



# ASIAN REVIEW

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## **Introduction**

*Jirayudh Sinthuphan*

## **Thailand Magic Amulets and Their Multimillion Baht Demand**

*Ainsley Jong*

## **Exploring the Vernacular Architecture in the Eastern Commercial and Tourism Districts of Mueang Chiang Mai**

*Aumpika Amloy*

## **Enhancing Urban Tourism in Bangkok: Challenges and Opportunities**

*Pechladda Pechpakdee*

## **The Stories of Construction and Contention: The 14th of October 1973 Memorial and the 2020 Student Movement in Thailand**

*Gil D. Turingan*

## **Taliban 2.0 and Geopolitical Security Concerns in South Asia's Neighbourhood**

*Masom Jan Masomy and Anup Shekhar Chakraborty*

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## Contents

Introduction	I
<i>Jirayudh Sinthuphan</i>	
Thailand Magic Amulets and Their Multimillion Baht Demand	1
<i>Ainsley Jong</i>	
Exploring the Vernacular Architecture in the Eastern Commercial and Tourism Districts of Mueang Chiang Mai	29
<i>Aumpika Amloy</i>	
Enhancing Urban Tourism in Bangkok: Challenges and Opportunities	53
<i>Pechladda Pechpakdee</i>	
The Stories of Construction and Contention: The 14th of October 1973 Memorial and the 2020 Student Movement in Thailand	85
<i>Gil D. Turingan</i>	
Taliban 2.0 and Geopolitical Security Concerns in South Asia's Neighbourhood	108
<i>Masom Jan Masomy and Anup Shekhar Chakraborty</i>	

## Introduction

*Jirayudh Sinthuphan*

In recent decades, it has been widely accepted that the creative industry is an important sector to global development. This is not just for its direct economic benefits but also for its broader impact on culture, society, and innovation. The creative industry enriches lives, fosters cultural understanding, and drives progress in various domains, making it a cornerstone of sustainable and inclusive development. The compelling collection of articles in this issue of *The Asian Review* offers readers a rich tapestry of insights, analysis, and reflections to the creative industry. Each essay within this anthology delves into unique aspects of culture, architecture, tourism, politics, and security, providing a comprehensive exploration of significant themes that shape our world.

In **Thailand Magic Amulets and Their Multi-Million Baht Demand: Why and Are They Really Worth So Much?**, Ainsley JONG embarks on an intriguing journey into the world of Thai magic amulets, examining their cultural significance and the substantial value placed upon them. The article uncovers the deep-seated beliefs that drive collectors to invest millions of baht in these objects, despite the pervasive issue of counterfeiting. By exploring the amulets' historical and spiritual context, the essay evaluates the potential for authenticating and legitimizing this market, positing it as a potential economic boon for Thailand in the post-COVID-19 era.

Next, **Exploring the Vernacular Architecture in the Eastern Commercial and Tourism Districts of Mueang Chiang Mai** by Aumpika AMLOY takes a closer look at the vernacular architecture

found in the bustling districts of eastern Chiang Mai. Through field surveys and architectural analysis, it identifies and documents six distinct styles, from wooden houses to concrete shophouses. The essay highlights how these architectural forms reflect local wisdom, the adaptation to modern construction techniques, and the timeless aesthetics that continue to shape the urban landscape.

**Enhancing Urban Tourism in Bangkok: Challenges and Opportunities** by Pechladda PECHPAKDEE focuses on Bangkok's urban tourism, this study investigates the challenges and opportunities inherent in the city's development. By analyzing data from tourist questionnaires, stakeholder interviews, and online travel platforms, the essay identifies mobility infrastructure as a critical issue. It offers strategic recommendations to improve primary attractions, support facilities, and mobility solutions, thereby enhancing Bangkok's appeal as a premier tourist destination.

On a political note, Gil D. TURINGAN delves into the symbolic and historical significance of the 14th of October 1973 Memorial in Thailand. **The Stories of Construction and Contention: The 14th of October 1973 Memorial and the 2020 Student Movement in Thailand** traces the evolution of this memorial from a site of remembrance for the student revolution to a platform for contemporary democratic movements, particularly the 2020 student protests. Through detailed analysis, the essay underscores the memorial's role in Thai democracy discourse and the enduring legacy of student activism.

**Lastly, Taliban 2.0 and Geopolitical Security Concerns in South Asia's Neighbourhood** by Anup Shekhar CHAKRABORTY and Masom Jan MASOMY examines the geopolitical shifts and the prevailing anti-India and anti-Pakistan sentiments within Taliban-controlled regions. The resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan presents profound security implications for South Asia, particularly for India and Pakistan. This essay explores the complex dynamics between these nuclear powers and the Taliban, highlighting the critical security concerns and the potential for regional instability.

Each essay in this collection offers a unique lens through

which readers are encouraged to engage with the material thoughtfully and critically. From the mystical allure of Thai amulets to the geopolitical tensions in South Asia, these writings provide valuable insights and foster a deeper understanding of the intricate forces at play in our world.

Jirayudh Sinthuphan

## Thailand Magic Amulets and Their Multimillion Baht Demand

*Ainsley Jong*<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT—** This paper seeks to explore and understand the making of Thai magic amulets and whether they are worth the value that makes their believers sometimes pay millions of baht for them, especially when there are many counterfeits. Looking at some of the most sought-after amulets, we learn why these magic amulets have an especially strong following among the Thai and even from visitors overseas. For the collectors of these amulets, there is this innate belief that they are made by powerful monks, who bless them and give the amulets magical powers, which are then transferred to the owner, thus giving them supernatural power, good fortune and protecting them from harm. This is what makes the amulets so desirable, but it is this same desire that make them so highly sought after and results in a huge commercial market where there is a great demand for the genuine amulets, which, in turn, creates opportunities for counterfeiters, who capitalise on this same demand. It is often difficult to identify the genuine from the counterfeit and this paper also seeks to evaluate why this is something that must be addressed, as magic amulets are possibly something innately Thai and have cultural value.

Finally the paper will evaluate whether the genuine amulets could be protected and authenticated, and by this process, with the legitimisation of the genuine amulet industry, it may be an area that may serve to contribute positively to the Thai economy, which is currently facing a difficult reset in these challenging post Covid-19 times.

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1 The writer is a PhD candidate with Chulalongkorn University, Faculty of Arts, Department of Thai studies and the approved thesis title is “Intellectual property rights protection in Thailand: A case study of alcoholic beverages”. He is the former head of Singapore’s Intellectual property rights department and was bestowed the title of H.E., Goodwill Ambassador, Kingdom of Cambodia, in 2017 representing Cambodia’s National Counter Counterfeit Committee.



as fundamental principles for delivering efficient services. The study also finds that administrative decentralization and the establishment of performance legitimacy within the Chinese political and governance system have played crucial roles in facilitating such a transformation. The study concludes with a discussion of the success factors and challenges associated with the ongoing reform efforts.

Keywords : Thai amulets, Religious commercialisation, Thai Buddhism, Thailand

## **Introduction**

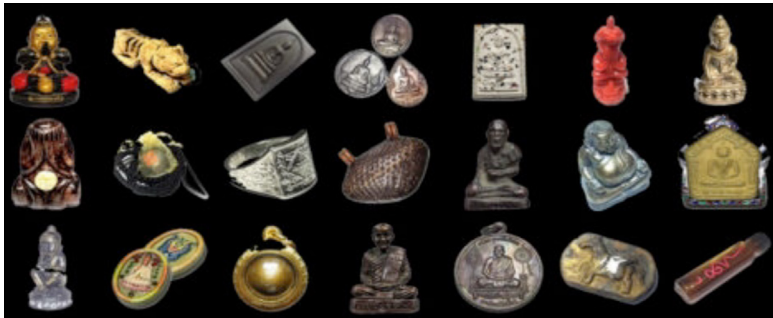
Thai magic amulets are small, mystically charged objects that are carried to provide the bearer with good fortune and/or protection from harm. They are carried by members of many Buddhist cultures, most prominently in the Theravada countries of mainland Southeast Asia, Burma, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia (Buswell 2004). Increasingly, they may now be found in countries in the European Union, the United States of America as well as China.

The majority of people who carry amulets are those who believe in the power and protection that they bring, despite the fact that the amulets were originally meant to be a reminder of Buddha and to live life in the same way as Buddha. They are sometimes also known as (Krueang Rang) in Thai, amulets bearing the likeness of Buddha, famous monks and Thai Kings among others.

### **How did they come about?**

According to Buswell, amulets derive their power from the blessings of monks with reputations for being exceptionally holy or mystically powerful. The amulets are small objects in which the power of the sacred is crystallised, as with holy relics. Once

crystallised, this power can be used by ordinary people who are not themselves holy or powerful. The power comes from both the words, Pali or Sanskrit blessings, and the personal power of the monks who chant them. The right words must be spoken by the right person for the transfer of power to be effective and monks acquire this power after years of meditation, which is demonstrated by their ability to perform miracles.



Picture of Thai amulets (Thailand Amulets 2019).

### **Why are they worn?**

The belief in the power of the amulet frequently starts from a very early age and becomes even more prominent as one gets older (Terwiel 2012). Due to this reason, owners of amulets have strong beliefs in their magical powers and as they progress in life and in their search to achieve success, these items play an even bigger role as they become more ingrained into their social and cultural beliefs.

Amulets are most commonly worn for general protection and often have very specific protective properties. A given amulet for instance may protect against puncture wounds, such as, from bullets or knives but not from crushing wounds from truncheons. An amulet is more valuable if it is known, for example, to have saved someone from a terrible car wreck (Buswell 2004). The belief in the power of the amulet is frequently what drives the owner to

gain possession of amulets they believe to possess great power and to keep the amulet on them at all times. Some owners are said to not leave home without their precious amulets and purposely return home if they realise they have left without them.

### **Pride in Possession**

Owners of amulets are also proud to keep them and show them off. It could be compared to a treasured possession, much like a car or a house or an expensive watch. When adult males gather together, one of the topics frequently discussed might be the recent acquisition of a powerful amulet. For example, whenever a group of men are together and there is a lull in the conversation, one of the group only has to ask someone to show his amulet, and the conversation is likely to centre upon these for a long period. Everyone is willing to explain in detail from where a prized amulet hails, how rare it is and what powers it possesses (Terwiel 2012). This is similar to other cultures where one may display the same attitude toward a new purchase, like a new watch, as it is a treasured possession and shown to peers for reasons of pride.

### **How are they made?**

Also known as (Devarupa), Buddha image, amulets and charms, can be made more powerful, or empowered, by rites performed according to magical knowledge. It may also be done through the chanting of a special Buddhist mantra using a special text or by fierce concentration to draw power into the objects in question, like amulets. The words in Thai are (sek) (from abhiseka) and (pluk sek) (pluk meaning to wake something up). When consecrating a Buddha image, the ritual is called (buddhabhisek). If amulets and charms are empowered, they are usually put into an oil casket used for lighting in a temple, so that when the monks chant, the power of the chants will be fixed into the amulets (Assavavirulhakarn 2010). Amulets may be composed of many different types of material, though generally they may be made of

flowers, sand or gravel or clay, holy powder, herbs or medicines or in metal form such as copper, silver or gold.

Nowadays however, they are often made depicting the face of a Buddhist monk, one who is famous for his magical power. These medallions are made by commercial firms, usually to order from the organising committee of a fund-raising committee of a monastery or temple (Terwiel 2012).

### **Does the association with Buddha add to its value?**

Most amulets are made by Buddhist monks, many in the impression and image of the Lord Buddha and used by devotees who call themselves Buddhists. They were in the early days also found in Buddhist relics and Stupas. Certainly, a case could be made that the amulets are seen by a portion of believers as part of the Buddhist religion.

Swearer (1993) shares his view on Buddha images which is used to draw a comparison with amulets. In Theravada Buddhist cultures, the Buddha images installed in assembly halls must be formally consecrated. Until that act takes place, the statue can be considered merely decorative. The consecration ceremony figuratively brings the image to life or empowers it, thereby transforming the image from its decorative and inconsequential status to one of spiritual and religious significance, which the same could be said for Buddha amulets. He goes on to say that Buddha symbols operative in various ritual contexts are most often associated with Buddha himself and includes Buddha images, his relics enshrined in reliquary mounds, and Buddha amulets. Symbols associated with individual monks are an important extension of these objects and the power ascribed to the individual monks derives in part from the power represented by the Buddha because monks follow his Dhamma (Swearer 1993).

The amulet cult serves as a function of normative beliefs and practices, circumstantial to forest monks but integral to religious religiosity (Taylor 1993). Taylor goes on to say amulets are

officially frowned upon, in the Thalaengkaan Khansong (1952), and serve in the same cultural category as sacred relics, functioning as reminders of the pure sanctity of the virtuoso and attributed with mystical powers.

Some of the most famous ones are known collectively as the (Benjapakee), meaning five types of members or grouping. Popular belief is that a group of well-known collectors in the early 1950s had proposed as a guide for Thai people the best choice of amulets to be worn. This is an excellent example of when amulets bore all the perceived powers of bringing good fortune, protection and charm to the owners.



Picture of Benjapakee (Old Thai Amulets 2019).

Mr B.T. Ng, a Singaporean, a collector with more than 20 years' experience collecting amulets, explained that the (Phra Somdej Wat Rakang) is the most sought after Thai Amulet of the five Benjapakee and is sometimes known as the King of amulets. This is corroborated by nearly all of the internet sites selling amulets, such as, <http://www.thailandamulet.net> and <http://www.oldthaiamulets.com>.

It has been said that the materials consist of shell lime, holy powder, flowers, rice, ashes, honey, banana and oil. The amulet was believed to be first made around B.E. 2409 and that a total of 84,000 amulets were made at the time. It is believed to bring fortune to the owner of the amulet and enhance their personal power. A piece in good condition could be worth more than 20 million baht. There are five notable (Pim) (mould or face), (Pim Yai), (Pim Jaydee), (Pim Tansam), (Pim Kratebuatoom) and (Pim Prokboh).



Picture of Phra Somdej Wat Rakang (Old Thai Amulets 2021).

(Phra Nang Phaya) was discovered sometime around B.E. 2444 at the temple of Wat Nang Phaya in Phitsanulok Province. Wat Nang Phaya was built in commemoration of the Queen at the time and so the Phra Nang Phaya is also sometimes called the Queen of the Thai Amulet. Made out of flower petals, rock gravel

and sand and in three styles, (Din Pao) or burnt clay, (Phong Bailarn) or ash from leaf and (Phong Hin) or ash from rock, the owner of the amulet would be blessed with personal power, attractiveness, charm and be safe from dangers. It is pyramid in shape and portrays a Buddha image in the subduing Mara posture, left hand rests on the lap and palm facing up, right hand bends over the knees and facing the ground, representing enlightenment. The amulets were made at the temple of Queen (Visutkatsatri), wife of King (Mahardharmaraja), father of King (Naresuan), during the Ayutthaya era and given out to soldiers for protection. The amulet had eight different Pim, (Pim Yai Kaokhong), (Pim Yai Kaothong), (Pim Sukathi), (Pim Aokfab), (Pim Aokthong), (Pim Aoknoon), (Pim Khanaonsukothai) and (Pim Khanonayuttaya) (Naresuan 2019).



Picture of Phra Nang Phaya (Top Amulet 2021).

(Phra Rod Wat Phra Singha) was first discovered during the reign of King Rama V inside a stupa at Wat Mahawan in Lamphun province and is also known as a Buddha of Escape. The amulet



is made from four types of clay from different places, medicines, herbs and many flowers and consecrated by 108 chanting monks and found in smooth clay of red, white, green and brown clay colours. Made by hermit (Narata Rorsee) or (Narod), it is believed to convey protection, avoidance of misfortune and safety in day to day activities. Some can be dated back 1,000 years and also said to give the owner power and safety from all dangers, disasters and misfortunes. There are five pim for Phra Rod, (Pim Yai), (Pim Grang), (Pim Lek), (Pim Tearn) and (Pim Tor).



Picture of Phra Rod (Chai Amulet 2021).

(Phra Phong Suphan) from (Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat) in Suphanburi Province is believed to be the strongest amulet ever created. A style some believe to be from the U Thong art style, some of the amulets are made out of gold, though most are made out of material like sand or gravel, flowers and medicinal herbs. It



typically comes in four colours of black, red, yellow and green. The uniqueness is the fingerprint of the master monk maker found at the back of the amulet, bringing protective power against weapons, good luck, and enhancement to the attractiveness of the owner. It is believed to be first found with a golden scripture that showed the relation between the amulet and its creator, (Phra Mahathera Piyathassi Saribut) during the period of King (Borommarachathirat) II. It has three notable pims, (Pim Na Noom) or young face, (Pim Na Klang) or mature face and (Pim Na Kae) or old face.



Picture of Phra Phong Suphan (Ahaina 2021).

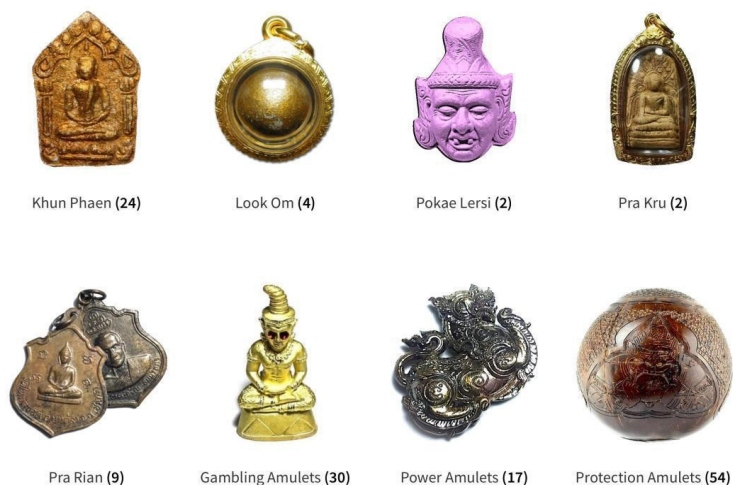
(Phra Som Kor) was discovered around B.E. 2392 at (Wat Phra Borumathat) at Kamphaeng Phet province. The oldest of these amulets are around 500 years old and are extremely rare. Made by 11 (Phra Lersi), hermits using special materials like flowers, herbs, spell and water. It is said that whoever has it will never be poor. Additionally, one special characteristic of the amulet is it feels especially soft in texture.



Picture of Phra Somkor (Ahaina 2021).

### **Other types of amulet**

(Phra Khun Phaen), (Jatukham Rammathep) and (Phra Kring) are examples of other types of popular amulets highly sought after by collectors and amulet enthusiasts. Also commonly collected are amulets with Indian deities, love charms, (Kuman Thong), dark arts or lockets with the face of famous monks. (Pokae lersi), (Phra Kru) and (Phra Rian) as seen in the image below from [Thailand-amulet.com](http://Thailand-amulet.com).



Picture of different amulet types (Thailand Amulet 2019).

### **Famous amulet makers**

Other very famous monks and amulet makers include (Luang Pu Thuad) of (Wat Chang Hai), (Luang Phor Ngern) of (Wat Bangklan), (Luang Phor Parn) of (Wat Bangnomko), (Luang Phor Derm) of (Wat Nong Pho), (Luang Phor Suk) of (Wat Makhham Tao), (Luang Phor Pae) of (Wat Pikulthong), (Luang Phor Toh) of (Wat Pradoochemelee) and (Luang Phor Koon) of (Wat Ban Rai) and amulets made by them are extremely valuable. Another famous maker of amulets who added to the mystique and legend of the amulets was (Luang Phor Sodh). He was famous for making amulets and charging them with power derived from high level Dharmmakaya meditation. There are numerous miraculous stories attributed to these amulets, and they are sought after by Thailand's many amulet buyers and traders (Bowers 1996).

In an article on a survey by Suan Dusit Poll, the argument

is that the most popular amulets are those bearing the likeness of Luang Pu Thuad of Wat Chang Hai and (Phra Somdej Toh) (47 and 21.9 per cent of all amulets worn, respectively). The survey was conducted on 1,126 people nationwide from 11-15 September. Results indicate that 12.9 per cent wore (Luang Por Sothorn) amulets, 9.4 per cent wore (Luang Phu Toh)'s (Phra Pidta) (Closed Eyes) amulets and 8 per cent wore (Luang Por Ngern) of (Wat Bang Klan) (The Nation 2018).

According to Taylor, in Thailand it is considered fortunate and prestigious to have in one's possession an amulet blessed by a forest monk. Famous forest monks such as (Ajaans Phaang, Sii, Fan, Khao, Juan and Waen) are known to have dispersed amulet-medallions at one time or another. Due to associations with arahanship and related mystical powers attributed to relics of forest monks in the line of (Ajaan Man), popular interest has grown in recent years and these monks have been actively sought over in the past twenty years for sacralising amulets.

### **How commercialised is amulet trading?**

Amulets have been a business and a hobby for only half a century. Amulet markets in Bangkok's old town attract tourists and this industry is worth over 40 billion baht – that's 1.25 billion dollars. Traded at about 10,000 stalls, shops, fairs, markets, magazines, websites, and a whole floor of Pantip Plaza computer mall at Ngamwongwan, they can fetch huge prices (Cornwell-Smith and Goss 2011).

A counter argument could be that amulets are made only as gifts and souvenirs and should not be deemed to be anything other than that. This is seen in the reply from the temple who claimed their amulets were made merely as a souvenir, as seen in the picture of amulets made with the symbol of Doraemon, a famous Japanese manga or cartoon character.



Picture of Doraemon amulet (Bangkok Post 2012).

Amulets are like gold, since it could contain perceived value and serve as a guard against inflation and political instability. Many traders of amulets claim it is a livelihood and explain that there is no mention within Buddhist teachings that trading in Buddha images should not be allowed.

