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Abstract

Christentum und Buddhismus als Antagonisten? Religion und ethnische Identität bei den Sgaw-Karen in Nordthailand

Roland Platz

The influence of Christianity in Sgaw-Karen communities of Northern Thailand is growing. Baptists and Catholics are the most important Christian denominations. Protestant churches reject the traditional religion, but insist on the core elements of their distinct culture to support their ethnic separation. Catholics are more tolerant, their religious boundary is more permeable. Thai-Buddhism is still marginal but growing in Karen villages, reducing traditional beliefs particularly ancestor worship. Buddhism as a feature of the dominant Thai culture contributes to the integration of Buddhist Karen into mainstream society. Despite conflicts between Christians and Non-Christians, differing attitudes by the various Christian denominations towards Karen tradition and intra-ethnic dissociation based on religion, a distinctive Karen ethnic identity persists irrespective of religion. Religious and ethnic identity are associated differently, however, according to religion.