

“Bangkok : The city of Angels, Reclaiming the City Through the Occult Order” ,

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Abstract

To what extent can public urban spaces be reclaimed or be prevented from dilapidated by the local people? In the past fifteen years, a new way of public spatial practice has emerged in Thailand, and particularly in Bangkok that is to sanctify public spaces. An intersection in one of the busiest streets is occupied by a number of small sanctuaries dedicated to Brahman gods locating on nicely designed plazas in front of modern shopping complexes and five star hotels. A number of corners or small land patches are erected with spirited houses and then turn themselves to become communities' meeting places, hence sometimes centre of communities' annual festive grounds. Recently, a number of temples and shrines are crowded by people who, on the one hand, want to make offering in return for their prosperity, but on the other bring back public life to those forgotten public places.

This paper will present the hidden aspects of city life through a map of sacred temples and shrines in Bangkok. It will discuss the hidden order of the Bangkokians' public spatial usage. Its main argument is that Bangkokians in the post-modernisation period have been living in 'a dual world,' and the sanctification of public spaces not only helps decreasing the level of anxiety and sustaining balance to the hectic city life but subtly bring life back such places: a method designers have not looked before.