

LANDSCAPES OF CONSUMPTION AND HIDDEN HERITAGE: CASE STUDY
OF SUKHUMVIT ROAD

By

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Bangkok's southeastern growth corridor, starting at Rattanakosin Island, is built around a road that begins as Rama I, becomes Phleonchit, and ends as Sukhumvit. Sukhumvit, as an area, is over-built, congested, chaotic, and represents Bangkok in its most urbanized developed form, for better or worse. It also has the region's heaviest concentration of western tourists, hotels, bars, prostitutes and represents Bangkok in its most venal state. This thoroughfare is both urbane and vulgar and a very recent manifestation: until the 1960s, the Sukhumvit area was rural and quietly suburban.

In 1857, Rama IV (King Mongkut) built Wat Srapathum along with his vacation palace, Srapathum near the end of Rama I Road. The dissertation approaches Sukhumvit as overlaying and inter-weaving layers of reality. Initially, there is the Sukhumvit of memory, perhaps most easily understood as a history of the area at its simplest level: the various kings and their legacies, the wats, the palaces and the few remaining khlongs, survivors of an older, aquatic realm. Second, Sukhumvit is an area of consumption – of constant change, an area of refurbishments and reinventions used to attract the tourist dollar, contemporary Sukhumvit at its cosmopolitan, tolerant, inventive best.

Third, though not quite as conspicuous, is the Sukhumvit of the intellect, as a place for scholarly speculation as academics from East and West strive to make sense of an urban realm that does not seem to conform to the comfortable stereotypes of urban space. Finally, there is Sukhumvit as a field of discourse, home of a million lives and a million stories. It has its writers, its Buddhist scholars, its philosophers and administrators, its poor stall-holders and rich investors expressing views and desires all of which create a rich cacophony that matches the life of the street itself.

The fundamental institution of Nation, Religion and King is revered and respected but the triad becomes less foundational in the limited awareness of immigrants and visitors who lack a profound knowledge of local lore and history. It is necessary to communicate a Thai interpretation of the area and to note Thai people's understanding, or lack of understanding, of Thai cultural heritage. Sukhumvit, it seems, is a place of appropriation – of the past existing in the present, of diverse cultures continuously absorbed into a metamorphosing Thai culture and heritage, and of the tolerated *farang* (western foreigner). Any interpretation of Sukhumvit and, by implication, of Thai urban space, must involve a process of explaining this appropriating, hybridizing nature of Thai culture. This will be revealed in the form of a discourse on literary writings, pertinent discussions, and inter-textual analysis, to analyze the significance of *surface* in a Thai view of the world and the significance of this characteristic, critical to any understanding of Thai responses to globalization.

Architectural Heritage Management and Tourism Graduate School, Silpakorn University Academic Year 2007

Student's signature.....

Thesis Advisor's signature.....

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Part I

Chapter 1

Introduction

“The world, which took six days to make, is likely to take six thousand to make out” (Morley, 1990: 176).

The author does not recall his first experience of Sukhumvit. It was many years ago, the author was probably little more than a baby at the time when went to soi Tonson and soi Somkit near by the British Embassy in that era. The author remembers the White Bus Lines in the 1960s, stationed in soi Somkit, and greenery that seemed to surround most residences, the clean canal, the trees, and the romantic feeling of pleasant khlong San Saeb every time we visited our aunt’s house in Sukhumvit soi 31 (Sawadee). Sukhumvit and its sois by then already projected an image and reputation of modernity among us; and of course today nothing remains of its rural era, but instead the accoutrements of profound urbanization with its high rise towers, traffic jams, the BTS, hotels, department stores, restaurants, shops, stalls, street markets, go-go bars, street prostitutes, tuk-tuks, international hospitals, apartments, condominiums and more plazas etc. It is now what might be commonly termed a quintessential ‘landscape of consumption’.

Sukhumvit is an area for the clash between two realities – the modern, and the memory of the past and of its heritage, which had expanded horizontally and dynamically over the centuries. The ancient maze of ever changing rural activity, in a mixed aquatic-terrestrial landscape of drainage lines and paths, is in marked contrast with the present with its modern vitality. It is this clash of realities that interests the author. How are they to co-exist and how might such a lost (disappeared) heritage is represented?

The author’s interest lies in searching for ways to interpret the history and heritage of an area that appears to combine a seemingly chaotic muddle of uncontrolled and disordered urban development and activity (the present characteristic in Sukhumvit), alongside the very clear heritage of khlongs, sois, and past ways of living. The pattern of growth may be one of seeming disorder, but it is the author’s chosen task to identify patterns of activity and the urban forms that have supported these patterns, from the past to the present day. This area is one of the most significant tourist districts in Southeast Asia - but, to the city’s disgrace, this lost heritage is not presented and interpreted to either the tourists or the local inhabitants.

The areas that are the focus of this tourist and visitor activity, and to which the author is referring, are the three districts of Pratumwan, Wattana and Khlong Toei.

Sitting on the eastern corridor of Bangkok, the 'tourist route' starts from Siam Square in Pratumwan district and runs eastwards on Rama I and along Phleonchit, across the rail road track, where it then becomes Sukhumvit Road, to around soi 24 (or soi Kasem on the south side). The northern part of Sukhumvit is in Wattana district and the southern part is in Khlong Toei District, covering a distance of about 4.5 kilometers. One could consider it as the route from the interchange of Siam BTS station traveling eastward to Phrom Phong BTS station.

The scope of study

The study of Rama I-Phleonchit-Sukhumvit presents a cross-section of the cultural landscape of the metropolis and displays Thai identity in all the diversity of the big city. The significant views to be considered include those of Thais and foreigners in this international venue. The author's most significant task is to interpret the status quo of the urban precinct along this stretch of roads. The study begins from roughly 1950s-1960s and continues to the present situation around the year 2006.

The author's narrative on history is to envisage and collaborate the understanding of Thai culture and ways of life as they are revealed in the transformations of the physical layers that constitute Thai spaces. The gist of themes can be depicted from Chapter 2: Sukhumvit as a field of history or memory, Chapter 3: Sukhumvit as a field of consumption, Chapter 4: Sukhumvit as a field for the intellect or interpretation, Chapter 5: Sukhumvit as a field of discourse and finally Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion. The scope of the narrative will covers aspects of globalization, politics and economy, also issues of ethics and morality, language, literature, and critically both foreigner and Thai views. The latter will be linked to the foundational triad of Nation-Religion-King. The study is pursued by reading the historical layers of changes and the 'writing' of the city as what might be described as hybridized collages.

The issue

Rama I-Phleonchit-Sukhumvit does have a hidden (forgotten, 'concreted over') heritage that could enrich Thai people's understanding of both their past and thereby themselves. However, it is also a major tourist destination, centre for foreign business, conventions etc, and it reveals significant aspects of *present* Thai culture, from the worst (the beggars, soi Nana, soi Cowboy) to the noblest (Siam Society, Srinakarinviroj University), all of which also is 'heritage'. So there is a tension involved in revealing, understanding or interpreting the processes of the present. These processes are indeed the dynamic of 'heritage' production, in two senses: in producing the actual sites and objects with heritage significance, and in the imagination or understanding of these sites and objects of heritage.

This space of heritage leads to the theoretical issue of this research, namely that culture is represented by how space is produced. French Marxist Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) was a sociologist who studied and wrote about the social production of space. But here our concern is with social production of heritage. In similar manner

to Lefebvre, our concern is with the social production of physical space, of the perceptions associated with it, and how both reflect culture over time. In brief the tripartite framework espoused by Lefebvre comprises (1) 'spatial practices,' concerning the economic use of space by local performers, (2) 'representations of space,' concerning the spatial layouts and purposes represented and regulated by local management teams, and (3) 'representational spaces', concerning the views and perceptions of local inhabitants regarding the representation of their culture (Lefebvre 1991: 39). Therefore the 'language' of physical space does not directly identify the social production of heritage. The interpretations of what lies under the superficial layers of city space will be revealed to deepen one's insight and understanding of that space. This will also allow one to interpret the historical strata of the past within the wide-ranging elements of spatial production, use and social interaction. Additionally, Thailand, Bangkok and Sukhumvit can also be viewed in the context of the historical triad of Nation-Religion-King which is considered to underlie the production of heritage, and considered the root of Thai heritage.

The research questions

The question comes down to one of defining heritage as both spaces and objects and our understanding of each within this context of social production. In defining a specific area as a representative space and applying our diversified concept of Nation-Religion-King to that space offers a process and framework by which the author can study the constant metamorphosis (especially in spatial practices) of these areas.

The following series of questions are especially pertinent when investigating Rama I-Phleonchit-Sukhumvit: Where are the evident historic remains? What are the competing interests? What of the urban poor? What of Sukhumvit's 'dark side' (mafia, fakes, sex tourism, etc)? Is there a trend in this cacophony? Where is it going or what might the future bring? After initial data gathering and reflection, the broad focus was narrowed to the following investigative questions:

1. What are the identifiable layers of evolution and ecology on Rama I-Phleonchit-Sukhumvit Roads?
2. How well, if at all, do visitors and locals understand the processes of cultural heritage in everyday life and the effects of management policies?
3. Do Thais maintain a sense of their cultural heritage and identity in this venue of tourism? If so, how do they maintain and interpret their heritage and what evidence is there of this heritage?

Research objectives

1. To discover layers of the historical past in everyday life within the modern social processes of globalization, consumerism and tourism along Rama I- Phleonchit-Sukhumvit Road.
2. To determine both hidden and evident cultural markers maintained over time in order to interpret Thai heritage and identity along Rama I-Phleonchit-Sukhumvit Road.

Methodology

The challenges to methodical research lie in the diversity of the production of space and of its use, the diversity of local concepts and the meanings locals ascribe to this production and use over time leading up to the cacophony of modern contemporary Thai urban lifestyle on a non-stop, twenty-four hour basis.

Due to the tripartite diversity (of representational space, of concepts or representations of space and of spatial practices, or economic use of space and their constant metamorphosis), and the long period of time involved, there is the methodological problems of how to investigate this question of Sukhumvit history. To come to grip with the time span involved and the diversity of the areas, a two-prong approach has been adopted. In the first approach, the investigation weaves in and out of the spaces under study, the events that have occurred in the production of these spaces, public accounts of the production of space, and of thoughts and ideas across time, seeking to weave connections between these phenomena. The text will allow the reader to wander through the muddle of Sukhumvit and its stories and come to terms with and appreciate the richness of ‘heritage as a process of the production of space.’ In the second instance, the approach explores the contemporary discourse about Sukhumvit in an attempt to understand ‘the diversity of conceptualizations with regard to the use of space and the historical significance of the structures erected.’ Reference to the historical and traditional concepts of time and space will mirror French historian Fernand Braudel’s view of time, introduced and explained in detail in Chapters 4.

The information gathered from observations and interviews are not viewed as a matter of right or wrong but rather as they highlight emerging insights within the scope and purpose of the study. The author will review input from local Thai groups that understand the sensitivity of heritage on the one hand, while identifying the theoretical meaning that might emerge from expatriates’ or Western views, on the other. For example, the Thai views are linked to Buddhism and good behavior as the Thais live in an egalitarian society with a specific cultural tradition, while Western views are characterized by ideas of systematic analysis and are much clear cut in black and white experiences. In research one should not forget one’s own identity as a person when performing a task. One is not invisible to the subjects one is studying. The researcher needs to be totally aware of what he/she is doing. The author became aware of the situation that he is a complete stranger when, in most interviews, he was unknown to the informants and experienced extreme difficulty in eliciting information. However, understanding was gleaned from observation of both primary sources, i.e. in viewing, participating and interviewing, and secondary sources, i.e. reading texts, newspapers etc. Learning about identifying hidden heritage will prove invaluable for the overall learning process and interpretation of Thai heritage.

The character of Bangkok and Sukhumvit is dominated by confusion (*wun-wai*); the ultra-urbanized *thanon* Sukhumvit (Sukhumvit Road) is where things happen “all over the place,” especially evident in the area of Sukhumvit sois 3, 7, 11 and soi Cowboy. There is historical ‘wun-wai’ in how the khlongs became a labyrinth of roads and sois. The garden home by its canal, called ‘baan suan rim

khlong', vanished, to be replaced by a network of sois. It is this labyrinthine Bangkok that quality needs to be 'unpacked' and revealed as being of the very essence of Thai space and, hence, heritage.



Figure 1: A pretended reconstruction of 'baan suan rim khlong' the 'ideal home' of Udomsri Buranasiri at Sukhumvit soi 12, *by the author, on 23rd July 2006.*

The problem of writing

A significant aspect of methodology has been to devise a method of writing the dissertation. Simply stated, Rama I-Phleonchit-Sukhumvit is a landscape of extraordinary diversity which could well be labelled confusion, muddle, chaos, or more positively as multi-layered, a collage or hybridized. Therefore any interpretation of it as heritage must come to terms with this quality of seeming confusion: how is the confusion to be presented to an audience so that its complexity and richness can be understood and appreciated?

Any heritage guidebook that might eventually be produced for the millions of visitors to the area would need to address the innumerable stories, myths and lives that constitute the place. So a guidebook would itself almost inevitably be a collage of these stories, events, personalities and levels of reality expressed in the spaces of the street. In an important sense, collage is the structure of the street, and has to be expressed in the structure of any guidebook that is to make sense to the reader.

The problem with the writing of this dissertation is similar: not only does it have to function in a situation where there is no explicit structure on which to base a description, but additionally the area's character as collage must itself be adequately communicated in the writing. There will be many places in the following chapters where the narrative 'breaks up', as secondary stories insert themselves into a main story; indeed at times the text may appear helter-skelter, racing off in many directions. However, that is the character of Sukhumvit.

The present author has a special advantage, in being a long term resident of Sukhumvit. Therefore his experience is of the multiplicity of its stories and thus of the potential richness of its interpretation to the vast majority of people who merely visit Sukhumvit. Hence the diversity of stories, allowed to surface in the following account, has been intended.

Structure of the dissertation:

The project will be reported here in two main parts. The first part, comprising chapters two and three will look at Rama I-Phleonchit-Sukhumvit in its historical background. While chapter two focuses on early history in term of memory (more or less to around 1960), and chapter 3 on later events, nevertheless there will be overlaps between the two, as it is the processes and connections that are the real issue. The issue of history coincides with the theme of consumption as it is prevailing in the sites and locations recorded in the chapter. It needs to be emphasized that there is no intention here to engage directly with current historio-graphical debates, as the historical discussion is presented rather as a background, in order to 'foreground' the spaces, processes and connections.

In these following chapters the writing will take something of a collage form, although it will have the simple structural devise of chronology to give a sense of order to what is always, however, a disordered landscape.

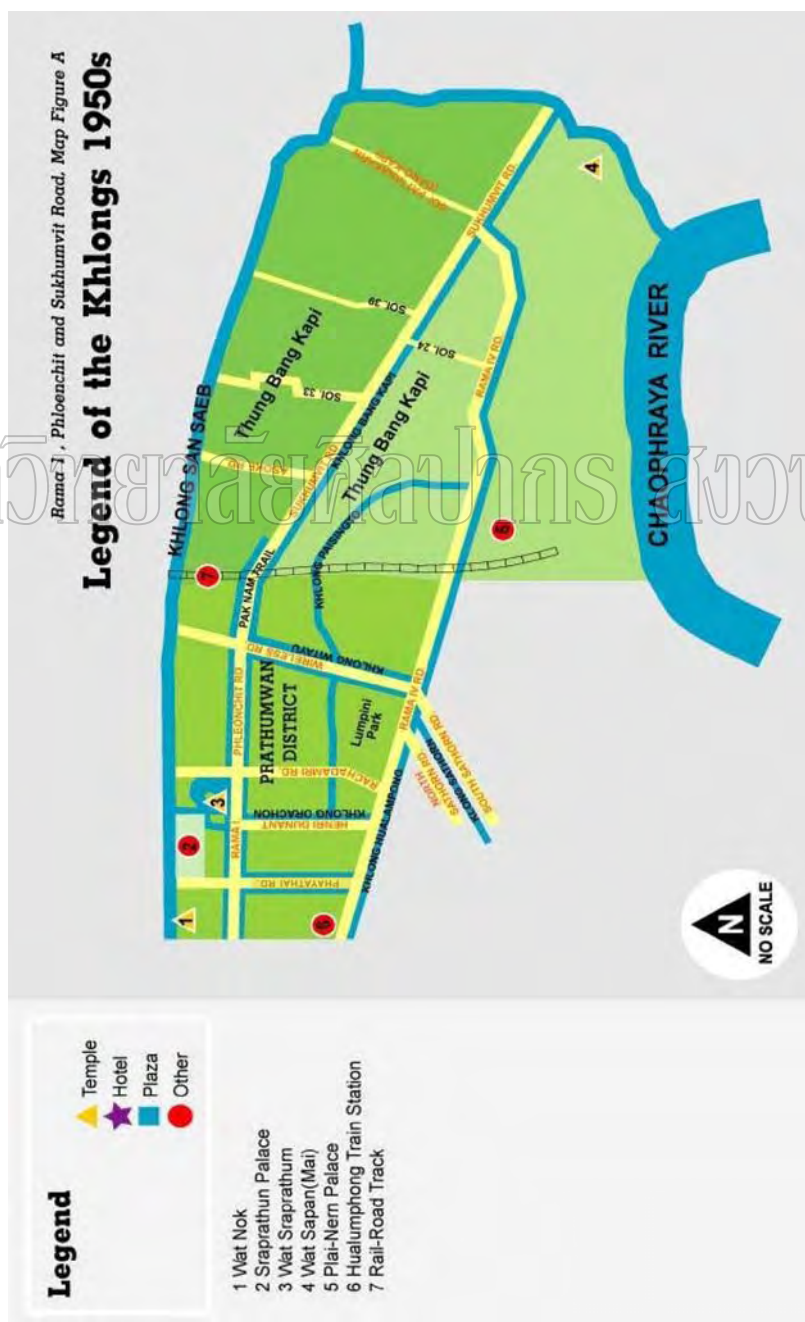
The second part of this document deals with the diverse discourse on what lies in, behind and around Sukhumvit. Chapter 4 is concerned with the literature relevant to Sukhumvit, and as these texts are historical, or deal with historical study, there is again some overlap with the themes of Chapter 2 and 3. This chapter also deals with Lefebvre's tripartite framework of production of space and the three understandings of time (hence of process) by Fernand Braudel. This will shed light on the heritage of that foundational triad of nation, religion and king. Therefore the ideas of superimposed layers of both eastern and western thought will be scrutinized. Chapter 5 covers an extensive number of surveys and interviews discussing, in the narrower sense of the discursive format, a wide range of ideas and attitudes about the Rama I-Phleonchit-Sukhumvit of the present day. This chapter is therefore argued to provide the link in term of discourse and narrative.

In this second part, generally speaking Chapter 4 and 5 of the dissertation, there can be no ordering devise such as chronology. Nor can the account be ordered as a spatial sequence, from one end to the other, as stories range variously up and down

the road and in and out of the sois. Thus the collaged method of reporting, discussed above, will characterize the account.

Finally, Chapter 6 takes the form of a broad discussion covering what this investigation has revealed. It is expressly directed toward the question of what, in the case of a multi-layered, chaotic, cacophonous and muddled space like Sukhumvit, can be defined as heritage. How, indeed, do we define heritage? In that sense, Chapter 6 brings the reader back to the issues raised in Chapter 1.

Map 1 of Khlongs in 1950s



Source: By interviewing various people, i.e. ajarn Udomsri Buranasiri.

Chapter 2

Sukhumvit as a Field of Memory

King Taksin (1767-1782), the harbinger of the Rattanakosin era, is credited with rebuilding the Kingdom after the painful defeat of Ayudhaya. He built a new Siam (Sian) at Thonburi, on the west side of the Choa Phraya River some fifty kilometers south of the former national capital of Ayudhaya. Thonburi was then, in 1773, known by Westerners as Bangkok variously spelt as: 'Bancoc, Bancok, Banckok, Bankoc, Banckock, Bangok, Bancocq and Bancock' (Archive of Rattanakosin, 1982: 14-32). In 1782 King Rama I (1782-1809) of the Rattanakosin era, selected the site on the east side of the river for his Grand Palace (Archive of Rattanakosin 1982: 33). His son, King Rama II (1809-1824), continued to build the royal site during the Rattanakosin era by adding a number of elaborate wats (temples). King Rama II's sons, King Rama III (1824-1851) and King Rama IV (b. 1804, r. 1851-1868) shared their father's penchant for building wats (Firestone, 1999: 18). King Rama IV selected the eastern precinct of the city of Rattanakosin to expand more temples, which was a flat area of aquatic basins famous for rice and fruit orchards. During this period, the area around the Grand Palace was settled by predominantly ethnic Thai, as well as Chinese, Indian and a few Mon.

King Rama IV or King Mongkut ordered another wang (palace) to be built along with wat Prathumvanaram (wat Srprathum or wat Sra) (Srprathum, 1991: 82) in the Prathumwan District. Construction of the new palace and wat was begun in 1853 (Srprathum, 1991: 82), and completed in 1857 (The Nation, 23rd December 2005: 1). The wat stood at the end of Rama I road (Phraram 1 road), then a rural suburb. The wat was reached by a narrow dirt trail and was surrounded by beautiful man-made ponds which were used for boat racing during festivals and for the exhibition of indigenous varieties of white or pink lotus (bau luang). Prathumvanaram or wat Srprathum (temple of lotus) did not have its grand celebration until December 1867. The area around the city of Rattanakosin was known for its serenity and famous for peaceful voyages along khlong (canal) San Saeb or khlong Bang Kapi (Srprathum, 1991: 197). These khlongs were dug during the reign of King Rama III in 1837 (Archive of Rattanakosin, 1982: 612). Khlong San Saeb (stinging nettle) was the main transportation route for the area. The smaller khlong Bang Kapi ran along the south side of the Pak Nam trail, a continuation from Rama I Road (Askew, 2002: 239); later, the name was changed to Phleonchit Road and Sukhumvit Road. Khlong Bang Kapi joined Khlong San Saeb in Phrakanong District east of the Wattana and Khlong Toei Districts. Both of these districts were once known as Thung (field) Bang Kapi.



Figure 2: Wat Prathumvanaram looking to northwest, December 1867, Source: Srathum, 1991: 84. Also 'Kromaphranaratiprapunpong', 2004, Klong Likit 'Mahamongkutrachakunanusorn', 1926, Chulalongkorn Printing: 183, Photographer unknown.

มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร ดงพลับพลึง

King Mongkut's choice was to build his palace in this eastern suburb because of its propitious location; however, in the 1950s, khlong San Saeb became infested with mosquitoes. Khlong San Saeb, heading off in an easterly direction, was the major route for the transportation of agricultural produce and supplies. The famous ponds of Pratumwan District were known for white lotus and where colorful Thai plants grew on many of the islands. King Mongkut expanded the landscape of rice fields by acquiring land parcels to be added to the Crown Property, and created something of a terrestrial paradise, a truly *Royal Eden*. In 2005, a ninety three year old monk, Phra Yindee (1913-2006), told the author that in 1950 a 100 meter long wall, with lotus flower carving was relocated and rebuilt after road expansion. It was moved at least 15 meters as confirmed by Luang Tah Lek, a ninety-six years old monk in an interview at Wat Prathumvanaram on 19th February 2007.



Figure 3: The beginning of the study area, at Rama I Road and the wall of wat Prathumvanaram, *by the author, on 28th December 2006.*

The main access to the area then became Khlong Orachon, a khlong that was dug during the period of wat and palace construction. A less frequently used access was built in 1857 (Srprathum, 1991: 65). During the summer months, King Mongkut made boat trips to visit Wat Srprathum, which was dedicated to his royal consort, and Srprathum Palace, on the northwest side of the wat (The Nation, 23rd December 2005: 1). His last visit was during the grand celebration of the temple, ten years after it was completed. On that festive occasion, it became the most illustrious royal temple of the era.

In the main hall of the grand temple resided two of the most worshipped Buddhas: Phra Serm and Phra Saan from Vient Chan, Laos. The inside walls of the temple were decorated with murals of fleets of royal barges and the legend of the Thai character ‘Srisanonchai’. This is the story about a young boy from Ayudhaya during the early Rattanakosin Era, written by Sunthorn Phu during the reign of King Rama II. Srisanonchai’s wit is famous among Thais and the story reflected everyday life of the time. By the clever use of irony and parody, Sunthorn Phu shows how individuals try to explain away their Machiavellian plots by use of pretext and whitewash. Srisanonchai is depicted on the walls of Wat Sra and alludes to how Thai politicians committed pork barrel politics in their policy making. (The author believes there is a connection between good and bad behavior and wants to scrutinize this idea later in this study).

In the smaller front hall resides another Buddha, Phra Sai which came from Lan-Chang (land of Elephant) Laos. The Buddhas came to Wat Prathumvanaram on 31st March 1865 (Srprathum, 1991: 104). Additionally, the interior walls of the

smaller temple are known for their Thai murals of lotus and rice fields (Srprathum, 1991: 87-90).

King Mongkut spent 27 years as a monk prior to his accession to the throne and was celebrated for his scientific knowledge, noted by accurately predicting a solar eclipse on 18th October 1868 (Srprathum, 1991: 70). During the early part of King Mongkut's reign, colonialism was seen as an emerging threat to the country. With Sir John Bowring, the King signed an economic treaty with England in 1855, creating and imposing an international tax levy, the first such treaty between the Western World and Rattanakosin Territory. King Mongkut established the order of 'Thammayuttinikaya', a denomination of Buddhist monks, in 1825 at Wat Samorai on Rattanakosin Island (Srprathum, 1991: 49), which has remained in practice to this day. One of the Buddhist festivals recognized by King Mongkut was the auspicious day when 1250 monks of Lord Buddha's followers met, without appointment, during the full moon of the Thai second or third calendar year in Varuwan Vihan, India. This phenomenon is a moveable feast celebrated by Thais and is known as the *Maka Buja* or Jaturongkasunibart Day. Another moveable holiday is the celebration of when the Lord Buddha was born, achieved nirvana and died all on the same day and it is called *Visaka Buja*.

These moveable holidays include the traditional practice of doing Vien Tien, where followers pray and circle (anti clockwise) the temple hall three times. Another moveable holiday is *Asalaha Buja* celebration, established in the early Rattanakosin era by King Rama II (under the Theravada denomination) and used to commemorate Lord Buddha's first sermon in Deer Park, Sarnath (National Museum Volunteers, Lecture Series in 3rd October 2006 at Goethe Institution Sathorn Road, Bangkok). It is known as the turning wheel of Dharma (Buddhist teaching). The lord Buddha delivered this sermon to the five ascetic monk attendants during his quest for enlightenment (B.P. 10th July 2006: 8).

During the reign of the King Rama V (b. 1852, r. 1868-1910), Srprathum Palace and the wat continued to be a venue for boat racing, as practised by his father King Rama IV. The palace and wat went through numerous renovations but eventually, when ponds became too shallow for racing activities; it became the headquarters of several army units. The wetlands around the palace and wat reverted to agricultural land late in the reign of King Rama V (Srprathum, 1991: 65).

King Rama VI or King Vajiravudh (b. 1881, r. 1910-1925) allowed his younger brother Kromakhun Petchaboon Intarachai to reside temporarily at the Srprathum Palace until his new Petchaboon Palace was completed in the late 1910s (Petchaboon Palace was located where the Central World Hotel was under construction in 2006) (Srprathum 1991). The Srprathum Palace was once occupied by the Queen of King Rama V who was also a daughter of King Rama IV, namely Chaofah Somdej Phra Panwasa or Queen Sawang Wattana (1862- 1955). The author has discovered part of her story, to be discussed in chapter 5. She was the grandmother of the present King Bhumipol or King Rama IX. Towards the end of the era of King Rama VI, Srprathum Palace was occupied by HRH Prince Mahidol of Songkla (1891-1929), a son of King Rama V.

During the reign of King Rama VII or King Prajathepok (r. 1925-1935, b. 1890-1937), Prince Mahidol of Songkla continued to live in Srprathum Palace, while Petchaboon Palace was occupied, from 1923 to 1980, by M.C. (Mom Chao) Boonjirathorn Juthatudh, daughter of Kromakhum Petchaboon Intarachai (Srprathum 1991).

Prince Mahidol of Songkla married Miss Sangvan Talapat who became Princess Srinakarindra or Somdeyjah (1900-1995) and the wedding was solemnized by King Vajiravudh. The wedding ceremony in the Thai fashion was celebrated at Srprathum Palace on the 10th of September in 1920 (Srprathum, 1991: 159). Srprathum Palace continued to be occupied by Somdeyjah until she passed away. The Palace now turns to be under Princess Sirinthorn's patronage (Phra Yindee at wat Srprathum interviewed 20th Feb. 2006). Prince Mahidol and Somdeyjah had three children who were:

1. Somdej Phraphenangterh Chaofah Kakaya Niwattana or Phrapenang who was born in London, England on the 6th May 1923.
2. Phrabart Somdej Phraporamintra Maha Ananthanahidol (King Anant) or King Rama VIII (1925-1946) who reigned between 1937-1946 but under the Privy Council during his youth. He was born in Heidelberg, Germany on the 20th September 1925.
3. Phrabart Somdej Phraporamintra Maha Bhumipoladulyadej (King Bhumipol) or King Rama IX who was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A. on the 5th December 1927 and is the present king.

To the west of the grand temple at wat Prathumvanaram today is a half pagoda, built in the late 1920s for the resting place of Thai royalties, principally HRH Prince Mahidol of Songkla (Somdej Phramahitalatibet Adulayadej or Prince Mahachanok), who was known as the father of Thai medical science. HRH Prince Mahidol of Songkla last resided at Srprathum Palace in 1929. At wat Srprathum there was a piece of hipbone of the late Princess Srinagarindra his beloved wife and a piece of the skull of King Rama VIII or King Anant, while the ashes of HRH Prince Mahidol of Songkla rest at the chedi. Wat Srprathum went through several restorations from fire and natural decay. Today the temple is in fair condition and stands amid newer high rise buildings at both ends. The Srprathum Palace is well kept as Crown Property and is a residence of Princess Sirindhorn (daughter of King Rama IX).

In the early 1990s the Tachapaiboon families occupied the shop house properties along the Ratchadamri road, under Crown Property Permit, and built World Trade Plaza. This subsequently was acquired by the Chirathivat families in 2004 whereupon the latter converted the whole area to become World Central Plaza with offices and hotel.

Rama I road connected to the estuary Pak Nam trail, which later became Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads. The trail led to the east and was not considered a major transportation link, as the primary mode of transportation at this time was by water. The main water course was known as Khlong Bang Kapi, but in the 1950s it

became known as Khlong San Saeb. In this area, the number of lily ponds around the palace and wat depended on the inundation from the river, which usually occurred during the summer months. The increased rains during the monsoon season caused the districts of Pratumwan and Bang Kapi to flood routinely. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the author remembers that during the monsoon season there was an average of thirty centimeters of water in the yards of most homes on soi Tonson, in the Pratumwan District. Water for seasonal crops and rice fields was obtained during the monsoon season and from the Chao Phraya River, about six kilometers away. The author remembers small khlongs on both sides of Phleonchit Road, with the khlongs on the south side of the road running in the easterly direction towards Phrakanong District where they joined with Khlong San Saeb. The Khlong Bang Kapi typified the expression 'baan suan rim khlong' (garden home by canal) as it meandered through the residential district. The khlong on the north side of Phleonchit Road ended at Sukhumvit soi 1 where it was channeled underground towards the south (see map 1 of Khlongs in 1950s, page 7).

Pak Nam Trail or Sukhumvit Road (Askew, 2002: 239) was in the Bang Kapi District before the district was divided and renamed Wattana and Khlong Toei Districts, which today are on the north and south of Sukhumvit road respectively. The freight railroad track, built during the reign of King Rama V, separates Pratumwan and Bang Kapi Districts and runs on a north-south direction, terminating at Khlong Toei River Port, approximately three kilometers from Sukhumvit road. Another major transport route was Khlong Hualumpong which connected the major khlongs in inner Rattanakosin Island. The khlong ran past the front of Hualumpong Station, along Rama IV Road, all the way east to the Phrakanong District about 10 kilometers from Hualumpong Station and Wat Sapan Mai. Khlong Hualumpong was the outlet of Khlong Paisingto which connected to the khlongs around Srprathum Palace and the wat before joining Khlong Hualumpong to the south of Rama IV Road via Ratchadapisek Road (See map 1, on page 7).

The countryside surroundings of the Pak Nam Trail was composed of narrow khlongs and drainage channels and formed a labyrinth of waterways around the sois in the Pratumwan and Bang Kapi Districts. These were the main transport routes for the area and ran north to khlong San Saeb. The outlets from khlong Bang Kapi ran to the south to khlong Paisingto and khlong Hualumpong by the side of Rama IV road. In fact most sois in the area are the product of khlong excavation and intentionally back-filled ground. Early in the development of this area, on both sides of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads were khlongs and ditches that allowed water to drain away during the rainy season or as the tide waters rose in Khlong San Saeb. Khlong San Saeb was connected to both Khlong Mahanak and Khlong Padunkrukasem on Rattanakosin Island where the latter drained into the Chao Phraya River. The author recalls this stretch of road when khlongs were commonplace during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

As mentioned, the districts in this area are Pratumwan District, Khlong Toei District and Wattana (or Vadhana) Districts. Pratumwan District was incorporated earliest, during the time of the inception of Srprathum Palace and wat. The Bang

Kapi District, which later become know as the Khlong Toei District, was incorporated in 1972, and covered both north and south sides of Sukhumvit Road. The present Wattana District, which was previously part of Khlong Toei District, was incorporated in 1997 and covers the whole north section of Sukhumvit Road (BMA 2005). The author found that Wattana District has responsibility from the north of the sidewalk up to Khlong San Saeb, while Khlong Toei district carries all work southward including on Sukhumvit Road.

Eighty-four year old ajarn (teacher) Udomsri Buranasiri, former architecture instructor of Chulalongkorn University, described how khlong Bang Kapi ran along the south of Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads before the 1960s. Here the feeling of “baan suan rim khlong” was very strong. However, the situation deteriorated when the khlong became shallower and eventually dried up by the mid 1960s. It was later filled in and used for road expansion (interviewed: 23rd July 2006). Ajarn Udomsri added, ‘my hobby was home building from 1951-1970 and I built some 200 homes and townhouses on the sois of Phleonchit and Sukhumvit’.

In 1950 Sukhumvit road was given its current name and was paved and enlarged to two lanes of traffic, from the beginning of Rama I Road, through Phleonchit Road to the railroad track section of Sukhumvit Road. Sukhumvit continued to the east for approximately 315 kilometers and terminated in Trat Province. To honor the head engineer, Phra Pisansukhumvit, this interstate highway was named after him and for the numerous construction projects he carried out in Thailand during his years of service (Sukhum, 2004: 334). Phleonchit Road, the name meaning ‘serenity of mind’, began at the end of Rama I Road at the Ratchaprasong intersection and connected with Sukhumvit Road. During the reign of King Rama VI, the land around soi Tonson and soi Lung Suan were granted to those who were supporters and disciples of the royalty, with Rama I Road carrying that name since the time of King Mongkut. Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads continued to be bordered by narrow khlongs until the early 1960s. The author remembers seeing this when traveling on Wireless Road, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads. On Wireless Road, there were khlongs on both sides as well as rows of karmpu trees (*genus Samanea saman*), or more commonly known as a ‘rain tree’. The trees were saved during the process of road expansion in the mid 1960s by requisitioning them from the American Embassy. Today the rain trees are very helpful to cool the road from the hot sun.

Development of the land on Sukhumvit Road and its associated sois by middle class and high-ranking officers and business families proceeded into the 1960s, moving out from the congested city center to the generous land blocks of Bang Kapi District. Associated with this was the up-grading of Sukhumvit Road by the American aid agency USOM, increasing the area’s attractiveness (Banchawan, 1992: 89-90). Udomsri Buranasiri stated that ‘by the end of World War II, on most evenings there was bicycle riding from soi 11 to soi 19, gatherings of friends and associates who enjoyed the area for its outdoor activities. During that time, the street was a much safer place to travel and on most weekends, people enjoyed the night life and ballroom dancing at Suan Amporn (in Dusit District of Rattanakosin Island) and at Lumpini Park in the Prathumwan District. Men in tuxedos and ladies in

evening gowns gathered at the late night supper clubs in front of Sukhumvit soi 39 (Phrom Phong) and explicitly pervaded colorful socializing on the street of Sukhumvit' (Buranasiri, 2004b: 4).

Norman Bartlett, who worked as the press attaché to the Australia Embassy and lived in Bang Kapi during the 1950s, described it as a quintessential modern suburb: 'Bang Kapi is one of the reasons why living in Bangkok is much like living in any other modern city. Bang Kapi is new and neat suburban, tropically suburban, a garden suburb pleasant enough to live in but more like Santa Barbara or Palm Beach, without the sea, than Siam. Everybody in Bang Kapi goes to office. Cars cause peak hour traffic jams. In the car harried fretful people who must not be late on their way to what people do in offices nowadays in nearly every city in the world' (Askew, 2002: 240).

People impacts of 1950s to 1960s

More 'colour' can be added to this account by learning about people and their views from various cultures. There were many people who made important contributions. Some had been the spearheads of new ideas and activities that became more commonplace in later times. Following are a few of the names that had impacts in the area.

In late 1940s, Bang Kapi (the area around Sukhumvit Road) was transformed from rice fields to a residential suburb (Anderson, 1977: 6). Prominent among these developers is A.E. Nana, an Indian Muslim Businessman who worked in the Sukhumvit Road area around soi 3 and 4 (Buranasiri, 2004a). Mr. Nana purchased an area of less than an acre of land to relocate the Siam Society, where it had been since 1922, to its present location at soi 21, soi asok (the Siam Society fact sheet 2005). Prior to this it was in Rattanakosin Island. Today A.E. Nana or Lek Nana resides in a teak gingerbread wooden frame house on lower Sukhumvit Road between soi 1 and soi 3.

Jim Thompson (1906-1967), an American, arrived in Bangkok in September of 1945, near the end of the Second World War (Manager Daily, 24th April 2006: 39), as a member of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). In 1946, after discharge from the military, he became interested in the Thai silk business. As result, he founded Thai Silk Company Ltd. in 1948 and encouraged Ban Krua (in Prathumwan district near khlong San Saeb) weavers to produce from their own homes, and purchased on a consignment basis in a bid to maintain quality and promote competition (Subhamitr, 2004: 6). Jim Thompson gathered a collection of old houses from various part of Thailand and, together with one he obtained from Ban Krua, built his now famous Jim Thompson's house museum by khlong San Saeb. Thompson mysteriously disappeared in Malaysia's Cameron Highlands in 1967. The present museum and the Thai houses are situated in Prathumwan district at soi Kasemson on Rama I road.

Khunying (lady) Manee Sirivorasan (1910-1990) was one of the people in that era who occupied a four-acre (10 rais) lot on Phleonchit road. By the late 1950s she

managed to operate one of the first tall high rises, a ten-floor office building called 'Maneeya Complex' which incorporated shops and services such as restaurant, coffee shop, night club and others (Sirivorasan, 1990: 31). The businesses seemed to do well until fire damage in the early 1960s. Today a newer Maneeya Building stands on the same site between Amarin Plaza, Mater Dei School and the Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel on the corner of Ratchaprasong Square on Phleonchit road.

