

タイ国における中国系善堂の宗教活動
—— 泰国義徳善堂に見る中国系宗教とタイ仏教 ——

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**Religious Activities of Chinese Philanthropic Foundations
in Thailand:
Chinese Religion, Thai Buddhism, and Ngi Tek Tung**

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Abstract

This paper examines religious aspects of Ngi Tek Tung (Ruam Katanyu Foundation), a Chinese philanthropic foundation in Thailand, to expand our field of discussion on Thai Buddhism and to reconsider the very concept of religion itself. Ngi Tek Tung emerged from a spirit-medium cult of Khlong Toey slum to become one of the largest philanthropic foundations in Bangkok. Its pantheon is a unique product of the fusion of Chinese religious tradition, Theravada Buddhism, and Thai local beliefs. Ngi Tek Tung's case also shows that the Chinese religion and Thai Buddhism mutually form repertoires for each other. Even though Ngi Tek Tung has the legal status of a secular organization, it provides occasions for merit making targeting recipients in this world as well as in the afterlife. Throughout Ngi Tek Tung's activities, a unique concept of rescue overarches both secular and religious domains. However, Ngi Tek Tung's emphasis on religiosity has been declining after the founder's death, which means the extinction of the tradition of the spirit medium cult. Today's Ngi Tek Tung can be viewed both as a secular foundation to encompass the religious domain and as a religious organization engaged in profane activities. This in-between nature of the religiosity of some Chinese philanthropic foundations poses a challenge to conventional understandings of religion, which have been concentrated on a dichotomy of church-style institutions and traditionalism embedded in communities.

Keywords: philanthropic foundation, *shantang*, Buddhism, Chinese religion, Thailand
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