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Changpang Lee, *The Rise of Tzu Chi: The Making of a Global Buddhist Movement*.

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Tzu Chi, a new Buddhist Movement founded in 1968 in Taiwan and best known for its many charitable programs, originated as a group of women gathered around the nun Cheng Yen (b.1937). The efforts of the women around Cheng Yen, who provided free medical services to their neighbors, grew steadily following the founding of a free clinic in 1972. The group had a real breakout moment in 1986 when they opened up a hospital in Hualien City, on Taiwan's east coast. Tzu Chi, most clearly embodied in the Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation, has experienced spectacular growth from the 1990s to the present as it expanded beyond Taiwan and established itself in Southeast Asia (especially Singapore and Malaysia), Indonesia, the Philippines and the United States. Though still largely unknown in America, Tzu Chi has centers in every major urban area and has taken its place alongside all the better-known early responders to major disasters such as the hurricanes that reek significant damage across the American south.

The spectacular rise of Tzu Chi has prompted a number of scholarly responses, many describing and evaluating the various parts of its multi-faceted charitable operation that now includes (to name a few) a recycling program, a television station in Taiwan, an extensive medical program, and its more notable work in disaster relief. Behind this massive and sophisticated charitable effort is a Buddhist core, Tzu Chi being a major exponent of humanistic Buddhism, a 19th-century Buddhist reformation movement that has challenged Buddhists to engage the modern world in all of its hurts and needs. Tzu Chi emerged from the complex student-teacher relationship between Cheng Yen and her mentor Yin Shun (1906–2005), the innovative Buddhist master who pioneered Humanistic Buddhist thought in Taiwan.

In *The Rise of Tzu Chi*, Professor Lee tackles one of the most intriguing questions that scholars have about the organization—what is the secret of its success amid the literally hundreds of new religions that have emerged since World War II? Only a few dozen of these new religions have been able to expand beyond their homelands and become impactful in anything like the way that Tzu Chi has. Most of the new religions that have assumed a presence on the international stage have made their presence felt solely in the religious sphere (such as the parallel Taiwanese Buddhist group Fo Guang Shan), and many at the price of constant largely negative controversy (such as the Unification Movement of Sun Myung Moon and the Church of Scientology).

Professor Lee movingly introduces readers to Tzu Chi by an account of its work in Indonesia after the 2005 tsunami and earthquake, and follows with a narrative of the life of Cheng Yen, the founding and early growth of the movement, and a somewhat detailed survey of its spectrum of charitable work. Even those who are already aware of Tzu Chi and know of its founder and her work will learn many new facts and gain a fresh perspective on the organization, from Lee's encounter with the movement and deep dive into the wealth of records chronicling its activities over the years. *The Rise of Tzu Chi* is possibly the best narrative of the movement's history to date.

However, scholars of religious movements will be hooked by the discussion of the "whys" behind the movement's success over the last half century. Lee focuses on two factors, the first being the charisma assigned to their founder: Cheng Yen is a text-book example of a successful charismatic leader. But as one uncovers the various layers of Cheng Yen's life, the reader discovers the complexity of the phenomenon of charisma—a trait that does not describe the founder/leader of a new religion so much as the relationship between a leader and followers and a leader's ability to empower the followers to action.

Lee's discussion of charisma carries all the complexity that new religions scholars have found in examining the many different movements of the post-WWII era, but the main contribution comes in his diverting the reader's attention from the leader to the organization that s/he has built. In the case of Tzu Chi, Cheng Yen has allowed the development of a complex diverse organization that now extends far beyond her knowledge and expertise, not to mention her ability to control. To explain this monumental achievement, Lee turns to an organizational theory proposed by fellow sociologist Marshall Ganz, who in his theory of strategic capacity offers a way to understand the balance successful movements have as they move between the unitive center provided by the charismatic leader and the often-radical diversity and the autonomy of leaders found in successful movements. Lee calls upon those of us who study movements to look more at the organizational structure and its adaptability in multiple situations relative to our attempts to understand the leader's career.

Lee's study thus accomplishes two tasks, either of them worthy on its own. First, it provides a noteworthy survey of Tzu Chi's origin and rise to prominence, a historical account that equals any that have preceded it. Second, it provides students of new religions with a set of ideas to consider as we approach the objects of our study and calls attention to some important factors to which we much pay attention. Highly recommended.