Udomsri Buranasiri (1922-present) was an instructor in the Architecture department at Chulalongkorn University (1952-1982). He had a sideline in building homes from 1951-1980 (Buranasiri 2004a: 5). Most were residences in the Sukhumvit area. He lives on Sukhumvit soi 12.

Luang Vichit Watakarn (1898-1962) spent the last day of his life at 22 Sukhumvit soi 24 on 31st March 1962 (Punseda, 1977: 203). He made a great impact on literary history with his writings and plays. He wrote numerous books, novels and songs. He spent seven years from 1934 to 1940 as Head Principal of the Cultural Arts Department of Silpakorn University (Buranamart, 1985: 77). Also in 1934 Luang Vichit and his young wife opened an art school similar to the 'Ecole de Beaux Arts' school in France, which later became 'Witthayalai Nartasilpa' in 1972 (Punseda, 1977: 51-53). His education in France and England put him into association with the League of Nations in France for almost five years. He spoke many languages including Spanish, Greek and French. On 8th May 1939 PM Phibulsongkram changed the name Siam to Thailand (Chi-anan Samudavanija cited in Reynolds, 2002, p: 52). The Thai cultural movement was at a turning point when after 1938 all of Luang Vichit's plays and writings changed the name 'Siam' to 'Thailand' (Buranamart, 1985: 136). At the conclusion of the Pacific war, however, the government of Pridi Banomyong (1945-1947) changed 'Thailand' back to 'Siam' in an effort to counter the semantic monopoly of Thai over other ethnic groups, thus asserting a more genuine national consciousness that would include all peoples within the country's borders, whatever their ethnicity (Anderson, 1978: 213). After Phibulsongkram returned to office, 'Siam' again became 'Thailand' once and for all in 1948 (Reynolds, 2002: 18). In the middle part of his life Luang Vichit became an ambassador to Japan during the Second World War in 1943. In 1952 Luang Vichit became ambassador to India and in 1953 he moved to Switzerland and Czechoslovakia then in the next year he came back to be stationed in Bern, Switzerland, until he retired in 1958 (Punseda, 1977: 67-70).

Ajarn Sompob Chanprapa described in an interview on 10th July 1980 that 'there were groups of conservative Thais who disliked his (Luang Vichit) works especially about his 'lakorn pun tang' (meaning mediocrity of eccentric, hybrid or non-Thai plays) or 'lakorn ka-lah-pah' (meaning plays of non-Thai) (Buranamart, 1985: 249).

The early history shows that the three districts of eastern Bangkok were at the beginning venues of Thai traditional lifestyles from the beginning. The significance of the area was also as the logistic gateway for Thai transportation. The most significant characteristic was that the areas were inhabited by a hotchpotch of an accumulated diversity of eclectic culture. These Thai spaces were subsequently

transformed lay entrepreneurs who after the Second World War turned the environment into a highly urbanized area which coincidentally created economic benefits under new forms of globalization.

Conclusion

The layers of heritage and the environment of eastern Bangkok prior to the 1960s were vitally important in the development of wats, palaces, residences and commercial properties. The urban community that switched from travel by khlong to travel by paved road sparked the growth of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads and its attendant complications. The average Thai's ambivalence to his or her heritage is underscored in the present eclectic community of the case study area, clouding Thai moral identity which has become embedded in the layers of development and often remains hidden to the casual onlooker.

Rama I Road began just outside Rattanakosin Island and can be traced back to the Grand Palace, though Khlong San Saeb was the main route for the transportation of food and agricultural products at that time. The significance of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads was that they became an important gateway for road transportation in the early 1950s, replacing the canal ways of the past. The development of this area in the early period of Thai history was purely at the behest of the king and the transformation of the area continued under the stewardship of the ruling classes. This has changed in recent years with various middle class groups, merchants and working class people bringing change. In the everyday lives of its present denizens, these earlier processes, stories and events exist more as memories that always seem about to be buried in the cacophony of the present. Further, as an imagined past cuts through any sharp recollection of old events, those memories can slip away. The role of scholarly interpretation of that past is to redeem such memories

Chapter 3

Sukhumvit as a Field of Consumption

This chapter describes the physical changes on Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads from the 1950s to 2000s. It therefore will set the stage for the research and give some details on spaces and places. Consumption venues will be covered including the new developments on Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads and those still under construction at the time of writing. The evolution of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads will be shown in Pivotal areas I, II and III, respectively.

Aerial photographs and maps have been selected from various sources specifically to identify patterns of development in these particular periods of time and to illustrate a correlation between the physical layers and the intrinsic heritage that relates to the subject of Thai culture and Thai identity.

The following sections cover the years 1952, 1974, 1987, 2001 and 2006 and will be supported by maps and photographs obtained from the Thai Army Map Department. The year 2006 is offered to signify the current situation of the areas covered in this research.

1. The 1952 (BMA) aerial photograph was the earliest map that could be obtained of the area. Regardless of the early date, the quality of the photograph is excellent and clearly shows residential space in the area of research. The photograph shows that this section of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads was occupied by owners of large plots of land, typically one-fifth acre to one acre in size. Subsequent research further shows that most subdivisions in the area were of this general size. However, in some cases plots were considerably larger, such as the four acre plot on Phleonchit Road (the present site of the Maneeya Building), and the much larger plot housing the British Embassy. Plots on lower Sukhumvit, within the land bank holdings of A.E. Nana, appear to be smaller. At the northern end of soi 22 up to soi 26, the land owned by the Busabong family was larger, as the name of this development 'setthi' (wealth) reflects (Askew, 2002: 246) (photograph requested on 20th Oct. 2005).
2. The 1974 (Army Map Department) aerial photograph shows where significant construction projects had been completed. In particular the Erawan Hotel, the Erawan Shrine, and the Siam Intercontinental Hotel. This period reveals the effects of a marked increase in tourism which began in the early 1970s (Sarah Anderson, Bangkok Post 6th February 2006: 1). The photograph also shows development that occurred during the 1960s. During this period, the changes were not only physical, but there were also significant intangible changes, i.e. in Thai prose and music, from Western influence (photograph requested on 26th Oct. 2005).

3. The 1987 (Army Map Department) aerial photograph relates to the period from the 1970s to the mid 1980s. It clearly shows urban movement and extensive housing development. The Condominium Acts 1979 marked a new approach to home ownership which allowed foreigners to own air space in the country for the first time. Movement into this area came about after the oil crisis of the mid 1970s with residential developments, commercial plazas and hotels representing the high rate of growth during this period. The photograph plainly shows these different forms of development. However few high-rises were built in the Sukhumvit sois during this period (photograph requested on 21st Oct. 2005).
4. The 2001 (Army Map Department) aerial photograph is the latest photograph of the area that was available. This period saw an increase in building of infrastructure such as the BTS and the MRT. Much of the physical change that occurred in this period of time was related to globalization. The period was an important time of social and economic evolution that Thailand underwent, involving political guidance that pushed Thai society toward globalization. The photograph shows the new developments of a Central Business District (CBD) in this area (photograph requested on 21st Oct. 2005).

Aerial photographs after 2001 are unavailable at this time. Further understanding, however, can be garnered from direct observation of what has occurred and is occurring within the area of study. The reality of the situation is that aggressive development has taken place along these roads, and this is backed up by direct observations. Manifestations of this development include the traffic situation from the 1960s to the 2000s and the increases in various groups of foreigners in the area. One can interpret the behavior of people from all walks of life, with the express purpose of identifying how and why certain structures exist and others are developed. However, this chapter will not only address physical forms, but will also delve into the realms of intangible perceptions to find meaning in the actions and activities of the people who live and work in the case study area.

An examination of the later history of this area, using aerial photographs and identifying significant changes that may or may not be visible in the photographs, will be conducted. Note that the figure (A1) works as counterpart to the preceding map (A1).

Figure A1: Aerial photograph by BMA 1952, scale 1:25,000.



มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร ส่วนลิขสิทธิ์

Figure A1 is the aerial photograph of the area taken in 1952. These newly constructed roads represent the growing communities in the eastern sector of Bangkok which comprised mainly shop-houses and single residences. In the northern sector, at the boundary of Khlong San Saeb on the south side of Sukhumvit Road in Khlong Toei District, communities of working people and low income families developed. Families who settled here became the new labor force, and are included in the case study area. It was this area of Bangkok that saw the city's First Development Plan (1961-66) (Askew 2002: 60) (Chirabundarnsook 1986: 154). The following can be identified from the map and aerial photograph:

Where Rama I Road intersected with Phayathai Road was the Phayathai intersection. Here one can clearly see the small low-rise plaza that eventually became Siam Square on the south side of Rama I Road, as well as a few earlier period shops. Siam Square was built on what was once Crown Property. The Civil Service School (see map A1) was built during the reign of King Rama V, and in 1910 became Royal Cadets School in the Royal Pages Department of King Rama VI. Later, in 1916, during the reign of King Rama VI, the school became Chulalongkorn University. The land around Siam Square was leased for orchard and vegetable growing throughout the Second World War. After Sukhumvit was named in 1950, a 25 acre (63 rais) area became a flea market; the area was developed into low rise shops in 1967. Twelve years later more shops were built, including the Center Point of Siam Square and the Novotel Hotel (Bangkok Station, issue 01, Jan. 2004: 68-9).

The temple: On the north side is Wat Srprathum, with its beautifully decorated front wall of lotus, facing Rama I. The National Royal Police Headquarter complex, built in the early 1950s, is on the opposite side of the road (information found in the grand hall of the police center).

Referring to the aerial photograph, figure A1, in Prathumwan District there are three dense clusters of greenery. Petchaboon Palace can be seen and Srprathum Temple is clearly visible with its small lake and islands set in an eight acre site. The race track on Ratchadamri Road (traveling south from the Ratchaprasong intersection) is bordered by rows of trees and the residence of the American Ambassador on Wireless Road overlooking this green space. It is ironic to note that Lumpini Park, which was created in 1917 by King Rama VI, comprised only a few trees in an open space of over 140 acres. In Khlong Toei District another green space can be seen at the Wattana Girl's School at the rear of Sukhumvit soi 19, the site where the school was transferred in 1874 (Wattana School Management).

Ratchaprasong intersection marked a peaceful neighborhood all the way down to Mater Dei, a Catholic girl's school established in 1928. Soi Somkit, next to the British Embassy, was a high status residential area. First the Embassy was built on the site of the present Central Post Office in 1856 (near the Chao Phraya River), during the reign of King Rama IV. The site was also used to house Burmese prisoners of war during the 1940s. In September 1926, the British Embassy moved to a new site of 12 acres (28 rais) on Phleonchit Road during the reign of King Rama VII, under the direction of Head of Mission, Sir Robert Greg. At the time it

had the tallest flagpole in the country (Bangkok Post 18th April 2006: 9). To the south, one could also see a high density of single residences on soi Lang Suan and soi Tonson which were mainly occupied by the royal household. Today, Wireless Road is the location of the American Embassy and its associated residences.

The one kilometer length of Phleonchit Road ends at the railroad track, and marks the beginning of Sukhumvit Road, commonly referred to as lower Sukhumvit Road or hua thanon, which means ‘beginning of the road’ (Thailand Timeout, May 2005, Vol., No. 81: 33). It appears that Phleonchit was named during the reign of King Rama VI some time in the late 1910s or early 1920s, which was the time the King deeded properties to the royal families in what was claimed to be a quiet, peaceful neighborhood. At the beginning of 1940, Sukhumvit was a dirt road up to soi 19 and to the site of Wattana girl’s school. From soi 19 eastwards, the road was simply a trail through rice fields (Buranasiri 2004b). By the mid-1950s, Sukhumvit Road was paved and the name Sukhumvit was officially given to it (Sukhum 2004: 334).

The highly prestigious Wattana Wittaya Boarding School is widely known for its large estate and beautiful shade trees. The school was established by Mrs. Hariott Aimhouse in 1874 at 67 Sukhumvit soi 19 in Wattana District. On Tuesday, 23rd September 2003 the author interviewed Pranee na Nakorn, the school Director, and Sriothong Chonlaphet, a member of the landscape and environment board. The first girls’ school in Thailand, its garden covered less than half an acre (show case section), and was filled with numerous varieties of tropical plants and many species of fern, gingers, palms, flowering shrubs and vines. The garden was later nominated by Her Majesty Queen Sirikit for her Bangkok Green City Project in the 1990s. Green space in an urban environment is always in high demand and in such a densely built-up environment as Sukhumvit, it is very rare. This beautiful and well maintained green space is a significant heritage site and is cherished by the students as well as the wider community who enjoy spending time in the garden.

The district surrounding Sukhumvit Road in Tambon, a sub-district of Bang Kapi, became a key element in the transformation of Bangkok from a compact city of half a million inhabitants in 1947, to a sprawling metropolis of over two million by 1960 (Askew 2002: 239). The aerial photograph does not clearly show the khlongs or the drainage ditches, but when the area flooded during the monsoon season, water collected in the areas of lowest elevation. In most areas, newly built structures were raised with subsoil up to one meter deep so that most of the water ran down to Khlong San Saeb. The aerial photograph does shows a number of empty lots and rice fields, especially close to soi Asoke or soi 21, where there were smaller lots of under an acre in size, interspersed with some larger lots of up to five acres.

At the intersection of Sukhumvit and Asoke, about 200 meters to the north, is the Siam Society. Founded in 1904, its offices were relocated to an acre of land on Asoke Road in 1932 (see people impact on the late history by A.E. Nana in Chapter 2). In 1962, the library building was opened and in 1963 a 150 year-old northern style building was relocated to the site and used as a museum. In 1997, the Chalerm

Phra Kiat Building was constructed in honor of 50th anniversary of His Majesty the King's accession to the throne.

The largest land parcel to the south of Sukhumvit Road was used to build the Tobacco Monopoly (soi 21). In 1950, the Tobacco Monopoly, under the guidance of the Ministry of Finance, bought this large land parcel in Khlong Toei District, which covers an area of 256.4 acres (641 rai) (Thailand Tobacco Monopoly 2002: 2-4). Khlong Paisingto, sometimes called Khlong Nang Hong (female swan), connects to Khlong Sathorn and in turn joins the Choa Phraya River and Khlong Hualumpong on Rama IV Road. Khlong Paisingto joins Khlong Sathorn to the south west and connects to the old drainage channels of Wireless Road. This area, once known for its polo community, then joins Khlong Paisingto to the north of the Tobacco Industry Monopoly property. It ran from west to east along the boundary of the Tobacco Monopoly's land before turning south, on the east side of Ratchada Lake, before running through Paisingto Community and, once again, joining Khlong Hualumpong near Rama IV Road. Khlong Paisingto today is contained by concrete walls and continues to feed Ratchada Lake as it did in the past. Some parts of the Sukhumvit underground drainage system connect Sukhumvit soi 19 and drains to Khlong Hualumpong (see the concrete swale represented at mid Sukhumvit soi 19).

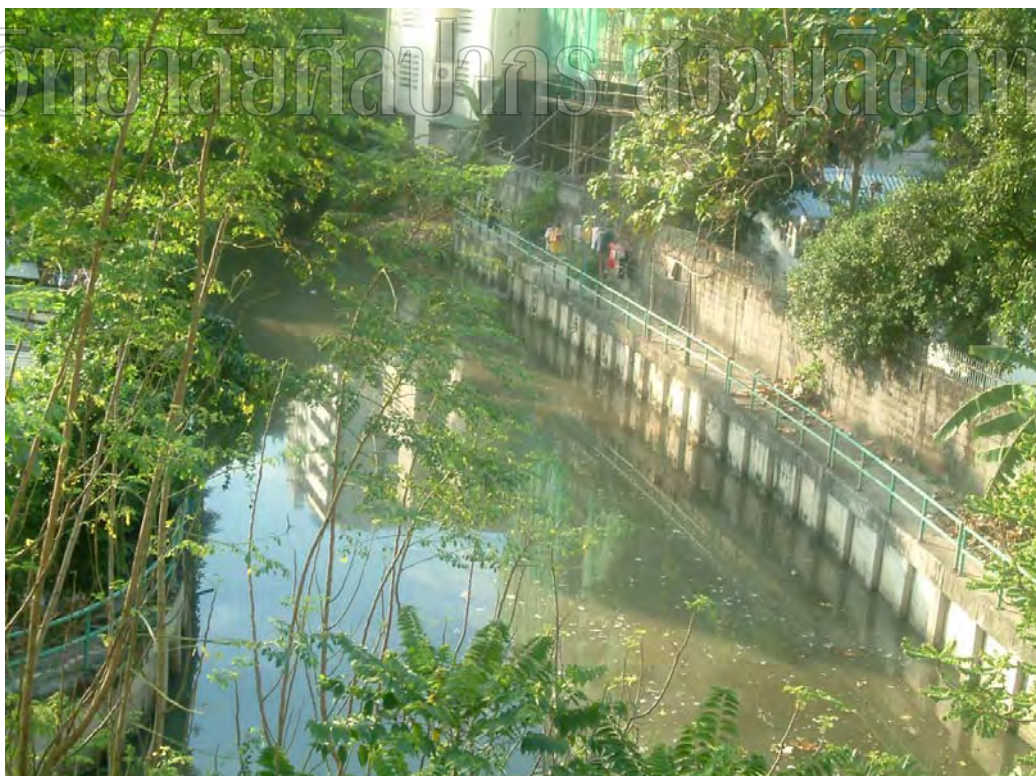


Figure 4: The new, connected 'baan suan rim khlong at khlong' on 'Paisingto'south of Sukhumvit soi 12, north of Benjakitti Park is not the way it was in the past by the author, on 8th December 2006.

The site near soi 24, where the Emporium stands today, appears to have comprised a grouping of small residential units. This presented Thai space in a usual

and natural form as in the days where pak soi become a gathering space for various activities and where everyone met. The Meteorology Building was demolished to make way for Benjasiri Park in the early 1990s.

Map 3 of 1974



Source: By the author's memories.

Figure A2: Aerial photograph by Army Map Department 1974, scale 1: 25,000.



< North

Figure A2: From Siam Square, one can notice that the various sizes and shapes of the shops differ from those shown in the photograph taken twenty years earlier. On the north side of Rama I Road, the Siam Center Mall began to appear, with the first building comprising small shops and offices erected in the late 1960s. Siam Square is typical of Thai shopping centers – it is a horizontal, low rise building with additional open space inside and out (Rukkiat, 2003: Abstract-b). Next to the Siam Center Mall was the Siam Intercontinental Hotel with its central complex, built in the shape of a Thai farmer's hat. This was a significant architectural landmark until it was demolished in 2002 to make way for the new Siam Paragon. The picture below shows the Siam Intercontinental Hotel in 1972, which also had Pan American Airlines Travel agency office in the hotel lobby. Also visible is the red roof of the Srprathum Palace in the upper left hand corner.



Figure 5: The former Siam Intercontinental Hotel, 1972 postcard, was replaced by the Siam Paragon in 2005.

The Erawan Hotel, eastern Bangkok's first five star hotel opened in 1957 at the corner of Ratchaprasong intersection, adjacent to the most popular and most sacred Erawan Shrine.

The Erawan Shrine was built in 1957 at the same time as the Erawan Hotel (Askew 2002: 61), although the shrine has been through several renovations since. The hotel was rebuilt in 1988. The shrine to the Hindu Brahma is held most sacred amongst the Hindu community and the Brahma of the Erawan Hotel is viewed as an important holy site. Many foreign tourists also come to pay respect at this shrine. The number of visitors has increased daily, even after the shrine was desecrated by a mentally ill young man on the morning of 22nd March 2006.

According to the holy book of the Brahma religion there are three Gods, each of which is represented at this shrine. Each one possesses different moral principles of greatness and miracles. These three Gods are directly responsible for human welfare, are collectively known as Tri Mulati and are Vishnu, Siva and Brahma. Brahma is believed to be the Creator of all things. He is the 'Sauampoo' (meaning

the one who originates himself), is cool-tempered and possesses the highest moral principles. He is filled with kindness, mercy, sympathy, and impartiality. These four precepts comprise the “Conscientious Behavior” which corresponds to Buddhist teachings and instructs Buddhists on the four Dharma principles of creation (Than Tao Mahaprom Foundation, handbook 2005-2006: 2).



Figure 6: New Erawan Shrine on Phleonchit at Ratchaprasong intersection at the Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel after the incident of March 2006
by the author, on 27th May 2006.

The former Maneeya Building was the first ten-storey building in the area, in the early 1960s. It was subsequently destroyed by fire and rebuilt (Sirivorasan 1990: 38). Since the early 1970s, hotels in the Phleonchit area have sprung up sporadically. Opposite these was the former President Hotel, now a Holiday Inn. In the late 1960s, Phleonchit Road was a famous venue for wedding celebrations.

An important shopping center on Phleonchit Road can be seen on the aerial photograph. On the north side of the road where Gaysorn Plaza is today and adjacent to soi Chidlom is Central Chidlom Plaza, the flagship of the Central chain owned by the Chirathivat family. The family subsequently developed the Central World Plaza complexes and Central Plaza Hotel, on Crown Property land on Rama I Road (east of Wat Srprathum), and the former world Trade Center, today the Central World Plaza, across from the National Royal Thai Police Headquarters and the Police General Hospital on the intersection.

Further down Phleonchit Road, at soi Tonson and Wireless Road, are the Ayudhaya Bank offices and the former headquarters of Ayudhaya Bank, built in 1970 (interviewed: Punya Srilajaroen, branch manager, 26th January 2006). Other office buildings in four-storey style shop-houses are mixed with vacant lots on the

northeast corner of Wireless Road. The Mahathun Building, built in the late 1970s, also graces this area.

Sukhumvit Road as seen in the aerial photograph figure A2 shows a high density of shop-houses, office buildings, small hotels, apartments and single residences. There were a number of popular hotels in the 1960s era where American servicemen on Rest and Recreation (R&R) stayed during Vietnam War. One in particular, the Grace Hotel on soi 3, was subsequently bought by Saudi investors (Askew 2002: 241). The smaller Miami and Manhattan Hotels are on Sukhumvit soi 13 and 15 respectively. At the end of the Vietnam War the Americans began to withdraw their troops, however business did not wane as this period saw a 28% increase in tourism (Askew 2002: 61).

Tourists from Europe, U.S.A. and the Middle East came to visit and stay in lower Sukhumvit. Along with a growing population of Muslim Indians the area became home to expatriates from India, Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and many other countries. They set up homes in and around soi Nana, or soi 3 and soi 4, which are on the north and south of lower Sukhumvit respectively. There were shop-houses, residential homes, low-rise office buildings, automobile showrooms, mini-marts, restaurants and many tailors found along both side of Sukhumvit Road.

The Tobacco Monopoly moved to the new Tobacco Industry complex on Rama IV Road in 1958. The administrative building was named ‘Chamnanyuthsilpa’ after the former managing director.



Figure 7: Looking westward at the Tobacco Company from Benjakiti Park, in the fore ground center is Prathumachat (birth of lotus) 2004, by the author, on 26th November 2006.



Figure 8: Looking eastward across Lake Ratchada to
the office towers on Ratchdapisek Road.
by the author, on 26th November 2006.

มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร ส่วนนิเทศศาสตร์

Map 4 of 1987:



Source: By the author's memories.

Figure A3: Aerial photograph by Army Map Department 1987, scale 1: 25,000.

Rachadapisek Road



<North

Figure A3: The Condominium Act 1979 brought about a dramatic rise in property development as it encouraged the building of residential and commercial units.

Wat Prathumvanaram continued to quietly function next to the former Siam Intercontinental Hotel although there was fierce competition among the many hotels in the area as they vied for the growing tourist trade. Small shop houses were built on the Crown Property land at Ratchaprasong intersection, where the Central Plaza is today, and leased by the Crown Property Service. Figure A3 shows that 1987 reflected the trend for urban development due to the changes in real estate law brought about by the Condominium Act 1979 (Askew, 2002: 230). The real estate market began to grow in Bangkok around the mid 1970s when single residences were still the most popular form of development. Later, there was an explosion of condominium construction along Sukhumvit, although this did not totally obliterate alternative forms of everyday life: today modern urban life coexists with local and district-based ecology and the layers of activity that shape the area's varied workforce, serving the tourists and supporting its population of shopkeepers and service workers (Askew 2002: 229). During this time, the highest concentration of commercial and residential development took place in the early 1970s, to the southeast in the Bang Kapi/Phrakanong area, forming a corridor some fifteen kilometers long (Askew 2002: 63).

The Novotel Hotel was built between 1979-1981, as a four-star 25 floor, 429 room hotel on soi 6, Siam Square. The hotel advertisement in 2006 stated: 'The Novotel in Siam Square soi six advertised for meeting and greeting venue, for only 550 per person and a minimum of 70 participations. The "2006 Alumni" package includes...a logo and backdrop and more. The hotel is on Bangkok's high street in top shopping district' (The Nation, 18th February 2006: 2C).

Amarin Plaza is a mid-1980s, classical revival style building situated on a four acre lot between Maneeya Plaza and the Grand Hyatt Erawan Plaza on the south side of Phleonchit Road. See the plaza next page.



Figure 9:
Amarin Plaza on
Phleonchit Road,
by the author on
24th July 2005.

In the late 1980s, the Landmark Hotel was built on Sukhumvit Road, near soi 6. It is one of the most popular five star hotels in Bangkok and was owned by the Thai Sihanatkathakul family, a family of international hoteliers.

The growth in condominiums along the sois of Sukhumvit began in the early 1980s, following the Condominium Act 1979. These developments attracted expatriates and an upper middle-class ownership, especially in the areas around soi 4 to soi 10, soi 3 to soi 21, and soi 18 to soi 26. This type of development continued throughout the 1980s.

From the mid 1980s the state played a role in shaping the nature of Sukhumvit. This was done largely through new transport infrastructure and the development of government-owned land. Asoke Road was extended south across Sukhumvit Road. The new road (Ratchadapisek) ran past the front of the substantial government property of the Tobacco Monopoly building and complex (Askew, 2002: 243). In figure A3, one can see how the Asoke intersection cuts across Sukhumvit Road. This caused the re-positioning of soi 16 allowing it to have a new access into the south bound section of Ratchadapisek Road, approximately 300 meters from where it used to be. The aerial photograph also clearly shows the development of the high rise buildings along the new Ratchadapisek Road. Ratchadapisek Road was designated to have eight lanes and continued from soi Asoke (soi 21) south along Ratchada Lake. There was also sporadic growth of high-rise offices such as CTI Building, Lake Ratchada Complex and Ocean Tower along Ratchadapisek and Asoke Road.

The Promsuk Condominium, at the rear of soi 26, opened in 1987 (Askew, 2002: 243). This high rise was built at the eastern end of soi 24 and soi 26 just off the aerial photograph. Promsuk condominium is a fourteen-storey tower block advertised as having: 'A closed circuit T.V. system which continually monitors the lobby, and the lifts and halls to make sure your privacy within the sublime, homey world of Promsuk Condominium remains at all times, undisturbed' (Askew, 2002: 235).

Figure A4: Aerial photograph by Army Map Department 2001, scale 1: 25,000.



Figure A4: A marked increase in the development of taller buildings throughout the area is noticeable in the aerial photograph of Rama I-Phleonchit-Sukhumvit Road, up to soi 24. The Expressway, built in 1990, cuts through the end of Phleonchit Road and the start of Sukhumvit Road. By the early 1990s, the area under study took on the character of a construction site. In 1998, Sukhumvit boasted the highest number of new construction permits in the whole of Bangkok Metropolis Administration (BMA), (Askew, 2002: 241). The new urban development projects along these roads became important sites in the lives of locals, resident expatriates and tourists alike.

Some of the major developments during this period have been completed while others are still under construction. By the year 2001, Bangkok's population had increased to over six millions, with the districts of Pratumwan, Wattana and Khlong Toei each having a population well over 300,000 inhabitants (Askew, 2002: 237). The sizes of Pratumwan, Wattana and Khlong Toei Districts are at 8.3, 12.5 and 12.9 square kilometers respectively (BMA 1998). Map 4A indicates the great amount of construction work taking place along Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads during this period of high urban development. From here the author will describe the venues on this stretch of road starting at the beginning, Siam Square.

The author visited Siam Square many times in March 1998 when the shopping precinct was dilapidated and most businesses were doing badly. This was especially notable in hot summer months when shoppers needed cooler places to do their shopping. The area around Siam Square did not become popular with younger socio-economic groups until the 1990s when The Discovery Center, built in 1997 on the corner of the Phayathai intersection, added a new high rise complex comprising of six floors for commercial usage and twenty three floors of office space. The Discovery Center brought business back to the adjacent low rise Siam Center, and business became better than it ever was before.

The new Sala Phrarachasutta was donated by King Rama IX and Queen Sirikit to be used for religious ceremonies and meditation, one of the activities of Wat Sra, at the rear of the temple. This meditation building, with capacity of over 1,000 worshippers, was named Phrarachasutta (eminent faith) and opened to the public on the 5th December 1992 (Sraprathum, 1991: 259) in time for the propitious ceremony of His Majesty's Birthday. Tri Mulati means triangle of three-deity, which are the supernatural powers of wind, fire and sun or the three-in-one god, Phra Brahma, Phra Shiva and Phra Narai who represented heat, breath and light. Over a period of ten years from 1995, the Tri Mulati Shrine stood on the corner diagonally opposite to the Erawan Shrine in 1995 (Khoasod, 12th Feb. 2005: 36). The Shrine was popular with the younger generations particularly for Valentine wishes. Today the site is subject to a new proposal for a courtyard. The Tri Mulati Shrine stood until late 2005 (the tall building in the background is the 84-storey 'Baiyok' building renowned for the being tallest building in Bangkok, and will be the tallest in Thailand until Ocean 1 of 91-storeys is built in Pattaya in 2008).



Figure 10: The former Tri Mulati Shrine (before relocation); in the background is the former World Trade Plaza. Tri Mulati Shrine was dedicated on 12th February 1995.
by the author, on 24th January 2004.

The Sheraton, part of an American hotel group, was established in 1996 on Sukhumvit in the midst of the financial crisis but the exceptional hotel made it through the difficult years with ease. It has a very well trained staff. Its advertised '445 guest rooms including 20 Executive Suites, 3 Special Suites, and 3 Thai theme Suites overlooking Lake Ratchada'.

The Westin Hotel, formerly the Grand Delta Pacific Hotel, was established on the north side of Sukhumvit and opposite the Sheraton which was on the south side of Sukhumvit. The 25 floors have 364 rooms. The Central Group (Chirathivat family) took over the Robinson Plaza between Sukhumvit soi 17 and soi 19 in late 2004. The complex was built in the late 1980s. (In July 2006 the Westin Hotel came under the Grand Asset Group, who also operate and own the new Crown on soi 29, and the Parkway Hotel south of Asoke and Sukhumvit Roads.)

Wattana Botanical Park, a mini-park in front of Wattana Witaya Girls School on soi 19 was named a preksa nakara (garden city on one rai, less than a half acre) and dedicated to Her Majesty Queen Sirikit in 1998. A beautiful ground was landscaped with indigenous plant materials near the school's ample parking lot.

Sirikit Convention Center was built in time for the 1991 World Bank Meeting, an occasion which provided an opportunity for displaying the city. This ambitious structure was erected at the expense of one of the city's major slum settlements (Duang Phitak) (Askew, 2002: 243). It sits on Ratchdapisek Road south of the

Asoke and Sukhumvit intersection on Tobacco Monopoly land. The total site covered 84.4 acres (Thailand Tobacco Monopoly, Oct. 2002: 2). Sirikit Convention Center complex has a capacity of 65,000 square meters and is able to accommodate over 10,000 people.

The Tobacco Monopoly site to the north of the Convention Center, soon to be vacated (although as of 2002 it had not been moved) features a large artificial lake (formerly used for industrial purposes) which will become a central element of a new park, and has already attracted office projects nearby, claiming it as 'Lake Ratchada' (after the name of the road) (Bangkok Post Investment and Property 27 December 1993). The remaining land area of over 172 acres (about 430 rais) was the property of Treasury Department (Kromtanaruk), Ministry of Finance, with its water treatment lake (Thailand Tobacco Monopoly, Employee Manual, Oct. 2002: 2-4).

On the corner of Ratchadapisek road toward Rama IV road a new stock exchange was foreshadowed in the late 1980s. Sirikit Convention Center which came afterwards sat between the stock exchange and Lake Ratchada (center of Benjakitti Park).

The popular Emporium Plaza was opened in 1993. It was planned to comprise a 38-storey building with a 36,000 square meter shopping center, a 25,000 square meter amusement park, parking provision for 2,500 cars (and additional parking complex for 2,000 cars in Dec. 2004) and a 350 room five star hotel, with a prestige office tower. The project was administered by a division of the Sophonphanich family's giant Bangkok Bank, a partner and owner of the land block. The other partner is the Mall Group, a company responsible for six of Bangkok's major suburban shopping complexes, which boasted a sales turnover of 10 billion baht (US \$40 million) in 1993 (Bangkok Post, 20 October 1993). One feature of the Emporium marketing strategy was its focus on Sukhumvit residents. Thus, one early project advertisement (B.P. 22 December 1993) announced that 'all of life's need for Sukhumvit resident, so that 300,000 families here never need to go anywhere else' (Askew, 2002: 237).

The park adjacent to the Emporium is the twelve acre Benjasiri Park. The Ministry of Finance of the Treasury Department dedicated the land for public use in honor of the Queen's 60th birthday on 12th August 1992. The park opened on the 4th of May 1993 and has been the responsibility of the Public Park Division under Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA). It was the former site of the meteorology building (see aerial photograph 1952). This busy park is complete with play grounds for children, jogging track, sports courts, skating rink, sculptures, swimming pool, manicured landscape, central pond and spring fountains in front on Sukhumvit road. The park's operating office is in the rear. One significant part of this park is that there is a good sized building for the Headquarters of World Fellowship of Buddhists next to the public swimming pool at the rear corner on about a third of an acre lot (author's observation in 2005). See below picture of Benjasiri Park and the Emporium in the background. This is one of the most popular small parks.



Figure 11: Front of Benjasiri Park with the Emporium Plaza in the background,
by the author, on 24th January 2004.

The President Park Complex development was completed in 1993 at the rear of soi 24. Real estate philosophy for condominiums and commercial buildings in this area may be worth mentioning as illustrating the marketing plans and strategies at the highest end of the luxury units market, and the creation of ‘total living environments’ and comprehensive facilities (Askew, 2002: 235). Hailed by its promoters as a ‘self-contained luxury residential community’ reflecting a ‘one stop living concept’, the President Park Complex development is one of Bangkok’s most exclusive luxury condominiums, between soi 22 and 24 south of Sukhumvit near Rama IV Road (Askew, 2002: 236). The project advertising played on the symbolic capital of its location, juxtaposing the images of its 33 and 45-storey residential towers with photographs of the iconic towers of Manhattan, the Eiffel tower and even Rome’s Capitol Hill (Askew, 2002: 236). The President Park Group is controlled by a Sikh family which has gradually built up its landholdings in the Sukhumvit area over several generations (Askew, 2002: 237). By the mid-1990s, the overwhelming proportion of luxury condominiums and apartments (an estimated 70 per cent) were concentrated in the Sukhumvit district (Askew, 2002: 234). With the 1997 financial crisis the area experienced problems on construction sites. One began to see unfinished buildings throughout Bangkok.



Figure 12: Unfinished building on Sukhumvit Road south of Nana BTS Station on the eastern corner of soi 6, *by the author, on 25th March 2005.*

The geophysical crisis: Another general view of the recent situation is flooding in the Monsoon season. When the roads and sidewalks were paved with concrete and black top respectively, there were not sufficient drainages installed. Khlong San Saeb on the north and Khlong Paisingto on the south connected to Khlong Sathorn in the southwest direction through Wireless Road. Khlong Paisingto ran along Ratchada Lake and cut into the middle of Ratchadapisek Road, passing under the MRT, and then continued through Paisingto community near Rama IV road to khlong Hualumpong which ran parallel to Rama IV Road in the southeast direction to Phrakanong District by wat Sapan Mai then turned south to the Chao Phraya River. Soil layers at Sukhumvit soi 27 show the profile of the cross section as follows: The top surface at 8-10 meters is soft clay, the next level is silt loam about 2 meters, the next level is medium clay 3-6 meters, the next layer is 3 meters of gray hard clay, next level is yellow brown and very hard adobe clay mixed with sand layers about 4-6 meters and finally it is hard packed sand on the bottom. That is a total between 17-22 meters depth of soil layers (Archive of Rattanakosin, 1982: 5). The effect of these layers of soils is that the whole area could continue to sink as has been observed by local inhabitants.

Sukhumvit soi 11 and soi 22 often experience the worst flooding, during the monsoon season, due to insufficient outlets or blocked drainage pipes.



Figure 13: Sukhumvit soi 11, flooding in the early monsoon season, the weather provides an adventurous experience on rainy days!
by the author, on 5th April 2005.

The train and the population

Construction of the BTS sky train began early in the 1990s. This major project was designed to improve Bangkok's infrastructure. The first phase of the BTS construction was through the areas being studied and was completed in 1999. In July 2004, the MRT (Mass Rapid Transit), an underground rail link, crossed Sukhumvit Road at soi Asoke. The opening of MRT was honored by the presence of His Majesty the King, the Queen and Princess Sirindhorn.

From a survey taken in the early 1990s, Sukhumvit's population was then 251,431. However, the daytime population is much larger, increasing by about 25,000 people engaged in retail activities, service (such as hotels), banks, education and embassy staff. In addition, there are about 61,590 students and an estimated 17,500 tourists to consider. Altogether, the daytime population was estimated at 428,629 (Askew, 2002: 244).

The present situation

Following the false alarm of Y2K, the shocking events of 9-11-2001' at the World Trade Center Towers and the Pentagon in America had a dramatic effect on the areas of Phleonchit and Sukhumvit. These areas were placed on alert in case of terrorist attacks and tourism declined in 2001 and 2002. Since then, the tourism industry has recovered and continues to grow. By 3rd July 2004 (The Nation, 2nd July 2004: 4A), the new MRT underground train began operation and helped in the recovery of the region. The terrible tragedy of the tsunami on 26th December 2004 struck the south coast of the Andaman Sea at 8.30 a.m. and over 250,000 people died. In Thailand from Ranong, Pang Ngar, Phuket, Krabi, Trang and Satun

provinces close to 10,000 people lost their lives. Phleonchit and Sukhumvit communities were among the first to set up relief funds for the hardest hit provinces.



Figure 14: Soi Thong Lor Sukhumvit 55, at J Street Plaza, 2nd day after the tsunami, by the author, on 28th December 2004.

In 2004 construction of commercial and residential properties began again in earnest, signaling an increased demand for commodities and an economic upturn. Between late 2005 and early 2006, Siam Square had a face lift, as the entire area was renovated. The old Siam Intercontinental Hotel was demolished in 2002 and re-established on the site of the former Le Meridian Hotel on Phleonchit Road. The adjacent Holiday Inn was opened on the site of what was once the President Hotel. Several other commercial and residential projects continued to be rebuilt in the area at this time, i.e. Gaysorn Plaza, Chidlom Plaza etc. Recently, advertisements for serviced apartments in local paper showed that thirty-eight out of seventy-five top end units in Bangkok were located in the Phleonchit and Sukhumvit areas (The Nation, 19th Feb. 2006: 11A).

At Phayathai intersection on the northeast corner is the BMA Building. The initial planning of the Art and Culture Center began on 20th September 2005 and is to be built on Rama I Road. The building will have eight floors with a total of 25,328 square meters. It is expected to cost 509 million baht and is planned to be completed by 26th May 2007 (Posted billboard on the site 2005).