Vendors bristle at accusations of ‘trade’ in, or commercialisation of amulets. They claim to ‘rent’ amulets, and use a similar analogy of why monks should not handle money, but graciously accept donations for amulets that may technically be sold. Another term they use is worship fee (Cornwell-Smith and Goss 2013).

Amulets are big business and some can cost upwards of two million dollars. Phra Somdej amulets at Wat Rakhang and Wat Indrawihan by Somdej Toh have consistently been some of the most valuable in the country. His amulets have attained the most privileged place among the five highest ranking amulets of the nation, the Benjapakee. This commodification of Somdej Toh and other monks, nuns, deities, monarchs, and historical figures has generally been approached by scholars as a reflection of the growing crisis in Thai Buddhism and of the rise of religious commercialism (McDaniel 2011).

### **How did they gain their tremendous value?**

Amulets embody personal beliefs and emotions, and are thought to increase the possessor's psycho-physical strength. The enormous consumption of amulets by men during the 1970s was motivated by the anxiety to boost male aggressiveness in a period of increased social instability and gender related violence (Tambiah 1984).

Since then, amulets continue to be bought in order to enhance the fortune of the owner or add personal power. Acquiring an amulet made by a famous monk is said to also mean receiving a transfer of power from the monk to the owner. Hence, it is normal that when the monks pass away, as more years go by, the more valuable their amulets become.

To understand what makes up the value of an amulet, one should consider who made the amulet, the temple's prominence or reputation, how many actual amulets were made, how well preserved the amulets are, how old the amulets are, the demand and supply of the amulets and on occasion the substance of the amulet. An example being that amulets made of gold are very valuable as they are very rare and hence priced many times above others.

A comparison could be made of large Buddha images or statues which get their name from their power, their appearance and style, their fabrication techniques and the materials from which they are made (Lagiarde and Koanantakool 2006).

Another amulet is the (Chatukham Rammathep), which had its height of popularity from 2006-2007 and originated from Nakhon Sri Thammarat. The amulet depicts the expression of a frustrated society desperate for spiritual assurance and of a collective desire for wealth and political stability among the Thai public. Amulet cults, such as, the Chatukham Rammathep and Luang Pho Khun reveal a shift away from devotional tradition based on community and family aligned with life cycles toward a new drive for personal material wealth, success and luck and this illustrates the commodification and marketisation of religious symbols and

charisma by the capitalists (Kitiarsa 2012).

History and myth are deeply entwined in the stories behind most famous amulets (Kitiarsa 2012). The plots of these stories are more about miracles than proven historical facts. However, history and myth are never completely separate because the mythical stories of amulets need to be grounded in known ancient history.

There are hundreds of miracle stories in amulet collector's magazines and shared between friends in the amulet markets or while relaxing at the monasteries. Occasionally a monk is heard telling these stories over loudspeakers during monastery festivals (McDaniel 2011).

### **Has trading amulets reached the point of illegality?**

A Reuters report discusses a Thai temple being reprimanded by religious authorities for selling amulets containing the ashes of cremated infants to raise money for a plot of land and a crematorium. A government official who was interviewed said it is not illegal, but is inappropriate (Reuters 2007).

Looking at some of Thailand's laws, The Royal Thai Customs Department regulate exports of Buddha images out of Thailand under the Customs Act BE 2469(1926) as consolidated in 2005 and strictly prohibits the export of any and all Buddha images without written permission or a license to do so. It also does not allow counterfeit goods.

Exploring the Intellectual Property laws in Thailand, the Trademark Act (No 3) B.E. 2559 (2016) would require the maker of the amulet or owner of the trademark to have registered the trademark for there to be an offence to be revealed for counterfeiting. Historically, trademark registration would not have happened since these laws are also too modern for when the early amulets were made.

The attractiveness of amulets has surpassed any discussion of legality and is seen as an asset of worth, and despite the fact that

it is discouraged, it is viewed to be able to hold and retain value. An example could be seen in an article in the Bangkok Post, where the National Anti-Corruption Commission or NACC accepted declarations of worth and included cash, houses and buildings, gold bars, high-end watches and cars from the Top Police General. He also declared 12 Buddha amulets, the value of which could not be appraised (Bangkok Post 2021).

### **The counterfeiting of amulets**

With the perception of value comes the possibility of counterfeit. Taan Tha Prachan, an amulet master and writer for Khaosod newspaper's amulet section shares that amulet forgery has been around for a long time but that in the present day, the forgery has become really advanced. Sometimes they can be 98% or 99% identical to the real antiques, especially with the help of printing and scanning technology. All the defects can be scanned and reproduced. It is still challenging, however, to forge amulets with 100% accuracy (Baumann 2014).

Technology today has, unfortunately, changed the counterfeiting landscape and made the task of creating a counterfeit much easier, which explains their proliferation. The ability to share knowledge and improve the know-how among counterfeiters, caused by the Internet is an example. Visitors to the dark web will get all the lessons a counterfeiter would require on how to manufacture counterfeits, including a step-by-step guide and even the supply of the materials in some instances. Shams (2017) mentions that on the Internet, sites for file sharing are common, such as, The Pirate Bay, which is known for giving access to pirated goods and even has specific sections, for instance, one called Physibles where people share digital files for printing objects.

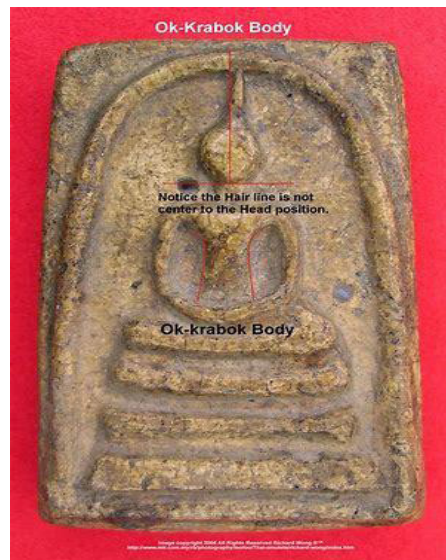
The second bane of technology as previously mentioned is the image capture processing and reproduction technologies which have significantly advanced. Within the hands of most people are their mobile devices, with their advanced cameras and the ability to capture high-definition images and hence every single known



image and angle the amulets will have, allowing for precise details in the reproduction of counterfeit.

This is then made worse due to the technology of modern-day reproduction. 3D printing or three dimensional printing is explained by Park B.J et al, (2019) as a method to produce 3D objects from digital models by fusing or depositing materials in successive layers, which allows the fabrication of objects with various geometries in a layer by layer process. Shams (2017) wrote that to copy an object, one only need two things: an electronic schematic of the product and a 3D printer, which means anyone can reproduce any available design or objects such as Buddha amulets to an exacting similarity.

With both perfect image capturing and perfect reproduction, this will negate one of the main tests in looking for differences in the appearance of the amulet as a means to differentiate the genuine from the counterfeit. For example, looking out for a minor flaw in the original caused by a dent in the original mould may no longer be viable as this flaw can now be replicated to perfection.



Example of a minor flaw in the moulds used by experts to identify a genuine amulet (Wong 2021).



Picture of Benjapakee (Ebay 2019).

### **Should something be done and why?**

There is a tremendous opportunity for Thailand to benefit from protecting the genuine amulet industry. Magic amulets are something uniquely Thai, and should be regulated and protected, allowed to grow and bring more recognition, more visibility and even act as a boost to the Thai economy, like K pop or K drama, which has brought increased visitors to Korea and revenue to its economy. It is now commonplace to see in many countries in the region like Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong websites, shops and people which offer verification, trading, certification and other related services for amulets. If nurtured in the right way, people would come to Thailand not only to visit temples, visit the beautiful places, eat the delicious food but also participate in the magic and mysticism of amulets. Even more so, a case could be made that magic amulets are Thai intellectual property, made in Thailand and carry the history and culture of the Thai people with some of these amulets being more than 500 years old. It would not be a far stretch that this could be an area where the Thai Government could consider registering Thai magic amulets as an intangible cultural heritage.

## **How regulation could help?**

To be effective in the regulation and control of the amulet industry, the Thai government could start by promulgating legislation that it is illegal to trade in uncertified magic amulets. As earlier discussed, it would be difficult at the initial stage to enforce under trademark laws as the majority of the amulets have never been registered as trademarks and it is also likely their makers have passed on, making registration now impossible. Hence a more practical step would be to use certification as the measure for legality, with future new amulets made registered and enforced under the Trademark Act. With the technology today, registering a trademark is also something quite easily done on the internet and reduces the costs to a reasonable level, which the Government could take on.

Second would be the setting up of a new Government department to regulate this industry. Given that it is an industry already estimated to be valued in the billions, it is an area the Thai government should not ignore further and it is a critical step to take. Within this new department, there would be several divisions to take charge of the different areas, including certification, verification, registration and enforcement. Starting with the most valuable of the amulets and making their way down, a small registration and certification fee could even be charged to offset any costs concerned. Owners of these amulets would be willing to have their precious amulets certified as it would add value for them and give them some certainty and perhaps bragging rights, certainly eliminating future doubts of authenticity.

A team of experts could be co-opted into the area of verification. This could be a gathering of the foremost experts with the most experience and they would form the start of skills gathering for identification, with training helping to inculcate these skills into the department for the future.

Controlling the conditions of sale is also important. Regulations should be enforced on how magic amulets may be sold, where they may be sold and even the way they are sold would go

a long way to cleaning up the industry, to name a few.

### **So how to assess an authentic amulet?**

It is therefore important also to look into how one identifies an amulet today. Though not an exhaustive list, one could consider some of the steps as follows;

- One, to bring a trusted expert to help verify these expensive amulets.
- Two, to buy amulets that have taken part in official competitions.
- Three, send the amulet for carbon testing, or the C14 test. For example, a Phra Somdej that is more than 140 years old is typically considered genuine. However it is unlikely any owner would consent to a part of their prized amulet being removed and tested.
- Four, to have knowledge of the amulet one intends to purchase if they must engage in trade for it. This includes knowing what material the amulet is made of, the colour, the age of the amulet, the distinct look of the amulet and any significant points to take note of which may have occurred during the moulding process will all help point to a genuine amulet.

### **How technology is able to help**

Iansiti and Lakhani (2017) shared, in an article in the Harvard business review, that the technology at the heart of blockchain is an open, distributed ledger that can record transactions between two parties efficiently and in a verifiable and permanent way. In a blockchain system, the ledger will be replicated in a large number of identical databases, each hosted and maintained by an interested party. When changes are entered in one copy, all the other copies are simultaneously updated. Therefore, as transactions occur, records of the exchange are permanently entered in all ledgers. It is common knowledge that the most valuable amulets are held in the hands of the rich or the elite and when

there is a change of ownership, in current practice, the information is quickly circulated through word of mouth. Ergo, trades that are not announced through this normal channel of information could be deemed counterfeit. This is a perfect illustration of the advantage in the use of the blockchain technology to capture the transferral of the buying and selling of the amulet pieces in order to properly authenticate the amulet.

The blockchain technology, when applied to the amulet, would create an unalterable digital ledger to record all transactions from the moment of their creation, which for the amulet means even a hundred years later, someone could still check the records. This would solve the current problem of authenticating genuine amulets with so many of the records having been lost and hence easily counterfeited.

A fine illustration of technology impacting not only the differentiation of counterfeiting, is even in the amulets themselves. In an article on Channel News Asia, a group of enthusiasts have already led the way in blockchain adoption. They continue to discuss the value that an amulet brings to the buyer of the amulet, which was blessed by (Luang Pu Heng) who had several lucky experiences such as winning lottery prizes or being promoted on the job (Voanews, 2012). What this truly represents is that it makes out the case that the belief in the power of the amulet is so strong that it could even be a crypto and hence virtual token and people would still carry the same belief.



Pictures of crypto amulets of Luang Po Heng (Crypto Amulets 2021).



### **These measures are still not 100%**

However, for the moment, there is still no way to tell whether an amulet is indeed authentic, which may be defined as an amulet which has the efficacy that the owners desire. After an examination of academic and commercial writings, it could be concluded that there exists no scientific or otherwise way to determine whether the amulets have the efficacy that the owners' seek. This means that an amulet collector engages in trade mainly due to their perception, and true authenticity of an amulet depends primarily on the owners' personal belief.

### **Conclusion**

In a country like Thailand, with the respect given by the majority of the people to Buddhism, along with the mysticism and stories of power that an amulet brings, it is natural that the practice of collecting amulets would grow to the proportions of today. In addition, the commercial value that trading in certain amulets brings, provides a confirmation as to why these amulets are worth millions.

From an authentication and counterfeiting perspective, technology has made it easy to manufacture counterfeits, thus making it more difficult to identify genuine from counterfeit in terms of originality and even legality standpoint.

Finally, from the believers' viewpoint, while there is no way to completely verify an amulet, as long as a believer truly believes that the amulet has the power it is deemed to contain, no matter genuine or counterfeit or how it was acquired, to the owner, it would be seen as authentic and valuable, which begs the question, does anything else really matter?



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## Exploring the Vernacular Architecture in the Eastern Commercial and Tourism Districts of Mueang Chiang Mai

*Aumpika Amloy<sup>1</sup>*

**ABSTRACT—:** This research article aims to analyze the vernacular architecture in the commercial and tourist districts of eastern Chiang Mai, covering the Chang Moi, Wat Ket, and San Pa Khoi districts. The methods of study are field surveys, historical documentation, and architectural analysis focusing on exploring the architectural elements, materials, and design principles that shape the urban environment in Mueang Chiang Mai. The study results identified six vernacular architecture styles in the study areas: wooden houses, wooden shophouses, wooden-concrete houses, wooden-concrete shophouses, concrete houses, and concrete shophouses. First, the vernacular architecture was built mainly from wood, representing the use of natural resources in the settlement area and local wisdom in construction. Second, the vernacular architecture was built with concrete and wood, combining local wisdom in traditional construction with modern construction techniques. Finally, vernacular architecture was built mainly with concrete, which uses both natural and engineering materials, reflecting the adaptation of vernacular architecture to support the popular functional changes over time, resulting in various improvement and developments. Conditions make vernacular architectural styles change from the original but still show the continuity of local wisdom in building, and timeless aesthetics. The prevalence and popularity of vernacular architecture styles found in the study area were 51 wooden houses in the Chang Moi district, 23 wooden-concrete houses in the Wat Ket district, and 8 concrete shophouses in the San Pa Khoi district.

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<sup>1</sup> Lecturer of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, Chiang Mai University.

Keywords : Vernacular Architecture, Chiang Mai, Cultural Influences, Preservation.

## **Introduction**

Chiang Mai, located in northern Thailand, is renowned for its rich cultural heritage and unique architectural traditions. The city's historical significance, cultural preservation efforts, traditional building practices, availability of natural resources, cultural exchange, and the impact of tourism have contributed to the abundance of valuable vernacular architecture in Chiang Mai. This architectural landscape showcases the city's cultural heritage and is vital to its enduring appeal as a destination (Tansukanun 2019).

The vernacular architecture in Chiang Mai is closely related to the local climate and natural environment. Traditional buildings incorporate design principles considering ventilation, shading, and rainwater management. Structures are often elevated on stilts to mitigate flooding, while their orientation maximizes natural airflow and minimizes heat gain. The value and importance of vernacular architecture in Chiang Mai lies in its representation of cultural identity, historical significance, architectural diversity, sustainable practices, community engagement, and its contribution to tourism and economic development. Recognizing and appreciating the value of vernacular architecture is crucial for preserving Chiang Mai's unique architectural heritage and ensuring its legacy for future generations (Leaurungreong 2005).

However, the rapid urbanization and development in developed areas often prioritize modern architectural styles and high-rise structures over vernacular architecture. The demand for land and commercial spaces can lead to demolishing or modifying existing vernacular buildings, resulting in the loss of architectural heritage (Thinnakorn, Tandikul, and Inpuntung 2020). The globalization and spread of standardized architectural styles further contribute to the homogenization of urban landscapes, diminishing their diversity and cultural distinctiveness (Suwatharapinun 2015). To

address these threats, concerted efforts from various stakeholders, including government bodies, preservation organizations, communities, and architects, are necessary. Raising awareness about the value of vernacular architecture, implementing supportive policies, providing financial incentives for restoration and adaptive reuse, and fostering community engagement are essential for preserving and recognizing these invaluable architectural treasures (Suwatcharapinun, et al. 2022).

The study of vernacular architecture in the eastern commercial and tourism districts of Chiang Mai holds significance as these areas have undergone significant development and transformation over time. Understanding the vernacular architecture in this context provides insights into the historical, social, and cultural contexts of Chiang Mai. It contributes to the understanding of the cultural products of local communities. This research article is part of a larger project titled “Adaptation of Urban Vernacular Architecture in the Main Tourist Cities of Thailand,” aimed at creating basic knowledge to guide the preservation and further development of vernacular architecture in Chiang Mai.

In conclusion, the value and importance of vernacular architecture in Chiang Mai stems from its representation of cultural identity, historical significance, architectural diversity, sustainable practices, community engagement, and contribution to tourism and economic development. Preserving and studying vernacular architecture in the face of urbanization and development challenges is essential to maintain the city’s cultural heritage and ensure its continued uniqueness and appeal.

## **Objectives**

This research article aims to analyze the vernacular architecture in the commercial and tourist districts of eastern Chiang Mai, covering the Chang Moi, Wat Ket, and San Pa Khoi districts.

## **Literature Review**

The study of vernacular architecture has gained recognition in the academic sphere since the 19th century, initially focusing on tribal and ethnic architectural practices. Its prominence further increased in the 20th century, particularly with the exhibition “Architecture without Architects,” which led to its acceptance as a legitimate architectural form by scholars and professionals. The concept of vernacular architecture has evolved with modern and postmodern architectural ideas, blending traditional wisdom with contemporary practices (Muadthong, Tovivich, and Panin 2019).

In addition, the study of vernacular architecture has expanded to examine its dynamics and responses to economic, social, and cultural developments. Globalization, consumerism, global warming, and natural disasters have prompted multidisciplinary investigations into the relationship between architecture and environmental forces. This multidisciplinary nature has attracted attention from various fields, including social sciences, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, geography, and environmental studies (Satheinnam and Thungsakul 2016).

Within the Thai context, studying vernacular architecture has gained significance, focusing on the relationship between humans and the environment and formulating diverse architectural styles based on contextual factors. Scholars have proposed educational frameworks to address the challenges and changes encountered in vernacular architecture. These frameworks emphasize an understanding of environmental principles, the dynamics of change, and the integration of different academic disciplines. Past academic works underscore the fundamental aspects and evolution of studying vernacular architecture, highlighting its connection to local wisdom, wherein the designer, builder, and user often belong to the same group. Vernacular architecture is recognized as a dynamic form that adapts and evolves to meet the needs and aspirations of the local society (Oranratmanee 2017).

The literature review particularly emphasizes the significance of studying vernacular architecture within the Thai context, shedding light on the relationship between humans and the

environment, contextual influences on architectural styles, and the necessity for comprehensive educational frameworks. It underscores the importance of integrating diverse academic disciplines and expanding educational approaches to address the challenges and changes that vernacular architecture faces today. Overall, the literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the critical themes, historical context, and interdisciplinary nature inherent in studying vernacular architecture. It serves as a foundation for further research and exploration into vernacular architecture's dynamics, preservation, and significance within various cultural, social, and environmental contexts.

## **Methodology**

The investigation into vernacular architecture within the Eastern Commercial and Tourism Districts of Mueang Chiang Mai, focusing on Chang Moi, Wat Ket, and San Pa Khoi districts, employed a mixed-methods approach. This approach seamlessly integrated qualitative and quantitative research methods comprehensively to understand the subject. The study utilized vernacular architecture surveys and unstructured interviews as its primary data collection tools. Key informants were thoughtfully selected through purposive sampling, considering specific characteristics that rendered them knowledgeable about the study area. The resulting interview data was meticulously analyzed and presented using various techniques, including written descriptions, maps, and illustrative visuals. The process of selecting the population and sample groups involved identifying key informants who deeply understood the study area and were proficient in the Thai language. Joint field surveys were conducted alongside residents with in-depth knowledge of the region. The purposive sampling method was skillfully applied to form two distinct sample groups. Group 1 comprised community leaders, including governance leaders, spiritual figures, religious leaders, and ceremonial leaders, with a ratio of three individuals per area. Group 2 consisted of community residents, with a ratio of ten individuals per area. Thirty-nine key informants participated in the study across the



three areas. The research commenced with an extensive literature review, establishing a robust theoretical framework to understand vernacular architecture in commercial and tourism development comprehensively. This review identified and synthesized essential concepts, theories, and previous research studies relevant to the research topic. Subsequently, site visits were conducted within the study areas, enabling direct observation and documentation of vernacular architecture. These site visits involved meticulous examinations of various types of buildings, encompassing architectural styles, construction materials, and spatial arrangements. Interviews were also conducted with residents and community leaders to acquire valuable insights into the historical context, cultural significance, and contemporary challenges associated with vernacular architecture in the selected districts. In addition to qualitative data collection methods, a survey form was administered to gather quantitative data regarding the number of vernacular architectures in the study area. This quantitative data collection process focused on exploring architectural elements, materials, and design principles that shaped the urban environment in Mueang Chiang Mai. The qualitative data collected from site visits, interviews, and document analysis was analyzed using qualitative techniques such as content analysis and thematic coding. These analytical methods facilitated the identification of common themes, patterns, and distinctive characteristics of vernacular architecture within the study area. Simultaneously, quantitative data from the survey form was analyzed using appropriate statistical methods, yielding meaningful insights and enabling informed conclusions. The research article emphasized the practice of data triangulation, which involves integrating data from multiple sources and utilizing diverse methods to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. By seamlessly integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study comprehensively analyzed vernacular architecture within the study areas. This analysis shed light on the significance of vernacular architecture within the region's commercial and tourism contexts.

