin.

In official Catholic teachings, social sin is interrelated with personal sin since personal sin affects our own relationship with God, and social sin is the actions that affect the people around us and our relationship with them. According to the CCC, "personal sins create structures of sin which lead the victims (of sin) to do evil in their turn." Thus "personal sins make everyone accomplices of one another and cause concupiscence, violence, and injustice to reign among them."[124] It further asserts that "sins give rise to social situations and insti-

123 David Thang Moe, "Sin and Evil in Christian and Buddhist Perspectives: A Quest for Theodicy," *Asian Journal of Theology*, vol. 29 (2015): 28. Samsaric life: Buddhism shares with Hinduism the doctrine of *samsara*, whereby all beings pass through an uncesasing cycle of birth, death, and rebirth until they find a means of liberation from the cycle. *Samsara* is considered to be *dukkha*, unsatisfactory and painful, perpetuated by desire and ignorance (*avidya*) and the resulting karma. Samsaric cycle will end if a person attain *nirvana*. See Kevin Trainor, Buddhism: the Illustrated Guide (USA: Oxford University, 2004), p. 58; 62-63. Also see Mark Juergensmeyer, Encyclopedia of Global Religion (USA: SAGE, 2012) p., 271-272.

124 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1869.

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tutions that are contrary to the divine goodness. 'Structures of sin' are the expression and effect of personal sins. They lead their victims to do evil in their turn. In an analogous sense, they constitute a social sin."[125] In other words, the effect of *bap* includes disharmony within human communities. Each member of these communities suffers from its effect. In *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CSDC), social sin is comprehensively expounded:

Social sin is every sin committed against justice due in relations between individuals, between the individual and the community, and also between the community and the individual. Social too is every sin against the rights of the human person, starting with the right to life, including that of life in the womb, and every sin against the physical integrity of the individual; every sin against the freedom of others, especially against the supreme freedom to believe in God and worship him; and every sin against the dignity and honor of one's neighbor. Every sin against the common good and its demands, in the whole broad area of rights and duties of citizens, is also social sin. In the end, social sin is that sin that "refers to the relationships between the various human communities. These relationships are not always in accordance with the plan of God, who intends that there be justice in the world and freedom and peace between individuals, groups, and peoples.[126]

At first glance, these two traditions appear to understand the effects of *bap* on the social condition from quite different

125 Ibid.

126 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace*, Conpendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004, no. 118, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html (accessed 17 June 2020).

perspectives. On the one hand, Thai popular culture sees *bap* as the suffering that people experience collectively from the smallest unit of a family to a larger society subjected to social, political, and economic instability. On the other hand, Catholic teachings underscore disharmony within the community over suffering. The suffering experienced by everyone at the social level originates from a "relationship" that has been broken because of prevalent injustice and violation of other people's dignity and freedom. When the bond of harmony and relationship is violated and damaged because of a selfish act of personal volition, every member of the community suffers and gets affected.

However, despite their distinctions, their different emphases are not contradictory but complementary. One challenges and inspires the other's social engagement and dynamic of building good relationships in society. In other words, through their everyday interaction, Thai popular culture can challenge official Church teachings to be more concerned about various forms of suffering. The Church is also challenged to take some concrete action in showing mercy and compassion for others. This challenge allows the Church of Thailand to revisit and reflect on how catechetical formation is being provided. The emphasis on social justice, rights of the persons, and community-relationship become a critical paradigm for catechesis to consider seriously. In fact, this is not something new in the Church. A Latin American theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez, already spoke of sin in "liberation theology" as a social, economic, and political injustice that exploits the oppressed and the poor.[127] In turn, Church teachings can

127 Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: the Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 12.

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challenge Thai popular culture's way of thinking by calling attention to the value of harmony and the establishment of good relationships in communities. Though suffering is a reality that cannot be eradicated from human history, unity within human communities should then be the focal point of concern rather than suffering.

Bap in Relation to Law: Karmic Law and Divine Law

In Thai popular culture, the contemporary meaning of *bap* is associated with the transgression of religious law and precepts. Catholic teachings likewise understand *bap* mainly as disobedience to God's law. These notions explicitly point to the objective dimension of *bap* in both traditions.

