both mother and child). In Yuan and Lao languages this category is respectively called *tai kom tai pai*, and *tai kum tai pai*. Furthermore, The Yuan of the North of Thailand have a specific subgeneric – *tai thuk tu* – for all the victims of sorcery (Anusaranasasanakiarti and Keyes 1980: 5), whereas Siamese and Lao seem to have only created varietals for experts in magical arts who were changed into malevolent spirits because they acted immorally or contravened taboos associated with their powers (see Table 2). *Phi pôp*, one of these varietals, particularly in use among the Lao though known in Bangkok by the older generation (Rajadhon 1986: 112), is not only almost homophonic with the *pi/fi pôp* of the Red and White Tai, but is also close to them by the symptoms of his attacks. Indeed, while the *pôp* spirit of the non-Buddhist Tai is described as causing diarrhoea, that of the Buddhist Lao has the reputation of possessing his victims for gorging himself on their guts (Reinhorn 1970: 1468). Evidently, this category belongs to the old religious substratum of the Tai peoples, as it is the case for *phi p(hr)ai*, this notion designating the spirit of women who died in childbirth among the White Tai, Siamese, and Lao.

Buddhist Tai, just like the non-Buddhist, have no categories for the victims of epidemic diseases, though these dead are thought to become malevolent spirits. Nevertheless, *phi* specialized in the passing on of epidemics are known among the two groups of populations. The Tho of northern Vietnam, for example, call them *pi hon* (Lunet de Lajonquière 1906: 132), and the Siamese: *phi ha* (Table 2).

If Buddhist Tai have no generic term encompassing the whole forms of abnormal death, they have nevertheless adopted an Indian notion – *samphawesi* – to signify a upper degree of malevolence among the *phi* issued from it. Literally *samphawesi* means "those who are looking for rebirth," and in practice the notion applies to spirits who, without respite, attempt to possess human beings in order to find a path to further reincarnation. In other words, they try to substitute themselves to the *khwan* of the possessed person, preferably a woman or a child.

In popular use, *phi samphawesi* is translated by "wandering spirits," and the fear they inspire is all the more strong since they can not be identified with a specific place. They are consequently susceptible to attack everywhere and, on this basis, they contrast with a wide range of topic spirits who do not usually move, contenting themselves to hit the passers-by.

Phi samphawesi is a cross category which encompasses the spirits otherwise classified according to the type of death, the funeral treatment, or the diseases they inflict (Table 2). The way they possess their victims and the signs of their intrusion vary of course significantly from one varietal to another. For instance, the *phi tai khum* of the Isan put himself across the womb of pregnant women, thus preventing delivery and causing death for both mother and child. The *phi phai*, for his part, sucks the delivery blood and causes fatal haemorrhage to the mother. As for the *phi pôp*, he signals his presence within a person by inexplicable crisis of weeping, alternating with periods of mutism, or conversely of hysteria. Those who present such symptoms, as well as their close kins exposed to contagion, suffer severe hardship for they can no longer live in their village. They have to join remote communities exclusively composed of fellows. This ostracism against individuals taken for *phi pôp* is explained by their supposed insatiability and by the high risk of contagion one incurs with their contact. It is believed that when the initial host of *phi pôp* dies, the spirit himself does not die but will continue to attack one person after another (Tambiah 1970: 320; Marukatat 1989: 140).

More generally, high capacity of propagation is a common feature of the *samphawesi* spirits. For some of them, they can slip from one victim into another owing to bleeding wounds, to menses, or to simple spitting (as is the case with the *phi phong*). Furthermore, their attack is sometimes the simple projection on others of the affliction which caused their own death: the spirit of a woman who died in childbirth causing in turn death in childbirth, while the spirit issued from sudden death similarly incites his victims to accident or suicide.

Topic spirits, on the other hand, give rise, as was the case among the non-Buddhist Tai, to a profusion of forms that the list of Table 2 partly reflects. Virtually, there are as many topic *phi* as there are diacritical components of the landscape, but each village elaborates its own spiritual geography, according to its topography and to bad death instances or ghost appearances inscribed in its collective memory. Basically, it is believed that, except those which became *phi samphawesi*, the *khwan* of victims of sudden death remain attached to the spot of the tragedy, though they may as well hover around a natural place that the victim had a liking for when alive.

Attacks by the localized spirits are usually limited to their place of residence. This place, either a tree, a termitary, a pond, or a mountain, is considered as their domain. They are supposed