

# Selection Criteria of Ordinary Urban Heritages Through the Case of Bangrak, a Multi-Cultural & Old Commercial District of Bangkok

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines preservation of an old and multicultural commercial district of Bangrak, Bangkok through application of ordinary urban heritage, which is an alternative approach, but one which can fill a gap in the heritage conservation process. The dual objectives of this paper are 1. Introducing an alternative lens for considering the heritages of ordinary people in an urban context through the case of Bangrak in Bangkok, Thailand; and 2. Identifying selection criteria of ordinary urban heritages.

Bangrak, the study area, is an old commercial district of inner Bangkok that is characterized by diversity in the different groups who live and work there, their cultures, and their heritages. This paper studied four areas comprising groups whose members originated from China, India-South Asia, Western countries, and Thailand.

The ordinary urban heritages discussed in this paper are outcomes of identifying selection criteria based on the methodology of three processes: (1) theoretical reviews of vernacular heritage, ordinary heritage, and urban heritage, making use of AHD (Authorised Heritage Discourse) to distinguish “official” heritages identified by Thai government agencies, and the ordinary urban heritages of Bangrak. (2) analysis of historical maps, and (3) non-participant observational surveys to verify locations and appearances of ordinary urban heritages identified by the analysis of historical maps.

The selection criteria of ordinary urban heritages of Bangrak are outcomes of five factors: (1) The amount of time the heritage has been present in the area, (2) Heritages of ordinary people, (3) Repetitive appearance or cluster of heritages, (4) Ability to adapt to urbanization, and (5) Present-day existence of heritages in four areas of different cultures.

The ordinary urban heritages identified as the result of selection criteria comprise shophouses, urban patterns of “Trok” (small alleys), and sacred places in the communities. As buildings, shophouses are, per se, ordinary urban heritage from a physical aspect, and they are the centers of the commercial activities of everyday life. “Trok”, or small alleys, have been built by ordinary people, and they help form the particular urban pattern of Bangrak. Small sacred places represent a legacy of the beliefs of different cultures represented through their physical spaces and appearances.

**Keywords:** selection criteria, ordinary urban heritage, Bangrak district, multicultural communities, Bangkok

## INTRODUCTION

The phrase, “Culture is ordinary” was first mentioned by Raymond Williams's Essay in 1958 and referred to again by McGuigan in 2014. It refers to the idea that human society expresses meanings, purposes, and shapes on its own, and that common meanings and direction are what define a society. This paper introduces the alternative lens of cultural heritages in the central business district (CBD) of Bangkok – specifically, the ordinary urban heritages of Bangrak, an old commercial and multicultural district. Ordinary urban heritage is the heritage of ordinary people and of everyday life that involves acceptance of changes and transformations of heritages from the urban context as part of the conservation process. To identify the ordinary urban heritages presented in this paper, selection criteria have been used that are alternative and different from those generally applied for conservation worldwide.

In general expertise and practices, heritages are observed and chosen for conservation due to their outstanding values, and the elements of rarity and exoticism are particularly emphasized (Podder et al., 2018). Currently, selection of heritage for conservation in Thailand follows the international criteria of UNESCO and ICOMOS, as true of other national organizations around the world. At the beginning of the heritage conservation process, the heritage selection criteria are problematic insofar as, with the experts as gatekeepers, they often ignore and devalue other forms of identity, with the result that they exclude a diverse group of sub-national cultural and social experiences of other ethnicities, indigenous communities, and the working class (Smith, 2015). For Bangkok, not only are local heritages and the diversity of local neighborhoods ignored by the process of heritage conservation and governmental heritage conservation structure, but they are also being threatened, as they are in other cities worldwide, by the forces of economic, cultural, and architectural homogenization (Charter on the built vernacular heritage [ICOMOS], 1999) or, more precisely, by urban redevelopment and tourism that have demolished and gentrified many neighborhoods and their heritages at the cost of the unique characteristics, culture and history

that are disappearing from the inner area of Bangkok (Herzfeld, 2010).

What are the elements of the local heritages and diversity of local neighborhoods in inner Bangkok?

What is the heritage of ordinary people and of everyday life, and what changes and transformations of heritages from urban context are accepted as part of the conservation process?

What selection criteria are appropriate for differentiating ordinary urban heritages?

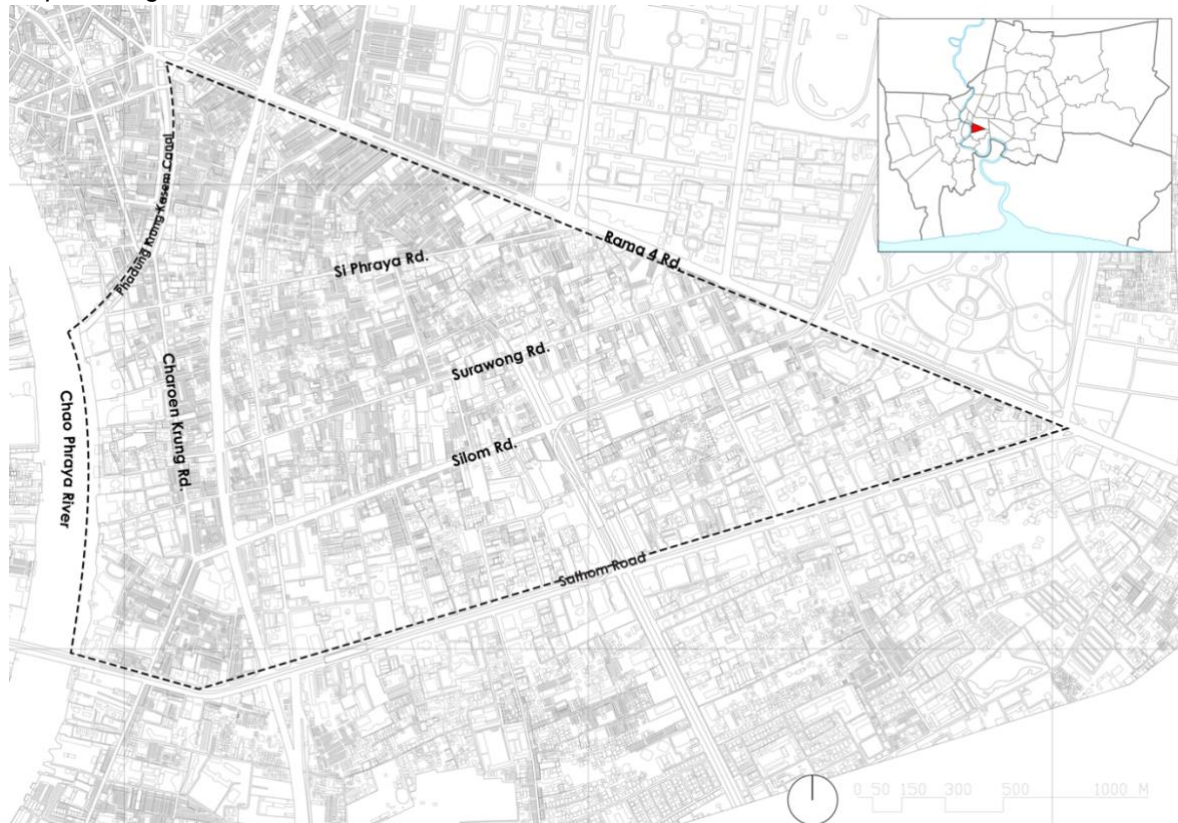
To answer those questions, and to identify the ordinary urban heritages of Bangrak, this research applied the theoretical approaches of “Vernacular Heritage”, “Urban Heritage” and “Ordinary Heritage” in the urban context of Bangkok as points of departure.

The three approaches above were applied, and framed the selection criteria for the case of Bangrak. The vernacular heritage approach formed the research foundation of the research, while urban heritage supplemented it with the notion of vernacular traditions through “changes” and the “contemporariness” of heritages through time in the urban context. Finally, “ordinary heritage” shares principles with the vernacular heritage mentioned above, but emphasizes the relationship between heritages, ordinariness, and everydayness. To identify the selection criteria for this research, not only is the process of heritage conservation – and more specifically, heritage selection for conservation in Thailand – questioned, but also other overlooked elements of ordinary urban heritages of Bangrak are introduced. The ordinary urban heritages of Bangrak identified by the selection criteria will also lead to questions, and portray alternative understanding of Bangkok's heritages.