## **Research Result**

### **Exploring the Vernacular Architecture in Chang Moi District.**

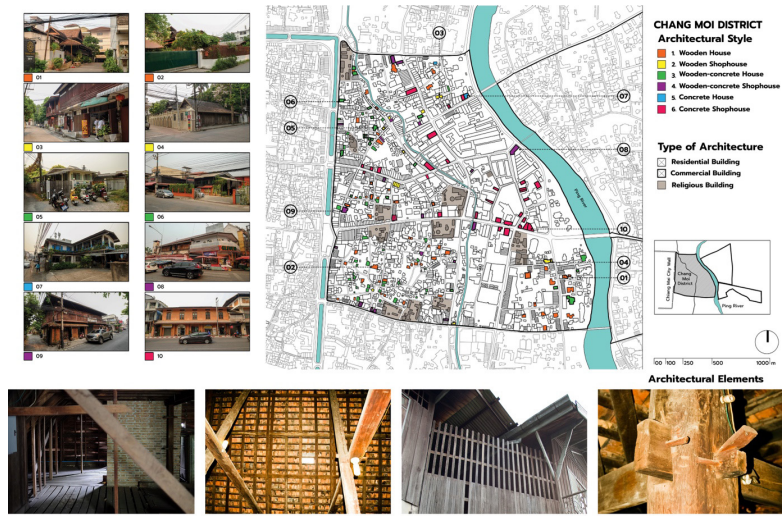
Chang Moi District, located on the eastern bank of the Ping River in Chiang Mai, Thailand, possesses a significant historical and cultural background that contributes to its distinct character and appeal. Originally a part of the ancient Lanna Kingdom from the 13th to the 18th century, Chang Moi played a vital role within the kingdom's fortifications, serving as a crucial district for the defense and administration of the capital city, Chiang Mai. Throughout its history, Chang Moi has been a center of cultural activities closely tied to local traditions, festivals, and ceremonies. The district is renowned for its association with religious practices. It boasts numerous temples and sacred sites, including the historically and spiritually significant Wat Chiang Man, the oldest temple in Chiang Mai (Tansukanun 2023).

As the years progressed, Chang Moi became a bustling commercial and residential hub, capitalizing on its strategic location along the Ping River and proximity to the Old City. Its prominence as a trade and commerce center is evident through its vibrant markets, diverse shops, and lively street life. This economic development has contributed to the district's cultural diversity, comprising both Thai locals and a significant expatriate population. This blending of cultural influences has resulted in a vibrant atmosphere and cosmopolitan character unique to Chang Moi. Moreover, the district's central location and rich cultural offerings have made it a popular tourist destination. Visitors are drawn to Chang Moi's lively markets, street food stalls, traditional craft shops, and art galleries, where they can immerse themselves in the local way of life, savor authentic Thai cuisine and explore the cultural heritage of Chiang Mai (Shummadtayar, et al. 2022).

In summary, the historical significance, cultural heritage, commercial prominence, cultural diversity, and popularity as a tourist destination shape the background of Chang Moi District. Understanding this background allows for a deeper appreciation of the district's unique character and its significant contribution

to the overall allure of Chiang Mai.

The study’s findings reveal a rich and diverse range of vernacular architecture in Chang Moi District. The survey identified 51 wooden houses, 9 wooden shophouses, 50 wooden-concrete houses, 18 wooden-concrete shophouses, 2 concrete houses, and 29 concrete shophouses. These buildings represent distinct architectural styles and construction materials commonly found within the district (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Map illustrating the exploration of vernacular architecture in Chang Moi District.

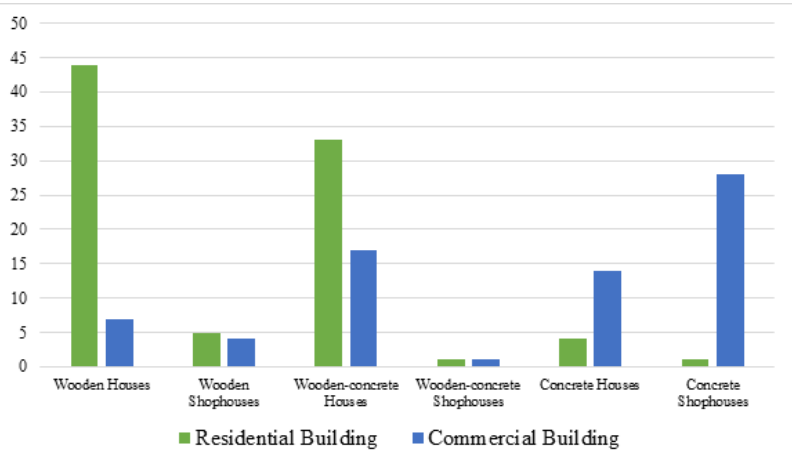
Modified Map Incorporating Tansukanun’s Scholarly Findings in 2023

Wooden houses and shophouses emerge as significant components of the vernacular architecture in Chang Moi District. These structures showcase characteristic features of traditional Lanna architecture, including intricate wood carvings, steep roofs, and elevated floor levels. The prevalent use of wood in these build-

ings exemplifies the local craftsmanship and the adaptation to the climatic conditions specific to the region.

In recent years, a notable trend has been the emergence of hybrid structures that combine wood and concrete elements. Wooden-concrete houses and shophouses represent a contemporary approach that integrates traditional aesthetics with modern construction techniques. While wooden houses and shophouses dominate the architectural inventory in Chang Moi District, concrete houses and shophouses constitute a relatively smaller proportion. These concrete structures signify the influence of urbanization and modernization on the district's-built environment.

The distribution of these vernacular buildings is scattered throughout Chang Moi District, contributing to the display of its rich architectural heritage and cultural diversity. The wooden houses and shophouses are predominantly concentrated in the older sections of the district, reflecting the area's historical legacy. In contrast, wooden-concrete and concrete structures are more prevalent in areas that have undergone urban development and modernization (Chart 1).



**Chart 1:** Comparative analysis of the quantity of vernacular architectures observed in Chang Moi District.

### Exploring the Vernacular Architecture in Wat Ket District.

Wat Ket District, situated in Chiang Mai, Thailand, possesses a significant historical and cultural background that provides valuable insights into its development and cultural heritage. The district's history can be traced back to the ancient Lanna Kingdom, which flourished from the 13th to the 18th century. As an integral part of the capital city, Chiang Mai, Wat Ket played a crucial role in regional administration and cultural life. Its location along the Ping River established it as a prominent trading hub, facilitating connections between Chiang Mai and neighboring regions (Tansukanun 2023).

The district derives its name from the leading cultural and religious site, Wat Ket Temple, officially known as Wat Ket Karam. This temple holds immense historical significance and is renowned for its architectural beauty. It showcases the traditional

Lanna architectural style through its main vihara, chedi, and ordination hall. Wat Ket has a rich heritage as a center of trade and commerce. Its strategic position along the Ping River facilitated the transportation of goods, attracting merchants and traders from surrounding areas. The river was vital for exchanging goods, contributing to the district's economic prosperity (Tansukanun and Daungthima 2017).

Wat Ket is characterized by its cultural diversity, housing various ethnic communities, including Thai locals, the descendants of Chinese migrants, and other minority groups. This multicultural environment has shaped the district's unique cultural fabric, evident in its architecture, cuisine, and festivals. The district boasts a rich tradition of craftsmanship, with skilled artisans preserving and passing down traditional crafts such as woodworking, silverware, and textile production. Craft shops and workshops in Wat Ket are renowned for their high-quality products, attracting visitors interested in authentic handcrafted items. In recent years, efforts have been made to preserve the cultural heritage of Wat Ket. Numerous organizations and community initiatives have focused on restoring and revitalizing historical buildings, promoting cultural activities, and raising awareness about the district's significance (Siriwatchaiporn and Issarathumnoon 2018).

In summary, the background of Wat Ket District showcases its historical importance within the ancient Lanna Kingdom, its association with the renowned Wat Ket Temple, its role as a trading and commercial hub, its cultural diversity, and the preservation efforts dedicated to safeguarding its rich heritage. Understanding this background enables a deeper appreciation of the district's cultural richness and its significant contribution to the historical and cultural landscape of Chiang Mai.

The research findings present a diverse range of vernacular architecture in Wat Ket District. The study documented 21 wooden houses, 15 wooden shophouses, 23 wooden-concrete houses, 11 wooden-concrete shophouses, 2 concrete houses, and 3 concrete shophouses. These buildings represent distinct architectural styles and construction materials commonly observed in

the district (Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Map illustrating the exploration of vernacular architecture in Wat Ket District. Modified Map Incorporating Tansukanun’s Scholarly Findings in 2023

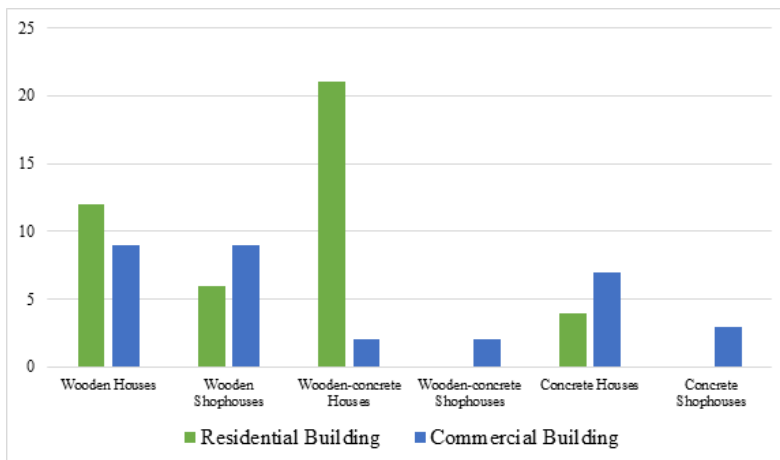
Like Chang Moi, wooden houses and shophouses hold significant prominence in the vernacular architecture of Wat Ket District. These structures often exhibit characteristic features of the Lanna architectural style, including intricate wood carvings, steeply pitched roofs, and raised floor levels. The substantial utilization of wood in these buildings showcases local craftsmanship and reflects their adaptation to the prevailing climatic conditions.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable emergence of hybrid structures that combine elements of both wood and concrete. Wooden-concrete houses and shophouses signify a contemporary approach seamlessly integrating traditional aesthetics with modern construction techniques.

Concrete houses and shophouses constitute a relatively

smaller proportion of the architectural inventory in Wat Ket District. These structures exemplify the influence of urbanization and modernization on the built environment, indicating the evolving architectural landscape within the district.

The distribution of these vernacular buildings is scattered throughout Wat Ket District, exemplifying the district's architectural heritage and cultural diversity. Wooden houses and shophouses are predominantly found in the older sections of the district, serving as symbols of its historical legacy. Conversely, wooden-concrete, and concrete structures are more prevalent in areas influenced by urban development and contemporary influences (Chart 2).



**Chart 2:** Comparative analysis of the quantity of vernacular architectures observed in Wat Ket District.



## **Exploring the Vernacular Architecture in San Pa Koi District.**

San Pa Khoi District, located in Chiang Mai, Thailand, is renowned for its unique historical and cultural heritage. The district's origins can be traced back to the ancient Lanna Kingdom, which prospered from the 13th to the 18th century. San Pa Khoi significantly influenced regional administration and cultural evolution as part of this kingdom. Its rich architectural heritage and enduring cultural traditions underscore its historical importance (Tansukanun, and Daungthima 2017).

San Pa Khoi District is renowned for its cultural heritage and traditional practices. The district has various temples and sacred sites with historical and spiritual significance. Notable examples include Wat Pa Khoi and Wat Ched Yod, revered by locals and visitors for their architectural beauty and religious importance. Unlike other districts in Chiang Mai, San Pa Khoi has a more rural and agricultural character. The district is surrounded by picturesque landscapes, including lush fields, orchards, and mountains, offering a peaceful and serene environment that attracts nature enthusiasts and those seeking a retreat from the city. Agriculture plays a vital role in the district's economy. The fertile land in San Pa Khoi supports the cultivation of crops such as rice, fruits, and vegetables. The district is also known for its traditional handicrafts, including bamboo weaving, pottery, and textiles, contributing to the local economy and cultural heritage (Tansukanun 2023).

San Pa Khoi District is characterized by its strong sense of community and local traditions. Residents actively participate in community events, festivals, and ceremonies, preserving their cultural practices and fostering a close-knit community spirit. Efforts have been made to preserve the cultural heritage and natural beauty of San Pa Khoi. Local organizations and community initiatives have played a crucial role in the conservation and restoration of historical sites and the promotion of sustainable tourism practices (Daungthima and Tansukanun 2018).

In summary, the background of San Pa Khoi District showcases its historical significance, cultural heritage, rural set-

ting, local industries, community spirit, and preservation efforts. Understanding this background provides valuable insights into the district's unique identity and its contribution to the cultural and natural landscape of Chiang Mai.

The research findings reveal limited vernacular architectural structures in the San Pa Koi District. The study documented 5 wooden houses, 5 wooden shophouses, 5 wooden-concrete houses, 3 wooden-concrete shophouses, 1 concrete house, and 8 concrete shophouses. These buildings represent various architectural styles and construction materials commonly observed in the district (Figure 3).



**Figure 3:** Map illustrating the exploration of vernacular architecture in San Pa Koi District.

Modified Map Incorporating Tansukanun's Scholarly Findings in 2023

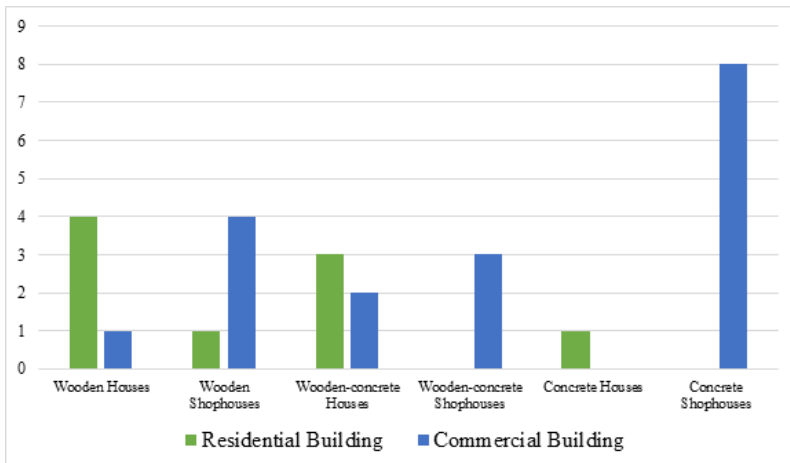
Wooden houses and shophouses also hold significant prominence in the vernacular architecture of the San Pa Koi District.

These structures exhibit characteristic features of traditional design, including intricate woodwork, elevated floor levels, and steep roofs. The prevalent use of wood highlights the local craftsmanship and the adaptation to the region's climatic conditions.

In recent years, wooden-concrete houses and shophouses have emerged, reflecting a contemporary approach that integrates traditional aesthetics with modern construction techniques. These hybrid structures contribute to the district's evolving architectural landscape, combining traditional and modern design elements.

Concrete houses and shophouses constitute a smaller proportion of the architectural inventory in the San Pa Koi District, indicating the influence of urbanization and modernization on the built environment. Concrete structures reflect the changing architectural preferences and the impact of contemporary design trends.

The distribution of these vernacular buildings is dispersed throughout San Pa Koi District, reflecting the area's architectural heritage and cultural diversity. Wooden houses and shophouses are predominantly found in the older sections of the district, representing the region's historical legacy. On the other hand, wooden-concrete and concrete structures are more prevalent in areas influenced by urban development and modern construction practices (Chart 3).



**Chart 3:** Comparative analysis of the quantity of vernacular architectures observed in

San Pa Koi District.

## Conclusion

Exploring the vernacular architecture in the eastern commercial and tourism districts of Mueang Chiang Mai can identify six distinct architectural styles. Each style represents a unique blend of materials, design principles, and cultural influences, contributing to the region's architectural diversity and historical fabric.

Style 1: The wooden houses, illustrate the use of natural resources and local construction wisdom. The detailed craftsmanship in the wooden framework, walls, and roofing indicates the region's cultural heritage. These elements serve functional purposes and embody the aesthetic values and traditions of Chiang Mai. These wooden houses are designed to suit the local climate, with features like elevated floors for flood mitigation and broad eaves for rain and sun protection. This functional aspect seamlessly in-

tertwines with the local way of life, where architecture harmonizes with the natural environment. In these homes, local wisdom is evident in the sustainable use of resources and traditional building techniques, reflecting a deep understanding and respect for the natural environment. This theme runs through the design and construction of the houses, showcasing a distinct cultural identity inherent in Chiang Mai's vernacular architecture. The survey found 51 houses in the Chang Moi district, 21 in the Wat Ket district, and 5 in the San Pa Khoi district.

Style 2: The wooden shophouses uniquely blend traditional and colonial influences. The ground floors are typically used for commercial purposes, while the residential quarters occupy the upper floors. This dual functionality is reflected in the architectural details, such as the distinctive wooden façades and interior layouts, which are deeply rooted in the local culture of Chiang Mai. The design of wooden shophouses is a direct response to the lifestyle and economic activities in the region. Integrating commercial and living spaces into a single structure exemplifies the practicality and efficiency valued in Chiang Mai's urban planning. The construction of these shophouses, using wood as the primary material, showcases local craftsmanship and sustainable practices. Their design and functionality reflect a deep understanding of local needs and traditions, making them an essential part of the architectural heritage of Chiang Mai. The survey found nine houses in the Chang Moi district, 15 in the Wat Ket district, and five in the San Pa Khoi district.

Style 3: The wood-concrete houses represent traditional and modern architecture fusion. Combining wood and concrete materials in these houses illustrates a blend of traditional craftsmanship with contemporary building techniques. This architectural style demonstrates an evolution in local construction practices while maintaining a connection to Chiang Mai's cultural heritage. These houses, combining wood and concrete, cater to the demands of modern living while preserving traditional aesthetics. Their design reflects an adaptation to changing lifestyles in Chiang Mai, balancing the need for sturdier, more resilient structures with respect for historical building methods. The combination of natural wood

and engineered concrete in these houses exemplifies local wisdom in adapting to modern needs without losing sight of traditional values. This architectural style showcases the region's ability to evolve and innovate while staying true to its cultural roots. The survey found 50 houses in the Chang Moi district, 23 in the Wat Ket district, and 5 in the San Pa Khoi district.

Style 4: Wood-concrete shophouses highlight wood-concrete shophouses that marry traditional wood elements with modern concrete. This style exemplifies a blend of durability and aesthetic appeal, reflecting a thoughtful fusion of old and new construction techniques. These shophouses, often featuring retail or commercial spaces on the ground floor and living quarters above, demonstrate an adaptive use of space that is deeply ingrained in the urban fabric of Chiang Mai. The combination of materials speaks to the city's evolving needs and lifestyle changes. The integration of wood and concrete in these structures is a testament to local ingenuity, combining time-honored building methods with modern requirements for strength and resilience, thus preserving the architectural heritage while adapting to contemporary needs. The survey found 18 houses in the Chang Moi district, 11 in the Wat Ket district, and 3 in the San Pa Khoi district.

Style 5: Concrete houses are characterized using concrete as the primary material. This choice reflects a shift towards modern building techniques, showcasing strength, durability, and fire resistance. Concrete's design versatility also allows for varied architectural expressions. These houses represent a modern adaptation to urban living in Chiang Mai. Their robust construction caters to the contemporary demands for safety and energy efficiency, while their versatile design aligns with modern aesthetics. Even in these modern structures, local wisdom is seen in how these houses blend into the urban landscape of Chiang Mai, respecting the city's evolving architectural narrative while maintaining functional integrity and efficiency. The survey found two houses in the Chang Moi district, 2 in the Wat Ket district, and one in the San Pa Khoi district.

Style 6: Concrete shophouses, known for their practicality

and adaptability. These structures blend modern construction techniques with traditional design, reflecting Chiang Mai's evolving architectural narrative. Concrete shophouses are integral to the urban landscape, serving commercial and residential purposes. Their design flexibility and structural stability cater to the city's dynamic urban needs, symbolizing the region's growth while maintaining its cultural essence. Adapting concrete shophouses in Chiang Mai demonstrates a balance between modern demands and preserving historical character, embodying the city's ability to innovate while respecting its architectural heritage. The survey found 29 houses in the Chang Moi district, 3 in the Wat Ket district, and eight in the San Pa Khoi district.

Understanding and appreciating the vernacular architectural styles in the eastern commercial and tourism districts of Mueang Chiang Mai offers insights into the region's cultural heritage. Each style, from wooden houses to concrete structures, showcases the area's evolution and local wisdom. The architectural styles found in Chiang Mai are like threads intricately woven into the fabric of daily life, seamlessly connecting commerce, residence, and culture. These architectural forms are not merely static structures; they are dynamic expressions of the local lifestyle, adapting to the needs and traditions of the community.

The preservation of these architectural styles is vital as they are not just buildings; they are an integral part of the cultural and historical fabric of Chiang Mai. They are the physical embodiment of the city's history and evolution and safeguarding them ensures that future generations can connect with the rich heritage of Chiang Mai. To support this preservation, proposing the creation of a comprehensive database to document Chiang Mai's architectural diversity is crucial. Such a database would aid in the conservation efforts and provide a valuable resource for research, education, and public awareness, enriching our understanding of this historically significant city.

