



Mediums, Monks, and Amulets: Thai Popular Buddhism Today

Pattana Kitiarsa

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Mediums, Monks, and Amulets is a sophisticated yet accessible study of the state of popular Buddhist beliefs as they are practiced in Thailand today. Using a combination of focused case studies and analysis, Pattana Kitiarsa explores the nature and evolution of popular Buddhism over the past three decades by focusing on those individuals who practice, popularize, and profit from it.

The case studies profiled include prominent spirit mediums and magic monks, the lottery fever surrounding the posthumous cult of folk singer Phumphuang Duangchan, the Chatukham-Rammathep amulet craze, and the cult of wealth attributed to preeminent monk Luang Pho Khun. It also explores the history of both popular and official opinion surrounding supernatural Buddhism, and its clashes with the rationalist, modernizing policies of Thailand's monarchy and government.

Mediums, Monks, and Amulets contests the viewpoint that supernatural elements within popular Buddhism are a symptom of the decline of the religion. Instead, it argues that this hybridity between traditional Buddhist beliefs and elements from other religions is in fact indicative of the health and wealth of Buddhism as it negotiates large-scale commercialization and global modernity.

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