The old districts of Inner Bangkok are not only the most highly-urbanized areas of Bangkok, but also places of multicultural settlements. Bangrak is one of these, and was selected as the study area because it is a mixed commercial-residential area with diverse groups of people from China, India-South Asia, Western countries, and Thailand. Bangrak is strategically located along the Chao Phraya River, south of the royal historic city, Rattanakosin, and Yaowarat -- Bangkok's Chinatown -- and has been urbanized since

**Figure 1**

*Map of Bangrak*



*Note.* Map of Bangrak District, inner multicultural commercial district of Bangkok city. From Rāingān wīchai chabap sombūn khrōngkān čhattham thānhōmūn lāe phānthī mōradok mūang sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] (p. 3 ), by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

1864, at the time that one of the first roads of Bangkok, Charoen Krung Road or New Road was constructed (see Figure 1).

Bangrak has been an international commercial district of Bangkok since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when shophouses, mixed commercial-residential buildings, were constructed along the New Road, allowing different groups of foreigners to occupy and develop both businesses and residences in the area. Being close to the river, embassies and offices of Western countries were located in the area. Indian and South Asian shophouses are scattered along the road in the north of Bangrak, and Chinese shophouses were built on both sides of the road in the south of the area. Later on, these multicultural communities not only constructed religious buildings comprising temples, churches, and mosques in the center of communities, but also small sacred places such as spirit houses and shrines on both

individual properties and in small communal areas.

The construction of shophouses along the primary thoroughfare of Charoen Krung Road and four secondary roads (Sathorn, Silom, Surawong, and Si Phraya) transformed former big orchards into residential areas. Groups of single-detached houses were built by the local Thai people in the middle of the blocks. To access their houses, local people originally used boats to traverse the “Khlōng”, or canals, or walked through the “Trok”, or small alleys. These organic urban traces were created by local people and clearly distinguish from road network pattern in the map of Bangrak. (see Figure 1). By 1896, Bangrak was being gradually urbanized according to the historical maps of the time, and, as presented in 1974 map (see Figure 2) was fully urbanized by the late-20<sup>th</sup> century. The small alleys from the areas early days were

progressively enlarged and transformed into a network of small roads connecting residents and communities to Charoenkrung Road.

## PROCESS OF IDENTIFYING SELECTION CRITERIA

### Applied Methodology

Selection criteria for ordinary urban heritage applied in Bangrak are the outcome of three identifying processes. The first of these is the reviews of theoretical frameworks of heritage selection from standardized international criteria. Three main approaches of heritage applicable to the context of Bangrak are explored: vernacular heritage, urban heritage, and ordinary heritage. In addition to these theoretical reviews, the selection criteria for heritage conservation currently applied in Thailand are analyzed to support the argument of ordinary urban heritages of Bangrak, both those that are overlooked and those authorized by government agencies. Secondly, historical map analysis identified locations and appearances of heritages in a series of maps. Lastly, non-participant observational surveys were undertaken to verify that the outcome of map analysis is consistent with the reality.

### Theoretical reviews

The first approach is “Vernacular Heritage”, which focuses on heritages of local creations and buildings that utilize traditional expertise in the creation process, with uses and associations that have generated collective value attached to them as the expression of the culture of community and the world’s cultural diversity (ICOMOS, 1999). They are part of an everyday practice that allows local contexts to make a claim to the present (Brosius & Michaels, 2020), and they are harmoniously situated with their context and inhabitants (Khafizova, 2018). Furthermore, vernacular heritage is a repository of technical knowledge that helps to ensure use and transmission from one generation to another through the expression of tradition, belief, and society (Correia et al., 2014). Vernacular architecture covers different scales of

interventions, representing a physical link between scales from landscape perception of the place to craftsmen’s tools for community activities conforming to collective perception to recognition of the place. At the scale of the settlement’s urban layout, it concerns building clusters, organization, spatial structure, and the relation between collective domain and private property. Vernacular heritage at the architectural scale considers the characterization and identification of traditional architectonic typologies that express ethnographic significance (Carlos et al., 2020). Recent studies on vernacular heritages accept adaptation on those heritages as they are not always conserved as they were in the past, but can be adapted to meet present requirements with traditional knowledge (Beg, 2016). Moreover, vernacular heritages are also not completely static, but have traditionally been subject to modifications and transformations rather than complete demolition (Vegas et al., 2020).

The second approach is “Urban Heritage”, a term used in the Charter for Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas in 1987 and the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention in 1996. At the beginning of the 21st century, the term “Urban heritage” related to the physical attributes of buildings, public spaces, urban morphology, and inheritors of the present and next generation (Orbasli, 2000). In 2010, UNESCO defined urban heritage as “a human and social element, defined by a historic layering of cultural and natural values that have been produced by passing cultures and an accumulation of traditions, recognized as such in their diversity” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2011; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], (2019). Urban heritage reflects the notion of vernacular traditions and their continuation in the urban context through “changes” and the “contemporariness” of heritages through times. In the urban context, changes are not only the result of passing of time or the accumulation of cultural layering, but are experienced in everyday life in the form of adaptation. Therefore, conservation should not to prevent change; rather, it is part of the process that creates heritage (Khalaf, 2016).



Lastly, “Ordinary heritage” addresses places and objects that were created by “ordinary people of the society” (Dallen, 2014). It is an alternative understanding of cultural heritages that manifest as the production of everyday activities or “unofficial” heritages (Papadam, 2017). Those heritages of ordinary people that are passed down from one generation to the next are crucial to a broader understanding of heritage for the city (Sapu, 2018). This emphasizes people-centered rather than object-centered heritage – a concept that supports the sense and identity of local people as different urban areas are interwoven with various stories, memories, and identities which are acknowledged and valorized as “Ordinary Heritage” (Auclair & Fairclough, 2015)

reflecting and corresponding with everyday heritage (Geppert & Lorenzi, 2013).

The theoretical frameworks mentioned above have been tested and sorted among different groups of cultural heritages in Bangrak. This led to identifying and separating ordinary urban heritages from other cultural heritages, specifically those that were created, developed, and used by ordinary people. The outcome of three groups of reviews framed a draft selection criterion of ordinary urban heritages defined by 6 characteristics: 1. non-elitist heritages, 2. non-exotic or ubiquitous heritages, 3. Spiritual-related beliefs and folklore-related heritages, 4. Local people-related heritages, 5. Local distinctiveness 6. Daily life activity-related heritages.

**Figure 2**

*Series of Historical Maps of Bangrak*



*Note.* A Series of historical maps of Bangrak 1896 (top-left), from 1911 (bottom-left), 1932 (top-right). From Historical Maps of Bangrak, by Royal Thai Survey Department, 1896, 1911, 1932. Copyright 1896, 1911, 1932, by Royal Thai Survey Department, and 1974 (bottom-right) show the overall evolution of the Bangrak District and the appearance and disappearance of urban elements that can be identified as Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District. From Bangrak Map, by Map Department, Traffic Police Section, 1974. Copyright 1974, by Map Department, Traffic Police Section.

## Analysis of historical maps

Secondly, analysis of secondary information comprising a series of historic maps of Bangkok and Bangrak was undertaken, including related historical manuscripts and archives. This process identified the appearance and disappearance of ordinary urban heritages by applying cartographic techniques and the theoretical frameworks from the three approaches mentioned above with the historical maps. A series of four Bangkok maps from the years 1896, 1911, 1932, and 1974 was used for analysis (see Figure 2). Historical archives and local-related information were studied in parallel with the map analysis. The maps from 1896 and 1911 present Bangkok and Bangrak in a single map because of the limited boundaries of the urban area of Bangkok in those times. However, in the maps from 1932 and 1974, Bangrak and its roads, land patterns, land uses, and buildings were represented in many small and separated district maps. The analysis of the maps, therefore, applied the theoretical frameworks through the time of appearance of heritage, typology of buildings from the maps, urban patterns, and urban spaces.

Analysis of the maps clearly shows the emergence of shophouses as rectangular blocks along Charoen Krung Road, compared to the non-repetitive shapes of government buildings. The government buildings were removed from the study population based on the principle of “ordinary heritage as they were built by royal and elitist initiatives at the beginning of the 20th century. Religious buildings in this research, specifically temples, churches, and mosques were not also selected as part of the ordinary urban heritages of Bangrak because they have already been officially listed by government agencies based on their values and outstanding appearances. On the other hand, small sacred places in this research comprise small spirit houses and shrines built individually, or built for a group of houses in the same location, and are included in the population of ordinary urban heritage. The analysis of maps and historical archives led to the identification of four different study areas: a Chinese-influenced cluster along Charoen Krung Road in the south of Bangrak, an Indian and South Asian-influenced cluster along Charoen Krung Road and Silom Road, a Western-influenced cluster on Silom Road in the

East, and Local Thai clusters in the middle of blocks. These four study areas not only represent identifiable urban patterns in the maps, but also help clarify the evolution of *trok* as a structural urban element of Bangrak.