The development of Bangkok and its increased numbers of residential projects and shopping malls has created the problem of urban sprawl. In 2000, the Department of Labour and Services indicated that Silom, Sathorn, Ratchadamri, New Phetchaburi, Paholyotin, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads have the highest commercial density (Hosirimanon 2003: 1). While such surveys and empirical studies support this research, attention will not be directed to all developments but to those that seem significant and pertinent to this study.

The major issues during this period are globalization, the increasing sway of corporate capitalism, urbanization, tourism, and electronic telecommunication. These sectors, in turn, support the main economic sectors, as well as several sectors of the service industry. In a society where changes are inevitable, cultural and traditional values are deeply ingrained in the local community. This represents the

cultural heritage the research seeks to identify and interpret benefiting local people in helping them understand their heritage. The government’s policies that focus on material consumption cause the society to pursue various forms of consumption of both commodities and services. This attitude goes through all layers of modern Thai society. It is the opposite of how Thais once respected nature and the diverse aspects of their historical heritage.

Map 6 of 2006:



Source: By the author’s field studies.

Map 7 of 2006: by Google Earth (no scale).



Rama I Road

Bangkok Metropolitan Art and Cultural Centre began construction in 2005

Consumption venues

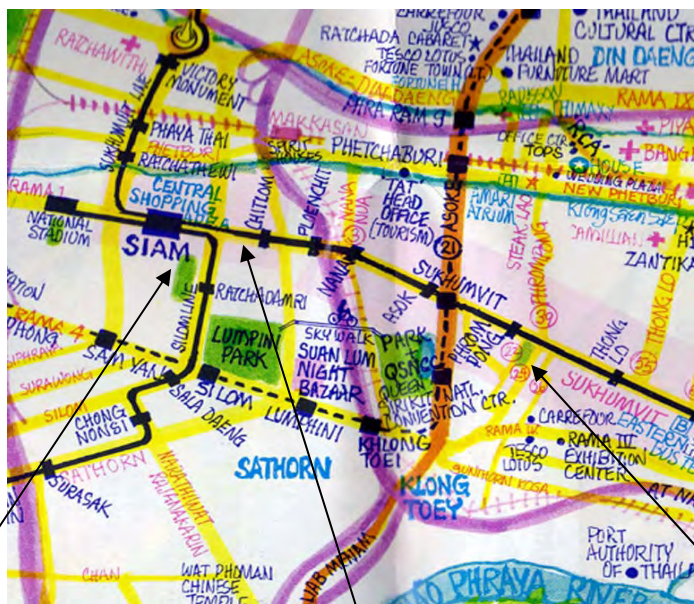
The following is a list of buildings within the case study area, which are considered pertinent in assembling both foreign and local observers.

1. Bangkok Metropolitan Art and Cultural Centre. On northwest corner of the intersection of Phayathai and Rama I. The centre will be completed by mid 2008.
2. Renovated Siam Square, Discovery Center and Siam Center opened in early 2006.
3. Siam Paragon's grand opening on 9th December 2005.
4. Central Plaza offices and the renovated Central World Plaza, under construction and renovation in January 2006.
5. Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok connected to New Urban Kitchen Plaza near the Erawan Shrine; opened early 2005.
6. The Gaysorn Plaza, a newer up-market shopping center and newly renovated.
7. The Royal Maneeya Condominium, under construction with the ground breaking in January 2006. The complex should be completed by late 2008.
8. The New Siam Intercontinental Hotel and the Holiday Inn; opposite the Maneeya building.
9. The City Electrical Bangkok Telephone Company, opposite the Mater Dei School.
10. Chidlom Plaza opened again in early 2000, after severe fire damage in the 1990s, opposite are the office towers of the Mercury and the Phleonchit and Tonson Tower buildings.
11. The British Embassy, opposite the Tai Kwan Do Club and Bank of Ayudhaya. The land at the front was sold to the Central Patana Group in early 2006.
12. The Athenee Hotel, under the new management of Le Meridian, south of Phleonchit Road on Wireless Road and opened in 2002.
13. The Park Nai Lert Hotel at the far north end of Wireless Road, built in the 1980s.
14. The Conrad Hotel, built in the early 2000s as a luxurious hotel south of Phleonchit Road on Wireless Road. The entire entrance hall through to the back is decorated with colorful beads arranged in a pattern inspired by Thai silk (Bangkok Station, January 2004, issue 01; 13).
15. The Wave Building, on the north corner Phleonchit and Wireless Roads, was built in late 1990s, on the last remaining 'empty lot' on Phleonchit Road, near the Caltex gas station. The lot is owned by the Satiensrasut family. The 'empty lot' counterpart on Sukhumvit is at the beginning of soi 6 at Nana BTS. These are the only remaining lots in this case study area.
16. The older Mahathun Building is a collection of shop-houses and low rise commercial units around it and towards the south end of Phleonchit Road, between Wireless Road and the railroad track.
17. Bumrungrad International Hospital at rear of soi 1 is situated just past the off ramp of the Expressway, at the Sukhumvit exit. It is a famous luxury hospital, new section completed in early 2006.

18. The renovated Krung Thai Bank of 15 floors is north of Sukhumvit and the new Krung Thai Building is across the street comprising 28 floors; they were opened in early 2005 and late 2005 respectively.
19. The Nana Plaza is north of Sukhumvit soi 3; it opened early 2005 opposite to the PPT gas station of Sukhumvit Road soi 4.
20. Rows of commercial shop-houses run on the north and south of Sukhumvit; on the north they are interrupted by the Regent Hotel and residences under construction near soi 13.
21. The Trendy Condominium located on soi 13 near the well known Ambassador Hotel (formerly the Chavalit Hotel) on soi 11. To be completed in late 2008.
22. The Natural Hotel is near Sukhumvit soi 13 is under construction. To be opened in mid 2008.
23. The Boutique Hotel on Sukhumvit pak-soi 15 is under construction. To be opened in late 2007.
24. Low rise commercial complex of furniture and clothing outlets between Sukhumvit soi 15 and 17 has no name; it replaced the former Shell gas station, and opened in 2006. This building is known for Jaspal fashion in clothes and furniture.
25. The Robinson Plaza at Sukhumvit soi 19, built in the late 1980s.
26. A decade old Westin Hotel is sharing parking with the Robinson Plaza.
27. Chuvit Garden by Sukhumvit soi 10; completed in 2005.
28. Benjakiti Park on Ratchadapisek Road; opened 9th December 2004.
29. The Exchange Tower on the southern corner of Sukhumvit and Ratchadapisek Roads. This New York style building stood unfinished after the financial crisis in 1997 until its completion in early 2006.
30. The row of shop-houses and auto-dealerships on the north side of Sukhumvit between soi 19 and 21 has been cleared in mid 2007; the empty space of about 2.5 acres is awaiting construction in late 2007.
31. The Jasmine Hotel and Offices Plaza at Sukhumvit soi 23 opened in 2004.
32. The Crown Plaza Hotel at Sukhumvit soi 27 was under construction with over 50% completed as of January 2006. To be opened in mid 2008.
33. The Jambunuda Condominium by Le Raffine at Sukhumvit pak-soi 31 has forty-four units, thirty floors; under construction with 25% completed as of January 2006. Similar is Le Raffine, Jambu Dvipa at Sukhumvit soi 39 having fifty-nine units, thirty four floors. To be occupied in early 2008.
34. The Fenix Office Plaza at Sukhumvit soi 31 was close to completion as of January 2006.
35. The Washington Theatre a newly remodeled building, sits across the street from Fenix Office Plaza, built in 1980s.
36. A row of shop-houses near Sukhumvit pak-soi 22a (older units).
37. The GM Heights condominium at pak-soi (near entry of soi) 22 is under construction. To be occupied in early 2008.
38. Sukhumvit soi 22 has colossal hotel The Imperial Queen's Park 'the over 1,400-room hotel was one of Trungjai Buranasomphob's architectural designs. The Jade Palace across the street was recently changed to the Grand Mercure under the Accor management in 2006.

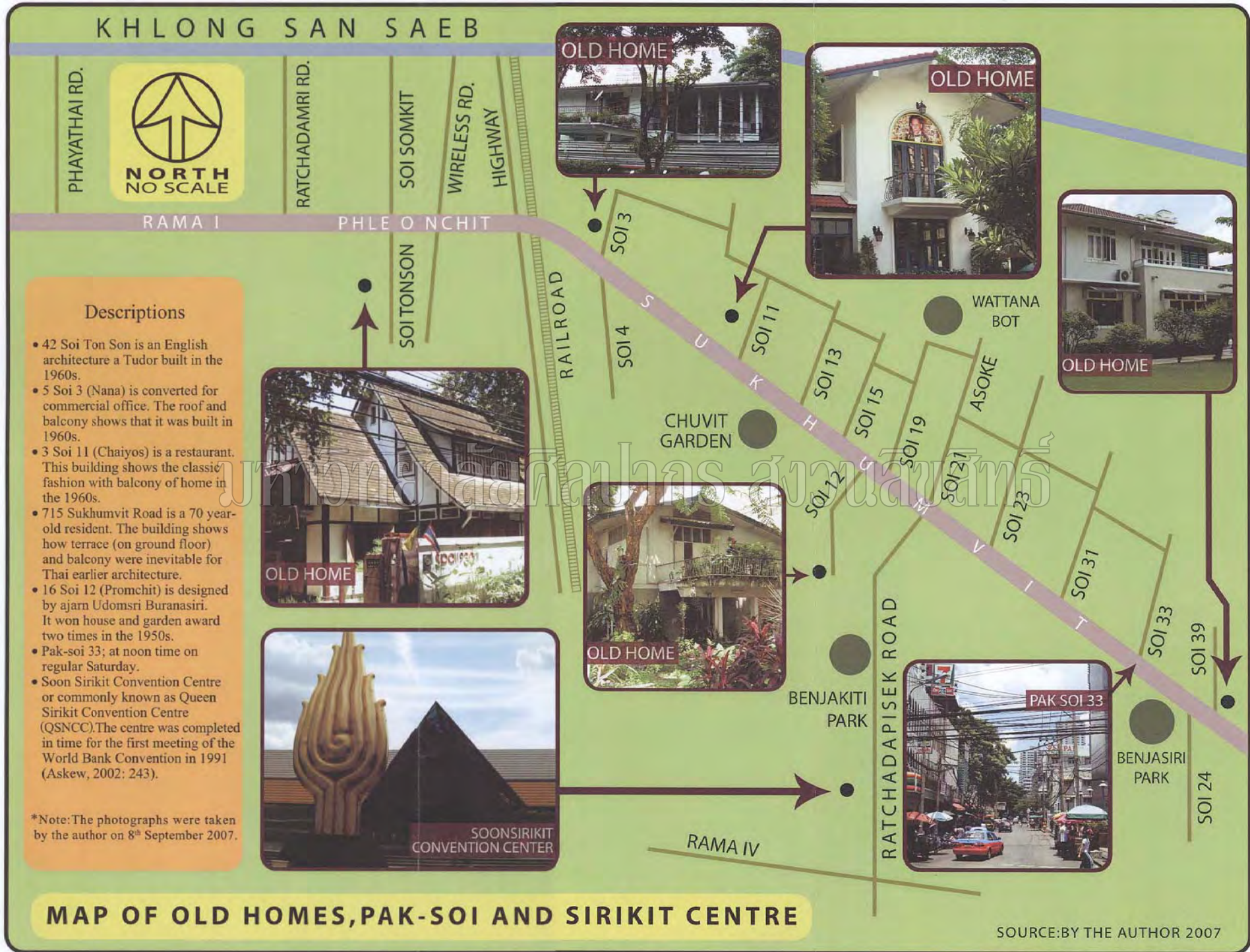
Map 8 (figure 15) Nancy Chandler’s Sukhumvit, Bangkok’s Map 2007

↑ North (no scale)



<p>Rama I Road 'Front entrance'</p>	<p>Phleochit Road 'Urban kitchen'</p>	<p>Sukhumvit Road soi 22 'Shrine facing Benjasiri Park'</p>
<p>Novotel Siam Square (Photograph: the author, 24/9/07)</p>	<p>Grand Hyatt Erawan (Photograph: the author, 24/9/07)</p>	<p>Imperial Queen's Park (Photograph: the author 24/9/07)</p>

Above is figure 15. Map 8 shows Rama I, Phleochit and Sukhumvit Roads, BTS and MRT stations (see the case study length of BTS Siam station to BTS Phrom Phong station). At Asoke (soi 21) and Sukhumvit Road intersection there is MRT line, it runs north and south. It is the first rail intersection transport of passenger for public in Bangkok and Thailand. The figure also shows three major hotels are on the section below.



Map 9 (Figure 16)

Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit in the present

There are many commercial and residential construction projects underway along the roads and the sois of this area. The popular term for this form of urban development is ribbon development, a form of urban sprawl that creates traffic problems as well as difficulties meeting safety, water and sewerage needs. At the present time the research reveals this stage of urban development has some way to go as there are significant changes occurring throughout the area of study. Related developments that are directly on the roads, or connect to them can be broken down into three specific, ‘pivotal’ areas. These areas however, are in real need of heritage interpretation, especially in the context of the continuing impact of luxury condominiums and plazas.

Sukhumvit has the greatest concentration of high income residents in the whole of Bangkok. Those that can afford the land are either members of the upper class or successful entrepreneurs, as this is very high-cost land. However, the neighboring Khlong Toei District is populated by predominantly low-income families (Nitbongkoch, 1998: 13). In general, the thrust of this study is that the author is investigating Thai cultural heritage in relation to the consumption of high-end residential and commercial structures, but also services, entertainment, plazas, street markets, information, and indeed the consumption of heritage itself.

The three pivotal areas are:

- Pivotal area I: Siam Paragon, wat Sraprathum area (from last section of Rama 1 and including Phleonchit road).
- Pivotal area II: Sukhumvit soi 1 and soi Nana (soi 3) to soi 19.
- Pivotal area III: Sukhumvit soi 21 to soi 24 up to the Emporium Plaza.

The network of roads continues to change as does the skyline of Bangkok as it continues to reflect the processes of urban change. This highlights economic growth, changes in the political make up of the society, and illustrates an increase of cultural mix where tourism and both the corporate and informal sectors are interdependent. Nevertheless, Thai identity must find its own cultural space within these wildly mixed eclectic cultures. The significance of the present situation depends upon one’s understanding of how these roads and these changes have affected Thai society. The inter-weaving of the layers of construction and the other influences on the area represents one of a fast growing modern landscape. There should be awareness of Thai identity as well as understanding that global influences take the form of consumption for local people, new comers and tourists, alike. This can be seen most clearly in the Thai desire to possess the most up to date and fashionable western accessories, household goods, fashion and vehicles. The following sections indicate the space the author thinks should be covered within the area of study, spaces that will reflect the impact of consumption on Thai heritage.

- **Pivotal area I**

Siam Paragon is a very large ‘high end’ shopping complex on the historical site of Khlong Orachon and Wat Prathumvanaram. The complex includes a “Beauty Hall” that occupies an area of more than 5,500 square meters. The cosmetics and fragrance section offers an outstanding selection of products from more than 100 leading brands (The Nation, 10th December 2005: 1B). This huge shopping facility has 231,000 sq. m. of ultra-modern retail units, and includes a parking structure with a total area of 500,000 sq. m. (The Nation, 10th December 2005: 2A). Siam Paragon was surpassed in retail space in 2006 by the Central World plaza, situated a few hundred meters to the east and boasting 300,000 sq. m. of retail space.



Figure 17: Front entry of Siam Paragon, polarization of gargantuan consumption screened by spirit houses, *by the author, on 12th August 2006.*



Figure 18: Landscape of consumption on Rama I Road on the opposite sidewalk of the Siam Paragon; an old lady selling 'malai',
by the author, on 25th November 2006.



Figure 19: Looking eastwards on Rama I: most vehicles run westward except the bus while concrete columns for the BTS sky train occupy the middle of road,
by the author, on 12th August 2006.

As indicated earlier, the Central Group is controlled by the Chirathivat family, who own several large scale businesses including plazas, hotels and offices in the area of study. These include the Central World Office tower, the Central Plaza Hotel and the Central World Plaza, which is on the site of the former World Trade Center. Central Group also own Chidlom Plaza on Phleonchit Road, Robinson Shopping Plaza on Sukhumvit soi 17 and 'low end' retail unit 'Big-C' on Ratchadamri Road

and ‘Leader Price’ near Sukhumvit soi 12. The Chirathivat family sponsored the Sky Walk between Siam BTS station to Chidlom BTS station on Rama I and connected to Phleonchit Road, which opened in early 2005. The Central World Plaza opened on 21st July 2006. Local area business publications stated ‘Let there be light’, as Kobchai Chirathivat, the president of Central Patana Plc (CPN), showed off the bright and airy new look of Central World, the company’s flagship shopping center at the Ratchaprasong intersection in central Bangkok (Bangkok Post, 21st July 2006: B1). At the time of this writing, the Central Hotel development was still under construction.

Wat Prathumvanaram was a hive of activity during the celebration of Maka-Buja Day, a moveable Buddhist feast which fell on the full moon, 13th February 2006 and on 3rd March 2007. The traditional circling around the temple is anti-clockwise.



Figure 20: Buddhist circling (clockwise) around temple of wat Prathumvanaram on Maka Buja day, in the background are Offices Central World Offices, by author, on 23rd February 2005.

The most recent and, to the author, most shocking development was the sale of a plot of land by the British Embassy for retail and residential development. The land faces Phleonchit Road and is almost four acres in area (about 9 rais) (Bangkok Post, 21st April 2006: 13). The corner lot, where two colonial buildings stood, disappeared after the Songkran Festival of 2006 and eventually the famous flagpole and Queen Victoria’s statue will be no longer be a part of the green landscape on Phleonchit Road. John Sheppard wrote ‘with the passing of the old Siam Intercontinental Hotel and now the British Embassy, there’s hardly a patch of greenery to rest your eyes on in this blighted city’ (Bangkok Post 18th April 2006: 9).

There are a number of luxury condominiums on Phleonchit Road, Ratchadamri Road, Lang Suan, Chidlom and Ruam Rurdee Road. There are two enormous condominium buildings in this area, the Park Chidlom on Chidlom Road which comprises two towers of twenty-eight storey with total of 219 units. The Chidlom Place was built in the 1980s and designed by architect John Rifenburg. The latter stands next to Chidlom road and the bridge over Khlong San Saeb and is known locally as the ‘condominium by the canal,’ a similar expression to the Thai saying of ‘baan suan rim khlong,’ or garden home by a canal. The other complex, ‘The Address Chidlom’ is under construction at the rear of soi Somkit next to Khlong San Saeb and is due to be completed in early 2008. Currently, another large condominium complex is being built at soi Ruam Rurdee. The Plaza Athenee Residence is at the rear of the Plaza Athenee Hotel and is owned by Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi, the richest man in Thailand (Bangkok Post 18th July 2006: B1). These examples are further evidence that the pace of development is not slowing, in fact it appears to be increasing. This also offers an insight into the type of development that is being created, high-end construction targeting the expatriate and foreign consumer.

- **Pivotal area II**

Krungthai Bank Headquarters: The high-rise building of 15 floors stands between Sukhumvit soi 1 and soi 3. Completed in 2005 it also stands diagonally across the street from the new Majestic Hotel in Khlong Toei District. The newly renovated bank headquarters has the Thai government as a major partner. See front courtyard of Krungthai Bank picture 21 below:



Figure 21: Krungthai Bank Headquarter on Sukhumvit road with inflated Liberty Monument advertising non-stop flights to New York by Thai Airlines (temporary advertisement),
by the author, on 7th April 2005.

Nana Square: A new designed small to medium size plaza incorporating elements of contemporary post-modern architecture may have seemed a shrewd development. However, it did not come out as planned and while it offered a good location for a few shops, the rest of the businesses were empty when it first opened.



Figure 22: Soi Nana (soi 3) and Sukhumvit road, new commercial plaza on the northwest corner opened for business in late 2004, by the author, on 17th February 2004.

มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร สงวนลิขสิทธิ์



Figure 23: Small plazas continue to grow on Sukhumvit road with uncertain futures as larger outlets attract more customers, while street signs are showing to all directions, by the author, on 28th December 2006.

Chuvit Garden: This green space of about two acres, by Sukhumvit soi 10, is the second privately donated public park to be built in Thailand. It stands between shop-houses and some low rise buildings. Facing Sukhumvit Road on the south side, it seems to the author to be the perfect place for an urban park. The Balinese sand stone columns with wrought iron fences separate the jogging track from the thirty

newly planted, fully grown trees and bright green lawns. In the park, there is a replica of American's Washington Monument, the idea of Chuvit Kamolvisit who may have related it to the scene of the gangland style demolition of the Sukhumvit Square night strip on 26th January 2003 (Bangkok Post 24th December 2005: 2). The privately donated park does not appear to be popular with local residents due to its heavily fenced areas and difficult accessibility. In April 2007 the author found a controversial newspaper headline which stated: 'Parents not allowed to play on grass with kids in the park' (The Nation 20th April 2007: 10A).



Figure 24: Chuvit Garden on Sukhumvit near soi 10,
by the author, on 23rd January 2006.

Siam Society: See Map A1 and description on page 23. The building represents a fundamental institution rast with the entertainment venue of soi Cowboy immediately opposite.



Figure 25: Siam Society is on soi Asoke in Wattana District,
by the author, on 6th June 2007.

Benjakiti Park: This recreational development signaled the expansion of Sukhumvit's function as a commercial and administrative extension of the old Central Business District (CBD) (Askew 2002: 243). On 9th December 2004 Her Majesty Queen Sirikit opened Benjakiti Park with Lake Ratchada as its center piece. This beautiful landscaped area includes a circular jogging track and a cycling lane found along Ratchadapisek Road with about 800 meters frontage along the road (measured by the author 5th December 2005). In total the park and lake cover approximately 52 acres (130 rais).



Figure 26: Looking south across Benjakiti Park with the Sirikit Convention Center in the far background, *by the author, on 11th January 2005.*

- **Pivotal area III**

At the far end of the area of study stands another manifestation of globalization mixed among traditional Thai, Western, Indian and regional Asian cultures. It is an area of mixed, eclectic cultures, i.e. soi Cowboy, the Brahma Shrine at the Jasmine Hotel and the Asian community of predominantly Japanese and Thai from soi 23 to soi 39. The physical aspects of this low lying water basin are now those that have become typical of a modern urban metropolis where corporate capitalism and conspicuous consumerism occur and arguments are considered regarding over-development, ecological disaster and urban survival and sustainability.



Figure 27: Looking west in front of the Emporium Plaza are Phrom Phong BTS station, note trees on the left and Exchange tower (New York style) in the middle background at Asoke BTS station, *by the author, on 11th January 2005.*

Soi Cowboy is on the east side of soi Asoke Montri (soi 21) and is a center for bars and restaurants. This noisy landscape is the antithesis of the Siam Society Building on the other side of the street.



Figure 28: Soi Cowboy on soi Asoke near Sukhumvit intersection
by the author, on 25th November 2006.

Headquarters of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (HWFB) is hidden at the rear corner of Benjasiri Park. It sits on a third of an acre lot or about one rai. There is a swimming pool for young people. The center also includes meeting rooms where classes and seminars are held and there is a library on the second floor, making this venue an excellent one for learning and enlightenment. This consecrated center is hidden away in one of the busiest areas of consumerism on Sukhumvit Road, an astonishing place considering the importance of morality and philosophical scruples of Buddhist teaching. The author would also like to highlight the building of Wat Srprathum and the Siam Society which also offers an oasis in the midst of this landscape of markets and consumerism in an amorously sprawling metropolis.



Figure 29: Headquarters of the World Fellowship of Buddhists is hidden in the rear of Benjasiri Park in Khlong Toei District, The Imperial Queen's Park is on the background, *by the author, on 6th June 2007.*

มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร ส่วนวนวัฒนคดี
 The previous paragraph and the pictures reveal the juxtapositions and ambivalence that are displaying on this stretch of roads. It comprises many appearances of activities of everyday life of both banal secularism and institutional tradition, e.g. soi Cowboy and Siam Society respectively.

This chapter shows the area in the years from 1950s to 2000s. There are many indications that the areas are still under an extreme process of growth. The most significant was the indication of expanding consumption venues. Rama I-Phleonchit-Sukhumvit Road was one of the most modern of urban areas in Thai views, though in reality it may not be so. The forces of globalization are inevitable, and it is likely that modern progress will continuously create new layers that will eventually cover the former surfaces of Thai tradition and cultural heritage. As experienced from the continuous growth on this stretch of roads, the old khlongs and rusticity of the past have mostly disappeared. Much expansion of buildings and the new airport lead to the growth of much higher consumption venues. Therefore, to recall the memory of the past and to identify the passage of the changes and developments, one has to try hard to find the relics or the sources of former meaning in Thai identity. The first step in this finding has been in physical remnants as a tangible source, then to look into meaning and identity of 'Thai' in term of intangible sources, i.e. literary writings, art and language that will be described in the next chapter.

The following picture simply shows the recent appearance of the water heritage as its transformation from the previous milieu of *'baan suan rim khlong San Saeb'* to a modern day, *'concrete passage of the khlong'*.



Figure 30: Passage of Khlong San Saeb, looking eastward from the bridge at Sukhumvit soi 3 (Nana), by the author, on 12th August 2007.

Conclusion

Chapter 3 represents the interface between memories of the past and the dynamic present. It has set out to investigate layers of capital investment and entrepreneurial exploits that are not manifested as layers so much as they are merely intersections in the transformation process. The continuous and progressive growth of shop-houses, apartments, hotels, plazas, office blocks, restaurants, go-go bars and prostitution represents the layers of capitalism, in a modern global society. The economic power behind this growth lies in the steady and continual influx of tourists and in the resettlement of expatriates into the area. This influx of money coupled with an international society co-mingling with indigenous peoples irrevocably altered the face of Thai cultural history. Currently, population and economic growth is at its highest level although there is marked uncertainty whether this current trend can be sustained. Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads represent a Thai metamorphosis from a rural, religious and royal realm to an urbanized environment. In addition to population and economic growth, the shift in architectural style, from Thai to Western, exhibited for example in the Royal Maneeya Building on Phleonchit Road, underscores the breadth and depth of change to the area. At the end of the 1960s, the term 'global' began to be used in relation to the Thai way of life and to the development of physical spaces in the Sukhumvit area. The onset of globalization is seen as a threat by some of the individuals interviewed in the course of this study, while others see it as inevitable, positive and even necessary if Thailand is to be a global contender in a free market economy.

However, one of the problems related to unrestrained capitalism was experienced in 1997 when Thailand and much of Asia experienced a financial crash. This dramatic turn of events can be viewed as having a marked effect on Thai cultural heritage. Even during this time of economic turbulence, life went on and Sukhumvit, possessing the region's heaviest concentration of farangs, tourists and hotels, was not as adversely affected as some other sectors of Thai commerce.

The spaces of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads are therefore an ideal venue for observing how the locations and spaces of both heritage and everyday life activities interact in a venue of consumption. Along these roads, everything is for consumption.

Part II

Chapter 4

Sukhumvit as a Field for Interpretation

The task of this chapter is to explore excerpts of literature that throw light on the processes and ambiguities in the spaces reviewed in Chapter 3.

In the first part of Chapter 4, the more common, wide-ranging literature will be reviewed. In the second part, the author will explore more specific literature to clarify and highlight certain aspects of the study. Some sources will be theoretical and empirical, but material will also be drawn from fiction, drama, and poetry. Overlaps will occur in the discussion of the social production of heritage.

In the book, *A Communications Theory of Urban Growth*, author Richard L. Meier, (1962:80), concludes that communication technology and a solid transportation infrastructure are the basic elements of urban growth (Charumilinda, 1980: 12). This theory can also suggest the reason why King Mongkut decided to build Srprathum Palace and Wat Srprathum at their chosen locations. Both of these structures were outside the city limits at the time of their construction and relied upon convenient access to Khlong San Saeb and Khlong Orachon which provided easy passage to Rattanakosin Island, then the transportation hub of Bangkok. Accessibility ensured the prerequisite requirement of face-to-face interaction identified by Lefebvre: through dialogue and face-to-face communication, society seeks to improve the quality of life for all people. Lefebvre's vision of a radically reformed urban environment contains both space (that is, place) and time for conversation (Wander, 2004: xi). This presents the two essential aspects of physical planning theory from Meier and, more philosophically, from Lefebvre. In the past, the planning of wang or wat was administrated by a feudal system and therefore Thai space juxtaposed the royal and the commoner in early history. That is, while there was a privileged time for the King, there was always closeness between the ruler and the people.

Also useful is the theory of concentric rings or functional belts articulated by Friedman (Friedman, 1966: 8-13 cited in Charumilinda, 1980: 14). Seeing the growth of the city in terms of center and periphery (center-periphery model), where the business district is the inner core and surrounding it are small industrial complexes then low income residences then middle income and higher income residences at the far periphery (Greenhut, 1970: 215-217, cited in Charumilinda, 1980: 13). That model gave the western conception of planning, which was in marked contrast to the Thai experience of an urban area where there is no clear center. In one sense, Phleonchit and lower Sukhumvit is one center core, but there

are others and growth of small industrial complexes and lower income homes has not followed the concentric rings pattern. Needham (1977) stated that in relation to commercial growth there are two essential principles: first is accessibility and second it has to be affordable within its location. These principles are clearly manifested in the clustering of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads. The unique feature here is that the clustering occurred in a process of transition from a land-based to a terrestrial settlement, and the area became one of Bangkok's 'CBDs' (Central Business Districts).

Another factor accounting for the uniqueness of Thai urban space is the lack of control, which accounts for its seeming chaos and muddle. Here explanation relates in part to an 'infantile' democratic policy in a tradition or heritage of autocracy. Peter Jackson writes "...this is the 'truth' that the historical roots and the true nature of being Thai is to be democratic and that political authoritarianism, whether of an absolute monarch as in the past or of a military dictator in recent decades, represents a perversion of the true character of Thai identity" (Jackson cited in Reynolds, 2002: 184). The comment from Jackson reflects a Thai approach to urban planning, in that individuality and private 'freedom' should not be restricted. Until the 1950s and 1960s Thais, who were educated in either the United States or Europe, were nearly always the political elite and the main driving force behind Thai cultural heritage, not to mention political influence from the American intervention in Vietnam. Hence Thai tradition and ways of thinking were re-interpreted from a western perspective, arguably inappropriately. Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit represents Thai space given over to accommodating the needs of the wealthy and an element of the middle class, with minimal consideration given to low income bracket consumers, with the exception of those serving the wealthy. So it is also a 'high-end' understanding of uncontrolled freedom that is at play.

None of this, however, is to deny the logic of space economy and at some level the concentric zone model applies. While developments along Rama I and Phleonchit are designed primarily for upper and upper-middle class socio-economic groups, lower Sukhumvit, (soi 1 to soi 21), continued to expand to meet the demands of its mixed communities, and traveling past soi 39 to soi 55 and continuing on to Phrakanong BTS station, the area turns into a chaotic muddle. The once derelict housing near On Nut BTS station has been transformed into low middle and low income bracket housing, again seemingly devoid of Thai cultural heritage.

The social production of heritage

It is argued here that self-employed operators mostly are poor stall holders and vendors. They have an innate sense of awareness of Thai cultural heritage even while exploiting street consumption. They are reconciled with a market economy of supply and demand while knowing that street consumption is both an interim economy and informal, untaxed economy. Relevant here is Lefebvre's narrative concerned with Western space in terms of verbal signs and non-verbal signs, and this can properly coincide with Thai space which will manifest an act of reverence in a public outdoor space such as the Erawan Shrine, whereas Western sacred

practices are more commonly associated with indoor or private space. Lefebvre's principle of space is plausible when applied to Thai space and its utilization. The unique makeup of Thai culture and its more public practices rely upon cooperation between local management of private sectors and government organizations. Thai space is best adapted to local improvisation where planning is flexible and able to cope with changing uses and processes of production (coincided with Lefebvre theory). The practices of government organizations and private service sectors are sometimes authoritarian, in the sense of being repressive.

Tourists and sightseers create their own perception of the environment and society. Meethan writes, 'There can be little doubt that the visual component of tourism and sightseeing are a major element in tourist consumption.' In 1976 MacCannell wrote: 'Sightseeing is a ritual performed to the differentiations of society' (1976: 13). What these approaches have in common is the emphasis they place on the visual aspects of sightseeing as a fundamental and defining characteristic of tourism, which marks it as a distinct form of social activity (Meethan, 2001: 81). Meethan also writes that sightseeing fits into an ideal category of tourist, who then responds to a set of prescribed meanings encoded in signage and images (Meethan, 2001: 83). The author believes that both Asian and Western perception of sightseeing result from the combination of one's experiences and the use of imagination and insight, all the while depending on the belief of an unexpected discovery just around the corner which keeps the experience entertaining and fresh. There is also the similar significance of seeking an 'authentic experience', while the Thais' view of sightseeing is looking for authenticity and fetish of physical phenomena. Marc Askew writes about his experiences at the Emporium Plaza in the late 1990s, regarding a fashion displaying a retro-dressed Shiva-figure. This projected to the consumer the power and multiple needs of a middle-class woman saying, 'The key image in the advertisement is a six-armed woman dressed completely in black, gazing at the viewer and holding fashion objects in four hands: the remaining two hands embrace her own body, completing the image of self indulgence' (Askew, 2002: 238). By identifying with a familiar Thai cultural figure such as Shiva, the idea is communicated to prospective customers that fashionable, materialistic objects are, indeed, affordable and they should be yearning for them as through the profound desire of Shiva herself. Yet Shiva, herself, is part of the heritage of spiritual values, while this commercial theme is just to communicate material value. Therefore, the use of spiritual images in a consumer setting 'muddies the water' and cultural heritage begins to be affected and the commercial recognition of objects becomes part of everyday life. This example clearly illustrates the true manipulation of Thai cultural heritage and how it goes beyond surface appearance; of equal importance is how it is interpreted.

Since the early 1960s, Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads have become a destination for tourists from around the globe. They come to the area for business and pleasure. As the seeming center of all opportunities, they reside in the area that is convenient for both professional time and leisure time, requiring less time to be reserved for transport and various other demands (Wander, 2004: 53). Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads offer a place away from home where tourists and business people can enjoy a different climate and escape the monotony of everyday

life in an environment that has both freedom and safety. David Young, in his novel *Sukhumvit Road*, writes: 'Sex shows and fireplaces, lady drinks and lawnmowers, hookers and home appliances, Sukhumvit and suburbs' (Young, 2005: 361). The implication is that Western memory is categorized in polarities, perhaps as some counterpart to a polarity of nostalgic memory and reminiscence. This view is also supported by Turton who writes: 'We also moved away from a residual structuralist attraction to oppositions or dichotomies. We started with some *a priori* oppositions of our own: local/elite, center/periphery, court/popular, male/female, power/impotence, legitimate/illegitimate, attraction/repulsion and so on (Turton, 1991: 11). This systematic epistemology of dialectic opposites is obviously different from how Thais see the world. Thai is, Thais tends to see in gray (not black or white) as though they are practicing 'krengjai' sometime although not most of the time; they do not neatly view things as either 'good' or 'bad'. However, Thais understand much better the distinctive between 'happy and sad'. In other words, Thais appear to be less focused on rational thinking and tend more towards an emotional approach to the world around them.

In an article by Dr. Feelgood, the pseudonym of a columnist in a local magazine, when responding to a Thai businessman's questioning of why '...on Sukhumvit do you see western men trailing little bar friends in broad daylight?' Dr. Feelgood answered, 'I don't suppose I should generalize, but I think Bangkok's farang (Western expatriate community) probably reacts much the same way you do about the excruciating dress sense!' The fact is that Sukhumvit – especially the lower soi area of Sukhumvit – does attract quite large numbers of short-term Western sex tourists, whose standard of sartorial elegance leaves much to be desired (Thailand Timeout, May 2005, Vol. 7, No. 81: 33). The author remembers the early 1960s when foreign uniformed servicemen were commonplace on lower Sukhumvit looking for a good time and they were welcomed by most Thai businessmen. Today foreigners spend on the average of three to four nights in the precinct, spending on the average 4,000 baht a day, with some spending considerably more (BMA 2005). There is also a growing number of tourist who spends from one to six months (author's observation) in the area and so may spend much less than the casual tourist who is prone to 'buy now.' The argument rests on the benefits to the local economy. The author believes that local management has never taken the matter concerning the Sukhumvit economy seriously and as an integral influence on the cultural heritage of Thai customs and traditions. The dilemma seems to be bound up in complex social standards where the everyday life of the service sectors and general public exist in symbiotic dependence, with no one thinking about or talking about Thai cultural heritage.

Since the 1960s, Sukhumvit has suffered from the effects of globalization (U.S. service men on R&R) and the area has become a focus for rural girls seeking to earn a better living or support their families in times of economic difficulties through providing sex services for Western and Asian men, an occupation that does not normally occur in other areas of Bangkok, with the exception of Patphong. Erik Cohen writes about Bangkok's sois and prostitution as a game of chance. 'The woman who meets a customer in a bar or coffee shop in most cases retires with him initially for a short time or single night... Such an approach hardly facilitates the

extension of the initial brief encounter into a more permanent liaison, the hope of many young women (Cohen, 2001: 275). In this sense, the term ‘game of chance’ seems apt. From observations and impartial views one can conclude that these women did this to survive. The game is, of course, one of trying to combine sex and love. One can be certain that the physical sexual acts occur in an atmosphere of superficial or ephemeral love. Sukhumvit, in this sense, is a domain of fantasy disguising sadness. This entertainment district derived its benefit from globalization lacking awareness of the impact that was being imposed on Thai heritage and values, which will be explored more narratively in the coming section on Eastern views and also in the Chapter 5.

The simple fact is that interpretation of the heritage would help communicate this severe impact on Thai values. Yet on the contrary, where there are only benefits to certain private service sectors but without consideration for indigenous locals, this may lead to sustainable tourism only in an economic sense. Professor Ross King writes that while Siam was not *politically* colonized by the West, it could not really escape colonization, nor the subsequent complexities of decolonization and of neo-colonisation in its thinking, in new experimentations (‘sustainable development’) or forms of resistance (anti-globalization) (King, 2004: 117). It is the local management’s or the government’s responsibility to control the legitimacy of people’s conduct and to separate good practices from bad. It is essential that there should be a special group or organization to safeguard in social values and cultural traditions in this venue. It comes down to what is considered good and bad in the eyes of the public and what steps are needed to safeguard cultural heritage. Managers and stakeholders should be sensitive to the regulations and ordinances when providing policy guidance that is designed to safeguard Thai society. With proper management, it should not be necessary to have a great many officers roaming the streets; otherwise their presence may interfere with the lives of local Thais and tourists. Yet a viewpoint from John Arnone, who lives in a northeastern province and is married to a Thai, states that ‘he prefers his children’s future to include a strong sense of Thai culture’ (the Nation, 8th July 2006: 9A). Obviously there are children living in the districts along Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads, and this mean that Thai cultural heritage, in these areas, is adversely affected by globalization and that capitalism will eventually affect the survival of Thai cultural heritage. This previous sentence indicates that globalization and capitalism are forged in Sukhumvit more or less in the full awareness of the local denizens. Therefore, to entrench and safeguard cultural heritage for the locals is necessary. Does it make any sense to provide a Thai safe space for the younger generation for the sake of being culturally sensitive to Thai heritage? It does appear necessary to acknowledge that these areas need additional support, resources and advocacy to combat globalization and assure a sense of rich Thai heritage that is to be offered the children living in the case study area.