## **Discussion**

The study has unveiled the rich tapestry of architectural styles within Chaing Mai's vernacular architecture, extending beyond their utilitarian functions to serve as powerful symbols of cultural identity. These architectural styles exemplify the dynamic essence of Northern Thai vernacular architecture by skillfully blending time-honored traditions with contemporary necessities. This delicate balance between tradition and modernity underscores vernacular architecture's profound role in preserving and expressing cultural identity. Furthermore, it has shed light on the deeply ingrained sustainable practices of Thai vernacular architecture. It embodies a sustainable approach that has endured through generations by incorporating indigenous materials like wood and harnessing local craftsmanship. This commitment to sustainability extends beyond environmental considerations, seamlessly aligning with the principles of sustainable development, including economic viability. Moreover, it masterfully strikes a balance between cultural continuity and architectural innovation. While meticulously preserving traditional architectural elements, it seamlessly integrates them with modern design principles and materials. This synthesis is a testament to the adaptability and resilience of Northern Thai vernacular architecture practices, challenging the conventional belief that tradition and progress are mutually exclusive and showcasing their harmonious coexistence in architectural development, which is integral to nurturing community bonds and fostering social cohesion. The thoughtful design of houses and shophouses, characterized by flexible spaces and dual functionality, actively encourages interaction among residents and between the broader community. This communal dimension aligns harmoniously with the cultural values of hospitality and social unity, reinforcing the intrinsic connection between architecture and society. The study underscores the pivotal role of Northern Thai vernacular architecture in cultural heritage tourism. These distinct architectural styles possess the inherent capacity to attract tourists seeking authentic cultural experiences. Therefore, preservation efforts should extend beyond physical structures to encompass the rich cultural narratives and traditions



embedded within these architectural forms. Such an approach can contribute to sustainable tourism practices that benefit the local community and visiting tourists. Finally, the study highlights the critical significance of documentation and scholarly research in preserving and evolving Northern Thai vernacular architecture. The proposal for a comprehensive database dedicated to cataloging the diverse spectrum of Thai architectural styles emerges as an invaluable resource for scholars, architects, and policymakers. This resource not only aids in comprehending the trajectory of architectural evolution but also serves as a guiding beacon for future developments that uphold the mantle of cultural heritage.

### **Acknowledgments**

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# Enhancing Urban Tourism in Bangkok: Challenges and Opportunities

*Pechladda Pechpakdee<sup>1</sup>*

**ABSTRACT—** This research aims to investigate the interplay between urban development and urban tourism in Bangkok by identifying challenges, potentials, and opportunities for enhancing the city's appeal. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study incorporates foreign tourist questionnaires, stakeholder interviews, and online open data analysis from prominent travel platforms. The findings reveal that, despite numerous clusters of tourist attractions and facilities, mobility infrastructure emerges as the most significant challenge for urban tourism and development in Bangkok. The study recommends concentrating on the development of primary attractions, secondary support facilities, and additional elements for convenient mobility to address these challenges. By acknowledging the strengths of Bangkok's diverse tourist attraction clusters and their proximity to primary and secondary elements, the research underscores the need for improved mobility facilities for tourists. This study contributes valuable insights into the challenges cities face in promoting urban tourism and emphasizes the critical role of mobility infrastructure for Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA).

**Keywords :** Urban Tourism, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), Primary Elements, Secondary Elements, Additional Elements

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<sup>1</sup> [Petchladda.p@msu.ac.th](mailto:Petchladda.p@msu.ac.th), Faculty of Architecture, Urban Design, and Creative Arts, Maha Sarakham University, Maha Sarakham province, Thailand, 44150 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4560-0168>

## **Introduction**

In Thailand, the tourism industry is pivotal to economic growth by providing revenue opportunities for cities. The Mastercard Global Destination Cities Index (GDCI) placed Bangkok first in 2019. Bangkok topped the GDCI for international overnight visitors for the fourth consecutive year (GDCI, 2019). This was the sixth time in the past decade that Thailand has outdone other cities. Urban tourism is intertwined with the concepts of “tourism” and “city” (Ashworth and Page, 2011). They address that cities possess attributes that both contribute to tourism and leisure activities, leading to city tours and resulting in urban development that accommodates tourism. This demonstrates the reciprocal relationship between urbanization and tourism. Despite the proliferation of studies on urban tourism in Thailand, there has been a lack of examination into the relationship between urban elements and tourism, particularly in Bangkok, which is a renowned tourist destination.’ Urban tourism has received a disproportionately small amount of attention from scholars of either tourism or the cities (ibid., p.1).

Foreign tourists are mainly attracted to Bangkok for its location as an important air travel hub in Asia (Manakitsomboon, 2021), low cost of living in comparison to other major cities (Aung, Nge, & Hichitake, 2015), and diversity of available activities and tourist attractions (The Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand, 2017). Despite Bangkok’s dominance in urban tourism, its competitiveness is hindered by challenges in urban development and living conditions (Webster and Muller, 2000). Bangkok was ranked 98th out of 140 cities in the Global Liveability Index by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) in 2019, with a score of 66 out of 100 (EIU, 2019). Additionally, Bangkok faces challenges such as traffic congestion and air pollution (Yuda, 2020), even though it was judged as the first-rated tourism city in the Global Destination City Index by the Mastercard rankings of world tourism cities as well as Numbeo, a crowd-sourced cost of living database, and Mercer (Morrison and Maxim, 2021; p.179). These challenges pose weaknesses for Bangkok’s urban development and

tourism, despite being the most visited city in the world.

This paper investigates the challenges of urban development for urban tourism in Bangkok, with a focus on studying the relationship between urban development and tourism, and investigating the problems, potentials, and challenges of promoting urban tourism in three zones: the old town, the business, and airport zones. The study uses mixed methods, including questionnaires for foreign tourists, stakeholder interviews, and analysis of online data from travel websites. The findings have important implications for policymakers in urban development and urban tourism in Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), providing insights that can inform decision-making and development of strategies to improve the city's competitiveness as a tourist destination while promoting sustainable urban development.<sup>2</sup>

## **Urban tourism background in developing countries, and Bangkok, Thailand**

### *Urban Tourism*

Urban tourism includes a wide range of activities that take place in urban areas and involve various stakeholders (Pearce, 2001). The World Tourism Organization defines urban tourism as a type of tourism that occurs in urban spaces with non-agricultural economies, offering diverse experiences and products for leisure and business (World Tourism Organization, 2019). Fainstein and Judd (1999) identified three key players in urban tourism: tourists, the tourism industry, and the city, which are all interconnected and create a complex ecosystem. However, there are still gaps in the understanding of the relationship between tourism and urban studies (Ashworth, 2003). Urban tourism consists of primary elements, such as tourist attractions, and secondary elements, such as transportation (Jansen-Verbeke, 1986). To promote successful

<sup>2</sup> This paper is from the research of 'The Challenges of Urban Development for Urban Tourism: Place, Path, and Plan in Bangkok' which is funded by the National Research Council of Thailand in 2018.

urban tourism, collaboration is needed among these stakeholders, including city planners and policymakers, to address issues such as transportation, infrastructure, and accessibility (Mckercher & Du Cros, 2002).

### *Urban tourism in developing countries*

Most tourism research are from the United Kingdom, Western European countries, and North America (Ismail & Baum, 2006). Opperman and Chon argued that in developing countries, 'compared to seaside resorts, city tourism and urban studies have attracted less attention (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). They also asserted that capital cities play a dominant role as 'pre-touristic structures' for international mass tourism as the 'gateway' and their international airports are developed as hubs(ibid.). In the Southeast Asia, Mullins (1999) argued that urban tourism and urbanization are strongly interrelated to the city networks as seen in Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. These countries became the main gateways and the hubs for international tourists in Southeast Asia through transportation systems. These cities are also involved in the competition to create the images and infrastructures for urban tourism through the mega malls, theme parks, and to enhance event tourism.

### *Urban Tourism in Bangkok, Thailand*

This study focuses on the challenges of urban development for tourism in Bangkok. The city is a popular destination, ranking high in Euromonitor International's list of "Top City Destinations" in 2016 and 2019. However, there are several obstacles to sustainable tourism development, including environmental sustainability and safety and security issues. The BMA has identified several risk factors and challenges for tourism, including a lack of creative tourism, poor mobility facilities, air quality issues, and inadequate management of tourist attractions (BMA, 2013;

Euromonitor Report, 2019; WEF, 2015). This research aims to address the challenges of urban tourism in Bangkok, specifically by investigating the problems, potentials, and policy implications for urban development. By employing mixed methods including questionnaires, stakeholder interviews, and analysis of online data, the study seeks to bridge the gap between academic research on urban studies and tourism in Thailand, generating insights that can inform policy decisions and organizational practices within the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA). The resulting recommendations will enable the BMA to develop and implement strategies for promoting urban tourism that balance the needs of both visitors and residents.

## **Urban tourism elements, Places, Paths, and Plans**

### *Urban tourism elements*

This research employs the ideas of 3 elements of urban tourism from Christopher Law, including primary elements, secondary elements, and additional elements. The primary elements are the tourist attractions. The secondary elements support and complement the tourist experience, including accommodations, shopping, and restaurants. The additional elements are the related facilities of the accessibility to primary and secondary elements through mobility-e.g., arranging parking places, the existence of tourist information offices, and so on (Law, 2002). To unpack the relationship between urban tourism and urban development in Bangkok, this research explored three main issues: places, paths, and plans.

### *Places*

Humans are tied to their environment and feel a sense of belonging there. The interaction between people and groups, institutionalized land uses, political and economic decisions, and



the language of representation all have a role in how the place is built and operated. This definition implies that place should be considered through interdisciplinary perspectives (Massay, D., 1994). Places are divided into different-sized sections of the earth's surface, each with its own name and territory. This notion was used in this paper to understand the circumstances of each district in Bangkok.

### *Paths*

Path definition is a route between one place and another, or the direction in which something is moving (Cambridge dictionary, 2020). Paths are the main lines of objects' movement and people's movement. People rely on paths to travel across the city (Hillier and Iida, 2005, cited from Filomena, G. et al., 2019, p.15). Kevin Lynch stated that paths are the channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves. People observe the city while moving through it, and along these paths, the other environmental elements are arranged and related (Lynch, 1960, p.47). This paper investigated paths and mobility between places to understand the planning of Bangkok urban tourism.

### *Plans*

Planning is the process of thinking regarding the activities required to achieve the desired goal based on foresight. Planning is a proposal of actions that need to be made by an organization to achieve its objectives (Certo, S., 2000). The reason for the planning process was outlined as follows; 1.) to identify the problem 2.) to select the problem and prioritize the problem 3.) To determine alternative solutions to achieve success 4.) to forecast each alternative 5.) To compare each alternative 6.) to choose the most suitable alternative to solve the problem (Conyers and Hills, 1984, pp.67-8). Thus, this paper aims at investigating the strengths, potentials, and challenges of BMA through urban

tourism elements for planning suggestions.

## Methods

This study used mixed methods to collect primary and secondary data through online surveys, in-depth interviews, observations, and open data sources such as TripAdvisor and Airbnb. TripAdvisor is a website that allows travelers to plan their trips based on other travelers' reviews (Miguéns, Baggio, & Costa, 2008), while Airbnb is a platform for online short-term rental accommodations (Cebeillac & Vaguet, 2021). The study analyzed data from January 5 to March 15, 2020, to investigate the number of accommodation services, tourist attractions, and secondary elements of urban tourism in 10 tourist districts in Bangkok. The use of GIS and mapping analysis provided insights into the distribution and concentration of primary and secondary elements of urban tourism in Bangkok. This mixed-methods approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and potential for urban development and urban tourism in Bangkok. According to the number of participants, this research employed the sizing samples by using Taro Yamane's formula (Taro Yamane 1967) at a 95% confidence level using a 5% randomization error as follows:

$$n = \frac{1}{N} \frac{1}{1 + Ne^2}$$

where  $n$  = sample size

$N$  = population size

$e$  = sampling error, defined as .05

In this research, the number of respondents was 400 people.

### *Sampling and randomization schemes*

This study used purposive sampling to administer questionnaires to online sources due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Both English-speaking and Chinese tourists were surveyed through Google Forms and wjx.cn, respectively. Data was collected through online surveys, observations, and in-depth interviews with stakeholders. The study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis to examine urban tourism issues in the framework of Places, Paths, and Plans, and verified data accuracy through triangulation. A sample size of 198 foreign tourists aged 15 years or older completed the same questionnaire as 202 Chinese tourists using wjx.cn in Chinese Mandarin, while 198 English-speaking tourists completed the questionnaire in English via Google Forms.

## **5. Results**

There are 400 respondents. The mean age of tourists is 49.5 years old, with 50.5% being English-speaking and 49.5% being Chinese speaking. Most tourists fall within the 25-39 age group, with 56.6% of Chinese-speaking tourists and 43.4% of English-speaking tourists. In comparison, only a small percentage of tourists are aged 49.5 years old. Notably, there are no tourists aged more than 65 years old. These findings suggest that Bangkok's urban tourism appeals primarily to young and middle-aged tourists.

Table 1 Demographic Comparison between Chinese and English-speaking Tourists

<b>Ages</b>	<b>Chinese Speaking Tourists</b>	<b>English Speaking Tourists</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>% Chi-nese</b>	<b>% Eng-lish</b>
18-24	79	75	154	77	51.3	48.7
25-39	111	85	196	98	56.6	43.4
40-44	2	10	12	6	16.7	83.3
45-49	2	10	12	6	16.7	83.3
50-59	2	8	10	5	20.0	80.0
60-64	0	8	8	4	0	100
More than 65	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>49.50%</b>	<b>50.50%</b>

Table 2 Tourist Occupation Demographics Data Top of Form

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Chinese speaking tourists</b>	<b>English speaking tourists</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage (Chinese speaking tourists)</b>	<b>Percentage (English speaking tourists)</b>
Full-time employees	110	94	204	54%	46%
Students	53	58	111	48%	52%
Business activities	18	14	32	56%	44%
Others	17	36	53	32%	68%
<b>Total</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>50%</b>

Comparing the two largest tourist groups, full-time employees in their countries and students, it illustrates that both have a

significant impact on the tourist population. Full-time employees make up the majority with 51%, indicating that many tourists travel for work-related reasons. On the other hand, students account for 27.75% of the total, which highlights their significant motivation for travel. The percentage of tourists participating in business activities and those falling under the “Others” category is significantly smaller, at 8% and 13.25% respectively. This suggests that these groups may have different motivations for both leisure and remote work.

## **5.1 Overall**

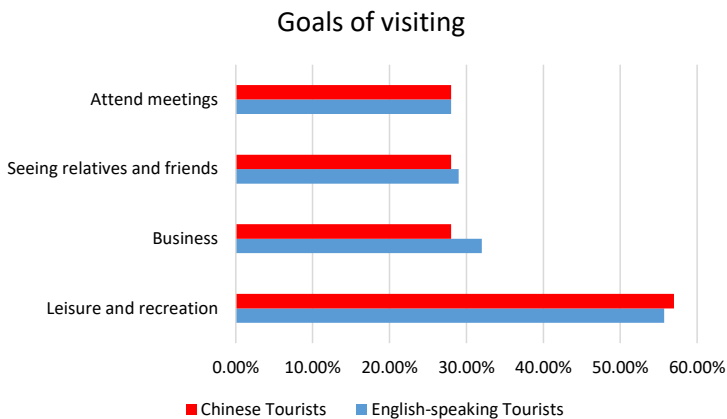
### *Information on urban tourism in Bangkok*

The study reveals that a significantly higher percentage of English-speaking tourists (86%) prefer to access information about Bangkok through the Internet, in comparison to Chinese tourists (72.73%). In contrast, a greater proportion of Chinese tourists (52.58%) obtain travel information from friends and relatives, while a comparable percentage of English-speaking tourists (45%) rely on this source. Concerning the use of travel agents, the results indicate that a lower percentage of Chinese tourists avail themselves of their services as compared to English-speaking tourists, as 27% is higher than 17%. Regarding accommodation booking, the majority of English-speaking tourists (85%) prefer self-booking, with 14% using travel agents, and 12.5% booking directly, indicating that some tourists use multiple method. Conversely, Chinese tourists favor booking accommodation themselves (75.76%), with 20.2% using online self-booking, and 15.5% booking directly, highlighting the use of multiple methods by individual tourists. The findings suggest that English-speaking tourists tend to access information and make travel arrangements independently via the Internet, while Chinese tourists prefer personal connections and travel agents to plan their trips.

### *Goals of visiting (more than 2 answers)*

Both Chinese tourists and English-speaking tourists visit Bangkok primarily for leisure and recreation (55.7% and 57%, respectively), but a higher proportion of English-speaking tourists also visit for business purposes (32%) compared to Chinese tourists (28%). Both groups of tourists also visit Bangkok to see relatives and friends (29% and 28%, respectively), and attend meetings (28% for both groups).

Fig. 1 Tourist Goals of visiting Comparison Chart



### *Overall satisfaction*

Both English-speaking tourists (43% satisfied, 37.5% very satisfied) and Chinese tourists (47% satisfied, 39.39% very satisfied) reported high levels of satisfaction in Bangkok. The study underscores the significance of considering diverse tourist groups in the development of tourism-related activities and services, as both groups found the city's tourist districts and attractions, such

as Rattanakosin, Khaosan, Bang Lamphu, and others, attractive.

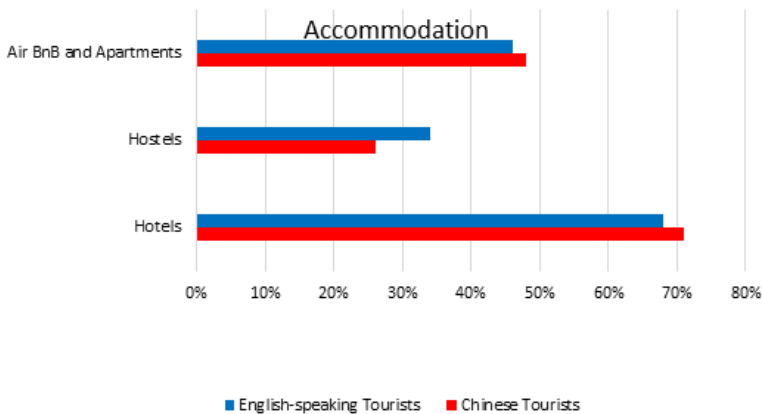
## **5.2 Urban tourism elements of Bangkok**

Bangkok's urban tourism offers diverse tourist destinations and a concentration of primary and secondary elements, attracting many tourists to areas such as the old town, Chao Phraya River, and business and shopping zones. These areas provide various tourist attractions, accommodation, and supportive services for tourism.

### *Accommodation*

The researchers have divided the accommodation types into 5 categories for analysis - hotels, hostels, Air BnB, apartments, and short-term rental accommodation. In terms of accommodation preferences, 71% of Chinese tourists prefer hotels while 68% of English-speaking tourists chose hotels. For alternative options, 48% of Chinese tourists and 46% of English-speaking tourists preferred Air BnB and apartments, while 26% of Chinese tourists and 34% of English-speaking tourists opted for hostels.

Fig. 2 Tourist Accommodation Comparison Chart



### *Activities*

According to the survey, 59% of Chinese tourists are most interested in street foods, followed by 52% dining experiences in restaurants, and 49 % traveling market tours. For foreign tourists who speak English, 46% were most intrigued by major tourist attractions, followed by 40% of street food surveys, and 38% were interested in shopping centers.

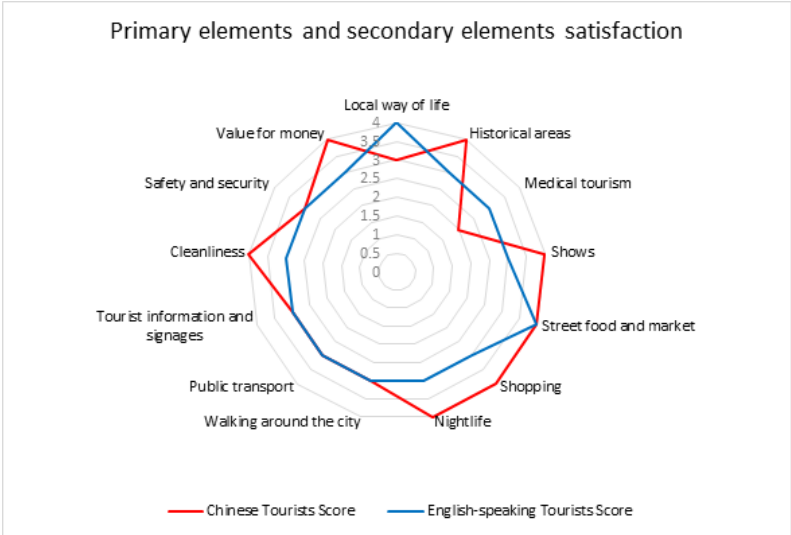
### *Favorite things in Bangkok*

The study revealed tourists' favorite aspects of Bangkok, ranging from active hobbies like sports and sightseeing to enjoying the vibrant nightlife and convenient shopping. While safety topped the list for Chinese tourists 83%, English-speaking visitors were more drawn to the city's lively atmosphere 61% and reliable service 57%. Notably, exploring the urban landscape and comfortable accommodation tied for third place 54% among English-speaking tourists, highlighting the importance of both



sightseeing and amenities (Pechpakdee et al. 2022).<sup>3</sup>

Fig. 3 Primary and Secondary Elements Satisfaction Chart



*Primary elements and secondary elements satisfaction*

The satisfaction of the primary and secondary elements of urban tourism experiences in Bangkok were analyzed. These elements include quality, local way of life, historical areas, medical tourism, shows, street food and markets, shopping, nightlife, city walk, public transport, tourist information, cleanliness, safety and security, and value for money.

