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THE ADAPTATION OF THE KONGTEK RITUAL
IN BANGKOK'S CHINATOWN

Mr. Jincheng Hu

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts in Thai Studies
Common Course
Faculty of Arts
Chulalongkorn University
Academic Year 2020
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การดัดแปลงพิธีงเต็กในเขตเยาวราช กรุงเทพมหานคร

นาย จินเจิง หู

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาอักษรศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
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Field of Study	Thai Studies
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วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ศึกษาพิธีงเต็กในเขตเยาวราช กรุงเทพมหานคร ผ่านการเก็บข้อมูลภาคสนาม จากวัดหลายแห่งในพื้นที่ พิธีงเต็กในเขตเยาวราชยังคงรักษาแก่นของพิธีงเต็กของจีนโดยเฉพาะในด้าน แนวคิดเรื่องความกตัญญูและแนวคิดเรื่องเครือญาติตามคติของขงจื้อ แต่ก็มีปรับเปลี่ยนบางด้านเพื่อให้ สอดคล้องกับวิถีปฏิบัติและความเชื่อในพุทธศาสนา เช่น มีการปรับเปลี่ยนทางด้านชนิดของโรงศพ ด้าน สถานที่ที่จัดพิธี ด้านการสวดอธิษฐานแบบเถรวาท ด้านการออกแบบลวดลายกระดาษที่ใช้ในพิธี เป็นต้น อัตลักษณ์ของชาวไทยเชื้อสายจีนไม่ได้อยู่ที่การใช้ชีวิตตามขนบแบบชาวจีน แต่อยู่ที่ว่าชาวไทยเชื้อสายจีน ยังมองตนเองว่าเป็นคน จีนอยู่หรือไม่ พิธีงเต็กมีบทบาทสำคัญต่อชาวไทยเชื้อสายจีนเป็นอย่างยิ่ง เพราะ เป็นพิธีที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการก้าวผ่านของชีวิตที่ช่วยรักษาอัตลักษณ์ทางชาติพันธุ์ โดยการย้าเตือนชาวไทย เชื้อสายจีนว่าพวกเขาเป็นใครและมีที่มาจากที่ใด การดัดแปลงพิธีงเต็กในเขตเยาวราช กรุงเทพมหานคร จึงมีบทบาทสำคัญในการดำรง อัตลักษณ์ความเป็นจีน และขณะเดียวกันก็เป็นการบำบัดความเศร้าโศก ของครอบครัว อย่างไรก็ตาม แม้พิธีงเต็กจะมีบทบาทและความสำคัญดังกล่าว แต่พิธีนี้ก็ไม่น่าที่จะหมด ความสำคัญลงไปเรื่อย ๆ ในสังคมปัจจุบันของกรุงเทพมหานคร

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JINCHENG HU: THE ADAPTATION OF THE KONGTEK RITUAL IN
BANGKOK'S CHINATOWN

Advisor: Assistant Professor NAMPHUENG PADAMALANGULA, Ph.D.

Co-Advisor: Assistant Professor THEERAWAT THEERAPOJJANEE, Ph.D.

This thesis examines the Kongtek ritual characteristics in Bangkok's Chinatown through fieldwork conducted at several temples. Kongtek rituals in Bangkok's Chinatown retain the core essence of Chinese Kongtek in terms of filial piety and Confucian kinship conception, while adapted in some respects to be compatible with Thai Buddhist beliefs and practices. Those adapted parts include what kind of coffin they use, where the Kongtek rituals take place, the collaboration with Theravada Buddhist funeral chant, the motif design of paper offerings, and so on. Sino-Thai's Chinese ethnic identity is not how orthodox they live their lives in Chinese ways, but rather it is whether they still consider themselves as Chinese. The Kongtek ritual is very important for Sino-Thai to maintain their ethnic identity because as one of the most important life passage ceremony, it renders a precious occasion to remind Sino-Thai of where they are from and who they are. The adapted Kongtek ritual in Bangkok's Chinatown chiefly serves these functions of maintaining Chinese identity and therapy for recovering from grief. Nevertheless, Kongtek tradition is destined to decline in Bangkok.

Field of Study: Thai Studies

Student's Signature

Academic Year: 2020

Advisor's Signature

Co-Advisor's Signature

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First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my informants. The object of this research is funeral in essence. My fieldwork was to observe those funerals. I really feel sorry to witness so many occasions where my informants lost the beloved one. After a venerable family matriarch or patriarch's death, my Sino-Thai informants carried out the deceased's deathbed behest of dying in traditional Chinese way that has passed down from generation to generation in the motherland. Thanks to their permission to take part in their Kongtek ceremony, I can get the valuable firsthand data. May my informants get blessed from those deceased ancestors who became the patron god of the clan.

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Last, but by no means least, I want to express my appreciation to my parents and friends. Thanks for their generous support and encouragement.

Jincheng Hu

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Constituting 14% of Thailand total population (Luangthongkum, 2007), Chinese is the predominant ethnic minority in Thailand. People of Chinese ethnic scatter all around Thailand. Their physical appearance looks like local Thai. They speak Thai as their first language without any accent. They intermarry with local Thai. They send their children to Thai schools. They observe Thai festivals. They stop their step to salute Thai national flag when Thai national anthem is ringing in morning and afternoon. They vigorously participate in Thai politics. They hold Thai citizenship. They pledge allegiance to Thai monarch. Some of them were awarded with decorations and titles from Thai royal family, because of their hegemonic economic status and contribution to charity. They go to Thai temple to make merit constantly. They have Thai given name and surname, which are usually even longer and sounds more literate than those of indigenous Thais. Concerning Thai overseas Chinese's Thai name, in 1983 Bangkok Post, a major English newspaper in Thailand explicitly commented that "all of them search sophisticated dictionaries to find lengthy Thai names and surnames in order to appear more Thai, with the result that now one can recognize really the true Thais only by their short surnames." Usually their uniqueness is overlooked at first glance, which leaves observers an illusion that Chinese assimilation in Thailand is so thorough that Thai culture becomes homogeneous.

In some specific occasions, Thai overseas Chinese can show their uniqueness evidently. If overseas Chinese are indeed thoroughly assimilated to Thai culture, “who are those people celebrating Chinese New Year and praying to the ancestors?” Tong Chee Kiong and Chan Kwok Bun (2001: 32)’s rhetorical question succinctly testifies overseas Chinese’s cultural persistence and ethnical identity. Immigrants tend to express their special identity mainly in ethnic ritualistic occasions such as celebrations of festivals and religious worships at home or clan associations, because those occasions are deemed to be segregated from ethnical outsiders and hence secure (Tong Chee Kiong and Chan Kwok Bun, 2001: 14). Rather than being passively assimilated to Thai culture, Chinese culture has been actively persisting in Thailand and even counter influencing Thai culture to Sinicize Thai culture. In Wat Phalapphla Chai, a Thai Theravada Buddhist temple, there are images of Guanyin and smiling Maitreya Buddha with a big belly which are typical Chinese Mahayana Buddha images, a Chinese shrine for Chinese folk religious deities and annual temple fair during Chinese New Year. Chinese opera is performed on stage every day in that temple during Chinese New Year. Chinese assimilation in Thailand is a mutual process. In the long run, overseas Chinese in Thailand have been becoming more Thai, and at the mean time Thai people are turning to be like Chinese increasingly. Assuredly, this mutual process includes funeral culture. On one hand, Chinese Kongtek funeral assimilates Thai influences; on the other hand, as Kongtek ritual keeps distinct from Thai funeral ritual, it has become a mark of Thai overseas Chinese’s ethnic identity, and it is so thriving that even counter influenced Thai funeral culture. As I observed in Thai coffin stores,

some Thai coffins are made imitating luxury villa. Thai coffin in this design is obviously influenced by paper house offering custom of Chinese Kongtek.

Thai overseas Chinese mentioned previously are “those of Chinese appearance, who spoke Thai without an accent and who acknowledged their Chinese ancestry”, which is defined as Sino-Thai by Basham (2001: 109). In this thesis henceforth, I will refer to Thai overseas Chinese succinctly as Sino-Thai.

To study Chinese assimilation in Thailand, Tong Chee Kiong and Chan Kwok Bun (2001) believes that assimilation should not be talked in generalities about whether an ethnic is assimilated or not, but rather some specific phenomena relating to assimilation should be closely studied to unveil the process and reason of change and persistence. As mentioned previously, Sino-Thai’s ethnical identify and customs are mostly preserved and manifested in Chinese religious events. Among all Chinese religious events, “the most frequent of public Chinese religious practices, those that are accessible to all city residents and visible to passers-by on the city streets, are funeral rites” (Hill, 1992: 316). When conducting the survey to study Sino-Thai’s worldview and ethnicity, Basham’s Bangkok Thai and Sino-Thai interviewees were most likely to remark on differences in funeral customs (Basham, 2001: 110). Kongtek ceremony, Sino-Thai’s funeral is extravagant in Thai people’s eyes, which has complex procedures and costs a great amount of money, while Thai people simply chant Buddhist sutra, make merit and cremate the corpse at funeral.

One of the reasons why some communities preserve their distinctive funeral custom when facing external influence is that funeral custom functions as an ethnic identity

mark. “To manage the deaths of its members is one of the core tasks of any society, a task involving both institutional arrangements and cultural resources” (Walter, 2012: 1). As stated by Walter, funeral tradition is sometimes used to build the ethnical or national identity. It is not merely theoretical, but some precedents did happen in the last century. When Communist China banned Kongtek paper offering during the *Cultural Revolution*, Taiwan government attempted to preserve paper offering tradition to differentiate itself to Communist China, consequently build its “national identity” and thereby claim its sovereignty to China (Blake, 2012: 15). From 1945 to 1989, Poland and Romania faithfully preserved their inhumation in funeral tradition while the Soviet Union was vigorously promoting cremation, because inhumation became a symbol of Polishness and Romanianess in the face of Russian domination and one way to keep their national identity from Russian’s cultural penetrating (Walter, 2012). When I mention Kongtek to Thai people, the first word that emerges in their minds is usually “Chinese”, which implies that Kongtek ritual is a criterion to tell whether a Thai people is a Sino-Thai or not. Therefore, to preserve Kongtek is to preserve Sino-Thai’s Chineseness.

There is not official history recording the origin of Kongtek ceremony. A legend about Kongtek is widespread in Teochew area. It is said that Kongtek can be dated back to the 14th century AD (Fang Liewen, 1996). In Thai history, the 14th century AD is in Sukhothai period. With Chinese, especially Teochew people swarming into Thailand, Kongtek ceremony was introduced to Thailand to handle those immigrants’ death properly according to the tradition of their hometown. As with Sino-Thai’s assimilation

and acculturation to Thailand, Kongtek ceremony underwent hundreds of years of interacting with Thai local tradition. In the process of interacting with Thai local mortuary tradition, it changed a lot in minor details while persisted its core essence, and it influenced Thai mortuary culture at the meantime. One instance of how Sino-Thai's Kongtek influence Thai mortuary culture is the Thai coffin in villa design that I mentioned previously. The core essence persisting in Kongtek is Confucian philosophy of filial piety. In Confucian ideology, parents' death should be treated with reverence and apt ritual as if the deceased is still alive, which explains why Kongtek is complicated. One important Confucian standard to judge a son to be filial pious is if he has children to carry on family lineage. Ancestral worship, position and sequence of mourners, and different mourning robes wore by different relatives in Kongtek all manifest the Confucian standard of filial piety, and thus these Kongtek elements persist in Thailand. For instances of changes, those minor details that has changed are what kind of coffin they use, the motif design of paper offerings, the length of the ceremony, the live musical accompaniment and so on. As Theravada Buddhism is the hegemonic religion of Thailand, Theravada Buddhism functions as a source of Thai people's knowledge about what life and death is, and thus it defines how Thai funeral is. Kongtek is based on Chinese popular religion. Chinese popular religion is not exclusive, but rather it is eclectic, as well as Thai popular religion (Skinner, 1973: 408). Consequently, Kongtek ritual in Thailand inevitably assimilated some Thai Theravada Buddhist funeral tradition. Additionally, influenced by overwhelming Buddhist context of Thailand, only Buddhist Kongtek survives in Thailand, while it is noteworthy that in

China Kongtek is very heterogeneous in terms of religious base. In China, Kongtek can be roughly classified into two types, namely Buddhist Kongtek and Taoist Kongtek. As observed by Hill (2001), some Sino-Thai hold Kongtek ceremony along with typical Thai funeral practice of making merit (ทำบุญ) and short-term ordination simultaneously.

A middle-aged Sino-Thai noted:

Apart from traditional Kongtek rites, Sino-Thais invariably invite four Theravada Buddhist monks to chant for the dead. There is not clear boundary between Chinese and Thai tradition. Do in Rome as Rome does. As long as we live in Thailand, we should do as Thai does. Moreover, Inviting Theravada monks to chant is doing good.

This thesis will study Kongtek, the Sino-Thai's funeral, find out its adaptation in Thailand, analyze how and why Kongtek acculturated and maintains in Thailand, and ultimately illuminate Kongtek's significance to Sino-Thai's identity.

I attended a Kongtek funeral in Wat Debsirin (Thai: วัดเทพศิรินทราวาสราชวรวิหาร). That Kongtek was for the old grandfather of a rich Sino-Thai family who is the owner of a big stationery company. I found several Thai cultural elements in that Kongtek. Here I will list a few evident Thai elements below to attest concrete manifestations of cultural adaptation existing in Thai Kongtek.



Figure 1: Kongtek funeral in Wat Debsirin

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)

On the photo I took at that Kongtek funeral, the two paper dolls which were burned eventually and are believed to become the servants of the deceased in the afterworld, a shirt of the deceased on the chair next to coffin, the Chinese lanterns and the coffin quilt with Chinese lion motif were all conform to Chinese Kongtek tradition. Extending slightly further in front of the table, there was a funeral curtain between the coffin and the rest of space in that hall. Unfortunately, this photo is not long enough to accommodate that funeral curtain along with the coffin. Some banners were attached on the curtain. On those banners, there were Chinese couplets expressing Buddhist and Confucian ideology about death. Before the Kongtek ceremony, Thai funeral was held for the very same deceased at the very same hall. On the Thai funeral, when 4 Theravada monks were chanting Pali scripture, a servant of that family was burning paper money in front of a side door of the funeral hall. Apart from those Chinese elements, we can easily notice a few Thai elements. Firstly, the venue is a Thai Theravada Buddhist

temple with a Theravada style Buddha image on the side. Secondly, the coffin is a Thai coffin. The top of Chinese coffin has an apparent slope, but the top of this coffin is flat. In local Thai funeral, normally there is not any quilt to cover the coffin. Thirdly, a robe for Theravada monk is placed on the desk in front of coffin, which reminded me of pamsukula tradition on Thai funeral.

In following chapters, these and a multitude of other cultural assimilation manifestations embodied by Bangkok Sino-Thai's Kongtek will be elaborated in length.

Those cultural assimilation phenomena I found in Bangkok Sino-Thai's Kongtek provoked my interest.

To find out what has acculturated and what maintains in Bangkok Sino-Thai's Kongtek is just the first stage of this research. Beyond phenomena of adaptation, this research will give an insight into how Kongtek adapted in Bangkok Chinatown. It is the similarities and differences between Thai beliefs with Chinese beliefs that decide what to maintain and what to change. To study how Kongtek acculturates and maintains in Bangkok Chinatown, we need to turn to Thai and Chinese beliefs. Barton (2007: 9) thinks Kongtek ceremony is very compatible with Thai society after being transplanted into Thailand. Kongtek ritual is distinct from Thai local funeral, but it is not incongruous with Thai local funeral. Although ostensibly, the existing Sino-Thai's Kongtek looks different with Thai mortuary tradition, the beliefs underlying them are similar. Roughly speaking, what changed in Sino-Thai's Kongtek are the parts whose belief bases are odd with Thai beliefs; what maintains in Sino-Thai's Kongtek are the parts whose belief bases are congruous with Thai beliefs. For instance, Sino-Thai's

Kongtek have a necessary item of paper pagoda (if the deceased is male) or paper lotus pond (if the deceased is female), which reflects perennial human need of reproduction. Both Thai and Chinese culture has the belief of worshiping reproduction. Thai culture manifests it with Phallic amulet (ปลัดขิก), while Chinese culture manifest it with paper pagoda and paper lotus pond on Kongtek ritual. This congruity decides paper pagoda and paper lotus pond can persist. In Chinese Kongtek, when ritual is finished, ritual specialists poke through doors and windows of paper pagoda or lotus pond, which is based on Taoism. In Sino-Thai's Kongtek, doors and windows of paper pagoda or lotus pond are not always poked through. Because Taoist belief underlying it does not make sense to Thai Buddhist belief, it has changed. Due to length limitation, it cannot be fully explained here. This will be elaborated in the third and fourth chapter.

As we can see from above, the process of what to persist and what to change is very complicated. Why don't Sino-Thai simply forsake Kongtek? Why does Thai Kongtek persist among Sino-Thai? Kongtek has its significance for Sino-Thai. What make it significant is its functions. Generally speaking, Thai Kongtek has three functions to Sino-Thai, namely preserving Sino-Thai's ethnic identity, passing down Chinese traditional value of family and therapy for recovering from grief.

1.2 Objective of the Study

To study how the Kongtek ritual inherited from Chinese traditions is adapted into contemporary Thai community in Bangkok's Chinatown.

To analyze the significance of the Kongtek ritual for Sino-Thais in contemporary Bangkok's Chinatown.

1.3 Hypothesis

Despite one of its purpose of preserving Chinese heritage, the Kongtek ritual in contemporary Bangkok's Chinatown adopt several Thai ways of practices that make the ritual fit in with Thai Buddhist belief, while certain practices are simplified to meet with modern demands and lifestyles.

These adaptations tend to help the Kongtek ritual maintain its significance despite changing views towards the concepts of family, the belief in life and death, and Sino-Thais' ethnic identities.

1.4 Significance

This study will contribute to a better understanding of Sino-Thais' Kongtek ritual in contemporary Thai society.

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Documentary research

Documents that I referred to mainly consist of academic literature, thesis and articles published on academic journals. Status quo and history of Kongtek are mostly from those documents. Fiction and non-fiction written by Sino-Thai are also very valuable to this research. Botan's novel, *Letters from Thailand*, inspired me a lot. A fictional story as it is, *Letters from Thailand* is an adaptation based on the author's own

life. The protagonist, Tan Suang U, is a composite of the author's father and uncle, both of whom emigrated from southern China to Thailand after World War II, settling in Bangkok and Thonburi. Botan admits that Tan Suang U's youngest daughter in the novel, Meng Chu, is like herself. Unavoidably, it reflects how Sino-Thai viewed assimilation and Kongtek in the decades after the World War II. Sino-Thai's anthologies compiled by Thai Alumni Association of China's Universities are comprised of mostly non-fictional proses, which reveal Sino-Thai's real opinion on assimilation and Kongtek.

1.5.2 Participant observation

I participated 20 Kongtek ceremonies in temples located in Chinatown vicinity to observe how Thai Kongtek is practiced. Along with participant observation, I randomly interviewed ritual specialists, host family and guests. Most of information about Thai Kongtek's status quo and Sino-Thai's attitude toward Kongtek are from participant observation.

During the fieldwork in 2019, I visited almost all Buddhist temples in Bangkok's Chinatown vicinity, whether in Theravada or Mahayana sect. I found that there are only 3 temples in that vicinity where Kongtek rituals regularly take place. The reason why Kongtek only takes place in a few temples there will be elaborated in the following chapters. Those temples I went to observe Kongtek rituals are:

Wat Debsirin

Wat Plabplachai

Wat Maha Pruettharam Worawihan

1.6 Scope of Study

This research is in the field of folklore and ethnology. I compare the ritual process of local Thai and Sino-Thai funeral. To explain how Kongtek adapted to Thailand, this thesis talks about local Thai and Sino-Thai worldview and religious cosmology.

This research observes 20 Kongtek ceremonies in Thai Buddhist temples located in Bangkok's Chinatown vicinity. Thai Kongtek is frequently held in Thai temples here. This area is mostly populated by Sino-Thai. Two- or three-story buildings are alongside the road. On the first floor of those buildings, shops or small businesses owned by Sino-Thai are accommodated, while rooms above the first floor are for living. Chinese Mahayana temples such as Mangkorn temple are not in the scope of this research, because Kongtek ceremony is rarely held there. Sino-Thai sometimes ask monks from Mangkorn temple to attend Thai Kongtek. There is no crematorium in Mangkorn temple, and therefore Sino-Thai invite three monks from Chinese Mahayana temple to go to Thai Theravada temple to chant funeral scripture (Yang, 2009: 50).

1.7 Literature Review

In academic database, I found a few description articles about Thai Kongtek, which solely describe the objects used in Kongtek and the process of Kongtek, but rarely give deep insight to the cultural and ethnic significance of Thai Kongtek. Available documents concerning Kongtek are mostly written by western and Chinese scholars. Chinese document about Kongtek is not as abundant as I expected. Kongtek is so

normal as part of Chinese daily life that it has been ignored by Chinese scholars for long. Chinese just take Kongtek as granted. It rarely draws Chinese scholars' academic interest. After approximately the 13rd century AD, Christian missionaries entered China from Europe. Kongtek occasionally appears in their logs. Recently, western scholars tend to study Kongtek as cultural heritage. Thai academic works concerning Kongtek are unanimously from Thai perspective. Documents about Sino-Thai's Kongtek are very limited, whether in English, Thai or Chinese. I list the most relevant literatures with annotation here. Roughly speaking, these literatures fall into two categories. One category discusses ethnic assimilation theory. Another category studies tangible facts of Kongtek Ceremony, Paper Offering, Chinese Religious Activities in Thailand and Thai Traditional Funeral.

1.7.1 Ethnic Assimilation Theories

Basham, R., 2001. Ethnicity and world view in Bangkok. Alternate Identities: The Chinese of Contemporary Thailand, pp.107-136.

Basham defined Sino-Thai as those of Chinese appearance, who spoke Thai without an accent and who acknowledged their Chinese ancestry. Conversely, Thai people are those of Thai appearance who speak Thai as their native language and those of mixed ancestry who considered themselves, and would be considered by others, as Thai. The author admitted that Sino-Thai's ethnic identity is ambiguous. To clarify how Sino-Thai is different to "real" Thai, the author conducted an interview, in which informants were Sino-Thai and Bangkokian Thai. The two groups of informants were

queried their opinion to various topics, such as family and democracy, and their stereotype to each other. This interview found that Sino-Thai generally have a sense of superiority over Thai people in terms of domestic relation and enterprise, while admire Thai elite's etiquette at mean time. Sino-Thai have not casted off wholly their own traditions. They just incorporated certain aspects of Thai official culture and Thai elite's etiquette. Thus, Thailand's acculturating Chinese have been able to "become Thai" while retaining much of their Confucian heritage and work ethic. Consequently, Sino-Thai have not been truly acculturated or assimilated, because they largely preserve Chinese minds within Thai bodies. When asked differences in tradition, Bangkok Thai and Sino-Thai interviewees were most likely to remark on differences in funeral customs, so Kongtek rituals are mentioned in this article.

Hill, A.M., 2001. Tradition, identity and religious eclecticism among Chinese in Thailand. Alternate Identities: The Chinese of Contemporary Thailand, 1, p.299.

Hill in this article analyzed two cases of religious eclecticism among Chinese in Thailand. The first case is Thai overseas Chinese's funeral, and the second case is a strikingly Chinese Maitreya Buddha temple inside a Thai temple. The funeral is a Teochew Kongtek funeral with some eclecticism of Thai tradition. After the ritual of escorting the soul through hell to heaven, the mourners then go outside to burn paper replicas of VCRs, TVs, cars, beds, houses and other objects to send to their ancestor for use in the afterlife. A Thai overseas Chinese businessman donated money to build a Chinese temple in a Thai temple which was patronized by members of the royal family. Through connections with Thai royal patrons and via public religious activities, Thai

overseas Chinese businessman was claiming a respectable niche in local Chiang Mai society, an identity as religious benefactor recognizable and acceptable to both Chinese and Thai audiences. The author suggested that the term Sino-Thai should be confined in only academic circle to succinctly signify overseas Chinese who live in Thailand. Firstly, as the author observed, overseas Chinese in Chiang Mai did not identify themselves as Sino-Thai. Nor is the term, outside of academics, used by their friends and neighbors to describe them. Secondly, with the boom of Chinese economy, in the global or regional context, Thailand's national culture and economy may seem less compelling and a Sino-Thai identity less attractive than a transnational Chinese identity that confers prestige and concrete economic benefits.

Kiong, T.C. and Bun, C.K., 2001. Rethinking assimilation and ethnicity: the Chinese of Thailand. Alternate Identities: The Chinese of Contemporary Thailand, 1, p.9.

This article summarized existing theories of assimilation and ethnicity, and talked about if they conform with the reality in Thailand. There are two dominant anthropological views in studies of ethnicity, namely expressive view and instrumental view. Expressive view takes ethnic as a superfamily where people holding a specific ethnicity are given at birth, deeply rooted and largely unchangeable. According to expressive view, people's feeling of ethnicity derives from our natural propensity to prefer kin over non-kin, and close kin over distant kin. On the contrary, instrumental view takes the human beings as an active agent selectively and strategically presenting and displaying his ethnic emblems in ways he sees fit for surviving and living better.

According to instrumental view, ethnicity is just an identity that can be putted on and taken off to signify their difference from other groups, which is like clothes, masks, emblems or badges. To account for an ethnical phenomenon comprehensively, we should dialectically adopt both the two views, although they seem contradictory to each other. Unlike much of classical American theories on assimilation which treat assimilation as a one-way process, namely unilateral approximation of one culture in the direction of the other, this article believes assimilation is a two-way process which will leave the Chinese with something Thai and the Thai with something Chinese. In addition to assimilation, this article mentioned two ethnic theories which are conceived as diametrically contrasting to assimilation. Those two theories are: first, cultural pluralism and multi-culturalism; and second, integration. This article elaborately talked about Skinner's theories in length, as the historical analysis used in them still remains the standard methodological tool in this field. It queried some of Skinner's hypothesis and refined them. As a conclusion, this article suggested that research questions concerning Chinese assimilation in Thailand should no longer be if Chinese is assimilated, but rather it should be how Chinese as a group and as persons behave in Thailand, and why.

Skinner, G.W., 1973. Change and persistence in Chinese culture overseas: A comparison of Thailand and Java. In Southeast Asia: The Politics of National Integration. Edited by J.T. McAlister. New York: Random House, pp.383-415.

In comparison with the assimilation patterns of Chinese in Java, Skinner found out several factors that had primary effect on the assimilation rate of the Chinese in

Thailand. Firstly, Thai culture has many points in common with that of Chinese, such as dietary habit, religion and physical appearance. Chinese popular religion with Mahayana elements, is similar to Thai popular religion with Theravada Buddhism. Chinese religious sentiment is eclectic and syncretic rather than exclusive. Thus, religion is not barrier to Chinese assimilation in Thailand. Secondly, he suggests that the historical experience of the Thai, without direct conquest by colonial power, has resulted in the Thai's sense of pride and security in the excellence of their tradition. Thus, Thai culture, by virtue of its vigor and continuity, was attractive to the Chinese, which in turn accelerated the assimilation process. Thirdly, Chinese in Thailand were free to reside and travel. Fourthly, Thai government in general reacted favorably towards Chinese and a pro-assimilationist policy.

Punyodyana, B., 1971. Chinese-Thai Differential Assimilation in Bangkok: An Exploratory Study.

In this thesis, Punyodyana conducted a survey involving 900 Sino-Thai respondents. He divided all those 900 respondents to 3 categories, namely Less Educated Non-Government Employees, More Educated Non-Government Employees, Government Employees. Each category has 300 respondents. To compare the degree of these three groups' assimilation to Thailand, six cultural and social channels were investigated. Those six cultural and social channels are firstly the use of the Chinese and/or Thai language and attitude toward Chinese and Thai language, secondly participation in and attitudes toward Thai education, thirdly religious practices and attitudes toward Thai and Chinese religions, forthly Occupational affiliation,

occupational preference and attitudes toward occupations in Thai society, fifthly actual behavior and attitudes toward interpersonal association, friendship and choice of friends, and sixthly family and marriage practices and attitudes toward intermarriage between Chinese and Thai. This thesis found that different Sino-Thai's assimilation degree to Thailand is different. Government Employees are assimilated to Thailand in the greatest degree. Less Educated Non-Government Employees are assimilated to Thailand in the least degree. The degree of More Educated Non-Government Employees' assimilation intermediates between the other two.

1.7.2 Kongtek Ceremony, Paper Offering, Chinese Religious Activities in Thailand and Thai Traditional Funeral

Formoso, B., 1996. Hsiu-Kou-Ku: The ritual refining of restless ghosts among the Chinese of Thailand. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, pp.217-234.

This article describes the full process of Hsiu-Kou-Ku ritual conducted by overseas Chinese in Thailand. Hsiu-Kou-Ku collects corpses of unfortunate dead, conciliates restless ghosts of those corpse and send them to samsara so that the living can live better without evil spirits' disturbance. Marking the end of the first half of Hsiu-Kou-Ku, Kongtek ritual is a necessary component. Normally, who those unfortunate dead are cannot be identified, and some of them even do not have descendant at all. It is impossible to have those unfortunate dead's descendants to attend Kongtek ceremony, so those benevolent association staffs do what unfortunate dead's descendants should do in Kongtek Ceremony. In addition to the description of the ritual's process, this

article investigated both Thai overseas Chinese and local Thai's opinion to Hsiu-Kou-Ku and to each other. Thai view Hsiu-Kou-Ku as the proof of social integration of overseas Chinese. From Sino-Thai's stance, it gives overseas Chinese the opportunity to assert their identity through a synthesis of their most significant communal forms of cult.