## Non-participant observational surveys

The last step supported the identification of ordinary heritages made from the analysis of maps and application of theoretical frameworks in the first and second processes described above. The objective of the surveys is to verify the locations and appearances of heritages identified from the maps, and to distinguish details of heritages that were not identifiable from the maps. Observation by foot was not only synchronized with map analysis, but also evidence of the presence of ordinary heritages was captured by taking photos from point of view of ordinary pedestrians. Furthermore, observation relates heritages, people, and activities with the time, their existence, and adaptation to the urban context.

## Selection Criteria

In Thailand, 3 different government agencies mandate heritage conservation: the Fine Arts Department and Department of Cultural Promotion under the Ministry of Culture, the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP), and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

The Fine Arts Department focuses on the preservation and registration of ancient monuments, antiques, and objects of Art in Thailand, according to The Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums (1961) revised in 1992. The criteria related to age and the period of their existence are considered and qualified as universally valued by the approval of the Director-General given under this Act (The Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art, and National Museum Act, B.E. 2504, (1992).

The Department of Cultural Promotion has the mandate of conserving, promoting, and ensuring the transfer of approved Intangible Cultural Heritage in Thailand, according to The Promotion and Conservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Act (2016) that is based on the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural (2003) (Promotion and Conservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage Act, (2016). The criteria are based flexibly on the UNESCO criteria for the intention to widen the scope of intangible cultural heritages in present-day, with the approval of the Promotion and Conservation of Intangible cultural heritage Commission in section 5 of the Act.

The Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning authorizes preservation, protection, and cooperation with the UNESCO World Heritage Council of World heritages existing in Thailand, generally from the provincial level to the national level by the law of The Prime Minister office on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (2016) and the World Heritage Council.

From review and comparison of the conservation criteria of Thai government agencies with theoretical and international criteria, the heritage selections in Bangkok and Thailand emphasized conventional “national heritages”, and the identification of such heritages is being decided by the relevant director or agency chief by Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD). In the study and criticism of AHD and its effect on heritage conservation, it has been said that AHD often ignores and devalues other forms of identity (Smith, 2015), particularly the heritages of local people in the case of Bangkok. The forced removal of an old local community at Mahakan Fort in the Rattanakosin area by the local government of Bangkok to build a public park (Herzfeld, 2010) reflects the problem of heritage conservation, and this case also opened a debate on the definition of cultural conservation in an urban area (Yanyongkasemsuk, 2016).

In applying the process of identifying the selection criteria mentioned above, 5 selection criteria were set and applied to Bangrak as follows;

### **1. The amount of time the heritage has been present in the area**

This criterion is broadly defined, depending on the value assessment in different cities, but identification of time is generally counted as part of the historic preservation compliance process through which potential historic properties must

pass (Sprinkle, 2007). In Thailand, the identification of time of heritages depends on different government agencies and specific heritage subjects. The Fine Arts Department, Ministry of Culture applies both time and age of heritage by historical eras. For example, the era of Bangkok as capital (established 1782) is considered less valuable than the successive prehistoric, Davaravathi, Sukhothai, or Ayutthaya periods. The Fine Arts Department has also stated in the Handbook of registration of antiques and objects of art (2007), that due to rapid globalization and development, it has been difficult to find relevant objects that have been created in the last 30-50 years. Therefore, it is reasonable to categorize those objects that have existed and remain existing for a period of more than 50 years as “historic objects” (The Fine Arts Department, 2007). Ordinary urban heritages are not necessarily valued only at the national level; however, this criterion of 50 years as the mean age for investigation of ordinary heritages in Bangrak was adopted in this study. The period of 50 years derives from the definition of a “historical object” that is related to significant historical events or activities, or the life and work of a distinguished person at the minimum period in which “heritage” can be passed on from generation to the next (Promotion of Cultural Diversity in Kosovo [PCDK], 2012).

This criterion was applied to the analysis of the historic maps. It should be noted that buildings are clearly visible in the oldest map of Bangrak, the one from 1896, which helped establish the age of ordinary urban heritages discussed among researchers during the analysis of maps and the survey. The map of 1896 reveals small alleys in local Thai villages with orchards. The map of 1911 presents significantly increased numbers of these small alleys (from 19 alleys in 1896 to 49 in 1911). Shophouses, shown as rectangular buildings along the road, have been identified on the 1932 map in the Chinese quarter (South of Bangrak), the Indian and South Asian quarter on Charoen Krung Road, and Silom Road. They are found almost ubiquitously in the survey of four different cultures of Bangrak. During the on-site observational survey, it was found that some shophouses from 1911 and 1932 had been demolished or reconstructed, but that those that remain intact are primarily greater than 50 years of age.

## 2. Heritages of Ordinary People

This criterion emphasizes the heritages of ordinary people (Dallen, 2014). Even though ordinary heritage shares some principles with vernacular heritage based on local creations, traditional expertise, and recent elements that play a significant role in the everyday life of the locals from the past to present (Brosius & Michaels, 2020), this criterion focuses on local people as makers and users of heritage. As a people-centered and place-based approach to heritage conservation, ordinary heritage brings out the necessity of understanding the value given by people in certain communities, and highlights the elements that support the sense of identity within those communities, and which are essential to the whole group (Auclair & Fairclough, 2015). An analysis of the old maps shows the early settlements of shophouses dates back to 1911, when it served as the commercial-market district of the area. Furthermore, the 1911 map shows the recent and ongoing contemporary construction of alleyways for access to the orchards and houses along the main roads, which were settled as early as 1896.

In four areas of the survey, this criterion is used, not only to sort the heritages of the ordinary people from royal and governmental heritages, but also to distinguish ordinary heritages from cultural heritages such as religious centers of different groups of people (temples, masjids, and churches) listed by the government. This research, by contrast, considers small-scale sacred places of the community, such as spirit houses and small shrines situated in both private properties and neighborhoods area, which, in local Thai residential areas, are often found in small alleys and private residential compounds.

Shophouses also represent the heritages of ordinary people. In Chinese, Indian & South Asian, and Western quarters. It is not only shophouses themselves that are considered ordinary heritages, but also their importance as places where ordinary activities were and are done by ordinary people.

## 3. Repetitive Appearance or Cluster of Heritages

The lens of “ordinary heritage” differentiates heritages of the everyday lives of ordinary people

from those that are of outstanding appearance, or which display rarity and exoticism of heritage. Ordinary heritage manifests as the production of everyday life activities or “unofficial” heritages (Papadam, 2017), and is interwoven into different urban areas with various stories, memories, and identities (Auclair & Fairclough, 2015). Heritages of everyday life, therefore, appear ubiquitously in the public area to serve the local people’s activities, as opposed to one specific and exotic building. From the analysis of the patterns and forms of the historic maps, shophouses and alleyways were found repeatedly in Bangrak. The survey of maps shows that they were located in proximity to the urban area; in other words, they represent clusters of heritages that were important to different groups and cultures. For example, a group of shophouses in a Chinese community dominated the South of Bangrak, housing-restaurants and grocery shops that served daily activities. Meanwhile, tailor shops and jewelry shops are seen ubiquitously in Indian and South Asian communities, while typical Spirit houses and small shrines are found frequently in Thai residential zones as the fundamental element of these communities.

## 4. Ability to Adapt to Urbanization

Bangrak was partly urbanized in 1864, and, according to the map survey, fully urbanized by 1974 (see figure 2, bottom-right). Recently, the notion of vernacular heritage has tended to be more flexible in accepting adaptation of heritage to meet present requirements with traditional knowledge (Beg, 2016), and modifications and transformations rather than complete demolition (Vegas et al., 2020). Furthermore, heritage in an urban area, or urban heritage that reflects the notion of vernacular traditions and their continuation, is more open to change and to accepting the contemporariness of heritage through time. Conservation is not undertaken to prevent change; instead, it is part of the process that creates heritage (Khalaf, 2016). Ordinary urban heritages in this paper mean not only heritages that are created, developed, and used by ordinary people, but also those that have been adapted to urbanization -- in the case of Bangrak, before 1974. As the Fine Arts Department stated, with the rapid rate of globalization, many historical objects at the age of 30-50 years are hard to find in the present day (The Fine Arts



Department, 2007), given that part of the value of these heritages is their ongoing usage -- a continuing process which changes through time (ICOMOS, 1999). Continuity in adapting to the changing landscape is of major significance in the process of passing down heritage and its significance in the community to subsequent generations and continuing to change in its settings (Auclair & Fairclough, 2015). Analysis of the historic maps of Bangrak present the continuing and evolving role of these heritages by, for example, showing the changing of sizes of the buildings from the time of the early settlements to 1974. The replacement of houses and orchards with shophouses was integrated with the pattern of alleyways and system of roads. The on-site survey found that the four observed areas present the ability of these identified heritages to have adapted to the urbanization of Bangkok prior to 1974. Small sacred spaces such as spirit houses in Thai communities were relocated to maintain their roles and places in small alleys of communities at both ends or the middle junction of smaller alleys. Furthermore, because of intensive use at ground level, these spirit houses that were originally placed in the compound of individual houses were grouped to form shared-spirit houses at the ends of streets for a group of houses in the same street, or even to have been lifted from the ground to the roof in some individual houses.