The study's data reveals that most Chinese and English-speaking tourists (both at 81%) had a satisfaction score of 3 or

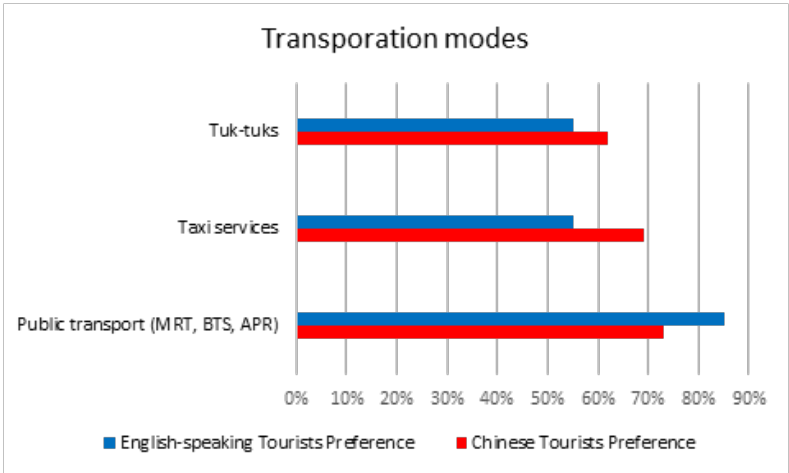
3 See more details in Pechpakdee, P., Muangyai, N., Turnbull, N., Nghiep, L. K., & Tudpor, K. (2022). The challenges of urban tourism, Liveable city, and urban environment in Bangkok. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(6).

above, indicating that they were “quite satisfied” or higher. Chinese tourists had a slightly higher satisfaction level, with 47% reporting that they were satisfied, while 39.39% reported that they were “very satisfied”. In contrast, 43% of English-speaking tourists reported being satisfied, while 37.5% were “very satisfied”.

Regarding different aspects of their travel experience, the data shows that both groups had similar levels of satisfaction in various categories, such as street food and markets, shopping, nightlife, and cleanliness, with scores ranging from 3 to 4. For instance, 45% of Chinese tourists and 47% of English-speaking tourists were satisfied with the street food and markets. Similarly, 45% of Chinese tourists and 46% of English-speaking tourists were satisfied with shopping. In terms of nightlife, 39% of Chinese tourists and 37% of English-speaking tourists were satisfied, while 37% of Chinese tourists and 34% of English-speaking tourists were satisfied with cleanliness.

However, there were some variations in their level of satisfaction regarding different elements of their trip. For example, a larger number of Chinese tourists were highly satisfied with historical areas (36% scored 4), while a higher proportion of English-speaking tourists were very satisfied with the value they got for their money (39% scored 3). In some categories, such as public transport and tourist information and signages, both groups had lower satisfaction levels. For instance, 40% of Chinese tourists and 38% of English-speaking tourists were satisfied with public transport. Likewise, 35% of Chinese tourists and 37% of English-speaking tourists were satisfied with tourist information and signages.

Fig. 4 Tourists Transportation mode comparison Chart



*Transportation and additional elements satisfactions*

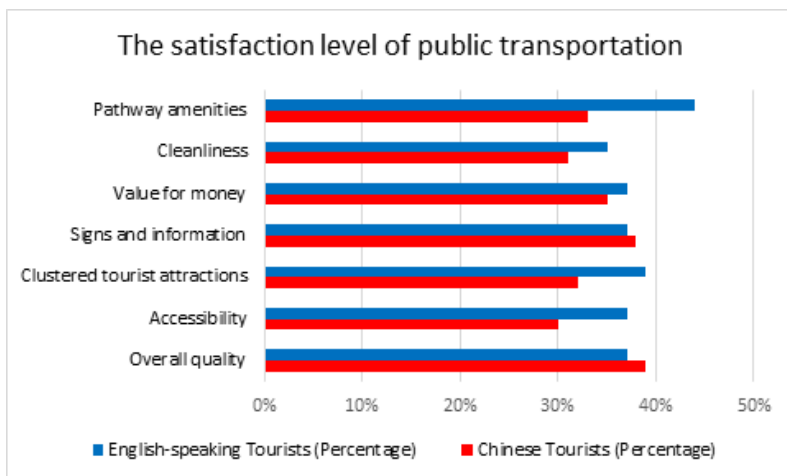
Transportation is one of the additional elements. Both Chinese and English-speaking tourists prefer to travel using public transport such as Mass Rapid Transit (MRT), The Bangkok Mass Transit System (BTS), and The Airport Rail link (APR), with 73% and 85% respectively. 69% of Chinese tourists and 55% of English-speaking tourists use taxi services, followed by 62% of Chinese tourists and 55% of English-speaking tourists who use Tuk-tuks.

*Trip satisfaction in BKK and additional elements*

The study analyzed tourist satisfaction in five areas: quality of the trip, information and signage, pathways, ticket services, and security. The data showed that both Chinese and English-speaking tourists were dissatisfied with the quality of the trip, with 30% and 28% expressing dissatisfaction. However, both

groups were satisfied with the information and signage, with 44% and 33% expressing satisfaction, respectively. Regarding the pathways and ticket services, both groups had similar levels of satisfaction, with 32% and 36% of Chinese tourists, and 37% and 36% of English-speaking tourists, expressing satisfaction with the pathways and ticket services, respectively. Additionally, most of both groups reported satisfaction with security and safety, with 38% of Chinese tourists and 44% of English-speaking tourists expressing satisfaction.

Fig. 5 The satisfaction level of public transportation Chart



The data showed that both groups had a low level of satisfaction with public transportation, with most respondents expressing only moderate levels of satisfaction. Regarding overall quality, 39% of Chinese tourists and 37% of English-speaking tourists expressed satisfaction. In contrast, accessibility to tourist attractions was more satisfactory for English-speaking tourists, with 37% expressing satisfaction, compared to 30% of Chinese tourists. Similarly, street amenities, such as benches and shade,

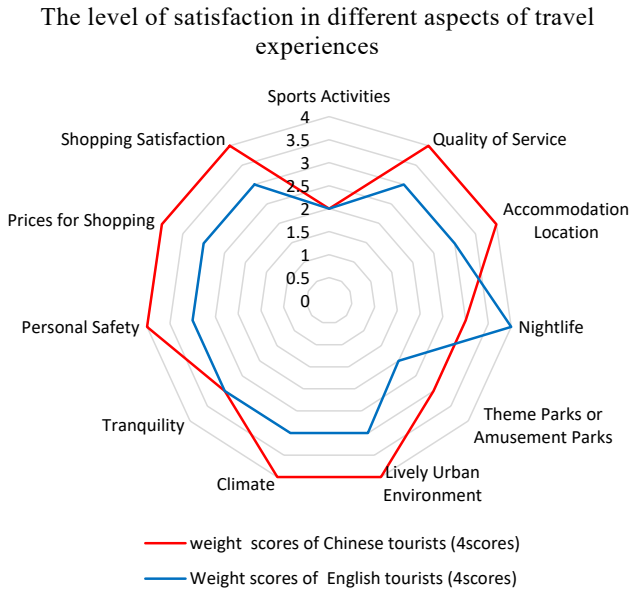
were more satisfactory for English-speaking tourists, with 44% expressing satisfaction, compared to 33% of Chinese tourists.

However, Chinese tourists expressed a higher level of satisfaction with regards to signs and information, with 38% expressing satisfaction, compared to 37% of English-speaking tourists. The value for money received a satisfaction rate of 35% for Chinese tourists and 37% for English-speaking tourists. The cleanliness of public transportation had a satisfaction rate of 31% for Chinese tourists and 35% for English-speaking tourists. Clustered tourist attractions received a satisfaction rate of 32% for Chinese tourists and 39% for English-speaking tourists. Both groups were generally dissatisfied with public transportation. The data indicates that English-speaking tourists placed a greater emphasis on accessibility and street amenities, while Chinese tourists placed a higher value on signs and information.

#### *Satisfaction with activities and tourism experiences*

The study assessed tourists' satisfaction with various aspects of travel experiences, including sports activities, urban landscape and nature, quality of service, accommodation, location, nightlife, theme parks, lively atmosphere, climate, tranquility, personal safety, and shopping prices. Both Chinese and English-speaking tourists showed similar levels of satisfaction with sports activities, scoring a 2 at 43% and 42%, respectively. Chinese tourists were more satisfied with the urban landscape and nature, scoring a 2 at 42%, while most English-speaking tourists rated a 3 with 52%. Chinese tourists also showed a higher level of satisfaction with the quality of service, with 60% scoring a 4, while 55% of English-speaking tourists rated a 3. In terms of accommodation location, most Chinese tourists rated it a 4 at 59%, while most English-speaking tourists rated a 3 at 55%.

Fig. 6 An Evaluation of Different Aspects of Travel Experiences Chart



The study's results show differences in satisfaction levels between Chinese and English-speaking tourists. Most Chinese tourists rated service quality and accommodation location with 4 points (60% and 59%), while a majority of English-speaking tourists gave these aspects 3 points (55% and 55%). Additionally, Chinese tourists rated personal safety higher with 4 points (78%) compared to English-speaking tourists who gave a score of 3 points (46%).

### Urban tourism elements and areas

There are 10 tourist districts including Rattanakosin, Khao-san, Bang Lamphu, around the Chao Phraya River, Sukhumvit, Silom, Siam, Phaya Thai, Ari, and airport areas. These districts

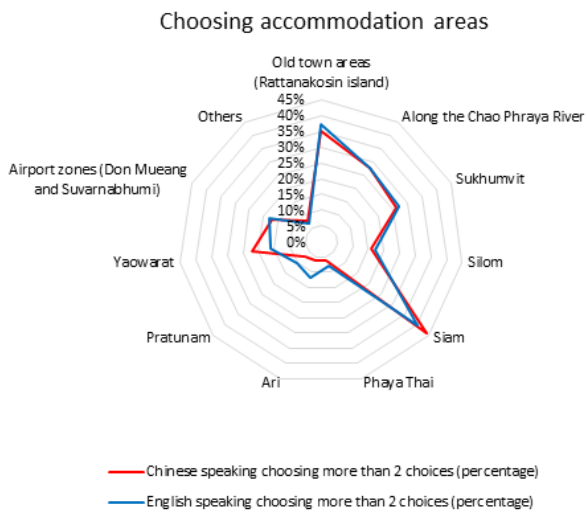
encompass a diverse range of Bangkok’s tourism experiences, from the historic core and bustling nightlife to modern business hubs and emerging neighborhoods. This allows for a comprehensive understanding of the city’s urban tourism landscape. The selection covers three distinct spatial zones: the historic old city (Rattanakosin, Khaosan, Bang Lamphu), the central business district (Sukhumvit, Silom), and the gateway area (airport zone). This facilitates comparison and analysis across different urban functions and their interaction with tourism.

Table 3 Tourist accommodation choosing by Chinese and English speaking (answering more than two choices)

Districts	Chinese speaking choosing more than 2 choices (per- centage)	English speaking choosing more than 2 choices (percentage)
Old town areas (Rat- tanakosin island)	35%	37%
Along the Chao Phraya River	28%	28%
Sukhumvit	26%	27%
Silom	16%	17%
Siam	44%	40%
Phaya Thai	6%	8%
Ari	6%	12%
Pratunam	7%	10%

Yaowarat	22%	16%
Airport zones (Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi)	17%	18%
Others	8%	7%

Fig. 7 Accommodation Areas Selection Chart



The study found that both Chinese-speaking and English-speaking tourists share similar interests in visiting specific districts in Bangkok, such as the Old Town areas, along the Chao Phraya River, and Sukhumvit. However, there were some differences in interest between the two groups regarding other districts, with a higher interest among Chinese-speaking tourists for the Siam area.



In terms of accommodation, both groups preferred to stay in the Siam area, followed by the Rattanakosin, Khaosan, and Bang Lamphu areas. The Siam, Sukhumvit, and Chao Phraya River areas were also popular among both groups, with 35% of Chinese tourists and 37% of English-speaking tourists choosing to stay in these areas due to their proximity to tourist attractions and convenient shopping areas. However, the Airport zones (Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi) were not popular among tourists, with only 17% of Chinese-speaking and 18% of English-speaking tourists choosing to stay in these districts.

Fig. 8 Tourist accommodation map in 3 zones from open-source data, Tripadvisor, visualized by author

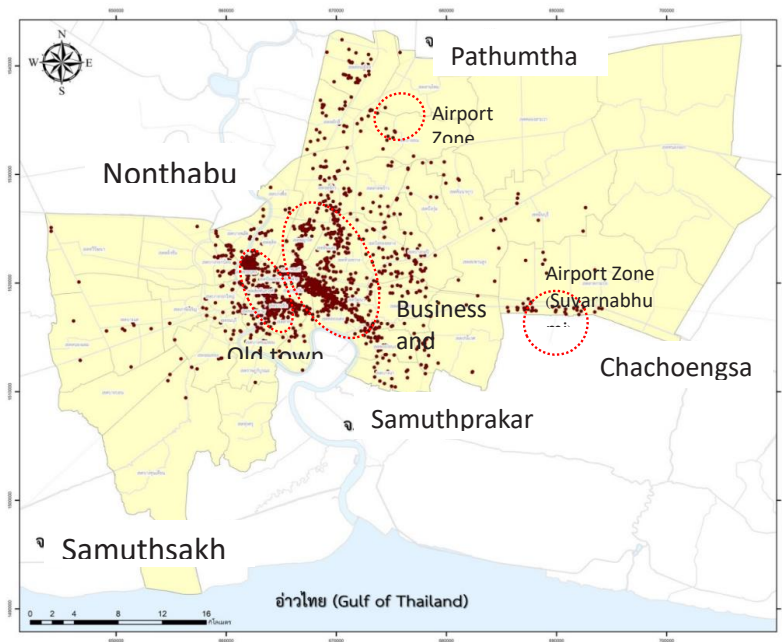


Fig. 9 A map of hotel satisfaction rating by tourists in Bangkok from opensource data, Tripadvisor, visualized by author

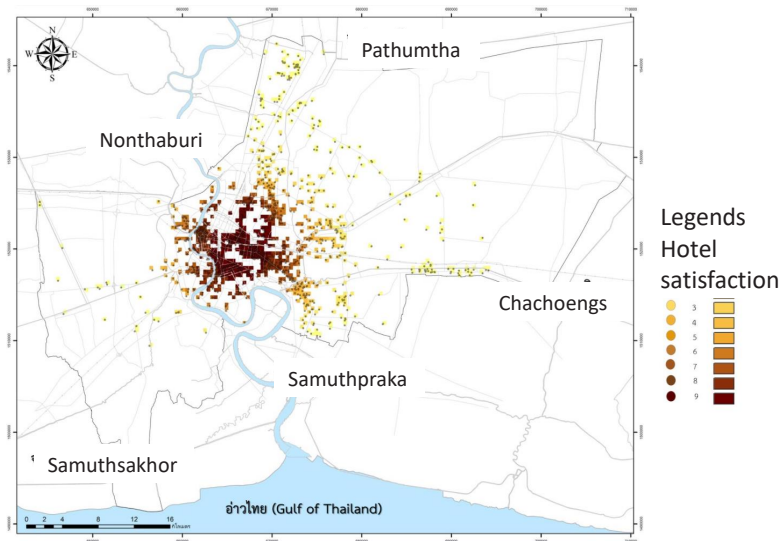


Fig. 8 illustrates a map of tourist accommodation across the three key zones, the historic old city, the central business district, and the airport zones. It provides a visual representation of the distribution and concentration of tourist accommodation density and spatial planning. According to opensource data, Tripadvisor in 2020, the most popular areas are agglomerated around the old town and business areas.

Fig. 9 depicts a map of hotel satisfaction ratings in Bangkok provided by tourists on Tripadvisor in 2020. This offers insights into visitor experiences and preferences across different areas of the city. Comparing this data with your accommodation map can reveal potential correlations between accommodation location and tourist satisfaction. This can be valuable for understanding why certain areas attract more tourists and receive higher ratings clustered around old town and business areas, informing strategies for improving tourism experiences in less satisfied areas around

airport zones. Based on the opensource data of Tripadvisor website in 2020 with the questionnaire, this could be considered as follows:

*1.) Old town in the core zone*

Chinese-speaking and English-speaking tourists share similar interests in visiting Bangkok's old town area, particularly the Rattanakosin Island, with 35% of Chinese-speaking and 37% of English-speaking tourists choosing this district. Tourist attractions in Phra Nakhon have high ratings, with a satisfaction score of 4 to 5 on Tripadvisor, indicating that both groups have a positive view of Bangkok's attractions. According to Tripadvisor, foreign tourists have a positive view of Bangkok's attractions, including architectural and cultural attractions, natural scenery along the Chao Phraya, villages, shopping markets, and food options near Khao San Road and Bang Lamphu. However, the accessibility and comfort of tourist attractions, such as public transport and parking, need improvement. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) is working to address these issues by improving the subway systems, walkways, and landscapes to create a more welcoming and safer atmosphere for tourists in the old city.

*2.) Businesses and shopping Zone:*

The data reveals differences in the popularity of different Bangkok districts among Chinese-speaking and English-speaking tourists. Chinese-speaking tourists are more drawn to the Siam district, with 44% choosing to visit the area, while both groups show similar interest in Sukhumvit and along the Chao Phraya River. Pathumwan and Bangrak have high satisfaction ratings for accommodation and secondary elements, while Din Daeng and Khlong Toei face challenges with limited tourist attractions and inconvenient hotel locations.

*3.) Airport area in the outer zone*

Chatuchak district is well-known for its famous Chatuchak weekend market, spread over 35 acres and consisting of 15,000 stalls selling a diverse range of goods. Its close proximity to Don

Mueang Airport presents an exciting opportunity for investment and development. However, the district also faces challenges with traffic congestion and limited accessibility to public transportation. In contrast, Lat Krabang, near Suvarnabhumi Airport, currently has limited facilities for travelers and relatively low popularity and satisfaction ratings. This can be attributed to problems such as the lack of public transportation and a shortage of supportive facilities. Nonetheless, with several major projects in the pipeline, including airport expansion and high-speed rail connections, the area has the potential to become a thriving destination for travelers seeking a convenient location near the airport. The completion of these projects is expected to result in an increased availability of secondary elements, such as accommodation, restaurants, and supportive facilities, making Lat Krabang an increasingly attractive choice for travelers.

According to the results and two research objectives, the current state of urban tourism elements and the future of urban development, this could be concluded that Tourist preferences and satisfaction reveal key opportunities and challenges for future urban development in Bangkok. Both Chinese-speaking and English-speaking tourists highly value Bangkok's historical and cultural attractions, particularly in the Rattanakosin Island area. Tripadvisor ratings confirm positive experiences with this attraction. Interestingly, tourist hotspots vary by language group. Chinese tourists favor Siam, while both groups enjoy Sukhumvit and areas along the Chao Phraya River. Din Daeng and Khlong Toei lack attractions and desirable hotel locations, contributing to lower satisfaction. For the future urban development, there are 2 areas could be concerned for airport zones, Chatuchak and Lat Krabang. Chatuchak market district, near Don Mueang Airport, presents an exciting opportunity for development and investment due to its unique offerings and proximity to the airport. Challenges like traffic congestion and limited public transport need to be addressed. Lat Krabang, near Suvarnabhumi Airport, holds potential with planned major projects like airport expansion and high-speed rail connections. Currently, limited facilities and accessibility hinder its development. Improved infrastructure and

additional amenities can transform Lat Krabang into a thriving travel destination.

Overall, focusing on tourist preferences, addressing accessibility issues, and developing underutilized areas like airport zones can shape a future Bangkok that caters to diverse visitor needs and fosters sustainable urban development for both tourists and residents.

## **6. Discussion**

This part will focus on two research objectives for the current state of urban tourism elements in Bangkok, as well as opportunities for urban development in the future. This part presents findings from a study on the characteristics of Free Individual Traveler (FIT) tourists in Bangkok, which involved interviews, questionnaires, and open data databases. The tourists generally spend 3 to 14 days in Bangkok. The study identified two research objectives: the current state of urban tourism elements in Bangkok, and opportunities for urban development in the future.

The study found that leisure and recreation were the primary interests of both English-speaking and Chinese tourists visiting Bangkok, with 55.7% and 57% respectively. Furthermore, 29% of English-speaking tourists and 28% of Chinese tourists reported visiting relatives and friends, while 28% of both groups attended meetings. Accommodation preference was high in the Siam area, with 40% of both groups choosing to stay there. Additionally, Chinese tourists preferred hotels (71%) while English-speaking tourists chose hotels and alternative options such as Airbnb and apartments (68% and 46%, respectively). Satisfaction levels were slightly higher for English-speaking tourists (43% most satisfied, 37.5% very satisfied) compared to Chinese tourists (47% most satisfied, 39.39% very satisfied). It is noteworthy that the study provides valuable insights into the preferences of tourists visiting Bangkok, which can aid in the development of more targeted tourism strategies.

This study recommends improvements of urban tourism for the BMA, with an emphasis on convenient mobility for tourists. The presence of various tourist attractions and supportive facilities, as well as the walkability of many tourist areas in mixed-use districts, are identified as strengths. The study suggests the development of rail route lines in the city to enhance the potential for urban tourism. Other recommendations include checking tourist feedback through open data platforms, providing tourist information in new places and districts, improving carrying capacity at crowded tourist attractions, and enhancing signage and information for English and Chinese-speaking tourists to better meet their needs and create good experiences for urban tourism. These recommendations aim to create a more competitive and sustainable urban tourism landscape in Bangkok.

For the second research objective, this research divided Bangkok into three tourism zones based on the presence of primary, secondary, and additional elements. The old town (Phra Nakhon) is a popular tourist destination with several tourist attractions and secondary elements, but accessibility and comfort remain problematic. The business and shopping areas along the Chao Phraya River and Sukhumvit attract equal numbers of both Chinese and English-speaking tourists, but walkability is a challenge in some areas. The airport area in the outer zone includes Chatuchak, popular due to its weekend market and investment opportunities, and Lat Krabang, which has limited facilities for travelers but has potential for growth with upcoming expansion and investment projects.

The study identified that the old town and business and shopping districts are popular among tourists for different reasons, while the airport zone has growth potential but requires further development. To enhance urban tourism, five issues need improvement: 1) mass transit from the airport to the city center, 2) public bus conditions, 3) walkability and street amenities, 4) public transportation information platform for tourists, and 5) integration of the mass transit system for tourists and residents. Successful urban development and promotion of tourism in Bang-

kok requires collaboration among city planners and policymakers.