Hill, A.M., 1992. Chinese Funerals and Chinese Ethnicity in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Ethnology, 31(4), pp.315-330.

In this article, Hill elaborately recorded a Kongtek funeral of overseas Chinese in Chiang Mai. Throughout the ritual, the author asked people around to explain what was going on, but their responses were mostly "I don't know". When the author asked participants' understanding of particular rituals or why they did them, they typically replied: "It is the custom of people from _____," or "My father asked me to do it this way," and so forth. Although most Thai overseas Chinese cannot articulate about the cultural connotation underlying Kongtek funeral, Hill thought it does not interfere with their Chinese ethnicity. In the author's opinion, Chinese funerals make sense to people not only as the right thing to do in terms of Chinese ritual traditions, but also as public statements of the family's fulfillment of its obligations to the older generation (the behavior deriving from filial piety) and its continuing identification, through ancestors, with native places in China. Notwithstanding Thai overseas Chinese funerals invariably include some local Thai mortuary traditions, it does not mean that Thai overseas Chinese culture and identity has become Sino-Thai that is distinct from both Thai and Chinese. Apart from funeral, this article talked about many other mortuary rituals

practiced by Thai overseas Chinese as well, in most of which Kongtek paper offerings are involved. These rites are ancestor-centered and in a larger sense are about origins. In these rituals people make claims about where they come from. In Thailand, Chinese assimilation is neither simply generational nor inevitable. What has changed in Thai overseas Chinese's culture and identity is only the superficial form. Thai overseas Chinese are still Chinese in the core, and their Chinese identity will persist in the foreseeable future.

Scott, J.L., 2013. Traditional Values and Modern Meanings in the Paper Offering Industry of Hong Kong". Evans and Tarn, Hong Kong: The Anthropology of a Chinese Metropolis, pp.223-241.

This article regards traditional Chinese funeral as the cultural heritage and paper offering is the material culture that complements the intangible cultural heritage. Chinese funeral in Hong Kong context reflects Hong Kong people's identity and worldview. Paper offerings are an integral part of Chinese funeral customs, so paper offerings themselves are of great significance. Paper offering is the expression of a Chinese identity in Hongkong. According to whether an item is necessary for the dead to travel to and live in western paradise or not, this article classifies paper offerings into two types, namely "basic set" and "items of everyday use". "basic set" is comprised of a dragon tablet, a pair of items consisting of the immortal crane and its accompanying catkin fan, one set consisting of a red and a white fan, one bathing pan, a package of bathing clothes, a pair of mountains in gold and silver, a sedan chair, and the image of hell-breaking spirit. Additional items in "basic set" are: the platform for looking back

on one's home village, a pair of male and female servants, a pair of bridges-one gold and one silver, a Chinese style safe to hold personal items for the deceased, a red cabinet for storing clothing, a car, a Western-style multi-floored house with a garden, a pair of storage chests for the gold and silver money, a television set, and an additional set of a seven foot gold bridge and a silver bridge. Items in "basic set" are mostly deemed to be the most significant for the soul to travel to and live in western paradise. Another outstanding characteristic of "basic set" is that Items in "basic set" are mostly in a style reminiscent of an earlier period of Chinese history, perhaps the middle to late Qing or early Republican. "Items of everyday use" is comprised of paper replicas of everything the living might use in daily life. "Items of everyday use" are offered regularly thereafter for the continued comfort of and use by the dead (although it appears that some purchasers burn some of them with the classical items burned at the funeral rituals). The prevalence of paper offering reflects Hong Kong's all-pervasive fetishism of material wealth and consumerism. To make the dead live luxuriously in the underworld implies the living's crave for luxurious life. Influenced by consumerism, the heavy spending on conspicuous paper offering can be used to publicly display the family's wealth. Besides, paper offerings satisfy moral demand of filial piety. Fundamentally, persistence of paper offerings lies in the deeply-rooted belief about the care due to ancestors. When burning paper offering to the deceased, Chinese might aspire to luck, wealth and progeny rewarded. Pragmatically, by displaying paper offering at funeral, the heir can claim the right to inherit the property of the deceased.

Lastly, providing paper offerings to the deceased allowed for psychological comfort or the easing of one's heart.

Brereton, B.P., 1995. Thai tellings of Phra Malai: texts and rituals concerning a popular Buddhist saint. Asu Center for Asian Research.

Phra Malai scripture is a very popular chanting text for Thai funerals. Bonnie Pacala Brereton provides an excellent translation from Thai into English of the entire legend of Phra Malai. Phra Malai is a legendary Theravada monk who obtained supernatural power through merit accrurement and meditation. In his legend, he travelled to hell first and then heaven. Phra Malai witnessed inhabitants' suffering in a variety of hells. He bestowed mercy on those suffering creatures. Suffering inhabitants in hells begged him to warn their relatives on earth of the horrors of hell and how those relatives can help them to escape it through making merit on behalf of the deceased, meditation and by following Buddhist precepts. In Tavatimsa heaven, Phra Malai converses with god Indra and the Buddha-to-come, Maitreya. Indra told Phra Malai the ways to accrue merit. Maitreya told Phra Malai that after deterioration of Buddhism that would come about after Gotama Buddha's teaching had been on earth for 5000 years, Maitreya would incarnate to human realm and attain enlightenment. The human realm during Maitreya's Buddhahood would be a world of happiness, moral and abundance. On hearing Maitreya's teaching in the next Buddhist era, everyone can get rid of Samsara, the vicious circle of rebirth. Maitreya Buddha instructed Phra Malai that those who wished to meet him should listen to the recitation of entire Vessantara Jataka all one thousand verses in one day and one night. Phra Malai went back to the

human realm and preached sermon to people with what he experienced in hell and heaven.

Blake, C.F., 2012. Burning Money: The Material Spirit of the Chinese Lifeworld. University of Hawai'i Press.

This book systematically studied Chinese paper offerings in terms of their shape, format, history, ritual practices involving them, cultural connotation, motivations, the idea of sacrifice in ancestry worship, and how people talk about them, conceive of them, and interconnect them. This book surveyed the galaxy of paper offerings that are widespread in continental east Asia from Lanzhou to Taipei, from Harbin to Hanoi and its diasporas. This book looks for the origins of the paper money custom by three paths, that is, ethnology which reveals the panhuman aspects of paper money in the offering customs around the world, folklore which narrates the peoples' own sense of how paper money came about, and history which tells the story from the fragments of written records. It reveals paper offerings' liturgical meaning by the method of structuralist analysis and a well-known Chinese Taoist theory of cosmic change (阴阳五行). This book illuminates how ideology of paper money interacts with consumerist ideology and how it survived from the penetrating of consumerism. This book tells how modern times have changed the paper money custom in ways that conform to the ideology of realism and, in the process of changing it, have turned its traditional ludic or "unruly" spirit into a burlesque.

Barton, J.T., 2007. A Comparative Study Of Chinese Musical Activities in Chinese and Thai Cultural Contexts. Manusya: Journal of Humanities, p.1.

This article talked about Chinese music applied in a variety of Thai contexts. Those contexts include Lion Dance, Dragon Dance, *Yingge* Dance, Teochew Opera, tea house, restaurant, amateur musical groups as a hobby, commercial enterprises, Kongtek ceremony, Buddhist ceremony, and music class. This article compared music in Thai Kongtek and Chinese Kongtek in detail. It found that Thai Kongtek music had evolved some unique characteristics which had not observed in China. Those Thai unique characteristics display Kongtek's adaptation in Thailand.

Terwiel, B.J., 1979. Tai Funeral Customs: Towards a Reconstruction of Archaic-Tai Ceremonies. Anthropos, (H. 3. /4), pp.393-432.

This article adopts two methods to reconstruct Archaic-Tai funeral, which examine Tai funeral customs in respectively terms of spatial and temporal dimension. One method is comparing contemporary funeral customs of a variety of Tai off-shoots. Another method is to consult historical records describing funeral of respective Tai off-shoots and compare them historically. This article divides Tai people into five subgroups, namely western group, southern group, central Mekong river group, central upland group and eastern group. Siamese or Thai in modern conception is subsumed to the overriding category of southern group. Eastern group includes southern Chinese Tai people who used to inhabit the very same region of Teochew people who initiated Kongtek ceremony and introduced it to Thailand. This article provides me a repository of historical information of both contemporary and archaic funeral beliefs and practices. This article illuminates how Thai funeral was before Theravada Buddhism dominated this area. The belief of khwan has been existing in Thailand long before Theravada

Buddhism spread on this land. The belief of khwan can explain many Thai folk funeral practices that cannot be explained by Buddhism.

Ladwig, P. and Williams, J., 2012. Introduction: Buddhist funeral cultures. In Buddhist funeral cultures of Southeast Asia and China (pp. 1-20).

This article regards death as an event that is particularly central to Buddhist interests. It points out that funeral cultures can be the departure to reveal Buddhist transmission and its syncretism with local cults in every specific region. The historical Buddha's last incarnation, Siddhartha Gautama was stimulated to pursue nirvana by the witness of death on his excursion out of his palace, and his awakening was accompanied by a triumph over Mara, the personification of death. Impermanence and death are of very essence of Buddhism. In Southeast Asia and China, Buddhism provides the philosophy about what happen at death, what processes are needed to ensure a successful death, what happens after death, and how hereafter links with the whole way someone has lived their life. The death and interaction with the dead ancestors are essential to social identity and cohesion. Although both Thai Theravada and Chinese Mahayana Buddhism believe reincarnation, Thai Theravada Buddhism believes the dead are reborn immediately after death, while Chinese Mahayana Buddhism believes that there exists a short period of up to forty-nine days before reincarnation. Those doctrinal differences in respect of reincarnation along with local folk beliefs lead to localization of Buddhist funeral culture. In order to avoid social censure and facilitate the spread of Buddhism, monks have a tendency to adjust their practice to local value. Death poses a threat to normal social and cosmic order, so an appropriate ritual is

needed to handle this exceptional situation and regain order. Because of localization, Buddhist funeral tends to vary from place to place. China has a centralized sophisticated imperial bureaucracy since ancient time, while this kind of bureaucracy was absent in Thai history. Therefore, there is no bank of hell among Theravada Buddhist and no burning of spirit money or houses can be observed in pure Thai funeral. Both in Southeast Asia and China, unfortunate death is regarded as inauspicious, which might cause the spirit to haunt the living's world and threat the living. Unfortunate death calls for special rite to appease haunting spirits. In local Southeast Asia culture, this dangerous mission is entrusted to Theravada monks who are generally considered to be socially dead and are therefore immune to ghosts attach. In Chinese culture, unfortunate death is usually dealt with by the laities who are considered by pure Thai to be exposed to the dangers of malevolent ghosts. Material objects of funeral cultures, such as pamsukula, are also discussed in this article. Usually, funeral encompasses ideas of fertility cult and regeneration, which includes both agricultural fertility and regeneration of human life. In Chinese culture, influenced by Confucian ideology, having children to carry on the family name is crucial, which is a vital standard to judge whether a child is filial or not. In Kongtek funeral, there is rich of details embodying regeneration of human life.

Tam, Y.F., 2012. Xianghua foshi 香花佛事 (incense and flower Buddhist rites): a local Buddhist funeral ritual tradition in southeastern China. Buddhist Funeral Cultures of Southeast Asia and China, p.238.

This article detailly records the funeral custom of Hakka people who live in southeastern coastal area of China. The area where Hakka people live is closely next to Teochew area. Hakka and Teochew people are two predominant groups of Chinese who immigrated to Thailand. Kongtek ceremony is generally recognized as Teochew funeral custom. Being geographically close to Teochew, Hakka people has been mingling with Teochew people for centuries. Today Hakka funeral and Teochew Kongtek ceremony have evolved to be quite homogeneous. Therefore, this article is very helpful for us to know funerals of southeastern coastal Chinese, including Teochew people. It is believed that this meritorious rite has three main functions: first, it can expedite the deceased soul's passage through the inevitable legal procedures in the Ten Halls in hell; second, the deceased can achieve a higher level of reincarnation in the next life in *Samsara*; and third, if the merit is sufficient, the deceased may even be able to transcend this world and reach the Western Paradise of the Buddha. This article briefly sketches history of this funeral, introduces the clergies presiding this funeral, and classifies the funeral into structural sections, sections for the deceased and sections for the living to analyze it. Noteworthily, those clergies identify themselves as Buddhist religious persons, because they might have ever stayed in temple to learn chanting Buddhist scriptures for a short period of time, they shave their hair and wear the robe similar to that of real monk, but they do not observe Chinese Buddhist precepts. Those clergies eat meat and are usually married. However, among the common people those clergies are accepted authentically Buddhist.

Thanyaporn Wongboonchainan, 2004. Kongtek: Chaozhou Chinese symbol and kinship system in Yaovarat (Doctoral dissertation, Chulalongkorn University).

According to this dissertation, Kongtek ritual functions as a way to express gratitude of the descendants to the departed one and a channel to reflect family and kinship structure by emphasizing the roles of its members in Kongtek ritual. Kongtek ritual encompasses Chinese traditional beliefs and values of filial piety. It expresses the good wish of the relatives to the deceased to live happily in the afterlife as it had been in this world. The author observed that Thai Kongtek consists of 10 ritual steps, and each conveys gratitude to the deceased. The author found that Kongtek practice among Sino-Thai was diminishing. As with Kongtek losing its prevalence among Sino-Thai, Kongtek changed a lot in respects of ritual steps and style. By this dissertation, Thai coffin substituting Chinese coffin and cremation substituting inhumation are the two most prominent factors that lead to the diminishing of Kongtek in Thailand. This author predicted that Kongtek might vanish in Thailand. However, as it still exists in Thailand today, it is a symbol through which Chinese identity, value of gratitude and the importance of family and clan ideology are preserved and expressed.

Naris Wasinanon and Ekachai Saengjantanu, 2014. Kongtek Rite of Hakka Chinese Descendants: Expression of Gratitude and Strategy to Teach. The International Symposium on "ASEAN + 3 communities: Socio-Political Challenges on Identity and Difference".

This article describes Kongtek ritual of Hakka Chinese. It discusses Kongtek in respects of practice, clergies who preside the ritual, ritual steps, strategy to teach about

the truth of life and transmission of beliefs. The article also compares Kongtek rite of Hakka people with that of Teochew people. This article takes Kongtek as a Mahayana Buddhist religious ceremony. It is believed to serve as a mean for descendants and their departed ancestors to make merits. It also provides a mean to worship Lord Buddha and deities, to make departed ancestors' souls comfortable in the afterlife and for descendants to express gratitude and love to their departed ancestors. Kongtek has been widely performed by Sino-Thais and has been passed down for many generations. This article predicted that Kongtek might vanish in Thailand in the near future.

CHAPTER II: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF KONGTEK RITUAL IN CHINA

Kongtek (做功德) is an essential funeral ritual that has prevailed in Teochew and neighborhood area for centuries. This chapter will firstly render the process of a typical Chinese Kongtek ceremony.

To sketch the historical background of Chinese Kongtek ritual, I referred to both local oral accounts and documentary evidences. Although Teochew local gazetteers did not specifically mention Kongtek ceremony, indirect and scattered information from local gazetteers of neighboring areas provides the valuable documentary evidences. However, those documentary evidences are very limited to trace Kongtek's origin. As a supplement, I put local accounts here. Not very reliable for historical research as they are, those local accounts reflect how local Teochew people perceive Kongtek's origin.

Ladwig and Williams (2012: 14) believed that not only ritual actions, material objects dealing with the dead are also topics of research when dealing with funeral culture, because those objects are crucial for performing rituals and recalling the presence of the dead. However, the materiality of funeral culture has been long-neglected by academic research. Paper offerings are especially important in Kongtek rite. Nevertheless, most earlier studies of paper offering merely included paper money in larger contexts of material cultures (Blake, 2012: 15). Those earlier studies mentioned paper offerings when they studied Chinese social life or superstitions, but paper offering itself was not their research objective. In this chapter, I will treat Kongtek paper offering equally with Kongtek ritual actions. Paper offering originated a few

centuries earlier than Kongtek ritual tradition. In the process of Kongtek tradition's formation, Kongtek incorporated paper offering which was already well-established at that time. When discussing historical background, history of Kongtek paper offering will be discussed parallel with history of Kongtek ritual.

Following the historical sketch, there is Kongtek's status quo in Contemporary China. After Chinese Communist government came to power, especially during the notorious Cultural Revolution, Kongtek was brutally suppressed. When Cultural Revolution was over, Kongtek rapidly revived and resumed its prevalence.

2.1 The Processes of Typical Chinese Kongtek

In the past, Kongtek ceremony was a complex sequence consisting of many rites, which took much time. The simplest Kongtek could spent one and half day. Usually it could last two or three days, and the most solemn Kongtek could last seven days. Kongtek ceremony in the past usually took place consecutive day and night and ended in the early morning on the last day. In contemporary China, Kongtek ceremony is largely simplified. Nowadays, Kongtek ceremony usually takes merely half day, from around 2:00 p.m. to around 10:00 p.m. If coffin is temporarily kept in a morgue before burial, for three days as usual, the mourners will hold Kongtek ceremony on the third day before transporting the corpse to cremate or inhume.

Compared with Kongtek in the past, Kongtek ceremony today is relatively simplified. Nevertheless, Kongtek in contemporary China is still very cumbersome.

2.1.1 The Preparation of a Kongtek Ceremony

Kongtek ceremony needs an apt venue. The family who holds Kongtek usually set up a temporary mourning hall on the square in front of the clan association building. The temporary mourning hall is a sanctum which is decorated like a Chinese Buddhist ordination hall. The coffin with the deceased in it is placed in the front of the hall. An altar is placed proximate to the coffin, so in Kongtek ceremony attendees cannot see the coffin, as it is concealed by this soul altar. On the soul altar, there hangs a portrait of the deceased and white banners written in black ink. Words on banners are about kinship affinity and Buddha's leading to western paradise. The soul altar faces the south. Another altar, buddha altar is on the east side of Kongtek hall. Buddhas' and boddhisattvas' portrait which were drawing or embroidered on red cloth will be hanged on the side of mourning hall and face the west. Gautama Buddha's portrait is in the middle, two portraits of Guanyin Boddhisattva (观音菩萨, literally means [The One Who] Perceives the Sounds of the World) are on the two sides of Gautama Buddha's portrait. In front of buddhas' and boddhisattvas' portrait, there is a long altar on which incense burners are placed. Sometimes Lord of the Land (地头老爷), Kitchen God (灶王爷) and previous ancestors will also be worshiped on the altar, but it is only practiced in some specific Teochew regions. Another preparation is the ceremonial food. Cakes made from rice or glutinous rice cake which is call Kuih (粿) by local people are frequently used in Kongtek ceremony. The last but not least is paper offering. Paper offerings burned during Kongtek ceremony include joss money, paper immortal crane, paper cabinet for storing clothing, paper storage chests for the gold and silver money,

paper pagoda, paper radio, paper TV, paper car and so on. Those paper offering is believed essential for the deceased's trip to the western paradise and daily use in the next world.

In China nowadays, there are two kinds of Kongtek ceremony, namely Buddhist Kongtek and Taoist Kongtek. The two kinds are virtually the same in ceremonial process, despite the differences of Kongtek hall decoration and ritual specialists. Taoist Kongtek hall is decorated like a Taoist temple with images of Taoist gods rather than buddhas' images. Taoist Kongtek ritual specialists are Taoist priests rather than Buddhists. If the deceased is a Taoist devotee, Taoist Kongtek will be chosen by the relatives. However, because Chinese people believe that Taoist ritual is more appropriate to beg bless for the living than the dead, and popular Buddhism has fused with Taoism perfectly, Buddhist Kongtek is more generally practiced. The Kongtek ceremony described below is a typical Buddhist Kongtek ceremony.

2.1.2 The Processes of a Kongtek Ceremony

The sequence of Kongtek processes is comprised of issuing the official travel document (发关), sending the official travel document (报关), inviting ancestors of earlier generations (追荐), bathing the soul (沐浴更衣), condoling (吊拜), paying respect to Buddha (礼佛) for male deceased or blood basin rite (礼血盆) for female deceased, spinning the pagoda (挨塔) for male deceased or spinning lotus pond (挨莲池) for female deceased, crossing bridge (过桥), and sending off Buddha (谢佛).

Issuing the official travel document (发关) is the start of Kongtek ceremony. Ritual specialists chant Buddhist sutra to invite buddhas and bodddhisattvas to descend and oversee the rite. The official travel document is issued to order the deceased's soul to return from the underworld back to his or her home so as to receive the meritorious benefits of the ritual. The travel document is a piece of specially-made yellow paper. On this yellow paper, a relative of the deceased writes the deceased's name, time and date of birth, time and date of death, and the deceased's children and grandchildren. It usually reads as follows:

*** (the name of the deceased) is from ** village, ** township, ** county, Teochew prefecture, Guangdong province, People's Republic of China. He or she was born at *** (time and date of birth) and deceased at *** (time and date of death). He/she has * (number of children) children. The eldest son is ***, the second son is *** (children's and grandchildren's names are listed here. Son's name is prior to daughter's name. Grandson's name is prior to granddaughter's name) ...

It is believed that part of the soul is taken away by the divine officers from hell at the moment of death. Moreover, the way between hell and home is guarded by different territorial deities. It is, therefore, crucial for the returning soul to have an official travel document issued by a legitimate ritual master to pass through the blockades (Tam, 2012: 249).

When sending the official travel document (报关), a ritual specialist firstly kneel down in front of the altar to orally report the official document issued in the previous section to buddhas, and then deliver the document to the deceased. That document is

entrusted to a paper immortal crane as the messenger to fly to where the deceased's soul is and deliver the document. When the crane arrives where the soul is, it carries the soul back to the ritual site as the soul's mount. The immortal crane is white, like a real crane, with a red patch on its head, straight legs, and a Willow Banner (柳旛) which actually looks like a white fly whisk is in its beak. The crane is the first item burned at Kongtek ceremony to recall the soul's presence. The ritual specialist burns the paper crane, while calling out the name of the deceased. After being burned, the crane is believed to fly to where the soul is to accomplish its mission. A pair of red and white banners that are held respectively by the deceased's son (the red) and the deceased's nephew (the white) are also burned at this stage. Burning the red and white banners are also deemed to recall the presence of the dead, for both have the name of the deceased written on them.

In inviting ancestors of earlier generations (追荐) rite, the previous three generations of ancestors will be invited to accepted the worship along with the deceased. During this rite, the deceased's relatives burn incense and worship these ancestors several times. At this section, the Chief Dragon Tablet (正龙牌) and the Vice Dragon Tablet (副龙牌) are burned. The two tablets are elaborately trimmed flowery paper tablets bearing the names of previous ancestors. If a married woman dies, the surname of her husband's family is listed on Chief Dragon Tablet, and Vice Dragon Tablet contains surname of her own ancestors. Sometimes, Chief Dragon Tablet is for the newly dead, and Vice Dragon Tablet is for previous ancestors. The meaning of "vice" is not "secondary", but represents ancestral depth. In the past, five generations of

previous ancestors will be spiritually invited, rather than only three generations as it is practiced now.

Bathing the soul (沐浴更衣) is for the soul of the deceased to bathe and change clothes. It is believed that the soul needs to clean itself and wear appropriately before listening to the scriptures at following stages. Ritual specialist puts a traditional Teochew wooden bathtub with a washbowl inside it on the ground. In the wooden bathtub, there is water. Since it is bath, it should be private. A straw mat is used as a curtain to enclose the bathtub so that the soul can bathe privately. Sometimes the straw mat is substituted by a small bathroom made of paper and bamboo splits. After this ritual, the paper bathroom and paper clothes are burned.

At condoling (吊拜) stage, the deceased's portrait, incense burner and soul banner are taken to the Kongtek ceremonial hall. Attendees mourn the deceased in order. For relatives, the sequence of mourning is that close relative has priority over further relative, and the younger one has priority over the elder one. For neighbors, the elder is prior over the younger. The way attendees mourn varies according to the attendee's generation. If the attendee's generation is junior to the deceased, the attendee should pay obeisance with Kneeling down three times and kowtow nine times. If the attendee is of the same generation with the deceased, the attendee has two options, namely the obeisance of Kneeling down three times and kowtow nine times or the obeisance of one kneeling down and three kowtows. If the attendee's generation is senior to the deceased, making a bow is enough.

If the deceased is male, paying respect to Buddha (礼佛) is practiced at this section, otherwise blood basin rite (礼血盆) is practiced. Paying respect to Buddha is simply chanting a few verses of Buddhist sutra. Blood basin rite is much more complicated than its counterpart for male deceased. Because women have menstruation and women's childbirth is regarded unclean by Chinese popular Buddhism, they are doomed to suffer the torture in Blood Pond purgatory. The only way to avoid this tragic consequence after death is the blood basin rite. In blood basin rite, besides chanting Buddhist sutra to release the soul from purgatory, ritual specialists sing many funeral ballads to praise motherhood and express gratitude to mother's giving birth and bringing up. Those ballads include *Song of Ten Months' Pregnancy* (十月怀胎歌), *Song of Maudgalyayana Rescuing His Mother* (目连救母歌), *Song of Bringing Up Children* (养儿大) etc. All those ballads are sung in Teochew language. If the specialists are competent enough, their singing can make attendees weep. A washbowl of red water is also used in blood basin rite. Red water is water colored to red with pomegranate flower. Bereaved family members kneel down around red water basin when ritual specialists chant. After the chanting, children and grandchildren all scoop up a cup of red water to drink, which means they suffer on behalf of their mother or grandmother. They sprinkle red water on the deceased's incense burner, which represents purifying the deceased from their female uncleanness.

Next, if the deceased is male, spinning the pagoda (挨塔) is practiced, otherwise spinning lotus pond (挨莲池) is practiced. At this stage, a pagoda for male deceased or a lotus pond for female deceased is the central material item. A 5 or 7-tier paper pagoda

or a paper ancient style multistory building is hanged slightly above the floor and within every mourner's easy reach. On the paper pagoda or building, there are motifs of buddhas, gods and *Twenty-four Filial Exemplars* (二十四孝). Under the elevated paper ancient-style multistory building, there puts a basin with clean water in it, which represents the lotus pond. The descendants stand in a line in order. The sons stand at the front of the line, and the granddaughters or daughter's children stand at the rear of the line. Three ritual specialists walk on the very front to lead the procession. One ritual specialist carries the soul banner, one shakes a small bell, and another one strikes wooden fish in a slow and unison rhythm. The oldest son or grandson holding the incense burner closely follows the ritual specialists. The rests of line hold a joss stick on their hands following the oldest son or grandson. With ritual specialists chanting Buddhist sutra or vernacular funeral proses, the procession walks around the hanging paper pagoda or lotus pond. When everyone passes the paper pagoda or lotus pond, he or she rotates it with their hand to keep it spin throughout this ritual stage. After the procession, ritual specialists poke through doors and windows of paper pagoda or lotus pond building, which symbolizes that the deceased transcends the confine of the earthly world to ascend to the western paradise. As the ritual specialists poke the paper pagoda or lotus pond building, they simultaneously recite a four-line poem to bless attendees.



Figure 2: Paper lotus pond building for female deceased and paper pagoda
for male deceased

(Source: <https://www.taobao.com>)

The next is crossing bridge (过桥). In the cosmology of Chinese traditional religion, a bridge called *Helplessness Bridge* (奈何桥) is the passage most of souls must pass after death. A long stool is placed in the Kongtek ceremonial hall symbolizing the *Helplessness Bridge*. A ritual specialists chant, carries the soul banner, shakes small bell, strike wooden fish, and walks ahead to lead the descendants to cross the “bridge”, namely the long stool. As same as the procession at last stage, the oldest son or grandson holds the incense burner closely following the ritual specialists, and the rests with a joss stick in hands follow the oldest son or grandson. The standing order in crossing bridge

procession is identical with that of spinning the pagoda or spinning lotus pond. Led by ritual specialists, everyone in the procession crosses the “bridge”, throws low-value RMB banknotes to a tray under the “bridge”, walk a circle back to the “bridge” and cross the bridge again. The procession crosses the bridge continuously again and again. It is believed that *Helplessness Bridge* is guarded by hell officers. To cross the bridge, the soul must give hell officers gold, silver or cake as toll fee. The procession throwing RMB banknote under “bridge” is to pay the toll fee on behalf of the deceased. When crossing bridge finishes, the “toll fee” in the tray can amount to from dozens of Yuan to over one thousand Yuan. The “toll fee” is actually accepted by the Kongtek ritual specialists as their additional tip. Buddhist sutras are chanted in order that the deceased’s soul can be released from purgatory and it can ascend to western paradise. In other words, crossing bridge rite is to accompany the deceased to cross the *Helplessness Bridge*. The relatives cannot accompany the deceased to go any further. Henceforward, the deceased’s soul must go alone on the journey in the afterworld. The relatives bid farewell and see off the deceased’ soul in front of the “bridge”. Then ritual specialists lead the relatives to turn back and cross the bridge in the opposite direction, which represents the relatives come back to the earthly world after the farewell in front of “bridge”.

Sending off Buddha (谢佛) is the last stage of Kongtek ceremony. Buddhas, gods and previous ancestors have stayed at the Kongtek hall to oversee all Kongtek sections and keep the ritual site secure from malicious ghosts’ harassment. It is time to send buddhas and gods off. Ritual specialists chant Buddhist sutra to express gratitude to

buddhas, gods and previous ancestors, and then buddhas, gods and previous are believed to leave the Kongtek hall. After buddhas, gods and previous ancestors leave, paper offerings, such as paper money, paper chests, paper cabinets, paper pagoda or lotus pond building, paper house, paper servants and so on, are carried out from the hall to incinerate. When incinerate paper offerings, the relatives all hold a green bamboo stick and kneel down in a circle around the bonfire, and ritual specialists chant with percussion accompaniment. They all weep aloud. They should not stop weeping aloud until all paper offerings are burned down into ashes. Then they leave their bamboo sticks around the ashes to make a circle. The green bamboo stick circle is regarded as a fence to keep malicious ghosts out for fear that malicious ghosts can steal these paper offerings which is dedicated to the deceased. Here, all Kongtek ceremony is finished.