Thai popular culture inseparably correlates *bap* and religious law because *bap*, though coming from personal volition, is manifested externally through verbal or bodily action. Thus, to prevent people from committing *bap*, religious laws prohibit them from doing evil acts that harm others. For example, in *sila ha* (Five Precepts)[128] , Buddhists are asked to refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lies and harsh speech, and harmful substances to lead a good life. There are also other *sila* (precepts) originally intended for different groups of adherents, for instance, 227 *pra vi nai* (precepts) for Theravada Buddhist monks, 311 precepts for Theravada Buddhist nuns, and so forth.[129] These are external

128 The Five Precepts are: (1) abstain from taking life of living beings, 2) abstain from stealing, (3) abstain from sexual misconduct, (4) abstain from telling lies and harsh speech, and (5) abstain from harmful substances. Also see พระพรหมคุณาภรณ์ (ป.อ. ปยุตฺโต) พจนานุกรมพุทธศาสตร์ ฉบับประมวลธรรม พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๑๒ พ.ศ. ๒๕๔๖ , (Prayudh Payutto, *Dictionary of Buddhism*, 12th ed., 2003) website: http://84000.org/tipitaka/dic/d_item.php?i=238.

129 Bhikkhu Ariyesako, "The Bhikkhus' Rules: A Guide for Laypeople," *Sanghaanloka Forest Hermitage*, 1998, https://www.

manifestations of *bap*, which come from personal volition. Thus personal volition and religious laws interrelate with each other in Buddhist-influenced Thai culture. More significantly, these religious laws and precepts are encompassed by the law of karma, which claims that every voluntary act (whether good or bad) leads to karmic consequences.

Religious law and precepts are meant to serve as spiritual and moral guidance in the pursuit of attaining *nibbana* or nirvana, the spiritual goal of Buddhism. These laws and tenets are means to eliminate possible obstacles, especially *bap*, from striving for liberation from suffering and karma. As long as people continue to violate religious laws, they still commit acts of *bap.* As a consequence, it will be hard for them to experience less suffering or to attain liberation from suffering and the karmic law. In short, if they continue to commit *bap* by violating religious precepts, they cannot attain liberation. Subsequently, these religious laws and precepts become the central paradigm of understanding *bap* in a legal manner where the law of karma binds every act of law violation.

Official Catholic teachings share commonality with Thai popular culture in terms of understanding *bap* as "disobedience." Hence *bap* is seen as disobedience to the Ten Commandments and the Church's precepts. For instance, attending Sunday Mass, fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, no killing, no sexual misconduct, and so forth—ought to be observed by so-called "good Catholics" in their pursuit of moral life. The Church's commandments then become the norm for Confession, involving what commandment one has transgressed and hence needs to confess as sin. As

nku.edu/~kenneyr/Buddhism/lib/modern/ariyesako/layguide.html (accessed 25 July 2020).

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shown in Thai catechetical formation, the weight of *bap* is tied to the Ten Commandments and Church's precepts. Even in preparing the children and catechumens for Confession, the emphasis is the objectiveness of *bap* as a violation of the law. This overemphasis on the Church's commandments and precepts also reinforces the notion of *bap* as disobedience to religious law. Oftentimes, disobedience of law is assumed to be equal to disobedience to God.

The dynamics of religiosity in Thai popular culture and the Church teaching seems to be congruent because they are both oriented towards a legal understanding of *bap*. Despite this congruence, the two traditions have different implications. On the one hand, Thai popular culture imagines the law of karma actively reinforcing and hastening karmic retribution on the agent. This karma is linked to various situations. Therefore, when one transgresses religious law, one fears the agents of karmic law who will inflict certain kinds of suffering as punishment.