Henri Lefebvre (in Wander, 2004) and Jane Smiley (Smiley 1996) have discussed the phenomena of everyday life. Lefebvre, *Towards a Permanent Cultural Revolution*, clearly identifies the reality of everyday life as: ‘The revival of art and of the meaning of art has a practical as well as a cultural aim; indeed, our cultural revolution has no purely ‘cultural’ aims, but directs culture towards experience, and

towards the transfiguration of everyday life.’ (Wander, 2004: 204). This might direct the attention of local art shops and public works of art within the case study area. Art and culture seem to belong to these modern main roads while the diversions and dalliances of the big city play out their stories in the everyday life of the sois. Smiley, writing on ‘Post-modern Humanism’, introduces the dissident playwright Vaclav Havel (1936-present) who, until 1989, had spent many years in jail as a political dissident, later to become the first freely elected President of then Czechoslovakia, after the fall of the Communist government. On July 4, 1994, Havel delivered a speech at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, discussing the future of humanity. Part of his speech argued: “The world of our experience seems chaotic and confusing. Experts can explain anything in the objective world to us, yet we understand our own lives less and less; we live in the post-modern world, where everything is possible and almost nothing is certain.” (Smiley, 1996: 578-579) This relationship between everyday life and Thai culture on Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads is without limits and is carried out in an environment where people do not feel they are behaving in an outlandish fashion, nor does everyday life limit their freedom. Thai spaces along these roads assert their own identity and express it without hostility towards the foreign residents or tourists. Havel referred to post-modernism by the means of an image of ‘a Bedouin mounted on a camel, clad in traditional robes under which he is wearing jeans... Havel’s statement is a typical expression of a multicultural era, and illustrates that an amalgamation of cultures is taking place’ (Smiley, 1996: 579). This author sees this concept reflected on the streets of the case study area as Thais and Westerners alike adopt one another’s dress, customs and mannerisms while carrying on their everyday lives. It can be concluded that we perceive a dynamic environment where individuals from all walks of life are free to express the ultimate freedom as locals as well as tourists. However, it also means that they are in an environment of difference, of chance and, of course, an environment of uncertainty, an environment very different from their heritage. Beyond the environment of difference, and especially in the sphere of politics, Thais are judged on their ideas and opinions within the restrictive confines of political authoritarianism. Jackson states: *The Triphum* (doctrine scripture of nostalgic Buddhist in Sukhothai era) is taken as revealing the hidden and long lost political essence and the true meaning of Thai identity, which reformists maintain was distorted and lost in the Ayutthaya and early Bangkok periods (Jackson, 1989 cited in Reynolds 2002: 184).

The social production of heritage on Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads seems to take the form of a new, inescapable display of diversity and otherness. The tragedy of this, however, lies in the lack of reflection for there is no engagement with this diversity in terms of new, challenging artistic production.

Globalization and capitalism in Thailand

Here the attention turns to the nature of the production process or the ‘mode of the production of space.’

Craig J. Reynolds writes, under the title *The Cult of Imitation*, that ‘the common theme, in the pessimistic assessment of globalization among Thai

intellectuals, is of a homogenized universal culture that raises the political issue of whether that universal culture will overwhelm and dominate the local culture' (Kahn, 1998: 130-131). This is, indeed, how most critics refer to the insidious influence of globalization. Nidhi Eoseewong, a Chiang Mai based historian, expressed alarm at the influence of global culture which he identified as predominantly European, highlighting its three main characteristics: its hegemony, meaning that no country or community of people can escape its influence; its dissolution of borders, meaning that local agencies may have lost control over decisions that are now made elsewhere; and its virtually instantaneous communication (Nidhi, 1994: 92). His comment in a speech made at Mahidol University in February 1994 was that 'In the age of globalization, there is more danger in imitating European models (kanlork tamra farang) than we have ever realized' (Eoseewong, 1994: 94). Professor Ross King writes, '...of new aspects of colonization and thereby of what is now fashionably termed globalization' (King, 2004b: 3). A fetish of imitation could inflict great damage on Thai culture; however, careful selection of suitable innovations could enhance the growth of local culture and identity.

Pridiyathorn Devakula, the governor of the Bank of Thailand, noted that from 1960 to 2005, annual per capita income had risen from 2,029 baht to 109,695 baht, highlighting the income gap which has also increased, with the wealthiest 20% of the population controlling 56.5% of the total income compared with the poorest section of society receiving just 4.2% (Bangkok Post, 1st July, 2006: B1). This statement supports the old saying 'The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.' This is patently evident in the area of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads, where one can observe all sorts of stalls and malai (garlands) sellers and very young girls and boys selling their wares at the intersection of Asoke and Sukhumvit Road. All of this takes place in an environment where office owners and corporate employees are busily going about their everyday, lucrative lives. The roads are also likely to be a favorite location for the nearby low-income residents who are not hard to find in the nearby perimeter or in the vicinity of Phrakanong and Khlong Toei Districts. Phleonchit is considered to be an upper class neighborhood where there is little or no room left for development and certainly no room for the poor. What little room is left for the poor can be found in the nearby neighborhoods of Huay Kwang and Rachatavee Districts, along the northern boundary. The population density in Prathumwan District is much lower than other districts due to it being primarily a commercial district (interviewed Isarameks Kachanukul, district manager 25th June 2004). Kosit Panpiemras, the executive chairman of Bangkok Bank, observed that 'the four major side-effects of capitalism are economic instability, uneven income distribution, economic unfairness and environmental exploitation' (annual seminar hosted by the NESDB on Plan Number Ten) (The Nation, 1st July 2006: 1A). A column in the Manager Daily noted that as, 'Thai society became addicted to capitalism, thus it had made poor Thais even poorer.' (Manager Daily 24th June 2006: 2) Lisa Ahlqvist similarly noted that '...the distribution of wealth in Thailand seems primarily to be concentrated on and around the rich and corrupt exchanging money for brand-name goods in super-luxury department stores, where no ordinary hard-working Thais could ever dream of shopping' (The Nation, 8th July 2006: 9A). Linda Tsukamoto from Chiang Mai writes, 'Capitalism is about letting people own

what they produce and letting goods and services flow to those who request them' (the Nation, 12th July 2006: 11A). One of the most pertinent writings on capitalism is by Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities*. His narrative described that: 'What, in a positive sense, made the new communities imaginable was a half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity' (Anderson, 1991: 42-43). The story of Thailand's development tells us that the immense impact of capitalism has caused massive problems and rifts in Thai society. However, if Thais are to safeguard themselves against capitalism, caution needs to be exercised. The sybaritic lifestyles of the upper class locals, who only amount to a handful of individuals, are juxtaposed against those of a harder working younger generation who are becoming addicted to globalization, mostly evident in credit cards. But what Anderson refers to as communication and linguistic diversity are at their most subtle when connecting the social and cultural areas of the arts and cultural traditions. Therefore the sybaritic lifestyles of the upper classes exercise a distinctive effect that flows from display and example, influencing lower income groups.

William Logan writes, 'cultural layering is a common feature of most Asian cities, but a feature that is handled very differently in the various official heritage definitions and approaches... All of these layers have significance; they all tell stories about key stages in the evolution of societies and cities' (Logan, 2002: xvi). This view is absolutely appropriate methodology for dealing with multi-layered character of Asian cities. Logan sees that a particular value in tracing the way in which the 'cultural significance' of city features is re-interpreted and new icons are built by succeeding regimes to create the new 'heritage' (Logan, 2002: xvi).

Today, it appears that globalization is inescapable and modern technology is necessary to compete in a neo-market environment that flows from the internet networks to an international transportation hub such as Suvarnabhumi Airport. Several new developments are noted in these areas, alongside the cultural heritages of the diverse community of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit. In Thailand, 'the global' is being used by capitalists to export 'the local,' regardless of the fact that 'the local' is a Thai consumer product or part of the national culture, even when it is used by environmentalists to confront developers. That is to say, globalization is not only a historical process bound up with capitalism and telecommunications technology but also a way of looking at the world which sees opportunities as well as perils in the changes taking place (Reynolds cited in Kahn, 1998: 141). The impact of globalization and capitalism are inevitable but we, as Thais, should be able to select what is appropriate to meet our needs as a growing nation. Threats to local communities seem to be more toward local indigenous peoples, for whom cultural heritage needs to be identified, interpreted and preserved to maintain *their* unique identities.

Heritage venues

One level of heritage was laid in a ground of seeming quietness and peacefulness but of political contestation, when wat and palace were built. Throughout the years the heritage of Nation, Religion and King continued in the environment of political space. This foundational ideology was overlaid with a new ideological triad of ‘Rachatipatiya’ (democratic kingship), constitution and democracy in 1932, which was advocated by Pridi Banomyong who emphasized the significance of democratic kingship, constitution and democracy (Pompetch, 2006: 17). At first Thai heritage was underpinned by the royals and the elite class, but with the change from feudalism or absolutism to democracy in the reign of King Prajathepok or Rama VII, democracy periodically confronted new forms of despotism through the era of Rama VIII and on to the present reign of King Rama IX, beginning in 1946. Historian Boonluarh Tepayasuwan commented, ‘So far I did not see any true nationalistic politician...It was only a surface nationalistic idea combined with corruption’ (Buranamart, 1985: 255). The politics of uncertainty continues to the present day and affects the majority of Thais and the hard working Chinese population. The Chinese population somehow worked to gain economic benefit in association with elite Thais in the construction of shop-houses throughout Bangkok (Sirivorasan, 1984: 488).

Meanwhile the physical reality of the khlongs began to be encroached upon by the building of more and more roads in the 1960s, a pattern that has continued to the present day. Not only did khlongs begin to disappear, but nature, idyllic rice fields and the scenery of the ‘baan suan rim klong’ also diminished. Home by the canal today is not quite the same as it used to be. Rigid concrete banks embrace the dark, murky water of the khlongs, where once clear water flowed. In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, this previous environment was transformed into an urban realm which continued with the ribbon development of shop-houses along the main roads. Layers of heritage of nation, religion and king interweave with high-rise blocks, occasional street protests, the almost continuous whistles of parking attendants and the daily challenges of rush hour traffic. High density traffic increased in rush hours during the 1990s. Living heritage along Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads represent contemporary life and may, at first glance, seem superficial, but the Thai’s deep heritage underpins all that goes on in the area. The important factor is that it is imperative that we are to learn as we grow, and that we strive to interpret the significance of Thai heritage yet to be discovered in this area. Then, we use what we learn, and have controls in place to save Thai heritage from being lost in the craze of global consumerism.

As globalization continues, Thai cultural heritage continues to present itself in the lives of all who live in and around Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads. Not only does Thai identity need to be understood, but Thai heritage itself must become the central issue. Thai heritage in hidden layers yet to be discovered must be discovered, reviewed and committed to collective memory. To this end, do the author’s historical findings hold a satisfactory paradigm in this case study? What needs to be preserved? And, how do we interpret the differing views of all the stakeholders? These questions will be addressed in the following chapter.

Development of the cultural landscape, tourism and consumption

Generally, when speaking of ‘heritage,’ the author learned the word began to be used commonly in Thailand in the 1970s (Setthi, 1999: 1), and in Europe, the word ‘culture’ was not commonly used prior to 1946 (Wander, 2004: 33). Heritage tourism, as a recognized industry, is a modern development. In tourism terms, heritage is only heritage when it is of interest and accessible to tourists (Setthi 1999). When Bangkok entered the ‘post-modern’ period, beginning in the 1970s (Sumet Jumsai in 2004, interviewed at Siam Society), Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads continued to grow in popularity with visitors from the West, Middle East and Asia, becoming a popular tourist destination. This influx was accentuated by the Condominium Act of 1979 which allowed non-Thais to own apartments for the first time (Askew, 2002: 241). Throughout the 1980s to the present, condominium construction has been continuous, with little sign of reduction. As the number of apartments increases in the area, it means there is an increased number of tourists and an increased number of long term visitors who have put down roots (BMA 2004).

In terms of the physical development of Thai heritage the area of study boasts a number of impressive religious and community centers including Wat Srapathum and its meditation ground, the Siam Society, the Headquarters of World Fellowship of Buddhists (rear of Benjasiri Park), and the soon to be completed (2008) Arts and Cultural Center under construction at the intersection of Phrayathai and Rama I, offering local citizens, expatriates and visitors to Thailand memorable structures where they may experience Thai cultural heritage. Against these manifestations of ‘high-end’ cultural life are the tourist consumption venues of plazas and malls, hotels, shops, street markets and stalls throughout the chosen study area. At both ends of this area are two enormous shopping plazas. One unexpected development occurred in between these two plazas when nearly four acres of land was sold off by the British Embassy on Phleonchit Road in early 2006 (Bangkok Post, 21st April 2006: 13). Adding to the landscape are some of the most interesting and well frequented parks in Bangkok, including Benjasiri Park and Lumpini Park. Chuvit Garden seldom used because of difficult access. Professor Ross King writes, ‘Bangkok Space,’ in which the identity of the Thai nation is sought or lost, may only be imagined and, therefore constructed, if all these four conditions are fulfilled:

1. The selective forgetting of history (perhaps more broadly of integrity).
2. The conscious forgetting of place and ecology (nature) – the very origins of Thai culture and society.
3. The forgetting of one’s behavior and its representations.
4. The forgetting of reality, itself.

(Summary by the author based on his interpretation of King 2006a; abstract on ‘Seoul and the post-national hyperspace, and condition of possibility’.)

In the context of these four theoretical concepts one can comment on Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads:

1. Rama I was developed in 1857, from a water-based hinterland of khlongs and rice fields, to a land-based domain of roads. Rama I continued to grow and expand into its present urban form, through various layers of change, including Phleonchit in the early 1920s and Sukhumvit in the 1930s.
2. In the present situation, aspects of internet communication and market economy became embedded in the everyday life of the society, dissolving the memory of former layers of its physical and spiritual past. Unfortunately, the chronological storage of Thai culture has never been planned and remains too weak for Thais to become a fully knowledge based society, as the memory of their cultural past is blurred.
3. The study of Thai history and of changes in the series of spaces and over time and in cultural representations is where the interpretation of Thai heritage becomes clearer.
4. Thai identity and the significance of cultural heritage are not explicitly reflected upon as a society. This indicates Thai people may not be aware of change, or the effects of globalization or the inequality of capitalism as it occurs in a landscape of consumption where only superficial reality prevails.

The author has used the above examples as questions to illustrate the changes occurring in our urban society against massive consumption, pointing out the need for responsible management of Thai cultural heritage yet sustaining tourism. In light of this, it is best to interpret Thai space amidst the chaos of modern day Bangkok. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the number of condominiums and hotels increased rapidly until political chaos hit Bangkok in May of 1992. This period was called 'pruksapa tamin' or 'Black May'. By 1993, a new government policy allowed more foreign born investors to purchase condominiums and condominium construction reached a new high by offering the policy of Bangkok International Banking Facility (BIBF) (Askew, 2002: 91). The policy did encourage foreign investment in transferring large funds. This was swiftly followed by the massive financial disaster that hit Bangkok in July 1997 (Baker 2000). These events proved vital in bringing about the changes and transformation we see in Bangkok today.

After the financial crisis the only construction project that continued was the BTS sky train which was opened in 1999 (King, 2004: 119), radically transforming Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads from the interchange station of Siam Square through to Phrom Phong Station and beyond. By April, 2006, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) and Governor Apirak Kosayodhin had proposed a continuation of the BTS sky train extension from On Nut to Sukhumvit soi 107, into the neighboring province of Samut Prakarn (B. P., 29th April 2006: 3). The BTS sky train continues to dominate the landscape of the eastern districts and its daily number of passengers continues to increase. These districts, however, have also been exposed to the new Suvarnabhumi Airport and the associated pollution and additional traffic congestion (Mekvichai cited in Silapacharanan, 2005: 25). Significantly, various types of consumption in this area indicate that it is fast becoming a focus for technology and modernization. This prime area has new architectural structures and offers an opportunity to demonstrate how Thai's might utilize Thai space, based on the practice of kindness, helpfulness and politeness. However, 'No such practice seems to inform the production of Bangkok's built

environment' (King, 2006b: 287). Cultural heritage, Thai space and significant edifices can be reviewed, not only by the manner and form of their construction, but also in their function within Thai society and culture. We will turn to both Western and Asian views that will be integrated in the theme of this venue as cosmopolitan.

The 'Western' view and the phenomenon of Sukhumvit

The selected literature seeks to define the salience of Bangkok and Sukhumvit phenomena from a plurality of Western views with the desire to incorporate a wider perspective. This objective process will ultimately give clarity and insight into the seeming muddle of the Sukhumvit phenomenon. Within these observations, identification and illumination of the characteristics of Thai heritage will be highlighted as it struggles to be heard over the hectic pace and urban noise of a modern global community.

Rama I and Phleonchit Roads do not exhibit the same character as is presented on Sukhumvit Road, as the latter is likely to be perceived through a Western eye via a lens of 'Orientalism' as described by Edward Said (Said 1978), a discourse which directs and stabilizes the identity of the West against the identity of 'other,' the Orient. (Dovey, Polakit, 2004:1). Sukhumvit is seen as an area of residential community commingled with commercial structures and entertainment businesses, altogether alien to Western views. Professor Ross King writes of 'The three circles of the Western appropriation of Siam – economic infiltration, territorial intrusion, and discursive Orientalism. In it we can identify four levels of intrusion – aspects of colonization and of what is now fashionably termed globalization' (King, 2005: 88). Rama I and Phleonchit are not considered residential communities but a combination of organized business centers with commercial plazas. Such a pattern would not be expected in a North America or Australian city center. One might expect such a structure to manifest a highly ordered and rigidly controlled urban morphology, yet in many ways it is the opposite: urban regulations are widely transgressed and the Thai streetscape can be very confusing, especially when viewed from the West (Dovey, Polakit, 2004: 2). The confusing situation exists (woon wai) in traffic flow and street signs, a traffic system which generally operates on the left-hand side, with additional informal routes when the use of the right-hand lane is permitted at certain locations and times. Signage is also unclear and often vanishes altogether as a driver nears his or her destination.

An agenda of modernization designed during the time of Rama IV was established to impress foreigners with the pace of Siam's modernism and the reality that Siam was becoming civilized (siwilai) (Winichakul 2000). To mimic the effects of colonization, and as a defense against its reality, is surely to be seen as self-inflicted colonization of the culture itself (King, 2004: 119). Evidence for this statement is incontestable as one becomes aware of the preponderance of neo-classical buildings along Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads. Does this represent self identity or does it represent the Thai nation competing with other nations by mimicking what they view - are lead to believe - a superior culture? Such actions threaten Thai identity, as identity is marginalized in the process and, if continued, may leave Thai identity in limbo at best or run the risk of becoming

hidden as an imagined otherness is sought. In our efforts to be a modern and leading Asian city, we run the risk of sacrificing our identity and eventually our heritage.

Marshall Berman, currently Distinguished Professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, is a philosopher of modernism and teaches Political Philosophy and Urbanism. Berman wrote of ‘Systems of mass communication, dynamic in their development, enveloping and binding together the most diverse people and societies; increasingly powerful national states...finally, bearing and driving all these people and institutions along, an ever-expanding, drastically fluctuating capitalist world market...the social processes that bring this maelstrom into being, and they keep it in a state of perpetual becoming, have come to be called “modernization” (Drolet, 2004: 54). One could argue that ‘modernization’ still is in its primary state and only continuous and critical attention to planning will determine how these changes will be resolved. Advocacy of all stakeholders is essential and planning policies are there to assist local communities develop and flourish.

Looking at intangible phenomena, there are characteristics of Thai space that reflect the Thai nature of language and communication. In Thailand, indirect communication is often more effective than direct, with conflicts and contradictions more often avoided rather than resolved. New ideas, forms and spatial practices tend to be layered and juxtaposed rather than displacing or completely replacing outmoded forms. Historically, Thai social and urban orders are strongly hierarchically, controlled and yet, highly fluid (Dovey, Polakit, 2004: 2). There is an ideal of ‘symbiotic dependence’ where, for example, flower stalls sell their wares to passers by to be offered to the various deities. This example demonstrates that street vendors are allowed to carry out this multi-cultural/multi-religious function with the tolerance of their local leaders. Within this process, conflicts and contradictions are often mediated through social acceptance or, where necessary, a higher authority. Perhaps to the Western eye there is the perception of a victim, of one without support from higher authority, or without inside connections, but invisible connections are there. This reflects the concept of subsidiary practice in Thai society, where the younger respects the older or brother and sister support one another in a patronage system. This Asian ideology is being practiced among workers within the service sectors and the rural classes. Lower middle class groups within this society carry on this practice, while elite and upper-middle class groups, who are often financially secure, practice democracy in business.

Henri Lefebvre’s tripartite framework:

One of the theoretical works which was introduced in previous chapters concerns Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* which attempts to avoid conceptualizing space as a container within which social activity occurs, or as a philosophical abstraction (Lefebvre, 1991: 26-27). Lefebvre makes a three-fold distinction in his analysis between spatial practices (our perceptions), representations of space (our concepts or ideas about space) and representational space (the actual lived in or used space). Thus:

- Spatial practices are purely within the realm of economy, in the strictest sense of the term. They are the factors that determine, in part, the uses of space and the accompanying social formations (Lefebvre, 1991: 33). The significant spatial practices along Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads are in the realms of consumption and cultural actions such as at the Erawan Shrine amid the commercial plazas of the area. Within these spaces are alternative activities linked to the quest for cultural, spiritual and economic benefits tied, in part, to the development of entertainment venues, street markets, street stalls, spirit houses, prostitutes, beggars, tuk tuks, and tourists. These spaces are there to attract tourists, to maintain the businesses of private entrepreneurs and to offer a wide range of services. From a legal viewpoint, many of these activities appear to be outside the scope of order and authority.
- Representations of space are the environments of ‘planners, urbanists, technocratic sub-dividers and social engineers’, which tend ‘towards a system of verbal signs’ (Lefebvre, 1991: 38). What Lefebvre is drawing attention to is the ways in which space is conceptualized in terms of policies and planning, as well as in various academic disciplines. The most significant point to note is that civil service managers attempt to control, direct or mediate the dominant form of spatial practice (Meethan, 2001: 36). In the context of Thai urban space, it appears there is an environment of chaos where many actions are ad hoc and the spatial practices of both developers and users happen without the scrutiny or restraint of urban planning. There is no planning regarding what happens on the street, and all seem to be a mad performance of uncoordinated actors upon a stage. The ‘verbal signs’ are either unuttered or unreadable. There is however, a significant counter image within this chaos: the gargantuan structure of the BTS indicates that once an attempt at order and form took place.
- Representational space concerns inhabitants and users, ‘space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols [which] ...tend towards more or less coherent systems of non verbal symbols and signs’ (Lefebvre, 1991: 39). This appears to be reflected in the visual cacophony of Thai spaces, reflecting the Thai predilection for carrying out business in one’s choice of convenient locations, signs and displays lacking subtlety or sophistication and an arbitrary or black market economy taking place on a daily basis. Street vendors, relying on the demand of passing trade and their own cunning, rotate their locations, times of business and their variety of services and wares in a constantly changing array of signs and visual displays, adding to the muddle of noise and confusion. The local sense of non verbal symbols and signs is an everyday part of the Thai way of life in which Thais express economic value, with formal management practices marginalized or ignored. For Lefebvre (1991, 1996) urban space and form is a social mirror through which societal reality is viewed and transformed. For de Certeau (1985: 131), like Lefebvre, the understanding of place is continuously being constructed and reconstructed through the actions of everyday life: “Like words, places are articulated by a thousand usages.”

Places are the warehouses of memory, always haunted with a myriad of possibilities for meaning and behavior (Dovey, 2001: 267). What actually occurs on these roads evaporates and is forgotten when compared to any other place on earth. Social perception is therefore synonymous with the economic life of local people and somehow symbiotic dependences emerge between groupings, i.e. tourists and street vendors, consumers of food and restaurants, passengers and taxis, and clients and prostitutes. Occasionally unsafe situations arise for the unfortunate individual, but this is viewed as a part of everyday life for local people and for the tourists and visitors alike. Overall, the case study area is unrivalled in Bangkok for its cosmopolitan life style. The varied forms of globalization/neo-colonialism have been imposed upon Thai urban space and can be clearly seen on Sukhumvit Road (King, 2004: 120). Sukhumvit Road is an area of high rise condominiums and low rise complexes, simple people and sophisticated people, rich citizens and poor citizens, traditional and global artifacts, the noble and the common, of five-star hotels and backpacker hostels. (King, 2005: 90).

In his writing *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, Lefebvre observes that ‘if there is no such complete and perfect system it will not be easy to sift knowledge from ideology; a critical analysis of everyday life will discover ideologies and the understanding of everyday life must include an ideological analysis and, especially, an incessant self-analysis’ (Wander, 2004: 27). Lefebvre focused his dialogue on subjects related to everyday life, by looking into music to create ‘number’ (money, minutes, meters, calories...), and ‘tragedy’ (life, death, failure and victory...), and by contemplating the subjects of philosophy, art, language, architecture, painting, dance, poetry and games. He writes, ‘Yet people are born, live and die. They live well or ill; but they live in everyday life...It is in everyday life that they rejoice and suffer; here and now’ (Wander, 2004: 20-21). Lefebvre continued by ‘inserting a distinction or two – for instance everyday life and modernity – and a situation is changed: You are now the active interpreter of signs’ (Wander, 2004: 25). Therefore verbal and non verbal signs are part of everyday life and where we once decried these spaces and scrutinized them thoroughly we turned from a passive victim of the situation to an active interpreter of signs. Learning about Thai heritage and the interpretation of signs are comparable. Rosalind Morris argues to the effect that Thai modernity stands on a mode of power that operates laterally across surfaces (signs) rather than vertically in the panoptic or all-seeing mode...It is “the love of the disciplined surface” (Morris, 2000: 180; cited in King, 2006b: 284). It seems that the term ‘laterally across surfaces’ refers to a horizontal mode of thinking where one might identify heritage value in the form of its superficial surfaces. The essence of this learning is described further in relation to idea of George Battaille and G.W.F. (George Wilhelm Friedrich) Hegel, in “Notes of Dilemma: Sukhumvit” by Professor Ross King.

Fernand Braudel on three understandings of time:

Another Western view that is useful to the understanding of heritage is derived from Fernand Braudel's tripartite framework based upon different experiences or understandings of time:

'[At one level] history, whose passage is almost imperceptible, that is of man in his relationship to the environment, a history in which all change is slow, a history of constant repetition, ever-recurring cycles...this [is] almost timeless history...

On a different level, there can be seen yet another form of history, this time with attention given to the slow, but perceptible, rhythms of life. If the expression had not been diverted from its full meaning, one could call it *social history*, the history of groups and groupings...

Lastly, an insight into traditional history – 'history, one might say, on the scale not of man, but of individual men... "l'histoire evenementielle", that is, the history of events: surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs.'

(Braudel, 1972: 20-21)

Braudel's triad is helpful in reflecting upon Thai cultural heritage. Braudel's great work, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, has at its beginning, three understandings of time:

- The *longue duree* – the time of nature itself, of the erosion of valleys, the silting of rivers (Maenam Choa Phraya, the marshes of Krung Thep, the seasons and the floods, the seemingly 'timeless' cycles of floods and nature). This is ecology time. It is also the time of Buddhism.
- There is also the time of the rise and fall of empires, historical time; these are the time of the Chakri Dynasty, the Rattanakosin Era and, indeed, the time of Nation-Religion-King (and remember that Buddhism is not 'reigion'). The building of Bangkok is within this time, as is the 1997 crisis ('the fall of empire'), and so is the rise and fall of Sukhumvit. All the things we commonly call heritage tend to be the relics of this time. And let us not forget that Nation, Religion and King are human inventions (unlike Buddhism) and are ephemeral.
- Then there is individual time, the time of an individual life and events, of perceptions. This is the time as experienced by King Bhumipol, Mr. Thaksin, and Mr. Surayuth (first Prime Minister after the 19th Sept. 2006 coup d'etat); it is also the time of each of the author's interviewees, noting that while they may attempt to frame their comments in *longue duree* or ecological time, social history or historical time. So it is also the time of spatial practices, though they may 'aggregate up' to historical time (as they bring about the 1997 crisis, or iteratively reinforce globalization, or bring about the end of an era).

The advantage of such an understanding of time is that it enables one to discuss concrete process and change, and thereby to probe old ideas of heritage as something fixed and to be 'preserved'. Thus it enables one to get back to the sorts of issues suggested in Chapter 1.

There would seem to be two essential understandings of heritage. First there is the process of change where the triad of Nation, Religion and King offers a perspective on that process of change that arises simultaneously in space and time. As for space, there are spatial practices, representations of space and representational spaces intermingling with the essence of ecological time, historical time and individual time, espoused by Braudel. Further manifestation of this process could be discussed, for example the disappearance of 'baan suan rim khlong', or the social production of (superficial and ephemeral) heritage of the King's birthday celebration. Second, allegedly old ideas of 'heritage' as something fixed and to be 'preserved' are no longer tenable as the heritage of individual men is also of value and should be considered as living heritage. The fact is that the triad of 'Nation, Religion and King' is a human invention and is ephemeral though its superficial exhibition is to be displayed in representational spaces and needs a long time to become embedded as heritage by the old standard of the repetition of the commonplace. The triad of Nation, Religion and King is elevated by Thais to the status of heritage but most Thais are not aware of the value of the heritage that they thus honour. They fail to refer to the dept of the spiritual morality, as their effect is only on the surface. Heritage production that arises in the social history of everyday life is truly heritage though it may seem superficial and ephemeral. The view of what can be considered 'profound' heritage is what one is endeavoring to discover, wherever it is to be found.

The space of Bangkok carries traces of these three conceptions of time, overlapping, with one layer endlessly flowing into the next, in a 'timeless and social history,' as 'history groups' and as the history of 'individual men'. The first of these categories is that of peasant production, rice fields, the annual floods, *Songkran*, *Loy Kratong* and other cultural practices and events. The reassuring rhythm of the King's birthday might also be seen in this measure of time. The second understanding of time deals with the period of modernization, globalization, the passing of royal absolutism, the coups and the coming of an emerging democracy. The third is the time of events – the King's 60th anniversary, a specific coup or the smashing of the Erawan Shrine. The point of including these time frames is, of course, to illustrate that *all* live within the three experiences of time, simultaneously.

The conclusion chapter will, in a sense, be the conclusion to the whole dissertation. So it will seek a succinct statement on the nature of heritage that can enable one to 'read' the processes of change at a diversity of levels – that is, to read time as 'longue duree', historical time and the time of individual lives. It is the way of looking at the definition of heritage that emerges from the study.

Notes on a dilemma: Sukhumvit (by Ross J. King, 2004)

In a review of elements of social theory relevant to a discourse on Bangkok space, King (2004) refers to two specific places. They are Nonthaburi and Sukhumvit. He identified the first of these areas as venue for viewing the former water-based city (albeit changing) and the latter as the more contemporary land-based city environment. Professor King also views three specific eras or epochs, namely colonization, de-colonization and neo-colonization.

King writes: ‘One could still travel from Nonthaburi to *thanon* Sukhumvit by boat (*khlong* Bangkok Noi, to the *mae-nam* Chao Phraya, *khlong* Bang Lamphoo, *khlong* Mahanak, *khlong* San Saeb which effectively parallels Sukhumvit); and it might still be faster than the grid-locked roads. The journey would, however, negotiate a far greater distance in the historical times and the transformations that it would traverse’ (King, 2004: 117). In all, the distance from Nonthaburi to Sukhumvit is about twenty kilometers.

Professor King maintains that ‘memory is always socially framed...Heritage, accordingly, is swept into the project of forging a unified (national) identity, against any idea of a pluralistic nationhood, and an idealized sense of origin that can supplant any desire to get back to the real genealogy of the space of everyday life.’ (King, 2006b: 281). In helping this writing on discovering heritage King’s writing emphasizes ‘an architecture that is authentically respectful towards heritage, which is a Thai context will mean an architecture and urban design that is modern but also embracing the sense of giving, ‘caring and considerate’ in a Thai Buddhist sense, to supplant the present (Thai?) paradigm of ‘venality and environmental vandalism’ (King, 2006b: 281).

In his review of Western thought relevant to a discourse on ‘Thai space’ King (2004) quotes Cornelius Castoriadis, a French – Greek philosopher and economist, to the effect that “Every thought of society and history, itself belongs to society and history” (Castoriadis, 1987: 3, cited in King, 2004: 117). King concludes, “in the reality of the ancient world, the economy is not yet constituted as a separate ‘autonomous’ moment...of human activity” (King, 2004: 117). The latter explains how ‘the economic gets only scant attention’. King refers to Algerian born Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser (1969, b. 1918-1989), to suggest that this leaves the real question of Nonthaburi unasked. For the question is: how do these ‘logics of space’ refer to mode of production in a historical materialist sense? The question refocuses the story. For it is easy to argue that the space of the *thanons* with its banks, offices, housing estates, factories and transnational franchises and the rest is ‘modern’ and a manifestation of the capitalist mode of production (surplus value, exchange value, commodity) (King, 2004: 116). This has been the manifestation on Rama I-Phleonchit-Sukhumvit Road. In Western philosophy, the Althusserian position firmly locates the sphere of economic relations at the ‘base’ of the social structure on which stands the superstructure of *political and ideological* (cultural) relations (King, 2004: 116). Thus, ‘in the feudal mode of production it was an ideological power, because of the central role of religion in maintaining unity, and

in the capitalist it is the economic level itself that is dominant' (King, 2004: 116-117).

King further writes, 'the varied forms of (globalizing) neo-colonialism are, however, ubiquitously impressed on Thai urban space, and nowhere is it more so than on *thanon* Sukhumvit' (King, 2004: 120). This neo-colonialism would seem to be a phenomenon of the epoch of King Rama IX.

King refers to Russian philosopher and semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) writing on 'carnival' whose logic is the "qualitative logic of ambivalence." Lechte (1994: 8; commenting on Bakhtin, 1984a, cited in King, 2004: 120) adds, however, that "the qualitative logic of ambivalence, where the actor is also the spectator, destruction gives rise to creativity, and death is equivalent to rebirth". Therefore Bakhtin's carnival has the logic of yearning for what is resented, and an irreversible fascination for what is seen as destructive in culture. This ambivalence coincides with another of King's references, to postcolonial critic and Columbia University Professor, Gayatri Spivak (1996: 19, cited in King, 2004: 120). While recognizing the destructive force of colonization, Spivak views it somewhat ambivalently as it tends to come as an 'enabling violence' or 'enabling violation' that can engender new creativity...It compels indigenous responses – either to assimilate the intrusion or to reject it and, if rejecting, then to advance an opposing representation appropriate to the culture and the times (King, 2004: 120). As Bakhtin argues, everyone in everyday life is both actor and observer and as such, they are themselves the heritage of everyday life and the living heritage of the moment, even though everyone's interpretation of and understanding of each actor and observer may differ.

King's view on Algerian born Sephardic Jewish philosopher Jacques Derrida relates in part to the idea of intertextuality. Derrida refers to "grafting": "To write means to graft – it's the same word". But to graft is to change the meaning of both the source (the water world) and the site of graft (Sukhumvit) – though immediately there is a paradox, because the grafting is in two directions simultaneously: an alien, always neo-colonising modernity is grafted on to the *khlongs*, rice fields and orchards of Sukhumvit, and then, in the search for lost meaning, the imagery of Nonthaburi is grafted (ghosted) on to the cacophony (King, 2004: 121) that is Sukhumvit. "Each grafted text continues to radiate toward the site of its removal, transforming that too, as it affects the new territory" (Derrida, 1981a: 355, cited in King, 2004: 121). Thus, in one sense, the sort of memory represented in Nonthaburi is a 'layer' beneath the 'surfaces' of modernity that Sukhumvit presents. Likewise, but less obvious, Sukhumvit is a 'layer' that lurks in the imagination of Nonthaburi as the threat of modernization that could descend upon it, as well.

One can draw further on the ideas of Derrida: as King suggests '...though complexity marks both Nonthaburi and Sukhumvit, it is the sheer proliferation of traces that distinguishes the latter' (King 2004: 121). The point to be made from all this is that we are not seeing Bangkok as a series of 'overlays' or replacements, Rather, each new insertion into the city and its culture is just that - an insertion or 'graft', horizontal as it were rather than a vertical, overlaying superimpositions

(King, 2004: 121). King concludes, “indeed ‘horizontal’ is a keyword that seems to represent the reality of Bangkok and, in turn, to give us an insight (pathway) to reality’. So what further thoughts might an insight provoke? (King, 2004: 121).

French writer and philosopher Georges Bataille (1897-1961) speaks of the two axes of thought (King, 2004: 121). The vertical axis is the axis of the vain climb towards (Western Enlightenment) ‘Absolute Knowledge’ – it is most clearly identified with G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831). But the ‘illumination’ of such knowledge is ultimately blinding, “...the end point of a kind of delirium of reason” (Lechte, 1994: 98, cited in King, 2004: 121), hiding what Bataille calls the very real obscurity of non-knowledge – sacrifice, the sacred, loss, chance, and eroticism – practices that open up the horizontal axis (Bataille, 1986). It is the axis of *difference* (King, 2004: 121-122).

Horizontality of thought becomes radical in the work of Gilles Deleuze (b1925) (King, 2004: 122). Such thought, in Deleuze, does not lead to sameness (everyone and everything on the same level), but to instability of differences (comparisons become problematic), there is no firmness of boundaries, but rather all boundaries and barriers are permeable (Deleuze 1962; Deleuze and Guatari 1987). The idea of the rhizome is central to such thought, as is a ‘labyrinth of horizontality’ (Lechte, 1994: 102, cited in King, 2004: 122). These ideas, opposed as they are to the suprematist exclusions of classical Western thought, could well be a description of the reality of Sukhumvit – labyrinthine, with no barriers, constantly unfolding difference, proliferating (and, as Lecercle observes, ‘proliferation is always a threat to order’ (1985: 95, cited in King, 2004: 122).

Bataille’s placement of eroticism on the horizontal (anti-rationalist) axis is precisely to recognize its role in destabilizing order. Eroticism is a violation, a transgression of interdictions: the interdiction is made known by the transgression, which thereby confirms the rupture of boundaries and frontiers (King, 2004: 122). King’s view on Western planning is that, ‘[in] the Western ‘science’ of planning cities, there is certainly an elaborate regime of controls and interdictions, even money or influence can overcome them; and these would unquestioningly be placed on the vertical axis. But in Bangkok it is different: there is an absence of development control, and anything can go anywhere – it is a space opening up to otherness, without boundary or frontiers – horizontal, indeed (King, 2004: 122). At the present, one sees that, at any time, as long as the price is right anything can be sold, i.e. sale of a parcel of land at the British Embassy in early 2006. King continues that these generalizations, however, are dangerous, for Bangkok does indeed have an order. There is the order of its foundation, of its sacredness, of its institutions (monarchy, religion, family), and these might indeed be caricatured as being on the vertical axis (King, 2004: 122). Bangkok is a city of *chance* (Bataille again) rather than of order; and thereby order itself comes into question – becomes problematic. (There are lessons from Bangkok that other cities have yet to learn.) (King, 2004: 122).