All along with Kongtek ceremony, there is chanting with live musical accompaniment. Both Buddhist sutras and vernacular ballads are chanted. Buddhist sutras chanted in Kongtek are *Guanyin Sutra* (观音经), *Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Pūrvapraṇidhāna Sutra* (地藏经), *Water Repentance Sutra* (三昧水忏经), *Liang Emperor Repentance Sutra* (梁皇忏), *Three Thousand Buddhas Sutra* (三千诸佛经), *Diamond Sutra* (金刚经), *Shorter Sukhāvātīvyūha Sutra* (阿弥陀经), *Rebirth in Pureland Mantra* (往生咒), *Blond Pond Sutra* (血盆经), and so on. At blood basin rite, the chant is mostly vernacular ballads, which are *Song of Ten Months' Pregnancy* (十月怀胎歌), *Song of Maudgalyayana Rescuing His Mother* (目连救母歌), *Song of Bringing Up Children* (养儿大), and so on. When spinning the pagoda or spinning lotus

pond, vernacular ballads chanted are *Song of Twenty-four Filial Exemplars* (二十四孝歌), *Invite Eight Immortals* (请八仙), and *Hundreds of flowers song* (百花歌).

2.2 Kongtek's History in Local Oral Accounts

2.2.1 Local Oral Accounts of Kongtek Ritual Tradition

Fang Liewen (1996) recorded a legend about Kongtek's origin which was narrated by a lay ritual specialist. It is said that Kongtek ritual originated in the transitional period of Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) to Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), namely the 14th century A.C. When Mongolian army vanquished the south, many Chinese were slaughtered. When Mongolian's Yuan Dynasty was overthrown, descendants of those massacre victims held rituals so as to commemorate and conciliate those victims' spirits. Those rituals took the Buddhist story of *Maudgalyayana Rescuing His Mother* (目连救母) as the model. *Maudgalyayana Rescuing His Mother* was the story extensively enacted on Ullambana ceremony at that time. They gathered around to chant Buddhist scriptures and begged Buddha's mercy, redemption of those unfortunate ancestors' spirits' bad karma and acceptance for those spirits to enter western paradise. Gradually, this ritual evolved into a folk funeral ritual.

Since then, Kongtek became increasingly prevalent around Teochew area. By the first half of the 20th century, Kongtek became extremely complex, systematic and prohibitively extravagant.

2.2.2 Oral Accounts of Kongtek Paper Offering

In folk tale, the origin of paper offering is attributed to Cai Lun (蔡伦, 63AD-121AD), a palace eunuch who occupied an important position under the Han emperor He Di (和帝, 89AD-106AD). Cai Lun in official history is renowned for his refinement in craft of paper making. Since his refinement, paper rapidly took place of all other materials to be the most popular medium for documentary record and literature. In folk tradition, Cai Lun has long been worshiped by paper makers and stationers as a patron deity. In the past, conventionally paper makers were heavily involved in supplying paper to paper offering workshop.

Cai Lun was a dishonest trader who had a wife in folk tale, instead of a palace eunuch as truth. When Cai Lun just invented the new paper craft, his paper was not widely recognized and in little demand. He produced much paper, but his paper was unsalable. To sell unsold stocks of paper, Cai Lun and his wife came up with a ruse to convince people that when burned, paper can become money in spirit world.

There are many varieties of this folk tale. In the principal variations, it was Cai Lun's elder brother and the elder brother's wife who initiate paper offering, instead of Cai Lun.

2.3 Documentary Evidences of Kongtek's History

2.3.1 Documentary Evidences of Kongtek Ritual Tradition

I failed to find any local gazetteer document directly about Teochew Kongtek, but I found some fragments of document mentioning Kongtek ritual. Those fragments scatter in local gazetteer documents of Teochew neighborhood area.

Hakka area is in the neighborhood of Teochew. Despite the close geographical distance, Hakka people speak a dialect different to Teochew. However, the contemporary funeral traditions of Teochew and Hakka are actually identical. Although Hakka and Teochew refer to their funeral ritual respectively with different names, the ritual processes are exactly the same. In Teochew, this funeral is designated as phrases revolving around the term *Kongtek* (Chinese: 功德), but in Hakka it is called *incense and flower Buddhist rites* (Chinese: 香花佛事) (Tam, 2012). In other Chinese regions, this kind of funeral is called with other names, but the rites are virtually the same while differing in minor points.

Meixian (梅县) is a major city of Hakka. Tam Yik Fai (2012: 240) gave a historical sketch of *incense and flower Buddhist rites* by studying the local gazetteer document of Meixian. That research found that by the early seventeenth century, this folk Buddhist funeral rite had existed in Meixian and was documented. In the early seventeenth century, it had already become a well-established rite. It usually takes a long time for a ritual tradition to be commonly accepted as the norm, especially funeral ritual tradition, because funeral is deemed the most important rite of passage for the Chinese. Therefore, it is safe to assume that the continuous dominance of this funeral

rite among the local population dates at latest from the first half of the seventeenth century (Tam, 2012: 240), and its origin can be much earlier than the seventeenth century. It is perfectly possible that the *incense and flower Buddhist rites* documented in Meixian gazetteer document is Kongtek ritual exactly. The historical document confirms the local oral account. Combining this documentary approach with local oral account, I infer that when Kongtek ritual tradition started to form is from the 14th century to the 17th century.

Interestingly, when Kongtek started to transmit across Teochew area, it underwent a competition with another Buddhist funeral rite prevailing in Teochew as a traditional conventional funeral rite. At that time, Kongtek is widely accepted by the folk, but rejected by Confusion elites. The compiler of Meixian gazetteer documents described the clerics who presided Kongtek rite in detail but in derogatory way. To Confusion elites, Kongtek ritual is not orthodox Buddhist funeral, because those clerics who presided Kongtek rite were not authentic monk who were ordained and observing Buddhist precepts. The funeral ritual prevailing among Confusion elites were presided by ordained monks. The historical document compiler neutrally described those ordained monks who presided funeral rite for the elites. Later on, the two funeral traditions had merged together. Today Kongtek can be presided by solely unordained ritual specialists, solely ordained monks or both the two factions.

Another reason why Kongtek was rejected by Confusion elites when it was originating might be its incorporation of southern ethnic minority's aboriginal mortuary culture. Hakka and Teochew area are now predominately populated by Hakka and

Teochew people. From the 14th to 17th century, when Kongtek originated, these areas were co-inhabited by Chinese minority ethnics who were the aboriginals and Chinese majority ethnic from Yellow River region who were refugees and immigrants. Through centuries of co-inhabitation, Chinese from Yellow River region acculturated to aboriginal culture, and conversely those aboriginal ethnic minorities were Sinicized. From Confusion elites' perspectives, those southern aboriginals were barbaric, so they could not tolerate Chinese funeral tradition to mix with those barbaric traditions. *She* (畚) Ethnic is a Chinese ethnic minority which has been inhabiting this area. *She* people has their own language, but they also speak Hakka and Teochew language. *She* people also call their funeral as Kongtek. *She* people's Kongtek actions are in many respects akin to Teochew's Kongtek. The origin of Kongtek is recorded in Hakka's ancient gazetteer document. When Hakka immigrated from the north and settled down in this area, *She* people were the predominant aboriginals who they mingled with. Li Hui and his fellows (2003)' genetics analysis concerning Hakka people reveals that Yellow River region Chinese gene comprise 80.2 of Hakka people's gene, while 13% of Hakka people's gene is from *She* people. On the basis of linguistic facts gathered from an ancient local poem, Zhengzhang (1991) believed that a branch of ancient Kra-Dai people (the ancestor of contemporary Tai ethnic which as a superclass includes Thai ethnic) used to dwell in the very area.

2.3.2 Documentary Evidences of Kongtek Paper Offering

Scott (2007: 105) generalizes the sequence of Chinese funeral offering evolution: Chinese funeral began with the offering of real objects, people or horses, evolved to replicas which was in durable materials but too coarse or small to be used in real life, and eventually evolved to paper models, a sequence reflecting how the Chinese at an early period of their history replaced the articles of value and domestic appliances which they had been accustomed to bury with the dead, by less valuable and even worthless things. In ancient China before the 2nd century BC, living person, treasures and real domestic appliances were ubiquitously buried with the dead. At that time, when aristocrats died, his servants, spouses and bodyguard soldiers were usually buried livingly to serve their lords in afterworld. Later on, out of Confucian philosophy of humanity (仁), Confucianism advocated abolishing excessively lavish burial objects, especially the tradition of burying the living with the dead. When Qin Shi Huang (秦始皇, literally First Qin Emperor, 259 BC –210 BC) demised, terracotta army was buried around his mausoleum as the garrison of the emperor's underground palace, instead of living soldiers. In the 20th century, elaborately crafted paper offerings were buried on Empress Dowager Cixi (慈禧太后, 1835 – 1908)'s royal funeral. When Wu Peifu (吴佩孚, 1874-1939), the powerful Chinese warlord died, three full sized paper soldiers that ridden on paper horses and were full uniformed were burned to be the warlord's guards in the afterworld.

Archeological evidence attested that by the reign of Han emperor He Di (和帝, A.D.89–106) paper was already a substitute for genuine coins, and paper cut into coin

shapes was being burned to the spirits by the beginning of the Three Kingdoms Period (三国, AD 220–265). That archeology dates paper offering back to Han emperor He Di period happens to correspond folk tales which ascribe paper offering to Cai Lun, the eunuch in Han emperor He Di's palace.

However, paper is not widely used to craft funeral offerings until Song Dynasty (960 AD-1279AD). Before that, paper was merely occasionally cut into coin shapes to substitute for genuine coins which were directly buried in the tomb with the dead, instead of incineration as the way to transfer them to the dead. In Song Dynasty, people crafted paper replicas of house, furniture, servants, vehicles, and so on, and symbolically transmitted to spirits by burning. Folded paper burial items replaced ceramic funeral artifacts that was used conventionally before, and were incorporated into royal funeral since Song Dynasty (Zhang Chongyi, 2017).

As same as Confusion elites' attitude toward Kongtek actions in the beginning, Confusion elites frowned upon paper offering when it started to prevail. Those literati dismissed paper offering as a vulgar village custom. Being both unorthodox and ridiculous in literati's view, it is not surprising that paper offering tradition was bound with Kongtek rite since Kongtek tradition began to thrive, because their folk tastes matched perfectly. Paper offerings are made from paper rather than enduring materials, such as metal, ceramic and wood. paper is more affordable to the masses. Comparing to other materials, paper is combustible. The scene of paper offerings burning into ashes can give people an illusion that the paper offerings have reached the other world. Due to its affordable cost and intuitive feeling of connection to the other world rendered by

burning, paper offering diffused rapidly. It was so prevalent that literati had no choice but to accept it. Literati were forced by the social majority to conform to paper offering custom that they have long disapproved. A Confusion philosopher in Song dynasty rationalized paper offering with Confusion filial piety idea. He pointed out that paper offering should not be dismissed since it is a way to express their filial piety to deceased ancestors. Zhu Xi (朱熹), the prestigious Neo-Confusion philosopher in Song dynasty publicly approved paper offering, because he thought paper offering was economy for people to commemorate ancestor, and thus it was conducive to promote the idea of filial piety.

2.4 Kongtek in Contemporary China

Ancient Chinese literati criticized Kongtek as vulgar and unorthodox to Buddhism, while the twentieth century intelligentsia dismissed Kongtek as wasteful and attacked the custom with a new, European locution, “superstition”. During 1934 to 1949, Kuomintang government in China initiated a *New Life Movement* (新生活运动) which advocated modernizing Chinese lifestyle and abolishing corrupt customs. Article 6 of Funeral Revolution Regulation drafted by *New Life Movement* prescribed that unnecessary lavish rites of funeral should be abolished. Kongtek was taken as a lavish funeral ritual that should be modernized and sanitized. However, *New Life Movement* was not very effective against Kongtek. During this movement, Kongtek was scarcely affected (Fang Liewen, 1996; Formoso, 2012: 195).

After 1949, communist government came into power. Although Kongtek contradicted with communist atheistic ideology, the communist government did not dogmatically eliminate Kongtek. Kongtek ritual specialists were pragmatically relied on to facilitate communist government's work of moving skeletons in tombs chaotically scattering all around the land to collective graves. Such resettlements, caused by overpopulation, urbanization and agricultural intensification, saw a peak during the Maoist period. At that time, skeletons discovered accidentally in building sites and those in tombs occupied the farmland must be shifted. Thus, local communist officials pragmatically relied on Kongtek ritual specialists to smoothly manage this sensitive issue (Formoso, 2012). Communist governments allowed paper offering craftsmen to continue their handicraft workshops, and in administrative bureau of industry and commerce, paper offering workshops were registered as *Superstitious Sector* (迷信业). Nevertheless, Kongtek suffered immense restriction. The ban of benevolent institutes (善堂) which constituted the main practitioners of Kongtek ritual was enforced in the 1950s (Formoso, 2012: 196). The *Superstitious* paper offering workshops still existed, but its number decreased a lot. In *Great Leap Forward* campaign (1958-1961), Kongtek ritual along with other religious practices were completely prohibited.

After 1978, Kongtek ritual is again tolerated by Chinese communist government. At present, Teochew area has recovered much of their traditional culture including the resurrection of this ceremony. The revival can be seen as an attempt on the part of today's people to preserve the rich cultural heritage that China is renowned for (Barton, 2007: 8).

Due to serious smoggy pollution, today many urban areas in China strictly banned the production, purchase and incineration of paper offerings. Nowadays, many prestigious Buddhist monasteries, such as *Buddha's Light Mountain* (佛光山) and *South Putuo Temple* (南普陀寺) on their official websites explicitly state their disapproving stance to Kongtek, as it misinterprets Buddhist doctrine.

I used to stay in Guangzhou, the capital city of the province that Teochew prefecture belongs to, where I mingled with many Teochew people. According to my personal contact with Teochew people in China, young generation of Teochew people generally do not understand the religious connotation of Kongtek ritual, or know it but do not believe it. However, they mostly think that Kongtek as a tradition and a component of Teochew identity should be carried on. Recently, the establishment's attitude toward Kongtek turned to be positive. In 2008, a few sections of Kongtek ritual were designated as intangible cultural heritage by Meixian municipal government. Municipal communist cadres attended the designation ceremony. Local religious authorities acknowledge Kongtek clergies' religious significance and begin to regulate Kongtek clergies' organization and training. Scholars are encouraged to investigate Kongtek. A Kongtek museum is in preparation by Meixian municipal government.

CHAPTER III: KONGTEK RITUAL'S ADAPTATION IN THAILAND

Kongtek in Thai language is a loanword from Chinese. To be more precise, it derives from Teochew variant of Chinese language. In Thai language, Kongtek is กงเต็ก (/konɰl.tekɰ/), while the original word in Teochew is 功德 (/konɰl.tekɰ/). In terms of pronunciation, the loanword Kongtek in Thai language maintains quite well from its Teochew origin. However, the term Kongtek changed a lot from its original meaning in Teochew. Kongtek in Thai language signifies the Chinese funeral I am discussing in this thesis, while its counterpart in Teochew means merely merit. To denote Kongtek rituals, Teochew people usually name it with the verb-object phrase as “做功德 (literally means making merit)” or the endocentric phrase “功德法事 (literally means merit ceremony)”. In Kongtek ceremony's Thai name, pronunciation persists well, but the meaning has changed. The term that people refer to Kongtek ritual gives people the first impression to Kongtek. Change and persistence coexist in the name which is the first impression for people to know Kongtek ritual. From the very surface level of name to the deepest level of cultural connotation, change and persistence coexist throughout Sino-Thai's Kongtek. To clarify adaptation of Thai Kongtek, this chapter will firstly sketch the vicissitudes of Thai Kongtek in the background of Sino-Thai's immigration history. Then Kongtek in Bangkok Chinatown will be closely compared with Chinese Kongtek to find out what has changed and what is persisting.

3.1 Brief History of Chinese Immigration to Thailand

Chinese immigrated to Thailand since the very beginning of Thai history. Sukhothai is the first recorded kingdom established by ancestors of Thai people. In the thirteenth century, when it was in Sukhothai period, Chinese traders were already established in the ports of the Gulf of Siam (Skinner, 1957).

From 1350 to 1767, Thailand was chiefly ruled by Ayutthaya Kingdom. Ayutthaya was friendly to foreign traders, especially those from China. Chinese sailors and officers were entrusted to work on the government's ships then. Because Ayutthaya Kingdom granted Chinese migrants priorities over foreigners from other countries in commercial domain, Chinese flocked into Thailand in great number. Written in 1536 by a Chinese literatus who collected many narrations about southeast Asia from sailors and merchants, *Haiyu* (海语, literally means overseas commentary) is an encyclopedia of southeastern Asia then. This book pointed out that by then Sino-Thai had been dwelled in Siam for several generations. Among those generations, only the first generation kept their last name, while the descendants of migrants forsook their Chinese last name. They all adopted Thai names. In 1616, Sino-Thai residents far outnumbered native population in the capital city then (Yang, 2009: 16). During the reign of King Narai (1656-1688), Chinese migrants were treated in the same way as how local Thai is treated, while foreigners from other countries were treated in different ways. King Narai issued a law to restrict intermarriage between Thai and foreigners with the exception of Chinese migrants. As most of trader immigrated to Thailand were bachelors then, it was very ubiquitous for them to intermarry with Thai women (Piao J.

and Zheng H., 2017). Beside merchants, the bulk of Ayutthaya Chinese community was also made up with other occupations, such as pig breeder, artisan, actor, scholar-official and physician (Skinner, 1957).

King Taksin led his army to expel Burmese invaders and established Thonburi Dynasty (1767-1782). King Taksin was the son of Thai-Chinese intermarriage. His father was from Teochew. He was committed to develop trade and diplomatic relation with China. In the war with Burmese, many local young men died or were taken prisoner. After war, laborers are urgently in need. In his reign, Chinese especially Teochew people were welcomed to make living in Thailand. His policy obviously favored Teochew people, which make it easy for them to live in Thailand. Accordingly, Thonburi period witnessed population boom of overseas Chinese. This is the first major Chinese influx to Thailand.

In 1782, when Chakri Dynasty took place of Thonburi Dynasty, the new monarch moved the capital city to Bangkok. To construct the new capital city, a large number of Chinese labors were attracted to Bangkok. The land where the newly established dynasty decided to construct its royal palace, namely the Grand Palace today, was original populated by overseas Chinese. To clear the way for the construction of the Grand Palace complex, overseas Chinese were resettled to Sampheng Road, which is the core area of today's Chinatown. From then on, Sino-Thai cluster around that area, and Chinatown was formed. Noteworthily, the royal family of Chakri Dynasty also has Chinese ancestry. Up until the signing of the Bowring Treaty with Great Britain in 1855, the rulers then admire Chinese medicine, opera and literature, and also married fair-

skinned Chinese women. Apart from the mixing of genes, the Chakri monarchs also adopted Chinese names to use in their diplomatic contacts with the Qing empire. King Rama I was known as Zheng Hua (郑华), King Rama II as Zheng Fo (郑佛), King Rama III as Zheng Fu (郑福), King Rama IV as Zheng Ming (郑明), and King Rama V as Zheng Long (郑隆) (Skinner, 1957). Overseas Chinese created many new forms of income for the government, including the exploitation of natural resources and taxation, and thus as a major source of capital they contributed enormously to the growth of Thailand's absolute monarchy at that time. Thai economy largely depended on those overseas Chinese then. Trade between Thailand and China got increasingly prosperous. Ships did not only transport goods, but masses of Chinese migrants were also taken into Thailand. During the reign of the Rama V there was a dramatic increase in the Chinese population in Thailand. It is estimated that the population of overseas Chinese in Thailand grew from around 230,000 in 1823 to 300,000 in 1850 and 792,000 in 1910 (Yang, 2009: 19). By the reign of King Rama V, corvée labor system had been the fundamental structure of Thai society, which divided people into two basic strata: the masters in the upper stratum who control manpower; and the serfs in the lower stratum. No matter what a person's ethnic identity was, as long as he or she was in this corvée labor system, he or she was regarded as Thai people.

A royal decree that King Rama IV issued in 1867-68 reads as follows:

The word Chinese means a person with a pigtail (a male hairstyle enforced by Manchus rulers in Qing Dynasty). If sons or grandsons of the Chinese wear a pigtail but are tattooed on

their wrist (the serfs in Thai corvée labor system tattooed on their wrist) and registered in a list. Then they are Thais. (Quoted in Tejapira, 2001: 54)

Because they mostly joined this corvée labor system, oversea Chinese were never considered foreigners by the Thai, as King Rama V stated, both publicly and privately: he regarded the Chinese not as foreigners but as “our men” and one of the components of his kingdom, and that his government should rule them well so that they would feel “we are the Chinese rulers” (Tejapira, 2001: 61). However, integrating overseas Chinese into corvée labor system was merely the assimilation in domain of politics. In term of culture, wearing Chinese attire and hairstyle, observing Chinese festivals, and complying with Chinese custom, overseas Chinese in Thailand remained very distinct from Thais. After Bowring Treaty in 1855, with the declining of corvée labor system, overseas Chinese were allowed to stay out of this system (Tejapira, 2001). Overseas Chinese out of the system were only required to pay a triennial capitation of 4.25 baht to the state, which was relatively cheaper to foreigners from other countries. Chinese traders were normally out of this system then. In 1905 King Rama V abolished corvée labor system, which flattened Thai social hierarchy. After Nationalist Revolution overthrew Qing Dynasty in 1911, Chinese discarded their pigtails whether they were in Thailand or China. Therefore, in Thailand, Chinese’s outward appearance became almost the same with local Thai’s. Consequently, King Rama V’s abolishment of corvée labor system and Chinese Nationalist Revolution jointly facilitated cultural assimilation of Chinese in Thailand.

King Rama VI was not as friendly to Chinese migrants as his father. This romantic nationalist king was a proponent of anti-Sinicism. With the rise of nationalistic sentiment, overseas Chinese were no longer regarded as an ethnic in Chakri's Kingdom, but rather as a "race" from the nation of China. In 1914, the 4th year after the anti-Sinitic King enthroned, he wrote an article entitled *The Jews of the Orient*, and published it in one of the nation's leading newspapers. The King claimed that Chinese exhibited all the notorious traits of European Jews. King Rama VI branded the overseas Chinese as inassimilable, opportunistic, two-faced, devoid of civic virtues, treacherous, secretive, rebellious, Mammon worshippers and economic parasites (Tejapira, 2001: 61). By the reign of King Rama VI, Thai commoners did not have the name with given name prior to surname in English style as it is today. He introduced surnames and coined hundreds of family names as part of his efforts to exhort the people to act and live as modern people did in the West (Morita, 2007: 142). Overseas Chinese were required to substitute their Chinese names and surnames with newly introduced Thai names and surnames by the King, otherwise they would be excluded from many civic rights. Although Chinese were not expelled from Thailand, they were forced to choose whether they wanted to be Thai or not. Thai government's policy was to give economic freedom but not political freedom to Chinese. Consequently, Chinese in Thailand changed their Chinese names to Thai names for the sake of their economic well-being (Burusratanaphand, 2001: 75). At that time some Chinese schools in Thailand sang Chinese national anthem and flew Chinese national flag, which were seen as defying Thai nationalism. "The Private School Act of 1918 extending government control over

all Chinese schools and requiring the instruction of Thai language and civics” (Burusatanaphand, 2001: 78). Those measures mark that Thai government started to integrate Chinese in terms culture and ethnic identity. In 1932, A coup abolished absolute monarch and established constitutional monarch. The newly organized government kept on with King Rama VI’s anti-Chinese attitude, and took some measures for those overseas Chinese to get Thai nationality. A series of policies aiming at assimilating Chinese were promulgated. In 1938, Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram came in power (up until 1955). He launched radical changes in areas of national life which affected overseas Chinese. Continuing with King Rama VI’s analogy between Chinese and Jewish, Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram compared the Chinese problem in Thailand to the Jewish problem in Germany and implied that Nazi solution might be applicable, although his paternal grandfather was a Cantonese Chinese immigrant. His policies restricted overseas Chinese’s occupation. An Occupational Restriction Act of 1938 barred aliens including Chinese from 20 occupations: hairdressing, salt manufacture, metal inlaying, driving of buses, pedicabs and motor tricycles for hire, taxi driving, manufacture of charcoal, umbrellas, the accoutrement of monastic service, operating private wharves, and commercial fishing, woman’s haircutting, hairdressing and dressmaking. The Act of Alien’s Resident Area Restriction of 1941, 1942, 1943, forbade aliens to live in 14 provinces, from all 71 provinces, where they accumulated their capital, and made them move out within 90 days. These acts were relevant to overseas Chinese’ occupation from worker to capitalist. The only answer for overseas Chinese was to transfer title and surname to Thai citizen (Burusatanaphand, 2001: 81).

However, those acts were enacted smoothly without serious resistance. Because the railway and other infrastructures were under construction then, a large number of Chinese laborers arrived Thailand in this period, despite those unfriendly policies. This is the second major Chinese influx to Thailand.

**Estimated Total Arrivals and Departures of
Ethnic Chinese 1882-1955 (in thousands)**

Year of Arrival	Total Arrivals	Total Departures	Total Surplus
1882-1892	177.5	99.4	78.1
1893-1905	455.1	261.9	193.2
1906-1917	815.7	635.5	180.2
1918-1931	1327.6	827.9	499.7
1932-1945	473.7	381.3	92.4
1946-1955	267.8	107.8	160.0

Table 1: Estimated Total Arrivals and Departures of Ethnic Chinese 1882-1955

Source: Skinner (1957)

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Chinese immigration to Thailand dramatically declined and eventually almost stopped. In 1947, Thai government announced a quota on the number of Chinese immigrants to Thailand: no more than 10,000 persons every year. Later in 1949, this number was reduced to 200 persons every year (Chantavanich and Sikharaksakulm, 2001: 192).

During Cold War period, Thailand stood on the USA's side with an actively anti-communist stance. As China mainland was ruled by communist party at that time, Thai government took Chinese as a threat of communist infiltration. Thai government on the one hand prevented Chinese from entering Thailand, and on the other hand vigorously took measure to assimilate Chinese who were already in Thailand. Overseas Chinese who rejected assimilation were prohibited to undertake several occupations such as civil

servant and soldier. Chinese schools were accused as a channel of communist propagation. Therefore, some Chinese schools in Thailand were forced to close. In Chinese schools tolerated by Thai governments, textbooks and syllabuses were supervised by the government. Because of the fear of communist ideology existing in textbooks, Chinese textbooks from China were banned. Texts in Chinese textbooks then were in Chinese language, but the content was required to be Thai stories, such as the glorious Thai history and the praises of Thai heroes, instead of Chinese stories. Chinese teachers from China were not allowed to enter Thailand. Those Chinese teachers who were already in Thailand but charged with violent Thai government's Chinese teaching regulations were repatriated to China. The lack of Chinese teacher furtherly caused the declining of Chinese schools in Thailand. In Chinese schools that survived, Thai government regulated that Chinese language could only be taught for seven hours every week at most as a foreign language. In terms of learning and teaching, there was no significant difference existing between Thai public schools and Chinese schools. Because the shutting down and Thai-ification of Chinese schools, many Sino-Thai children shifted to Thai schools. Capitalist Sino-Thai who wanted their children to receive Chinese education sent their children to Hongkong and Singapore. Some less well-to-do Sino-Thai sent their Thai born children back to China by ships that was to repatriate communist suspects. Those Sino-Thai children were entrusted to their relatives in China. They got Chinese education up until higher education and joined *Red Guards* during the Chinese *Cultural Revolution* (1966-1976). Those Thai born Sino-Thai progressively returned back to Thailand since Thailand established

diplomatic relationship with People's Republic China in 1975. Those Sino-Thai educated in China and Singapore became the backbone of Chinese associations in Thailand later on.

Sino-Thai in Thailand are not a homogeneous group. Classified by Chinese language varieties these Sino-Thai speak, all Sino-Thai can be generally subsumed into five dialect groups, namely Teochew, Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien and Hainanese. Each dialect group established their own association to provide social security for their compatriots. Most of the time, the Chinese community was divided, and they occasionally fought among themselves for economic reasons. When they had problems with the authorities, the leaders of each group would separately negotiate and ask for help from Thai officers instead of working together. Because of the diversities of lineage principles and localities, they are still not unified today (Burusatanaphand, 2001: 71). It is well known that Chinese immigrants organized themselves into secret societies in the 19th century. Conflicts of interest among various dialect groups led to antagonism and occasional fighting (Chantavanich and Sikharaksakulm, 2001: 190).

Kongtek is the funeral tradition practiced by Teochew, Hakka and some of Hokkien people. Constituting 70% of Sino-Thai population, Teochew is the largest group among the five groups mentioned above (Chokkajitsumpun, 2001: 204; Formoso, 2012: 201). Following Teochew dialect group's predominance, Cantonese takes up 9% of all Sino-Thai, Hokkien 7%, Hakka 6%, Hainanese 5%, and the remaining 3% are mainly from Yunnan, Guangxi, Zhejiang and Taiwan. Those Chinese groups respectively became associated with specific professions and trades. Teochew made up most of the bankers,

rice merchants, gold and jewelry merchants, Hakkas the newspapermen, tailors, silversmiths, Hokkiens rubber exporters, Cantonese printers, and Hainanese the pharmacists (Skinner, 1957). Bangkok Chinatown is mostly populated by Teochew people.