On the other hand, in Catholic teachings, behind the violation of law stands the God who is superior above all laws. This implies that the person breaks the laws and disobeys God's command by violating the law. Hence the image of God as a lawmaker becomes prominent. As Bill Cosgrave comments, "in the legal model of sin also, punishment for sin was a central idea, with that punishment being meted out here and/ or hereafter. God was, of course, the punisher as well as lawmaker, policeman, and judge. So, the image of God here was forbidding and fear-provoking."[130] This is reflected in official liturgical prayers of the Church. For example, the Act of Contrition during Confession states, "sins demand

130 Bill Cosgrave, "Understanding Sin Today," *The Furrow* Vol. 50, no. 10 (Oct., 1999): 539.

your (God's) punishment (*karn long tod*). The image of God who judges according to the laws is unavoidably accentuated. In the Rite for the Departed, the punishment (of *bap*) is mentioned three times when people pray for them to be saved from God's punishment for their guilt.[131]

Aside from their common emphasis on *bap* as a violation of law, both traditions consider the relationality of humans within society from different perspectives. In Thai popular culture, the expression *tham dee dai dee sham chua dai shua* (good deeds result in good outcomes, bad deeds in bad outcomes) indicates the understanding of *bap* in its relational dimension. It emphasizes that its consequence affects the agent and other people related in one way or another. The act of every human has an impact related on others. Moreover, "those who do good will be rewarded, but those who do bad get punished." This is not about teaching people to mind their own business or encourage them to be only self-concerned by doing less bap and accumulating more boon (merit) just for themselves, for their prosperous life in the future or even in the future next worlds. In other words, to avoid committing *bap* is not just avoiding punishment for oneself but also punishment for others. The spirit of the law of karma then includes treating fellow human beings well, building up a peaceful society, and creating harmony within communities.

In Catholic teachings, rewarding good and punishing evil is also ubiquitous in Jewish-Christian Scriptures.[132] Countless

131 See คณะอนุกรรมการฝ่ายจารีตพิธีกรรมและคณะอนุกรรมการฝ่ายส่งเสริมความศรัทธา หนังสือพิธีปลงศพ โรงพิมพ์อัสสัมชัญ บางรัก 1980 หน้า 35-36; 47 (Sub-committee for Liturgy and Sub-committee for Sustaining Faith, *A Catholic Funeral Rite*, Bangkok: Assumption Press, 1980, pages 35-36, 47).

132 See Proverbs 11:18; 13:21, Genesis 15:1, Psalms 58:1; 62:12, Isaiah 13:11, and Romans 2:6.

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passages in the Old Testament speak of God punishing those who violate the Torah by inflicting pain and suffering in their lives while giving life and prosperity to those who remain faithful. However, in the New Testament, Jesus himself summarizes all of God's law into the two great commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-38). Here one finds the essential teaching of all laws. Indeed the spirit of the law makes all the commandments and precepts of the Church helpful principles for the faithful to lead moral lives. This integral connection between the love of God and the love of neighbor overcomes the narrow legal understanding of moral action and behavior. It also becomes a corrective to the common image of God as a lawmaker, judge, and punisher.

Bap in Relation to the Ground of Transcendence

Thai popular culture upholds that the ultimate ground of transcendence—in relation to *bap*—is the state of liberation from sufferings and attaining *nibbana*, the ultimate spiritual goal. At the same time, official Church teachings firmly profess the sole Triune God as the ground of transcendence.

Thai popular culture does not believe in a personal ground of transcendence, personal God, or Creator God. However, its striving for transcendence is instead found in its conviction of the ongoing possibility of rebirth until one achieves *nibbana* or *nirvana*. Buddhist Thais believe in the ground of Transcendental Being or, as Walpola called *nibbana*, the Absolute Truth or Ultimate Reality.[133] "*Nibbana* literally means "extinction." It is a state of being and is strictly defined as a

133 Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 35.

state without conditioned aspects, without arising, subsisting, changing, or passing away."[134] "*Nibbana* is often depicted as "bliss" or the cessation of suffering, *dukkha*."[135] Arising from Hindu religious thought, Buddhism carries a similar view that *nibbana* is a state of liberation from individual consciousness and the suffering of samsara, the cycle of birth and death. In Buddhism, *nibbana* assumes the individual to overcome desire, hate, and delusion to be freed from the dictates of karma.[136] To attain *nibbana*, one must eliminate the main root of dukkha, which is "thirst" (*tanha*).[137] Bap is not subject to an overall divine hegemony and authoritative governance within this framework but depends on an individual's actions.

