



# Refashioning of Chinese Shrine from Spiritual Religious Center to the New Purpose: Case Studies from Indochina

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## Abstract

Chinese shrine is a specific building that is usually existed in the Chinese ethnic community. This place plays role as spiritual center for the community. When time pass, the changing function of the Chinese shrine might occur and the refashioning is an interesting social science phenomenon. In this brief article, the authors present and discuss on examples of cases of refashioning of Chinese shrine from spiritual religious center to the new purpose. The dynamicity of culture over time can be reflected.

**Keywords:** Chinese, shrine, function.

## Introduction

Chinese shrine(in chinese, 寺庙) is a specific building that is usually existed in the Chinese ethnic community. This place plays role as spiritual center for the community. Many old Chinese shrines exist in Chinese communities worldwide. When time pass, the changing function of the Chinese shrine might occur and the refashioning is an interesting social science phenomenon.

In this brief article, the authors present and discuss on examples of cases of refashioning of Chinese shrine from spiritual religious center to the new purpose. The dynamicity of culture over time can be reflected.

## Case study

Here, the authors present 3 interesting case studies of refashioning of Chinese shrine from spiritual religious center to the new purpose from a country in Indochina.

### **A. A café**

This case is a small old Chinese shrine in Pitsanulok province of Thailand. The place name is Long café. It is an old river side Chinese shrine of the town. The shrine is totally renovated. Religious models are removed. The new function of the place is the café. This place becomes a very famous café' selling food and drinks in the environmental style of old Chinese shrine.

### **B. A gallery art**

This case is a small old Chinese shrine in Nakornpathom province of Thailand. The place name is Horsilpsanjao. This is a canal side old shrine. The shrine has been changed into the art gallery of the community. The infrastructure within the shrine is still preserved. The god and goddess models are still kept. The new things are the arts displayed in the building. The place becomes the new community cultural center. It does not have the single role as a religious place but the local artistic cultural center.

### **C. A community museum**

This is small old famous shrine in Pichit province of Thailand. The place name is Sanjoporkaewkao. The new shrine is constructed and the religious models in the old shrine are moved to the new Chinese shrine. The left old shrine is renovated and used as a local museum of the community.



**A. local community museum**



**B. local community gallery**



**C. café**

**Figure 1. Many new faces of old Chinese shrines**

## **Discussion**

Changing function of the old religious place is an interesting phenomenon. In Southeast Asia, there are many examples. The good cases are the refashioning of the old ruined Buddhist temple into a new function place such as market, school and hospital [1]. In the present article, the specific focus is on the Chinese shrine, which is another common religious place in Chinese ethnic communities.

The ways that the old shrines have been refashioned are different. Some refashioning promote the longevity of the cultural preservation such as refashioning into the museum or local community gallery. However, it sometimes changes into the private business center.

How to protect the old religious building in the community is a challenge in the current cultural dynamicity. It is a topic for further researching in social science and humanity.

**Conflict of interest:** None

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