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Excerpted from:

## What is 'tam boon' ทำบุญ? And why do Thais do it?

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For Thais there are two kinds of karma: good or *boon*/บุญ and bad or *bàap*/บาป. Good karma is like money in a bank account. When you *tam boon*/ทำบุญ you accumulate good karma into your bank account of life. The more you tam boon/ ทำบุญ the more you accumulate so you will have a good place to stay after you are dead, like *sà-wǎn* heaven สวรรค์ . Consequently you can also accumulate bad karma or *tam bàap*/ทำบาป from bad deeds as well.



ทำบุญ/tam boon

Things that are considered virtuous in the accumulation of *tam boon*/ทำบุญ are: chanting and sharing with a monk, giving of every kind, meditation and taking care of

suffering animals. Interestingly suffering animals are considered to have had a past life of a lot of bad karma or *tam bàap*/ทำบาป. And if you were born into a well-bred family, you had a lot of *tam boon*/ทำบุญ from a previous life.



ทำบาป/*tam bàap*

Ghosts, spirits or *pěe*/ผี are looked upon as folks who are not sure where to go next, are lost, or who don't have enough *tam boon*/ทำบุญ to incarnate into a new life. You can offer *tam boon*/ทำบุญ to ghosts, spirits or *pěe* ผี as well to help them find their way. When most people think about making merit at the temple, or when they pray, I think Westerners usually think of the living, but Thais, like a lot of Asian cultures include the dead.



กรวดน้ำ/ *gruat náam*

Thais can do this by spreading loving kindness and generosity (through prayer) or *pàe mây-ttaa*/แผ่เมตตา to all the people they love both alive and deceased. After which

follows the very important water pouring ceremony or *gruat náam/กรวดน้ำ*. I see it as the closure to a prayer, like an “Amen”. And I’m guessing most expats and visitors interested in Buddhist culture have witnessed this *gruat náam/กรวดน้ำ* on many occasions.

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### *Who Is Thaigirltalk?*



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*An online Thai language teacher who loves to talk about her country and its culture.*



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*First generation American teaching English in Chiang Mai.*