### 5. Existence of Heritages in Present Day

The ability to exist to the present day is a criterion of ordinary urban heritage, due to the notion that ordinary heritage should not only be used as the representation of the past, but still live in the present as an essential component of daily life (Auclair & Fairclough, 2015). Moreover, changes and the contemporariness of heritages are accepted by the notion of urban heritage (Khalaf, 2016). This criterion supports the identification of heritages that are still present in the urban context in the present day. Based on recent study of vernacular heritage, heritages that exist to the present day are parts of an everyday practice that allows local contexts to make a claim to the present (Brosius & Michaels, 2020). This leads to distinguishing between heritages that have disappeared and the existence of heritages that are still in use and which serve everyday life. The continuity of

ordinary urban heritages through time is essential in this paper because this represents the ability of ordinary heritage to survive in the urban context. The analysis of historical maps combined with observational survey confirmed that the ordinary urban heritages of Bangrak were affected by the urbanization of Bangkok between the end of the 19th century and the 1970s. In fact, they still exist, and are still in use as part of the everyday life of the local people and outsiders.

## FINDINGS FROM THE APPLICATION OF SELECTION CRITERIA

The studied selection criteria were tested and applied to the ordinary heritages that are generally and ubiquitously found in the four study areas. Following the non-participant observational survey, the ordinary urban heritages of Bangrak were categorized into 3 groups: shophouses, the urban patterns of "Trok" (small alleys), and sacred places in the communities. Shophouses were originally built in rows and owners were separated vertically. Being transformed by urbanization, shophouses were divided into smaller spaces but increased numbers by the intensification of usage in the commercial area of Bangrak. Urbanization led shophouses to be more collective; the floors were divided and rented out to different shop owners. Small alleys (or Trok) in Bangrak were built originally to provide access to specific houses and orchards. They were later enlarged into public roads due to the urbanization of Bangrak, which explains how heritages such as Trok were transformed from individual use to more collective importance. Sacred Places found in Bangrak can be categorized into 2 types: spirit houses and shrines. Spirit houses were originally located in on single-family detached house properties. Due to urbanization and limited land area, they were eventually grouped into collective spirit houses of the neighborhoods, or were sometimes relocated to the roof of family homes. The shrines comprise traditional Chinese or Brahman shrines. The Chinese shrines are collective places for communities, and were built as a small center for different groups of

communities and traditional events. Brahman shrines are found at the entrance of large commercial buildings in Bangrak.

## Shophouses

Shophouses were first identified on the 1911 map, where they appeared in linear rectangular shapes along the Charoen Krung Road and at its junction with Silom Road. These shophouses, themselves, are considered to be ordinary urban heritages based on their existence from 1911 to the present day. This type of building is found ubiquitously in Bangrak and Bangkok, and accommodate a mix of commercial and residential uses. Commercial activities are located along the pedestrian pathways at ground level, while residential areas are found on the upper floors. Shophouses in Bangrak can be grouped into clusters based on location and categorized into Chinese shophouses, Indian and South Asian shophouses, and Western shophouses.

Shophouses in Chinese clusters are located primarily along Charoen Krung Road, from the junction with Phadungkrungkasem canal to the South of Bangrak, and also on Si Phraya Road and Silom Road. The survey found a total of 41 Chinese shophouses, of which 24 have been modified while 17 remain in their original forms and structures (see Figure 3). They generally house restaurants, beverage shops, and grocery shops that served local people and visitors from other areas. Shophouses on Charoen Krung Road are the most active due to the circulation of people from around the area. Shophouses on Si Phraya Road are slightly less busy than those on Silom Road, which are busier on the weekdays during lunch hour due to a large number of office workers in this area of Bangrak. These shops have particular arrangements depending on goods and services (see Figure 4). The shop on the ground floor is divided into two parts, a beverage shop attached to the pathway (C21 in middle) and a condiment shop (C22 on the left)

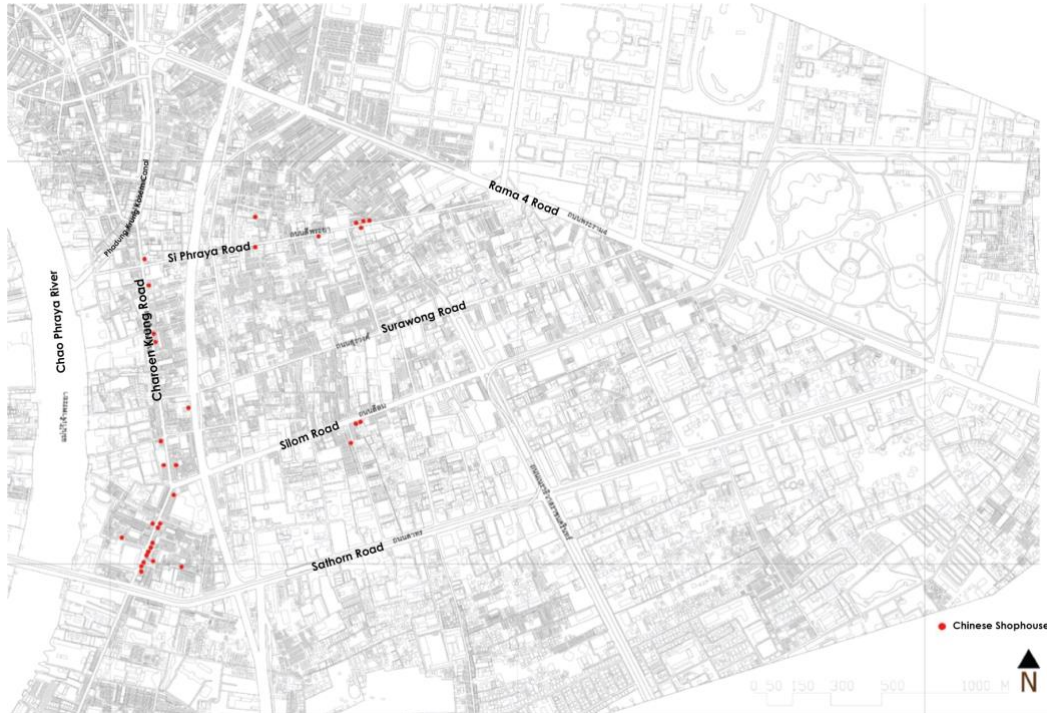
located behind the beverage stand occupying the interior space of the shophouse to display foods and products. A grocery store displays its products on shelves attached to the wall (C17 on the right).

The presence of Chinese culture is reflected through these ordinary-buildings; not only the arrangement of the shops but also shopfront signage reveals the meaning of clan, goods, and services, and the old shop sign is often hung inside the shop (see Figure 4 left). Shop nameplates located over the shop entrance display typology that is similar in style and color as red and gold or yellowish gold are considered the colors of wealth (Clair, 2016). Writing is mostly in Chinese, Thai, and English, with the pattern of writing differing only slightly from shop to shop (see Figure 5). According to the survey, 43.90% of Chinese shophouses have both Chinese and Thai letters. Chinese letters can be divided into 2 groups; the first group is traditional Chinese script that is read from right to left (62.07%), while the second group is read from left to right (LTR, 37.93%) in the style of Thai and English writing. Naming is really important to Chinese people (Blum, 1997; Watson, 1986); the integration of words that are considered to bring luck and fortune to the store can be found; for example, the words 豐集 or 豐, which mean success, and can be found in nameplates C14 and C15 in Figure 5.

Shophouses in Indian and South Asian Quarters are located in the North of Bangrak along Charoenkrung Road and Silom Road (see Figure 6). They comprise jewelry shops, tailor shops, and restaurants that are related to India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh where owners come from (see Figure 7). Gujaratis, an Indo-Aryan ethnolinguistic group of the Indian subcontinent, are particularly related to the precious stones trade, while other groups, Punjabis and Sindhis, have traditionally been involved in textiles. The diasporic Indian communities adopted their way of life to the new context of Bangkok through social, economic, religious, and cultural changes (Agarwal, 2018).