3.2 The Transmission of Kongtek in Thailand

Simon De La Loubère visited Siam in 1687 and 1688. He recorded a Siamese funeral of a wealthy man. His recording of that wealth man's funeral was discussed by Terwiel (1979), which reads as follows:

A wealthy man immediately after death is placed in a wooden coffin which is varnished and gilded on the outside. In order to combat decomposition, mercury is poured in the mouth. Whilst the coffin remains at home, incense and candles are burnt. The place of cremation is chosen by the family, usually a spot near a monastery. This place is enclosed with a square bamboo fence and contains replicas of houses, movables, domestic and savage animals cut out of paper. In the middle of this enclosure the pyre is built... The body is taken out of the coffin before it is burnt, and before the pyre is lighted, various entertaining theatre and musical shows can be provided. After cremation the ashes and charred bones are put back in the coffin and this is put under a pyramidal construction (ceedii).

Paper replicas mentioned in this Siamese wealthy man's funeral are much the same as Kongtek paper offerings. Note that except Chinese, none of other cultures as far as Blake (2012: 9) investigated, uses paper effigies and replicas in their funeral, at least not to the extent that Chinese do. Varnished and gilded, the wooden coffin described

above is probably Chinese traditional coffin. This funeral was recorded in the final stage of King Narai's reign of Ayutthaya kingdom when Chinese migrants clustered in the capital city. In China at that time, Kongtek was already well established. It is perfectly possible that the wealthy man who died in the record was a Chinese migrant, and he had Kongtek ceremony for his funeral.

Precisely when Kongtek started to hold in Thailand is not clear, because there is lack of historical record, especially the record of commoner's funeral in earlier history of Thailand. Nevertheless, historical record of royal family's funeral reveals some traces of Kongtek in Thailand.

King Taksin's Thonburi dynasty attracted many Teochew people, as the King himself was the son of Teochew people. Teochew migrants were regarded as superior Chinese migrants. From then on, Teochew flocked into Thailand in large scale, and its population outnumbered Chinese migrants of other dialect groups. Kongtek as a prevalent funeral ceremony of Teochew people became thriving in Thailand. As royal family of Chakri dynasty has Teochew ancestry, it inherited some of Teochew traditions. In the reign of King Rama IV, Kongtek rituals firstly appeared in the royal court of Thailand, and officially became a part of royal funeral rite from then on, especially those funerals for kings and high-ranking royal aristocrats. Usually, the royal family entrusts Sino-Thai capitalists to organize the Kongtek ceremony for them. It is a way for Sino-Thai capitalists to pledge their allegiance to Thai monarch (Surasit Amornwanitsak, 2016).

From King Rama VI's reign to Cold War period, Thailand was actively restricting Chinese migrates and assimilating Sino-Thai in terms of culture and identity. Despite Thai government's harsh policies toward Chinese, interethnic tensions and resentment observed in other Southeast Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines, did not occur in Thailand. Chinese migrates simply changed citizenship and name to Thai to get equal rights with local Thai. Restricting Chinese school is for political purpose. Chinese schools in Thailand promulgated Chinese nationalism according to Sun Yat-sen's national revolution ideals when Thailand was establishing unified Thai national identity, advocated anti-Japanese thoughts when Thai politicians were cooperating with Japan in the second world war, and were accused of propagating communist ideology when Thai government was on anti-communist stance during Cold War. Chinese schools were restricted by Thailand, because Chinese schools were alleged to involve in political affairs. However, Thai government did not intervene Sino-Thai's cultural and religious activities. A Teochew benevolent institute is firstly given patronage by King Rama V to carry out rituals to collect corpses of bad death. The King gave his patronage with two premises. The first premise was that the charitable activities of the Teochew benevolent institute benefit the whole population of the kingdom without ethnic distinction. The second premise was that rituals to collect bones of bad death that the Teochew benevolent institute intended to organize respects the Thai customs concerning the unfortunate dead. Following the royal requirements, Teochew benevolent institutes have spread widely in Thai territory, especially from 1960s onwards, thanks to the spectacular economic growth of the country. Corpses of

both Sino-Thai and local Thai bad death victims has been involved in Teochew benevolent institute's bone collecting ritual. From the second world war onwards most of collected bones belonged to local Thai (Formoso, 2012: 201). An anti-Sinitic as King Rama VI was, he himself had Kongtek ceremony when he died. I interviewed an old Sino-Thai who is a second generation and local-born Sino-Thai. His parents were both from Teochew area. He told me that, during Cold War period, Kongtek practices of Sino-Thai was not affected at all. Contrariwise, during Cold War period, Sino-Thai were more likely to hold Kongtek for their parent's death, and their Kongtek rituals were less adapted, comparing with Kongtek in contemporary Thailand.

Per Cent Whose Families Follow Thai and Chinese Funeral Practices

	Group I Less Educated Non- Government Employee (N = 300)	Group II More Educated Non- Government Employee (N = 300)	Group III Government Employee (N = 300)
Purely Chinese	51.0%	35.0%	22.3%
Partly Chinese and Partly Thai	40.0%	51.7%	42.7%
Purely Thai	3.3%	6.0%	33.0%
Other	5.7%	7.3%	2.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 2: Per Cent Whose Families Follow Thai and Chinese Funeral Practices

Source: Punyodyana (1971: 45)

Punyodyana (1971)'s survey attested that many Sino-Thai in Bangkok still persisted in holding Chinese funeral, assuredly including Kongtek, in Cold War period. With the option to hold funeral partly Chinese and partly Thai, the adaption of Chinese Kongtek toward Thai Theravada Buddhist funeral customs had already been ongoing then.

It is in the 1990s that inclusion of Thai customs in the frame of Chinese funerals was institutionalized (Hill, 1992: 328). The story of Botan's novel, *Letters from Thailand*, takes place in the time setting from 1945 to 1967 which overlaps with Cold War period. It is a story of how Sino-Thai lived their life in Bangkok Chinatown. Culture and stereotype of the two factions of Sino-Thai and local Thai were depicted closely. The story crosses the time span of 22 years, during which the protagonist's father-in-law, mother-in-law, adoptive father and wife successively passed away. The protagonist and his relatives passed away in this story all had their origins in Teochew. The funerals for the protagonist's father-in-law, mother-in-law and stepfather invariably had Kongtek rituals. The protagonist's wife died in an accident when she was in her middle age. Because she did not reach 50 years old when she died, she did not have Kongtek ceremony in her funeral. According to Kongtek tradition in China, the dead younger than 50 years old would not have Kongtek ceremony. In Thailand, Sino-Thai adhere to this tradition. Besides Botan's *Letters from Thailand*, stories wrote by some other Sino-Thai writers recorded Kongtek in Cold War period as well. The subtle account of Kongtek rituals in these stories along with my informants' discourse jointly present how Kongtek rituals were practiced in Cold War period. Sino-Thai's Kongtek then did not incorporate much Thai mortuary traditions to the extent like today. At that time, Kongtek ritual mostly took place at home or clan associations, rather than in Theravada Buddhist temples as it is today. Additionally, unlike that nowadays Sino-Thai invariably invite Theravada Buddhist monks to chant as a complement of Kongtek rituals, during Cold War period Theravada Buddhist monks were occasionally invited

to chant in Sino-Thai's Kongtek ceremony, but not always. As same as the tradition in China, in Cold War period the mourners generally cried very hard, but today Sino-Thai mourners tend to cry less on Kongtek ceremony. Traditionally in China, the more the descendants cry, the more filial pious they are considered to be. In Chinese culture, to cry on the deceased's Kongtek ceremony is a manifestation of filial piety.

3.3 Adaptations of Kongtek Rituals in Bangkok's Chinatown

On the one hand, as mentioned in the prior part, Sino-Thai's Kongtek rituals today changed a lot from their counterparts in Cold War period when they were closer to Kongtek tradition in China. After the adaptation, Kongtek rituals become more compatible with Thai funeral traditions and Theravada Buddhist culture. On the other hand, Sino-Thai's Kongtek rituals maintain many old Chinese traditions. Roughly speaking, the skeleton of Sino-Thai's Kongtek process maintains Chinese way which has been given in the 2nd Chapter.

Kongtek rituals' adaptations in Bangkok's Chinatown are discussed in this part case by case.

3.3.1 Kongtek in Sino-Thai's Understanding

This thesis does not define what Kongtek rituals are in Bangkok Chinatown. It is Sino-Thai themselves who claim those rituals that are believed to be practiced in Chinese way are Kongtek.

Usually, there is a blackboard at the outside of funeral hall. On the blackboard, there is the schedule of funeral.

The last or penultimate ritual of Sino-Thais' funeral schedule is named พิธีกงเต็ก or simply กงเต็ก, which literally means Kongtek ceremony or Kongtek. The adaptation of the Thai loanword กงเต็ก have already been discuss in the beginning of this chapter.

Another information that can be read from those blackboards is that Kongtek is merely one component of Sino-Thai's funeral. The rests are Thai funeral rituals.

After some deliberation, I decided to have Buddhist ceremonies as well, and monks prayed for seven nights before the Kongtek procession. My friends all said the crypt we bought is sure to bring good luck to his descendants. Truly, I spent a good bit on it. We will invite monks to pray again on the twenty-first, fiftieth, and hundredth day. May this merit reach the hand of dear Lo Yong Chua. In his death I have been a faithful son.

This is an excerpt from Botan's novel, *Letters from Thailand*. Lo Yong Chua is an overseas Chinese who live in Bangkok Chinatown, and the protagonist's adoptive father. The author put the funeral in the setting of 1953 in Bangkok Chinatown. The reason why Lo Yong Chua adopted the protagonist as his son was that his wife and children died in a flood in Bangkok. Without descendants, it is impossible to have a proper funeral, especially Kongtek ceremony, and his spirit would not get apt worship annually. Without Kongtek and annual worship, his spirit would not be leaded to Amitabha Buddha's Western Paradise or rebirth to human's realm, but it would become a wandering spirit which begs other families' offering. In order to have a son to arrange his funeral, he adopted the protagonist. As a reward, Lo Yong Chua took advantage of his social network in Bangkok Chinatown to help his stepson find a job and subsequently found his own business in Chinatown. A few years before Lo Yong Chua

died, he prescribed the protagonist that he wanted a Kongtek ceremony in his funeral. Out of gratitude to this adoptive father, the protagonist decided to do more than the adoptive father told. He held both Kongtek and traditional Thai Buddhist funeral rites as exactly same as what Sino-Thai mostly do today. Chinese Kongtek is believed to generate merit. Sino-Thai usually use Thai funeral rites to serve the same end. As Chinese Kongtek can generate merit, Thai funeral rites can generate merit too, although Theravada Buddhist doctrine does not take funeral rites as a source of merit. From Sino-Thai's point of view, the dead gets merit from Kongtek ceremony, and if it is accompanied with Thai funeral rites, the dead can receive double merit. This expounding of coexistence of Kongtek and Thai traditional rites is illustrated clearly by Hill (2001: 325):

From the point of view of Chinese religious practitioners, with whom I have talked in Chinese temples, chanting Buddhist (or Daoist) script is a "good thing;" it earns virtue for the chanter and for others whom you want to help. Chanting at funerals is a good thing to do for the dead and monks know the right way to do this at funerals. Thai monks, for their part, say they are not chanting for the dead; rather, they are preaching to the living from texts that are morally edifying. So having Thai monks at funerals is understood in the Chinese paradigm as getting the assistance of another kind of religious specialist to do good things for the dead. The message of their chanting falls on deaf ears.

Sino-Thai are on the boundary of Thai ethnic and Chinese ethnic, so they have more options. Sino-Thai can choose from a variety of funeral traditions from both Thai and Chinese culture. Unlike Sino-Thai, Chinese in their homeland have less to choose from in term of funeral practice. In China, Kongtek is usually on the 7th day of funeral. The 7th day is normally the last day of a Chinese funeral. Immediately after Kongtek, it is inhumation or cremation. In China, Kongtek is the religious part to generate merit for the deceased in funeral. Apart from it, in China, Chinese funeral do not have other

approach to make merit, such as donate to temples as Sino-Thai do in Theravada temples. Sino-Thai's Kongtek is not necessary to be on the 7th day of funeral as the tradition in China. How many days a funeral last in Thailand is up to the budget. The more money spent on it, the more days the funeral will last, but it usually does not exceed 7 days. In 1950s, Sino-Thai maintained the Chinese tradition of holding Kongtek ceremony on the 7th day of the funeral. The change of when to hold Kongtek ceremony occurred in recent decades. The information of whether to hold Kongtek on the 7th day was revealed by an old Bangkok Sino-Thai, and it is confirmed by Botan's description of Kongtek. Botan gave an account of Kongtek ceremony in Bangkok's Chinatown which took place in 1947:

On the seventh day following his death, we prepared for the Kongtek and the journey to Thonburi. (The journey to Thonburi is to a cemetery to bury the corpse)

In Thai society, face is a serious matter. It is very honorable to hold funeral in prestigious temples like Wat Hua Lamphong (Thai: วัดหัวลำโพง) and Wat Debsirin (Thai: วัดเทพศิรินทราวาสราชวรวิหาร). Accordingly, the expense to hold funeral in these temples is very expensive. In Thai language, there is a proverb, *khon tai khai khon pen* (คนตายขายคนเป็น, literally "the dead sell the living"), which means that to hold funeral can cost much money and cause the living descendants into debt. This is especially true for Sino-Thai, because they do not only need to pay the Thai Theravada temple which render the venue, but they also need to pay for Kongtek ritual specialists, live Kongtek musical band, paper offerings, and sometimes Chinese coffin and cemetery. Not every family can afford to hold funeral in Theravada temple for consecutive 7 days. Nevertheless, Sino-

Thai's Kongtek is invariably on the last day of a funeral immediately before inhumation or cremation, which maintained Chinese tradition.

In Bangkok Chinatown area, Kongtek ceremony is complemented with Thai funeral rites. Meanwhile, those Thai funeral rites usually were fused with Chinese elements. The schedule on the blackboards divided the whole funeral into several segments. But Thai practices and Chinese practices are not split up clearly as it is written on the blackboard. In Sino-Thai's funeral, Thai traditions can be practiced on Kongtek ceremony which is considered Chinese, while Chinese traditions can be practiced on the rest segments which are Thai rites. Generally, the first day of Sino-Thai's funeral is a Thai Buddhist rite, but the bereaved family distribute candies and oranges in red package to attendees. Distributing candy and orange in red package is a Chinese funeral tradition which is prevalent in Teochew area. It implies that funeral is only a temporary transition. The grief of losing the beloved family member will pass. The grey atmosphere is only temporary. There is luck (symbolized by red package and orange. "Orange"(桔) and "luck"(吉) in Chinese are homophones) and sweetness (symbolized by candy) in the future. People's nature is to be afraid of death, the corpse, and the potential bad luck to which they are exposed at funerals. Many turn their backs on the coffin whenever it is moved, fearing that the jostling of the corpse might release its ghostly soul to cause them misfortune. The color red on candies and packages of oranges can provide guests a measure of protection from bad luck (Hill, 1992: 319). In Chinese tradition, the funeral for the deceased who dies in old ages like over 80 or 90 years old is regarded as a lucky funeral. This kind of funeral is a party-like occasion,

where the bereaved family can wear red accessories along with white or jute sackcloth mourning garb, hang red elegiac couplet and banner, set off red firecrackers and hold entertaining shows. By holding the funeral in happy atmosphere, the family celebrate that the deceased passes away in old age without much regret left in this earthly world. Sino-Thai in Bangkok still maintains the tradition of lucky funeral for the deceased who died in very old age. They wear in blue, or wear red accessories along with white or jute sackcloth mourning garb, and hang red elegiac couplets and red banners. Even so, some parts of lucky funeral tradition have been given up. As I observed, Bangkok Sino-Thai do not set off red firecrackers or hold entertaining shows.

On the first several days in Sino-Thai's funeral, there is only Thai Buddhist funeral rites. However, the funeral hall is decorated in Chinese way. Four Thai Theravada monks chant in Thai traditional way in a Chinese style funeral hall, and meantime a Chinese incense stick and joss paper are burning. That is a commonplace scene in Theravada temples in Bangkok Chinatown vicinity. In most cases, Sino-Thai hang Chinese funeral lanterns, elegiac couplets and banners with Chinese calligraphy on them. Invariably, some Chinese yellow incantation paper slips are pasted on doors of funeral hall. On the lanterns, they are written with the deceased's personal information of age and whether he or she is the strict father or the lenient mother. The age written on the lanterns is one year older than the deceased's actual age, which maintains the Teochew tradition in China. On yellow incantation paper slips, there are invariably four Chinese characters, 百事无忌, which literally means that all things do not have taboo. It is a long-lasting tradition to paste this yellow incantation paper slips at funeral

occasion, which Chinese people simply follow it, but few of them know why they should paste them. If the deceased did not die in very old age, elegiac couplets and banners will be in black and white color. The Chinese characters on them convey the meaning of grief for the death. Otherwise, elegiac couplets and banners will be in red colors, and Chinese characters on them convey a sense of consolation that the elderly passed away after the long-life ends in a satisfactory way. For Sino-Thai's lucky funeral, Thai funeral wreaths are sometimes decorated with red color. Note that the normal hue of Thai funeral wreath is mainly white, yellow, navy color or blue.



Figure 3: Sino-Thai hang Chinese funeral lanterns in Theravada temple

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)



Figure 4: elegiac couplets and banners with Chinese calligraphy in Sino-Thai's funeral hall

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)



Figure 5: Chinese yellow incantation paper slips are pasted on doors of funeral hall

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)



Figure 6: funeral wreaths in red color following Chinese lucky funeral tradition

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)



Figure 7: elegiac couplets and banners in red color following Chinese lucky funeral tradition

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)

Another phenomenon of Chinese practice fused to Sino-Thai's Thai Theravada Buddhist rite is burning joss paper when Thai Theravada Buddhist monks are chanting

for the funeral. These joss papers are not burned for the deceased who the funeral is devoted to, but rather for wandering spirits which do not have descendant to worship them or are neglected by their descendants. Paper offerings specially for the deceased of the funeral include a variety of paper replicas crafted extravagantly and usually in large size. After all other Kongtek rituals finish, as the last stage of Kongtek ceremony, paper offerings specially for the deceased are incinerated all together. Comparing with papering offerings for the deceased who the funeral is dedicated to, the joss paper burning for wandering spirits alongside Theravada Buddhist rites is quite simple and crude. Chinese usually hold banquet for funeral, and the elaborately prepared dishes on funeral banquet are not worse than those of wedding banquet. Thai funerals offer food to guests too, but food on Thai funeral is very simple and far less comparable to the food on Thai wedding. Some Sino-Thai still maintain this tradition of funeral banquet in Bangkok Chinatown. I once observed a Sino-Thai funeral banquet in Wat Debsirin. At dinner time, several tables were putted up on the open ground outside the funeral hall. A variety of dishes were served on the table. On the one hand, Sino-Thai funeral treat guests with elaborate banquet; On the other hand, wandering spirits were satisfied with joss paper so that they will not disturb the funeral. However, not all Sino-Thai funerals have banquet. Nowadays, most of Sino-Thai simply adopt Thai ways in respect of funeral food for attendees. They provide packs of bottle water, cakes and breads to attendees in case they arrive at the temple without having dinner. Human guests' banquet can be simplified, but the feeding of spiritual guests is seldom neglected by Sino-Thai.



Figure 8: burning joss paper when Thai Theravada Buddhist monks are chanting for
the funeral

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)

Hill (2001: 306) observed short term renunciation to Theravada Buddhist novice in Chiangmai Sino-Thai's funeral. In Thai tradition, the young sons or grandsons, usually those who are younger than 20 years old, will shortly renounce secular world as a novice. The time for them to stay Theravada Buddhist monkhood varies from several hours to several weeks. The purpose is to dedicate merit to the deceased, according to the long tradition in Thai Buddhism of ordination as a merit-making deed. This is a Thai custom, but it is acceptable to families of Chinese descent in Chiangmai because it is something done for the good of the death. As the Hill (1992; 2001) observed in Chiangmai, however, the eldest son, who have the heaviest filial obligations from a Chinese point of view, never become novices at funerals, and even the young sons and grandsons who already became novices don Chinese mourning clothes to join the procession to take the deceased to the underground in Kongtek rituals. The day

before the burial, the same day as the “crossing the bridge” ritual, four of the deceased’s youngest sons and two of his lineal grandsons were ordained as Theravada Buddhist novices. By nightfall all six were back in Chinese mourning garb. The next morning, the day of the burial, the six appeared again in novices’ robes and were fed before noon, along with the temple’s other monks and novices. They also received gifts of money and items for personal use from the mourning family, including their mother. Before the monks retired, a child from the mourning family poured a bowl of water onto the ground outside the temple, which is a typical Theravada Buddhist practice after merit making.

In Bangkok Chinatown, Sino-Thai invite Thai monks to chant, make merit by feed Thai monks, and sometimes send young men of the mourning family to be novices. Punyodyana (1971) found that to some extent Sino-Thai in Bangkok has accepted the Thai belief that entering Buddhist priesthood is a way to pay moral debts to one’s parents. In 1971, most of Sino-Thai who lived in Bangkok expressed their willingness to see their sons, brothers or other close male relatives ordained as Buddhist priests. It is because that Thai Theravada priesthood is much more flexible, as it allows Sino-Thai to take into account both merit-making in Theravada way and secular Chinese life. In Thailand, they can go in and come out soon from Theravada priesthood to live in secular Chinese way, while Chinese Mahayana sect requires a man to remain ordained and renunciate from family permanently. Young man in the bereaved families to be ordained to Thai Theravada Buddhist priesthood during the funeral is sometimes observed. Those young men are invariably ordained to be Theravada monks in the

temples where the Kongtek takes place. Do Bangkok Sino-Thai young men enter Buddhist priesthood in Chinese Mahayana temples like Mangkorn temple and Phoman temple? The answer is no. Yang (2009: 70) found that Bangkok Sino-Thai prefer Thai Theravada temple to Chinese Mahayana temple if their sons is going to be ordained. In Chinese Mahayana temples located in Bangkok, there are not many novices from Bangkok. Most of the novices in Mangkorn temple are from other provinces. Those novices in Bangkok Mahayana temples include both Sino-Thai and local Thai. Mostly their purpose of coming to Bangkok to become a novice in Mahayana temples is for learning Chinese language or higher education in Bangkok, instead of aspiration concerning Mahayana Buddhist itself or parent's passing away. After a few years' monastery life in Bangkok Mahayana temples, they normally return back to their own provinces to do secular jobs, rather than get full ordained to be a Mahayana monk.

3.3.2 The Maintaining of Buddhist Kongtek and vanishing of Taoist Kongtek in Bangkok's Chinatown

Despite some Bangkok Sino-Thai's folk practices deeply influenced by Taoism, Sino-Thai are scarcely identified as Taoists. All Sino-Thai's Kongtek rituals I observed in Bangkok Chinatown were held in Buddhist temples, and ritual clerics of these Kongtek rituals are either Mahayana Buddhist monks or Mahayana Buddhist lay ritual specialists.

In those Kongtek rituals which presided by Mahayana Buddhists monks, usually seven Mahayana Buddhist monks are invited to conduct Kongtek rituals. They wear yellow robes in Mahayana style, chant Mahayana sutras in Sanskrit, occasionally chant

filial piety ballads in Teochew language, instruct the eldest son of the deceased to give recitations of funeral orations in Thai language, and lead the mourning family to walk around in a single file in the funeral hall as a part of Kongtek rituals. Usually spending just approximately two hours, this kind of Kongtek is relatively shorter than the other kind (see below). There are ten precepts for monks. One is to refrain from singing, dancing, playing music or attending entertainment programs (performances). Consequently, monks' chant in Kongtek rituals is not very melodic, although live musical band is hired to play the accompaniment. This kind of Kongtek is the variation that adapted the most to Thai Buddhist rites. In China, full ordained monks are not very often invited to preside Kongtek rituals. Catering for the tastes of Bangkok Sino-Thai, it can be considered as the replacement of Phra Malai scripture chanting (Thai: สวดพระมาลัย). Phra Malai scripture chanting is a prevalently Buddhist funeral rite normally conducted on the last day of Thai people's funeral. Generally, Thai Theravada monks' funeral chant is lack of melody. However, Thai Theravada monks chant Phra Malai scripture in melodic way, so it is nicknamed "monks sing songs" by Thai people. Thai folk Buddhist funerals end up with Phra Malai scripture chanting, the "Thai monks sing songs", while Bangkok Sino-Thai's funerals sometimes end up with Mahayana Buddhist monks' chanting, the "Chinese monks sing songs".



Figure 9: Kongtek presided by Mahayana Buddhists monks

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)

In those Kongtek rituals presided by Mahayana Buddhist lay ritual specialists, usually a troupe of professional Kongtek practitioners is invited to conduct Kongtek rituals. This troupe normally consists of lay Kongtek ritual specialists in odd numbers like 13 or 15. In a lay Kongtek troupe, those professional Kongtek practitioners cooperate with due division of work. Some of them perform in drama-like rituals, some play Kongtek music in the live band, and a chief ritual specialist instructs the Kongtek rituals overall. The chief ritual specialist is also in charge of chanting Kongtek scriptures, instructing the eldest son of the deceased to give recitations of funeral orations in Thai language, and leading the mourning family to walk around in a single file in the funeral hall. The chant and singing in this kind of Kongtek is almost all in Teochew language. Almost all Kongtek practitioners in this kind of troupes including bandsmen can speak Teochew. This kind of troupes generally name themselves as *Buddhist association* (Thai: พุทธสมาคม, Chinese: 念佛社). In Bangkok, most of those Kongtek troupes are comprised of only male members. In southern Thai provinces such as Hat Yai and Trang, lay Mahayana Buddhist women extensively take part in Kongtek

rituals as ritual specialists, which may be caused by its proximity to Malaysia where Kongtek rituals presided by lay Buddhist women are very pervasive. Those lay male Kongtek ritual specialists correspond to *incense-flower monks* (香花和尚) in China, while those lay female Kongtek ritual specialists correspond to *vegetarian women* (斋姑). As how *incense-flower monks* and *vegetarian women* conduct themselves in China, lay Kongtek ritual specialists in Thailand do not adhere to Mahayana Buddhist precepts. They do not need to shave their hair, and due to their lay religious status, they do not wear real monk robe in terms of outward appearance. In terms of everyday life, they do not need to abstain from alcohol, sex, music, dramatic performance or earthly possessions. When they are enacting Kongtek rituals, they wear costumes similar to Mahayana Buddhist monk robe's cut but in white color rather than yellow, and in some dancing-like sections they wear the costumes imitating Mahayana Buddhist monk's kasaya. In Thailand, they invariably claim themselves as Buddhists. In Kongtek rituals presided by them, the Kongtek hall is decorated as same as full ordained Mahayana monks' Kongtek rituals, with a soul altar facing the south and a buddha altar facing the west. Buddha images are hanged on the buddha altar. What they chant are *incense-flower* (香花) scriptures. *Incense-flower* scriptures are localized and vulgarized Buddhist sutras. Originally, Mahayana Buddhist sutras were in Sanskrit language, and then translated to Chinese. However, those translated scriptures are in classical Chinese literary language, which is understandable for literati but does not make sense to illiterate commoners. To promote illiterate commoner's understanding of Buddhist philosophy, many Chinese monks rewrite Buddhist scriptures into proses and ballads

in vernacular spoken language. Chinese folk stories and legends are adopted to illustrate some specific Buddhist philosophy. *Incense-flower* scriptures teach Chinese commoners impermanence and emptiness, persuade people not to attach to property and fame, and expiate the deceased from their sin. Because those lay ritual specialists are lay persons, the precept that prohibit singing, dancing, playing music or attending performance does not affect them. They sing *Incense-flower* scriptures in very melodic way, and perform *Incense-flower* scriptures in very spectacular way like operas. But unfortunately, nowadays in Bangkok fewer and fewer Sino-Thai can appreciate their performance, because their performance and singing are in Teochew language, while Sino-Thai's Teochew proficiency has been declining (Chokkajitsumpun, 2001). Hill (1992) found that Sino-Thai in Chiangmai considered Kongtek rituals as customs from their Chinese roots, but generally were not very articulate about their understanding of Kongtek rituals. Without knowing what to do in Kongtek rituals and how and why to do it, mourners in Chiangmai Sino-Thai's Kongtek are literally shoved into proper position by the ritual specialists. As with Hill's observation, Sino-Thai in Bangkok do not understand the Kongtek rituals' connotation either. Once in Wat Debsirin, when I was observing the Kongtek rituals, a Sino-Thai middle-aged attendee curiously inquired me what was the story they were performing and what the ritual specialist was singing on earth. Apparently, he was all at sea, sitting there, surrounded by Kongtek rituals.



Figure 10: Kongtek rituals presided by Mahayana Buddhist lay ritual specialists

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)

Taoism is a native religion of China. It was established two thousand years ago. It originated from Chinese ancient indigenous philosophy of maintaining health, witchcraft and spiritual cult. Afterward, it progressively absorbed Confucian ethnics of loyalty, righteousness and filial piety, and Buddhist doctrine of samsara and meditation. Along with Confucianism and Buddhism, Taoism has long been one of the three most influential religions in China. In China, especially in Hokkien province, and in Malaysia, some bereaved families hold Taoist Kongtek, although overall Buddhist Kongtek is more prevalent. Unlike Buddhist Kongtek where ordained Buddhist monks or lay Buddhist ritual specialists are invited to preside and a buddha's altar is put up, in Taoist Kongtek, Taoist priests preside over the rituals, and a Taoist alter with some Taoist gods' images on it is put up at the place where the buddha's altar should be.