King writes, ‘with any thought of a city as labyrinthine horizontality, the mind is likely to turn to Walter Benjamin’s vast, unfinished, also labyrinthine project of

the “Arcades Project” (*Passagen Werk*) (King, 2004: 122). Susan Buck-Morss suggests four ‘ways of seeing’ a city or ‘image spheres,’ that arise out of Benjamin’s display, and that these come from the intersections of *myth, nature and history* (King, 2004: 123). In it, Benjamin (1892-1940) describes the intersections of myth, nature and history. In the first reading in Buck-Morss’s reconstruction, we have ‘Nature/History: Fossil’ – the world of industrial objects viewed as fossils, from whose surface we can read the origins of the present – the past stands as fossil, with traces of past economic epochs running through the present (King, 2004: 123). King suggests that, ‘so we forget the exploitations, oppressions and tyrannies that lie beneath them’ (King, 2004: 123). This comes as something of an eye opener in the search for heritage. Professor King stresses the dilemma of nostalgia in comprehending its effects on heritage. He argues that ‘this is the dilemma of nostalgia of heritage; and that to comprehend the effects of heritage and its accumulating industry, and to reveal the relationships of power that underlie it and is attendant purposive remembering and forgetting, is the proper task of ‘heritage studies’ (King, 2006b: 282).

The second reading, ‘Myth/History: Fetish’, reveals that all the ‘change’ of the present (‘progress’) is but the surface shifts on the unchanging fetishisation of change itself – “hellish repetition.” Benjamin sees this indeed (in 1930s Europe) as “...the eternity of Hell and its sadistic craving for innovation” (1982: 1011). In the case of Bangkok, the translation of such insights leads to immediate doubt (King, 2004: 123). Along Sukhumvit Road, some land possesses no built structures (cleared for the 1997 boom or even after its collapse, and now awaiting a new boom that will come but will certainly not be like the last), but much other land has two forms of structures: utilitarian buildings for the present or some preceding economic era, and the spirit houses (King, 2003: 17 cited in King, 2004: 125). The third way of seeing is ‘Myth/Nature: Wish Image’. ‘Every time we imagine the future, we get it wrong, for we imagine it in terms of present possibilities and a mythic past.’

‘In a dream in which every epoch sees in images the epoch which is to succeed it, the latter appears coupled with elements of prehistory – that is to say of a classless society. The experiences of this society, which have their faith placed in a collective unconsciousness, intersects with the new to give birth to the utopias which leave their traces in a thousand configurations of life, from permanent buildings to ephemeral fashions’ (Benjamin, 1973: 159, cited in King, 2004: 123).

So, observes Buck-Morss (1989: 124, cited in King, 2004: 124), Benjamin is identifying a dialectic that develops within the ‘cultural superstructure’ (in Althusser’s terms), as a play between the imagination and the productive potential of still un-comprehended “new nature”. And it is a dialectic that develops not by attempting to *bury* the past (Lenin), but by re-energizing it. It is to redeem the past rather than to respect it or yearn for it (King, 2004: 124).

If the third of Benjamin’s “ways of seeing” is to view the city as a dream, the fourth is to see it as a ruin. The ruin is the antidote of the dream. This concept is the theme of Buck-Morss’s History/Nature: Ruin, the counterpart of all visions and utopias. As Benjamin is ostensibly writing about Paris in the 19th century, it is not surprising that he devotes much attention to the poetry of Charles Baudelaire (1821-

1867). Baudelaire's subjects are of the interweaving of rather harsh images of women as commodities, as in prostitution or as decorative and fashionable objects. In like manner Bangkok, too, offers scenery of ruined lives, with women and men viewed as commodities and as economic and emotional beggars who line thanon Sukhumvit (King, 2004: 124).

But there is another possibility, namely that the observer, seeing the unredeemed promise of Thai culture as poignantly displayed in the water-borne villages, will imagine a different future - that intersection of "mythic dream states" and "mythic new nature," that emerges in Benjamin's way of seeing the city. And to show what these possible alternative futures can be - alternative spaces of everyday life (King, 1996: 247-250 cited in King, 2004: 125). One does not ask if Bangkok is sacred or profane for it is both. Neither can it question itself, as this would not be 'real,' because ambivalence *is* its reality, perhaps viewed as a self-inflicted Westernization of the culture. Ambivalence, it seems, is of the very essence of the city, and its embrace much inevitably constitute the task of its designer (King, 2004: 125).

Nation, anti-nation, and the hazards of heritage, symposium paper by Ross King (2006b):

At the 'International Symposium on Architecture in the Land of Suvannabhumi' held in Bangkok on August 3, 2006, Professor King stated 'Memory is always socially framed; that is to say, there are always 'conditions of possibility' that enable certain memories, while prohibiting others...Heritage, accordingly, is swept into the project of forging a unified (national) identity, against any idea of a pluralistic nationhood and an idealized sense of origin that can supplant any desire to get back to the real genealogy of the spaces of everyday life' (King, 2006b: 281). King refers to Pierre Nora who edited a project built around the work of Maurice Halbwach's investigations of collective memory (1992); '...on social framing of memory, rebelling against "any Durkheimian notion of a reified or superorganic cultural memory. Rather he looked at how social institutions and contexts made possible certain memories, encouraging certain recollections while discouraging other"' (Legg, 2005: 481-482, cited in King, 2004: 282). Central to Nora's argument is the idea of sites of memory (heritage?) as compensation for a profound loss: '...These sites are now necessary because most people no longer live in *milieux de memoire* (environments of memory)'. Nora claimed that, with the rise of modernism and its attendant traits of globalization, mediatization, democratization and massification, modern media is substituted for collective memory. What we have now is not living memory, but reconstructed history. To compensate for this lack, sites of memory have arisen (Legg, 2005: 483-484, cited in King, 2006b: 282). An explanation of such sites or environments of memory on Sukhumvit and its soils will take place in the empirical study in a later chapter.

King notes that nostalgia seems to arise at four principal levels: in a melancholic yearning for 'real environments of memory' (*milieux de memoire*), and in the dream of the unifying power of the nation-state. His argument is first to examine the question of remembering and forgetting, as context for scrutinizing the

social construction of heritage. Then, second, there is the issue of ‘the nation’ and the dream of its unifying power, and of the potential role of a ‘counter heritage’ in calling into question both its genealogy and its likely trajectory in the area of globalization and the imagined ‘end of the nation’. Third he will contemplate that other apparent weakness both in Nora’s project and in the institutionalization of heritage, namely the nostalgia for *milieux de memoire* – environments of memory for which mere sites of memory (heritage) can only ever be weak compensation. Fourth and finally, and in the particular context of Thailand, there is a problem of a present architecture that flies in the face of a Thai way of seeing the world – that is, in the face of the real heritage of beliefs and values (King, 2006b: 282). King brings in the following four points to explain his view:

1. Memory and forgetting: In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson traces the genealogy of vernacular or language-based communities that became imaginable through a half-fortuitous, but explosive interaction between [1] a system of production and productive relations or capitalism, [2] a technology of communications, or the printed word and [3] the fatality of human linguistic diversity (Anderson, 1991: 42-43).
2. Heritage and the constitution of the nation: It is not too difficult to identify elements of proclaimed heritage that underscore the defining triad of modern Siamese/Thai national identity – nation, religion and king.
 - Elite space – palaces, throne halls, monuments to democracy or victory, Rachadamnoen Road, wats etc are real statements of the identity of our nation, and as background, merely incidental – to the joy of the intertwined elite of politics and capital.
 - The Royal surface – the periodic displays of birthdays and grand celebrations – yielding a legitimizing screen for both capitalist appropriation and institutional repression.
 - Festivals such as ‘Loy Kratong’ and ‘Songkran,’ along with the costly tokens and bright rituals of religion that serve to mask the modernist divorce of Buddhist practice from its humble origins.

The problem of penetrating Thai heritage - discovering what lies behind it (the study of heritage, in other words) is however deeper than this mere danger of offence (King, 2006b: 284). Peter Jackson has drawn attention to what he terms a ‘Thai regime of images’ (Jackson, 2004a; 2004b). There was, he suggests, a pre-modern episteme – way of constructing knowledge – based in a culture of ‘face’ and ‘reputation’, and manifested in a preoccupation with surface ritual (the ‘theatre state’). In the course of 19th century and in the imperative to create the image of ‘civilized’ Siam, this transformed in the era of Ramas IV and V into the ‘performative state’. Jackson cites Rosalind Morris, to the effect that Thai modernity stands on a mode of power that operates laterally across surfaces rather than vertically in the panoptic or all-seeing mode that Michel Foucault identified as characterizing Western politics and culture (Morris 2000; cited in Jackson, 2004a:

182) – it is ‘the love of the disciplined surface’ (Morris, 2000: 180), or the Thai ‘order of appearances’ (Jackson, 2000: 173), and ‘an over investment in appearances’ (Jackson, 2000: 5, cited in King, 2006b: 284). Anthropologist Penny Van Esterik is quoted to the effect that present Thai society can be seen as one that ‘encourages an essentialism of appearances or surfaces...The real is hidden and unchallenged. The surface is taken for real’ (Van Esterick, 2000: 4). Such a characteristic is also deep-rooted in people’s attitudes to achieve ‘social success in life’, and in terms of cultural values which Phillips (1965) referred to as ‘social cosmetics’, such as appearing ‘caring and considerate’ (the concept of *krengchai*), ‘politeness’, ‘kindness and helpfulness’ (Komin, 1985: 179-180, cited in King, 2006b: 287).

3. Heritage and the space of everyday:

King argues that the space of ordinary everyday lives is to be seen against the space of the elites. The former is permeated by myth and the spiritual: the physical is ephemeral, impermanent and passing, while the real and eternal is at an altogether different level, in the realm of the spirits, the true owners of the space of the everyday (Mulder 1996, cited in King, 2006b: 285). King emphasizes two main points. The first is the deconstruction of the legitimizing surface (in the case of Thailand, Nation, Religion and King), and second, is a reconstruction of genealogy, the real memory of ordinary lives. In a Thai epistemology, the first level is populated by gods and spirits who are virtually supreme, second is mother, health, king and earth, and the third level is held by the powerful and the politically untrustworthy, and the fourth is evil. This coincides with the Traiphum Phra Ruang as depicted in ancient Thai scriptures, which presents three planes of existence, compatible with the enterprise of the ‘deconstruction of the legitimizing surface’. This is especially true of young Thais who base their lives on the principles of a posteriori (teleology) or even simple rationality. The fact is that kindness and consideration should be replaced or supplanted by the *krengchai* where the privacy of everyday life can be observed and one can peer into the ordinariness of unrecorded heritage that is discovered only now and again. This notion could become a measuring source of representational space in this confused and muddled society where the image of the ‘Thai smile’ (bright smile) and its apparent *mai pen rai* (never mind) attitude are so commonplace that we must be clear about what they mean.

4. Purposive forgetting, and architectures of venality:

However the concern of the symposium for which this paper was written was as much for the architecture of the present as for what might be the built environment of memory and nostalgia (and, by extension, of heritage) (King, 2006b: 286). The concern here is with bad, even venal architecture, as well as environmental vandalism. King writes: ‘Sukhumvit, like other great urban streets of Thailand, can be read through the ‘epistemic lens’ suggested earlier: the spiritual realm is presented as the screen – a surface of shrines, spirit houses and spatial practices of respect and reverence overlaid on the endless modified shop houses, office blocks, condominiums and establishments of questionable function. Then

there is the further legitimizing screen of periodic royal celebration' (King, 2006b: 286). This is prevailing on Sukhumvit as it is a part of everyday life, where the only difference is from those who are the viewers?

There is the dilemma that 'Bangkok is a city of infinite diversity and richness, of wonderful complexity and muddle, where all those differing levels of reality and their representing surfaces overlap and intersect, where boundaries between levels 'melt into air' and the observer is endlessly confronted by an infinity of paradoxes and contradictions (King, 2006b: 287). Against that however, is the concept and practice of *krengchai* – caring, consideration, kindness, helpfulness and politeness (Komin, 1985: 179-180, cited in King, 2006b: 287). No such practice however seems to inform the production of Bangkok's built environment (King, 2006b: 287). Here is identified the venality and environmental vandalism of Sukhumvit's urban design in the repeated juxtaposing of huge tower block 'monuments' within the boundaries of palaces and wats. King ended his paper by insisting: 'We need to design buildings that 'give alms' in that Thai Buddhist sense – shaded places for ordinary people to sit, assemble and watch the passing parade – to restore the *khlongs* and their banks and to bring *khlong* and *suan* back into your designs. Design buildings that are welcoming rather than repelling – in other words, be Thai rather than emulate the grossest of the West (King, 2006b: 287).

The lesson one learns here is to delve for relics of origins in cultural heritage and for the traces and remnants that might account for the local wisdom of an emerging knowledge-based society.

- **Parameter of connections**

One interesting view is from American culture and ideas historian, Jacques Barzun (2001). Barzun depicted five related outlines: 'secularism', 'individualism', 'self-consciousness' 'primitivism' and 'cultural trends'. There is a similarity between individualism and cultural trends in which Barzun argues that: 'It's the sense of individual rights, which like many cultural trends, began as a religious idea...Individualism spread to politics, where it becomes the basis for the idea of democracy – rule by the people. Then generic cultural ideas, which had led to a belief that one can do anything they desire, so long as it is within the realm of the law' (Jacques Barzun, 2001, cited in Niel Leiper, 2004: 66). The encroachment of other subjects, such as economics and politics, are often instrumental in leading to an assumption of cultural heritage. Additionally, it is understood that individualism began in Thailand as a religious idea, as in the two major denominations of Buddhism, *Thammayuttinikaya* and *Mahanikaya*, and also illustrated in the principle of *Traiphum Phra Ruang*. The following section explores the experience of nation-religion-king in this Thai's process of learning cultural heritage.

The ‘Eastern’ views and the phenomenon of Sukhumvit

Most Thais living in the three districts of Prathumwan, Wattana and Khlong Toie are followers of Buddhism, as are most Thais, nation wide. There are other religious groups such as Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Jews who congregate and integrate in the area. The maintenance of this peaceful coexistence of eclectic cultures and religions has been one of the liberal policies of the Thai rulers since the beginning of Rattanakosin. Thai values are a combination of religious beliefs mixed in with the nature of Thais who are noted for being gentle and sensible. These many diverse elements offer a key to unlocking true Thai identity (Reynolds, 1987: 161).

- **The essence of Traibhum Phra Ruang** (Prayutto, 2000)

The Traibhum is alleged to relate to ‘Dosapitcharatchadhamma’ or written as ‘Dasarjadhamma’ (Prayutto, 2000: 29-30) which comes from ‘Phra Trai Pidok’ (triad of the Lord Buddha’s philosophical mandate) of Buddhism. The significance of the Traibhum is in three precepts. They are firstly, success is ephemeral; secondly, nothing is eternal and nothing is real; thirdly, the goal of one destiny is to reach nirvana. The leader is to rule according to Dhamma while all atrocity came through Hindu practices since the late Aydhaya period (Prayutto, 2000: 44). In Buddhism there is no separation in terms of class. All are equal (Prayutto, 2000: 50). “Traibhum Phra Ruang; influences upon Thai society” depicts an edification where morality and mentality are simultaneously developed. Traibhum means three but there is the fourth perception so called ‘lokutalabhum’ (meaning nirvana). Traibhum is based on three subjects they are kilesa (delusion and greed), karma (course of doing or acting) and vibarka (result or consequence). Traibhum Phra Ruang has 31 sub-layers (Prayutto, 2000: 3). The search for a unique Thai national identity takes a range of forms in modern Thailand--local culture forms in annual ‘fairs’ or thetsakan.

Peter A. Jackson writes about old Thai Buddhist ‘gospel’, ‘Traibhum Phra Ruang’. The intimate theoretical and ritualistic relationship between Buddhism and all aspects of secular life in Thailand has placed the religion at the centre of recent attempts to isolate, define and promote the features of a distinctive Thai identity (ekkarak Thai) (Jackson cited in Reynolds, 1987: 155). Traibhum has retained a political potency up to the present day. This is because of its symbolic association with the ascribed historical sources of the political and cultural identity of the modern Thai state (Jackson cited in Reynolds, 1987: 161). King Rama I of the Rattanakosin dynasty had one version and Prince Damrong son of King Rama V, had written another version called the Phra Maha Chuai version which was first published in Thailand in 1912 as a cremation volume for the funerals of Phraongchoa Prasansisai and Phraongchoa Praphaisisa (Jackson cited in Reynolds, 1987: 162-185).

- **The essence of Traibhumikatha** (17th October 2006, C. Chitrabongs)

After generations of interpretation, the insight into the cycle of rebirth was reviewed by National Museum Volunteers at the Goethe Institute on 'Traibhumikatha'. Lithai wrote about the 'Three Planes of Existence' that were understood until the reign of King Rama IV. These were:

1. Incorporeal Plane or Aruppabhumi.
2. Corporeal Plane or Ruppabhumi.
3. Sensual Plane or Karmabhumi.

There are, in total, 31 stages of existence that have to be passed through before Nirvana can be attained. The essence of Traibhumikatha is really in Asian ways of constructing knowledge by learning about the macrocosmic universe and the profound insights to reach enlightenment.

- **Understanding of identity**

In the 1960s, a large number of scholars who had contributed articles to Sangkhomsat Parithat (Social Views) and later Warasan Setthasat Kanmu'ang (Political Economic Magazine) subsequently returned with higher education degrees from Europe, the USA, Australia and elsewhere (Turton, 1991: 8). However, it was not until 1981 that the National Thai Identity Board began to publish 'Thai Magazine' (Warasan Thai). Its contents were decidedly royalist with articles on past and present monarchical accomplishments. The coverage also included, at the opposite end of the socio-economic spectrum, 'the Peasant: Backbone of the Nation' (Reynolds, 1987). In the mid 1960s, the Thai school system made attempts to deal with the agrarian nature of the society. After due deliberation, the National Identity Board took the foundation for Thai identity to be 'chat niyom' (nationalism), whose six components include:

1. territory
2. people
3. independence and sovereignty
4. government and administration
5. culture
6. pride

Further components were later added to create a new result:

7. religion
8. monarchy

This eight-fold schema was labeled as the core of Thai identity (Reynolds, 1987: 15). 'Chat' (nationalism, derived from the Sanskrit word 'jati' meaning 'birth', has come into the Thai language carrying powerful resonances of blood-ties and, most importantly, shared descent (Keyes, 1976: 206). Thai culture and its subtext, 'the Thai way of life,' have become as sacred an object as the monarchy...The preservation of Thai-ness (kanraksa khwampenthai) requires the defense of Thai-ness, thus the Thai military becomes a trace, an ever present

background presence, and a critical aspect in each of the eight components (Reynolds, 1987: 22). The military has been assiduous in their role of promoting national culture and national identity and recognizes their acts as a state agency whose legitimacy is to safeguard social values. Bureaucracy has been a political entity because it has always been the main power base of the State through which the State exercises its power on society. Typical is the case of Luang Vichit Watakarn, the Thai Director of Fine Arts and composer of nationalistic or patriotic songs and plays, who uses his position and talents to create a cultural bridge between the official realm and the public realm (Chai-anan Samudavanija cited in Reynolds, 1987: 54-60). Luang Vichit's goal is to engender and support a deep sense of nationalism.

In Thailand, in the late 1930s, the word 'culture' was a word or concept not in common use and Prince Wanvithayakorn Voravarn is credited as the person who brought in the term culture (*wattanadhamma*), and suggested the government should issue a 'ratthaniyom' (Cultural Mandate) along the lines of the *phrarachaniyom* which was put into place during monarchical times (Chai-anan Samudavanija cited in Reynolds, 1987: 52).

Something of the 'flavor' of Sukhumvit and Bangkok emerges from the richness of Thai literature. Thai Professor Em-On Chittasobhon refers to the following fifteen selected works that are officially recognized as literary masterpieces by the Wannakhadi Samoson (National Literature Association). One can acknowledge the musical dramas and plays held at *wat Srapathum*, royal boat racing and Thai poetry depicted on *lillit*, *chan*, *kap* and *klon* along with various types of troubadours and literature, popular in King Mongkut's era. The fifteen literary treasures are:

1. *Lilit Phra Law*: The best of the *lillit* type.
2. *Samuthakhot*: The best of *chan* type.
3. *Mahachat Khamthet*: The best of *kap* type.
4. *Khun Chang Khun Phan*: The best of *klon sepha*
5. *Enau*: The best of dance drama.
6. *Huacai Nakrop*: The best of legitimate drama.
7. *Sam Kok*: The best of the essay type tales.
8. *Praratchaphithe Sipsong Duan*: The best of the narrative essays; the twelve months modals, which include *Visaka Buja* by King Rama II and *Maka Buja* by King Rama IV).

A second category comprises seven literary works, each of which has won the Southeast Asian Writer's awards. These works reflect western influences and date from the reign of King Rama IV (1851) to the present day. They are:

1. *Luk Isan* by Khamphoon Bunthawi (1979) or *Children of Esan*
2. *Khamphiphaksa* by Chat Kobcitti (1982) or *Judgment*.
3. *Poon Pit Thong* by Krisana Asoksin (1985) or *Gold of Poon Pit*.
4. *Taling Sung Sung Nak* by Niyom Rayawa (1988) or *Really Such a Steep Cliff*.

5. Cao Can Phom Hom by Mala Khamcan (1991) or Can Mountain of Phom Hom.
6. Wela by Chat Kobcitti (1994) or Time.
7. Pachathipatai bon Senkhanan by Win Leowarin (1997) or Democracy on the parallel.

The first group represents Thai classical literature, while the second group represents contemporary Thai literature (Chittasobhon, 2003: 395-396).

Chittasobhon writes that Thai culture (as reflected in literature) is of three kinds – literary conventions Thai traditional ceremony and the writings on the status of women (Chittasobhon, 2003: 397). It is interesting to note that literary works can relate to the views of Thai women as an analogy of cultural change on lower Sukhumvit. Chittasobhon's view is that Thai women are more literate than their predecessors and have more confidence in doing things, a view that seems supported in contemporary literature where women are depicted as capable family leaders. Pali gives us a good example, in 'Poon Pit Thong', of how women's status has changed – perhaps because tradition appears to be less important nowadays, but Thai women used to be known as 'Chang thow lang' (the elephant's back feet) (Chittasobhon, 2003: 402). One could argue, however, that the status of Thai women remains vulnerable despite social, educational and economic progress linked to the more beneficial aspects of globalization. Still, in the present deprivation of tradition, women's role incurs a stigma for *all* women who come from rural areas or are less educated and become hostesses in the clubs and bars along Sukhumvit in an effort to support themselves and their families in times of financial hardship.

Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit presented their English translation of *Khun Chang Khun Phan*, the best of klon sepha (words of musical poetry), at the Siam Society June 26, 2006. It was interesting to witness this evening where nearly 80% of the attendants were expatriates from Asian and Western countries, who placed evident importance on Thai literary heritage. Baker and Phongpaichit introduced a number of interesting discussion points where Thais and expatriates had an opportunity to experience views of everyday life in Thailand based on a naturally idyllic environment in which this immortal literature was created. The convention hall of Siam Society produced an excellent atmosphere for this tale of Thai heritage amid the museums, the busy streets, tall office buildings, condominiums and soi Cowboy.

The stories of Sukhumvit are arguably the best way to interpret this venue. Chuvit Garden, for example, is a small park at soi 10 and Sukhumvit Road, donated to the public by a wealthy businessman, a gift of private property for public use. The property owner was accused of a gangland style demolition of shops that were in the area of the present day park. Chuvit Garden was built on the site of these demolished shops in 2005 and dedicated as a private park in a token of his generosity. A sign stating this is 'Chuvit Garden' was placed in front of the park, and a Washington DC style monument was erected at the rear of the garden. Reviewing this example of public generosity, it appears the Thai donor offered this space in repentance to compensate for what was publicly perceived a wrong doing.

This cultural difference may show a sense of how Asians interact in public where display (the episteme of surfaces, again) must be invoked to screen a moral dilemma of compunction. Will this philanthropy-as-a-screen become common practice and act as an example among wealthy people who wish to repair their wrong-doing? This act has given us a new public park in the middle of lower Sukhumvit Road where a marble sign proclaims the name of its notorious donor and proclaims personal gratitude towards the public, though the park is little used arguably due to its poor design and, as such, often stands empty. One wonders if the park will ever be fully used or if it means the immediate area does not need open space for outdoor activities? It seems that a couple of acres of parkland would be beneficial to the area but for now the memory of the past few years is fresh.

The grammarian Bharhrtari (6th to 7th century) claimed the world to be a manifestation of an ultimate principle (Brahman), whose essence is language...the entire world is an outpouring of the transcendental language-principle (Ram-Prasad, 2005: 166). Some Thai writers willingly share their views on cultural language and cultural heritage as it is manifested in the following four reports of recent incidents. The first is on the literary texts of contemporary writers, the second is about the desecration of the Erawan Shrine, the third is on the effect of religious monuments and the fourth a demonstration held on Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads:

1. Por Intalapolit (1910-1968) a writer in the 1950s through to the late 1960s considered himself too low in class to mix with the literary elite and wrote merely to earn a living. He was sincere in his work and his modest way of thinking led him to create great stories and characters, but he had no intention to educate or to promote a specific value. Por Intalapolit's writings were contemporary with those of Vor Na Pramulmart (1920-1977), a granddaughter of King Rama V. Her stories reflected Thai society in the 1950s and 1960s and indirectly involved an inter-textual analysis of society. Their writings used words such as 'choey,' which has since become widely used to mean 'old-fashioned' (The Nation, 6th May 2006: 8A), and 'go-gah', which means 'high society' (Culture & Tradition, 25th March 2005: 140-141). Both writers gave clear views of the differences between the working Thais and elite groups in the context of a changing, classic society and the change in the understanding of globalization in Thai society. Por depicted the ordinary Thai values of common sense and irony and, as a popular writer of bandit romances, where... 'the bandit community is a free society which has escaped from state power' (Nidhi 1998, quoted in Saichon n.d.: 7, cited in Nidhi 2005: 365). On the other hand, Vor Na Pramulmart's stories were presented and set against the backdrop of Phleonchit and Sukhumvit, with its elite, fashionable lifestyle alongside its rice fields. Both views offer glimpses into a different Thai manner of living in an autocratic society, as the characters carefully negotiate sensitive political issues and the poor deal with the issues of everyday survival. In the present day, the value of this literature remains constant as it offers a picture of 'the poor view of heritage and the cultural values of everyday life,' along side elite ideas of 'national heritage.' The present understanding is that the middle of Sukhumvit as royal, sacred

and profane is *all* about Thai heritage and *all* are equally comparable to the grandest monuments of Nation, Religion and King.

2. On the morning of 22nd March 2006 a mentally disturbed man destroyed the Erawan Shrine and was beaten to death by an angry mob. The murderers received no punishment and walked free and most local people thought the public execution of a useless man was inevitable. The dead man was a living person with flesh, spirit and soul while the defiled Erawan Shrine was made of plaster, concrete and other lifeless, spirit-less materials. The author did not hear of any human rights organizations denouncing the murderers. While the desecration of the Shrine inflicted much pain on a wider community, the murderers became the self-anointed judge, jury and executioners. This incident may offer a profound lesson in the development of Thai cultural heritage. The issue is one of how the different cultures value human life, material objects and the supra-human spirit, and that a material object would hold more value than an immortal soul. Discussion can never lead to total acceptance of the desecration of an object of cultural heritage nor will it be viewed as a purely material object; but it does raise the question of how a human life is seen as less valuable in the wider view, and a National cultural symbol awarded a higher value. Nigel Pike writes in 'a letter to the editor', that the rule of law in Thailand is notoriously weak (the Nation, 13th May 2006: 7A). This act and its aftermath dramatically raise the problems associated with the notion of heritage: the Erawan Shrine was not an ancient shrine but was, in fact, a new structure, one made of inanimate, artificial materials, all of which are replaceable. On the other hand, the desecrator was a living being, possessing a spirit, albeit disturbed, who was destroyed for the sake of a material object. This destruction of a human life can be seen as a metaphor for the persisting violence of a modern capitalist state (in everyday life and its contestations). As an Australian visitor, Ross King by chance engaged in a conversation with an Asian man near the Erawan Shrine in late April 2006. He described that the man was in tears looking at the defiled Shrine (though at the time it was covered by boards). He expressed the unspoken words of a sacrificed god and the feelings of suffering in seeing the Shrine had been sacrilegiously attacked. Some visitors may or may not understand the reason for this grief and others may feel a similar level of sympathy. This remarkable sharing of emotions at the Erawan Shrine is a social activity and it is a highly popular destination for many believers from many Asian regions, many of whom travel to Bangkok to show respect at this shrine. The general public follows the Brahmin's advice on worship and the giving of offerings. Believers hold that the appropriate times for worship are from seven to eight a.m. each morning and from seven to eight p.m. each evening and feel that a wish will be granted if one asks for divine assistance in the evening after which Toa Mahaprom is believed to have retired to heaven for the rest of the day (Nakagawa, 2003: 4). Though sacred, other shrines in the vicinity are not nearly as popular as the Erawan Shrine. The Erawan Shrine attracts more followers, encourages economic benefits for the vendors and can be considered a remarkable sightseeing experience. The desecration may have had other effects on the area. Time

was spent observing the shrines nearby and the finding was that the numbers of visitors were no longer in decline as they once were. Maybe the ‘un-broken’ shrines drew some followers away from the Erawan Shrine. Then, too, there was the belief that the site of the consecration may be altered and moved to a new venue, but this did not happen and even more shrines to ignite faith and trust in this valuable space of consumption has been included for a blessed future.

3. In supporting the above incident, on 1st March 2001, there was universal outrage when the Taliban made good their threat to destroy the Bamiyan Buddha in an act of religious zealotry. With the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha, the Taliban made clear their contempt for other religions. The leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, who to this day remains at large, personally ordered the destruction of the Buddha (the Nation, 12th March 2006: 2B). By comparison, the author thinks that the disturbed Thai man at the Erawan Shrine was far less harmful than this minority of religious fanatics. Even though the Erawan Shrine is only fifty years old, when compared to the centuries old Bamiyan Buddhas, there is an enormous sense of cultural value that can be learned. By 2006, the impoverished Afghan town of Bamiyan pinned its hope on the resurrection of the Buddha images. Habiba Surabi, governor of Bamiyan province, and Afghanistan’s first female to hold the post said, “We can change the locals’ lives from being dominated by poverty if we rebuild one of the Buddha statues,” (the Nation, 13th August 2006: 2B).
4. The demonstrations began on 26th March 2006 when the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) changed its venue for their demonstration from the traditional site of Sanam Luang, Rachadamnoen, to a new site at the Siam Paragon on Rama I Road. It was a modern day protest against the government. This is the first time in Thai history that a space of transnational capital and consumption was involved in a public expression in opposition to elitist power and in support of a budding understanding of democracy. These modern street demonstrations cut across unspoken aspects of Thai heritage, abandoning the traditional location of protests (Sanam Luang, Rachadamnoen) for a ‘globalist’ locale. The change of venue raised the problem of the memory of the old Sraprathum area, a public site, and the notion that cultural connections can be transferred to the site of Siam Paragon...previously private and belonging to the royal family.

Nation – Religion – King

Nation

By ‘Nation,’ the reference is to governmental and societal institutions of Sukhumvit such as the Royal Police Headquarters and the Siam Society.

1. After the financial crisis of 2nd July 1997 and on its seventh anniversary, Thanong Khangthong wrote, ‘Finally, when an economy enters into a crisis for a prolonged period, it eventually has to recover when the conditions are right. In Thailand’s case, several conditions – call them the Amazing Thailand effect – gradually allowed the country to emerge from the crisis,’ (The Nation, 2nd July 2004: 12A). Looking into this venue of Sukhumvit, it is a space where various activities are carried out: commercial consumption, entertainment, cultural practices and everyday life in a Thai hotchpotch society. Competition comes in all forms from the macro-scale of corporations to the micro-scale of street vendors.
2. Nation is at the vanguard of competition as far as globalization is concerned. The nation is moving swiftly and now there is a new hierarchical center and a new marketplace when calamity occurs, such as the July 1997 financial crisis. There was a related shift to a newer stability as China moved into the center of economics life in Asia (Matichon Weekly, 9th to 15th June 2006, Vol. 26, No. 1347: 41). On the other hand India, too, has become a pretender to the throne of Asian supremacy with its large population and capital markets. New thoughts on making higher education a pre-requisite for expansion into the global marketplace were inevitable. According to Kim Young-gil, President of Handong Global University, South Korea, the development of the information economy has progressed from the ‘data age’ (1950-1960), to the ‘information age’ (1970-1980), to the ‘knowledge age’ (1990-2000) and finally into what would be called the ‘wisdom age’ (the Nation, 13th August 2006: 7A).

Religion

Sutthiwong Phongphaibun (1983) adopts the symbolic method of interpreting Buddhist scriptures in terms of ‘dhamma language,’ as developed by the reformist monk Buddadasa (Phutthathat) (Jackson, cited in Reynolds, 1987: 185). Certainly the Thai nation has had a strong tie to the Buddhist religion and the Kingship, throughout its long history. Therefore the significance of Buddhism prevails in the triad of nation, religion and king as demonstrated in the early 1980s by the Thai National Identity Board (samnakngan semsang ekkarak khong chat). The Traiphum Phra Ruang (see above on the essence of Traiphum Phra Ruang) is believed to reveal the hidden and long lost political essence and the true meaning of Thai identity through Buddhism. This view, reformists maintain, was distorted and lost in the Ayudhaya Period and the early Bangkok Periods. This present time, then, reveals the ‘truth,’ and if the historical roots and the true nature of being Thai is to

be democratic, but if political authoritarianism, whether of an absolute monarch or a military dictator, has distorted that destiny then the representation becomes a perversion of the true character of Thai identity (Jackson cited in Reynolds, 1987: 184). Jackson uses the terms ‘traditionalist’ and ‘reformist’ to refer to these politico-religious outlooks because the common use of ‘traditions of Buddhism’ is to support conservative political positions, while the use of ‘reformist’ presentations of Buddhist teaching supports political liberalization and reform (Jackson, cited in Reynolds, 1987: 158-159). One can therefore recount the symbolic traits of state power and political power on the spatial practices of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads while exploring the process of how religion developed, is presented and how it is incorporated in contemporary lives.

King

The 5th May 1950, His Majesty King Bhumipol Adulyadej’s coronation took place, performed in the style of a traditional European ceremony (King 2006). His Majesty made his accession speech in front of the grand audience of venerable monks and Brahmins, members of the Royal Family, cabinet ministers, members of parliament, judges, military officers and civil servants stating that: ‘I shall reign by Dhamma, for the benefit and happiness of all the Thai people’ (Bangkok Post, 12th June 2006: 8). In June 2006, the 60th anniversary of his accession, Thailand celebrated this Royal occasion in style. The festival of celebration of the 60th anniversary began as it did on the evening of June 9, 1946 with thousands of fireworks set off in Benjakitti Park. Several members of royal families from across the globe convened at the grand hall of Ananta Samakom Palace, Royal Plaza, on Rattanakosin Island. Approximately nine royal families stayed at hotels on Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads. Though there were few arrangements made to make the area look more ordered, street market activities were prohibited. The local inhabitants were in a festive mood and the beautiful Royal Barges on the Chao Phraya River in the late evening of June 12, 2006 exhibited an aspect of Thai cultural heritage. This traditional cultural heritage displayed Thai unity and news of the celebration was broadcast throughout the world, capturing a rare moment in time for all to see. Nigerian, Elizabeth Ogunlana, on the faculty of the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok wrote, ‘For your love and kindness to Thais and foreigners in Thailand, we praise you. For the 60th anniversary of your accession to the throne, we celebrate you. Long Live the King of Thailand! Long Live, an excellent King!’ (The Nation, 15th June 2006: 11A). After his 60 years reign it is not surprising why the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, presented the Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award to His Majesty King on 29th May 2006 (B. P., 16th June, 2006: 10).

The pictures below show ‘*pan phum*’ of gold and silver, used as part of a traditional royal ceremony.



Figure 31: Celebration on lower Sukhumvit Road sidewalk near soi 2 for the King's Birthday, by the author, on 5th December 2006.



Figure 32: Celebration on Rama I road on Discovery Plaza stairs for the Queen's Birthday by the author, on 12th August 2006.

The principles of the King's accession to the throne are principles derived from Buddhist scrutiny (Phra Worapatramatee ASTV, 24th Sept. 2006 in Buddadasa Bhikku and Educational Reforms). These principles are part of Thai cultural heritage and inform governmental process throughout Thailand. The ten basic principles called 'Dasarajadhamma' (or 'Dosapitcharatchadhama') relating to this ruling are considered a core part of Thai cultural heritage. These are established in Traibhumikatha:

1. Dana, which means giving in a beneficial way or alms.
2. Sila, which means maintaining good conduct so as not to breach religious morals, laws and all ethical norms.
3. Pariccaga, which means making selfless sacrifice for the greater good.
4. Ajjava, which means loyalty, truthfulness and honesty.

5. Maddava, which means being gentle and open-minded to reasonable advice and not being arrogant.
6. Tapa, which means diligence in consistently performing the royal duties, leading a simple life and restraining the mind from indulgence in sensual pleasure.
7. Akkodha, which means not showing anger, or dwelling on hatred or vindictiveness against others, and being compassionate.
8. Avihimsa, which means not afflicting harm on others, including animals and all living things, adhering to peace and tranquility for all, and to be a king not indulging himself in his power.
9. Khanti, which means being patient and persevering against all emotions, be they greed, anger, ignorance or any kind of suffering, to be against abrasive words, and maintaining calmness and composure in body and words.
10. Avirodhana, which means being steadfast in righteousness, not allowing any misdeeds, being just, correcting those who do wrong and rewarding those who do right.

When the King lives by Dasarajadhamma in its entirety, the royal family, royal servants and subjects will pay homage to him with reverence, do their duty to serve him wholeheartedly, honestly and loyally, and the country will prosper (Bangkok Post, 12th June 2006: 8). Under the title ‘Dasarajadhamma: New Governance Principles for Civil and Public Management,’ former law professor and Thai legal expert, Borwornsak Uwanno writes: ‘The term good government in its new meaning, i.e., the exercise of decision making-power to allocate limited national resources to various groups of people in a balanced and equitable manner, has been applied for just ten years.’ Borwornsak stated in one of the Royal addresses: ‘Development must take into account the local environment in terms of its physical environment, the sociological environment and cultural environment, however, if we go in and find out what the people really want and then fully explain how they can best achieve their aims, the principles of development can be readily applied’ (Bangkok Post, 15th June 2006: 12).

During this celebration, a number of interesting issues were raised. Expatriates who lived in the lower Sukhumvit Road area wrote to the Bangkok Post’s Postbag under the heading of: ‘Foreign dignitaries should visit more often,’ saying that, ‘as a long term resident of the lower Sukhumvit area, I must say how great it has been over the past few days not having to fight my way through all the illegal street vendors. No more being forced into the road to walk around footpaths and restaurant clutter. Even the grease from all the cooking is starting to wear off the footpath, but sadly the poor sewer rats must be starving’ (Bangkok Post, 12th June 2006: 9). Another wrote to the Postbag, titled: ‘Miss them on Monday,’ saying, ‘the street vendors play a large part in making Bangkok the wonderful city that it is. Many of these people are working long, hard hours to support their families. If you are so compassionless and inconvenienced by their presence, then perhaps you should move from lower Sukhumvit area back to where you came from’ (Bangkok Post, 14th June 2006: 13). And yet another replied, ‘Those of us who live here will be the first to stick up for the vendor’s rights. We, too, are proud to live here and want to make the city better, safer place for everyone’ (Bangkok Post, 16th June 2006: 11).