**Figure 3**

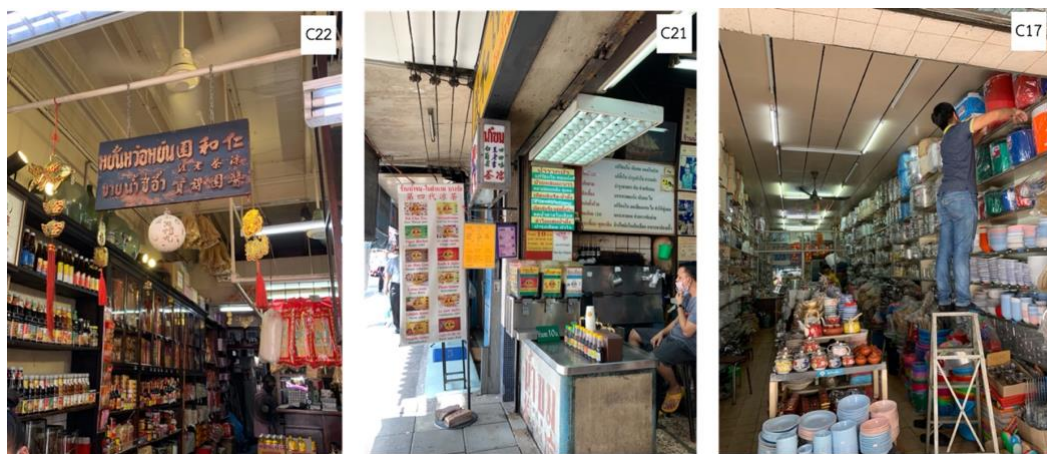
*Locations of Chinese Shophouses in Bangrak*



*Note.* The Red dots represent Locations of Chinese Shophouses (in 2020). Mainly located on Charoen Krung Road, with the expansion to the Silom and Si Phraya area, these locations have distinct characteristics and uses adjusted to their surroundings. From Rāingān wičhai chabap sombūn khroṅkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phānthī mōradok mưāng sāmān khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] (p. 5-6), by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

**Figure 4**

*Commercial Shophouses With Different Shop Arrangements Along Charoen Krung Road in Bangrak*



*Note.* This figure shows the variety of shop arrangements in the same category of Chinese shophouses as an Ordinary Urban Heritage. From Rāingān wičhai chabap sombūn khroṅkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phānthī mōradok mưāng sāmān khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] (p. 5-23, by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.



**Figure 5**

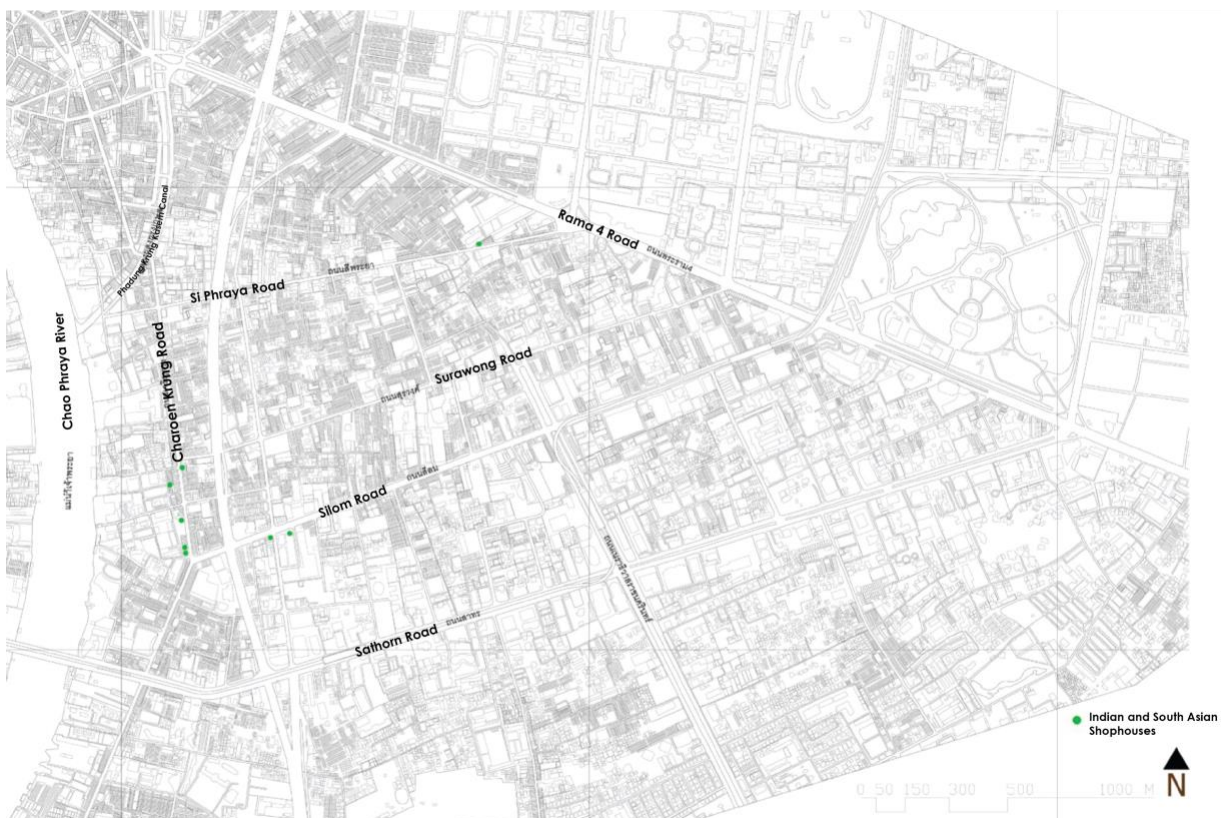
*Various Nameplates of Chinese Shophouses in Bangrak*



*Note.* This figure shows the nameplates styles, the use of specific colors such as gold or red, and the typical script used on the plate, of six different Chinese shophouses in the Bangrak district. From Rāingān wičajai chabap sombūn khrōngkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phǎenthī mōradok mưāng sāmān khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] (p. 5-24), by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

**Figure 6**

*Location of Indian and South Asian Shophouses in Bangrak*



*Note.* The green dots in this figure show the locations of Indian and South Asian Shophouses in the Bangrak district, mostly located on Charoen Krung Road with the expansion to Si Phraya Road and Silom Road. From Rāingān wičajai chabap sombūn khrōngkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phǎenthī mōradok mưāng sāmān khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] (p. 5-30), by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

## Figure 7

### *Shophouse in Indian and South Asian Quarters*



*Note.* This figure shows shophouses in Indian and South Asian quarters in Bangrak, (Left) tailor shop located on Charoen Krung Road, (Middle) A. Song Tailor shop on Charoen Krung 38 alley, and (Right) Rama Jewelry on Silom Road. From Rāingān wičhai chabap sombūn khrōngkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phānthī mōradok mŭang sāmān khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] , by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

## Figure 8

### *Uses and Arrangements of Shophouses in Indian and South Asian Quarters*



*Note.* (Left) Storefront display of Sin Do Tailor since 1940 (Middle) Storefront and Ordering space of Gold Spice shop since 1936 (Right) Storefront display of Rama Jewelry shop since 1960. From Rāingān wičhai chabap sombūn khrōngkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phānthī mōradok mŭang sāmān khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] , by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

Their commercial activities take place in shops located on the ground floor, with residential areas on the upper floors, as found in Chinese shophouses. Eight shops are older than 50

years, and shopfront signs are written mostly in two languages, Thai and English, with golden letters (see Figure 8).