Located on Plabplachai Road (ถนนพลับพลาไชย), Lü Dongbin temple (Lü Dongbin is the name of the god whom this temple is dedicated to) is the earliest established Taoist temple in Thailand (Bannong Lamugai, 2016: 25). It is also the largest in existing Taoist

temples in Thailand. Lü Dongbin temple was established in 1902 by Hakka migrants. At that time, a Hakka capitalist Nai Zitin Saeqi (นายจื้อถิน แซ่ลิ) undertook the contracted project of railway construction in southern Thailand. During the construction, an epidemic broke out among workers. Many workers on the construction site died from it. For that reason, he turned to the god Lü Dongbin for help by worshiping him. Lü Dongbin is popularly known as the divine pharmacist. Subsequently, it really worked. The epidemic was overcome miraculously. After railway construction was finished, he mobilized Hakka migrants in Thailand to raise fund to build a Lü Dongbin temple. After the establishment of Lü Dongbin temple, it became an important place for Hakka migrants' religious and social activities. In 1909, Hakka association was established, and has been continuously operating up to today. Hakka association is in charge of Lü Dongbin temple. Sino-Thai established many Chinese temples in Thailand. If judged by the gods that those temples are dedicated to, most of those Chinese temples are originally Taoist temples, because most of those gods were Taoist gods. However, as time went by, most of those Chinese temples got increasingly Buddhist by bringing more and more buddha images into those Chinese temples to worship. Lü Dongbin temple is a clear instance. In 1988, Lü Dongbin temple was ruined in a conflagration. Hakka association decided to rebuild it. On the 4th, September of 1989, the Thai Buddhist Supreme patriarch then was invited to preside the rebuilding ceremony of Lü Dongbin temple. The newly built Lü Dongbin temple is a four-store Chinese traditional building. On the first floor, there are images of a buddha, a Bodhisattva and God of Wealth (a Taoism god); On the second floor, there are some Taoist god's images and

the images of 18 arahants (Buddhist); The whole third floor is dedicated to three buddha images; The fourth floor is dedicated to a Taoist god's image and an image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. After the conflagration, the Lü Dongbin temple persisted its Taoist elements, while incorporated both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhist elements.

As far as I know, today there is no Taoist priest in Thailand. In Mahayana temples, there is Mahayana Buddhist monks, but there is not Taoist priest in Taoist temples in Thailand. Moreover, there is not any historical record concerning Taoist priest in Thailand. Probably, in early history of Taoism's transmission in Thailand, there used to be a few Taoist priests in Taoist temples in Thailand, but not very many. Although Thailand did not reject Taoism, after all Taoism has not been the mainstream. Taoism could not rival Buddhist in Thailand. Lack of lay adherents, some Taoist priest gave up their Taoism and got ordained to be Buddhist monks, and others returned to secular life. Just as the Lü Dongbin temple is managed by Hakka association, Taoist temples in Thailand are managed by Chinese dialect or clan associations, rather than Taoist priests. When it is time for religious ceremonies in those Taoist temples, usually Mahayana monks from Thai Mahayana temples will be invited to preside those ceremonies. If there is no Mahayana temple in the neighborhood, Theravada monks can also do this work.

Because of the Taoism's adaptation to Buddhism and the absent of Taoist priest in Thailand, Sino-Thai in Bangkok do not have Taoist Kongtek rituals. In Bangkok, lay Buddhist ritual specialists' practice of Kongtek rituals more or less incorporated some Taoist elements, but their Kongtek rituals are still Buddhist, because Buddhism holds

the dominance in their rituals. Chinese popular religion is a syncretism of Mahayana Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. Chinese Mahayana Buddhism has been deeply influenced by Confucianism and Taoism. Concerning the interaction of Buddhism and local traditions, in order to find cohabitation acceptable, Buddhism normally requires that these other systems acknowledge Buddhism as the supreme overarching system, and as a path to salvation, and that their practices do not conflict too blatantly with Buddhism's own teachings. In other words, the syncretism is an ordered multiplicity of concepts where Buddhism holds the hegemony, instead of a random cultural hybridity (Ladwig Williams, 2012: 11).

3.3.3 the Venue of Kongtek rituals

At funerals, some Chinese may perform rituals which are distinctly Chinese in origin and content, but they do so in the Thai wat (temple) as well (Kiong, T.C. and Bun, C.K., 2001: 32). As stated by Kiong and Bun, today Sino-Thai in Bangkok hold Kongtek rituals in Theravada temples which have ceremonial halls and crematoriums.

Actually, the current convention of holding Kongtek rituals in Theravada temples is not an old tradition among Sino-Thai in Bangkok Chinatown. It is not until the recent decades that Thai Theravada temples started to accommodate Kongtek rituals. In 1950s and 1960s, Sino-Thai in Bangkok Chinatown generally held Kongtek rituals in clan association, or if they have a yard or room spacious enough at their own home, they would hold Kongtek rituals at home.

In China, Kongtek rituals take place at home, or at clan association or community hall if the mourning family's house is not spacious enough. Chinese monks might be invited to perform Kongtek rituals, but Chinese Buddhist temples scarcely accommodate Kongtek rituals.

The last Chinese immigration wave to Thailand ended in 1950s. After 1950s, due to the lack of new migrant who could have kept bringing Chinese standard Kongtek practice to Thailand, Sino-Thai's Kongtek consequently lost its Chinese standard. From then on, the adapting progress of Sino-Thai's Kongtek rituals to Thai Buddhist funeral rituals accelerated. Gradually, Thai Theravada funeral rituals have been held by Sino-Thai together with Kongtek rituals. Accordingly, Kongtek ritual venue moved from Sino-Thai's houses and clan associations to Theravada temples.

"I was going to visit you first, and then go to Leng Noei Yi Temple to invite the monks to pray. I thought we would have seven nights of prayers here, then take him to the crypt on the seventh day. We'll have the Kongtek, of course, as he wanted, and the paper burning. I've already sent someone to the paper shop with our order."

This is an excerpt of Botan's novel, *Letters from Thailand*. This excerpt describes a Bangkok Sino-Thai's Kongtek ceremony taking place in 1947. The *Leng Noei Yi* Temple in the description is Mangkorn temple's name in Teochew language. Mangkorn temple is a very prestigious Chinese Mahayana temple in Thailand. It is located in Bangkok Chinatown. Yang (2009: 50)'s research on Chinese Mahayana temples in Bangkok confirms this description. Lay people ask the Mahayana monks to attend funerals. There is no facility to cremate the body in Mangkorn temple. So, lay people ask three monks to conduct Chinese funeral rites in the Thai (Theravada) temple. Punyodayna (1971)'s research also confirms that most of Sino-Thai in Bangkok have

their deceased kin cremated in Thai temples, but also perform rites which are distinctly Chinese in origin and content. Most of Sino-Thai conduct funeral rites in mixture of Thai and Chinese practices (Punyadyana, 1971: 45).

The announcement below is an obituary of the permanent honorary president of Xu clan association of Thailand. Even as the permanent honorary president of a clan association, his funeral, including Kongtek, is held in a Thai Theravada temple, Wat Debsirin, rather than his own house or his clan association. It is noteworthy that he is very rich given that his funeral is in Wat Debsirin, so his house must be spacious enough to hold Kongtek rituals.



สมาคมตระกูลเชื้อแห่งประเทศไทย
泰國徐氏宗親總會
THE XU CLAN ASSOCIATION OF THAILAND

วันเสาร์ที่ 23 มีนาคม พ.ศ. 2562

เรื่อง: เชิญร่วมพิธีสวดพระอภิธรรม

เรียน: ท่านนายกิตติศักดิ์ถาวร, นายกิตติศักดิ์, ที่ปรึกษานายกิตติศักดิ์

อุปนายกฯ, กรรมการบริหาร, กรรมการทุกท่านที่เคารพ

เนื่องด้วยนายเจริญ เพชรคาถา (นายกิตติศักดิ์ถาวรสมาคมฯ) ซึ่งเป็นบิดาของกรรมการวิชัย ขจรเดชไพศาลกุล ได้ถึงแก่กรรมด้วยโรค
ชราวันเสาร์ที่ 23 มีนาคม 62 รวมสิริอายุ 103 ปี, ตั้งศพ ณ วัดเทพศิรินทราวาส ศาลา 14 ได้กำหนดสวดพระอภิธรรมวันเสาร์ที่ 23 - 27 มีนาคม
62 วันพฤหัสบดีที่ 28 มีนาคม 62 ประกอบพิธีฝังศพ วันศุกร์ที่ 29 มีนาคม 62 เวลา 08.00 น. ประกอบพิธีค่านับศพ เวลา 09.30 น. เคลื่อนศพ
จากวัดไปยังสุสานไทยสมบุญ อ.บ้านบึง จ.ชลบุรี

ทางสมาคมฯ ได้กำหนดในคืนวันอังคารที่ 26 มีนาคม 62 เวลา 19.00 น. เป็นเจ้าภาพสวดพระอภิธรรม

จึงขอเรียนเชิญทุกท่านเข้าร่วมพิธีโดยพร้อมเพรียงกัน

ขอแสดงความนับถือ

(นายวิฑูรย์ ชิวศิริกุล)

นายกสมาคมฯ

เงินช่วยเหลือ

สมาคมได้ช่วยเหลือก่อน

莫儀備妥

敬啟者：本會永遠名譽理事長歷行宗長於 23 日，寅時壽終披耶泰第一醫院，
享壽積閏 103 歲，即日移柩泰京越貼素葬佛寺第 14 廳安靈治喪。茲其家屬擇吉於本
月 23 至 27 日，由有關社團商號輪流贈經，28 日功德，29 日發引春府晚縣萬福山莊
之原吉時安葬。

本會定於本月 26 日（星期二）晚七時贈經，特函恭請

臺端依時蒞臨參加贈經，致奠執紼。

永遠名譽理事長 名譽理事長 名譽顧問

副理事長 常務理事 理事

臺鑒



理事長 徐偉洲



謹啟

佛曆二五六二年三月廿三日發。

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Figure 11: obituary of the permanent honorary president of Xu clan association of
Thailand

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)

Wat chaiyaphum karam (Thai: วัดชัยภูมิการาม, Chinese: 翠岸寺) is a Chinese Mahayana Buddhist temple located on Yaowapanit Road in Bangkok Chinatown. It was established by Teochew migrants in 1906. Unlike typical temples as independent buildings of traditional wood and stone structure, Wat chaiyaphum karam is a part of a multistoried cement building. This temple takes the 5th and 6th floor. On the floors under this temple, there are stores and a multistoried car park. Because this temple is affiliated to the cement building, the temple's layout is confined by the structure of the building. So, there is not any division of ordination hall, ceremonial pavilion or yard, let alone the crematorium. A big living room is in the center. A few Chinese and Thai buddhas' images, a few eminent monks' sculptures, Chinese religious paper binding handicraft and books are in the central living room. Several small rooms around the central living room are monks' bedroom. Apparently limited by the space of this temple, it is impossible to hold Kongtek rituals here. A monk in the temple told me that they are often invited by Bangkok Sino-Thai to Thai Theravada temples to conduct Kongtek rituals. The Thai temple where they go is not fixed. Which Thai temple they go is all up to the mourning family. They conduct Kongtek rituals in whichever Thai temple the mourning families invite them to.

Today, almost all Bangkok Sino-Thai hold their Kongtek rituals in Thai Theravada temples. In Bangkok Chinatown, there are a large number of Thai Theravada temples. So, do all these Thai Theravada temples have Kongtek rituals? The answer is no. Among all those Theravada temples in Bangkok China town, most of them do not have Kongtek rituals. To hold Kongtek rituals in a Theravada temple, the prerequisite is that

the Theravada temple must have the convention of holding Thai Buddhist funeral rites. To conduct Thai Buddhist funeral rites, the Theravada temple must have crematorium within the temple compound. In general, Thai people do not hold funeral rites in one temple, and then move to another temple for cremation. If a Theravada temple does not have the capacity or space to hold Thai Buddhist funeral rites, certainly it cannot accommodate Kongtek rituals. So, only those Theravada temples which have crematorium can hold Kongtek rituals. The actual circumstance in Bangkok Chinatown is that most of Theravada temples there do not have crematorium. When asked which temple has Kongtek ceremony, Sino-Thai in Bangkok Chinatown generally tell me to visit Wat Debsirin and Wat Plabplachai. Both the two temples are located in Yaowarat Chinatown area. They are across to each other on the two sides of Luang Road. Luang Road is between the two temples as the boundary. Wat Plabplachai, a temple of Maha Nikai sect, is built in Ayutthaya period during the reign of King Narai (1656-1682). With a school, a residents' committee, an office of a Sino-Thai benevolent association, a community hall and some sport facilities affiliated to it, this temple serves as community religious, educational, amusement and neighborhood activity center for the masses. Wat Debsirin is a royal temple, which mainly serves the upper class, including royal family, establishment of Thai Sangha hierarchy and business elites. In recent years, funeral of Princess Ratchanee and the Late Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, His Holiness Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara are both held in this temple. Clean, tranquil, elegant, with abundant fund and modernized management, everything in Wat Debsirin emanates noble temperament.

The case of the Golden Buddha Temple (Thai: วัดไตรมิตรวิทยารามวรวิหาร) perfectly embodies the correlation between owning crematorium and holding Kongtek rituals. Initially, Golden Buddha Temple used to have a crematorium, and thus used to hold Thai Buddhist funeral rites and Kongtek ceremony, given its relevance with Sino-Thai citizens living around it. Later on, the crematorium was dismantled to make room for a new cement building to accommodate the Golden Buddha Image and a museum. After the crematorium was dismantled, in Golden Buddha Temple there is not Thai Buddhist funeral or Kongtek rituals any longer.

Only those Theravada temples which have crematorium can hold Kongtek rituals. It does not mean that all Bangkok Sino-Thai have adapted their mortuary tradition of inhumation to the Thai way of cremation. Some rich Sino-Thai still maintain the Chinese tradition of inhumation, although most Sino-Thai cremate their deceased kin today.

3.3.4 The disposition of corpse

Sino-Thai acknowledged the greater ceremony and costs associated with their Kongtek, compared with Thai Buddhist funeral. Indeed, some suggested rising costs were making traditional, Chinese-style funerals so expensive that modern Sino-Thai were being forced to adopt cremation (Basham, 2001: 111). As indicated by Basham, more and more Sino-Thai gave up the Chinese tradition of inhumation out of economic reasons. According to Basham (2001: 111), in 2001, the price of a plot in a cemetery is between 5,0000 to 100,000 or even 200,000 baht. That is the price in 2001. As for the

price today, a Sino-Thai informant remarked, “nowadays most of Sino-Thai cremate the deceased’s body, collect ashes into an urn, and keep the urn of ashes in temples, or if the mourning family is really rich, the urn of ashes will be buried in Chinese cemetery. These days a plot in Chinese cemetery can be very expensive. The price sometimes can be up to over one million baht, or at least it is several hundred thousand baht.”

Inhumation is a very land-consuming way to dispose the death. Bangkok is a densely populated area. Even before 1950, there had not been land left for inhumation. Thai authorities launched a policy that forbade to build cemetery within a 300-kilometer radius around Bangkok. Cemeteries that already existed in Bangkok before that policy can remain there, but were not allowed to extend. Bangkok Sino-Thai who were rich enough to afford inhumation has no choice but to bury their deceased kin in cemeteries located in provinces around Bangkok, like Saraburi, Chonburi and Chachoengsao. Bangkok Sino-Thai from relatively lower economic stratum are forced to adopt Thai mortuary tradition of cremating in Theravada temples.

Local Thai people usually cremate their deceased kin’s body, but bury the body of bad death (dying of accident or mishap without relatives to mourn). Contrariwise, Sino-Thai traditionally inhume their deceased kin, but cremate the body of bad death. After Thai people cremate their deceased kin, they sprinkle some of the ashes to river or sea and keep the rest of ashes in an urn. Some Thai people enshrine the urn on the altar beside Buddha’s altar at home. Some Thai people store the urn in miniature pagoda or simply a small cupboard on the wall in Theravada temples. Comparing with the price of a plot in Sino-Thai’s cemetery, to store ashes in Theravada temples is much cheaper.

To store ashes in Wat Prayun, the price in 2005 started from just one thousand baht (Segaller, 2005: 105). Although Bangkok Sino-Thai now adopt the Thai way of cremation and storing ashes in temples, but unlike Thai people, Sino-Thai rarely sprinkle ashes into river or sea, or store ashes at home. As one Sino-Thai university student explained, traditional values lead them “to give importance to their parent’s corpse, rather than cremate it or throw it into the ocean” (Basham, 2001: 111).

Another factor that forces Sino-Thai to adopt cremation is the prohibitively expensive Chinese coffin. A Chinese coffin is elaborately made from a lot of precious wood, and is made sturdy to resist decay in the underground. The extravagant usage of timber makes a Chinese coffin very heavy. Customarily, Chinese coffin is made from the one and only one intact log. So, Chinese coffins keep the shape of a trunk with one end bigger than the other end. All components of a Chinese coffin are assembled firmly without using any nail. Because the process of handicraft of Chinese coffin involves witchcraft, Chinese coffin has not been made industrially yet. Chinese coffin is customarily made by hand in workshop. Moreover, when Chinese coffins are stored in the shop, the shop owners have to take good care of those Chinese coffins in case of any crack emerging on the wood, because the material of Chinese coffin is very sensitive to sun shine, and temperature and humidity change. All those features of Chinese coffin jointly decide its high price. In Bangkok, a Chinese coffin of lowest quality can even be priced at more than one hundred thousand baht. In coffins shops around Bangkok Chinatown, a moderate Chinese coffin can be charged to five hundred thousand baht. Chinese coffin is too expensive and unflamable to be burnt with the corpse. In

contrast, Thai coffin is very cheap. The price of a Thai coffin hardly exceeds ten thousand baht. In general, the mourning family can get a fancy Thai coffin with merely thousands of baht. Thai coffins are industrially made in factory and usually from cheap materials, such as light plank or plywood. Because the corpse is pushed into crematorium with Thai coffin containing it, Thai coffin must be flammable to make sure that the corpse can quickly burn down into ashes.

To inhume means that the Bangkok Sino-Thai mourning family's budget on a funeral must outnumber one million baht, as an informant estimated. Bangkok Sino-Thai who cannot afford a crypt in Chinese cemetery and a Chinese coffin will hold Kongtek ceremony on the last day of funeral with a bright color Thai coffin prominently displayed in the Kongtek ceremonial hall, and cremate the corpse in the Theravada temple where the Kongtek rituals take place. As it is a tradition in China to cover the Chinese coffin with a special coffin quilt in funeral, some Sino-Thai cover the Thai coffin with traditional Chinese coffin quilt in the duration of the entire funeral, including those Thai Buddhist rites. The motif on Sino-Thai's coffin quilt is immortal crane for deceased women or lion for deceased man, which is typical Chinese.

Despite the tendency that cremation substitutes inhumation, inhumation is still Bangkok Sino-Thai's preferable disposition of deceased kin. If the mourning family is rich enough, they will lay the corpse in a heavy Chinese coffin and bury it in an ostentatiously built graveyard. As much of Thailand's wealth and commercial activity is monopolized by Sino-Thai (Basham, 2001: 129), a coffin and graveyard are still affordable for many Sino-Thai families. Hence, Chinese coffin is still widely used on

Bangkok Sino-Thai's funerals. It is very common to observe that a fancy Chinese coffin is display in a prominent position, while just next to the Chinese coffin, four Theravada monks are chanting Abhidhamma sutra for the deceased.

The design of Chinese coffin has not been influenced by Thai tradition at all. However, the Thai coffin's design has been influenced by Sino-Thai's funeral culture.



Figure 12: Thai coffin modeled on fancy house

(Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/1RyEDFSt8r1WCNWEA>)

This Thai coffin modeled on fancy house in the picture above shares the same idea with Kongtek paper house.

3.3.5 Paper offering

The last section of Kongtek ceremony is the ritual of burning paper offerings. In Thai temples which holds Kongtek rituals, there is conventionally an incinerator. This incinerator is specially for burning paper offerings. It is traditionally believed that those paper items will be sent to the dead in the afterlife. Kongtek paper offerings are a long

range of things you can imagine using in the real world, such as computers, mobile phones, furniture, money, cars and houses.

In Bangkok Sino-Thai's funerals, the paper offerings invariably include a few specific items deemed necessary for the deceased to arrive and be well-off in the next world. These items are to assist the soul in transition and to help it escape from the consequences of sin. Standard items include a paper messenger on horse, a paper crane, a bathroom, some paper clothing, models of servants, paper Chinese-style safes containing paper money, a paper tower for male deceased or a paper lotus pond for female deceased, paper money, paper gold mountains, paper silver mountains, a paper platform for looking back to the place of origin, and also include the house and car, although these two items play no part in the funeral rituals themselves.

The paper messenger on horse is burned after a ritual of dispatching the messenger to take the soul from hell to the Kongtek ritual hall to participate in the following rituals.

The paper crane is dispatched to fetch official travel document from Buddha to allow the deceased' soul to pass the multiple gates in the underworld, one after another. In some Chinese area, after the ritual, the paper crane is floated on nearest waters, while it is burned in some other Chinese area. In Bangkok Chinatown, the paper crane is burned after the ritual of fetching official travel document.

The paper bathroom is for the soul of the deceased to bathe and change clothes. The paper clothing is for the soul to wear after the bath. It is believed that the soul needs to clean itself and wear appropriately before listening to the scriptures in the following rituals. Sometimes, those paper clothing has typical Thai motifs.



Figure 13: paper clothing that has typical Thai motifs and paper banknotes that have Thai digits

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)

Immediately after laying the coffin in the Kongtek ritual hall, a pair of models of servants are put immediately in front of the coffin. One of the pair of models is a female servant, and the another one is a male servant. Both the two paper dolls are dressed traditionally in Chinese style. The male servant is often dressed in Qing or Republican-era costumes. The female servant is attired in the side-closing jackets, trimmed with paper rickrack, and trousers. Both male and female servants have finely formed faces

of papier-mache, neatly painted with distinct features against a rosy, healthy complexion. The males generally have pink faces and the females, white. These servants are intended to serve the deceased in the next world. Usually, in the first a few days of a Bangkok Sino-Thai's funeral, Thai monks chant in Thai traditional way with these two paper servants standing in attendance before the coffin. However, in Bangkok those paper servants do not have to be made in Chinese-style dress. The design is very flexible. Almost all those paper offerings can be customized in whatever way the mourning family wants. For King Rama the 9th's Kongtek ceremony, the paper servants were designed in Thai civil servant's uniform, and the paper house is the miniature of Phra Tamnak Pieum Suk within Klai Kangwon Palace in Prachuap Khiri Khan.



Figure 14: Kongtek paper offering for King Rama the 9th

(Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/jDiyvYUf8jrDTXLT6>)

Paper Chinese-style safes containing paper money is for the deceased to repay the loan to the hell. Each person was born into this world by borrowing money from the

bank of the underworld. Each person stayed alive only so long as the term of repayment had not ended. At death, each person was required to repay in full the loan contracted at birth. On arriving in the next world, the soul of the deceased needs money to pay the heavy ransom demanded by the King of Hell for its release, or to satisfy other creditors waiting there who need funds for their release. Thus, large quantities of money are required. The living relatives do not wish the deceased to be annoyed by demands presented in the other world for the debts of this and therefore furnish a box of cash for the express purpose of liquidating these liabilities.

A paper tower for male deceased or a paper lotus pond for female deceased is the central material item that ritual of spinning the pagoda (挨塔, for deceased man) or spinning lotus pond (挨莲池, for deceased woman) revolves around. In Teochew, there is a proverb, 挨池过桥——死人事, which means spinning lotus pond and crossing bridge ritual are typical funeral affairs. It implies that spinning the pagoda or spinning lotus pond is deemed one of the most representative ritual in the whole Kongtek process. The practices of those two rituals maintain their Chinese tradition quiet well with some minor adaptation. The paper items those rituals revolve around adapts to Thai design. Paper lotus pond is a miniature building with a lotus pond on this building. The purpose of spinning lotus pond ritual is to commemorate mother's hardship and dedication to bring up children. On paper lotus pond used on Bangkok Sino-Thai's funeral, the motif is the combination of Chinese immortals and Thai women under eaves of Thai house. In the end of spinning the pagoda or spinning lotus pond, if the Kongtek is presided by lay ritual specialists, a ritual specialist will poke through doors and windows of paper

pagoda or lotus pond building, which symbolizes that the deceased transcends the confine of the earthly world to ascend to the western paradise. When it is presided by Mahayana monks, the paper pagoda or lotus pond will not be poked through, because poking through them is based on a Taoism custom that is *breaking the earth*.



Figure 15: Sino-Thai's Paper lotus pond with motif in Thai style

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)

Paper money, paper gold mountains and paper silver mountains are to secure the deceased's wealth and comfort in the afterlife. Paper money are papers with golden or silver foil on it, and is folded into the shape of Chinese ancient ingot.

A paper platform for looking back to the place of origin is out of Chinese cosmology of the underworld. On the deceased's travelling in the underworld, there is

a moment when the soul is allowed to view home village, to which the soul can never return and which he must now forget.

The paper car is the modern mean of transportation in the underworld. In the past, a sedan chair is burned to provide transport. As the number eight (in Chinese, 8 sounds like the word *rich*, “发”) is the most favorable luck number, and the number nine (in Chinese, 9 is the homonym of *long live*, “久”) comes second, digit eight or nine often appear on the license plate of paper car or even paper motorcycle. Bangkok Sino-Thai maintain the preference of number eight and nine.



Figure 16: paper cars and motorcycles

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)

The paper house is usually a western house with a garden. Inside the paper house, it is usually equipped with miniature furniture and electrical appliances. Wire and small

light bulbs are installed in paper houses, so when turn on the switch, the paper house will have interior illumination. Bangkok Sino-Thai mostly use this kind of western paper house, as same as the case in Hongkong and many areas in China mainland. Some paper offering workshops make paper replica of Thai traditional elevated house, which is easy to find on internet. In some conservative parts of China, paper house is still the replica of Chinese traditional mansion.



Figure 17: paper house modelled on modern fancy villa

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)

Apart from those necessary items, there can be a variety of paper furniture and electrical appliances, such as sofa, cabinets, bed, drawers, mirror, basin and so on. Even though miniature paper furniture and electrical appliances are equipped inside the paper house already, some mourning families will still buy those paper items in real-life size. Usually the real-life-sized paper furniture is in traditional Chinese style.

The ensemble of paper offerings is a mixture of modern items and Chinese ancient items. Some are in modern style, such as paper house, car, and electrical appliances.

Some others are in ancient Chinese style, such as the paper Chinese-style safes, furniture, money, gold mountains, and silver mountains.

There is no fixed standard concerning what and how to be burned to the deceased. Different ritual specialist practices it in different way. Variations in the content and the design is usually the result of ethnic difference and personal taste. In China, some ritual specialists insist that some specific items should be burned at some specific stages of Kongtek ceremony as indispensable parts of rituals, and after all rituals finished the rest should be incinerated all at once. Some ritual specialists do not care the sequence of burn paper offerings. They instruct the mourning family to burn paper offering all together at the end of Kongtek ceremony. In Bangkok, as I observed in Chinatown, Sino-Thai burn all paper offerings at the same time when Kongtek ceremony ends.

Generally speaking, paper offering in Bangkok maintain its Chineseness quiet well, because many finished and semi-finished products of paper offerings are imported from China or Malaysia. An owner of a paper offering wholesale dealer told me that her stock is all from China. Without any doubt, paper offerings imported from China keep exactly 100% of their Chineseness. Kongtek offerings' adaptation to Thainess is made by Thai local paper offering workshops. Chang Lek Wat Yuan Saphankhao Shop in Soi Phetchakasem 42 is a renowned paper offering workshop. This workshop had made Kongtek offerings for HM Queen Rambhai Bharni, HRH Somdet Phra Srinagarindra Boromarajajonani, HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana, and HRH Princess Bejaratana and King Rama the 9th. The Chinese paper offering craft has long taken root in Bangkok.

Scott (2013: 120) cited a description about a Chinese paper offering workshop located in Bangkok in 1937. It reads as follows:

In Bangkok, where the population is made up of three Chinese to every Siamese, I recall standing before one of these shops for hours watching the construction of the replica of a huge dog, the frame made of thin strips of bamboo... Upon asking the Chinese worker how the dog was to be used, I was told that a wealthy Chinese merchant had just died and that this was a representation of his mastiff, the imitation animal had been ordered by the dead man's relatives... the master would have his favorite dog with him when he reached the spirit world. (Scott, 120)

Paper offerings are to burn. Only by being totally consumed by flame will the object reach its destination, and be usable by the recipient. But how to make sure that a specific soul actually receives the offering targeted for them? As with the practice in China, in Bangkok each paper item is stuck with a yellow paper label on it. The label is akin to the incantation paper slip with yellow background and red font. On the Chinese safes and chests, the label is stuck as a sealing strip to close them. This label is like a waybill on mailing bag. On the yellow label, the name of the deceased, the name of the sender and the date of burning are written. On the “waybill” on Bangkok Sino-Thai’s paper offerings, the word in biggest font at the upper center is 觉皇宝坛, which means Buddha’s altar, because the Buddha is entrusted by Bangkok Sino-Thai to intervene to ensure that the paper offerings can be delivered safely to the deceased. In China, various deities may intervene to ensure the safe delivery. This is a proper responsibility for gods. Earth God can do this, and Guan Yin is also often entrusted to do this. In Bangkok, as Buddhist is the hegemonic belief, Buddha takes the responsibility to supervise the delivering of paper offering. In Bangkok, the “waybill”

is in the similar format with that of Thailand Post, with a ផ្ដើម (addressee) at the upper right corner and a ផ្ដើម (sender) at the upper left corner.