## **7. Conclusions**

The conclusion of this article highlights the importance of urban tourism and urban development for BMA, and sheds light on the necessary improvements to make the city more appealing to tourists. The paper focused on two research objectives.

The findings of the study reveal that tourists are primarily interested in leisure and recreation activities and that they are satisfied with the cultural attractions, arts, and accommodation options in the city. However, the study also identifies the importance of additional elements such as convenient mobility in determining the choice of location for staying. Based on the analysis, the study suggests that future urban development in Bangkok should focus on providing tourists with three key elements: primary attractions, secondary support facilities, and additional elements for convenient mobility. The study also divided Bangkok into three tourism zones, each with its unique strengths and challenges. The old town, for example, is a popular tourist destination due to its historic architecture, local way of life, and proximity to the Chao Phraya River. However, the study suggests that there is a need for improving secondary attractions in this zone to meet the needs of tourists. Similarly, the business and shopping districts, shopping centers and restaurants, while the airport zone needs to be improved to provide enough primary, secondary, and additional elements to attract tourists.

To address these issues, the study highlights the importance of collaboration between city planners and policymakers in their efforts to enhance the potential of urban tourism in Bangkok. The following areas are identified as requiring improvement: improving mass transit from the airport to the city center, upgrading public bus conditions, enhancing walkability and street amenities to be more accessible, providing a public transportation information platform for tourists, and integrating the mass transit system for

tourists and residents.

The study has some limitations, including the use of open data databases and a small sample size of tourists. Future research should aim to provide more in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the relationship between urban tourism and urban development in Bangkok. Nevertheless, this study provides a valuable contribution to the field of urban tourism and urban development and lays the groundwork for further research in this area.

### **Acknowledgments**

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# **The Stories of Construction and Contention: The 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial and the 2020 Student Movement in Thailand<sup>1</sup>**

Gil D. Turingan<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT—** This study argues that the construction of the 14th of October 1973 Memorial (Anuson Sathan Sip Si Tula) embodies the complicated Thai democracy and the democratic quest and struggles of the Thai people. By looking at the historical accounts and narratives of its construction and analyzing the symbols and meanings of the structure, this article reveals that from being a space for remembrance and a venue of commemoration of the October 1973 student revolution, this memorial transformed into a platform for democracy over time up to the emergence of the 2020 student movement. The protest activities, particularly the performative actions conducted by the student protesters in this structure in 2020, contributed to the contention and layering of the meanings of the memorial. This paper also asserts the significance of the 14th of October 1973 Memorial and its role in Thai democracy discourse and the legacies of student activism in Thailand.

**Keywords :** Sip Si Tula, 14th of October 1973 Memorial, Student Movement, Thai Student Movement, 1973 October Revolution

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1 This paper is part of a doctoral thesis titled “Movements and Monuments: Student Movements for ‘Democracy’ in 1973 and 2020 Public Monuments in Thailand.”

2 Ph.D. in Thai Studies (Candidate), Thai Studies Center, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

## Introduction

October 14, 2023, marked the 50<sup>th</sup> year of a significant milestone in the democratic quest and student activism of Thailand. Known as the 14<sup>th</sup> of October (*Sip Si Tula*), this historic event ended the military government of Thanom Kittikachorn in 1973. To honor the people who died in the October 1973 student revolution, the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial (*Anuson Sathan Sip Si Tula*) was installed in 2001. Aside from remembering the people who sacrificed their lives in the name of democracy, this structure also honors the anti-military, pro-constitution, and monarchy-allied student protests of 1973.

The structure contains an interesting story that embodies the complicated concept of Thai democracy. The narrative of its construction represents the democratic struggles of Thailand because it took 28 years after the revolution to materialize because of the contentions and the challenges the pro-democracy groups had to surmount. The memorial monumentalizes a democracy mainly associated with the traditional school because of the monarchy's role and intervention in addressing the student protesters' demands and ending the protests. The Western notion of democracy can also be seen on the periphery through the participation of the people in constructing it and the symbols representing liberal values attached to the monument, such as freedom, human rights, and equality.<sup>3</sup>

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3 This paper uses the two political discourses on Thai democracy according to Mektrairat (2020, 64-93). The first is the "Traditionalist School of Thought," while the second is the "Western School of Thought." The "Traditionalist School of Thought" argues that democracy has long been part of Thai society through the origin and status of the monarchy. It can be traced back to the Sukhothai Kingdom's idea of the "father-child model" or "father rules the child" (*rabop phor pokkhrong luk*), explaining that the Thai kings ruled over the people and ascended to the throne with the consent given by the Thai political community. This concept was further developed during the Rattanakosin period using the Buddhist concept of *aneknikon samosonsommut*, which justified the Thai monarchs' existence and the political community's mutual consent. Under this school of thought, democracy in Thailand is defined as a "Democracy with the Monarch as the Head of the State." The other perspective regarding the discourse on Thai democracy is the "Western School

By looking at the historical accounts and the small number of references written in English about this memorial, such as documentation of the memorial's construction and narratives of the protests, this study aims to discuss the democratic quest of the Thai people using the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial, and examine the transformation of its meanings over the years and how the spatial agencies have maximized this spatial structure.<sup>4</sup>

With the re-emergence of the democratic student movement in 2020, the protest activities at the memorial contributed to the structure's continuous contention and layering of meanings. From being a space for commemoration, it transformed into a venue for democracy and the progressive demands of the 2020 student movement, including the influence of the 1932 revolution and the contentious demands for monarchy reform.

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of Thought.” This aspect highlights Thailand's Western ideals of democracy, which started during the 1932 revolution or the “New Age of Hope” for the Siamese people. The *Khana Ratsadon*, or People's Party, overthrew the absolute monarchy and installed a constitutional rule in Thailand in 1932, favoring the Western style of democracy, which focused on French liberal teachings. It rejected the traditionalist school of democracy and believed in humanity's universal rationality and progress, such as freedom, equality, fraternity, separation of powers, constitutional laws, etc.

<sup>4</sup> This paper also follows the theoretical concepts of spatial structures and agencies. As a spatial structure, the 14th of October 1973 Memorial constructs a cognitive map that people can imagine and think about because of its symbols and meanings. The memorial produces meanings and frames the people's everyday lives within these spaces. It shapes and determines people's actions because it enables humans to act relative to this structure. However, these structures are not just passive warehouses of memories and symbols. People can continuously construct and reconstruct its meaning, and the spatial agency allows the memorial to turn these spaces into political and social platforms. The spatial agencies, such as the protesters and social movements, convert the spatial structures into their platform for grievances (Sewell 2001, 54-56).

## **Symbols and Meanings of the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial**



Figure 1. *14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial in Bangkok.*

Photograph by the author, November 3, 2021.

The 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial (*Anuson Sathan Sip Si Tula*), located at the Khok Wua intersection or corner of the middle portion of the Ratchadamnoen Avenue and Tanao Road in Bangkok (fig. 1), embodies various meanings and functions. The structure honors the people who died in the October protests, symbolizes the significance of the 1973 revolution in Thai society, epitomizes a democracy that mainly follows the traditionalist school, symbolizes modernization through its modern design, and other multifaceted meanings formed in this structure through time such as demonstrations, commemorations, projects, and programs.

The memorial primarily honors the people who died in the October Revolution. It was initially named the 14<sup>th</sup> of October Heroes' Monument (*Anusawari Wirachon Sip Si Tula*) from 1974 to 1989. Then, when the October 14 Foundation was formed in

1990, it was later called the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial to remind people of the democratic history of Thailand, particularly the memories of the October 1973 student revolution, and not just the heroes who died in the protests (Thatsanaleelaporn 2020, 73-74).

A few steps away from the famous symbol of Thai democracy and the venue of the 1973 protests, the Democracy Monument, this memorial was installed in 2001 to symbolize the significance of the 1973 revolution in Thai society. The significant events during the October 1973 revolution are all marked and remembered in the 14th of October 1973 Memorial. Aside from the gallery of the events during the October protests found in the area, the entire structure serves as a reminder of this historic event.

The memorial also epitomizes a democracy that mainly follows the traditionalist school. The structure is reminiscent of the significant moment when King Bhumibol publicly inserted himself into a very tense confrontation as a democratic monarch. The monument became a symbol of remembrance of the King's image when he restored constitutionalism and democracy for the good of the people (Handley 2006, 212) (Marshall 2014, 85-86).

Even though the memorial celebrates the force of the people, the spirit of democracy among the Thai youth was said to be neglected due to the contribution of the monarchical institution in ending the revolution. The images disseminated in various mediums showcasing the royal influence in the calling for peace and ending the military dictatorship stuck to the mainstream memory of the people that conformed to and complemented the student movement and, simultaneously, snatched the power from the hands of the people (Prakitnonthakan, 2008, 9-10).

This architectural structure also symbolizes modernization by following a modern approach to design compared to the nearby structures, which offer a different style amidst the statist and royalist layout of Ratchadamnoen Avenue due to the presence of government buildings and royalty-designed boulevards. The modern layout, designed by Architect Terdkart Sakdikamduang, consists of a semi-circular building that aims to house a confer-



ence room, auditorium, and museum. It also includes a garden and event spaces for debates, music, performances, and a display of Thai democracy history and the narrative of the October 1973 revolution (พิธีเปิดอนุสรณ์สถานวีรชนประชาธิปไตย [Opening Ceremony of the Memorial for Democracy Heroes] 2001, 27-30).



Figure 2. *The tip of the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial in Bangkok.*

Photograph by the author, November 3, 2021.

The centerpiece structure, added later and created by Surojana Sethabutra, a known Thai ceramic and visual artist, stands out among the other buildings in the area and stresses the modernization it promotes. This inverted cone-shaped and stupa-like structure composed of a broad rectangular base represents the democratic quest of the Thai people. At the tip of this 14-meter monument, a transparent material can be found that allows light

to shine from the structure (fig. 2). The tip's design symbolizes that the fight for democracy of the Thai people is not yet finished and completed. The height of the memorial's centerpiece measures 14 meters to represent October 14. It is divided into different parts, such as the rectangular base, which measures 5 meters. The long middle portion measures 7 meters, and the tip measures 2 meters. The monument is also a cenotaph of those who fought and sacrificed their lives for democracy. Their names are engraved at the rectangular base of the memorial (fig. 3) (Susanpoolthong 1998) (Dovey 2001, 70) (พิธีเปิดอนุสรณ์สถานวีรชนประชาธิปไตย [Opening Ceremony of the Memorial for Democracy Heroes] 2001, 28-30).

Due to its distinctiveness and modern style, the centerpiece stirred different interpretations and perspectives among the authorities and scholars. The design, which was selected in 1975 through a competition, received a backlash from the Rattanakosin Island Committee in the 1990s. It was criticized for having an inappropriate political overtone because it depicted divisiveness in society (Susanpoolthong 1998). From the architectural viewpoint, it was also considered an insufficiently powerful expression of democracy rooted in the struggles of the 1973 student movement. Based on Buddhist symbolism, the stupa invokes a feeling of peace and emptiness of mind more than a sense of the urgent and violent force of the people who fought against the dictatorship in 1973. Prakitnonthakan (2008, 9) argued that the structure failed to capture the power of the people who gathered on Ratchadamnoen Avenue to demand a constitution and democracy and oppose the power of military dictatorship because of the design. The structure still plays a significant role in public memory and Thai democracy, and it cannot be denied significance despite its criticisms.

In addition to the democracy aligned with the monarchical institution, the Western notion of democracy can also be seen at the sidelines through the symbols representing liberal values attached to the monument, such as freedom, human rights, and equality. The rectangular base of the structure, designed with terracotta tiles, features poetic lines about democracy, freedom, and human rights (fig. 3). Thai poet and national artist Naowarat Pongpaiboon wrote one. This poem, titled "Freedom" (*seripaap*),

emphasizes that humans must have freedom, particularly freedom of speech, and a genuinely democratic society must be based on equality. The concept of Western democracy which focuses on the rule by the people can also be seen in the inscription titled “14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 People’s Democracy” located at the front area of the rectangular base (พิธีเปิดอนุสรณ์สถานวีรชนประชาธิปไตย [Opening Ceremony of the Memorial for Democracy Heroes] 2001, 29) (กลุ่มคนรักสี่ก 2017).



Figure 3. *The rectangular base of the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial in Bangkok.*

Photograph by the author, November 3, 2021.

After the installation of the memorial, multifaceted meanings of this structure were formed through time. It was not only associated with the heroes and events of the October 1973 revolution. It became a site for political movements alongside the Democracy Monument, a testament that this structure fulfills its objective of becoming a democratic space for the Thai people (Thatsanaleelaporn 2020, 74-114). As a spatial structure, the memorial constructed a concept of democracy through its symbols and meanings that transpired in the understanding and memory of the Thai people. On the other hand, the people, protest groups, and institutions as spatial agencies further reinforced this democracy through their demonstrations, commemorations, projects, and programs at the structure.

This structure became a perennial venue of protests in memoriam of Nuamthong Praiwan, who sacrificed himself for democracy and committed a symbolic suicide against the 2006 military coup.<sup>5</sup> In 2013, the 24 June Democracy group had a commemoration activity at the memorial. Aside from the speeches of the group, a poem was also dedicated to the suicide of Nuamthong (Red shirts commemorate 7th anniversary of anti-coup suicide 2013).

The memorial functioned as a platform for the state to commemorate the 1973 student revolution. Led by Uthai Pimchaichon, the National Assembly designated October 14 of every year as Democracy Day (*Wan Prachathipatai*) in May 2003. This resolution was passed on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October 1973 revolution. The declaration explicitly highlighted the significance of the student revolution and the efforts of the people who fought for democracy and opposed the dictatorial rule in Thailand. It is noteworthy to underline their concept of the traditional school of democracy in this resolution, accentuating the idea of “Constitutional Democracy with the Monarch as the Head of State.”

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5 Nuamthong Praiwan is a 60-year-old taxi driver who tried to kill himself by driving his taxi into a military tank on September 30, 2006 as a protest. He was severely injured but was found hanging from a pedestrian footbridge on Vibhavadi Rangsit Road in Bangkok on October 31, 2006 (Red shirts commemorate 7th anniversary of anti-coup suicide 2013).

It followed the notion that sovereignty belongs to the people and that the country's leaders are representatives of the people. The rulers must exercise their power in the name of the King, and unrighteous use of power has no room for democracy (สมุดรวมภาพเหตุการณ์ ๑๔ ตุลา: ๒๕๑๖ ๒๕๑๗ ๒๕๔๔ ๒๕๔๖ [Photobook of October 14 Events: 1973, 1974, 2001, 2003] 2005). This kind of democracy was monumentalized in the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial and reinforced by the commemorations and various activities conducted in the structure. The National Assembly formed an organizing committee and sub-committees, and projects and programs were prepared to align with the objectives of Democracy Day and the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revolution. It included the grand commemoration held at the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial on October 14, 2003 (14 ตุลา วันประชาธิปไตย รำลึก 30 ปี 14 ตุลาคม 2516 - 2546 [October 14 Democracy Day, 30th anniversary of 14th of October (1973 - 2003)] 2003) (สมุดรวมภาพเหตุการณ์ ๑๔ ตุลา: ๒๕๑๖ ๒๕๑๗ ๒๕๔๔ ๒๕๔๖ [Photobook of October 14 Events: 1973, 1974, 2001, 2003] 2005).

The commemoration of the October 1973 revolution continues every year at the memorial. However, it is not as grand as the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary due to the different events and leadership changes after, such as the military junta in 2006. The usage of October 14 as Democracy Day was also not used anymore. Although people still remember the October 1973 revolution because of the commemoration activities, Democracy Day rarely rings a bell as the public infrequently mentions it because it is only a national observance compared to a national holiday like December 10 Constitution Day. In recent memory, October 14 is overshadowed by another national holiday, the October 13 King Bhumibol Adulyadej Memorial Day, commemorating King Bhumibol's passing in 2016. In 2019, October 14 was a substitution holiday for King Bhumibol Adulyadej Memorial Day because October 13 was a Sunday (October 2019 Holidays 2019). Then, in 2022, since October 14 is just a national observance, the date was labeled as an additional special holiday of October 13 because of holiday economics. It was just seen as a day to bridge the gap between October 13, which was Thursday, and the weekend (4

extra holidays next year 2021). In 2023, the Thai government officially declared October 13 every year as “Navamindra Maharaj Day,” a memorial day and national holiday to commemorate the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Navamindra Maharaj Day: A Remembrance 2023).<sup>6</sup> The changes in the leadership and the public holidays in Thailand prove that spatial agency, such as human activities, is vital in preserving and continuing the messages conveyed in the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial as a spatial structure. The spatial agency can contribute to the Thai people’s public memory and historical consciousness by occupying this space and activating its meaning.

The memorial also functions as a platform for various purposes and multifaceted meanings. It operates as a tourist site because it is considered an important landmark featured by the Tourism Authority of Thailand and different travel and museum websites. The structure also caters to the everyday life of the people; it serves as a venue for learning because of the workshops, seminars, discussions, film screenings, exhibits, performances, book fairs, youth camps, and contests that can be organized in this memorial to stimulate the interest of young people in Thai democracy. It is also a relaxing area because of the spaces where people can sit, chat, or enjoy their pastime. People also nap, eat, smoke, hang out, and read in this place. It is also a venue for people’s income and livelihood, such as lottery tickets and food vending. The structure is also a waiting area for sex workers and motorcycle drivers and shelters homeless people along Ratchadamnoen Avenue. This memorial is also a sacred space for some, notably because of the statue in front of the structure (fig. 4). Garlands, flowers, incense sticks, and food offerings can be seen in this stone sculpture. It eventually became an instrument for worship by the people in this area, particularly the families and relatives of the fallen heroes and the lottery vendors who always pay respect to this structure (Thatsanaleelaporn 2020, 73-114).

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Given the points mentioned above, the memorial as a

<sup>6</sup> *Navamindra* means “ninth great person,” while *Maharaj* means “great king” because the late King was the ninth king of the Chakri Dynasty (Navamindra Maharaj Day: A Remembrance 2023).

spatial structure amplifies these various meanings and functions in Thai society. It helps the people to memorialize the October 1973 revolution based on what was depicted and transpired in this structure. Not only is it attached to the traditional school of Thai democracy, the fallen heroes, and memories of the revolution, but it is also linked to the concept of social space where the people can claim this space for themselves to exercise their fundamental human rights and apply its meanings in their everyday lives. However, before the people could maximize this area, it first went through the eye of a needle because of Thailand's ideological rift and political situation after the 1973 revolution.

## **The Stories of Construction**

The memorial's construction encountered some complications and challenges, resulting in its late inauguration in 2001. The first issue resolved was its location, which turned out to be a government building that had been burnt down during the October 1973 demonstration. The Crown Property Bureau owned the land. Then, it was leased to the military and eventually rented by the Lottery Sellers' Association (Dovey 2001, 70) (Peleggi 2017, 147-148). The second concern was the funding for its installation. The initial plan of installing this memorial was discussed in 1974. The government approved the construction of the structure, and Prime Minister Sanya Thammasakdi and the Ministry of Finance pledged to shoulder half the cost of the memorial. Then the other half came from public donations (พิธีเปิดอนุสรณ์สถานวีรชนประชาธิปไตย [Opening Ceremony of the Memorial for Democracy Heroes] 2001, 13) (Peleggi 2017, 147-148). The National Student Center of Thailand (NSCT) also collected four million baht for the construction. However, due to the 1976 Thammasat massacre, the police seized the amount collected by the student organization (Peleggi 2017, 149). During this period, the military and right-wing groups started vehemently to oppose the construction plan of the memorial because it was seen as a symbol of divisiveness (Susanpoolthong 1998).





Figure 4. *“Monument to the Youth Killed in October” located in the  
14 October 1973 Memorial in Bangkok.*

Photograph by Gil D. Turingan, November 3, 2021.

Despite the concerns and pending final approval, the foundation stone of the memorial was still laid on October 14, 1975 at the Khok Wua intersection. The ceremony was presided over by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and at-



tended by Supreme Patriarch Somdet Phra Ariyavongsagatanana and Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj (พิธีเปิดอนุสรณ์สถานวีรชนประชาธิปไตย [Opening Ceremony of the Memorial for Democracy Heroes] 2001, 12). While waiting for the approval to install a memorial, a cement structure was placed on the ground in 1989 (fig. 4). This structure, with five young people tangled by a flag, continued to commemorate the sacrifices of people who died during the 1973 revolution (Peleggi 2017, 149).

With all the complications in constructing this memorial, the plans finally started to form when the October 14 Foundation was formally created and tasked to head the memorial's construction on October 8, 1990. The confiscated money from NSCT was transferred to this foundation. The construction plan of the monument resumed after the 1992 Black May protests and was resurrected by former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun. He obtained permission from the Crown Property Bureau to use the said land again, leased by the Lottery Sellers' Association (In memory of a memorial 1997) (Peleggi 2017, 149).

Through the help of the October 14 Foundation, commemoration activities are conducted annually. They arrange exhibits, collect memories, documents, and testimonies of the 1973 revolution, and create materials that will educate people about democracy and the historic student movement (อนุสรณ์สถาน 14 ตุลา 2016).

After many decades of being in limbo and opposed by right-wing groups, the memorial was finally inaugurated on October 14, 2001. About 40,000 people attended the inauguration. Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra delivered his speech during the inauguration and told the public to leave the past behind, which offended the pro-democracy activists. They insisted that past mistakes would likely be repeated if people moved on without bringing anyone to justice (Ruangdit 2001) (Lertchavalitsakul 2016) (Peleggi 2017, 150).