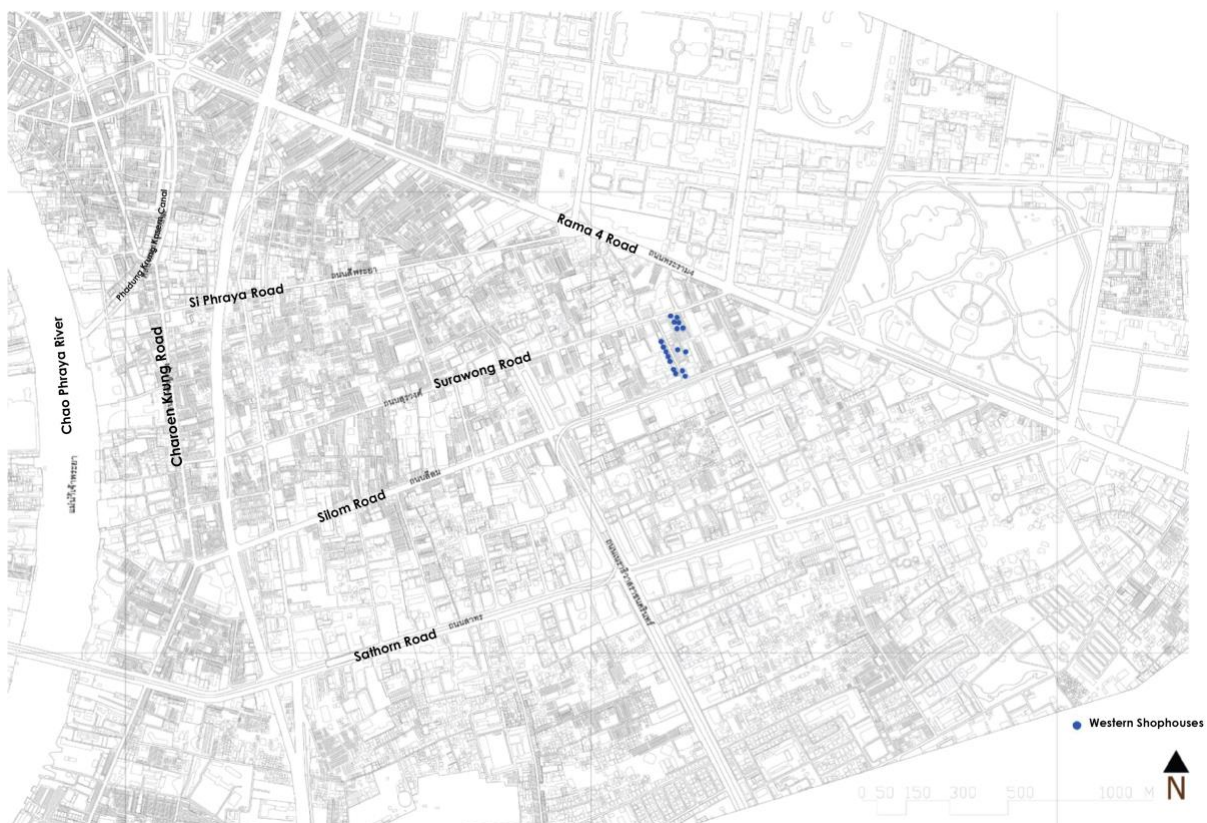


Shophouses in the Western Quarter were constructed in the 1950s in the East of Bangrak, between Silom and Surawong Road, in an area known as Patpong. This area was originally developed to house new major foreign companies and offices at the time, which led to Bangrak developing into the Central Business District of Bangkok (see Figure 9). These shophouses were transformed into restaurants and entertainment businesses to serve the working people in 1964 or later, and some shophouses became Go-Go bars starting in 1968 (Patpong Museum, 2020). Since then, the shophouses in these areas have mostly operated at night as part of the entertainment red-light district. Due to this type of usage, unlike shophouses in Chinese and Indian quarters, which have residential areas on the upper floor,

shophouses in Patpong use the upper floors for business, which means that this area is mostly deserted during daytime and active at night, with more food carts, shops and a night market. The survey and analysis of this area found two types of shophouses: 2-3 storey shophouses, and 4-6 storey shophouses (see Figure 10). Due to the intensive use of the shophouses, the activities are separated into different floors for different entertainment venues and owners (see Figure 11). Separate access has been added leading directly to the upper floors from pedestrian walkways. These separated accesses have been implemented in various ways, such as access through the front of the shophouse with stairways straight to the upper floor or through the side of the shophouse to access the upper floor (see Figure 12).

**Figure 9**

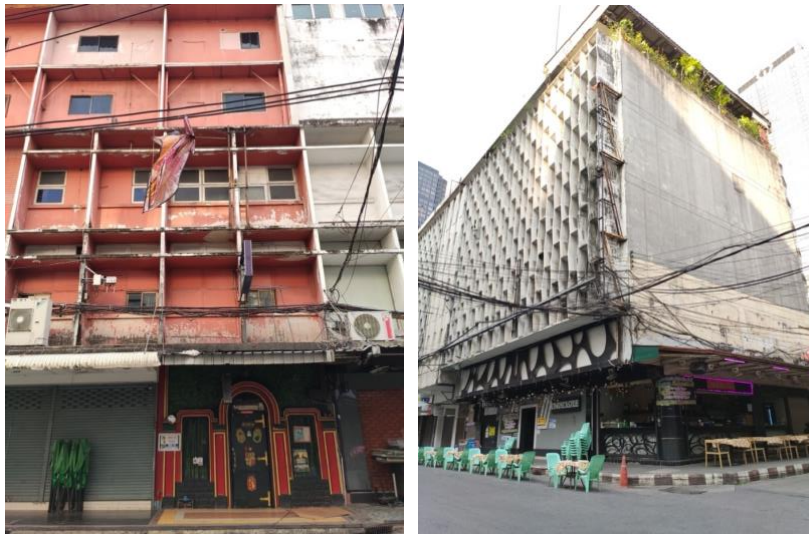
*Location of Shophouses in the Western Quarter*



*Note.* The blue dots on this figure show the locations of Western shophouses in Bangrak district in 2020, located in the Patpong area, a red-light district cluster, between Silom Road and Surawong Road. From Rāṅgān wīchāi chabap sombūn khroṅkān c̣hattham thānkhōmūn lāe phānthī mōradok mūrang sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] (p. 5-46), by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

**Figure 10**

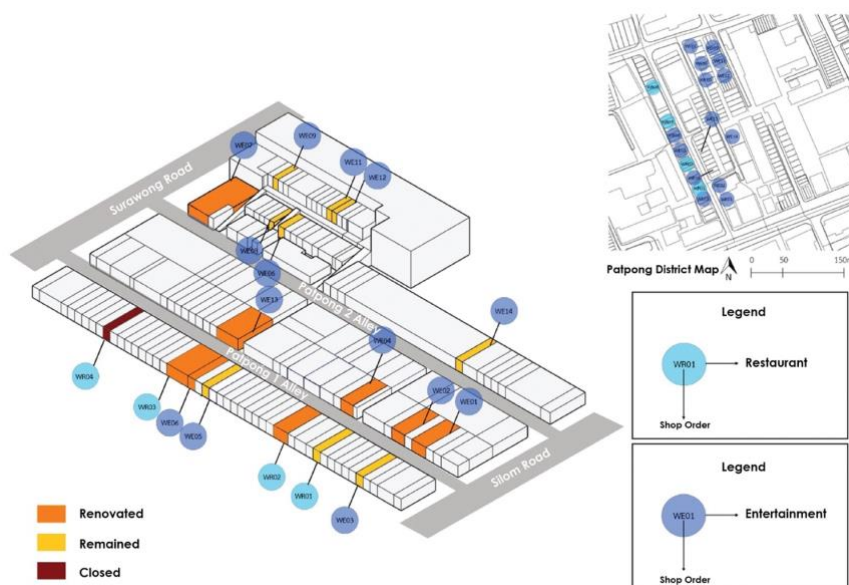
*Shophouse Front in the Western Quarter Between Silom Road and Surawong Road*



*Note.* Western shophouses in the Patpong area during daytime (left) entertainment shop closed during daytime with no activity on the outside (right) King's Castle bar building with different uses on each floor with secondary access. From Rāingān wičhai chabap sombūn khroṅkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phǣnthī mōradok mūrang sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] , by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

**Figure 11**

*Existing Use Status and Influenced Culture of Shophouses Between Silom Road and Surawong Road*



*Note.* This figure identifies the status of shophouses in the Patpong area in the present day. Shophouses colored in orange have been renovated, and those colored yellow remain in their original from Rāingān wičhai chabap sombūn khroṅkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phǣnthī mōradok mūrang sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] (p. 5-49), by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

**Figure 12**

*Separated Entrance of the Western Shophouses in Patpong*



*Note.* The separate access ports of shophouses in the Patpong area directly connect to the upper floor, which maximizes the usage of shophouses in this area. From Rāingān wīchai chabap sombūn khōngkān c̥hattham thānkhōmūn lāe phāēnthī mōradok mūang sāmān khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok], by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

## “Trok” of Bangrak

A network of canals once provided the main access for local Thai villagers to reach the orchard areas from the Chao Phraya River and Padungkrungkasem canal. A “trok” in Thai is a small pedestrian alley cut, in the past, by local people to access houses in orchards along with the system of canals.