One looks where to find confirmation on what ex-patriots find appropriate conduct and what conduct would satisfy both Thais and visitors on a variety of issues. For now there seems no answer or suggestion on how to manage and safeguard these districts for sustainable tourism based around the street vendors and pedestrians when taking into account all aspects of safety and the well being of the community.

The story of Mahajanaka, a literary vision by His Majesty King Bhumipol Adulayadej and finished by Prawase Wasi, noted that 'this is truly a society driven by greed, anger and ignorance, a society in crisis. This reflects both the present Thai society and the global one'. He continues 'when people struggle only for economic gain, the society and the environment are destroyed' (Bangkok Post, 9th July 2006, special edition).

The tale of Prince Mahajanaka Swimming in the Ocean: When the ship that Prince Mahajanaka floundered in a storm, the prince filled his stomach with a mixture of butter and sugar, wrapped himself in an oil soaked cloth and leapt into the sea. Although he couldn't see the shore, he swam for seven days until the goddess Mani Mekhala rescued him. The story directs one to be diligent, to persevere and to learn with wisdom and not merely 'vija' (traditional learning) such as mathematics, geography or history. But with 'vijja' (liberation from greed, anger and ignorance) – there will be a lessening of selfishness and increasing concern for others, (Bangkok Post, 9th July 2006: 2). This literary subject becomes an important part of Thai cultural heritage for the insight it gives one in our modern, capitalist society. Thais must carry on with their religious rituals, with diligence and complete freedom from 'kilesa' (impurities), as frequently demonstrated by Buddadasa Bhikku. It is certain that parallels can be found in literary writings, philosophical ethics, present royal practices, and in the recognized institutions that closely adhere to national religious practices.

Buddhist and Asian views

Buddhism is not so much a religion as a philosophical ideal. The practice of Buddhist philosophy is a process of cultural tradition in its various forms, according to each denomination. One believes that Buddhism keeps Thais on the middle path and non-aggressive. The middle path is meant to contemplate ideas and criticisms and allow subjectivity to guide one's appropriate choice of actions. Yet the middle path does not mean that one can hide from the world, but that one must scrutinize matters rationally and select what is proper and has the greater legitimacy. Today, globalization may have moved Thais away from this middle path. Nevertheless, the move towards modernity and technology presents old and new forms of perspective which impact upon their demeanor and manipulate the characteristic behavior of Thais. Up to the present day, the Thai view of self has grown in light of, for example, the Thai smile and the wai, an act of respect by pressing the palms of one's hands together near the upper body or face when greeting or paying regard to another person. Thais believe the nature of being free is embedded in the deepest sense of the Thai psyche, and being a free entrepreneur has been a behavior adopted by those aspiring to reach the dream of globalization. They hope, dream and yearn

to be free, and so the Thai views of cultural heritage can only be understood from a deeply engrained knowledge of their society or community. This knowledge-based society needs to interpret its history and cultural heritage clearly for full understanding. Regarding Thai traditional values and this concept of a knowledge-based society, Prawase Wasi writes that 'the roots of Thai society are grounded in a knowledge-based culture. In Thailand where power reigns supreme, we do not have a knowledge-based society' (Chittasobhon, 2003: 409). Thai cultural behavior is derived from the practice and process of religious observances and influences the Thai way of seeing the world.

Throughout the year Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit represent forms of heritage and cultural tradition based on both daily incidents and moveable and non-moveable holidays, i.e. Maka-Buja, the moveable full moon holiday in late February or early March and Songkran, a non-moveable holiday, 13th to 15th April and Loy-Kratong, on moveable holidays, dependent on the full moon in late November or early December, (Gerson 1996).

A sign in front of the Benjasiri Park gate in the middle of May, 2006, advertised a convention honoring the well-known Buddhist monk, Buddadasa (1906-1993), who was ordained when he was twenty-three years old and remained at his temple in Chumporn province at Wat Suan Mok (Mok Garden Temple) in Lung Suan District until his death in 1993. This year, 2006, marked the 100th anniversary of his birth on 27th May (Nantasam Seesalab, Rector World Buddhist University; 2006: 19). This convention was held on Sunday 21st May, was international in make-up and attracted people from all walks of life. It was the first time the author saw so many tourists and expatriates who were interested in Buddhism, in Buddadasa and his philosophy. The introduction by Apichai Puntasen described Buddadasa's Dhammic-Socialism and Buddhist Economics beliefs (Tavivat Puntarigvivat writes: 'Dhammic' derives from Dhamma meaning words of Lord Buddha and Dhammic Socialism is a socialism of Dhamma practices [Seesalab 2006: 21]). Buddadasa claimed that 'Buddhist economics can offer the solution to approaching a state of peace and tranquility, but one must kill one's self, selfishness, and craving. The condition of a clean mind can be generated by following the five 'sila' (precepts) of Buddhism which will calm the mind or consciousness through behavior and meditation. A clear mind will generate panna or an intellect of peacefulness and calm. The core value of Buddhism with regard to economics is in total opposition to that of capitalism, as Buddhism stresses compassion instead of competition and stresses selflessness instead of self-interest. Under this set of core values, the mode of production in Buddhist economics is not capital, but panna. 'Buddhist economics advocates moderate consumption, which leads to the effective maintenance of the human faculty and mind' (Puntasen 21st May 2006, speech introduction). Thais understand the teachings and meanings of Buddhism and acknowledge and understand a sense of compassion and tranquility. But the milieu of everyday life of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit is actually full of the acoutrements of modernity, technology and consumption under globalization. Therefore, the religion of the majority displays a Thai heritage that is ambivalent toward capitalism. The ambivalence is between heritage and consumption.

The importance that Buddhism places on selflessness is evident in Tao philosophy, brought forward more than 2500 years ago (Ball, 2004: 101), and practiced by Lao Tse (604 BC), an ancient Chinese poet, philosopher and a keen observer of people and the natural world (Ball, 2004: 19). During the Pre-Qin period (770-221 BC), the Hundred Schools of Thought put Tao into a central position and defined its significance. The original meaning of Tao, or The Way, a path or a road (analogously Rama I, Phleonchit, Sukhumvit Roads) on which people and vehicles could come and go). *Jito*, by Shirakawa Shizuka, a world renowned expert on Kanji states the Chinese character for 'Way,' found on bronze ware, consisted of carrying a neck. Therefore, some argue that its original meaning is not only a way, but also instruction to go and carry a human neck, that is, a human head. A road was a dangerous place, because anyone going on a road had a curse placed upon them, and inevitably met with misfortune. The street could lead to a foreign country, or the gate at the boundary where one could make contact with the outside world and malicious spirits, so rites to exorcize spirits were rigidly upheld (Nakagawa, 2003: 12-13). *Jito* states: 'Because the road opened in such a way, it was a place where you can feel relieved and at peace, giving character over to human actions, morals, reasons, techniques, and celebrating only one's being as the source of all existence.' The word 'Way' started from meaning a rite to exorcize, to a road, and finally became the practice of sublimation, where traveling upon it offered a most profound world' (*Jito*: 656 cited in Nakagawa, 2003: 13).

Philosophical Taoism, before overlaid by magical and religious aspects, was very clear on the principle of *wu wei*, non-action or emptiness. This does not mean one must become passive and fatalistic but rather it means becoming more involved in the wider issues of the spiritual plane. The ideal person or perfect man operating in *wu wei* will act in three different ways, sometimes in only one but more often in all three. These are:

Effortlessness
 Responsiveness
 Unobtrusiveness

(Ball, 2004: 179)

In Buddhadasa's philosophy for spiritual learning and meditation, the insight to learning has never occurred in any physical form other than one's ability to understand and to put into practice. His Dhamma therefore unites Thai society enabling people to live their lives accordingly, even in the present day where a widely mixed and globally conscious community stands shoulder to shoulder.

In regard to the triad of nation, religion and king and Sukhumvit Road, it is appropriate to review what the triad presents. The nation itself is the function of social groups, the economy and political representatives and is manifested here in such institutions Siam Society, the Police Headquarters, and District Officers. Religion is represented by wats and religious organizations such as HWFB, Christian churches, mosques etc, while the King has the royal palace and images of the monarchy. In regard to the commonplace of everyday life, there will be better understanding about heritage transaction emerging in the discussion section of Chapter 6.

Conclusion

Chapter 4 has been concerned with the intellectual representation and interpretation of Sukhumvit, offering views from both East and West. However, trying to make sense of an Eastern urban realm that does not appear to conform to a comfortable Western stereotype of urban space is a problem that may never be satisfactorily resolved. There is a unilateral perception in critical dialogue from the West towards the East that is never reciprocated against the West, as Thai scholars do not critically examine the West (see King *et al*, Eds, 2003, cited in King 2005: 94). In this chapter, the study area is held up especially to the (Western) theories of Lefebvre and Braudel in the search for insights and understanding into how spaces are adapted and used over time by a local population. However, deeper Thai knowledge exists, most notably in the form of the ever-evolving discourse of Buddhist scholarship. Both Western and Thai insights considered as intellectual interpretations or conceptual layers on to Thai space, offer an opportunity to explore Thai hidden heritage.

มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร สงวนลิขสิทธิ์

Chapter 5

Sukhumvit as a Field of Discourse

As Sukhumvit is a muddle of diverse spaces and histories and, as argued above, of diverse layers of reality, it will inevitably evince a diversity of views. The present chapter turns to this next 'level' of diversity. But now the process (layering) is not historical, across time, but across conceptions and 'world views.' The issue of diversity or the fragmentation that characterizes any understanding of space, the environment or heritage in an urban setting, is, as we will see, an ongoing 'process.' Here the essence of all heritage lies in the processes of everyday life, at all levels of society. Though it may seem to confuse the triad of nation, religion and king in that certain elements of heritage are ingrained, such as the heritage of celebration and festival, the process of this living heritage of everyday life is the outcome of the passage of historical time in the context of that fundamental triad. In this manner, the theories Lefebvre of and Braudel are joined.

Views will be sought from some of those who are responsible for urban development and social well being more widely such as architects, social workers and with university professors knowledgeable in the field to guide the investigations. Individuals were also selected from the business world who can inform about commerce as well as individuals associated with tourism, such as hotel managers. In addition, interviews, articles and editorials from newspapers, magazines and the internet have been used as secondary sources. These various views can also prove helpful in striving for a broad data base of information to tie it in with the method and process of passing time in social and historical terms.

The accounts that follow will include data on why the interviewee was selected, the time of the interview and participation and what was asked. Also outlined are other activities the researcher took part in, including meetings attended, conferences, a listing of direct field observations, and where the author carried out his interviews. The question is: 'why does one particular aspect of a culture arise and then persist?' (Carter, 2004: 94). The question is not a simple one: One has to scrutinize various aspects and note how they might relate to the central being of a society, to its economy and on the political movements and decisions that are reflected in the area.

The following is qualitative in method (Maxwell, 1996: 65-6) and is based on four main components. They are:

1. The importance of a positive attitude and relationship with what is being studied. This is an important attitude as it will affect the value and validity of the research findings and the conclusion.

2. Sampling: the times and cycle of times, settings, and the individuals the author selects for participation, for observation, and for interviewing, along with other sources of information the author decides to use.
3. Data collecting: how information is gathered and used.
4. Data analysis: what is done with this information in order to make sense of it.

The outlines therefore are a catalogue of sites within the three districts and venues of activities, as well as of the people of various professions including architects, university lecturers, business people and government officers. In addition, the views were sought of the general managers in the three districts of the study area. These districts are:

- **District of Pratumwan:** Mr. Issarameth Kachanukul, district manager. The interview took place at the district office on 25th June 2004, between 9.15 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. During the interview, the author asked Mr Kachanukul what were the processes of heritage production and activities in the Pratumwan District, and what were the activities that supported it. The author asked: What do you do to support the community? His answer seemed to focus on the area of general services and communicating with the constituents. At this point the author found the relationship between bureaucratic officers and the people of the community in Pratumwan District an ongoing process, where emphasis on good communication was paramount. However, questions arose when Mr Kachanukul explained that activities were set up for various groups of local people, yet there was no understanding or communication that revealed the process of heritage production. Little was done other than arranging activities such as Songkran and Loy Kratong, or offering necessary support for some businesses that supported the community. Noting this absence of communication, the author was informed that one of the current and best supported strategies is to take measures to thoroughly understand what the community truly wants and needs? Everyone can see that the district is situated in a densely populated area where local people were employed in the commercial sector and, per capita, have a higher annual income base than the other two districts and that most of the clients who frequented local businesses were not residents of the district, but workers and tourists who resided outside the district.
- **District of Khlong Toei:** Mr. Chaithawat Usamran, district manger. The interview took place at the district office on 21st February 2005, between 10.45 a.m. and 11.45 a.m. The Khlong Toei District, in the late 1980s, connected Asoke, continued along Ratchadapisek Road and down through Rama IV Road to the Khlong Toei Port on the Chao Phraya River. One can argue that the development of sois 20, 22, and 26 also helped Khlong Toie District connect Rama IV Road to Sukhumvit Road. An ongoing issue is Ratchadapisek Road, which is heavily used and causes huge traffic jams during the rush hour. In addition, the district manager has the responsibility of taking care of the many park projects south of Sukhumvit Road, such as Benjasiri and Benjakitti Parks, a seemingly endless task linked to the social

welfare of the community. Mr. Chaithawat believes that because Sukhumvit Road is famous and critical to tourism, it is under close scrutiny and, because of this, he is vitally aware that he is responsible for all phases of development from signage to sidewalks, and even sculptures, one notable site being at the Asoke and Sukhumvit intersection (see picture 31). One sign in front of the Exchange Tower on Sukhumvit informs the passerby of how Sukhumvit was inaugurated in 1950. The author notes that community groups in Khlong Toei were heavily dependant on district services due to drug issues and unemployment in the area. Also noting traffic as an ongoing problem in this district, the author attended a community protest meeting held against a newly proposed traffic route near Khlong Paisingto and Ratchadapisek Road held at the District Headquarter on 24th February 2005. Yet, in light of the various problems the communities face, the demonstrations show the people are able to actively express their views, a right in a democratic society, and are willing to work together in search of equitable solutions.

- **District of Wattana:** Mr Surakiet Limchareon, district manager. The interview took place at the district office on 2nd March 2005, between 10.15 a.m. and 11.00 a.m. The author asked questions on various aspects regarding the district. Two of these questions were: ‘What are your goals for the Wattana District?’ and ‘What is your vision and what are your plans concerning the management strategy for this district?’ Mr Surakiet explained that he wanted to promote Wattana as an internationally recognized district and appears satisfied with the progress that had been made during his administration. Even though progress is being made, much work lies ahead in promoting the Nana and Asoke areas as the flagships of his district. A community meeting attended on 3rd of March 2005 at the District Headquarters between 1.00 p.m. and 2.30 p.m also forms part of this study. Here, it was voiced that Mr. Surakiet has been very successful in his dealing with different groups and various subjects within the community. In early 2006, Mr. Surakiet was transferred to Pratumwan District and a new set of challenges. It was observed that the district had a diverse population, pointing out the number of mosques along Khlong San Saeb, as well as numerous Christian churches and Buddhist temples. The area also has a number of higher income residences, generally those at the southern end of the Khlong Toei District, south of Rama IV Road.

General Participations

The following dialogues are intended to bring some critical attention to cultural heritage. Perceptions and arguments will be discussed and analyzed here and in the following chapter.

The Siam Society seminars

Siam Society is one of premier institutions offering insights and access to Thai cultural heritage. One of the programs attended was the Siam Society's centennial seminar series, "100 Years of the Siam Society: Creating Knowledge and Friendship in Thai Society" held on 18th September 2004. Another conference on "Art, Culture and History" was organized by Prof. Sumet Jumsai na Ayudhya and Chatvichai Promadhaattavedi on Saturday (full day) and Sunday (half day). The seminars were conducted in English and Thai. Comments about each of the seminars follow:

18th September 2004:

Title 'Shaking Up History and A New Perspective.' Subtitled 'Discussing politics, administration and culture in present history,' the talk also emphasized a strong inter-relational link between 'art culture and history.' The seminar began at 9.30 a.m.

- Bannasopit Mekvichai, Bangkok's Deputy Governor, many times stated that the culture of everyday life seems to be lifeless and invisible. We have to live with it in our everyday life as if it were part of our natural being; we have to realize that it is a part of ourselves, before it can grow and developed: in other words, we must *use* culture to become *comfortable* with culture. Therefore the question is how do we keep good culture alive and become comfortable with it? How can we understand it and make it part of our natural feelings? Mr Bannasopit suggests the government's policy should not emphasize tourism if they wish to preserve Thai culture. Instead, he suggests, government policy should lead the community to practice and cherish its culture, and tourism would become the by-product.

The following discussion proposed a way of creating a continuous culture from the past to the present day, and from the abstract to the concrete. This could be achieved by preserving the value of Thai culture and using it in everyday life. As Mr Bannasopit stated, 'Culture is something that stays with us and moves along with us. Therefore it should be adapted from being conserved to being contemporary to fit in with present-day life, making it more concrete' (Jumsai, 2004b: 3).

The move toward a concrete culture is reflected in the government's policy of establishing the Ministry of Culture, a crucial step toward preserving culture and turning it into something that fits in with a modern Thai society. Many scholars have voiced their opinions and criticized the work of the Ministry of Culture arguing that its principal policy *must* put

culture to the fore, not simply by promoting tourism with culture tagging along (Memo on 18th September 2004, by the author).

- Yongthanis Phimolsathian reinforced this view, arguing that the value of Thai cultural heritage must be demonstrated by showing the continuity of our glorious past to the exciting and progressive present. Mr. Yongthanis felt that the government ought to allow the people to take part in conserving cultural heritage in areas where people share in or own the cultural heritage.
- Somchart Chuengsiriarak asked for the conservation of ancient monuments to be placed under the jurisdiction of the Fine Arts Department. Mr. Somchart made an interesting comment on the management problems faced by the Fine Arts Department, in which it is noted that while individuals understand how conservation should be done, the system that it operates under has different goals and agendas from its policy document. Currently they focus on how ancient monuments communicate with us, a limited and limiting view. In addition, and with regard to conservation of a townscape such as Rattanakosin, today's busy and impersonal space is the result of government placing more importance on tourism than on conserving the culture of the local community. This is akin to 'using an eraser to wipe out our history and culture,' that is, such action takes precedence in opening up an area and its buildings and landscape for tourism, while showing little regard for the community and the people who live there (Jumsai, 2004b: 3).
- Pensuk Chucksujinda, a former senator from the northeastern province of Sakonakorn, is strong in her beliefs against globalization. She has suggested that the Ministry of Culture is an essential organization because, properly promoted, Thailand can survive on its culture heritage, noting its uniqueness compared with other cultures. She also proposed that the current tourism policy is purely focusing on the economic benefits and should be superseded by a conservation policy; however, one policy need not impede the other – tourism and cultural conservation *can* and *should* co-exist, not compete. She believes that culture in its initial phase is imparted by the family and uses the example of young northeastern dancers who most often respond with 'My mother,' when asked who teaches them 'esan' (northeastern) style dancing. Another pillar central to Thai society is religion. Thais and neighboring Laos carried on the tradition of 'bonk-fai' (bamboo rockets) at the religious celebration of 'bong-fai, phraya-nak' (serpent), a beautiful ceremony of this area, held at the full moon of late September. Here is a shared tradition, also worthy of conservation, in that it shows Thailand's connectedness with its neighbors.
- While very few artists attended the seminar, those that did strongly stressed the current problems facing the Thai cultural and historic museums in that the museums do not encourage young people to return by offering attractive cultural options for students to learn from and enjoy. The most critical issue the artists raised related to contemporary life styles and the lives of ordinary

people when viewing traditional and postmodern art and how to facilitate the interpretation of art within local communities.

- Yongtanit Pimonsatien's belief was that conservation and cultural subjects should be the most significant topic in today's society. He stressed the value and understanding of cultural heritage in terms of it being intangible, but crucial in transmitting Thai cultural heritage to future generations. For an example of his ideas on community conservation, he stated that to preserve the old town area of Phuket, the task should begin with policy planning that offers some form of agreement and charter with strict guidelines enforced, all the way to the national and civil trusts, the governmental bodies that oversee such projects.
- Bannasopit Mekvichai concluded that Thais need to learn how the process of conservation works. By learning this process, the people can take a lead in preserving their cultural heritage through appropriate legislation. The post-modern view and attitude in conservation must also be addressed as this may be necessary for the younger generation to become involved in heritage projects, i.e. the modern style of Thai dress may appeal to younger groups as new trends and styles come into fashion. Another important element that must be addressed is the importance of emphasizing Thailand's cultural diversity. Culturally diverse members of Thailand's historic and modern society have played and continue to play a significant role in Thailand's vibrant society; to deny their part in Thai heritage would be a grave mistake (Memo on 18th September 2004, by the author).

19th September 2004:

The Siam Society Centennial Seminar continued with its series of lectures on "100 Years of the Siam Society." 10.00 a.m. (morning session).

- Morning session: Social critic Sulak Sivalak led the conference by citing the motto of the Siam Society that "knowledge creates friendship," and leads to the creation of academic freedom. Acknowledging another's ideas and theories without bias and without adhering rigidly to one's own theory or idea can bring about a liberal academic pathway. 'Shaking Up the Sediments of History: Clearing away the leftover elements in the Thai historical viewpoint' (Jumsai, 2004b: 2).
- Vasant Sithikhet, an artist, stated that post-modern art always relates to the communities' powerful interrelationship with religion. The story of poor people in everyday life is played out amid a background of labor oppression and suppression. The role of an artist is to communicate those everyday lives that are being marginalized and are a hidden part of society, thereby not allowing the state to be oblivious to it. We, as Thais, claim that we live in an egalitarian society but we also are very aware that this does not truly exist in the contemporary Thai urban environment. Most of us are very aware that opportunities go to elite groups and not to the everyday people who live their

lives in the mundane and everyday world. Perhaps the artist, in depicting everyday life, will have the opportunity through his or her work regardless of artistic style, to bring this inequity out into the open (Memo on 19th September 2004, by the author).

○ *Afternoon session:*

The title of the afternoon plenary address was, ‘Overturning Conventional Values and Making Way for Contemporary Perceptions in Culture and History.’ Subtitle: ‘New Dimensions of Post-Modern Culture - Disconnected or Reconnected’?

- Successful young architect Duangrit Bunnag had an interesting idea on this topic: ‘Look at history and see it as a past, present and future relationship as if we were looking at a tree which is composed of roots, trunk, and leaves; the significance of history can tell us what kind of tree we are’ (Jumsai, 2004b: 4). Mr. Duangrit asserted his views as a member of the younger generation.
- Music impresario Bruce Gaston stated that life and culture depends on how one looks at the world and one’s perception of it. Thai cultural heritage is considered a resistant force and can be viewed as a diver preparing to dive off a diving board. The diving board is cultural heritage itself and *we*, the diver, produce the performance. He continued to speak regarding art in general. ‘For example, representational art is beautiful but most seen here is not of Thai origin or does not illustrate the symbolic identity of Thais. Performing arts and plays should be able to interpret and demonstrate the society of Thai culture to its audience’ (Memo on 19th September 2004, by the author).
- Sumet Jumsai presented a three-page handout saying that ‘overturning conventional values, etc. sounds very exciting! At this point in time, to overturn the age-old beliefs or mainstream thinking is considered fair game’...He continued, ‘in truth, every epoch has had its share of cultural overturning’...This is a historical cyclical process and is inevitable, and the more you deconstruct the more you return to the basics, the same path or starting point (Jumsai, 2004a: 1).
- Professor Sunet Chutithranont also presented the viewpoint that history belongs to the whole population and each human has a right to think and create his or her own history. In a diverse society, history also becomes diverse within a single locality. In reality, history is used as a tool in the national building process, resulting in the creation of a nationalistic history. Seemingly one track, today’s history is created by central government. Later, when people hold differing opinions, they were thought to be wrong because their view does not coincide with the national historical approach. It can be said to be a monopoly of memory process, adhering only to the mainstream historical approach. Panya Wichintharasarn saw that the view of mainstream

history limited the format of Thai art, thereby neglecting the dimension of creating contemporary artistic works, or realizing the importance of blending traditional Thai art into the cultural growth that would lead to the quality of being contemporary (Jumsai, 2004b: 2).

- Sumet Jumsai concluded that cultural heritage can be conserved in a postmodern community, but the accumulation and propagation of memory inevitably depends on the printed media...It is no secret that developed nations compete with one another with museums, art galleries and libraries. As depositories and retrieval stations of human memories, these are given prominence and equipped with state-of-the-art technology at huge financial cost to the nation. But they are more than mere depositories: they are 'fun' places which attract young people and, in terms of architecture, the young are the signatures of the cities which host them (Jumsai, 2004a: 3).

20th November 2004: "Step Beyond Culture":

The seminar was on one of the Siam Society Centennial Seminar Series.

- Mark Tamthai' Philosophy Professor and peace proponent. Tamthai identified the relationship between culture and locality, offering the following thoughts on the topic:
 1. Culture and the step beyond: He suggested that in the 21st century we should promote a diversity of culture, that is to say diversity of human groups. He argues that the isolation of a culture is dangerous as it produces a weaker society where boundaries were unclear. He compared a culture to our home as a place where we come and go as we please. It is this type of relationship we need to pursue with others.
 2. Why do we step beyond culture? Is it temporary or it is permanent?
- Dimension of individualism: Should one close one's eyes and ears and follow culture and morality without personal discernment or critical thought? A discernable pattern has emerged and enables us to step beyond culture, but is it wise?
- Dimension of society: It was argued that democracy arises within the diversification of culture and not in its polarization. The writing of a Constitution has to be able to communicate with the population at large and cannot be judged by a referendum that one merely gives yes/no answers to. Creating a good relationship amongst its citizens at home and globally must be the essential goal of a good government, and is the essential goal of socialism.

3. How do we overstep culture? How do we go beyond culture? There seem to be two components to this:

- Behavior: Within a social context, one can overstep culture in a desensitized system, that is to say a system of protégé and advocacy. The pretext has to be corrected by reflecting on its rationale. Ethics and morality are compulsory and must be considered above all else.
- Culture of language: Often, profound insights that are possible with clear and precise language become muddled and difficult to comprehend. While language can be used in this manner, it is also a vehicle to assert that, as human beings, we are creatures of a morality born of culture, and learned through language. Discursive language can cloud understanding and, unfortunately, can be used in a negative way, creating the conflicts we struggle with in the world today. How, then, can culture be transmitted in a positive vein, or how can gratitude for one's land and heritage be passed on to younger generations? This becomes the critical question and, how best can we achieve this? The answer is there are no easy paths and we must not seek an automatic response to such deep issues, knowing the path to understanding and equality must be discovered through rational argument and debate.
- Kasien Thechapira: Thai sociologist Kasien emphasized the knowledge that one needs the ability to look at and understand a variety of views. This knowledge or knowing is the same phenomenon as espoused in the 18th century Age of Enlightenment which stated that morality and politics must never be divorced from one another. Kasien believes that to be independent is to be fair and instructive.
- Ammar Siamwalla: Noted academic Ammar Siamwalla stated the following aspects that are often recognized as the fundamental concepts of life: first, the basic religious idea that man is not God; second, one has to realize that one does not have comprehensive knowledge and never will; third, that taking or choosing sides always involves strategy and high risk; and fourth, one has to be able to take criticism and face disagreement. Ammar gave a final conclusion that in order for one to take sides, one has to be ready to scrutinize results, and one has to be flexible in the face of changing circumstances.

5th March 2005:

The seminar was about “Summary of the Siam Society Centennial Seminar Series”, 9.30a.m.-5.00p.m.

- Morning session: “Philosophy, religion, and ethics” Chulalongkorn philosophy professor, Suwanna Satha-anand, started with the principle and purpose of her views on philosophy. Satha-anand explained that culture is not only in the past but it is in everyday life and it is being practiced on a

daily basis, around the world. She continued by showing a picture of the spirit of Haida Gwaii, a large sculpture of a copper and bronze cast canoe with animated passengers, by Bill Reid from Great Turtle Island near Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The sculpture is approximately nineteen feet in length and was first exhibited in 1985; today it stands in front of the Canadian Embassy in Washington D.C. She continued that the thirteen passengers in the canoe show the diversity and duty of each passenger under the rule of not killing one other. This rule is a metaphor for a society that needs to move towards a destination, but there will always be confrontation and arguments regarding duty, responsibility, jealousy and hate. She stated that by going beyond culture there is the possibility to share and develop hope to conquer fear and guilt. She believes that globalization gives impetus to complex diversity and dynamic cultural differences, underscoring all the more the need to assuage difficulties, appreciate differences and join together in our move towards a common destination. She concluded by recalling how UNESCO offered recognition by drawing awareness to Cultural Diversity, that what we really are in need of is a box to share and not a cage. Satha-anand's views mirror Ammar Siamwalla's belief that objectivity is knowledge and Kasien Techathira's belief that no one culture can claim the achievement of final objective knowledge. All concur: it is universal (Memo on seminar, on 5th March 2005, by the author).

๐ “Good governance and the economy”: Ammar Siamwalla, an economist, thinks that good governance or thamapibun should be one word. He focuses on the meaning of governance as the power of money and continued that recently government and corporations, including state banks, work together like a family business. Private Banks often lend to small minority groups and share holders who cannot, in times of financial crisis, siphon money off in time, and therefore suffer the greater losses. This happened last when banks were lending money without restraint and the financial crises of 1997 hit Southeast Asia. Simple, good governance means that the government should not intervene with the market. One question is ‘would you prefer to be a good citizen and pay tax’? That is, good governance is essential if a country is to thrive. Deunden Nikomborirak, currently a Research Director, Economic Governance, Sectoral Economics Program, Thailand Development Research, claimed that even in the private sector many actions are tampered with by the government. This was seen when gold was underestimated to avoid tax and construction companies were paying up to 30% of the total project budget in bribes to secure the contract. The largest Thai companies siphon off revenue from concessions, especially in the telecommunication sector. Corruption is spreading like a cancer while Thais do not know how to go about imposing social sanctions. Neither do we seem to know how to install good and honest people in positions of authority. In addition one remarkable problem stated by Mr Ammar is that Thais, as individuals, are wise and intelligent, but collectively or as a regulatory body, they are ‘dumb as hell’. This latter statement describes the Thai cultural pattern of client relationships – that is, one on one - while economic ethics, in this situation, often involve larger groups. Ammar is adamant that a good

system of regulation can exist by following rules of good behavior, yet must also be monitored by independent organizations. The fact is that good behavior has to be enforced while ethics themselves should be compulsory. Deunden added that business ethics courses are either out of date or have always been cancelled (Memo on seminar, on 5th March 2005, by the author).

Afternoon session: “Science, technology and environment” Yongyuth Yuthavong, a professor and senior researcher at Thailand's National Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, described the impact, the roots and future of science and technology in Thailand.

- **1960s** the dawn of modern science and universities.
- **1970s** dawn of indigenous, original research period.
- **1980s** beginning of research and development support.
- **1990s** research support.
- **2000s** academic research.

As a scientist, Yuthavong asserts that we *must* alert and mobilize the government to act on environmental problems. He concluded that science and technology have to be in harmony with culture and environment and that, we should not commercialize science and technology.

On 5th June 2006, World Environmental Day, Thailand was placed at number 11 among the seventeen Asian regions and 61 of all one hundred and thirty three APEC countries (Daily Manager, 5th June 2006: 43) (Memo on seminar, on 5th March 2005, by the author).

- “Art, culture and history”: Sumet Jumsai na Ayudhya, Chairman of the Duang Prateep Foundation, began his lecture session by stating that we need history and culture, and emphasized that art is a part of culture and must not be overlooked. In our democratic country, Jumsai stressed that people can learn from historical research and this learning would be good for Thailand, as is a developing country, a country still in the process of nation building. History can be seen as either a constructing or a reconstructing as history is an accumulation of memory and experience. We need cultural diversity because the concept of art & culture is inclusive, not exclusive (Memo on seminar on 5th March 2005, by the author).

23rd February 2007:

Somtow Sucharitkul, artistic director of the Bangkok Opera, spoke at the Siam Society about the nature of culture in Thailand and his personal struggles in the 1970s and over the last five years to bring Thailand's vibrant contemporary culture to the international community's attention. He also spoke about what is different now and what has remained unchanged from when he began his fight for Thailand to be internationally culturally recognized, declaring artistic integrity and artistic freedom are worthy of the fight. In the 1970s, Somtow established himself as a

prominent Southeast Asian avant-garde composer, causing considerable controversy in his native country as artistic director of the Asian Composers Expo '78. He founded the Thai Composers' Association, and is a permanent representative for Thailand to the International Music Council of UNESCO (Siam Society fact sheet). Somtow thinks that:

- Thai society is a 'yum-yai,' a reference to a Thai salad; a combination of various mixtures i.e. Indian, Chinese, Mon, Burmese, Balinese etc. It is a sense of diversified ethnology.
- About his music career, 'Music is about what you can do; it is precision for a creative mind and the power of the Bangkok Opera Company is not what you see, but based on what you hear.'
- Thai customs have changed over time. One has to have more than one viewpoint. If culture is a tree, then the tradition may be its roots and therefore the fruit that it produces may be different from time to time. With that in mind no one wants to harm their own roots.
- The future has already arrived: it is here. In his Bangkok Opera Company performance on 16 to 18 November 2006, he included the combination of Thai, Indian and Balinese dance and musical forms to reflect the combination of Thailand's eclectic culture. The controversy that it caused was about killing Thosakan and other assaults on culture. Somtow is still haunted by the ghosts of the 1970s.
- Somtow has yet to begin his fight for the glory of the interpretation of Thai cultural heritage as a way of expressing his professional viewpoint. At this time and in this space, he is quite uncertain about the future of the contemporary music industry in Thailand. (Memo on 23rd February 2007 by the author)

Other participations

1st-2nd July 2004:

The international conference 'Competitiveness: Challenges and Opportunities for Asian Countries' was held on 1st and 2nd July 2004 at the Intercontinental Hotel Bangkok on Phleonchit Road. This prestigious event was hosted by the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), a major think tank of the country. The decision to choose this venue for the conference was not an accident as the organizers wished to impress the delegates with the luxurious surroundings the hotel had to offer in this most globalized and capitalistic of cities. Guest speakers from around the world emphasized the international atmosphere. One prominent speaker, Richard N. Cooper, Maurits C. Boas Professor of International Economics at Harvard University, stated that 'the United States is a good place to do business; with excellent growth prospects, although modest in comparison with some

emerging markets, still excellent when compared to the other rich nations. Its productivity is high and growing at an excellent rate. And that is what national competitiveness is all about' (Cooper, 2004: 12). The Thai government hosted this conference to promote Thailand's open-door policy for business investment and the venue of Phleonchit as an internationally is a recognizable site. However, there was something missing from the event. The convention was not concerned with ethics or the moral aspects as it should have been. Previous Thai heritage was confirmed by former Finance Minister Phraya Suriyanuwat in his writing 'sapphasat' (all profound knowledges). His argument was that in an economy with a relative abundance of labor and where ownership of capital is concentrated in a numerically small group of privileged people, competitive markets will direct the income from productive activity overwhelmingly towards the owners of capital, leaving labor impoverished. Where the market power of labor and capital is severely unequal, unregulated markets result in the exploitation of the former by the latter (Brown cited in Turton, 1991: 87). It could be argued that in being the host of the event and in that locality, there should be a message of Thais' ethical awareness delivered to global players in such a convention.

In March of 2007, Standard & Poor's recommended that, in the medium term, governments, including Thailand, should ease constraints on monetary flexibility by introducing greater domestic competition in the non-trade sector, liberalizing business regulations and promoting deeper domestic capital markets, leading us back to the same question: How to improve the competitiveness of the country as a whole (The Nation 16th March 2007: 10A). Often times one sees that Thailand, Bangkok, Sukhumvit go around in a circle and then return to the starting point. For Thai people, it is an educative process, and iterative.

4th August 2005:

Appreciation of Diversity: 'The Imagination of Thai,' a program offered by Mahidol University. The venue was the Royal City Avenue Hotel, Bangkok (west of the Chao Phraya River).

- Author and activist, Prawet Wasi spoke with reference to the major issue, being that the greatest assets we have are neither capital nor money. The most beneficial relationships we can foster are between the environment and our culture. Prawet confirms that a mono-culture in a civilization is a danger to all.
 1. The recent political and economic turmoil in Thailand is related to the shrewd and powerful wealthy who are deeply embedded in Thai society and who are deeply involved in the control of the country.
 2. The positive thrust of capitalism in an eclectic culture is realized when it is established in a climate of multiculturalism, where ideas collide and diversification can flourish. One can see this collision being created in an environment where diversification exists, an important component in Thai society.

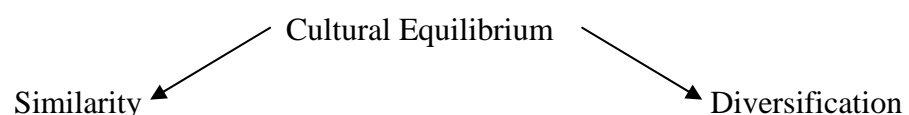
- Nidhi Eoseewong: Famed Thai historian, Nidhi Eoseewong stated that the most important aspect of diversity is cultural diversity, for one must have new choices. The more choices we have, the more diversity there is. There will also be changes and this is inevitable. Changes occur periodically and the importance of facing these new choices and changes arises when one is forced to choose a new society or social structure that will be for the betterment of Thai society.
- Nidhi showed us two sides to this argument:
 1. What is the Nation?
 2. The real development is the choice of others over us.

Conclusion:

- A. There is the banality of Nation in which a Nation is the banality of everyday life. The key word is diversification.
- B. Development is not uniformity. For example, some varieties of rice have been developed that are immune to certain diseases or are tolerant of flooding. Therefore, Thai people do not all have to conform to one model. They have their own unique culture and should not be afraid to express it proudly.

- Sutthiwong Phongphaibun is a noted scholar on the history and culture of southern Thailand (and the late incident in the three provinces) who has published numerous books on ways to overcome impoverishment:
 1. Educational reform: a strong and equitable system of education is essential. The government must also support a system of checks and balances, specifically aimed at guarding against impoverishment.
 2. Revolution of culture: There have to be policies for all communities with constructive discussion regarding what is commonplace and what is diversification and how a mixing of ideas is beneficial for growth.

Sutthiwong's conclusion included the brief diagram below, illustrating how culture moves separately in opposite directions:



That is a simple visual aid that represents a cultural dilemma whereby communities can be pulled apart and move away from one another if there is the

lack of a strong intellectual and knowledge based society, hence the critical need for an educated society.