With the re-emergence of the student movement in 2020, they continued the legacies of the memorial by honoring the people who fought for democracy in their demonstrations and commemorating the success of the 1973 student movement. The

14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial became one of the venues of the 2020 student movement, which resulted in contention and another layering of meanings. Due to various factors, such as protest strategies, purposes, and alternatives, the memorial turned into one of the most memorable spaces of the 2020 student movement.

## The Stories of Contention

In 2020, Thailand witnessed the re-emergence of the Thai student movement. Many students were outraged by the Constitutional Court's decision to dissolve the Future Forward Party (*Phak Anakhot Mai*), the precursor of the Move Forward Party (*Phak Kao Klai*), which led them to organize protests on their campuses in February and paved the way for them to express their demands and dissatisfaction with the government. Since then, a series of political protests have erupted in Thailand, and the movement has caught the attention of the international stage.

The 2020 student movement produced another layer of meaning to the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial by commemorating the 1973 revolution. The movement honored the legacies of the October 1973 revolution and the people who fought for democracy in their demonstrations. The student activists commemorated the sacrifice of the names engraved at the rectangular base of the memorial. It can be seen in how the student protesters used the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial to remember the revolution's anniversary. The students designated the memorial as a space for remembrance, while the nearby Democracy Monument was a protest venue. The *Ratsadon* group, inspired by the People's Party (*Khana Ratsadon*) of the 1932 revolution, led the October 1973 commemoration by protesting the current demands of the students and their allied pro-democracy groups (Planned Event and Timeline for October 14 2020). The *Khana Ratsadon*, which overthrew the absolute monarchy and installed a constitutional rule in Thailand in 1932, favoring the Western style of democracy, became popular and meaningful again because of the 2020 student protests. The group imbibed the poems and messages of the lines placed at the structure by exercising their freedom of speech

and asserting their human rights during their protests. However, this commemoration was not just a simple remembrance of the 1973 event but also signaled the combination of the influences of the 1932 and 1973 revolutions in the 2020 movement. With the occupation of the 2020 student movement of the memorial, the structure became a repository of the Western school of democratic ideals and messages of the 1932 revolution and 2020 student movement, not just the traditional school of democracy of the 1973 student movement. The Thai democracy constructed in this space, aligned with the traditional ideas of democracy, overlapped with the legacies of the 1932 and 2020 movements. The Western school of democracy embedded in the meanings of the structure at the sidelines through the symbols representing liberal values such as freedom, human rights, and equality were further emphasized by the 2020 student movement's reference to the 1932 revolution.

Aside from the democracy influenced by the 1932 revolution, the memorial also served as a venue for the Western school of democracy because of monarchy reforms. On the day of the Thai Constitution and International Human Rights, December 10, 2020, the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial witnessed the “Cancel 112” or (*Yoklerk 112*) protest of the Thai student leaders and activists on the abolition of the *lese majeste* law. Early in the morning of December 10, the memorial served as a place for the speeches of the pro-monarchy reform protest leaders. Panusaya “Rung” Sithijirawattanakul and over 1,000 protesters convened at the structure to oppose Article 112 of the Thai Criminal Code. The memorial also became a platform for bands and music organized by the United Front of Thammasat and Demonstration (UFTD) and Mob Fest. (Tanakasempipat 2020) (Rally chiefs want repeal of lese majeste law 2020) (แหล่งข่าว ‘ห่วยราษฎร์’ จวต 10 ธันวาคม โควิดด้านละไบ 2,475 ฉบับ พิมพ์กำกับ ‘ไม่ขายสลิม’ 2020).

Outside the memorial, the activists from the *Ratsadon* group activated the people's memory of the structure by making a parody of the Thai lottery named “People's Lottery” (*Huay Ratsadon*). In reference to the 1932 revolution, *Khana Ratsadon*, and the long saga of the construction of the October 14 memorial, they handed

out 2,475 tickets to the people and protesters as souvenirs. The group told them that the prizes for the winners included Thai democracy, a monarchy truly respecting the constitution, and the resignation of Prime Minister Prayuth (Khaosod English 2020) ('ห่วยราษฎร์' ของที่ระลึกสำหรับผู้สมทบท่อน้ำเลี้ยง 2020) (หนังสือ 'ห่วยราษฎร์' งวด 10 ธันวาคม โค้วต้าคนละใบ 2,475 ฉบับ พิมพ์กำกับ 'ไม่ขายสลิม' 2020).

The 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial also witnessed the performative actions of the 2020 student movement on the significance of a democratic constitution. An epitaph-designed gallery of Thai constitutions was paraded before the memorial during their August 27 protest (Pro-democracy activists set up camp at October 14 Memorial in Bangkok 2020).

These protest activities at the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial contributed to the contention and added more meaning to the structure. The memorial was no longer just a space for remembrance and commemoration of the 1973 student revolution. It also transformed into a venue for the Western school of democracy and progressive demands of the 2020 student movement, including the influence of the 1932 revolution and the contentious monarchy reform.

The memorial also became a democratic space and a haven for the left-wing groups from the provinces. The anti-government protesters led by former Khon Kaen University law student Jatupat Boonpattaraksa or Pai Dao Din occupied the memorial and turned the place into a campsite on August 27, 2020.<sup>7</sup> He encouraged the others to join the protest campaign of his Dao Din group titled "Camp Not Jail" by installing tents around the

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7 Pai Dao Din was one of the five members of the Dao Din group who protested in front of Prime Minister Prayuth at the Khon Kaen City Hall on November 19, 2014. They wore black shirts with printed words "We," "do," "not," "want," and "coup" while making the three-finger salute. They were arrested but eventually released with conditions such as a ban on political activities and a threat to their student status (Sripokangkul, Muangming and Vulsuma 2017, 468). Then, he was jailed for more than two years because of *lese majeste* and Computer Crime Act violations in 2016 (Pro-democracy activists set up camp at October 14 Memorial in Bangkok 2020).

memorial. Pai led the overnight camping and proceeded to the police station the next day to respond to the summons given to him because of his presence in the July 18 demonstration at the Democracy Monument (Pro-democracy activists set up camp at October 14 Memorial in Bangkok 2020). The memorial on that day was surrounded by protest banners such as “The dictator shall perish, long live democracy” and “Stop harassing the people.” The banner of the Khon Kaen protest movement, *Isaan Boyander*, was also placed in the memorial. It is also puzzling to point out that the symbol of anarchy was placed on the cone-shaped and stupa-liked structure of the memorial. It is far from the democracy that the said structure symbolizes and the democratic message of some banners tied to the venue.<sup>8</sup> Although Pai Dao Din cleared it in his interview with Khaosod English correspondent Pravit Rojanaphruk, he discouraged violence in demonstrations (LIVE from the Oct. 14, 1973 Memorial where protesters plan to camp overnight in defiance of the government 2020). Various stalls for food, beverages, first-aid, Red Shirt items and protest paraphernalia, mats, and airconditioned toilets were also situated on the venue. The Internet Law Reform Dialogue (iLaw), a non-profit organization collecting signatures to amend the Constitution, was also at the camping event. The memorial also served as a stage for the speeches of the protest leaders from various sectors and the movement’s demands. In the evening, they also had a film-showing event. They showed the documentary film of Lauren Greenfield titled “The Kingmaker,” which centers on the story of Imelda Marcos and the efforts of the Marcos family to resurrect their image in the Philippines (LIVE from the Oct. 14, 1973 Memorial where protesters plan to camp overnight in defiance of the government 2020).

Initially, the democracy monumentalized in this memorial was associated with the traditional school because of the royal institution’s role in solving the tension during the October 1973

8 In an interview with one of the Dao Din activists in 2021, Pang explained that the members of the Dao Din group believe in different left-wing ideals such as Marxism and Anarchism. Under this umbrella, various groups emerged, such as The Commoners Party, the UNME of Anarchy, and the Thalufah activism group (Dao Din Interview Part 1 2021).

revolution. The pictures and stories of the royalty's influence on the October 1973 revolution solidified the imagery of Thai democracy and its linkage with the Thai monarchy. Then, this imagery was eventually attached and commemorated in the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial. The protest activities of the 2020 student movement in this structure began to create a small crack in the imagery of the memorial due to their progressive demands and the way they occupied it. By introducing the 1932 revolution again and campaigning for monarchy reforms in this space, the students produced a new layer of meaning for the public. It constructed a new layer of democracy aligned with the Western school, adding to the traditional Thai democracy left by the 1973 student movement. The 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial is no longer a structure built to commemorate or memorialize its purpose. It is now a repository of collective memory and Thai democracy constructed by the spatial agency or the protesters in this spatial structure. With the ongoing student activism among the Thai youth, it is now in their hands how they will continue claiming the narrative and contesting the imagery of this memorial.

## **Conclusion**

Democracy in Thai society was brought to life when the October 1973 student revolution ended the military government of Thanom Kittikachorn, which was memorialized through the construction of the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial. Aside from traditional democracy, this structure commemorates the significance of the October 1973 revolution and honors the heroes who sacrificed their lives for democracy. It also represented the democratic struggles that Thai society experienced after 1973. Amidst the resistance and challenges it experienced for decades, the pro-democracy groups, the October 14 Foundation, and all other allied sectors supporting the 1973 student revolution made this memorial happen. The memorial also exemplifies modernization and different multifaceted meanings. Its mere presence in the public sphere constructs mental imagery of these functions and meanings. It also serves as a democratic space and venue for

political demonstrations, allowing the protesters to transform this structure into a political and social platform that can contest or add layers of meaning to its original nature.

With the re-emergence of the student movement in 2020, the student protesters continued the legacies of the memorial by honoring the people who fought for democracy in their demonstrations and commemorating the success of the 1973 student movement. The various performative actions conducted by the 2020 student protests at the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial embodied its representations, such as the inverted cone-shaped and stupa-like structure that symbolizes the democratic quest of the Thai people. The student activists commemorated the sacrifice of the names engraved at the rectangular base of the monument. They imbibed the poems and messages of the lines placed at the structure by exercising their freedom of speech and asserting their human rights during their protests. The memorial also became a venue for the Western school of democracy due to the progressive demands of the 2020 student movement, the influence of the 1932 revolution, and the contentious demands for monarchy reform. From a memorial that monumentalizes a traditional Thai democracy allied with the monarchical institution, it also became a space for Western democracy. The 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial transformed into a repository of collective memory and Thai democracy discourse constructed by the spatial agency or the protesters in this spatial structure.

As epitomized by the tip of the inverted cone-shaped and stupa-like centerpiece of the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial, Thai democracy and the democratic quest of the Thai people are indeed not yet finished and completed. For 50 years, the 1973 democracy faced a lot of trials, and it was an arduous battle for the Thai people. But it is also important to note that democracy is a continuous process, and with the current things happening in Thailand, the people have the power to control this narrative and define the democracy they want to have with the use of monuments such as the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1973 Memorial—no matter how challenging the existing Thai political infrastructures and institutions are.

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## Taliban 2.0 and Geopolitical Security Concerns in South Asia's Neighbourhood

Masom Jan Masomy<sup>1</sup> and Anup Shekhar Chakraborty<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT—** The emergence of Taliban 2.0 has raised significant security concerns in South Asia, particularly in India and Pakistan. The dynamics of South Asia's neighbouring countries are experiencing notable shifts due to the rise and consolidation of the Taliban 2.0's regime from 2021 to 2024. In Taliban controlled Afghanistan, there is a notable prevalence of anti-India and anti-Pakistan sentiments. Past analysis of Afghanistan has raised concerns regarding the capabilities and preparedness of these terrorists for attacks. The two long-standing nuclear powers have differing views on Afghanistan, while expressing concerns about each other's increasing influence. This discussion examines the relations between Pakistan, India, and the Taliban, while also addressing legitimate concerns about security issues in South Asia due to the situation in Afghanistan.

**Keywords :** War, Peace building, Afghanistan, Security, Taliban 2.0, India, Pakistan

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1 Assistant Professor at the Regional Studies Centre, Afghanistan Academy of Sciences, Kabul, Afghanistan.

2 Anup Shekhar Chakraborty is Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science, North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), India

## **Introduction: Taliban 2.0**

Afghanistan has been severely affected by the consequences of successive wars for almost forty years. The Afghan conflict is heavily impacted by ongoing interference from external actors, which has contributed to the enduring state of instability in the country. The military interventions by the USSR from 1979 to 1989 and the United States from 2001 to 2021 had a significant negative impact on Afghanistan's stability and economic progress. Furthermore, it is crucial to emphasise that this situation presents substantial long-term prospects for the neighbouring governments of Afghanistan and regional states to increase their involvement in the internal affairs of the country, with the intention of leveraging Afghanistan's predicament for their own advantage. The collapse of the Afghan government, backed by the United States, has had far-reaching and negative effects on Afghanistan and the surrounding region in South Asia. The decision to consciously forego opportunities for long-term peace raises concerns about the potential consequences that may only become apparent in the future. In 2021, the emergence of the Taliban 2.0 after the departure of US and NATO forces had far-reaching consequences for Afghanistan. Taliban 2.0's rise post 2021 has triggered an abrupt economic crisis and a surge in instability (Calabrese 2021).

The reaction from the South Asian neighbourhood to the fall of the Afghan government at the hands of the Taliban was varied and included both positive and negative responses. Over the course of the past year, it is noteworthy that China, Russia, Iran, and Pakistan have maintained operational embassies in Kabul, even after the Taliban assumed control. According to O'Connor (2021), there are embassies that have continued to maintain diplomatic relations with the Taliban. The consensus among them was that the United States, NATO, and the Afghan government had effectively addressed a major security challenge in the region during the last two decades. The presence of military forces from the United States and NATO in Afghanistan has faced opposition from regional powers like China, Russia, Pakistan, and Iran. However, it is worth noting that India and the Central Asia

Republics (CARs) have been exceptions to this opposition. As a result, it can be observed that Pakistan, Russia, China, Iran, and certain countries in Central Asia have taken proactive measures to establish diplomatic relations with the Taliban. These countries have also welcomed and engaged with Taliban representatives, indicating a significant focus on safeguarding their economic and security concerns during the ongoing peace negotiations. However, it is important to note that the current situation in Afghanistan remains closely connected to the overall state of regional security. This article contributes to the existing scholarship by focusing on the production of new literature and highlighting recent developments in the field of security trends. The discussion highlights the regional security concerns that arose following the fall of the democratic government, which had enjoyed global support for a period of twenty years.

This study examines the security concerns of India and Pakistan in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. According to the perspectives of the two major powers in the South Asian neighbourhood, Afghanistan serves as a base for militants who are opposed to both India and Pakistan. They anticipate that this factor will gain significance in the future when it comes to the strategic planning of attacks. The two historic rival nuclear powers hold contrasting perspectives on Afghanistan and are simultaneously apprehensive about each other's growing involvement in the country. This study aims to analyse the 'Taliban takeover of Afghanistan' one year after the Taliban assumed control in the country and the larger spillage of security concerns in insecure neighbourhoods of South Asia. In this study, the term 'Taliban 2.0' will be used to refer to the current Taliban regime (2021-2024) in Afghanistan. The purpose of recognising the various incarnations and transformations of the Taliban over the years is to gain a deeper understanding of their evolution and the shape-shifting sense of fear, insecurities and collective apprehensions.

## **Taliban 2.0 and Geopolitical Dilemma**

The sudden and surprising collapse of the US-backed Afghan government to the Taliban on August 15, 2021, was a significant and far-reaching event that deeply affected the global community and the South Asian neighbourhood. Vock (2021) suggests that the Taliban's ability to declare victory over the US-NATO trained and equipped Afghan security forces in merely ten days of fighting is noteworthy. The conclusion drawn by various perspectives is that the results were primarily influenced by the US-Taliban Doha deal, which favoured the Taliban, and intentionally marginalised the Afghan government in the Afghan Peace Process. Multiple researchers have confirmed this finding. Following the takeover by the Taliban, Afghanistan faced substantial economic challenges. The administration of President Joe Biden promptly froze Afghanistan's Central Bank assets, which amounted to \$9.5 billion and were held in the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Several countries, including the European Union, Germany, and Britain, have decided to suspend their involvement in several aid for development programmes in Afghanistan. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank halted their funding for development projects in Afghanistan due to the country's currency crisis. According to Calabrese (2021), the IMF took measures to prevent the release of emergency currency reserves.

Despite the initial efforts of the United Nations, regional countries, and western nations to provide humanitarian aid to the Afghan people, they continue to face severe economic challenges. According to agencies affiliated with the United Nations (OCHA), there is a significant number of over 22 million individuals who are currently in dire need of assistance and are experiencing severe hunger. The crisis has resulted in the displacement of nine million people, with millions of children unable to attend school and one million children facing the risk of malnutrition. The United Nations responded to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan by issuing a substantial appeal in January 2022. They requested \$5 billion in funding (United Nations 2022). The relief effort in Afghanistan is primarily led by western countries, although China,

India, and other regional countries have also contributed food and medical supplies. The United States' decision to ease some of the sanctions imposed on Afghanistan has resulted in donor countries providing nearly \$1.6 billion to the UN appeal. In October 2021, the European Union pledged to support the Afghan economy by offering a financial aid package of one billion dollars. From February onwards, the United States of America has emerged as the leading contributor to Afghanistan, providing a significant sum of \$421 million in financial aid. The European Union has contributed \$227 million, making it the largest contributor. Germany follows closely behind with a contribution of \$182 million. The United Kingdom has contributed \$113 million, while France has contributed \$82 million. Denmark has contributed \$74 million, Japan has contributed \$60 million, and Sweden has contributed \$53 million. The Netherlands has contributed \$30 million, and Canada has contributed \$27 million (Menon 2022). The provision of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan remains ongoing, facilitated by the United Nations. Afghanistan has received approximately \$1.8 billion in humanitarian assistance, with the United States contributing \$1.1 billion to support the Afghan population amidst the current challenging circumstances (Masomy 2022c).

The response from the from neighbouring countries as well as in the wider region to the Taliban's takeover of the Afghan government was varied. China, Russia, Iran, and Pakistan continued to maintain their embassies in Kabul, indicating their ongoing diplomatic relations with the Taliban over the past one to two years. All individuals shared a common perception of a notable void in regional security that was effectively addressed by the presence of US-NATO forces and the Afghan government over the course of the last twenty years. Regional powers like China, Russia, Pakistan, and Iran have consistently expressed opposition to the military presence of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, with the exception of India and the Central Asia Republics (CARs). According to O'oconor (2021), it can be observed that Pakistan, Russia, China, Iran, and certain Central Asian countries have established diplomatic connections with the Taliban and have welcomed Taliban representatives as part of the peace process.

This indicates a significant focus on security and economic concerns. Russia has increased its military presence in Central Asia to provide security to the region. This is being done through the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) framework, which aims to prevent any potential movement of terrorist and extremist groups across borders. The situation in Afghanistan, where the Taliban has gained control, has contributed to the need for this heightened mobilisation. (Gupta, 2021) In August, Russia and Uzbekistan conducted military exercises near the Afghan-Uzbek border. Additionally, they held military drills in Tajikistan along the Afghan border, which involved the participation of Russia, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan (Moscow Times 2021).

The presence of foreign terrorist organisations in Afghanistan has raised significant concerns, particularly as the United States and NATO forces have initiated their withdrawal from that country according to President Joe Biden's new deadline. The situation took place during a period of escalated conflict between the Taliban and the remaining elements of the former Afghan government. According to the twelfth report of the United Nations Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the estimated number of foreign terrorist fighters is approximately 8,000 to 10,000. According to the UNSC (2021), a significant number of these individuals are thought to originate from Central Asia, the Caucasus region of the Russian Federation, Pakistan, and Xinjiang, specifically the Uighur autonomous region of China. The presence of foreign terrorist fighters in Afghanistan has been a topic of contention, with the Taliban consistently denying their existence. However, former Afghan President Mohammed Ashraf Ghani provided explicit confirmation of their presence during an international conference held in Uzbekistan in July 2021. The conference had participants from different countries, represented by regional representatives. President Ghani claimed that the number of jihadist fighters in Afghanistan exceeded 10,000, and they are collaborating with the Taliban in their efforts to overthrow the Afghan government (Pajhwok 2021). Pakistan was held responsible for undermining the prospects for peace in Afghanistan.



China, being one of the powers keens on expanding its influence in South Asia, has openly expressed its discontent with the withdrawal of United States and NATO forces from Afghanistan, both before and after the fall of Kabul. China is widely recognised as a formidable competitor to the United States in terms of global power and influence. The Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, criticised the sudden withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan during a phone call with Secretary of State Antony Blinken, emphasising the negative consequences it had on the situation in the country (Patranobis 2021). The recent suicide bombings in Kabul airport, Kunduz, and Kandahar provinces targeted Shia Mosques and resulted in the loss of many innocent lives. These attacks highlight the emergence of the *Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP)* as a significant threat to both the Taliban government and neighbouring countries (Masomy, 2021). According to a report from UN News on July 20, 2022, there have been a significant number of casualties, with approximately 700 innocent lives lost and 1,406 individuals injured since the Taliban assumed control. It is worth noting that most of these attacks have been attributed to the ISKP, a rival faction to the Taliban.

China and the Taliban have significantly improved their diplomatic relations in recent years, marking a notable development. The current development is being regarded as a significant achievement for China's foreign policy. Additionally, China's apprehension regarding potential security threats originating from Afghanistan under Taliban rule is widely acknowledged. Based on the June 2021 United Nations report, it has been observed that a significant number of fighters affiliated with the *East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)* and ISKP are actively present in Afghanistan's Badakhshan province. This province shares borders with both China and Tajikistan. (UNSC 2021) China has consistently expressed its security concerns to the Taliban, emphasising that these concerns primarily revolve around anti-China military groups that specifically aim to attack Chinese territory or disrupt China's economic assets. China has raised concerns about the alleged links between Uighur Muslims and the Taliban during their discussions with the Taliban. The Taliban has provided China with

assurances that Afghan territory will not be utilised for military activities targeting China or any other nation (Calabrese 2021). Furthermore, China is actively cultivating strong diplomatic links with its neighbours to strengthen its security concerns in Afghanistan, especially since the Taliban took power. China's security role in Central Asia expanded with the building of a military base in Tajikistan near the Afghan border. This action reduces security risks from Afghanistan's instability (Schulz, 2021). Tajikistan has used deteriorating relations with the Taliban to justify enhanced border surveillance with Afghanistan. Tajikistan maintains strong connections with Russia and China to effectively fight possible threats.

