

Book Review

The Living Local Cultural Sites of Bangkok

Kjell Skylstad⁺ Editor in Chief

It is here – the most comprehensive mapping of urban cultural resources ever undertaken by any metropolitan authority, and a model for what can be achieved when administrators join forces with researchers in a spirit of close partnership. As the oldest and leading academic institution in Thailand Chulalongkorn University has through nearly a century of dedicated service upheld its mission as the Pillar of the Nation. Situated in the very center of the Nation's capital it can also be credited with functioning in an equally dedicated role as an urban cultural engine.

Our JUCR readers will have observed an express wish of our editorial committee to attempt to bring living examples of the cultural and social interaction between city and university into focus, not least in times of crises that put alliances and commitments to the test, like the recent Bangkok flooding. As part and parcel of this interaction one will find a program of research in the cultural and social sciences, more often than not transcending disciplinary boundaries. It is with special pleasure we acknowledge the research commission from the Bangkok administrative authorities that made this volume possible.

As is known by our readers the Urban Research Plaza of Chulalongkorn University and Osaka City Universities has been leading out in promoting the kind of research needed to give direction to city planning in times of rapid urbanization causing radical cultural change. Recognizing the challenges and risks of a global trend toward unimpeded unsustainable urban development the URP and the Thai

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Music Research Center of Excellence under the leadership of Professor Bussakorn Binson accepted the call to engage in a project of mapping the cultural resources of all of Bangkok's 50 urban districts.

In a direct way this project also is a fulfillment of the strategic developmental aims announced by UNESCO for the Asia Pacific region centering on six strategic pillars.

- Protection of endangered and minority cultures
- Empowerment of the culture profession
- Grass-roots management of cultural resources
- Culture conflict resolution
- Sustainable cultural tourism and ecotourism
- Cultural industries and creative enterprises

Overall, cultural mapping has been recognized by UNESCO as an indispensable tool in elucidating natural and cultural landscapes. The present publication can be seen as fulfilling in a very unique way the UNESCO objectives on all areas considered crucial in a program to secure cultural continuity. Building on information from individual culture bearers and institutional caretakers the book presents an inclusive and comprehensive map of the cultural life of all 50 Bangkok districts in five categories based on a holistic view of culture as ingrained in the daily life of a city.

1. Performing Arts
2. Traditions
3. Sports and Recreation
4. Craftsmanship
5. Domestic Arts

An unique research project such as the one underlying this exceptional volume deserves recognition far beyond the confines of a city and a nation.

The Living Local Cultural Sites of Bangkok, 405 pp.
Culture, Sports and Tourism Department, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration,
Bangkok 2011.
ISBN 078-616-272-009-3