Figure 18: Kongtek paper item sealed with a yellow paper “waybill”

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)



Figure 19: Kongtek paper item sealed with a yellow paper “waybill”

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)

CHAPTER IV: CULTURAL ADAPTATION AND FUNCTIONS OF KONGTEK IN BANGKOK CHINATOWN

Existing mainstream theories about ethnical assimilation are subsumed by Tong Chee Kiong and Chan Kwok Bun (2001) into two categories, namely primordial view and instrumental view. Primordial view believes that ethnic is a superfamily where people holding a specific ethnicity are given at birth, deeply rooted and largely unchangeable. According to primordial view, people's feeling of ethnicity derives from our natural propensity to prefer kin over non-kin, and close kin over distant kin. On the contrary, instrumental view takes human beings as an active agent selectively and strategically presenting and displaying his ethnic emblems in ways he sees fit for surviving and living better. According to instrumental view, ethnicity is just an identity that can be putted on and taken off to signify their difference from other groups, which is like clothes, masks, emblems or badges. To comprehensively investigate an ethnical assimilation phenomenon, those two views should be applied jointly. When analyzing an ethnical assimilation phenomenon, we should put it into a coordinate where primordial and instrumental view are respectively x and y axis. The coordinate of primordial view and instrumentality of ethnicity interpret, define and regulate interpersonal relationships both within and between ethnic groups. Instrumental view is essentially goal-oriented, a mean to an end, while primordial view is an end in itself, in another word, a result of a prior need or emotional state.

In the following parts, I will firstly discuss the cultural adaptation underlying Thai Kongtek, namely how Sino-Thai's culture mingles with Thai indigenous culture. It is

the cultural adaptation that leads to Kongtek's adaptation. Then the functions of Kongtek for Sino-Thai will be closely analyzed.

4.1 the Compromise between Thai and Chinese Culture

This part will analyze the cultural significance underlying tangible instances of Kongtek's adaptation and maintenance among Bangkok Sino-Thai. In the course of analysis, I will jointly apply primordial view and instrumental view.

To adopt primordial view, I will take the comparison between Thai and Chinese culture as the point of departure. On the one hand, Sino-Thai's Chinese culture is different from the culture of their adoptive country, Thailand. On the other hand, despite the difference, Thai culture bear much resemblance to Chinese culture. Because differences between Thai and Chinese tradition constantly remind Sino-Thai of their distance with local Thai in kinship, Sino-Thai feel that they were born difference with local Thai. Their Chinese identity thus needs to be preserved. Kongtek ritual is a channel to express the difference in a secure way, as it is a private occasion. As a result, the core of Kongtek is maintained well by Bangkok Sino-Thai. However, the similarities of worldview and religion make Sino-Thai feel that the cultural gap is not prohibitively wide, so some insignificant minor details can thus be modified so as to keep Kongtek surviving in this adoptive country. Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist temples are both Buddhist after all. That is why Kongtek can take place in Theravada Buddhist temples. Suppose Chinese migrants live in a Christian or Muslim community,

where will they hold Kongtek rituals? By no means, can their Kongtek rituals be adapted to take place in a church or mosque.

From the perspective of instrumental view, the maintenance of Kongtek is out of its value in use, while adaptation is caused by the outliving of some parts' usefulness or by the high costs. Kongtek rituals' value in use is the functions. Instrumental view believes that ethnic identity is strategically selected and presented for the sake of maximizing benefit. Once there is benefit, there will be cost. Kongtek rituals have price. Therefore, the anthropology problem of Kongtek's adaptation becomes a microeconomics problem of benefit and cost. The cost including monetary cost and opportunity cost. The opportunity cost in Thai context is Thai traditional funeral which can totally or partly substitute Kongtek rituals.

4.1.1 The Compromise in Primordial View

To analyze this Kongtek's adaptation in primordial view is to study the ontological difference between Sino-Thai and local Thai people, and the difference of their respective cultures. The ethnical difference between Sino-Thai and local Thai people result in Sino-Thais' natural propensity for Kongtek ritual than Thai local funeral. Inter-marriage blurs the ethnic boundary, which smooths the path for Kongtek's adaptation in Thailand. In primordial view, culture is one of the most significant factors that define people's ethnic identity. The underlying cultural differences lay a foundation for the psychological distance between Sino-Thai and local Thai people. To study the cultural differences can shed some light to Kongtek's adaptation.

4.1.1.1 Intermarriages and Kongtek Tradition

Skinner (1957: 128) noted that intermarriage between the Thai and Chinese was quite common. The first-generation Chinese migrants crossed the sea to make a living in Thailand. They were mostly young man who intended to make money in Thailand and send money back home to support their impoverished families. A considerable number of young Chinese migrants were bachelors when they arrived in Thailand. They had intended to take a chance to make money in Thailand for some years and then go back China. But subsequently China was governed by communist party, and China was closed to the rest of world. As a result, their way back home to China was blocked. They are forced to transform into permanent migrants from temporary sojourners. Some of them married Thai women, although many Chinese migrants at that time still persist to marry the one of pure Chinese blood. Therefore, there are many mixed-blood of Thai and Chinese.

One of my informants is such a mixed-blood. Her grandfather is from Teochew prefecture of China, and her grandmother is a local Thai. Her family held Kongtek rituals when the grandfather passed away. When the grandmother passed away, there was no Kongtek ritual, because she is a local Thai. She speculated that there would not be any Kongtek ritual when grandfather's children, namely her father, uncles and aunts, or grandchildren, namely herself and cousins pass away in the future. The reason she gave was very simple: "we are not จีนแท้ๆ (genuine Chinese)". She did not think that they including herself were are Chinese, but rather they are Thai who uphold Theravada

tradition. Their Chinese blood is very diluted, so they will not have Kongtek ritual in their own funerals.

4.1.1.2 The Different Concept of Merit

As I mentioned in the 3rd Chapter, the original meaning of the loanword Kongtek in Chinese is merit. However, the Chinese notion of merit is not consistent with Thai notion of it. Although Kongtek ceremony is named with the Chinese term of merit, in Thai frame of mind, Kongtek rituals does nothing to accrue merit. Notwithstanding, in Chinese mindset, holding Kongtek rituals is very meritorious, as it is believed to save the deceased parent's soul from rebirth in worse realm. In other words, it is an act of meticulous care for parent and thus an enact of filial piety. Filial piety is one of the sources for merit, as with donation to Buddhism. Besides, in Chinese tradition, reading and listening Buddhist scriptures itself is an act to generate merit.

Merit in Thailand is a totally Buddhist concept. In Thai frame of mind, all merit-making acts has relevance to Buddhism. Tanphaichitr (1979) cited a rank of merit-making activities in the order of their importance in her thesis. The rank according to anthropological research in the central plain of Thailand lists as follows:

1. Becoming a monk
2. Contributing enough money for the construction of a wat (temple)
3. Having a son ordained as a monk
4. Making excursions to the Buddhist shrines throughout Thailand
5. Contributing toward the repair of a wat

6. Giving food daily to the monks and giving food on holy days
7. Becoming a novice
8. Attending the wat on all holy days and obeying the eight laws on these days
9. Obeying the five laws at all times
10. Giving money and clothing to monks at the Thaud Kathin (post-lent festival)

Based on this rank, as having a son ordained as a monk and donating to temples are two prominent ways to make merit, in Thai Buddhist funeral, these two ways of merit making are widely practiced.

In Thai language, the word for merit is บุญ, a loanword from Pali language, the Buddhist language used specially for Buddhist scripture in Thailand. Presumably, before the introduction of Buddhism to Thailand, Thailand did not have the concept of merit. That is why Thai language directly borrowed the word บุญ for the concept of merit from Pali language, as there was not any existing local word for it then. Pali language was bound together with Theravada Buddhism when Buddhism just came to Thailand. However, long before Buddhism was introduced to China or even before the founding of Buddhism, the notion of merit already existed in China. In ancient China, the notion merit already appeared in *I Ching* (Chinese: 易经, literally means Book of Changes. Dated back to 1000–750 BC, it is one of the oldest Chinese classics. It was included in the “five classics” of Confucianism). Merit in Chinese language is Kongtek (Chinese: 功德, Pronunciation in Teochew language: /kon^htek/), from which the name of Kongtek ceremony derives. Initially, the notion merit in ancient China encouraged people to do good deeds and nurture virtue, and as a result, meritorious luck will be

rewarded. Subsequently, with Buddhism entering China, Buddhist notion of merit was incorporated. Unlike Thai language, for the notion merit fused with Buddhist notion, Chinese language did not borrow *punya* (the word for merit in Sanskrit), but rather it continued to use the existing Chinese local term, Kongtek. Those 10 Thai acts of merit making are also accepted as merit-making acts in Chinese tradition, but their importance ranks lower. Influenced by Confucianism, Chinese tradition highly values secular charitable deeds. To some extent, contribution to community in secular ways and charitable deeds are more highly valued as merit-making acts than contribution to Buddhism. In Chinese, there are proverbs like “救人一命胜造七级浮屠 (literally means that saving a person’s life is more meritorious than building a 7-tier pagoda)” and “宁拆十座庙, 不拆一桩婚 (literally means that a meritorious person would rather ruin ten temples than ruin a marriage)”. Chinese monks only occasionally go out for alms collecting, because feeding monks is not a popular way to make merit in China. Chinese monks receive their subsistence from the temple to which they are attached, while Thai monks depend on daily food offerings from the devout which are gathered at their doorstep in the morning. Thai householders adhere to the merit-making way of offer food to monks, but Sino-Thai are not as enthusiastic as local Thai to present alms to monks (Morita, 2007: 130; Punyodyana, 1971: 35). Sino-Thai in Bangkok rarely offer food to monks every morning when Thai monks cruise in alleys to beg alms, so Thai monks usually by-passed Sino-Thai’s settlement on their daily rounds (Morita, 2007: 130). Basham (2001) found that both Sino-Thai and local Thai believe the notion

of merit, but the two groups practice merit-making in different ways. His comparison is so clear that I shall quote it at length as follows:

Perhaps the most significant difference between the Bangkok Thai and Sino-Thai informants in matters of Buddhist merit-making lay in different assumptions as to what actions were most effective in producing merit. When asked “what is the best way to make merit?”, the Thai were most likely to nominate the offering of food to monks, visiting a temple, offering financial support to a temple or helping to build a temple, while the Sino-Thai stressed “helping others” and “giving charity” as the best ways of earning merit. Few Thai females even mentioned charity as a way of earning merit; indeed, one very high-status Thai female made a point of insisting that giving charity was not the same as making merit: “(for example), donating to a hospital is charity; it is not making merit”. The emphasis on making merit by giving charity was particularly strong among Sino-Thai females, consisting 58 percent of their responses. In a typical reply, a 27-year-old female Sino-Thai businesswoman said that one can best make merit by “helping those who really need help. Once they are strong enough, they can really help themselves” (Basham, 2001: 126).

On traditional festivals for Sino-Thai to receive merit from ghosts and gods, Sino-Thai do charitable deeds at the meantime to enhance their merit. Ullambana festival is a traditional Chinese ghost festival, which has taken root in Thailand for long. Every year in Bangkok, there are annual rituals for Ullambana festival held by many Chinese Mahayana temples like Mangkorn temple and Phoman temple, Chinese shrines, and benevolent associations. In those rituals for Ullambana festival, on the one hand, Sino-Thai organize Buddhist sutra chanting, worship ancestors, and offer sacrifice and burn paper offering to unattended wandering ghosts; on the other hand, Sino-Thai donate money, articles for daily use and rice to the poor in the community, whether those poor are Thai or Sino-Thai. Usually, on days of Ullambana festival the scene of providing relief can be observed in Sino-Thai’s associations and their temples. On Sino-Thai’s vegetarian festival, Sino-Thai do not only worship gods, but they also distribute vegetarian food to the poor for free.

Although according to Thai standard, Kongtek rituals do nothing to make merit, from Chinese point of view, it generates a great amount of religious merit, benefiting not only the deceased, but also the living members of the host family, as well as wandering souls in the neighborhood, who can all share in the merits of performing these rites. It is believed that this meritorious rite has three main functions: first, it can expedite the deceased soul's passage through the inevitable legal procedures in the Ten Halls in hell; Second, the deceased can achieve a higher level of reincarnation in the next life in Samsara; and third, if the merit is sufficient, the deceased may even be able to transcend this world and reach the Western Paradise of the Buddha (Tam, 2012: 239). Kongtek rituals invite the deceased's soul to listen to Buddhist scriptures, which provides the last chance for the deceased to hear Buddha's teaching so that it can avoid the suffering in purgatory or bad rebirth. Unlike Thai concept of merit, merit generated by Kongtek ceremony is not from donation to Buddhism, but rather by the act of loving care for the deceased parent's well-being after death, namely an fulfill of filial piety, and chanting Buddhist scriptures.

4.1.1.3 Kongtek as a Symbol of Teochew and Hakka Identity

China is very big. From the same archaic Chinese language, with the Chinese people's migration and mingling with other ethnics, many regional Chinese varieties formed and are spoken by Chinese people from different regions. In southeastern coastal part of China, the linguistic situation is especially complicated. Between those regional Chinese varieties, the pronunciation differs greatly and much of their

colloquial vocabularies are different too. Those regional Chinese varieties are often mutual unintelligible. To take an extreme example, there is probably as much difference between those regional Chinese varieties in southeastern coastal part of China as there is between Italian and French.

Because of geographically proximity, Sino-Thai are mostly from southeastern coastal part of China where there are many mutually unintelligible vernaculars. As a result, when Chinese migrants just arrived in Thailand, they did not only have language barrier with Thai people, but they also had language barrier with their Chinese compatriots who were from other regions of southeastern China. Consequently, Chinese migrants from the region speaking the same Chinese vernacular united together, and formed their own townsman associations. Usually those associations exclude Sino-Thai from other Chinese vernacular regions. Based on which Chinese vernacular region a Sino-Thai is from, all Sino-Thai can be generally subsumed into five sub-groups, namely Teochew, Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien and Hainanese. All those sub-groups of Sino-Thai have their own identities, such as Teochew identity, Cantonese identity, Hakka identity, etc.

In China, as with the linguistic variety of vernaculars, funeral rituals vary from region to region. Kongtek ceremony is observed by Teochew, Hakka, and some of Hokkien in China. Among Teochew, Hakka, and some of Hokkien's Kongtek ceremony in China, the ritual process is almost the same, but those rituals are hold in different Chinese vernaculars.

In Thailand, Sino-Thai's funeral basically follows the mortuary tradition of the Chinese region where their ancestral roots are. Sino-Thai whose roots are from Teochew, Hakka region and some area of Hokkien hold Kongtek rituals for the deceased, but the Kongtek rituals do not necessarily to be conduct in the vernacular of their Chinese hometown. Some Sino-Thai still insist to conduct Kongtek rituals in the vernacular of their Chinese hometown. Teochew Sino-Thai's Kongtek rituals are conducted in Teochew language without any doubt, because they are the predominant mainstream Sino-Thai and most of Kongtek ritual specialists are Teochew speakers. Hakka Sino-Thai and those Hokkien Sino-Thai who observe Kongtek tradition sometimes conduct Kongtek rituals respectively in Hakka and Hokkien dialects, but they are increasingly likely to accept Teochew dialect to be used in their Kongtek rituals. In the 3rd chapter, I referred to the permanent honorary president of a clan association's Kongtek rituals as an instance. The permanent honorary president of a clan association who passed away is a Hakka Sino-Thai. In his Kongtek rituals, 7 Chinese Mahayana monks chanted Buddhist sutras in Sanskrit and Teochew language, the undertaker who officiated the Kongtek rituals announced the process of Kongtek rituals in Teochew dialect, the relatives read the funeral speeches in Thai language, and at last the addresses delivered by some leaders of the clan association were in Hakka dialect and Mandarin. A leader of the clan association who was present at that entire Kongtek ceremony told me that he sat in the hall from afternoon to night, but most of the time he did not understand the language of the ceremony.

Some Hokkien people in China do not hold Kongtek rituals. For example, Gutian is a northern Hokkien prefecture far from Teochew area. Hokkien people in Gutian do not have the tradition of Kongtek, and instead their mortuary ritual is much simpler than Kongtek. I interviewed a Sino-Thai old lady. She was born in Thailand, and was sent to study in her parents' homeland, Hokkien, during the cold war period. When the cold war ended, she was allowed to come back to Thailand by the government. After came back to Thailand, she has been running her own business and hold a concurrent post as the headteacher of a Chinese school. When asked about Kongtek rituals, she told me as follows:

We do not hold Kongtek rituals. We Hokkien people from Gutian hold funeral rituals according to the tradition in our hometown. On the day to hold funeral procession, we simply wear mourning garbs in the morning, offer sacrifices, pay the deceased homage in order according to how close the mourner's kinship is with the deceased, and read elegiac speeches. Ours is different from them Teochew people's.

Funeral rituals of Hainan people in China are different from those of Teochew people. As with the difference existing in China, Hainanese Sino-Thai's funeral rituals are different from those of Teochew, Hakka or Hokkien Sino-Thai's Kongtek. Crossing bridge rite is an indispensable, and one of the most impressive and representative part of Kongtek rituals. In Teochew, there is a proverb, 挨池过桥——死人事, which means spinning lotus pond and crossing bridge ritual are typical funeral affairs. It can be said that without crossing bridge rite, a funeral ceremony cannot be considered as a Kongtek ceremony. A Thai born Hainanese Sino-Thai showed me photos of the funeral for her grandfather a few years ago. Her grandfather passed away in Thailand, and the funeral took place in Thailand. They worship ancestors, wear mourning garbs, offer sacrifice

and burning paper offerings as same as Teochew people do. She recalled that her grandmother told her it was a Kongtek ceremony. They name it as Kongtek following the Teochew term, but there was not crossing bridge rite at all.

These days differences of mortuary practice among those Sino-Thai sub-groups still exist, but the differences are gradually vanishing. Mortuary practices among those Sino-Thai sub-groups are converging to Teochew Sino-Thai's Kongtek ceremony. This phenomenon reflects that the identities of sub-groups divided by different Chinese dialects are merging into a holistic identity for all Sino-Thai. Through mortuary rituals, Sino-Thai are less stress on their respective Teochew, Hakka, Hokkien, Hainanese or Cantonese identity, but rather on holistic Chinese identity. This is caused by the changing of linguistic landscape in Thailand. The proficiency of Sino-Thai's vernacular Chinese dialects is continually declining, while Mandarin have been flourishing in Bangkok, because of a growing demand for Mandarin fluency at work, the government's promotion of Mandarin education from kindergarten to graduate school, and an increasing enrolment in Mandarin classes in formal and non-formal education (Chokkajitsumpun, 2001: 203). Language barrier between these Sino-Thai sub-groups has collapsed, because they speak Thai or Mandarin as lingua franca. Once when I observed a Kongtek ceremony, before the ceremony began, sitting outside the Kongtek hall, two middle aged man were exchanging experience of using a smartphone application to learn Mandarin. In other words, Mandarin is substituting Teochew, Hakka, Cantonese, Hokkien and Hainanese dialects among Sino-Thai. Since subdivision of Sino-Thai's identity is based on Chinese dialects, the decline of Chinese

dialects undermines the base of this subdivision. Consequently, the tendency of Sino-Thai identity's convergence emerged. This convergence of Sino-Thai's identity is manifesting in the convergence of Sino-Thai's Kongtek rituals. Previously Kongtek is the manifestation of subdivided identity especially for Teochew, Hakka and some Hokkien Sino-Thai, but now Kongtek gradually becomes a manifestation of holistic Chinese identity for Sino-Thai overall.

4.1.1.4 The Convention of Filial Piety

Filial piety has long been a tenet of traditional Chinese culture and is a core concept of Confucianism. It has very strong vitality in Thailand. When Sino-Thai's ostensible tangible customs keep acculturating in Thailand, filial piety maintains very well among Sino-Thai, since it has deeply engrained in their culture.

China has many traditional festivals. Sino-Thai brought those traditional Chinese festivals to Thailand. Those Chinese festivals are conditionally maintained in Thailand. Those Chinese festivals embodies filial piety and involves ancestral worship are kept by Sino-Thai, while those Chinese festivals commemorating other things like romantic love or loyal imperial minister are left out. The Chinese New Year, Qing Ming(Thai: วันชิงเหม้ง, Chinese: 清明节), Chun Yuan(Thai: วันสารทจีน, Chinese: 中元节) and Mid-Autumn festivals(Thai: เทศกาลไหว้พระจันทร์, Chinese: 中秋节) are celebrated on a grand scale in Bangkok by Sino-Thai. Chinese New Year is the festival for family reunion. On Chinese New Year, children go back home to visit parents and grandparents, and worship ancestors all together. Qing Ming is a festival specially for Sino-Thai to visit

ancestors' graveyard and pay homage. Chun Yuan festival is for Sino-Thai to send offerings to ancestors and feed wandering ghosts. Mid-Autumn festival is on a full moon day. The round full moon symbolizes the reunion of family. On that day, children should spend time with parents and grandparents, and worship ancestors.

Filial piety idea is pervasive all over Kongtek ritual. The origin of Kongtek custom according to folk account is related to a filial story. As a mortuary ritual to meticulous care for parent's well-being after death, Kongtek ceremony itself is an enact of filial piety. The extravagant expenditure on parent's funeral is regarded as a criterion to judge a Sino-Thai's filial piety. Filial piety is a desirable reputation, which is conducive to gain respect and social status. Kongtek ceremony is very conspicuous. Therefore, Kongtek ceremony is perfect for Sino-Thai to demonstrate their filial piety. Furthermore, the Kongtek section of *spinning pagoda (for deceased man) or spinning lotus pond (for deceased woman)* reflects the theme of fertility and sexual symbolism. Note that regenerating human life to carry on family name is a crucial principle of Confucian filial piety.

It is said that when the tradition of Kongtek just began to emerge, it was inspired by the Buddhist story of *Maudgalyayana Rescuing His Mother* (目连救母). This story was introduced to China from India, dating back to the 3rd or 4th century CE, as a part of Ullambana Sutra which was translated into Chinese from Indic. This story's counterpart in Theravada scripture is a story with similar plot in Pali Canon, which recounts that the disciple Sāriputta rescuing his deceased mother from his previous fifth life as an act of filial piety. Originally in the translated Chinese sutra, immediately after

Maudgalyayana obtained extra-sensory abilities, he applied those extra-sensory abilities to search for his deceased parents. Maudgalyayana found that his deceased mother had reborn to be a preta (hungry ghost). She was suffering from acute starving and thirsty. Maudgalyayana tried to help her by offering her food. Unfortunately, as a hungry ghost, her throat was too thin to swallow the food, and when the food reached her mouth, the fire from her mouth burned the food into coal. Maudgalyayana then sought for help from the Buddha. Buddha taught him that the way to save his mother was to offer food to and serve sangha on the 15th day of the seventh month whereby the sangha transfers the merits to the deceased parents. Maudgalyayana did as Buddha told, and his mother was thus relieved. This original translated Chinese account is very filial pious already. Later on, this story was localized further to fit into Confucian culture. In new narration, this story was enriched with many details and was made thoroughly Chinese. Maudgalyayana was given a typical Chinese nickname, *Radish*, and his mother was named a Chinese name, Liu Qingti. The mother fell into purgatory, rather than reborn as a preta. In new narration, Buddha gave Maudgalyayana a divine rod. Maudgalyayana used the rod to break blockades in hell, fight with hellish soldiers, smash the prison wall, and save the mother. This folk narrative of Maudgalyayana fighting in hell was influenced by a Taoism custom, *breaking the earth*. This story in China folk narration is no longer making merit to save the mother, but rather it became that a filial son saves his mother by his own courage and super nature power. In Kongtek ceremony presided by lay Buddhist ritual specialists, the Buddhist saga of Maudgalyayana rescuing his mother (the fighting version) is usually enacted in the form

of ritual dancing. Through the reenactment of the Maudgalyayana story, the soul can be released from the sufferings of the hells. However, the logic of the rite suggests that the soul should have been guaranteed salvation in the previous sections. Therefore, the emphasis on the story of Maudgalyayana probably serves the didactic purpose of reinforcing the traditional Confucian virtue of filial piety (Tam, 2012: 255).

In Confucian ancient classics, filial piety is expounded in roughly two twofold standards, that is, filial piety before death and after death.

Confucius said to his disciples “that parents, when alive, be served according to propriety; that, when dead, they should be buried according to propriety; and that they should be sacrificed to according to propriety” and that “the service which a filial son does to his parents is as follows: In his general conduct to them, he manifests the utmost reverence. In his nourishing of them, his endeavor is to give them the utmost pleasure. When they are ill, he feels the greatest anxiety. In mourning for them (dead), he exhibits every demonstration of grief. In sacrificing to them, he displays the utmost solemnity. When a son is complete in these five things, (he may be pronounced) able to serve his parents.”

The *Book of Rites* (Chinese: 礼记), one of Confucian classics expounds “in three ways is a filial son's service of his parents shown - while they are alive, by nourishing them; when they are dead, by all the rites of mourning; and when the mourning is over by sacrificing to them. In his nourishing them we see his natural obedience; in his funeral rites we see his sorrow; in his sacrifices we see his reverence and observance of the (proper) seasons. In these three ways we see the practice of a filial son.”

According to Confucian teaching, a proper funeral is indispensable to fulfill filial obligation, as well as serving parents properly before they pass away. Among Bangkok Sino-Thai, the funeral of the elderly is surely held by descendants as long as the elderly has any descendants who can afford to a funeral. If a young person dies without any child who is able to hold a funeral, the funeral is normally held by the peers or the elders. Descendants to hold funeral for the elderly is an act of filial piety, but the elders to hold funeral for the young is merely an unfortunate event. So, there is not any Kongtek ceremony in a young person's funeral. What makes the difference is filial piety. Only in case that the funeral embodies filial piety, can Kongtek ceremony be held as a part of funeral. Therefore, Kongtek ceremony is far beyond the religious meaning of releasing the soul from purgatory. It can be said that Kongtek rituals benefit more to the living kin than to the dead. The living kin do not only hold Kongtek ceremony for dead, but also it is for themselves. They hold Kongtek to reflect their filial piety, and thus get recognition from Sino-Thai community. Spending a great amount of money on parent's funeral is a common way to display children's filial piety. If parent's funeral is too frugal, the children are likely to be criticized as lack of filial piety.

Here I do not mean that Thai people do not have filial piety. Indeed, Thai culture does value family and ancestor very much. In fact, respect and obedience to elders, trust in their wisdom and protection, and the need to return favors received are all strong themes in Thai culture (Morita, 2007: 135). However, Thai and Chinese culture practice filial piety in different ways. Morita (2007: 125) quoted a discourse about filial piety in Thai culture as follows:

Children are raised in a spirit of moral obligation giving the impression that their upbringing creates a kind of debt which the children have to repay by taking care of their parents when they are old... The child has to reciprocate for the parental care, protection, indulgence and dependence by showing his respect, obedience, conformity and a proper sense of obligation.

Unlike Chinese filial piety which is counseled and regulated by Confucianism, filial piety in Thai culture is deeply shaped by Theravada Buddhism. Thai filial piety encourage son to be ordained as a monk to repay parents' moral debt, especially for mother who cannot enter monkhood by herself as a woman. Contrariwise, Chinese filial piety blocks the children from being ordained into Buddhist priesthood, especially the sons, because in Chinese culture being ordained into Buddhist priesthood signifies one's renunciation of family. Moreover, in Chinese culture to be a monk or nun is generally a life-long decision, which implies that if the son is ordained to be monk, he cannot get marry or have any child throughout his life. Note that according to Confucian filial piety, there is an injunction that sons produce progeny to honor the father and to carry on the family line. The Confucian philosopher, Mencius, made a clear statement that "there are three ways to be unfilial, the worst is not to produce off-spring".

Thai filial piety only regulates the relation among immediate family, while Chinese filial piety values the long family lineage by emphasizing on ancestral worship. In another words, Thai people appear to value respect and obligation in the family and towards elders, while Thai do not commemorate their further ancestors and that they did not use family names until the beginning of the 20th century (Morita, 2007: 136). Thai children should visit parents regularly, help them with their work or send them money, and after his parents' death, he should visit the temple regularly and make merit

for them (Morita, 2007: 136). Thai people make merit for the deceased immediate family members. In Thai case, the generation span to commemorate is very limited. Sino-Thai regarded the family as the keystone of society, and saw it as extending back into time for innumerable generations. The ordinary Chinese stood in a temporal continuum of kin: he was not only grateful to his ancestors for what his immediate family had, but was responsible to them for what he did to further the fortune of his family lineage. His primary goal was not individual salvation, but lineage survival and advancement (Skinner 1957: 92-3).

Sino-Thai adopt both Thai and Chinese way to express their filial piety. When mourning the deceased parent, they on the one hand hold Kongtek ceremony, and on the other hand, take Thai ways to dedicate merit to the deceased, including feeding and donating to monks, chanting of Pali funeral texts, water pouring and the use of sacred thread. Perhaps it is sufficient to reiterate that mortuary rituals are the nexus between Chinese popular religion and Thai Buddhism, to the extent that Buddhist merit-making can be put in the service of filial piety (Hill, 2001: 310). Despite that filial piety is a deep-rooted value among Sino-Thai, some practices presenting filial piety in Kongtek rituals has been left out. In China, on the buddha's altar in Kongtek hall successive generations of ancestors' tablets are usually placed beside buddhas' images, bodhisattva's images and local deities' images. In Bangkok, on the buddha's altar in Kongtek hall, there are generally only buddhas' and bodhisattva's images. Ancestors' tablets are not worshiped at Sino-Thai's Kongtek ceremony.