- Amara Phongsapit: Amara stated that the most important issue is the right to have a cultural heritage. The problem is that we need to come to define our identity, which is the combination of ethnology and culture. We have to look into language, religion, history and archaeology. That is to say that there are variables to identity. Amara declared, 'I am not very fond of the word 'Thai-ness' at all,' (also see 'kanraksa khwampenthai' or Thai-ness, section 'understanding of identity' in chapter 4) (Reynolds, 1987: 22). Amara believes we have to learn to live together and to be open to learning about new identities with a sense of acceptance, and that we must live together as Thais.
- Mark Tamthai: His imagination is to build new perceptions and not simply to spend his time searching for them or relying on earlier perceptions based upon nation, religion and king. Whereas Nation identifies the diversity of citizens, Religion works in the environment around us and teaches us to be less selfish while the King is the center of all religion and engenders an unselfish demeanor.
- Akin Rabibhadana: American educated anthropologist Akin Rabibhadana stated that one new perception is that we have to be ourselves and to do so we must totally withdraw from Western ideological influence. Western ideological insights are those that were embedded in Thai society by those educated abroad ever since the 1900s. The new perceptions apply to the education of younger generations. These new generations have to be committed to participation in activities and society. The keystone should be to search for one's own identity and identify what is good and what is bad and continue in the practice of engaging with the community at large.
- Jiraporn Bunnak: We have to look at ourselves as a small country and we must not compare ourselves to a big country. We have to realize the extent of our own resources and capacity, our strength is in the diversity of culture and is essential for Thai society. However, the power of Sukhumvit is in its diversity, in the layers of "otherness" that it forces over the top of Thai culture.
- Wonchai Tan: Name is the most important issue. Siam was the name that the other nations called us. The name 'Thai' is born from a feeling of nationalism and has been the cause of great animosity and conflict within our culturally diverse society. The strength of solidarity comes from cultural diversity, i.e. cultural diversity creates a fair market for competition and allows the country to produce cheaper products. It creates various brandings which, in being polarized, become the destruction of monopolies.

17th October 2006:

The National Museum Volunteers (NMVs') held a conference, with an introductory lecture series, at Goethe Institute Bangkok 18/1 soi Goethe, Sathorn 1, Bangkok. The lecture was in the morning from 8.30 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. It is impossible to avoid the subject of cosmology in the study of Thai heritage; cosmology is a fundamental belief and therefore can only shed more light on to the process of discovering Thai heritage. The subject of Thai Cosmology refers to the 'Traibhum Phra Ruang' where 'Tribhumikatha' is the cosmology written in 1345 by Phraya Lithai, the fifth king of the House of Phra Ruang and of Sukhothai (1239-1377)... 'The nation's first and finest piece of research dissertation was written.' The book is a treatise on cosmology, ethics, biology, and the Buddhist faith, as known and understood in the Thai culture during the 14th century (NMV Introductory Lecture Series, p: 1). The 'Tribhumikatha is the story of the three planes of existence. The subject is also part of the older stone inscription of 'Traibhum Phra Ruang'. The presentation was delivered by Chakrarot Chitrabongs, former president of Siam Society (2005-2006).

Interviews

Academic bodies

23rd July 2006:

Interview with Udomsri Buranasiri, former professor at Chulalongkorn University, at his residence 16 Sukhumvit soi 12 in the middle of lower Sukhumvit Road, observing the residence is an old style bungalow of approximately 77 sq. meters evoking a kind of nostalgia. The house sits by a pond where lotus grows vigorously due to the high water-table (see picture 1). The layers of soil and the high water-table in a pond which has no outlet, offers us a glimpse of the same environment described earlier as remembered from childhood. He built and lived in a two storey-home in 1957 and was the first prize winner for a home and garden contest for two consecutive years in 1960 and 1961 (Buranasiri, 2004: 14).

- One of the questions was about the layers of change in the case study area. He responded with: 'let me start with my input in this venue. I had designed and built many houses throughout Phleonchit and Sukhumvit areas. To mention a few, I designed and built the homes of M.L. Pee Malakul in Sukhumvit soi 63 in 1953, M.C. Rangsiyakul Arpakorn in Sukhumvit soi 22, M.C. Castawat Chakkapun in Sukhumvit soi 49 and M.C. Sureeprapa Krisadakorn in Sukhumvit soi 39 in 1955'. The interesting designs that were emerging at that time showed that the Phleonchit and Sukhumvit communities were in the good hands of architects and designers, primarily graduates of Chulalongkorn. They were interested in designing and creating a modern environment that was wholly innovative in Thailand. Most single

story and two-storey homes were scattered throughout the sois of Phleonchit and Sukhumvit and indicated a new Thai way of life.

- Regarding Thai cultural heritage and identity, Udomsri responded that the life style and practice of heritage in giving alms has changed since the early 1960s. Udomsri said, ‘we drove along Sukhumvit early in the morning and stopped when we approached monks who wandered by for alms at 6 or 7 a.m. any morning’. Today I can go to the intersection of Sukhumvit and Asoke Road before 7 a.m. and present alms to monks as well. Also the physical forms of Thai heritage were destroyed firstly by the development of land filled road expansions (when the khlongs slowly disappeared), simultaneously with the appearance of the United States troops on R&R who introduced a new forms of consumption and globalization either by introducing an insight to another culture or spending large sums of money in the commercial plazas along Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads. First came the shop-houses, then bigger shops, followed by the small plazas such as Maneeya Plaza, Gaysorn Plaza, Asoke Market (Asoke market catered for a Thai style of consumption), theaters and roadside restaurants near soi 39 where many Thais enjoyed a late night supper at the weekend. During this period of time, the Thai government had an excellent relationship with the United States.

- Udomsri Buranasiri added ‘Khlong Paisingto used to run along Rama IV Road and Henry Dunant Road to meet Khlong Orachon about 300 meters before it turned into Chulalongkorn University, at the front of the Architectural Department, and met Khlong Phrayathai’. Khlong Bangkapi was on the south side of Sukhumvit Road, originally called Khlong San Saeb. It ran parallel to Sukhumvit from Rama I Road and traveled eastward to meet Khlong San Saeb in Phraakanong District. Khun Chittra, the mother of Udomsri, bought her property when she was traveling on Khlong Bangkapi in 1930s. She discovered the property was for sale for six-salunk per square wah, or roughly one U.S. cent (penny) per square meter.

28th July 2006:

Interview with Pipat Umawongsakul, an administrative officer, Level 6, of Pratumwan District, the officer was in dark blue uniform, and is the head grounds supervisors at Ratchaprasong Intersection. The questions the author posed were about the incident regarding the desecration of the Erawan Shrine and the murder of the man involved on 22nd March 2006.

- He spoke freely of the incident on 22nd March 2006 saying ‘it was a bad accident’. When the desecrator of the Erawan Shrine tried to jump across the metal fence his pants caught on the iron spike of the fence, causing him to hit his head on the concrete sidewalk, he tried to get up and continue eastward on Phleonchit Road. However, in the next twenty meters he met a gang of trash collectors who hit him a number of times. He was pronounced dead when the police arrived and was found with a hammer near his hand. It could

indeed be said that the spirit of the Erawan Shrine did have an effect on the desecrator, almost as if there were a 'karma' backlash.

- Pipat continues, 'The width of the sidewalk at the Erawan Shrine is about four meters and runs for a distance of forty-six meters, half of which is allocated for garland vendor stalls. There is space allocated for twenty-five stalls but they rarely manage to have more than fifteen stalls at any one time, and vendors democratically take turns, by means of a monthly lottery, for the best location'. One of the leaders of these stall vendors is Jeh Noy, who oversees trading conduct. This particular street vendor also acts as a role model for the other vendors in the district. Jeh is a second generation street vendor and her family had occupied this space since 1957.

9th August 2006:

Interview with Suoanee Watanavichang, member and secretary of the Than Tao Mahaprom Foundation, Erawan Hotel, it was a surprised visit.

- As of 31st December 2005, the Foundation donated a total of 739,681,817.99Baht to medical health charities (Than Tao Mahaprom Foundation, 2005: 58).

9th August 2006:

In meeting with flower sellers, a short interview held at midday on the sidewalk: Customers are 90% Asian with a few mixed in from other nations.

10th August 2006:

Interview with Srislang Sooksomstarn managing director and secretary, the views were sought about the Erawan Shrine Foundation in the past and today.

- There was a tramway running on Ratchadamri Road from Prathunam Bridge to Silom Road, on to inner Rattanakosin Island, and along the west side of Ratchadamri Road; it was discontinued in the early 1960s. Today urban growth brings a modern lifestyle and new technologies, including the BTS which is good for this area. The old khlongs have long since disappeared along with the fruit plantations that were once commonplace throughout the Phleonchit and Ratchadamri areas. In the 1960s, only the Erawan Hotel, the commercial Gaysorn Plaza, the Police Hospital and few shop-houses were to be found at the four corners of this intersection.
- In 1988, the Ministry of Finance and a private partnership rebuilt the Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel on the Crown Property site. At the same time the foundation was formed.
- This Erawan Shrine is propitious and famous for bringing happiness and wealth to all who visit it and over 90% of visitors come from the Asian

region and most worshipers come from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. About 10% of the visitors are Thai people.

- God is universal but Thais are strongly opposed to the commercial reproduction of the Brahma.
- Most Thais are Thai Buddhist, with Brahma Buddhism a strong subsidiary to Thai Buddhism (Nakagawa, 2003: 1).

10th August 2006:

Interview with Sawitri Pisonpong, a history instructor at Srinakharinwirot University, Sukhumvit soi 23, comments were sought on Sukhumvit Road, Thai identity and his understanding of words such as 'krengchai' (caring and considerate) and 'kee songsan' (combination of sympathy and pity).

- There have been many condominiums built in the area over the past years. Sukhumvit may have more high-end residential units than other area in Bangkok.
- One of the most insidious influences in the area is soi Cowboy. Only a decade ago, neighborhood residents didn't worry much for their younger children. Now they may wander through the soi to get to the BTS or MRT and they may be experienced an environment which may not be suitable for young children. Sadly there is not much one can do about it.
- The University does not have ongoing projects in the neighborhood so far. Hence it does not yet evidence that Thai value of sympathy to others that we call 'kee songsan'.
- 'Kee songsan' is stronger and has a deeper sense than 'krengchai'. It is something that is a fundamental principal of Buddhism. A Buddhist concept of Brahma vihara is the embodiment of kindness, mercy, goodwill and equanimity. So it encompasses the compassion of krengchai where the obligation of what to do or not to do is for the benefit or for the sake of others. 'Kee songsan' stresses carefulness, and as it is said Thais go out of our way to avoid giving offence. However, one may come to the conclusion that most of us are light hearted. A significant Thai cultural value is that we are tolerant and able to adapt ourselves to most conditions, and different situations. This sense of 'kee songsan' is a trademark of Thai (Cambodian and Laotian) nationalities, whereas the rest of the people of the Asian region do not exhibit quite the same identity.

21st August 2006:

Interview with Professor Kawee Worrakawin, assistant professor and Vice President for Special Affairs at Srinakharinwirot University, Sukhumvit soi 23,

views were sought on Sukhumvit Road generally and on cultural vulnerability on Sukhumvit Road.

- In the recent past we discovered that the name Asoke Road came from the original name 'Phra Asoke Montri' so, in the early 2000s, we requested the district to change the name from simply 'Asoke' to 'Asoke Montri' to honor the donor of land for this road. It is believed that khlong San Saeb was the main transport route in the past. Srprathum Palace, wats and mosques and even Wattana School were built along the khlong, long before Sukhumvit Road came to be the central route and khlong San Saeb fell into semi-disrepair.
- When looking at soi Cowboy, it is reminiscent of the old song 'Quan-e-Rium' (Dearest of-e-Rium, where 'e' is identified as female). Where plays and love songs once depicted the genre of idyllic khlong San Saeb in the 1950s, today's 'scene' moves to Sukhumvit Road and its sois. Regarding Thai heritage, the first thing that comes to mind is the need to understand Thai nature. Thais are Buddhists. This is the main element of their cultural heritage and other faiths such as Christianity and Islam are allowed to coexist alongside Thai Buddhism without conflict. Usually it is the make-up of Thai nature to always view things as having the spiritual identity of peaceful living, very different from Western ideas that place things in an orderly and systematic process. This may be explained as Thais being more towards contemplation to develop a logical thinking process.
- The explanation of everyday life is that people need to keep returning to the basic thinking and insight of 'kee songsan'. Most Thais have a good heart and believe in 'kee krenchai', however this Thai ephemeral thinking is being watered down by a lack of rational thinking and there is need to be more contemplative. In 'krenchai', one falls short in expressing one's own courage as the emphasis is on making the right choice, not on personal surety. Therefore, one could be seen to failing to attain his or her highest standards by being afraid to do or say something that may be viewed as disagreeable by another. When one has a firm resolve, one can engage in dialogue and be able to indicate clearly with one's own voice. This strength can be reinforced by the thinking process which can change a feeling of uncertainty to one with more direction and confidence. A knowledge based society and other forms of materialism can make Thais less 'krenchai' conscious, but this does not mean they must become more blunt or rude. While 'kee songsan' is directed towards the giving of alms and acts of kindness, it can be separated from 'krenchai'. Worrakawin concluded: 'As my background is in geography, I have traveled throughout Thailand and I have seen a similar phenomenon. I think most Thais have 'jai' or 'heart' for others but quite often they are not developed in their psychological make up. I think this can be developed by learning the process of thinking. My answers may have taken a broad view and I hope it helps you on the subject of the nature of heritage.'

14th October 2006:

Glency Atienza from University of Philippines-Diliman interviewed at the Terrace Restaurant, Chidlom Plaza Phleonchit Road at 12.00 p.m: 'Theatre Chronicles: Lessons in Theatre Documentation from Traditional and Contemporary Theatre Practices in Thailand and Indonesia', under the Nippon Foundation Fellowships for Asian Public Intellectuals (API Fellowship Program) (Atienza 2003). Views were sought on the speaker's thoughts on Thai heritage and Thai identity.

- There are different shapes and forms. Atienza had observed various shapes and forms used in Thai architecture which is unique from others forms of architecture, including their functions and proportions used. Thai architecture has a tendency to place a great deal of emphasis on the upper reaches of a building. In architecture and dress, the roof and headwear are clearly demonstrated and unique. In dancing, hand movement and the pressing of the hands together in a vertical form with emphasis on a curved shape. The stamping of feet in classical drama produces precise rhythmic sounds and then the performers curve the foot upward. These various shapes and forms gave clear views of Thai identity. These shapes can be found in classical Thai architecture.
- I have been to many places in Asia and they use similar postures in art and dancing. However, I can say that Thai art and dances are more refined. Upon closer scrutiny I have observed the repetition of these shapes and forms and, at times, in other spheres such as in architecture, dances or in textiles using traditional Thai silk patterns. What I cannot quite understand is the intermingling of contemporary with the original forms and patterns. For example the new Pataravadee Theatre is not Thai in design but looks more Japanese. Anyhow, the presentation of repetition is very interesting and unique. The Thai motif is understood as a more civilized and refined form.
- About the word 'krenghchai', we in the Philippines say 'maligoy' (caring and considerate) which also has a similar meaning to 'krenghchai'. The major difference is that Thais are quiet and less expressive in general while the Philippine people tend to be more extroverted in their behavior.

Corporate Hotels

Novotel Siam Square Hotel

4th October 2006:

Interview with Michael Thomas, general manager of Novotel Siam Square at Siam Square soi 6, a letter was sent to request an interview on the 27th September 2006 and received an appointment for an interview the next day. Confirmation was also received from the general manager's office regarding the interview which was

to take place at 3.00 p.m. in the lobby lounge. Mr Thomas was asked about his perceptions of the job in general, and also about his views on Rama I Road.

- Michael Thomas answered that we work as a team. We have over 600 employees; it's almost like running a small community. He has been in Thailand for twelve years and had spent the past six years at Novotel Siam Square.
- He thinks Thailand has changed a great deal since he first came here. He was in Khon Kaen province several years ago and people there have also changed their life style. Here on Rama I, they have changed a great deal. In his own community, for example one, of the drivers carried over a dozen credit cards and had spent to his credit limit. We had to step in and help him face the problems with the lenders. Government policy has been encouraging Thais to consume without limit and every one of my employees does overspend. He observed that Thais are under pressure to earn more and are struggling to earn enough money while they still want to enjoy life. Thais love to have fun and are eager to participate in activities such as celebrations and festivals.
- The street is lively. Thais have colorful festivals and his employees love it. One thing Michael did not enjoy was the street protests which he believed caused inconvenience.
- The Thai smile and the politeness of the Thai people is a valuable attribute. In Sri Lanka, where he comes from, people do not compete or care for luxury objects as much as Thais. He also cares about the way of life that most of his employees have, how they make ends meet and the pressure they are under even though they earn a good income compared with many other Thais.

All the evidence is that Michael is a well organized manager who understands Thais, evidenced in that he places his faith in them. He supports his employees and has shown that he has sympathy for his employees, for example when he helped his driver out of trouble when he over spent on his credit cards.

Michael has spent over twelve years in Thailand and his engagement on a second term as general manager is an asset to Thai society. His position requires the efficient management of several hundred Thai employees and by dint of his awareness of the nature of Thai people, he helps the hotel serve its customers in this venue of mass consumption. One can argue that the location of the hotel is one of the best in the case study area.

Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel

11th October 2006:

Interview with Richard Greaves, general manager of Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok at 494 Ratchadamri Road, a letter requested an appointment in early

October and a reply was received from his secretary Khun Tharinee Wongsombun the next day. The interview was set up a week later at 2.30 p.m. and lasted about forty minutes and was held in the general manager's office. General views regarding his job were sought along with a set of questions relating to heritage and the Erawan Shrine.

- His Asian experience has covered at least twenty years in many countries from Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore etc. He identifies Thai culture in that it is unique and salient and the various shapes of pagoda and forms of classical dance are unique and vastly differences from those in the rest of the region. When he was living outside Thailand he often had a difficulty telling what cultural differences were, but this does not apply to Thai symbols where he states he has no difficulty at all in identifying their symbolic meaning. On the subject of Thai value, Richard thinks the Buddhist faith embraces the majority of Thais gracefully. The coup d'etat of 19th September 2006 did not bother him at all, as he was devoted to the King. Thais have the greatest King of all time, and the impact of the Thai monarchy is commendable; it is incomparable. It surpasses England which is where he comes from.
- He explains that he has over six-hundred fulltime employees and over two-hundred additional trainees and apprentices and has been general manager for over five and a half years. He is committed to continuing to guide his hotel as it grows and prospers by offering opportunities for learning to his employees. The employees play their part successfully by striving to reach their personal goals and dreams coupled with a sense of belonging to the company.
- He thinks the Erawan Shrine is a most sacred and auspicious monument. In 1988, when the hotel was rebuilt, its name was going to be Grand Hyatt Bangkok but we thought that by changing the name to Erawan would be more appropriate. We also kept the former outlets of the Erawan Tearoom and the Erawan Bakery. We do our best to continue to celebrate the Shrine and its environment. The incident on 22nd March of 2006 upset all of his employees. We really think there is an Erawan spirit residing at the Shrine. We enjoy the street activities and welcome people from all walks of life who visit the Shrine.
- The vulnerable heritage of Thais and how to pass on this knowledge of heritage to the next generation has to be reflected upon within its educational system, as is the matter of how to really appreciate and understand Thai heritage and cherish it. Phleonchit is a progressive place. It is dynamic. Things have been changed and are changing on an almost daily basis that affects the everyday life of all who live and work here. Therefore, the Grand Hyatt is conscientious about providing learning opportunities for all employees, especially with regards to learning English language.

- When asked about the Siam Society he replied honestly that he really didn't know much about it except for Wat Srprathum, which should be promoted as a tourist attraction with its well preserved Thai architecture. It could be an important symbol of Thai cultural identity.

Richard Greaves clearly is a very energetic manager. His open and his optimistic outlook is probably a very useful tool in management for he clearly understands and cares about the lives of his employees. He spoke about the incident when the Erawan Shrine was desecrated in 2006 and repeated that this event made his employees very unhappy for several days. He is a very thoughtful person who thinks that by offering his employees opportunities on their career path is one of his top priorities. He encourages his employees to acquire better language skills which will, in turn, offer a better professional service. His attitude is also very sensitive to traditional values of Thai heritage. He thinks that the Erawan Shrine is a very valuable deity for the hotel and is committed to support the on going activities at the Shrine. Though he admitted that he doesn't know much about the Siam Society on Asoke Road, he thinks that Wat Srprathum could become a unique tourist attraction for the area.

In reflection, the Grand Hyatt Erawan and the Novotel Siam Square are two of the most convenient hotels in the case study area and are linked by a spacious sky walk which offers great views of the modern environment interspersed with some older buildings.

JW Marriott Sukhumvit Hotel

September through to early November 2006: Interview by e-mail, Peter Caprez general manager. One must remark upon the great assistance offered by Khun Anchalee Chamroonthanekul the Director of Marketing and Communication in trying to set up an interview. Mr Caprez's general view of the local streets is quite positive. He thought that Chuvit Garden is a beautiful place, though it needs some kinds of attraction to draw people to the park.

Suk-11 Hostel Sukhumvit

6th November 2006:

Interview with Somchet Yossundara, owner and general manager of a ninety room Thai style hotel, between 4.00 to 4.45 p.m. Somchet escorted the author through his four floor Thai style hotel and offered his views on Thai perceptions. His understanding of Thai hospitality was introduced, and attempts were made to express a Thai way of life. Therefore the questions used in this interview were less structured allowing him to explain specific details with regard to the areas of his hotel.

- First of all we approached the second floor balcony and looked out on to the spa complex, a wooden bridge connected to the second floor balcony. On the bottom floor of the spa complex is a 7/11 store. Somchet explained, ‘the front of Suk-11 is a long and narrow Thai restaurant. This structure is covered by wooden planks with a rusty tin roof. The Thai restaurant is intentionally decorated to represent a sitting room of a Thai house sitting on the edge of a water passage or khlong. It is an idea that Somchet described as ‘...a veranda of Baan Suan Rim Khlong,’ where the black top road represents a khlong and as a person strolls by the restaurant they see the view of people dining in a restaurant. The hotel office is at the corner of the first floor of a town-house row in the rear adjacent to the restaurant. In total the area covered by this establishment is approximately one third of an acre. The second, third and fourth floors of the structure are connected to create a ninety room hotel but the most interesting aspect is the low-key decorations used to make this cozy Thai hotel a different experience than what the tourist may experience in one of the larger chain hotel offerings, such as those addressed previously. Cultural awareness which emphasizes a prohibition on promiscuous activity is rigidly enforced at Suk-11, as strict rules regarding ‘no sexual solicitation or street walkers are not allowed in the hotel’ are closely monitored.
- Somchet introduced his son, a young man in his twenties by the name of Kanin. The tour of Suk-11 showed a new concept for Thai hospitality amid a semi-modern environment where most of the decorations used would be well suited to an up market hotel. The author finds that Suk-11 is a courageous venture where the preservation of Thai identity works well in a bargain priced hotel while still offering comprehensive view of Thai cultural identity. Somchet also emphasized his hostel as a home away from home which is popular among Western clients who are interested in basic hospitality and no frills accommodation. The philosophy is also popular as seen in the publication the Lonely Planet Guide (A Day, February 2006, Vol. 6, No. 66: 110).

The author considers Suk-11 at Sukhumvit soi 11 to a rare find. Somchet, the owner, is well aware of the concepts of a Thai way of life. Though under a low-key management, Somchet allows the maximum use of space, and the sense of Thai atmosphere from days gone by, to be offered in size and a scale that is carefully done. The natural style here presents Thai identity, where details have been carefully incorporated in order to come up with a most serviceable hotel.

Somchet sets his hotel philosophy apart from the rest of Bangkok hotels. He does not allow customers to bring prostitutes or local bar girls into the hotel. This may not be suitable for every client as it puts Suk-11 on the cusp between being a dormitory and the YMCA. In fact, it instills a good atmosphere. One recognizes that Suk-11 helps create a sustainable Thai community where ethics and morality are preserved in an architectural setting that offers a glimpse of Thai identity in a post-modern form, as Thai identity and moral values are ingrained in motifs and architecture.



Figure 33: Samlor or peddle-powered tri-cycle, Sukhumvit soi 11: at the entrance of Suk-11 Hostel, by the author, on 16th November 2006.



Figure 34: Entrance of Suk 11, a cozy Thai décor, by the author 16th November 2006.

Observations

Expatriate and foreigner views:

On Sunday 26th March 2006 the author handed out forty-five fliers asking opinions on the street demonstration on Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads. There were two responses. They offered interesting messages regarding the situation at the Erawan Shrine and the street demonstration:

1. Marco, a free marketer who has spent many years in Asia and has traveled throughout the world, thinks that consumerism is a by-product of wealth building through trade, and as such is not a bad thing. He continues, 'Consumerism taken to excess can supersede more wholesome values like the enjoyment of one's traditions, but you can't blame foreigners for that. Siam Paragon may be one of the ugliest buildings in Bangkok, but it was built to satisfy a Thai demand, not a foreign one.' Regarding the incident at Erawan Shrine on March 22, 2006 Marco noted 'I was very saddened: I did not think that the Thai would be so 'jai dam' (black heart) to take another person's life simply over the vandalism of a symbol, especially given that the vandal was mentally handicapped.' He continued 'I have been hearing over and over the mantra of how Asian values are better than Western ones. Interestingly enough, I have never met anyone who has been able to tell me exactly what Asian values are.'
2. The other respondent was Chris Otchy, a guest to Thailand, who has spent over a year and a half here and thinks that Thailand, just like the United States, is primarily made up of working class laborers and farmers who will never have the time or the education to see a political situation as clearly as the upper-middle class liberals and intellectuals. Chris witnesses that people are gathering together, making noise, chanting, singing, expressing their opinions, even causing havoc (at least to traffic and businesses, as in the demonstration at Siam Paragon) in such huge numbers as to signal the beginning of a new age of increased political freedoms, increased transparency into the private/business dealings of politicians, and an improved democratic system.

15th – 16th September 2006:

The exhibition of Srprathum Palace on the first floor of Siam Discovery Center 10th - 17th September 2006, to commemorate Queen Sawang Wattana or Phra Panwasa, grandmother of King Rama IX, who lived at the palace in her final years. This exhibition was an excellent opportunity to introduce local Thai heritage to the public. The exhibition showed the first building of the 'Tomnak Keiw' (big palace) which was built in 1913 by the order of Her Majesty, Queen Sawang Wattana. (Srisavarintiranusornraanee, 2006:161). The graphics in the exhibition explained royal genealogy and showed the relationship between buildings on the west side of Rama I. Kasemson Palace, on sois Kasemson 1, 2 and 3 is today on Rama I and Petchaboon Palace was located to the east of Wat Srprathum on the site of Central

World Plaza today. The exhibition was a success as very large numbers of Thais attended the exhibition, which was in Thai language, along with promotional books in Thai about Her Majesty the Queen being offered for sale. There are possibilities that could have been developed for both local people and tourists to learn more about Thai heritage. This worthwhile exhibition could be offered in at least two languages, with the other being English or Chinese, and through a nationwide advertising campaign undertaken in local papers, the internet and television, in both languages. The author believes that the exhibition would be beneficial to the many foreigners who come to Bangkok for cultural and learning experiences. Therefore great importance and support should be placed on similar exhibitions by district authorities and the government.

Story of Don Quixote comes to the Siam Society:

On February 22, 2006, the King of Spain, Juan Carlos, and Queen Sophia made a historic state visit to Thailand as part of the celebration to mark the 60th anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumipol Adulyadej's accession to the throne. The King and Queen accompanied Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn to a ceremony at the Siam Society to launch the first Thai translation of 'Don Quixote' by Professor Swangwan Tricharoenwiwat of Ramkhamhaeng University. Don Quixote de La Mancha, by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, is one of the world's greatest literary masterpieces and was published in Madrid in 1605. In the book Don Quixote gave lessons on universal values; 'the man who is wise of heart should love others and do good to all' (The Nation, 23rd Feb. 2006: 10A). This event was a significant cultural link between Spain and Thailand as well as a tangible sign of Spain's contribution to world cultural heritage. The Siam Society became the venue of this meeting between the philosophical and cultural views of Western and Thai societies. The significance of using the venue of the Siam Society offers countless opportunities to repeat such experiences and similar events in the future.

The views of spectacular urban renewal and new airport/town development:

The urban landscape of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit has been rapidly growing over recent years, due to the numerous condominium projects for housing upper middle and upper class groups. Commercial plazas continued to grow along this stretch of Sukhumvit Road, as well. The New Suvarnabhumi Airport, in its final stage of completion in mid 2006, comes with an image of a new urban development around it, and designated as the Airport City. Why did it have to be an airport city? Some claimed that the new city development in Nakorn-nayok province, proposed to the north of the airport was watered down a few years ago. A city of 227.6 square kilometers is planned around the airport (Silapacharanan, 2006: 27). The government is proposing to establish a new metropolitan area, called Suvarnabhumi Metropolis (Silapacharanan, 2006: 35).

Bannasopit Mekvichai writes, 'Theoretical aspects of the new city airport are unavoidably becoming agglomerations of various modes of transport, economic and social activities associated with the airports and air transport.' An early description

of the airport city as a new form of urban development was presented by Hobart McKinley Conway, airport design experts, in 1977. The more widely known concept of the aerotropolis was later elaborated by third world urbanization planner, John D. Karsada in 2000 (Silapacharanan, 2006: 21-22). A column in *Street Wise* describes it as “the erstwhile Cobra Swamp airport, now Suvarnabhumi, will pump more than 100 million passengers a year through its glass portals, about as many as JFK, La Guardia and Newark airports in the State of New York combined.” Within 30 years, a city of 3.3 million citizens will have emerged from the swampland”...Courtney, a student from Chicago argues that “the aerotropolis is a fascinating and dangerous concept...Shouldn’t we, as concerned global citizens, stop ourselves and ask what significant risk comes with such a plan?” (The Nation, 15th August 2006: 16).

Bangkok’s administration is set to propose a “more efficient” alternative to the government’s plan of creating a separate province around Suvarnabhumi Airport. It calls for the establishment of a non-profit corporation to oversee the development. Bannasopit, the deputy Bangkok governor, said the urbanization of areas around the new airport would be a major obstacle to Thailand’s goal of becoming a regional aviation hub. No other country in the world would surround an airport with a city. Bannasopit said the BMA’s City Planning Department had listed reasons for opposing the Interior Ministry plan to set up a 77th province around the airport, which would include Lat Krabang and Prawet Districts (Bangkok Post, 12th July 2006: 1A-4A). The author agrees with Bannasopit and Courtney’s arguments and sees no need to over-load the city as the center of Bangkok is not far from the new airport, approximately twenty kilometers away.

By January of 2007, Suvarnabhumi Airport was experiencing a number of problems. Run-ways cracked and the passenger terminal was not functioning well. These problems were due to corruption and blatant evidence of conflicts of interest during planning and construction. The author can only conclude that this airport was built by Thais and it shows that it is identified by a Thai process and a Thai way of behavior. It does not matter whether the results are good or bad, it still represents all the motives that are attributable to Thais. The author thinks it is almost like an illustration of how the Thai can identify and live with political corruption that would be denounced by the world at large. This revelation of Thai values inflicts inevitable damage to Thai heritage and its true identity. Corruption has prevailed in Thai society from Sukhumvit to Suvarnabhumi Airport where the lack of ethical morality and an acceptance of conflicts of interest hold sway. Is there some hope that we can move our cultural heritage away from this insidious plot of greed and ravenous consumerism? The author remains uncertain, but he is hopeful. Title on local newspaper alleges on corruption that; ‘corruption still bad’: Thailand slipped back from 11th place to 14th in the Asia-Pacific index from 63rd to 84th in the overall 180-nation world index (The Nation, 27th September 2007, p: 4A). By mid February 2007, a decision was made to reopen Don Muang Airport on the 25th of March to assist with air traffic while necessary construction repairs to badly damaged runways began at Suvarnabhumi. Finally, the discourse comes to conclude in a diversity of views. Physical considerations as well as opinions and literary writing will be referred to in order to sum up the discussion in the following Chapter six.

Conclusion

In previous chapters of memory, history, and scholarly analysis were explored as layers and collages in the form of stories and events that occurred on Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads. However, in Chapter 5 the focus has been on interpreting dialogue and analyzing interviews and, in doing so, identifying various interlinking stories. Sukhumvit, home to writers, architects, Buddhist scholars, administrators, poor stall-holders and rich investors, is a landscape of discourse. Lives are lived and plans are made here, both openly and in secret, for this too is a part of Sukhumvit's heritage --- everyday life.

It is difficult to find physical remnants of the past; instead there is a plethora of memories and stories that offer one an insight into the routes of the old khlongs, the *baan suan rim khlong*, drainage channels and the old stories that have been told by those who lived and worked in the area.

It is vital to discover how management operates, what people think about the street situation, and how *Thai* society has progressed amid the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the area. Insights are conveyed in the arts, novels, economics, politics and the way people think and act. The interviews and discussions proved useful in defining Thai identity and behavior in the context of Thailand, Bangkok and Sukhumvit. There are the layered stories and events of life in the past where cultural heritage was openly celebrated and in the present where the heritage is hidden and submerged by the detritus of globalization.

The word *krengchai*, an act of obeisance, was originally part of Thai identity. Krengchai was supported by the Thai sense of equilibrium where Thais learned from their society and inherited their identity and morality. When Thais consciously made krengchai a part of their nature, their way of thinking changed and this is why Thais will present as less aggressive, arguably, than other peoples. Thais are also very aware of their physical appearance which is reflected in the importance placed on status symbols, freely available in this landscape of globalization. This statement is demonstrated by the story of an employee at the Novotel Siam Square who became a victim of over-spending. While not strictly krengchai, collectively expressed group behavior as displayed in the People's Alliance for Democracy protest on Rama I, Phleonchit, Sukhumvit and Wireless Roads offers another manifestation of Thai cultural heritage. While the force of globalization is all pervading in this landscape of crass consumption, many Thais never learn krengchai because of their exposure to corruption. Therefore, the argument might be made that as individuals Thais are wise and intelligent, but collectively they are not.

Chapter 6

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

This study has been about Thai cultural heritage and how one can interpret and associate cultural meaning to the jumbled space of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads, an eastern region of the Bangkok metropolis. From the early days of Thai history and through many layers of urbanization, in the present day we observe a world where much of our culture has been partially tarnished by the forces of globalization. Throughout this long period of history, Thais have maintained their cultural heritage, albeit transformed, in a multi-cultural mix of residents and tourists. In like manner, Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads have prevailed, though transformed, against the forces of globalization, capitalism, terrorism, mobile phones and internet cafes. The quest in the present study became a question of discovering the genealogy of everyday life and the role that it has played in the present core of the community.

Curiosity about the culture and its genealogy was the driving motivation for the present study, and the specific interest was the present study area, beginning with the early 1950s to the present time. There seemed to be a critical absence of policy or planning to safeguard Thai heritage and, arguably by implication, Thai identity and democracy. While Thais surround themselves with educated ministers and experienced leadership for governmental situations, the basic cultural institutions can end up having little effect in moderating excess. Where is the inherited wisdom? As a nation, Thailand has numerous problems but, through it all, the cultural heritage continues to be (re)produced.

In the attempt to understand the production and reproduction of the idea of heritage as represented in the Sukhumvit corridor, it has surely been coincidental that the most useful conceptualizations have arisen as triads. In the objective understanding of Thai identity there has been the triad of Nation, Religion and King, the *sathaban lak* or fundamental institution of Thai society. The production of that identity *in space* has focused the mind on Lefebvre's tripartite understanding of the social production of space itself, in representations of space, spatial practices and spatial representations. Then the question of such production always arising over time brings to the fore the understanding of time, and thereby Fernand Braudel's tripartite understanding of ecological time, social or historical time, and the everyday time of individual men.

There is also, in any understanding of heritage, the question of the intangible. There will be some situations where tangible symbols may confirm and support the intangible aspects of one's cultural heritage, such as the expression '*krengchai*', the

Thai Buddhist attitude of taking other people's feelings into consideration, avoiding confrontation, and being tolerant of others' situations. Dovey and Polakit write: in the Thai context, oblique communication is often more effective than direct language; conflicts and contradictions are often avoided rather than resolved. New ideas, forms and spatial practices tend to be layered and juxtaposed rather than displaced. The social order and the urban order are, at once, strongly hierarchical, rigidly controlled and highly fluid (Dovey, Polakit, 2004: 2). One might agree with this reasoning, in that *krengchai* tends to identify with the situation that it faces. A distancing is necessary when using oblique communication. Combined with the highly fluid social hierarchy identified by Dovey and Polakit, this distancing is the opposite of the horizontal expression where dynamic behavior can be considered superficial. Thus *krengchai* has two meanings: first, it is offered in the discursive manner of indecision and, second, it is offered in the true expression of caring and consideration. The former is what is going on in everyday life or in living heritage and the latter is a profound identity within itself. This dual meaning needs to be considered when working towards explaining what one has to understand in the meaning of an act, event or expression – that is, as a superficial perception as well as a profound perception, in order to better interpret Thai heritage and identity.

Two broad aims have been the focus of the preceding chapters. The first has been to understand Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads and what has become of their ancient roots as seen in relation to the heritage of the nation's evolution. The second has been more ambitious: to question the meaning of heritage in a rapidly changing Bangkok where the built environment of only a generation ago already seems ancient and is swiftly disappearing under new layers of investment. Searching for Thai identity in everyday Sukhumvit, amid the forces of neo-colonization and rampant capitalist excess, offers a framework for future studies in bringing to life Thai cultural heritage. In a postmodern world where everything seems ephemeral, even the most revered and sacred is increasingly seen as mere objects for consumption and gratification, and we are left a fundamental question: how are we to define heritage?

In the attempt to find answers to these two forms of the project's question, the method used has been to take four 'traverses' of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads. The first of these has been broadly historic, to ask what has survived of the ancient past, where 'ancient' is as conventionally understood. Sukhumvit approximates the path Rama I took on his return to Siam, a path that led to the founding of a city and a dynasty and laid the foundation for the nation to come. In 1857, Rama IV built Wat Srathum along with his vacation palace, Srathum. The parents of the reigning monarch, Rama IX, lived in this palace and today it is the home of his daughter, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, and other close members of his family.

More at the level of ordinary lives, there is Khlong San Saeb and a few other remaining elements of the old aquatic realm of the past. Grand events and the lesser events of many lives have left their traces on the landscape of this area and, where those traces might now be scarcely detectable, there are memories of events and places held by many of the people who still reside in the Sukhumvit area or might

occasionally pass through it. Hence this first traverse of the area has been labeled ‘Sukhumvit as a field of memory.’

The second traverse observes a far more venal Sukhumvit. The roads and many of its sois are over-built, congested, chaotic, and Bangkok at its most urbanized. There have been continual waves of investment and, some would say, over-investment as entrepreneurs look for new opportunities to turn a profit. Some of these investors are occasionally inventive and offer new technologies and creative approaches to cultural production, as seen in the Science Center and Library in the Emporium Complex. Too often, however, these investments have been mindlessly repetitive as entrepreneurs try to emulate a previously successful model, demonstrating the herd mentality that in 1997 fueled the Asian Financial Crisis and left Sukhumvit scarred with unfinished, abandoned buildings, deserted sites and architectural wreckage. Sukhumvit has the region’s heaviest concentration of farangs, tourists, hotels, bars and prostitutes and represents Bangkok at its most venal state. Yet against all of this, the area is extraordinarily and marvelously alive - it never sleeps, it is a place of high culture as well as low, and it is one of the world’s great cosmopolitan sites. Sukhumvit is both urbane and vulgar. It is also relatively recent: until the 1960s it was rural and quietly suburban. Hence it raises questions about the culture of Thailand itself: it is a place of tolerance, constant change, cultural synthesis and metamorphosis. This traverse has been labeled ‘Sukhumvit as a field of consumption.’