Following the Taliban's assumption of power on August 15, 2021, countries in the region have encountered numerous complex challenges. The coordination of policies has become necessary for them to address the complex situation in Afghanistan, which includes a humanitarian crisis, economic instability, and an influx of refugees. The inaugural regional conference took place in Moscow in October, following the Taliban's assumption of power in Afghanistan. The conference included delegates from the Taliban as well as representatives from other countries. During the meeting, representatives from China, India, Pakistan, Iran, and five Central Asian Republics (CARs) joined forces to exert pressure on the Taliban. Their objective was to encourage the formation of an inclusive Afghan government that respects human rights and avoids becoming a sanctuary for terrorist organisations. According to Simmons (2021), there was a preference for engaging in dialogue with the Taliban, irrespective of the government's official recognition of the group. Iran has proposed a second conference on Afghanistan, scheduled for the end of October 2021. The conference aims to gather representatives from six neighbouring countries of Afghanistan. A joint request was made to the Taliban, urging them to address security concerns and establish an inclusive government (RFE 2021). India and Pakistan have recently organised several meetings focused on Afghanistan, aiming to preserve their influence in the region.

## **Insecurity, Collective Fear, and Global Concerns**

The prevalence of insecurity, collective fear, and global concerns is a pressing matter that necessitates thorough analysis and thoughtful deliberation. Before delving into the theoretical framework surrounding the emergence of collective insecurity, it is imperative to establish a clear and concise definition of the term. When individuals lack defences, they are susceptible to both internal stress and external danger, which can leave them vulnerable. The contemporary interpretation of the term 'insecurity' incorporates the notion of being 'not adequately protected,' whereas its original connotation referred to a state of anxiety, fear, lack of confidence, or uncertainty. Both terms suggest a deficiency in security measures, but the former places a greater emphasis on feelings of mistrust or uncertainty compared to the latter. This study provides a definition of 'insecurity' as the negative emotions that arise from a sense of imminent threat, regardless of whether the threat is actual or perceived. The presence of insecurity within a community can be attributed to the influence of constructed social and political systems. The concept of the "social and political construction of reality" is used to describe how a collective group of individuals interprets and understands the world (Glassner 1999; Altheide 2002; Furedi 2002; Barber 2003). Contrary to common perception, this statement does not suggest that our reality is akin to a fictional realm where every aspect is a result of cunning psychological manipulation. Collective insecurity refers to the phenomenon where the ordinary worries and concerns of individuals or communities are magnified and transformed into social or political problems. Fear and anxiety, on the other hand, are common emotions that people regularly encounter in their daily lives (Glassner 1999; Altheide 2002; Furedi 2002; Barber 2003; Robin 2004). Collective insecurity emerges when individuals and groups develop interpretations of risk through learning and acquisition processes. When we identify the sources of insecurity as problems that affect a large portion of the population, we can then consider including them on the policy agenda. This framework illuminates agenda shifting and political actors' role in resolving communal fears that policymakers often miss.

India and Pakistan's actions, reactions, and silences imply they are concerned about regional securitization and militarism, as well as the Taliban's growing visibility.

## **India and Pakistan's Security Concerns: Then and Now**

Political tensions have persisted between India and Pakistan in South Asia since 1947. The ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan has drawn Afghanistan into its midst. The strategic depth of Afghanistan is utilised as both an advantage and a weapon in proxy conflicts. Both nations have consistently made efforts to enhance their influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan has developed strong relationships with different Jihadi factions, especially after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which occurred over the last forty years. According to Fraser (2019), the Taliban has been perceived as having a more favourable relationship with Pakistan than with India, particularly during the 1990s when tensions between Pakistan and India over Kashmir were high. Additionally, it is important to note that their policies towards Afghanistan appear to be contradictory. India expresses optimism regarding the prospects of Afghanistan achieving stability and economic self-sufficiency. Pakistan has expressed a desire for Afghanistan to establish a dependence on Pakistan. Both nations have a history of having interests and concerns in Afghanistan and the surrounding region. The recent return of the Taliban to power requires them to reassess their policies towards the country.

## **India's Security Concerns**

India's role in Afghanistan has been crucial in the last twenty years. They have provided support in various areas to promote the establishment of a just legal system and democratic values within Afghan society. India's main objective in Afghanistan was to strengthen its historical connections with the Afghan people,

prevent the Taliban from regaining power, and minimise Pakistan's impact in the region. The return of the Taliban to power has significant implications for India's ability to exert influence in Afghanistan and for its national security, given the long-standing distrust between India and the Taliban. In 1999, militants based in Pakistan hijacked an Indian IC-814 aircraft during its journey from Kathmandu to Kandahar. The event had a notable effect on how India viewed the Taliban's initial regime, which lasted from 1996 to 2001 (Sharma & Patil 2022). In the post-9/11 world, it became evident that India's engagement with the Afghan government, supported by the United States, was notably more proactive than other countries in the region. In contrast Pakistan took a reactive position to the Taliban groups that were previously inactive and offered them a safe haven within its borders. According to Ganguly and Howenstien (2009), the Taliban carried out attacks on India's consulates in various Afghan provinces and its embassy in Kabul. The motivation behind these attacks was attributed to the rivalry between India and Afghanistan.

India's role in the Afghan peace process was limited, but it had valuable insights to offer regarding the Taliban's conduct, their rigid ideology, their connections with terrorist organisations hostile to India, and their relationship with Pakistan. Concerns started to escalate in India due to the forceful overthrow of Ashraf Ghani's government by the Taliban. India has long argued that the Taliban is aligned with Pakistan and serves as a proxy for Pakistani interests. Furthermore, the extensive network of militant groups that the Taliban is affiliated with poses a significant risk to both India's national security and the overall stability of the region. The conflict in India administered Kashmir involves the presence of anti-Indian militant groups such as *Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM)* and *Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)* (Ellis-Peterson 2021). Over a span of multiple years, the two organisations have conducted attacks on Indian forces in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) regions that fall under Indian administration but are situated within Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. The United Nations report states that *Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM)* and *Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)* had an estimated 6,000 to 6,500 active fighters engaged in combat in Afghanistan

(Ellis-Peterson 2021).

India's stance towards the Taliban in multilateral relations remains unyielding, as there have been no indications of India's willingness to engage with them. Following the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, diplomatic channels were effectively shut down, resulting in a cessation of construction activities on ongoing development projects. The presence of anti-India armed groups, including *JeM* and *LeT*, which are affiliated with Pakistan, is a significant cause for worry for India. India expresses concern over the potential of these groups to initiate offensives in the Kashmir Valley. After the Soviet Union's defeat in Afghanistan in 1989, there was a noticeable emergence of militant groups in the Kashmir Valley. Pakistan strategically directed militants, comprising both Kashmiri militants and foreign fighters, towards the Kashmir Valley with the objective of promoting the notion of a 'fight for Islam.' According to Wani (2021), there were approximately 400 Afghan insurgents affiliated with the *Hezb-e-Islami Party* of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in Kashmir, originating from the tribal areas of Afghanistan. Indian politicians and policymakers have expressed concerns about the potential utilisation of Afghanistan's 'strategic depth' by Pakistan, as they fear that Pakistan might exploit Afghanistan's territory as a strategic rallying point by deploying insurgents to Kashmir following the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan.

In the initial diplomatic encounter between India's ambassador to Qatar, Deepak Mittal, and a prominent Taliban representative, Sher Mohammed Abbas Stanikzai, India emphasised the crucial point that Afghanistan's territory must not be utilised in any manner that poses a threat to India's interests. Stanikzai assured Mittal that the Afghan government would actively work towards finding a positive resolution to the issue. The spread of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is believed to be a consequence of the Taliban's recent triumph in Afghanistan. This has occurred despite India's border troops intensifying surveillance along the Line of Control (LoC). According to a recent statement by an Indian military general, American weapons and night vision

devices were found in the possession of terrorists who were killed in Kashmir (Khalid 2022). India has chosen to limit its engagement with the current government in Afghanistan due to concerns that have been raised. However, there have been specific instances where India has sent its technical and diplomatic team to Kabul to establish its embassy under the Taliban's rule. Additionally, a high-level delegation led by joint secretary JP Singh met with the Taliban's foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. India has taken diplomatic measures to establish trust with the Taliban. They have also provided assistance to the Afghan people by sending 50,000 metric tonnes of wheat, covid-19 vaccines, medicines, and winter clothing, aiming to support them during the economic challenges they are facing (Masomy 2022b).

India continues actively to engage in Afghanistan's political climate, despite the Taliban's recent takeover of the country. The continued utilisation of the 'watch and wait' approach reflects the ongoing assessment of the Taliban's behaviour in Afghanistan. India, recognising its significance as a regional actor, has actively involved itself in the unstable circumstances in Afghanistan following the Taliban's seizure of power. Up until now, three distinct regional forums have been held, during which participants have emphasised the need for collective action in addressing the situation in Afghanistan. The India-Central Asia First Summit, the third India-Central Asia Dialogue at the Foreign Minister's Level, and the India-Central Asia Dialogue at the Foreign Minister's Level have collectively played a significant role in strengthening India's position in the region. National security advisors from Russia, Iran, and five Central Asian Republics (CARs) participated in the meeting. The individuals worked together to present a comprehensive analysis of important topics, such as the efforts to combat counterterrorism, the proliferation of radical ideology, and the problem of drug trafficking. The participants emphasised the importance of the Taliban adhering to human rights and ensuring that the government in Afghanistan is genuinely representative of the Afghan population. In addition, the request was made for the Taliban to prevent terrorist groups from using Afghan soil as a base for launching attacks against any nation (Masomy 2022a).

India and its regional partners, collectively referred to as CARs, have reached a consensus to form collaborative working groups focused on Afghanistan. The primary objective of these groups is to enhance regional agreement on the most effective approach to engaging with the Taliban in relation to regional matters such as security, trade, transit, and connectivity objectives.

### **Pakistan's Security Concerns**

Due to Pakistan's extensive involvement in Afghanistan's affairs over time, a significant number of Afghans hold the belief that Pakistan is the main contributor to the multitude of issues faced by their country. The coup led by Sardar Dawood Khan, a member of Afghanistan's royal family, resulted in the overthrow of King Zahir Shah and the royal regime in 1973. Since then, there has been a covert infiltration of Afghanistan's affairs. Pakistan played a significant role in the Afghan Jihad against the Soviet Union's illegal invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. It strategically aligned its policy with the United States, providing assistance to Afghan Mujahideen fighters based in Pakistan. This support aimed to aid the Mujahideen in their resistance against the Soviet Union. The success of Pakistan's mission can be attributed to this factor. The security situation in Afghanistan presented numerous opportunities for Pakistan's military regime to exploit, allowing them to gain support domestically and internationally, notably from the United States (Nasreen 2008). Over the course of the last forty years, Pakistan's intelligence agencies and army have developed and reinforced connections with Afghan Jihadi groups, factions, and other armed groups. This strategic approach has been employed to further Pakistan's regional objectives. Pakistan has actively pursued closer relationships with various armed groups. In the 1990s, Pakistan strategically supported the Taliban with the aim of leveraging Afghanistan's location to advance its 'strategic depth' in the South Asia. This trend continued even after the events of 9/11. Pakistan emphasised its intention to combat western forces and the Afghan government, with the aim of reinstating



the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and establishing a government that aligns with Pakistan's interests (Fraser 2019).

Throughout the 'West's War on Terror,' Pakistan has maintained a stronger alliance with the United States compared to its relationship during the Cold War. Furthermore, it is worth noting that it played a crucial role in facilitating the peace agreement between the United States and the Taliban. The Soviet Union's illegal invasion of Afghanistan has had significant implications for the West, particularly the United States, as it has fostered a dependable strategic alliance with Pakistan. The organisation has faced criticism for its inconsistent policies on the Afghanistan conflict, leading to a decline in its international reputation. The victory of the Taliban is seen as a significant success from Pakistan's perspective due to its impact on the dissolution of an elected government and a well-equipped security and military force of around 350,000 troops.

The current situation can be seen as a significant achievement for Afghanistan in terms of its geopolitical influence and its efforts to secure strategic advantages over India. The occurrence was met with enthusiasm from different factions within the nation's military, Islamist community, religious community, and political community. In contrast, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed the view that the Afghan people have achieved liberation from subjugation due to the United States' defeat in Afghanistan. The Taliban's victory has garnered congratulations from various religious parties, such as *Jamiat-e-Ulema-Islam-Fazal* and the *Jamiat-e-Islami*. The flag of the Afghan Taliban being flown over the *Jamia Hafsa Seminary* in Islamabad, instead of the flag of Pakistan, is a particularly intriguing observation (Abbas and Ahmed 2021). Following the collapse of Ashraf Ghani's government and the Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan, Pakistan has been asserting its success in the situation from multiple angles. To a certain degree, there is validity in this claim. Pakistan has taken the initiative to promote the Taliban regime at both regional and extra-regional platforms. They have been actively encouraging

state actors to participate in discussions with the Taliban caretaker government. The Pakistani diplomatic strategy has consistently focused on leveraging each stage of diplomacy to garner global attention and ensure that all matters related to Afghanistan are channelled through Pakistan. This approach has effectively bolstered Pakistan's geopolitical standing. The efforts made by Pakistan have resulted in a stronger and more favourable position for the country on the global stage. The 17th Extraordinary Session at the level of foreign ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) and the Troika Plus meeting between US, China, and Russian envoys, both held in Pakistan, discussed the Taliban rule and the severe economic crisis in Afghanistan. These meetings highlight Pakistan's diplomatic support for the new entity in Afghanistan (Afzal 2022).

Despite the relief felt by many people in Pakistan upon the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan, the subsequent increase in armed attacks against the Pakistani army and other security forces in tribal areas has raised fresh concerns. One possible explanation is that different regional Jihadi factions found inspiration in the remarkable success achieved by the Taliban in their conquest against the US-backed Afghan government in Afghanistan. The success of this victory has motivated individuals to advocate for the implementation of *Sharia law* in the surrounding area. For an extended period, the Pakistani establishment has consistently asserted that the previous Afghan government provided refuge to militants with anti-Pakistani sentiments within their borders. After the Taliban takeover, the Pakistani establishment had expectations that the Taliban would either compel the TTP insurgents to surrender or effectively deter them from launching attacks on Pakistan. According to Mir (2022), the Taliban recently released numerous prisoners who were being held by various groups, such as the ISKP, Al-Qaida, and criminals apprehended by the previous Afghan government. Among those released were TTP fighters and Maulvi Faqir Mohammed, the deputy leader of TTP. Meanwhile, the Afghan government has been actively pursuing suspected terrorists. The TTP is a Pakistani Taliban group established in 2007. This group poses a significant risk to the internal security of Paki-

stan. This group has been actively opposing the establishment of Pakistan for over a decade, with the aim of implementing *Sharia law* in the country. The TTP is predominantly operational in the tribal regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, situated along the Durand Line. According to Sayed (2021), this organisation has established and sustained a long-standing affiliation with the Afghan Taliban. Upon assuming power, the Taliban in Kabul and the political leadership of Pakistan promptly initiated negotiations and proposed a general amnesty for the TTP. Their objective was to persuade the TTP to relinquish their weapons and embrace the constitution of Pakistan (Sayed 2021). In November 2021, Pakistan and the TTP reached a monthly ceasefire agreement after engaging in negotiations. As part of the agreement, Pakistan committed to releasing over 100 TTP prisoners, including their prominent leaders. This was a new experience for both parties involved.

According to Mir (2022), Sirajuddin Haqqani, who is the Interior Minister of the Taliban's caretaker government and a co-founder of the Haqqani Network, played a role as a mediator in various discussions held in Afghanistan. The cessation of hostilities between the Pakistani side and TTP was not prolonged due to the lack of tangible actions taken by Pakistan to facilitate the release of TTP prisoners. Consequently, the ceasefire concluded. Pakistan's dissatisfaction with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan stems from their perceived lack of significant action against the TTP within Afghanistan. In response, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has raised this concern with the international community. During his address at the United Nations General Assembly 2022 (UNGA), the speaker expressed his country's apprehensions regarding the existence of terrorist organisations operating within Afghanistan. However, these concerns were dismissed by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Yousaf 2022). After Lieutenant General Asim Munir was appointed as the new army chief in November 2022, the TTP decided to end the informal five-month ceasefire. They also issued a warning, stating their intention to carry out widespread attacks on Pakistani targets. In the specified time frame, there were instances of conflict between Pakistani security forces and TTP insurgents. Both sides

engaged in these conflicts in an effort to defend themselves and exact revenge for past transgressions (Kaura 202).

The Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS), an Islamabad-based think-tank, has reported a significant increase in attacks in Pakistan since the Taliban takeover of Kabul in August 2021. The data shows a 51% rise in attacks between August 2021 and August 2022, indicating a worsening security situation in the country. These attacks have resulted in the loss of 433 lives and injuries to 719 individuals in 250 different incidents. In comparison, the period from August 2020 to August 2021 witnessed 294 fatalities and 598 injuries in 165 attacks (IANS Business Standard, October 20, 2022).

According to a recent report published by the United Nations, the estimated number of TTP fighters ranges between 3,000 and 5,500. The report also states that these fighters are led by Noor Wali Mehsud in Afghanistan. The provided information pertains to armed groups that are currently active in the region. Several terrorist organisations, including Al Qaeda, ISKP, ETIM, TIP (Turkestan Islamic Party), and Jamaat Ansarullah, have formed alliances to coordinate their efforts and strategize attacks in Pakistan and Central Asia. According to Iqbal (2022), the attacks primarily target China's interests in the region. According to reports, the Taliban have responded to claims and reports by assuring countries, both within and outside of Afghanistan, that they will not use Afghanistan's territory to launch attacks on any country.

The frequency of attacks by the TTP in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan has increased, and the Pakistani security forces have also faced a series of assaults in Balochistan. Following the Taliban's assumption of power in Afghanistan, there has been a notable surge in the frequency of both minor and major attacks. The attacks in three provinces of Pakistan, including Punjab, were claimed by the Baloch Freedom Fighters and the TTP. The Balochistan Liberation Army, a group of Baloch freedom fighters, recently carried out attacks on two military bases in Pakistan. These bases, located in Panjgur and Nushki in southwest Balochistan, were targeted in large-scale raids. According to a statement from

Baloch Separatists, these attacks resulted in the deaths of over one hundred Frontier Corps (FC) soldiers (Yousafzai & Shahzad 2022). The TTP and the BLA pose significant challenges to Pakistan, leading to instability within the country and potentially affecting other regions like Sindh and Punjab. According to reports, the Pakistani establishment has accused the previous Afghan Government and India of allegedly supporting anti-Pakistan armed groups, specifically consisting of TTP fighters and Baloch Separatists.

Despite the Taliban's victory in August, Pakistan continues to hold the belief that terrorists are utilising Afghan territory as a launching pad for their operations. Contrary to this, the Taliban argue that the issue at hand is an internal matter specific to Pakistan (Siddiqui 2022; Yousafzai & Shahzad 2022). The possibility exists that Maulvi Faqir Mohammed, a prominent member of the TTP, could have been the intended recipient of a drone strike conducted by Pakistan in December 2021 in the Kunar province. However, it is important to note that the missile failed to explode upon impact in the vicinity of his residence (Mir 2022). According to Khan (2022), Mohammad Khurasani, the senior leader and spokesperson of the TTP, was assassinated in a targeted attack in Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province in January 2022. The statement implies that Pakistani intelligence agencies have been closely monitoring the TTP leadership and affiliated fighters, operating on both sides of the Durand Line. The emergence of ISKP, also known as Daesh, poses a significant security threat to Pakistan. Reports have been released concerning the activities conducted by ISIS in the volatile states of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan. The ISKP has asserted accountability for the two most fatal suicide attacks of the week. The initial attack took place at a Shia mosque in Peshawar, resulting in the tragic loss of 64 lives and leaving numerous others injured. According to Aljazeera (2022), the second attack occurred in the Sibi district of Balochistan, resulting in the tragic loss of seven paramilitary troops and leaving numerous others injured. Pakistan could potentially face a significant increase in violence in the future due to the aforementioned factors. Multiple terrorist organisations have formed alliances and coordinated their strategies effectively to ad-

vance the Jihad agenda in the region. The attempts at negotiations between Pakistan and TTP, facilitated by the Afghan Taliban in Kabul, were unsuccessful. The Pakistan government rejected the demands put forth by TTP, which included the complete withdrawal of the military from tribal areas and the implementation of *Sharia law* in those regions.

Several key observations derived from this discussion include:

1. Recent events involving the Taliban 2.0 have posed significant challenges to how regional security is perceived.

2. The recent shift in leadership within the Taliban highlights the transformation of a once violent group into a governing body that now holds power over Afghanistan's government and administration. The Taliban have come to understand that in an increasingly interconnected world, acts of terror and uncivil behaviour are no longer tolerated. They recognise that engaging in such behaviour is unlikely to receive backing from religious institutions and could potentially lead to dissatisfaction among their followers.

3. Given the economic crisis in Afghanistan, the influx of refugees, and various other challenges, it is imperative for regional security to be bolstered through active participation in multiple areas of cooperation.

4. It appears that Taliban 2.0's Afghanistan is currently experiencing the infiltration of

various armed factions seeking a secure operating base amidst the unstable conditions.

This discussion presents a new perspective on the Taliban's regional positioning, suggesting that it may be influenced by the changing global political landscape.

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