As mentioned above, sons are given the responsibility by filial piety to produce progeny to honor the family name and to carry on the family line. Kongtek section of *spinning pagoda (for deceased man)* or *spinning lotus pond (for deceased woman)* reflects the theme of fertility and sexual symbolism. This section is conditional. If the deceased is male, this section is *spinning pagoda*, and accordingly a paper pagoda is used as the central material item. If the deceased is female, this section is *spinning lotus pond*, and accordingly a paper lotus pond is used as the central material item. On the two photos below, the two rites are respectively spinning pagoda and spinning lotus pond. The paper pagoda symbolizes an erect phallus, while the paper lotus pond symbolizes female genitals. This rite commemorates that the deceased fulfilled the fundamental obligation to give birth to and bring up children, and at meantime it calls children's attention to further the family lineage by bearing offspring. In Thai culture, fertility and sexual symbolism never presents in Thai people's funeral, but rather it is presented by a kind of amulet, ปลัดขิก. It is a phallus shape wood amulet, and is believed to have magic power to bring fertility in the domain of reproduce and business. It is prevalent among Thai common people all around Thailand, from north to south, but Thai establishment frowns upon it (Cornwel-Smith and Goss, 2005). I have been told by some Sino-Thai informants that Sino-Thai did not believe, wear this kind of amulet or put it in store as a talisman. The theme of fertility and sexual symbolism reflects perennial human need of reproduction. Assuredly, it exists in both Thai and Chinese culture, but it is expressed in different ways. In this case, Chinese way is relatively more reserved, but Thai way is more sexually explicit, which is why this Thai amulet is

frowned up by Thai elites. In respect of fertility and sexual symbolism, Sino-Thai rejected Thai way and maintained Chinese way.



Figure 20: spinning lotus pond (for deceased woman)

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)



Figure 21: spinning pagoda (for deceased man)

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)

In Chinese culture, tear is very necessary on funeral. For Chinese, to shed tear on funeral is a virtue. “In mourning for them (dead), he exhibits every demonstration of grief” (a quote from Confucius). As said by Confucius, a filial child should exhibit grief

publicly. The most instinctive way to show grief is weeping. In Kongtek rituals in China, crying is inevitable. However, in Bangkok Sino-Thai's Kongtek ceremony, weeping is not often observed. This is influenced by Thai mortuary culture. Thai culture restrains Thai people to weep in funeral. In Thailand, openly expressing emotion in public like laughing, crying or talking loudly, is regarded as impoliteness rather than virtue. Thai people believe that weeping can hurt the dead's spirit, interfere with its reincarnation and cause the dead to reincarnate in worse realm. Every tear falls on the deceased's soul, and penetrates the soul like a bullet. Another version about tear in Thailand is that if the mourner cry on funeral, the spirit will have to swim through mourner's tears (Segaller, 2005: 43). The sound of weeping can make the soul reluctant to leave, not able to rebirth to a better realm, and permanently wander in the underworld. Even though Sino-Thai has accepted this Thai convention, sometimes Sino-Thai are still unable to restrain themselves from crying, especially if the Kongtek is presided by lay ritual specialists and the mourner can understand the Chinese dialect used to chant Kongtek scriptures. Those Kongtek scriptures sang by lay ritual specialists with musical accompaniment are very touching.

4.1.1.5 Buddhism's Nexus to Death in Thai and Chinese Culture

Evidence from funerals and other Chinese engagements with both religious traditions, Chinese and Thai, suggests that Chinese descendants most often incorporate Thai customs into their religious life when such practices and beliefs are consonant with pre-existing Chinese concerns, or when there is a precedent in Chinese tradition for

doing so, as in the chanting of monks at funerals (Hill, 1992: 327). The chanting of monks has been a funeral custom in Thailand for centuries. Likewise, the chanting of monks has been a funeral custom in China since ancient imperial times. Because Buddhist priest's chanting has long been a Chinese mortuary tradition, for Sino-Thai, four Theravada Buddhist monks chanting on funeral is not too exotic to accept. This similarity paves the way for Sino-Thai to adopt Thai funeral chanting. When Sino-Thai incorporated the Thai way of inviting four Theravada monks to chant for funeral, they also maintained Chinese tradition of Kongtek rituals, as Kongtek rituals are the occasions for Chinese Buddhist chanting. However, among Bangkok Sino-Thai, lineal descendants' temporary ordination to be Buddhist novices or monks for the deceased is not very common. Because there is no precedent in Chinese tradition for doing so, and it contradicts with Confucian principle of filial piety which is repeatedly reiterated by Kongtek rituals.

Why can Sino-Thai widely change their inhumation to cremation? One of the reasons is the basic similarities between Thai and Chinese religion. The religious similarities are conducive to this alteration. Religion affects many practices around dying, funerals and mourning; teachings about soul can have implications for treatment of the corpse. World religions that teach resurrection of the body (Islam, Judaism, Christianity) have traditionally buried. Those that entertain rather vaguer afterlife beliefs, especially those concerned with an immortal soul, such as Taoism, have not resisted the introduction of cremation. Religions that teach reincarnation, such as Buddhist and Hinduism, tend to cremate (Walter, 2012: 134). Muslim have lived in

Bangkok for long. Their dwelling history in Bangkok is by no means shorter than it of Sino-Thai. However, their Islam belief makes them perpetuate their Muslim mortuary tradition in Thailand without being acculturated. Islam is largely different with Buddhism, which makes it nearly impossible for adaptation. Bangkok Muslim invariably inhume their dead rather than cremating. In China, Confucianism resists cremation. Confucianism considers it important for the deceased to go intact into the other world, as a Confucian dictum says, “One should not inflict harm to one’s body, not even hair and skin because they were inherited from parents.” However, since Chinese popular religion is a synthesis of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, beside Confucianism, there are two prevalent beliefs among Chinese and Sino-Thai, namely Buddhism and Taoism. Buddhist advocates cremation. Taoism concerns with immortal soul, so it does not resist cremation. Sino-Thai has three options to rationalize their behavior, among which only Confucianism resists cremation, while Buddhism and Taoism are in favor of cremation. When Sino-Thai need to rationalize cremation in religious level, they will simply turn to Taoism or Buddhism.

That Sino-Thai hold Kongtek rituals in Theravada temples is facilitated by the fact that Chinese has long been trusting Buddhism to intervene funeral. While Sino-Thai routinely celebrate marriages in hotels and Chinese association hall, such sites, including residences, are seen as inappropriate for mortuary rites (Hill, 2001: 305). Segaller (2005: 36) recount that if a Thai dies outside the home, whether in hospital, in an accident, or from other causes, the body will always be taken straight to a temple. In China, if so, the body will not be taken back home as well, but straightly to the

undertaker's. This similarity reflects that both Thai and Chinese culture take death, especially bad death, as a potential source of pollution and danger. Whether in Thai or Thai culture, the pollution and danger caused by a normal death is multiplied in the case of a bad death (Ladwig and Williams, 2012: 12). Therefore, the body of bad death will not be taken back home. The people dying of bad death, are likely to become malevolent ghost, as bad death is untimely, premature or violent. Buddhist monks are traditionally entrusted by both Thai and Chinese to conduct rites and battle the potential pollution caused by bad death. Buddhist monks are immune to ghost's attack, because they are considered to be socially dead and are therefore equipped to deal with death as an exceptional situation. Consequently, Buddhist people like Theravada monks, Mahayana monks and lay Buddhist rituals specialists are considered as appropriate people to handle funeral rituals, and Buddhist temples are the right venue for funeral to avoid pollution and danger from the death. For Chinese, Kongtek rituals conducted by Buddhist people is capable of transforming the malevolent soul into a benign ancestor who is suitable for reverence and filial care in the afterworld. Even if the death is natural death, Sino-Thai move the corpse to Theravada temples soon after the death.

4.1.1.6 Cosmology and Imagination of Death

Kongtek rituals are a sequence of rites which release the deceased's soul from the hell and lead it to better rebirth or to the heaven step by step. Therefore, Kongtek rituals inevitably reflect traditional Chinese cosmology, namely the imagination of hell, heaven and death. General speaking, traditional Chinese cosmology reflected by

Kongtek rituals is similar to that of Thai. The differences scatter in many details. The similarities make Kongtek rituals religiously compatible in Thailand, and smooth the path for Kongtek rituals to be practiced in Thailand. Despite the overall cosmological similarities, the differences exist in many details. Those differences contribute to keep Kongtek ritual practices distinct from those of Thai Buddhist funeral rites. For a custom to be maintained in an exotic foreign country, the cultural content underlying it should not be too incompatible with the adoptive country, but meanwhile should not be totally same with that of the adoptive country. To express one's unique ethnic identity in a foreign country, one will express it via one's traditional custom which must be neither irreconcilable with nor totally same to any custom in the adoptive country.

Cosmological similarities between Thai and Chinese make Kongtek rituals not too weird to be practiced in Thailand.

Some similarities exist in Buddhist cosmology shared by Thailand and China. Thai Theravada and Chinese Mahayana Buddhist cosmologies are almost the same. *Three Worlds According to King Ruang* is a religious didactic book compiled by a King of Sukhothai kingdom. Phra Malai scripture is an ancient Thai Buddhist literature recounting a magical Theravada monk's traveling in heaven and hell. It elaborately depicts Thai people's imagination of heaven, earth and hell. In traditional Thai cosmology, this world is comprised of hierarchical thirty-one planes of existence. Some planes are inhabited by a variety of ghosts, some by demons, one by human, some by demi-gods and heavenly beings, etc. With sun and moon revolve around it, *Mount Meru*, the extremely tall mountain, is at the center. On the top of Mount Meru, it is the palace

of Indra, the Heavenly King and the active protector of Buddhism, who is in charge of many heavenly beings. The heaven closely above Indra's heaven is the abode of bodhisattva Maitreya. Around Mount Meru, beyond seven layers of loop-like mountain ranges and seas, there are four continents. Chinese and Thai traditional cosmology share many things in common, since they were both shaped by Buddhism. In Thai and Chinese traditional cosmology, the hierarchy of thirty-one planes of existence and the layout of the world are identical. Mount Meru image is a prevalent decorative sculpture in Chinese temples. The four continents are frequently referred to by Chinese classical literatures, such as *Journey to the West*. The counterpart of Indra in Chinese traditional cosmology is *Jade Emperor* (Chinese: 玉皇大帝), the ruler of heaven, whose image is like an earthly Chinese emperor, wearing imperial robe, sitting on throne. His heavenly royal court is like an earthly royal court. *Jade Emperor's* heavenly ministers and those deities he governs usually have their counterpart in Thai traditional cosmology. A same deity, in Thai cosmology might be named with Indian name and in Indian appearance, but in Chinese cosmology normally takes the prototype from real Chinese historical figures who can be hero, saint, loyal imperial officials or renowned filial children. To take the four heavenly guardians as an example, in Chinese they take the prototype of four Chinese imperial generals, while in Thai cosmology they are purely Indian. To draw an analogy between traditional cosmology and movie, Thai cosmology brought in both screenplay and cast from India, but Chinese cosmology slightly adapted the Indian screenplay and cast Chinese local actors and actresses. This cosmology is usually displayed as pictures on the curtain behind of buddha's altar in Kongtek hall. On those

pictures, there are lively depiction of sufferings in multiple hells, hungry ghosts' realm and the utmost happiness in western paradise. Among those cosmological pictures, with fire torture, thorn trees, bizarre hell animals, skinny hungry ghost and so on, multiple hells and hungry ghosts' realm are very like the depiction by Thai temple's mural paintings and statues.

Cosmological similarities also exist in Thai and Chinese local spirit cults. Both Thai and Chinese religions are very eclectic. Buddhism is only a component in these two religious synthetics. Theoretically, orthodox Buddhism deny the existence of soul, as it teaches emptiness and non-self. In Buddhism, the term *anattā* (Pali) or *anātman* (Sanskrit) refers to the doctrine of "non-self", that there is no unchanging, permanent self, soul or essence in living beings. However, because no matter in Thailand or China, Buddhism is a religion brought in from foreign countries, before the entering of Buddhism, Thailand and China each already had the concept of soul in their indigenous belief. The indigenous concept of soul in Thailand is *khwǎn*(ขวัญ), and in China is *hun* and *po*(魂魄). In Thailand, *khwǎn* as the immaterial components of a deceased person was very important at Thai people's funeral in pre-Buddhist times of Thailand. Terwiel (1979) deduced that bird-burial had long been practiced by at least sections of ancient Thai people before Theravada Buddhism spread in Thailand. Bird-burial in ancient Thailand is to place the corpse of the deceased kin on an open ground and let flocks of crows and vultures to devour it. Birds pick clean the corpse and fly into the sky with the deceased's flesh in their stomachs, which symbolizes that birds take the deceased's *khwǎn* to the heaven. At that time, Thai believed that every person has multiple *khwǎns*.

The life after death involved groups of *khwǎns*, and each destined for different goals. Some *khwǎns* were believed to be taken to heaven by birds, some remained in the grave where the bones left by bird were interred in a coffin or earthenware jar, and some went to the ancestor's altar. Thai believe that if a living person lost parts of *khwǎns*, this living person will get unlucky or sick, and if a living person's multiple *khwǎns* all depart, this living person will die. Chinese name immaterial components or souls of a deceased as *hun* and *po*(魂魄). *Hun* and *po*(魂魄) consists of *hun*(魂) and *po*(魄), which are two kinds of souls affiliated to each one person. *Hun* literally means cloud-soul; *Po* literally means white-soul. The former is intelligent spirit which is destined to return to heaven; The latter is the body and the animal soul which is destined to return to the earth. Chinese traditional religion believes that every people have three *Huns* and seven *Pos*. After a person dies, among all these three *Huns* and seven *Pos*, one *Hun* and two *Pos* go to the tomb with the dead body, another one *Hun* and two *Pos* go to Buddha's Western Paradise or the hell to undergo complicate trials which decide the rebirth according to the person's karma, and the remaining one *Hun* and three *Pos* go the ancestral altar to be a family patron god. This Chinese concept of multiple souls is very akin to Thai *khwǎns*. Like Thai *khwǎns*, the *Hun* and *Po*'s departure from the body is also the cause of disease, bad luck and dead. From a linguistic perspective, *hun*(魂)'s reconstructed archaic pronunciation sounds very similar to *khwǎn* (𑖦𑖩𑖫). Because of the correspondence of both connotation and pronunciation, the Thai word *khwǎn* (𑖦𑖩𑖫) and Chinese word 魂 (*hun*) are tremendously likely to share the same etymology

(Manomaivibool, 1975: 318), whether one is the loanword from the another or the two are cognate words.

Based on the belief of eternal souls, Kongtek rituals begin with issuing the official travel document and sending the official travel document to summon parts of these souls that have departed from the dead body. The two paper dolls are placed beside the coffin all along Sino-Thai's funeral as servants, among which one is the attendant for *Hun*, and another is the attendant for *Po*.

After Theravada Buddhism obtained the dominance in Thailand, Theravada Buddhism quickly substituted *khwǎn* to define a typical Thai funeral. The introducing of Buddhism to Thailand did not cause the demise of *khwǎn* belief. Conversely, one of the reasons Buddhist cosmographies fits so well into Thailand is that it spared a place for indigenous cults, such as *khwǎn* belief. *Khwǎn* is continuously playing an important role in many Thai local cult rituals until today, but it has disappeared at Thai funerals. Theravada Buddhism believes that every person has impermanent consciousness (Thai: วิญญาณ, Pali: *viññāṇa*), but not any permanent soul. In Thai funeral today, four monks are invited to recite parts of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka (one of three components of Pali Canon), a practice aimed at persuading the deceased' consciousness to depart the dead body and set out for rebirth. The underlying belief is that the spirit of the deceased is hanging around the coffin and needs to be urged to go and get reborn. And so, the chanting of the Abhidhamma is aimed at informing the spirit that the material form that make up its corpse are no use to it anymore and so it is time to let go of attachment to it and move on. Thai people believe that Thai monks' chanting provides the last chance

for the deceased's consciousness to listen to Buddha's teaching. If hopefully the deceased's consciousness gets enlightened after listening the chant, it will rebirth as a divine being to live in one of heaven realm. Likewise, Kongtek rituals' end is to see the deceased's souls off, and lead the its souls to rebirth or even skip the rebirth to reach Western Paradise directly. While some might see in these practices evidence for conceptual or ideological compatibility between Theravada Buddhism and Chinese popular religion, there are differences in the cosmological and ontological premises of the two traditions. Even the apparent resemblance in notions of rebirth, more or less explicit in both Chinese and Thai mortuary rituals, is illusory. The Chinese soul may be reborn in the Western Paradise, or for the less fortune, here on earth. For descendants, the soul is also manifest in the ancestral tablet and in the grave. This triple soul, the object of filial rituals for ancestors, is a far cry from the Thai Buddhist notion of *viññāṇa*, or consciousness, which is central to constructs of karma, but, of course, never commemorated after death (Hill, 2001: 310).

Buddhism, whether Theravada or Mahayana, believes that on spatial level, a basic cosmological unit is a set of thirty-one planes of existence, that a world consists of numerous such units, and that there parallelly exists innumerable such worlds in the universe; on temporal level, every basic spatial unit undergoes repeatedly cycle of human beings' degeneration, a buddha's advent, enlightenment and teaching dharma, human beings' revival after learning the dharma, human beings' betrayal of the present dharma, the extreme chaos of the world, a bodhisattva's incarnation to be a man, the bodhisattva's enlightenment to be a new buddha and bring the new dharma to people,

and human beings' temporarily revival. Each world is taught by a buddha, so innumerable buddhas exist in innumerable worlds. Theravada Buddhism only focus on the world we live in, namely the world taught by the historical Buddha (Gautama Buddha), and it rarely mention other worlds. Contrariwise, Mahayana Buddhism encourages people to embrace salvation from buddhas of other worlds. Both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism have the concept of *three buddhas*, but their connotations are different. Theravada *three-buddha* notion is temporal, but the Mahayana one is spatial. In Theravada school, the *three buddhas* are Dīpankara who is one of numerous previous Buddhas, Gautama who is the historical Buddha, and Maitreya who will be the next Buddha in the future, while in Mahayana school, the *three buddhas* are Gautama who is the historical Buddha and two buddhas who temporally co-exist with Gautama Buddha but are in different worlds. In many Chinese Mahayana temples, *three buddhas*' images are placed together. According to Theravada Buddhism, after death in a world, the rebirth will take place in one of thirty-one planes of existence in the same world. Chinese Mahayana Buddhism generally preaches that to avoid suffering, human beings do not need to be meritoriously perfect to reincarnate in an upper plane of the thirty-one planes in our world. It is possible for a wretch to not fall into hell, hungry ghost or animal plane to undergo retribution. Our world is full of misery, because it is in the period when human beings are betraying the present dharma, which is making our world degenerate. Luckily, worlds of the other two buddhas are blissful, and moreover, buddhas there are very kind to welcome dwellers from our world with open arms. One of these two buddhas is Amitābha Buddha, the buddha in a world called Western

Paradise, as it is believed in the west to our own world. With utmost bliss and Amitābha Buddha and bodhisattva's teaching by themselves, even the human beings' plane in Western Paradise is as good as our world's heavens. There is not hungry ghost and hell in that world. By comparison, people in our world are like refugees. Even if the deceased goes to the human being's plane in Western Paradise, it is the resettlement good enough. Kongtek rituals are to send the deceased to Western Paradise. When a person dies, a white lotus will emerge in Western Paradise. If mourning children hold Kongtek for the deceased, the white lotus will thrive there, and the deceased will reach there. Otherwise, that lotus will fade, and the deceased will have to partake in the cycle of life in this world again.

Concerning death and rebirth, on doctrine level, Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism distinctly contradict each other, but on practice level, they are quite similar. Antarābhava state is the transitional state between death and rebirth. After death, those people with immense guilt fall to purgatory planes immediately, those exceptionally good people with immense good karma ascend to heavenly planes immediately, and the rest of people who constitute the overwhelming majority stay in antarābhava state to wait for rebirth. People in antarābhava state are not ghosts, but are those people in a new immaterial form with their old consciousness before death. Antarābhava state lasts 49 days at longest. Within this intermediate 49 days, Buddhist rituals dedicated to the deceased can bring about a better rebirth. In Buddhist rituals for the deceased's antarābhava state, monk's chanting gives the deceased the last chance to listen to Buddha's teaching, to repent and to follow Buddha's way, and as a result, the deceased

can be guided to Western Paradise or the rebirth can be elevated to a better plane. As regard rebirth, it is almost meaningless to hold Buddhist rituals after 49 days, because the rebirth destination cannot be changed, since it already happened. Chinese Mahayana Buddhism admits antarābhava state's existing, but Theravada Buddhist doctrine denies it. Pali Canon, the standard collection of scriptures in the Theravada Buddhist tradition, makes a record of the debate among early Buddhist sects on whether antarābhava state exists. Pali Canon refutes antarābhava state which is advocated by other Buddhist sects. Theravada Buddhist theology believe the cycle of rebirth is an automatic mechanism. In this mechanism, rebirth happens immediately after death. The rebirth process does not need to be intervened by any god, judge or divine official, but it runs totally automatically according to karma. Likewise, every being's karma increases or decreases automatically according to one's previous deed without any divine accountant to compute it. Actually, in funeral practice, view of cosmology and death reflected by Thai Buddhist funeral is closer to Mahayana theology. Thai Buddhist funeral tacitly acknowledges that the deceased's consciousness is still here hanging around the coffin, rather than that the deceased has left for rebirth immediately after death, so it is possible that 4 Theravada monks chant for the deceased's consciousness to listen. The 49-day antarābhava state has seven times seven days. In Chinese tradition, Kongtek ceremony is generally on the seventh day, because it is believed on the seventh day, the antarābhava state existence eventually realizes its worldly body's death. When the antarābhava state existence realizes its death, it is the time to lead it to Western Paradise or a desirable rebirth. Coincidentally, a standard Thai Buddhist funeral last 7

days too. During these 7 days, Thai Theravada monks are daily invited to chant. This is evidently demonstrated by the passage of Theravada Buddhist monks' funeral chanting:

“It is time to listen to the Dhamma (*dharmassavana-kālo*) until the seventh day after the death, when the home of the dead person ceases to be regarded as the ‘house of the deceased’ (Langer, 2012: 27).”

Kongtek rituals are believed to be able to expedite the passage of the deceased's antarābhava state existence through the legal procedures in Ten Courts presided over by Ten Enlightened Kings respectively. The Ten Enlightened Kings are respectively in charge of judging different kinds of crimes. The Ten trials by Ten Enlightened Kings are inevitable before rebirth. *Along with the Gods: The Two Worlds*, a 2017 South Korean action fantasy drama film ably demonstrate the Chinese imagination of death and rebirth. It was a blockbuster movie in China and Korea which broke box office record. That movie tells the story of the death of an ordinary firefighter and that three hellish officials escort the firefighter to the rebirth, where he will be assigned a public defender to represent him in hellish trials in 49 days to find out how he lived his life and where he ought to be reborn. In Kongtek rituals, monks or ritual specialists take the role of hellish officials in that movie. The picture below is the depiction of trails by Ten Enlightened Kings in underworld. This picture is on a curtain hung on buddha's altar in Bangkok Sino-Thai's Kongtek hall.



Figure 22: painting that depicts of trails by Ten Enlightened Kings in underworld

(Source: Photography by Jincheng Hu)

Orthodox Theravada Buddhist theology deny any trail in the process of rebirth, but Thai popular religion believes that there is a trial that decides the rebirth in underworld. Although this belief is not manifested at Thai Buddhist funerals, it is widely accepted by Thai people. It is believed that the soul of a deceased person will firstly meet Yama, the Lord of Justice, who presides over the Buddhist hells. Yama will decide about people's reincarnation according to their karma, which is the result of their actions of body, speech and mind during their previous existence. The difference is that there are Ten Enlightened Kings and Ten trials in Chinese culture, but in Thai culture, there is only one.

4.1.1.7 The Convergence Caused by Globalization

Globalization popularizes cremation and brings scientific rationality to everywhere. Subsequently, scientific rationality causes the simplify of funeral rituals, because it undermines the religious base of most funeral rituals. Of course, Bangkok Sino-Thai's Kongtek are facing the shock of globalization. With the collapse of traditional Chinese cosmology, some Sino-Thai prescribe children that they want their funeral to be simple and refuse Kongtek ceremony, because they do not want their death to become a burden to children. Sino-Thai's anthologies compiled by *Thai Alumni Association of China's Universities* published in 2009 includes some discourses concerning funeral, as the following:

When she was about to die, she made a will about her funeral. The funeral should be as simple as possible. It should not be extravagant. For the funeral, one night is enough. She declined any wreath, banner or condolence on newspaper. She exhorted that cash gift received in the funeral should all be donated to charity to help the people in need. (The deceased was a very successful, influential and renowned Sino-Thai enterpriser)

According to Sino-Thai's tradition, the deceased is often inhumed. Today, times have changed, mortuary custom has been different from it in the past. We cremated father's body, as he ordered before he passed away. "We do not need to buy a plot in cemetery, if you cremate my body. At present, the land for inhumation is in very short supply, so it is very expensive", father said, "Besides, if you bury me in a cemetery, it will bother you very much, because you will have to visit my tomb on Qing Ming every year, if so. After I die, I do not need you to worship me, but you, my children must take good care of your mother. Take your mother to travel a lot. Go back to China with her for once".

With globalization, modern western cremation technology is being adopted globally, if with local adaptations (Walter, 2012: 138). In the respect of cremation, both Thai and Chinese mortuary practices are approaching in the same direction of modern western cremation. In China, cremation is gradually substituting inhumation, as it is

promoted by government to save the land for constructing and farming. The bond between Kongtek ceremony and the procession to bury the dead has been loosened. After Kongtek ceremony, the dead is often moved to crematorium rather than directly to grave, and then the ash is often stored in a small plot of vault in cemetery conforming with town planning. Thai people have long been cremating their deceased kin in the past hundreds of years. Traditionally, Thai practice open pyre cremations in the wilderness after which families pick out the bones. Influenced by globalization, Thai have been adopting modern way to cremate. Modern cremation facilities are installed in Thai temples. Today, Thai people's cremations are often taken place in Thai temples. Sino-Thai prevalently adopted cremation, because of the twofold reason. Firstly, inhumation is too expensive. Secondly, globalization has modified cremation in Thailand and adapted it to be acceptable for Sino-Thai. Suppose cremation in Thailand is still open pyre cremation. In this way, will Sino-Thai readily alter their inhumation and Chinese coffin to open pyre cremation and Thai coffin? The answer is probably no.

Music is an important component of Kongtek ceremony. Whether the Kongtek ceremony is conducted by ordained monks or lay ritual specialist, there must be live Chinese musical band. In Kongtek rituals, ordained monks' musical accompaniment is less melodic than that of lay ritual specialist, because one of ten Buddhist precepts is to refrain from singing, dancing, playing music or attending entertainment programs (performances). In the past, musical instruments used in Kongtek rituals are totally Chinese traditional musical instruments. However, nowadays globalization has brought

cello, a western stringed instrument, in the Kongtek music group, but no other foreign instruments. The bass of cello makes Kongtek music sounds more solemn.

Globalization has brought modern rapid lifestyle to both Thailand and China. As life has been quickened, people tend to spend less time on Kongtek rituals. Thus, Kongtek ceremony has been shortened and simplified. China witnessed this shortening and simplification in recent decades, and this shortening and simplification has also been taking place in Thailand. A Sino-Thai female company official recounted her memory of her experience in attending Kongtek ceremonies. When she was a child, she used to attend Kongtek ceremony for two times, once was for her grandfather and once is for a relative in her extended family. In her childhood, which was about twenty years ago, Sino-Thai's Kongtek ceremony usually could last a few days, while today out of the whole funeral only one day, the last day is allocated to Kongtek ceremony. This informant ascribes the shortening to modern globalized lifestyle. The operation of a Kongtek ceremony requires the presence of entirely all members in the extended family. Some extended families may consist of dozens of people. Influenced by globalization, today in Thailand, young Sino-Thai are widely living in nuclear family rather than extended family, living in neolocal residence after marriage rather than Chinese tradition of patrilocal residence, and working in public companies with modern management rather than family small businesses. Some members of the extended family may work and live in somewhere far from hometown, and it is difficult for them to be granted many days' leave for Kongtek ceremony. Now, it got harder for all extended family members to be available for consecutive a few days to gather at

Kongtek ceremony day after day. Consequently, Kongtek ceremony in Bangkok has been shorten into one day to cater for Sino-Thai's globalized new lifestyle. Besides, this shortening and simplification is evidently embodied by Kongtek music. Barton (2007: 9) found that in Thailand, some Kongtek groups have adopted Chinese popular melodies for chanting in the ceremony instead of Chinese traditional melodies. This was not observed in China. Two interviewees of Barton (2007: 9) explained clearly the shortening and simplification, as follows:

Shen Mu-sheng, a Thai national, and ethnic Chinese musician, said: "I have performed the Kongtek ceremony for 30 years. I have tried to shorten the duration of the ceremony, and also to make it appear more solemn" (August 25, 2004). This indicates an evolution in Thai culture not observed in China.

Xu You, a Chinese musician in Puning, visited Thailand in 1993, and during his visit he joined a Kongtek ceremony group in Chon Buri. He said: "I played music in a Kongtek ceremony once while I visited Thailand. I found the ceremony to be shorter, and the music simple. I was able to play with them without any rehearsals" (March 21, 2005).