From the 1896 map (see Figure 13), Trok have been identified as new access from Charoen Krung Road, Surawongse Road, and Si Phaya Road. These “trok” form a particular network of Bangrak’s urban pattern nowadays; therefore, they can be considered ordinary urban heritages. In the 1932 map (see Figure 14), trok can be seen as a network of small alleys connected to

main roads from the mixed agricultural and residential area in the middle of blocks. The network of trok allowed people to walk inside the blocks.

The 1974 map shows the presence of many new roads in the middle of the inner blocks, particularly in the North of Bangrak. Due to the rapid urbanization of Bangrak at that time, some trok were enlarged to allow vehicle access to newly built houses. The construction of new roads replaced the prior methods of boat and pedestrian access. The 1974 map presents a composition with the shophouses built along the roads, and the junctions between roads and trok acting as commercial areas for the local neighborhoods inside the blocks. (see Figure 15).



**Figure 13**

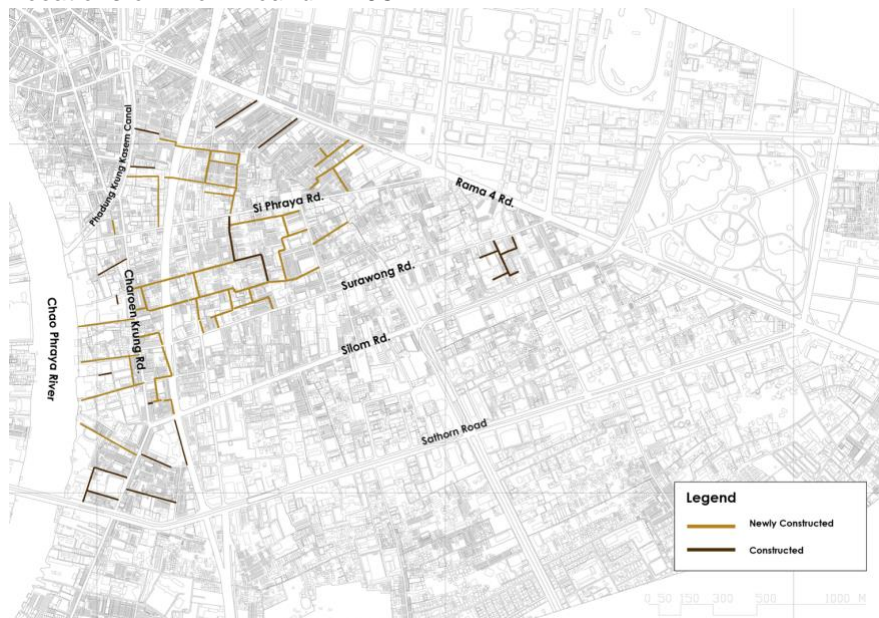
*Locations of “Trok” Shown on the 1896 Map*



*Note.* This figure shows small alleys (Trok) that were created prior to 1896. The yellow lines represent the newly constructed alleys in that year, and the black lines represent the old constructed alleys. From Rāingān wičaj chabap sombūn khroṅkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phānthī mōradok mŭang sāmān khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] (p. 3-46), by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

**Figure 14**

*Locations of “Trok” Found in 1932*



*Note.* This figure shows small alleys (Trok) that were created prior to 1932. The yellow lines represent the newly constructed alleys in that year, and the black lines represent the old constructed alleys. From Rāingān wičaj chabap sombūn khroṅkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phānthī mōradok mŭang sāmān khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] (p. 3-47), by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

**Figure 15**

*Locations of “Trok” Found in 1974*



*Note.* This figure shows the increasing amount of “Trok” in the Bangrak area that transformed the access from inner blocks to the new main roads. From Rāingān wīchai chabap sombūn khroṅkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phānthī mōradok mūang sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] (p. 3-48), by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

The analysis of maps and the observational survey found 5 types of trok in Bangrak: one-way alleys, L-shape alleys, alleys cutting through the buildings to access groups of buildings inside the blocks, alleys with the split paths, and disappeared alleys that are no longer found in the area.

The pattern of trok is also analyzed in combination with the type of construction based on location. Some trok were built on the top of the old canals that were filled in and converted to ground-level transport routes, and can be seen as curved alleys in the northern part of Bangrak around the Si Phraya area. Trok were also constructed to create access to destinations represented by a hexagonal shape in Figure 16, while the alleys that were replaced as the part of a road network are represented by a circular

shape. Trok that were enlarged as part of the building setback regulation are represented by a square shape. The last type of trok was constructed to access certain land plots, represented by a triangular shape (see Figure 16).

Analysis of maps and field surveys clarified not only the types of Trok, but also the related daily activities and uses. Colored round shapes (see Figure 17) present mapping of these activities from the foot survey. They become more significant in the everyday lives of the people in the area as the access and circulation around the community improve. Furthermore, they also provide venues for exchange of goods and other business transactions between local people in the community. The junctions of trok became, first temporary, and later, permanent market



areas with fresh foods and ingredients being sold in de facto food markets. Many shophouses along the roads and trok open as early as 6 am, and may remain open until 10 pm. In less busy places, such as the small junctions of trok in communities, shops are open primarily in the morning period as people are getting food before going to work. On weekdays, many food carts inside these “trok” provide lunch for office workers.

Surveys found that there are many trok in Bangrak that remain as small and narrow as when they were first built. (see Figure 18 A and B). A trok is a place for food carts and workers who serve daily meals to workers as part of the

everyday life of the area. In some areas, restaurants take place as much as half the available space along the walkways of the trok.

The type of trok that cuts through buildings to access houses behind forms a private area; some restaurants serve the communities from this covered area (see Figure 19 A-B)

The trok in the Patpong Area (East of Bangrak, figure 17 red dots A-B) have wider sidewalks, but the road is still narrow. The curved road (Fig. 20A) was once a canal. As Patpong is an entertainment area, the spaces in front of shops are fully utilized as welcoming spaces for restaurants, pubs, and bars.

**Figure 16**

*The Urban Pattern of “Trok” of the Eastern Bangrak Area*



*Note.* This figure shows the connected network of “Trok” which existed from the past to the present in the eastern Bangrak area, where the various types of “Trok” created the urban pattern. From Rāingān wīchai chabap sombūn khōngkān čattham thānkhōmūn læ phānthī mōradok mūang sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] (p. 5-67), by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

**Figure 17**

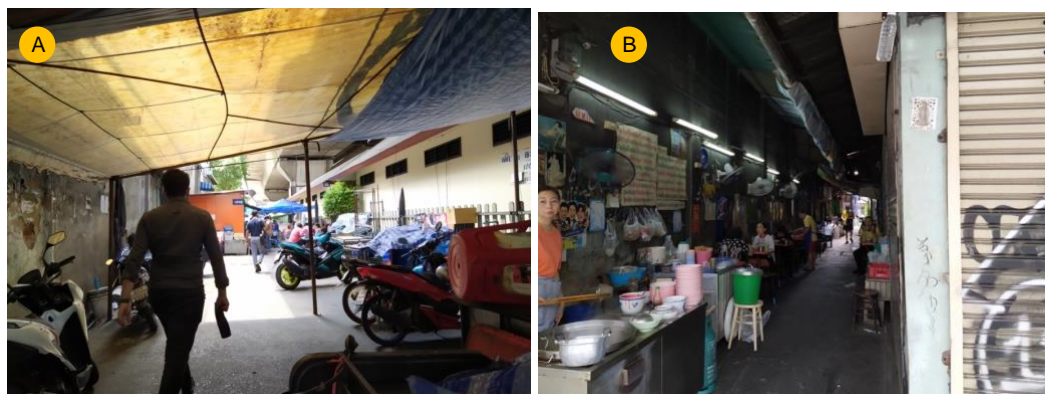
*Locations of “Trok” According to the Historic Maps of Bangrak*



*Note.* The locations, shapes, and forms of “Trok” in Bangrak, categorized by the year they first appeared on the map, from 1896 to 2020. From Rāingān wičajai chabap sombūn khroṅkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phānthī mōradok mūrang sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] (p. 5-62), by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

**Figure 18**

*“Trok” as Lunch Place for Office Workers in Surrounding Areas*



*Note.* (Left) office workers at lunch hour on Charoen Krung 49 alley where many food carts and restaurants are clustered. (Right) the smaller “Trok” connect to Charoen Krung 49 which utilizes 50% of the space for cooking and seating (Coordinated with Figure 17). From Rāingān wičajai chabap sombūn khroṅkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phānthī mōradok mūrang sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] , by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.