Contrary to the way Thai popular culture understands *bap* in relation to the ground of transcendence, the Church teachings essentially affirm belief in personal Transcendence. It also firmly professes that God is the Creator of the world and the entire universe, including human beings.[138] The CCC affirms that "human beings are created in the image of God, and human individual possesses the dignity of a person. They are capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession, and of freely giving themselves and entering into communion with other persons. They are called by grace to a covenant with their Creator."[139] Hence, as the CCC describes, *bap* is first and foremost a "failure in genuine love for God"[140] and "an

134 Edward Irons, "Nirvana/Nibbana," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism: Encyclopedia of World Religions* (New York: Facts On File An Imprint of Infobase Publishing, 2008), 370.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
137 Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 35.
138 Cf. Genesis 1-2.
139 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 357.
140 Cf. คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1849.

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offense against God."[141] Fundamentally speaking, *bap* is a rupture in one's personal relationship with God.

As such, Thai popular culture and official Church teachings have different grounds of transcendence in relation to which *bap* is understood. The former believes in karmic force rather than God, and the latter fully believes in God, who is the Source of all goodness. Though these two are contradictory in their philosophical and theological grounds, they both promote similar values in terms of universal goodness.

Through religious laws and precepts, both Thai popular culture and official Catholic teachings guide people to live their moral lives with similar prescriptions and proscriptions. Mutual dialogue is the language that bridges these different grounds together.

Pastoral Implications and Reflections

While these two traditions have significant differences in understanding of *bap*, they could still complement each other. They widen each other's perspective and deepen each other's understanding of *bap,* which involves doctrinal exposition and cultural articulation. This has key implications that can be applied to pastoral practice.

First, catechetical formation on *bap* should involve the contextualization of *bap*. Given the influence of Thai popular culture that simply considers personal volition to *bap*, catechetical formation should stress the wider context of human action. This would lead to a more holistic notion of *bap* for Thai Catholics.

Second, catechetical formation may also underscore the

141 Cf. คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1850.

issue of social sin in the Thai context and the sense of moral responsibility of each member of society. Both Thai popular culture and Church teachings see social sin as collective suffering and pain caused by sinful social structures. Hence, catechetical formation needs to emphasize engagement in social issues by also stressing the sense of responsibility in *bap* that individuals have committed and affect others.

Third, Catholic catechetical formation may also stress the importance of relationships in the understanding of *bap*. Both traditions heavily underline the objective character of *bap* in emphasizing the transgression of religious laws and precepts. Current overemphasis on the legal understanding of *bap* should then be lessened so that law-oriented attitudes can be more human-centered or relationship-oriented. This can be achieved through careful attention to the process of formulating catechetical lessons for Thai Catholics nationwide. This helps re-calibrate the direction of the catechism towards two realizations: sin in relation to the person of the sinner and sin in relation to our relationship to others. The former helps deepen the meaning of Confession, which emphasizes the person's continual conversion and spiritual growth over the list of wrong deeds. The latter highlights that the greatest sin is not about breaking the Church's laws but the breaking of relationships in all forms. Without these realizations, Catholic teachings on sin will never promote conversion as the true goal.

Fourth, Catholic catechetical formation should endeavor to accentuate that *bap* consists of breaking one's relation to God in its ultimate sense. Granted that Thai popular culture's influence heavily banks on karmic law, the catechetical formation should emphasize *bap* as turning away from God. Otherwise, *bap* for Thai Catholics' would cage around

suffering and pain, leading to an incomplete image of God as a "punishing God." On the contrary, God is in solidarity with us in our suffering, especially in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. This would accentuate God as merciful than punishing.