The third journey through the corridor has been the search for ‘Sukhumvit as a field for interpretation.’ It is the Sukhumvit of scholarly speculation. While Thailand was never formally colonized, it *has* been economically, culturally and especially intellectually colonized. This is the European Orientalist project, where the East is defined as ‘the Other’ in an attempt by the West to find and define its own identity. Herein lies the danger in the application of Western epistemologies to the task of describing and understanding Asian urban space. Yet, undeterred, Western urban theory has frequently been brought to focus on the Asian city, and in this present instance there has been a search for insight, especially through the ideas of Lefebvre and Braudel, as noted above. Against these rationalist approaches used to understand the concepts of urban space and time are to be set the insights garnered from local wisdom, most notably the ever-evolving discourse of Buddhist scholarship. Where Western and local wisdom are derived from radically different epistemologies, the intellectual task of the age is to bring these together so that each can shed light on the other, and in doing so will begin the identification of a Thai knowledge-based society. Yet this requires a venue, and the power of Sukhumvit lies in its ability to throw the dilemmas of both Eastern and Western thought into the sharpest of contrasts.

There is a fourth traverse of Sukhumvit that might simply be identified with the observation of its everyday life. Here the task is to see ‘Sukhumvit as a field of discourse’, a place of a million lives and a million interlinking stories. It has its writers, its architects, its Buddhist scholars, administrators, expatriate professionals in offices, poor squatters along the bank of Khlong San Saeb and the wealthy in their luxury condominiums or residential compounds in quiet sois, all variously

expressing views and desires, their individual and collective histories, wisdom and discourse which theory or literature has rarely touched. These inhabitants participate in a rich and discursive cacophony, matching that of the life of the street. This discourse coincides with the other traverses of Sukhumvit – with its memories, with both the struggle and the exploitation of its life as a realm of consumption, and in scholarly discourse. The traverses mutually intersect. After all, there is only one Sukhumvit.

Sukhumvit is a great many things to a great many people; it includes landscapes of consumption, memories of the past, contemporary lifestyles, diverse cultures and economic symbiosis. Thai society is a domain of an endless duplication of spaces layered over one another. For example one may wander into Wat Srapathum and a path inside the temple wall is the location of poor stall-holders. As they are not allowed on Rama I Road, therefore they hide behind the temple wall. The lesson of these roads continues to delineate dichotomous poles of difference where rich and poor, intellectuals and less well-educated, the wise and unwise, the good and the bad, of local and global, of old and new, and of the happy and the sad exist side by side. However, they all have one thing in common: they coexist in the area and take advantage of the opportunities that arise. Sukhumvit is always awake and full of activity and always a chaotic mix, raucous and alive. After all Sukhumvit has its charm: it is a place where one can always remark on its uniqueness, even though the environment has few cultural monuments that would immediately call attention to themselves.

Sukhumvit as a realm of surfaces

It is the intersections of these traverses that suggest an answer to the first part of this project's goal – to discover Sukhumvit and its heritage. Each traverse hints at a layering effect. As history is always a narrative of past events that have been constructed on the detritus of events that preceded them, so Rama II built his nation on top of that of Rama I, Rama IV built on Rama III and then Rama V on top of that again. One Buddhist ideal built on the wisdom or mistakes of that which preceded it; the thanon were layered over the khlong. Layers also characterize Sukhumvit as a realm of consumption: one wave of fashion buries another, a new hotel or shopping mall tries to bury its predecessor, a new wave of tourists, with a greater disposable wealth, over-rides other waves of tourists. Similarly, this applies to Sukhumvit as a field of intellectual speculation, where every new idea inevitably builds on the theorizing that preceded it. Western philosophy has constantly drawn insight from Eastern wisdom, and the intersections continue. Discourse, in turn, is also always layered, one experience and its narrative or metanarratives standing on the shoulders of a seemingly infinite number of stories that precede it.

Noparatnaraporn and King (2007) have recently drawn attention to Peter Jackson's idea of a "Thai regime of images" (Jackson, 2004a, 2004b). A distinctive episteme is traced back to a pre-modern culture of 'face' and 'reputation', manifested in a preoccupation with surface ritual, as in 'the theatre state', transforming in the 19th century to the 'performative state'. Penny Van Esterik is quoted to the effect that present Thai society can be seen as one that "encourages an

essentialism of appearances or surfaces ... The real is hidden and unchallenged. The surface is taken for real” (2000, p: 4). Noparatnaraporn and King go on to view Thai urban space as a ‘realm of surfaces.’ And so at its most extreme, in a space like Sukhumvit, we see the constant metamorphosis of the culture at the level of surface. There is a ‘spiritual surface’: “the overlay of the spiritual becomes less ordered, shrines appear and then disappear, spirit houses are fewer but now in the most unexpected of places (on roofs of high-rises, balconies, or in ‘entertainment’ venues), and garlands, offerings and displays of prayerful respect are far more in evidence than ever found in the villages. ... The religious and the spiritual are not ‘passing away’, but vibrantly transforming” (Noparatnaraporn and King, 2007: 78).

Then there is the surface of the royal: “ambivalently merging with the spiritual is the royal: the ubiquitous images of Rama V and of (the current) Rama IX, and the periodic proliferation of royal birthday shrines. ... Then there are other, more profane overlays: the endlessly multiplying street stalls, roadside kitchens and hawkers fragment and enliven the space of the public realm” (Noparatnaraporn and King, 2007: 78).

Certainly these multiple overlays are never distinct, nor are they ever completely separate from the hard reality of property titles, buildings and enterprises. The point is that the layers or surfaces of memory, consumption, ideas and narratives intersect with and enliven the other surfaces of the religion, the royal and the profane. Sukhumvit is a realm of layers and surfaces exhibited in a myriad of dimensions, and the task of heritage interpretation is akin to that of the archaeologist digging beneath the multiple layers of the city in order to uncover its genealogy.

The constitution of heritage

The second form of the project’s aim has been more abstract in that it has focused on a situation where everything is in continual flux, current events immediately are superseded and become ancient yet are still part of everyday life, so that nothing can be conventionally labeled ‘the past’, and the task becomes that of defining ‘heritage’. This fluidity makes the definition of heritage difficult to pin down and all the more so when defining the perimeters of Thailand’s cultural heritage.

The project’s conclusion is itself a speculation. As the wats, palaces, old houses and surviving khlongs of Sukhumvit are seen as artifacts of the living present rather than of an ancient past, then heritage as conventionally understood is inseparable from everyday life. Sukhumvit, it seems, is a place of appropriation – of the past while still living in the present, of diverse cultures where all are continuously absorbed into a metamorphosing Thai culture, and of a wider world in the form of the tolerated farangs. Any interpretation of Sukhumvit, and by implication of Thai urban space, must then involve the process of explaining or bringing to the fore the essentially appropriating, hybridizing nature of Thai culture, the significance of surface in the Thai way of seeing the world and, in turn, the significance of these characteristics in understanding Thai responses to

globalization. Heritage is to be sought not in things but in the culture, where culture can be defined as those resources, practices, beliefs and values that enable a society to engage creatively with the inevitability of change.

Prelude to Conclusion

Many stories were discovered in the undertaking of this research including the Queen Sawang Wattana Exhibition at the Discovery Center, the desecration of the Erawan Shrine, the Chuvit Garden story, Shiva, and the models of consumerism and consumption. In conclusion, profound insight was gained by going far beyond the superficial identity that is the make up of Thai heritage and on to the very core of a more valid and spiritual interpretation. This brief study explains aspects of a culture's past history and it offers memories that help explain the reality of contemporary life in relation to Thai hidden heritage. This view of heritage, entrenched in contemporary society, suggests tranquility in a chaotic world which vacillates between hegemony and a landscape of consumption. Thai heritage runs along the vertical axis of a knowledge based society and the horizontal axis of temporal secularism. Therefore, the interpretation of spatial practices in representational spaces is juxtaposed against the process of times that recur daily, in a landscape of consumption. This process is exemplified in the essence of life which is dependant on one's cultural baggage interfacing with developmental changes on Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads. What is considered the most significant Thai view in this representation of Thai space is the ambivalence between Thais and non-Thais, the daily pursuit of survival and day to day experiences, and therefore representations, of the way Thais see the world. These have to be depicted as a dynamic interpretation that depends on one's choice whether to accept or reject options that enhance insight into Thai heritage or to continue existing at a superficial level. The conclusion is that hidden heritage, itself, is all around us and can be found in poetry, literature, novels, cultural traditions, language, art, history, architecture, music, dance, oral stories, Thai cuisine and everyday life.



Figure 35: 'Relationship between Human and Technology' at Sukhumvit and Asoke-Ratchadapisek Road by the artist Paiyan Bunjongkleng, *by the author, on 25th November 2006.*

The goal of communicating Thai cultural heritage and identity as understood here offers hope in light of the many crises that confront Thailand today. This approach may mitigate, in some small way, the crisis in the three southern provinces, where tragic events evoke a painful sense of worthlessness, leading even the most gentle of souls to become involved in atrocious, nefarious and hateful deeds. However, through skillful communication and the acceptance of the southern people's cultural heritage and the important role they, too, have played in the weaving of the overarching aspect of Thai cultural heritage, we may offer the first steps toward facilitating a peaceful solution to this current dilemma. Communicating the attributes of Thai identity is an arduous task that must also negotiate the hierarchical structure of the rigid Thai class system.

Conclusion

The preceding chapters have offered a glimpse of the diversity of stories that constitute the historical heritage and the everyday life of Sukhumvit denizens. In one sense these stories have demonstrated that the division between historical heritage and contemporary life is an artificial one, as the two are inextricably intertwined, albeit each one having its own unique character.

It is necessary, however, to raise the analysis to another level, and reflect on the nature of Sukhumvit as a multi-layered, multi-storied collage of layers. There are two useful ways of seeing this character. One is to view Sukhumvit as intersecting worlds, and the other is as layered surfaces and realities.

Sukhumvit as intersecting worlds

Sukhumvit manifests an international economy and society and it is, in an important sense, equal with the likes of New York, Los Angeles or Tokyo and their economies. It is part of the global flow of tourists, business people, experts, international ideas and global consumption. It manifests what Manuel Castells (1989, 1996), calls 'the space of flows'.

At a different level however, the study is local – Thailand, and its life as nation-state. As such, Thailand becomes a manifestation of the founding triad of Nation, Religion and King. All three elements are explored with regard to spatial heritage. The King is omnipresent in the photographs and commemorative shrines which may be difficult for the visitor to understand; however, he is even more strongly manifested in Thai hearts and minds. Nation is also manifested in the royal portraits but, more immediately, Thailand as a Nation reveals itself in the everyday life of the street where the national anthem is played at 8.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. Nation is also revealed in the people and their identity. Religion is omnipresent on Sukhumvit, in the ubiquitous spirit houses, shrines, amulets displayed in tuk-tuks and taxies, and the courtesy of the wai, the traditional Thai greeting.

These two worlds exist dichotomously in Sukhumvit. The heritage of Sukhumvit might be superficially seen in wat Srapathum, khlong San Saeb, or a few

historic buildings, however this would be a superficial and dismissive statement to make. Rather, the real lessons for both Thais and foreign visitors lie in the forever chaotic, changing dichotomy between the two worlds that intersect.

Sukhumvit as layered realities

The area covered by Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads is also to be seen as an extreme manifestation of Thai space. Following the ideas laid down by Peter Jackson (2004), the area can be analyzed as a series of superimposed surfaces or layers. These include the following.

- The corporate towers, condominium blocks, BTS and hotels. These are international, and are described as part of what Frederic Jameson (1991) terms ‘the postmodern hyperspace’. It is the space of corporate capitalism and conspicuous consumption.
- The stalls, street-markets, tailors, bars, prostitutes, and other manifestations of the informal, untaxed economy. This exists in the realm of everyday life.
- The institutional: the Police Headquarters, the Siam Society and the Headquarters of the World Fellowship of Buddhists.
- The spaces of spirituality, evident in the shrines (see below: a typical shrine at a hotel) and spirit houses on the roof-tops, in front of shops, houses and high-rise blocks and at the wats, the spiritual focus.
- The royal overlay: Shrines to celebrate royal buildings and anniversaries, the ubiquitous portraits of Rama V and Rama IX.
- The fleetingly political: displays of flags and banners, demonstrations and political posters.



Figure 36: Mahaprom Shrine at the Ambassador Hotel, Sukhumvit soi 11
by the author, on 28th December 2006.

The dilemma of Thai space is in the dichotomy of the real and the ephemeral. Neils Mulder (1992) writes of an underlying Thai belief or worldview which sees the spiritual as the real and the material as merely ephemeral as it will pass away, whereas the spirits and their realm live forever. However, arguments could variously be made that each of these layers of Sukhumvit is forever and is true and real, with everything else ultimately falling into ruin or ceasing to exist. The reality of Sukhumvit and Thai space more generally is its ambivalence, its scattered nature, its multiple layers of built space and spatial practices, and in its uncertainty.

It is the uncertainty of this multi-level space that is the reality of Sukhumvit. One could argue that Thai space is acknowledged as diverse and that these spaces are variously intersected and layered in an indeterminate manner. The heritage of Sukhumvit is not so much in its remnants of historic monuments but more in its power as arguably the strongest manifestation of Thai space as a collage of surfaces and layers.

The writing of heritage

The understanding of heritage that emerges from the paragraph immediately above returns the discussion to the earlier problem (from Chapter 1) of how to write about such a multi-layered landscape – more specifically, to write about it as heritage. The suggested conclusion is that the writing of such heritage is to allow the links between surfaces to take on ‘their own life’ within the writing. Such has been the aim here.

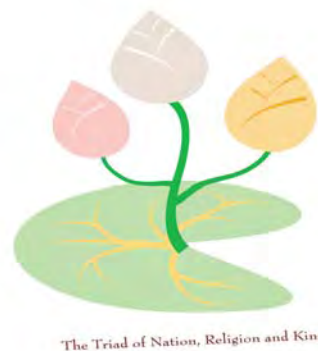


Figure 37: The Triad of Nation-Religion-King on Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads is red-white-gold (red-white-blue) Interpretation, by the author 2007

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มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร สงวนลิขสิทธิ์

มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร **Appendix** ส่วนลิขสิทธิ์

Appendix A

The following chart shows sample of changes between 1950s and 2000s.

Chart 1: A summary of physical and behavioral changes, and issues of morality on Sukhumvit.

1950s	2000s
Khlong ‘San Saeb’ was clean and clear.	The khlong is polluted with murky water.
Thai massage was at wat Po, for local consumption as physical therapy.	Thai massage, spa treatments and salons are popular throughout the areas.
Most Thais took a bath from concrete containers or large bowl with ‘cun’ (meaning small bowl).	Thais accustomed to bath by shower heads. (‘Cutout’ in Sukhumvit soi 1 shows shower head products, see chart 3.)
Most Thais cooked by wooden-charcoal.	Most Thais cooked by natural gas.
Vendor stalls were few and limited to only pak-soi (meaning entrance of soi).	Vendor stalls are ubiquitous almost everywhere and continue growing.
Shops and plazas were limited to around Ratchaprasong intersection and Asok-Sukhumvit intersection.	Shops and plazas are innumerable on Rama I-Phleonchit-Sukhumvit Road.
Bars and coffee shops were limited to Petchaburi Road and the red-light district was further out to Sukhumvit soi 65.	Sukhumvit is venue for streetwalkers. Bars and coffee shops moved into Sukhumvit area.
Safer venues for locals and tourists. Most crimes were committed by local Thais and local visitors.	Increasing crimes on counterfeit products and crimes committed by locals, expatriates and tourists.

There are many things that have not changed while in the process of growth and transformation, for example:

- Flooding in certain areas on Sukhumvit (see picture 13).
- Exposed utility wires everywhere throughout Bangkok.

- Deteriorated streets and sidewalks mostly on Sukhumvit Road (north section). At the time of this writing north section of Sukhumvit between soi 21-39 is under renovation.
- Vendor merchants insisting and pervading on the streets and sois.

We have learned that crime scenes and prostitution linked to so called ‘sex tourism’ are increasing in the areas and order to safeguard the milieu from perpetrators has to be carefully exercised. Therefore aspects of rehabilitation and sanction are necessary. Cultural heritage can be seen as the counterpart to good behavior, to be taught and inculcated in Thai communities. Hidden heritage could be helpful tools the helpful to safeguard Thai society. The view of cultural heritage as layers and processes of change needs to be communicated to local Thais. It is inevitable that change and the process of thinking must have impulse from globalization and consumption. The following chart is a summificant of events.

Chart 2: Transformations that have had affects in Sukhumvit from 1950s to 2000s.

1960s Thai and U.S. liaison in South East Asia.
Many Thais began to return from education abroad after 1960s, i.e. U.S. and Europe.
There were internal conflicts in the 1970s. Khlong Toei District was formed in 1972.
Condominium Act 1979 was one of the major reasons for urban growth.
The effects from ‘Desert War’ in 1991 and period of internal conflict (14-5-1992).
In 1995 Wattana District was formed. Financial crisis in 1997.
Opening of BTS in 1999.
World crisis in New York (9-11-2001) and new government in Thailand (2001).
Tsunami (26-12-2004).
Internal conflict (19-9-2006).
The years 2005-2006 were excellent for real estate and consumption in Sukhumvit.

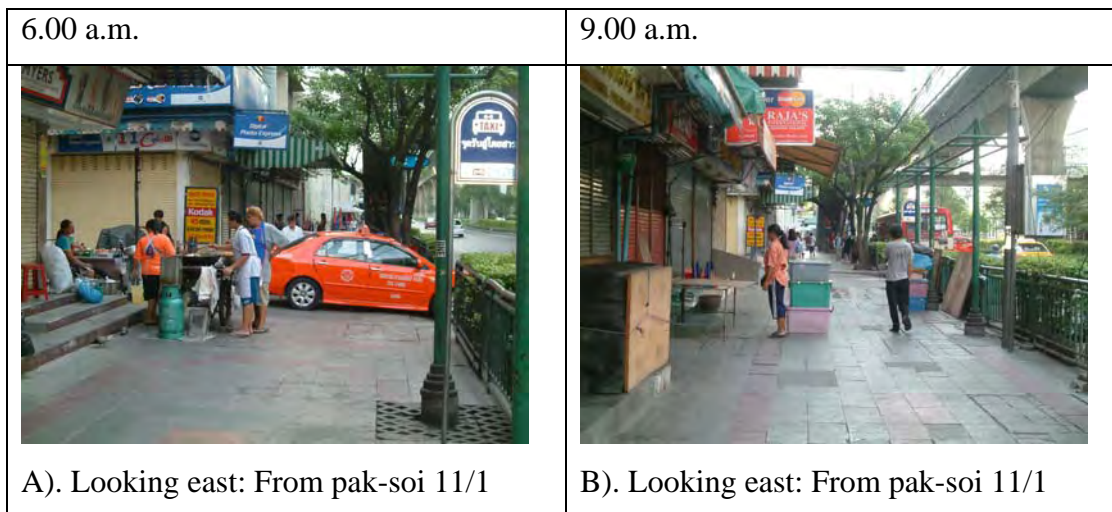
The following chart shows new technology of modernity that never had been experienced by the locals in Sukhumvit in 1950. Generally speaking there were window show-cases but the colossal ‘cut-out’ had never been presented (see chart 3).

Chart 3: Commercial displays of modern technology in June 2007.



The sampling in the following charts shows spatial transformations linked to periodic cycles of day and night. The author chooses two connecting sites at the entrance of Sukhumvit soi 11, and soi 11/1 which is just 60 meters on the east. It is an area of street market and in the heart of international venues. It is in the middle of lower Sukhumvit (roughly it is the area between soi Nana and soi Asok). The charts show how Thai spaces are used periodically during the course of day and night in May-June 2007 (see charts below).

Chart 4: Pak-soi 11/1 and soi 11 on early Saturday 26 of May morning.





C). Looking into Pak-soi 11.



D). Looking east: From pak-soi 11.

Chart 5: Pak-soi 11/1 and soi 11 on Saturday 26 of May afternoon.

10.00 p.m.



A). Looking east: From pak-soi 11/1.

4.00 p.m.



B). Looking east: From pak-soi 11.

Chart 6: Shows pak-soi 11, Saturday 2 of June evening to midnight.

6.30 p.m.



A). Looking east: From pak-soi 11.

12.00 a.m.



B). Looking east: From pak-soi 11.

Chart 7: Pak-soi 11, early Sunday 27 May morning.





2.00 a.m.	4.00 a.m.
 <p>A). Looking east: From pak-soi 11.</p>	 <p>B). Trash at pak-soi 11.</p>

Chart 8: What are going on Sukhumvit on Sunday 27 May.

Early morning 4.00 a.m.	Morning 7.30 a.m.
 <p>A). Prophecy by cards under Nana BTS.</p>	 <p>B). Morning sleep under Nana BTS.</p>

Appendix B

Reminiscences

My first memory of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Road is the old and long forgotten khlong. Khlongs were used for transportation throughout the districts; small khlongs were used by rua bot or small rowing boat for carrying agricultural goods. Clearly a main benefit of the khlongs was for drainage, but they also aided Thais in producing agricultural crops which included; lotus and puk or water plants of various kinds, as well as for an affordable and easily accessible means of transportation. After the introduction of the motorcar during the reign of King Rama V, the khlongs began to be used less and less while motorcars and samlor, three wheeled tri-cycles with a rear seat, were seen more and more on Rama I and Phleonchit Road by the end of King Rama VIII's reign and beginning of King Rama IX's reign in 1946. Land was reclaimed to make road surfaces throughout the Phleonchit Road area during the early part of King Rama IX's reign. The National Highway Project began in 1950, creating an eastern route or Sukhumvit Road along Khlong Bang Kapi (Sukhum, 2004: 333), (Sraprathum Palace exhibition, 16th September 2006 at Discovery Center see observation in Chapter 5). The remains of the old khlongs can sometimes be seen behind walls, at the rear of the sois, or along drainage routes through concrete retaining walls such as Khlong Orachon. This runs between Wat Srapathum, the Siam Paragon Plaza and Sukhumvit soi 19 and is a sub-drainage channel which runs along the front of Wattana Witaya School, to its outlet at Khlong San Saeb. Another nearby khlong was on the south side of Sukhumvit and ran towards Khlong Paisingto, by Lake Ratchada. The author remembers the old khlongs on both side of Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Road in the early 1960s and watched as they gradually disappeared in the mid 1960s.

The following headings are reminders of the past events that occurred along the roads which gives one a sense of both identity and nostalgia from early history to the present day:

Tin-ka khoa

The reflection of modernity, in Thai society, was amplified by the Thai belief of tin-ka-khoa, which means land of white crow or as an allegory to Westerners invading the scene. This took place when Thais had a minimal understanding of globalization in the 1960s and when most families were fearful of the communist domino theory. This period is one of the ten series depicted in Thai astrological analysis. This period, the so called tin-ka-khoa was the ninth period and the tenth period is called chow-civilai or civilized people (astrologer Pinyo Phongchareon, ASTV 26th July 2006). The Thai view of tin-ka-khoa can be passive where Thais could wait for Westerners to lead the way on policies to improve the community or improve the profitability of businesses. Thai policies, in the 1960s, depended on a few educated leaders who probably were unaware of the need to preserve and protect Thailand from cultural exploitation by visitors especially those who were on R & R or Rest and Recreation, during the Vietnam Conflict. Economic power exerted a powerful role over the local service people as the value of the dollar

encouraged the growth of prostitution with the influx of Thai women into Bangkok from the countryside. The argument exists that being uneducated does not mean Thais were powerless and unaware of what was going on, though being uneducated means that one's sense of survival may be heightened and one may not consider the effects of what one's actions may have on Thai tradition. Tin-ka khoa was the beginning globalization in 1960s, and this continued until Phleonchit and Sukhumvit were well known to be advanced in modern technology in the post-modern period of the mid 1970s. Then tourism became the new phenomena of Thai business and globalization began to pervade all aspects of Thai life and the words of tin-ka khoa were eventually marginalized. Thai tourism increased to a substantial level purely by word of mouth and Sukhumvit became *the* attraction to visitors from afar. Improved connections with the Middle East and Asian regions increased the population of tourists and expatriates to create mixed population. Expensive condominiums, hotels and apartments grew rapidly in the study area and modernity began to increase. Development of the slum and shanty towns occurred on some hidden areas close to the sois, especially in the south in Khlong Toei District and near the railroad junctions. Petchaburi Road, which ran parallel to Sukhumvit Road to north of Khlong San Saeb, was actually the main red light district, whereas Sukhumvit offered restaurants and only a few bars. Entertainment businesses were limited to hotels, restaurants and amenities were not fully developed in the Sukhumvit area, nor were service providers and street vendors.

Music power

During the tin-ka-khoa period, the globalization that invaded this area was a terrible culture shock to many local Thais. This became even more apparent when they were exposed to Western music. Western music of the fifties changed from slow ballads to rock and roll performed by the likes of Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Jimmy Hendrix and many others throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Music became a leading influence in Thai society and for everyday people. As music is universal, Thais enjoyed the music and even the King is internationally famous for playing jazz. Music is one of the most influential elements in our society and as a means of communication it can bring happiness and harmony. Viphand Roengpithya, dean of Asian University of Science and Technology explained that Genghis Khan (1162-1227) managed to communicate orders to hundreds of thousands of soldiers by the way of poetry and songs (Morning Thailand, T.V., channel 5, on 19th July 2006). The author is convinced that street music promotes and reciprocates urban life style in major cities around the globe, be it Osaka, Paris or Bangkok.

Blind bands and street musicians

There are different type of bands on the streets of Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit. Some are teams made up of a husband and wife, a pair of musicians and vocal group with a battery amplifier or a blind band. These can all be found in front of the Lake Ratchada Building on Ratchadapisek Road. Blind band musicians have a proverb that says 'Creating a job is a better charity than the building of a nation.' Teenage blind bands also perform Thai pop music at the Asoke BTS and MRT junction at noon each day, and under the supervision of a charity manager who

handed a brochure to the author on 10th August 2006. During the weekend, the young musicians also play at the Siam Square Court. Shin Nakagawa writes in his research on the street music of Osaka that when he asked some musicians, ‘Why do you play on the street?’ They answered, ‘I want to attract attention,’ or they offered, ‘I want to communicate with passers by,’ and, in complete honesty, ‘I can earn money!’ Other reasons offered included, ‘This is practice; I cannot practice at home, because my house is too small’ and ‘I want to be professional.’ (Nakagawa, 2003: 83). The author thinks these answers from Japanese musicians may not reflect the reasons why Thais perform on the street. One researcher found that working as a street musician in Thailand is not a welcomed occupation, although this appears to also be true in Japan. Research has shown some of the issues some musicians content with in the lives of street musicians in central Bangkok and in the suburbs are the same – they need to make their own living without any support from the government. The majority of traditional Thai minstrels tend to be older and blind, but often as those younger musicians state, they feel degraded by working on the street (Nakagawa, 2003: 80).

Western sport and the popularization of football

World Cup fever hit Thailand in the summer of 2006 when the World Cup was held in Germany. Football fans are known for their high spirit and for being very tired, as staying up all night to watch the matches have become very popular in Thailand. Many people in the Phleonchit and Sukhumvit area seemed to hold their breath during the thirty-one day competition, a bit worried about the hooliganism that may occur should a favored team lose their match. Thais have also developed a great interest in western sports such as tennis and golf which now played throughout the Kingdom. In Bangkok, there are football fans from all over the world that watched the game but were not informed about the game through the usual TV commentary, here offered by the Tosapak Group, the sole owners of such television rights. The lack of this commentary caused great disappointment for those foreign fans throughout Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads who were not able to understand the Thai commentary. A big screen outdoor television, in front of the Central World Plaza, drew a huge crowd on the Ratchadamri and Phleonchit Roads during 1.00 a.m. and 4.30 a.m. on 9th July 2006 for the final between France and Italy even though the commentary was in Thai. Cha-am Jamal from Phetchaburi province wrote, ‘Farangs have been victimized by ‘gonzo’ marketing techniques that should be disgusting even to Thais. Farangs who live here with Thai spouses and children and have moved their life savings and made their homes here are not really foreigners. They are part of the fabric of Thailand. On the World Cup issue, they have been wronged. Thais should stand with them on this issue’ (The Nation, 22nd June 2006, p: 11A).

Sukhumvit as a fashion venue

A fashion exhibition and parade was held in the case study area that traveled from the National Stadium to the Emporium Plaza on 15th February 2004. This extravaganza, designed to promote Bangkok city fashion, was hosted by the Bangkok Metropolis Administration (BMA). The government wanted to put

Thailand on the fashion world map and chose Rama I, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads for this fashion parade amid cutting edge technology and the extensive networks of globalization. The parade drew large crowds of observers who lined both sides of the route. This marketing success was an innovation for Bangkok that needs to be capitalized upon. A second fashion exhibition was held on the 6th floor of the Emporium Plaza in the Thailand Creative & Design Center (TCDC), between 4th May and 18th June 2006. This one year old venue collaborated with the Design Museum, Finland, to exhibit works by the illustrious designer Marimekko. The exhibition displayed, ‘fundamental to Marimekko’s designs is a use of color, paired with simple but memorable patterns’ (Brochure, Marimekko, TDCD, 2006). Over the last two years Bangkok fashion has been promoted and has become increasingly popular. National Economic Social Development Board (NESDB) sponsored the fashion show held at Lake Ratchada in Benchakitti Park from 14th to 19th June 2006. NESDB wants to make Thailand into an international in fashion and design center for the region. Therefore, it was not a surprise that they picked Sukhumvit as the place to hold the show. One of the latest fashion shows from London held at the TCDC presented Vivian Westwood punk-rock style fashion in August 2006.

Flowers from Pak Khlong Talad to Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads

A book from the urban culture research center by Shin Nakagawa and Bussakorn Sumrongthong classifies four primary locations for the street flower business. The first is the street intersection, where buyers can find and purchase lotus or malai to decorate spirit houses and pay homage to the gods or the image of Buddha. A second popular location can be found in the financial district, along sidewalks near commercial offices, where the garlands are much more elaborate. A third location is in popular residential areas and near community centers; these garlands are made from crown flowers rather than jasmine and are the cheapest, especially on Buddhist Sabbath Day. Finally the fourth location is near all religious centers, and the malai tend to be larger and more elaborate and, some are made to order (Nakagawa, 2003: 93). Through personal observation it can be argued that the Erawan Shrine does need the service of these vendors, as it is a tourist attraction in its own right.

Soi jumbos and soi animals

The author recently had a close call with some soi dogs apparently inhabiting a derelict building that sits near the Siam Society. The author survived this unpleasant occurrence, but feels the need to point out the problem of soi dogs, or animals that have no owner and merely roam the streets at will. However, the subject that continues to upset the author even further is the fate of the ‘urban’ Thai elephant. Thai elephants have roamed the streets of Bangkok for more than five decades. They have become a tourist attraction as the tourists are encouraged to feed them of bananas and sugarcane on the busy roads and sois. Animal rights activists *must* act and force government authorities to ban this activity once and for all. Letters to the editor from Rakesh Sodhia states ‘I believe there are laws in Thailand that clearly state elephants and other animals are not allowed into cities. In fact, Ronnakit Ekkasingh, the deputy mayor of Pattaya, recently announced that elephants found in

Pattaya will be seized and sent to Khao Khiew Open Zoo and their mahouts fined Bt10,000 (The Nation, 13th August 2006: 9A).

Baan Suan Rim Khlong

Some of my fondest memories of Sukhumvit, have to be centered on soi 31 and the scenery of rice fields in the 1960s. The soi ended at Khlong San Saeb, which was always full of clean water and fresh, clean vegetation for the author to reach out and touch. Houses along the banks were not so close to one another and the background of green nuan noi, a tropical grass, was a very pretty sight and seemed to stretch on forever and ever. Some houses had lovely balconies jutting out alongside the khlongs, offering a view of a comfortable and peaceful lifestyle. Those old days are now gone; now the khlongs are not as clean and are filled with loud long tail boats and passenger boats. Many of the bungalow style houses along with the baan ruh ruh, or the more expensive homes surrounded by fragrant tropical shrubs are now gone. To this day the sight of a typical Thai house reminds the author of baan suan rim khlong. Professor King writes, 'in the Central Plain this was the world of rice, orchards, khlongs, villages, baan suan rim khlong; there would be a *wat* as a mediator between realms (on a diversity of levels!). This is the private sphere, of the family and the mother, of mother rice goodness (whereas the elite realm, of Nation, Religion and King, is neither good nor bad, but simply what is there, unquestioned, and there can be no judgement passed upon it) (King, 2006b: 285). The author finds this memory implicated in the area of study as representational spaces interpreting Thai heritage in the strata of history.

Literature of politics

Since the 1960s, urban spaces throughout central Bangkok have come under a certain form of democratic movement. A path extends from a sacred 'bo tree' at Thamassat University through the royal grounds of Sanam Luang and along the royal road of Rachadamnoen Klang Avenue to the Democracy Monument (Dovey, 2001: 265). The protest rally held in March 2006 was at Siam Paragon though the weekly political entertainment programs, at Suan Lumpini Park, were more effective. The firebrand leader Sondhi Limthongkul and the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) chose to parade where Wireless Road cuts across Phleonchit Road from the British Embassy to the American Embassy on the afternoon of 14th July 2006 to protest the government of caretaker Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The simple reason for this political rally seems to have been the catch-22 question of a recalcitrant government - choice of a modern global environment in the precinct of the embassies or to move towards a path to call for a reformed democracy and, in this case, constitutional reform. The protest was to raise issues regarding conflicts of interest, breaches of human rights issues and the essential principles of democracy. Finally, a coup-d'etat occurred on 19th September 2006 which ousted the Prime Minister and put Prime Minister Surayuth Julanon in charge two weeks later.

The most important goal in this dissertation is to scrutinize and contemplate on cultural landscape, spatial practices and ethical morality of what is going on in

everyday life in the space of consumption. The view of ‘good and bad’ is the perception that could possibly inculcate Thai communities in becoming a knowledge based society. There are views and stories that will be inserted into chapters. For example views on site and location on physical layers outlook of spatial interpretation and other subjects, i.e. Buddhism, Thai identity, globalization, consumption, triad of nation-religion-king, Eastern and Western views that will be gleaned into the writing of what the author calls; ‘hybridized collages’, are taking place in the chapters.

Appendix C

A society of eclectic cultures

The author wishes to emphasize the diversity of the producers and their worldviews and concepts of space, following the representations of space in Lefebvre’s terms.

Archaeology was an unheard of enterprise in pre-colonial Southeast Asia, though it was adopted in un-colonized Siam in the colonial state’s manner (Anderson, 1983: 185). Since then Rama 1, Phleonchit and Sukhumvit Roads began their evolution during the reign of King Rama IV, the author has looked into local communities from the viewpoint of people and races and finds there are various groupings of people throughout the history of Thailand:

Thais: Members of the royal family along with the upper and lower classes of indigenous Thai people lived in the case study area and its surrounding districts. The middle class also mixed with those of royal lineage who tended to be land owners or owned established businesses of various types. Thai-Jeans (Thai-Chinese), who fit this description, are the majority of Thais today due to inter-marriage between local Thais and Chinese merchants over the past hundred years, with intermarriage becoming more acceptable after the reign of King Rama VI (Kesboonchoo, 2004: 136). Rural laborers and visitors lived outside the central area and sometimes even further a field. They rented properties and worked within the general service sectors. During the period of the 1950s and 1960s, a few Mon people remained, though most were Thai or second and third generation Chinese.

Chinese: From Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan; the majority of Chinese investors came from Singapore and Taiwan and began to invest in the area. In the recent decades, business incorporation came aggressively in the 2000s. One of the most prominent managing companies, to fall within this category, began to develop a high rise condominium on Sukhumvit soi 11 under the name ‘The Prime’. In recent decades there have been few developments on Sukhumvit soi 6, 8, 10 and 16, however at the end of 2006, a Taiwanese real estate group bought and sold an office block to be developed as a high rise condominium building in the area.

India: Sub-continentals are those who are called khaeks (visitors or foreigners), (Sulak Sivaraksa cited in Reynolds, 1987: 33) or of Sikh descent from India. They

came into the area from Banglumphu District in Rattanakosin during the Second World War period. Professor Kawee Worrakawin of Srinakharinwirot University on Sukhumvit soi 23 states there was an enclave of Indians from the Makkason area in nearby Petchburi Road who have lived in this area since the Ayudhaya period in Thai history. One well known family is known as 'Nana'. A. E. Nana is land developer (Askew, 2002: 239) who first had a subdivision in the Sukhumvit area and donated a plot of land to the Siam Society on Asoke Road (today Asoke Montri Road). He also owns a great deal of land in other areas. Today several hotels, apartments and condominiums are owned and operated by his family. Khaeks followed their ancestors businesses in Banglumphu District by opening garment business and tailoring shops. The younger generations also own restaurants, bars and computer based businesses.

Middle East: The Middle Easterners came in several decades ago. One of these was from Saudi Arabia and bought the Grace Hotel on soi Nana, where they lived with the Muslim Indian enclave and with them formed a Muslim community. They assisted many of their descendants in relocating to the enclave of soi Nana (soi 3 and soi 4). There are also Egyptians and other Africans found in this area. They tend to be merchants and of various trades and professions. Today the Indian and Middle Eastern population has spread throughout Sukhumvit Road.

Farangs: This term is used to describe those from America, Europe, and Australia. Most are engaged in professional services, as technicians, teachers and professors. A few own corporations and are involved in large industrial enterprises. Many upper end hotels and restaurants hire Western chefs and general managers. Some Farangs own small to medium businesses with moderate degree of success. Farangs have invested heavily in condominiums throughout the case study area where they are attracted to the area and cover a wide range of ages from the very young to retirees. Many Farangs settled in the area, while others travel throughout Thailand after their first visit to the Sukhumvit area.

Africans: They have come from all over the African continent, although those from Guinea, Mali, and Senegal are on the decline. They are often engaged in cloth and the clothing industry but have moved to China where raw materials and labor is cheap (Metro, 3rd May 2003: 26).

Japanese: Many Japanese own industries in partnership with others. Some Japanese soldiers remained after the war and settled around where the Emporium Plaza is today and throughout soi 20 to soi 55. Many have opened small family run Japanese restaurants. They have also invested in property throughout the area (physical surveys by author).

Koreans: From observations, Koreans have been the latest arrivals into the area. Most of them are restaurants owners and have begun to invest in property. Recent developments have led to Korean-Thais investing in the property market and in commercial development projects. Commercial shops near soi 12 and associated sois are home to a number of Korean business enterprises (interview, Udomsri Buranasiri, 23rd July 2006).

One can discuss the reasons behind why these wide ranging cultural groups have been attracted to Phleonchit and Sukhumvit, and of course there are many other nationalities, and that how they view their experiences of living in Bangkok, of their interdependency and how this connection has helped them survive and flourish. This phenomenon represents a sense of interracial harmony and connectedness that has developed in this international space since globalization in the late 1960s to the present day. The most impressive fact is these widely disparate cultures live side by side, without conflict and division, in a competitive, yet supportive, environment. It would be a worthwhile future study, to observe changes in growth, stability, connection and sustainability amongst these groups. Could this become a new kind of world community, a lesson for society to learn to live in light of globalization?

มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร สงวนลิขสิทธิ์

Appendix D

Figure 38: Graphic interpretation of everyday life on Sukhumvit Road



By Pumin Varavarn 2007.

Appendix E

Map 10: Vicinity Map 2007



Source: By the author 2007

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- Landscape Architectural Assistant, 200 North Main Street, City of Los Angeles, Department of Recreation and Parks, California, U.S.A.
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