4.1.2 The Compromise in Instrumental View

4.1.2.1 Kongtek Rituals Do Not Make Sense to Most Sino-Thai

Skinner asserted that assimilation would be complete by the fourth generation and the character of assimilation would take the form of prolific use of the Thai language in almost every social domain, private or public. Overall, in Sino-Thai's daily usage, Thai language substitutes Chinese; To look at Sino-Thai's linguistic landscape more closely, Mandarin is substituting other Chinese dialects, such as Teochew dialect and Cantonese. Sino-Thai's Chinese regional homeland identity is declining with the decline of Sino-Thai's regional dialect proficiency. Instead, a general Chinese identity is constructed among young generation Sino-Thai, when they are engaged in Mandarin

learning. In contemporary Bangkok Sino-Thai families, normally those elders as the first generation are Chinese dialect native speaker; The middle-aged Sino-Thai as the second generation are passive bilinguals who speak mainly Thai while they understand their parents' Chinese dialect far better than they speak it; The young adult Sino-Thai as the third generation are educated by Thai public schools which instruct all courses in Thai language, they learn Mandarin in public schools or tutorial classes as foreign language as well as English; The fourth generation are students who is learn Mandarin in kindergartens, public schools or colleges with Thai classmates (Chokkajitsumpun, 2001). Today, it is those dialect native speaking elders who Kongtek rituals are dedicated to in Bangkok, and it is those passive bilingual middle-aged Sino-Thai who hire Mahayana monks or rituals specialists to hold Kongtek rituals for their deceased parent.

Originally in China, Kongtek rituals in different region are mostly conducted in different dialect, while in some regions Kongtek rituals are occasionally conducted by ordained monks in Sanskrit language. In Bangkok where Sino-Thai from different Chinese regions mingle together, with the decline of their dialect proficiency generation by generation, those Sino-Thai mourning children gradually became unable to understand Kongtek rituals conducted in their former generations' dialect. No matter in what language Kongtek rituals are conducted, Chinese regional dialects or Sanskrit, Sino-Thai cannot understand them anyway. Therefore, in Bangkok, Kongtek rituals conducted in Chinese regional dialects except Teochew dialect vanished. Only Kongtek rituals in Teochew dialect and Sanskrit continue to exist until today in Bangkok.

Kongtek rituals in Teochew dialect survives, because Teochew people constitute the vast majority of Bangkok Sino-Thai. Kongtek rituals in Sanskrit survives, because asking Mahayana monks to chant Sanskrit scriptures is a panacea which is proper and fair to all those Sino-Thai sub-ethnics, since none of them understand it fairly.

Since Kongtek ritual does not make sense to Sino-Thai any longer, Sino-Thai have the tendency to replace it with totally Thai Buddhist funeral.

4.1.2.2 The Cost of Kongtek Rituals

I was told by a Sino-Thai informant that to hold Kongtek ceremony, the mourning family must spend a lot of money, but in spite of the high expense, Sino-Thai generally adhere to this Kongtek custom, as long as they are not in desperate poverty. The reasons for Sino-Thai to adhere to Kongtek custom in all costs lie in Sino-Thai's social values, such as the filial obligation they valued and to show off the wealth on such occasion.

According to a Sino-Thai informant who holds membership of Hakka township association in Thailand, and often takes part in the arrangement of Kongtek rituals once there is a member passing away, in 2018 the modest Kongtek ceremony can cost more than 100,000 baht, which is only the cost specially for rituals excluding costs on food for guests or rent of a venue in Theravada temple. In Bangkok Chinatown, usually the cost for an elaborate Kongtek ceremony can reach 1,000,000 baht. This informant thought it is excessively extravagant, and wondered whether the cost of a Kongtek in Thailand is much higher than it in China. I told her in China the cost for Kongtek

ceremony is as high as it in Thailand. “It is incredible,” she responded surprisingly, “how can these days a funeral be so expensive?”

According to a report of Bangkok Post issued on 15th December 2013, on average, Chinese funerals cost about 200,000 baht but there are also some cases that have reached 1 million baht. It depends on the wealth of the family. At the last section of Kongtek, the bereaved family burns paper-made items such as houses, cars and money. It is believed that those items will be sent to the dead in the next life. The price of these items can also reach six digits as they are typically hand-made and may be modelled on real-life objects.

Chinese coffin and Chinese tomb are not a necessary equipment of Kongtek rituals now. Generally, Sino-Thai cremate the dead body and store the ashes in temples these days, which will not cost so much. Some Sino-Thai still value the integrity of dead body and want a tomb where they can visit annually together to worship, so they invest very much in Chinese coffin and grave plot. A Chinese coffin cost at least 100,000 baht. Some ornate one can be priced at several hundred thousand baht. Sino-Thai persist the Chinese belief of geomancy(Thai: ศาสตร์, Chinese: 风水). The location of tomb is believed to influence descendants’ fortune. In a same cemetery, the geomancy is better in some plots than it in other plots. Accordingly, the price of plots in a same cemetery varies from one to another. No matter under which plot to bury, the budget of funeral will certainly exceed 1,000,000 baht.

The high cost of a Kongtek ceremony has become a threshold that hinder some Sino-Thai from maintaining Kongtek custom. Thai Buddhist funeral and Kongtek

ceremony are both believed to function similarly in terms of sending the deceased to a better rebirth, but the former is much cheaper than the latter. Between two merchandises that have similar function and quality but very different prices, a rational buyer will choose the cheaper one. If we simply regard Thai Buddhist funeral and Kongtek ceremony as two funeral services which have similar quality and function to the deceased but very different prices, Sino-Thai will certainly choose Thai Buddhist funeral and forsake Kongtek ceremony. In Bangkok, Kongtek custom is indeed declining, especially among young generation Sino-Thai who are mostly indifferent to it. Those young Sino-Thai usually state frankly that they thought Kongtek was interesting, but neither would they hold a Kongtek ceremony for their parents when they pass away, nor did they want a Kongtek ceremony when they die. One of my young informants is a third generation Sino-Thai. He is now studying his bachelor's degree in Thammasat University. His family's root is in Teochew. His Mandarin is on intermediate level, but he cannot speak Teochew dialect. He used to attend several Kongtek ceremonies. At his home, there are many group photos taken at Kongtek ceremonies. Once, one of his relatives passed away, his family assign him an errand to buy a Kongtek funeral banner in Bangkok Chinatown. He struggled to look for the banner store by store. Store owners told him that there was not such banner in their inventories, because fewer and fewer customers bought it those days.

However, in fact, Kongtek ceremony does not only serve the end to send the deceased to better rebirth, which is similar to Thai Buddhist funeral's function, but it also has special meanings to Sino-Thai which Thai Buddhist funeral cannot render.

Kongtek ceremony's function is far beyond improving the deceased's rebirth. Its function to the living is far more important to its function to the deceased to some extents. These pragmatic functions of Kongtek ceremony entail Sino-Thai continuing to practice it despite the high cost.

4.2 Kongtek Rituals' Pragmatic Functions for the Living Sino-Thai

4.2.1 Kongtek Ceremony Instructed by the Elderly Reminds the Living of Where They Are from and Who They Are

In Chinese culture, the elders tend to prepare their own funeral by themselves years before they die. They select a coffin suiting their own sizes, customize it according to their personal tastes and pay in advance. They visit cemeteries, consult geomancers, cautiously select a plot, and pay for it by themselves. A gravestone is erected on that plot shortly after they buy it, have their own name carved on it and lacquer the name to red color. On gravestone, personal names painted in red are for the living whereas the name in green belongs to the dead. Scott (2007: 107) found that years before death, Chinese elders order and pay for their own paper offerings which are destined to burn at their own funeral. To assure their comfort in the next world, they prefer to order in advance their own set of paper offerings. Tradition-minded elderly among Teochew community practice *sending treasury* in which they burn the paper offering for themselves in advance. These items are burned tied with red strings (or sealed with red paper) for a protective good meaning, as the burner of goods is after all, still alive, and hoped not to die soon, but to have a long life. When they realize that their death is near,

they will make a will to their children to instruct how they want their own funeral to be. Usually, some tradition-minded elders will instruct children that they want Kongtek rituals conducted by a specific Kongtek troupe that they like, and they do not want their body to be cremated. Although to hold Kongtek ceremony is very costly, as it is mostly arranged and paid by the deceased her/himself, it does not burden children very much. When the purchasing of proper funeral offerings is entrusted to family members, some individuals may tell children what paper-items they want and to inform their favorite shop beforehand.

Sino-Thai elders maintain this custom in Bangkok. Toward one's own funeral, Thai people avoid mentioning it, because discussing one's own funeral is a bad omen in Thai culture. The novel, *Letters from Thailand*, aptly gives a description of cultural difference in this domain:

We Chinese do not fear death, or consider the preparation are a matter of practicality and convenience, enabling us to meet our inevitable end with cool hearts. And why should death be feared, after all, when it is the natural fate of all living things? Every Chinese who attains old age prepares the place where he wishes to rest. I have seen Thais become angry when death was mentioned in the presence of old people. They say that to speak of death is to invite it. Does that make sense? Nothing invites death but life itself, and old people know they are going to die. Knowing that we are ill or growing old, it is our duty to spare others the trouble of arranging our affairs. A man should take leave of life efficiently.

Although Sino-Thai elders' original intention to prescribe their own funerals before death is not to preserve homeland culture or identity in Thailand, Kongtek ceremony conducted according to their prescription somehow does contribute to the maintenance of their offspring's Chinese culture and identity. The newest fashion of ethnographic study believes that ethnographic researchers should not judge their research objects' ethnic identity by the researchers' self-righteous criteria, but rather it is those research

objects themselves who exercise the right to define their own ethnic identity. Between local Thai and Sino-Thai, today the similarities exist in many aspects, outward appearance, occupation, language competence, religious practices, dietary habits, and so on. On Bangkok street, it is very difficult to distinguish Sino-Thai from local Thai. The occasions left for Sino-Thai to express their ethnical uniqueness are very limited. Funeral for Sino-Thai is such an occasion that remains. Kongtek ceremony as a unique part at Sino-Thai's funeral reminds offspring of the Chinese homeland they are from and their identity as descendants of Chinese. The most frequent of Chinese religious practices, those that are accessible to all city residents, are funeral rites. Although held in Thai Theravada temples, these Kongtek rituals reiterate the traditional cosmology that in the late traditional China related local culture to the natural, the supernatural, society, the state and the universe within a total cosmic plan. Within this universe, Sino-Thai's alignments with gods and ancestors were sources of social identity connecting them to particular places, communities and origins. According to Hill (1992), Kongtek rituals are ancestor-centered and in a larger sense are about origins. In these rituals, showing their decentness from the same people, place and culture, bereaved family make public claims about where they are from. The elders prescribe a Kongtek ceremony for themselves because they still hold the sense of attachment to their cultural root. By dying in Chinese way, the deceased makes the strongest statements about the ethnic identity. Because the status of the deceased is at the center of this final rite of passage, participants should be complicit in this choice. By agreeing to follow Kongtek

rituals, descendants tacitly subscribe to the propriety of the rituals which presume a Chinese worldview and identity.

By holding or participating in Kongtek for Sino-Thai elders, Sino-Thais are reminded of their Chinese root indeed, but Kongtek is not able enough to pass down the Chinese folk belief and mortuary tradition based on it among Sino-Thai. The older generation Sino-Thais want to have Kongtek in their funerals, because they still feel connected with their cultural root and they want a funeral that conforms with the spiritual beliefs that they learn from the culture of their origin. With Sino-Thai's decline of Chinese language proficiency, the folk religious chant on Kongtek rituals almost falls on deaf ears. Without understanding the cultural connotation of what they are doing on Kongtek ritual, What Sino-Thai's Kongtek pass down to younger generation Sino-Thais is merely the awareness of their Chinese root rather than the feeling of attachment to Chinese cultural root. Consequently, younger generation Sino-Thais plan to not hold Kongtek ritual on their own funeral when they pass away in the future, even though they are fully aware of their Chinese root.

4.2.2 Kongtek Ceremony Contribute to the Reconstruction of Family Order

Kongtek rituals confirm the newly reconstructed family order after the old patriarch or matriarch passes away, and then teach the living kin to obey this new order with ballad chant. Victor Turner (1967) argued that major transitioning points in human life, such as birth, the coming of age, marriage, and death are liminal states that pose the threat, not to the individual who is going through those stages but also to the community.

Therefore, rituals must be held to ease and to assure the smooth transition. The threat derives from the ambiguity, or in another word, a confusion of all customary categories during the transition. To reify the conception of transition in the concrete case of Kongtek, the deceased is in the liminal state of *antarābhava*, namely the state that the deceased's consciousness has left the body to temporarily obtain an immaterial form, which is on the boundary of death and rebirth. At the stage, the deceased has not been symbolically transformed into a benign ancestor or clan patron god yet by the ritual. It is neither the head of clan any longer nor the ancestor in ancestral shrine. It is no longer classified and not yet classified. Victor Turner (1967) cited a very interesting and illuminating view that the concept of pollution is a reaction to protect cherished principles and categories from contradiction. What is unclear and contradictory (from the perspective of social definition) tends to be regarded as (ritually) unclean.

The death of the head of clan elicits multifold ambiguities. Not only does the state of the deceased become ambiguous, but the livings' status in the extended family also becomes ambiguous. In family order defined by Confucian primogeniture ideology, briefly speaking, the firstborn legitimate son is prior to other sons, sons are prior to daughters, and the firstborn legitimate son of the firstborn legitimate son has priority to all other grandchildren and even to his aunts and uncles. Although this predefined order has been tacitly consented by all family members, before Kongtek the status of the new head of clan and the status of other family members are still pending to be confirmed by the community. The ambiguities pose potential threat, because it disturbs the stable state. Bereaved family members, especially the firstborn legitimate son, face the

transition of their position from the old order to new order. In this liminal phase, the successor's status is on the boundary between the role of firstborn legitimate son and the role of new head of clan. A proper ritual is needed to reconstruct and confirm a new order.

Kongtek is a grand affair involving all extended family members, which usually outnumber 10 people. To hold Kongtek entails cooperation of all family members. The cooperation needs a person generally recognized by all family members to coordinate the action. The firstborn legitimate son as the head-to-be is expected to bear this responsibility. By taking charge of Kongtek, the firstborn legitimate son tacitly claims his position as the head of clan with the witness of all attendees to the Kongtek ritual. By complying with the firstborn legitimate son's arrangement of Kongtek ritual, other family members admit the new order led by the firstborn legitimate son.

The most indispensable ritual in Kongtek ceremony is *crossing bridge*, which is to see off the soul of the deceased to the underworld. Led by a chanting ritual specialist, the bereaved family members symbolically descend into the underworld together to see the soul off. The firstborn legitimate son, bearing a paper tablet with the name of the deceased, is the first behind the ritual specialist; the firstborn legitimate son is followed in train by the descendants in order defined by Confucian primogeniture ideology. The demise of an old patriarch or matriarch causes temporarily disorder in an extended family. A new order is urgently needed. Pragmatically, the distribution of legacy of the deceased is usually decided by this new order. This order in ritual procession is the debut of the new order.

The Kongtek chanting teaches the bereaved family to obey the new order and how to obey it. If a participant is literate in Teochew dialect and the Kongtek ceremony is conducted by lay rituals specialists, this participant will be able to learn Confucian and Mahayana Buddhist philosophy from the Kongtek chant. In the past, when villagers normally did not have chance to accept formal education, ballad chant of Kongtek rituals is a significant source for them to learn Confucian social value. It is according to Confucian ideology conveyed by the chant that the new order is reconstructed. In respect of Mahayana Buddhist morality, those chants encourage the living to live a moral life which in karmic terms can guarantee them worldly rewards and Buddhist assistance in all forms.

Family order defined by Confucian primogeniture ideology is deeply engrained in Chinese extended family, or in another word, Chinese clan. In Bangkok this notion of family order is still conserved by Sino-Thais. Extended family is still regarded as the basic social unit among Sino-Thais. Nowadays in Bangkok, Sino-Thais' clan associations still vigorously keep working. Activities that relate to extended family are usually organized by those clan associations. On Chinese traditional festivals that require the family reunion such as Lunar New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival, members of extended family gather to celebrate together in Sino-Thai society. On Qing Ming (วันชิงมิง), Sino-Thais join with their respective extended family to collectively visit their ancestors' tombs in cemeteries and sacrifice collectively. However, young generation Sino-Thais have the tendency to neglect extended family and to lay excessive stress on nuclear family. Moreover, the declining birth rate in Thailand makes Sino-Thais' extended

family shrink in terms of scale, as fewer new members were born to the extended family. With Sino-Thais' extended family structure gradually transforming into nuclear family in modern days, Kongtek's importance on reconstructing family order is less valued by young generation Sino-Thais. As with the change of family structure, young generation Sino-Thais tend to be indifferent to their position in extend family. This tendency undermines Kongtek's significance among Sino-Thai, and hence challenges Kongtek tradition's surviving in Thailand.

4.2.3 A Therapy for the Living to Recover from Sadness

Kongtek provides emotional comfort to the living at a time in which they are experiencing the loss of a loved one. Kongtek persuades the living to cultivate virtue and morality, promise them various types of Buddhist rewards and salvation, help them to overcome the emotional crises of the death of a loved one and alter their fortunes from the bad luck and pollution associated with death to an auspicious event (Tam, 2012: 256). To some mourners, Kongtek ceremony's function of relieving the living's grief is more highly valued than its function of improving the deceased's rebirth. After all, whether the deceased has reached better rebirth or not is unknowable, but the sorrow of losing a beloved one is tangible. Kongtek ritual transforms the deceased from a dreaded corpse into a merciful ancestor for offspring to commemorate and worship. Kongtek ceremony is not merely for the deceased, but it is also for the living offspring to adjust themselves and resume their normal lives and work.

By holding Kongtek ritual, bereaved children's moral need of fulfilling filial piety is satisfied. Because Kongtek ceremony is usually prescribed by the deceased him/herself, lavish Kongtek ceremony makes sense to people not only as the right thing to do in terms of Chinese ritual traditions, but also as public statements of family's fulfillment of its obligations to the older generation (Hill, 1992: 323). Sino-Thai bereaved children practice filial piety by obey parent's final will about the funeral. Filial piety is a highly valued virtue, which can bring about community approbation. By practicing Kongtek as the deceased parent told, bereaved children do what they can do to repay the moral debt, after which they feel released.

According to Zhan Lifeng (2015)'s psychological study concerning Kongtek ritual, mourning at funeral is a significant procedure for mental remedy. Funeral is the event to ritualize grief, so funeral leads mourners to express their grief openly, and the end of funeral marks the end of grief. When the deceased just passes away, the first reaction of bereaved kin is normally refusing to accept this sad reality. In the beginning, this non-acceptance is a mentally self-defense mechanic, but if it last too long, it is harmful for mental health and causes problem for mourners to normalize life. In this respect, funeral reminds mourners to accept a beloved's death. Death is dreaded. An individual may feel helpless and anxious when facing death alone. Funeral is an occasion where bereaved family are united together to face the crisis incurred by death. Shortly after the death of a beloved, a bereaved one usually has a multiplicity of negative emotions, such as sorrow, resentment, yearning, missing and even angry. Funeral is a channel for mourners to fully release those negative emotions in an acceptable way to others, which

is conducive to good mental health. The duration of funeral is a liminal phase. The liminal phase is a far cry from daily life. In the liminal phase, people are expected to behave entirely different to what they usually do. Weird behavior or radical catharsis of negative emotion is regarded improper in regular situation, but people accept and empathize with it in liminal phase. The end of funeral is the end of liminal phase, which claim the end of grief and send mourners back to regular life. These psychological functions are generality of funerals around the world, whatever ethnic a funeral belongs to, but the virtual effect varies.

Both Thai Buddhist funeral and Sino-Thai's Kongtek ceremony can serve these psychological functions, but to some degree, for Sino-Thai Kongtek ceremony fulfils these functions better than Thai Buddhist funeral, because mourners are encouraged to weep at Kongtek ceremony. Thai Buddhist funeral expects mourners to restrain themselves from weeping, but weeping is encouraged by Kongtek ceremony as a filial virtue. Weeping at Sino-Thai's Kongtek ceremony is less frequently observed, but Sino-Thai are more likely to weep at Kongtek ceremony, especially Kongtek ceremony conducted by lay ritual specialists, than at Thai Buddhist funeral rituals. Note that at Kongtek ceremony conducted by lay ritual specialists, musical accompaniment is more melodic and solemnly, and the chant is more understandable and touching than those at Mahayana monks' Kongtek ceremony. Today many Sino-Thai have accustomed themselves to Thai way. They are very careful to make sure that they do not shed tear at funeral. However, some of them are unable to restrain their emotion, and publicly burst into tears when Kongtek rituals are ongoing. At the stages of issuing and sending

official travel document, mourners are informed that the deceased's antarābhava state existing has come back. The emotion starts to generate. At the stage of bathing the soul, mourners prepare their emotion to start the procedure of seeing the antarābhava state existing off. At the stage of paying respect to Buddha (for deceased male) or blood basin rite (for deceased female), bereaved children are guided to recall the memory that deceased parent nurtured themselves. At the stage of spinning the pagoda (for deceased male) or spinning lotus pond (for deceased female), mourners are guided to connect their own bereavement with past filial stories, praise ancient saints and learn from those ancient stories to relieve the grief. The stage of crossing bridge is the final farewell to the antarābhava state existing. At this stage, mourners are informed that the deceased has completely left and their blood relation with the deceased has completely demised, so the accumulated emotion becomes uncontrollable and eventually is released. At that moment, mourners finally cannot help bursting into tears.

Van Gennep (1960) generalized human rituals' pattern in structuralism view. He discovered that all rituals share the same tripartite sequential structure: separation, transition, and incorporation. Among the tripartite sequential structure, the transition phase in rituals is usually identified with a territorial passage, such as a threshold, an entrance into a village or a house, the movement from one room to another, or the crossing of streets and squares. The passage from one group to another is often ritually expressed by passage under a portal, or by an "opening of the doors." In Kongtek ritual, the passage is expressively embodied by crossing bridge. The two sides of the symbolic bridge are the world of the living and the world afterlife. The bridge between the two

worlds forms the boundary. For the deceased, the separation part of Kongtek ritual is to be guided to leave this world; the progress of Kongtek ritual that drives the passage step by step is the transition part; and the incorporation part is to make sure the deceased's well-being in the afterlife by some wrapping up rites especially the paper offering burning rites. For the bereaved family, the separation part of Kongtek ritual reiterates the truth that the deceased has passed away; the transition part is to symbolically accompany the deceased to cross the bridge, and finally farewell the deceased; after the farewell on the bridge, Kongtek ritual specialists guide bereaved family to cross the bridge in reverse to come back to the living's world, to resume their everyday life, which is the incorporation. Kongtek ritual not only smooth the passage of the deceased from death to afterlife, but it also settles the life crisis of the bereaved family. Suppose the absence of a proper funeral ritual after a beloved family member pass away, what will happen to the bereaved family? They may still feel some illusionary attachment to the deceased. They may need longer time to acknowledge the fact that the beloved one has eternally gone, and accordingly the mental crisis that incurs negative emotion will last longer and even damages mental health. It will take longer time to resume regular life. Sino-Thais need Kongtek to inform them the beloved one's undeniable departure from this world, assure them of the deceased's well-being in the afterlife, and to lead them to tide over the crisis of transition by farewelling the deceased and incorporating to regular life.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Kongtek is a set of traditional Chinese funeral rituals, which has been practiced in China for centuries. With the Chinese migrants' influx into Thailand, some Chinese traditions were brought to Thailand and took root in Sino-Thai communities, among which Kongtek is the one that practiced ostentatiously by those migrants since the old dynasty age. In Sino-Thai communities, Kongtek tradition has been survived for centuries, and is still widely performed until today.

Kongtek as performed on funeral, is a sequence of rituals to summon spirits of the dead, preach the dead with religious scriptures, commemorate the dead's reminiscences especially the hardship of supporting the family and bringing up children, farewell the dead's spirits and finally send the dead to a better reincarnation, rebirth in better realm of Buddhist hierarchical cosmology or directly to Amitabha Buddha's Western Paradise.

With Sino-Thai's closely mingling with local Thai people for centuries, acculturation inevitably happened in Sino-Thai's Kongtek, but Kongtek's core essence has never been compromised. The similarities of worldview and religion between Thai and Chinese make Sino-Thai people feel that the gap is not prohibitively wide, so some insignificant process and components can be modified so as to keep Kongtek surviving in Thailand. Sino-Thai's Kongtek embodies their cosmology, which is mostly Chinese Buddhist cosmology. Because Chinese Buddhist cosmology is perfectly compatible with Thai cosmology, the adaptation is unnecessary in this aspect. Thai local people have their own obsequies convention which is profoundly influenced by Theravada Buddhism. To survive in Thai society where the hegemonic religion is Theravada

Buddhism, Sino-Thai's Kongtek should not be too odd to the majority. Sino-Thai gradually forsook inhumation and tough Chinese coffin. Instead, they increasingly accepted cremation and inflammable Thai coffin. They simplified many rites in their Kongtek. In Sino-Thai's Kongtek, on the buddha's altar, there are generally only buddhas' and bodhisattvas' images, while in China there is successive generations of ancestors' tablets beside buddhas' and bodhisattvas' images. Indigenous Thai's funeral usually takes place for successively a few days. Likewise, Sino-Thai's funeral takes seven successive days. But they shorted the duration of Kongtek from up to 7 days to just 1 day, and scheduled Kongtek on the last day. The rest 6 days are allocated to hold Theravada Buddhist funeral rites where Theravada Buddhist monks chant sutras. Sino-Thai has accepted the Thai idea that the right venue to hold funeral is Theravada Buddhist temple, so Sino-Thai's Kongtek invariably take place in those temples. Some Sino-Thai mourning family hold Kongtek on the one hand, and following Thai funeral tradition to make young men in family be temporarily ordained as Theravada monks on the other hand.

Kongtek's core essence of filial piety and Confucian kinship is well conserved in Sino-Thai's Kongtek. Thai people love their deceased parent, so they make merit from Thai monks and Thai monks as media transfer it to the deceased parent, while Chinese people worship deceased kin directly without making merit. Both Thai and Chinese culture value family and filial piety, but traditionally Thai and Chinese enact those ideas in different ways. Sino-Thai's Kongtek itself is a showcase for Chinese conventional filial piety and Confucian kinship. In Sino-Thai's Kongtek, ballads praising parents'

upbringing are commonly chanted by the ritual specialists. The idea for children to take care of deceased parents' afterlife is an orthodox Confucian idea promulgated in Confucian classics. Sino-Thai's Kongtek is the precious last chance to be with and farewell the deceased as a family. After the Kongtek ritual specialist send the deceased to reincarnate, it symbolizes that the mourning children's personal blood relation with the deceased has completely demised. What Kongtek leaves for the mourning family is part of the deceased's soul which is transformed to be a benign ancestor who is suitable for reverence, regularly worship and filial care in the afterworld.

Kongtek rituals in Bangkok Chinatown play a significant role for Sino-Thai people. It is significant, because funeral is one of the most important ceremony of a Chinese's life passage, and it provides an occasion for Sino-Thai to remember their ancestry. This significance is substantiated by Kongtek rituals' function in Thailand, the function of meeting personal emotional need for appreciation, recognition, affiliation, harmony, unity and relieving grief. Appreciation is out of filial piety. Parent usually prescribe the children that they want a Kongtek ceremony after death, so children materialize parent's will to fulfill their filial obligation. Recognition is the public approbation that the mourning children receive because they practice filial piety by holding Kongtek rituals. The affiliation is among Sino-Thai from the same hometown, which is enhanced by participating Kongtek together and having empathy with each other. Harmony and unity result from Kongtek rituals' emphasizing on the order the family. After the chaos caused by a parent's death, a new order should be established. This new order makes its debut in Kongtek rituals as every family member's position in the procession.

Furthermore, Kongtek rituals can function as a therapy to relieve the mourners' grief, as it encourages the mourners to cry in the Thai context which restrains people from weeping at funeral.

This article is not to illustrate that Kongtek practice in Bangkok Chinatown can contribute to perpetuate Bangkok Sino-Thai's ethnic identity. Conversely, in Bangkok, young generation Sino-Thai's indifferent attitude toward Kongtek indicates that Kongtek custom will finally fade away. Those young Sino-Thai usually state frankly that they thought Kongtek was interesting, but neither would they hold a Kongtek ceremony for their parents when they pass away, nor did they want a Kongtek ceremony when they die. Young generation Sino-Thai still insist to hold and participate in the deceased elders' Kongtek ceremony, but for their own death, Kongtek becomes unnecessary. As Kongtek is the custom intimately bonded with Sino-Thai's ethnic identity, Kongtek custom's decline in Bangkok reflects the decline of Sino-Thai's Chinese identity. Kongtek custom in Bangkok is not able enough to maintain Sino-Thai's unique ethnic identity against the overwhelming tendency of assimilation.

Although it is possible that Kongtek rituals will vanish in Bangkok Sino-Thai's individual funeral, Kongtek rituals are likely to persist as Chinese group mortuary rite. Today in Thailand, Chinese charity associations are actively collecting corpses of bad death. When they collect enough corpses, they hold group Kongtek rituals called *"festival to refine the restless ghosts"*, which is elaborately discussed by Formoso (1996). On 10th May 1993, in a factory located in Thailand central plain, 188 workers died in a conflagration. Since then, Thai government set the 10th May as annual Labor

Safety Day to advocate safe production. On this day, Thai government holds Kongtek rituals to commemorate victims' souls. On 5th July 2018 in Phuket, 47 Chinese tourists perished from a shipwrecked. Subsequently, on 8th August, Phuket government and Tourism Authority of Thailand jointly held a group Kongtek ceremony for those victims. Kongtek in Thailand is evolving to be and will persist as the ritual for public relation.

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