Though these implications could have arrived through contemporary theological reflection on God's mercy and compassion, the study of the influence of Thai popular culture on the lived religion of Thai Catholics uncovers how Thai Catholics live their faith. Though limited to the understanding of *bap*, this study helps the Church in Thailand deepen the lived religion of Thai Catholics and promote more authentic evangelization.

On a wider note, the Catholic Church in Thailand should pay more attention to the translation of key doctrinal terms like *bap*, while mindful of the contextual and cultural understanding. It must reassess how terms are used especially in liturgical services and prayers. For instance, the prayer, "O God, I am sorry that I have sinned because sins demand your punishment especially sins that offend you, the source of goodness and worthy to be praised...," can be re-formulated as "O God, I am sorry that I have sinned because my sins destroy my relationship with you. I have committed sins that offend you. You are the Source of goodness. You are worthy of being praised..." If the Church preaches a personal and relational God, and the effect of *bap* is the ruin of one's relation to God, then the terms used in prayers should also center on the "break of relation" rather than "punishment." Given the influence of Thai popular culture viewing suffering as punishment from karma, this aspect of breaking relationships must be emphasized. Otherwise, if the use of terms does not convey the message faithfully, it might result in wrong views

or mistaken beliefs that give rise to wrong thoughts, wrong words, and wrong deeds.[142] Thus, the Church should transmit the faith which she herself lives. And the best place to transmit the faith is a community nourished and transformed by its liturgical life and prayer: *lex orandi, lex credendi*. [143]

Concluding Reflections

Since religion is more than ideas or beliefs, language becomes the privileged entry point into the culture and mind of a people and their religious practices.[144] Because language is a human and cultural resource to make sense of reality, people commonly articulate their religion or faith through the language they use in their daily lives.[145] And these discourses express their "lived religion," that is, the "religion and spirituality that are practiced, experienced, and expressed by ordinary people in the context of their everyday lives."[146]

Therefore, it is truly relevant and necessary to seriously consider how people are firmly rooted in their own particular socio-cultural milieu. As Pope Francis has asked the Church today, it is a way to "listen" to the people. It is also a great challenge for Thai Catholics to live their faith in a culture

142 The Buddhadasa Indapanno, *The Heart of Buddhism: the Total Message of Buddhism* (A lecture on Dhamma on a special occasion at the Dhamma Study Club Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital 17 December 1961), 18-19.

143 Synod of Bishops XIII Ordinary General Assembly, "*the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*" *(Instrumentum laboris*), 27 May 2012, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20120619_instrumentum-xiii_en.html#The_Church_Transmits_the_Faith_Which_She_Herself_Lives (91) (accessed 25 July 2020), no 97.

144 M. B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 15.

145 Jose M. De Mesa, *A Theological Reader*, "The Ginhawa which Jesus brings" (Philippines: De La Salle University Publishing House, 2016), 331.

146 McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 12.

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immensely immersed in Buddhist influences. Moreover, they have to wrestle with their "lived religion" in which the Faith of the Church and the people's daily experiences of faith have to become integral and "make sense" amidst the complexity of religious pluralism and the diversity of popular culture expressions.

To narrow the gap that seemingly separates doctrinal teachings and lived religion, more effort is needed to critically study Thai popular culture and Church teachings on various topics of faith. This is to effectively implement the results of such studies to help consolidate what the Church universally teaches and what the people of Thailand culturally practice. The First Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Thailand 2015, "Christ's Disciples Living the New Evangelization," reiterates the significance of "inculturation and dialogue" and urges the local Thai Church to "respect differences," to "acknowledge the good points of other cultures," and to "appreciate the way of life of the Thai people."[147] This insight from the Plenary Council is not entirely new in the sphere of evangelization in the post-Second Vatican Council period. However, serious articulation and effective implementation are still inadequate, especially in relation to the vastly unexplored socio-cultural and anthropological grounds of inculturation involving language and culture. The Church needs to change her superficial level of inculturation and dialogue. She must enter into a deeper ground of encounter where people's faith and their invaluable cultures actively associate.

147 Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand (CBCT), *Christ's Disciples Living the New Evangelization*, 33.