**Figure 19**

*“Trok” That Cut Through Buildings*



*Note.* Alleys which have been cut through buildings to access other buildings inside the alley (Left) the appearance of the building in this scenario (Right) both sides of the alley can be used as a shopfront, parking, or space for service activities (Coordinates with Figure 17). From Rāingān wičhai chabap sombūn khrōngkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phǎenthī mōradok mūrang sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] , by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

**Figure 20**

*Alley Forms in the Patpong Area of Bangrak*



*Note.* (Left) alleyways in the Patpong area which contain the characteristics of the old canal (Right) the small traffic area of Patpong with wide walkways (Coordinates with Figure 17). From Rāingān wičhai chabap sombūn khrōngkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phǎenthī mōradok mūrang sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] , by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

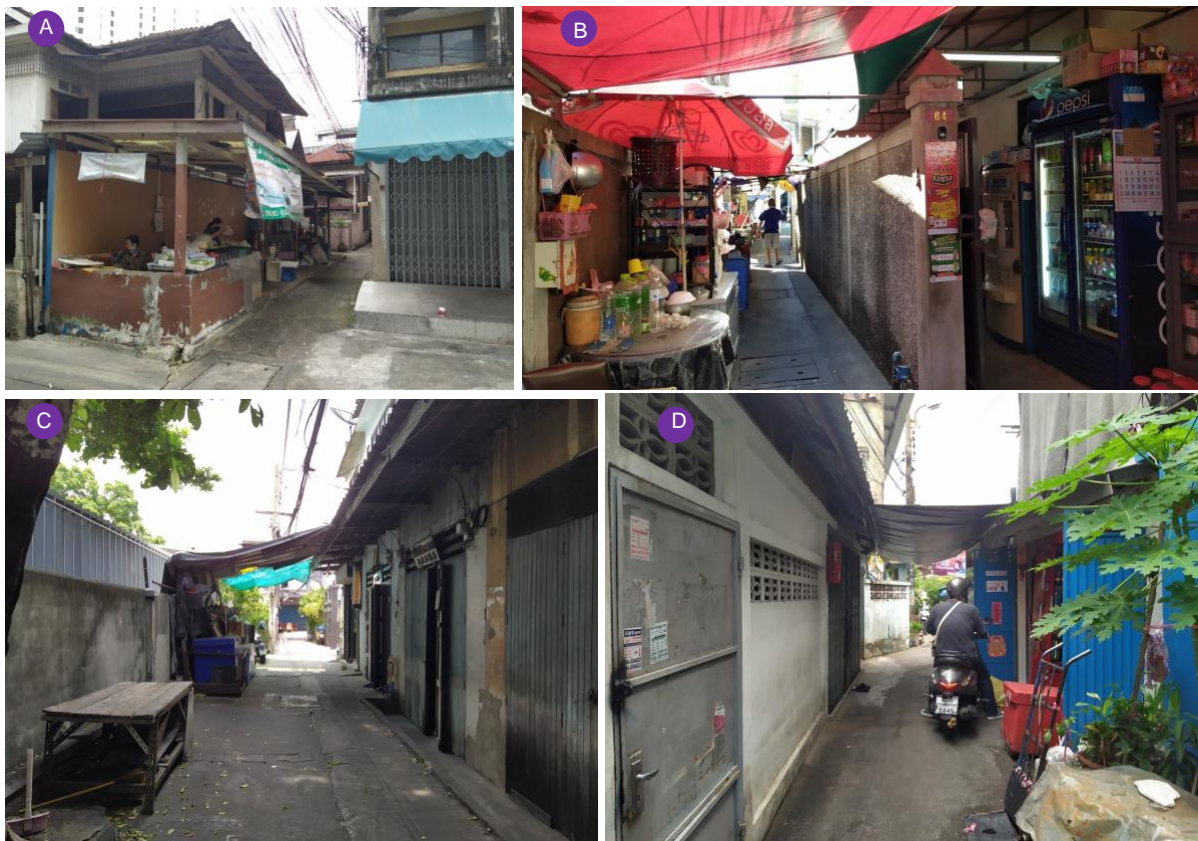
In the residential area of small land plots, both sides of “trok” are composed of different urban elements such as access to houses and shops, walls, and resting spaces along the alleys, which reflect how people use trok in the community. Daily activities such as planting, drying, and parking for vehicles or food carts can be seen along the trok. These spaces are usually found more often in residential and private areas inside the urban blocks. The alleys with smaller land plots have activities on both sides, acting as commercial areas where some shops serve

people in the community for a particular period, mostly in the morning and the afternoon. They are typically located in a narrow alley that can be accessed only by small scooters and pedestrians (see Figure 21).

On both sides of the trok are private houses or big land plots; the trok provides a passageway or parking for scooters. When looking at The Wanit 2 Alley in Figure 22 (left), the land of the Holy Rosary Church is on the left, and the district government office is on the right.

**Figure 21**

*Locations and Arrangement of Sacred Places in Small Alleys of Bangrak*

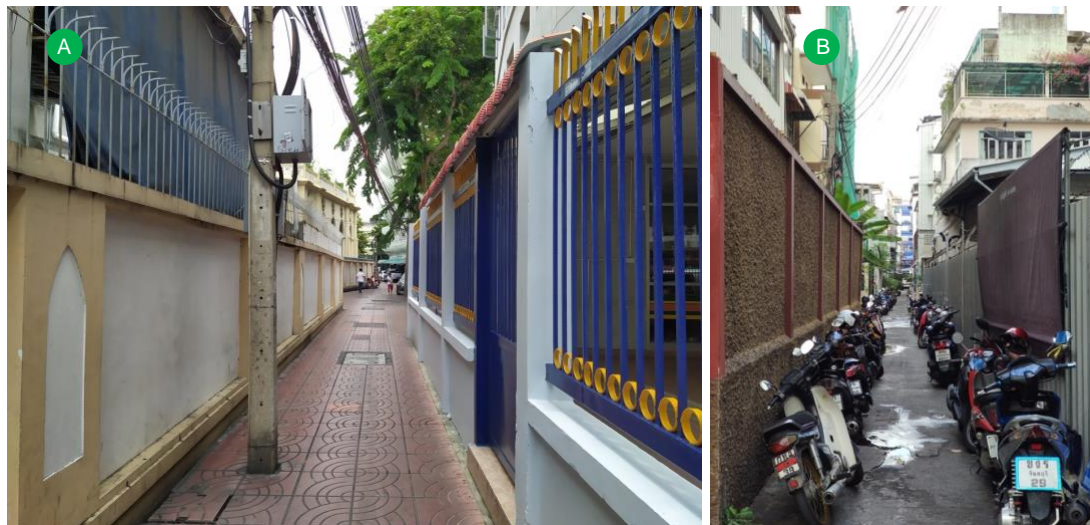


*Note.* (Upper Row) “Trok” in the residential area of Bangrak which is a place for shops that serve people in the area, (Lower Row) “Trok” in the residential area with fewer shops; both sides of the alley act only as an access area and walls of the land plot (Coordinated with Figure 17). From Rāingān wīchai chabap sombūn khōngkān c̣hattham thānkhōmūn lāe phānthī mōradok mūrang sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] , by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.



**Figure 22**

*Locations and Arrangement of Sacred Places in Small Alleys of Bangrak*



*Note.* (Left) The Wanit 2 Alley is connected to The Charoen Krung 30 Alley that runs parallel to The Chao Phraya River, with a large land plot on both sides. (Right) The Pramote 3 Alley has residential buildings on both sides of the alley, and people use the space along the *trok* to park their motorcycles (Coordinates with Figure 17). From *Rāingān wičajai chabap sombūn khōngkān chāttham thānkhōmūn lāe phānthī mōradok mūrang sāmān khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn* [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] , by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

## Sacred Places

Sacred places of Bangrak are ordinary urban heritages that can be seen ubiquitously as evidence of different beliefs and cultures of different groups of people that manifest through spaces of communities (see Figure 23). As mentioned above, sacred places in this research are small-scale sacred places of the individual local people or those shared by the residents of the same alley or road. Three types of sacred places have been categorized from the analysis of Bangrak.

### Spirit Houses

Spirit houses comprise the first type of sacred place, and are ubiquitous in the residential communities of Bangrak. Thai people generally construct these small shrines when they newly settle or build a new house (Amphanwong, 1996). The spirit houses can be categorized by physical appearance into two groups. Firstly, the one-column-support shrine is rooted in a mix of beliefs with Indian-Thai mythology. Thai people

believe it is a place for guardian angels of households named “Chaiyamongkol” who protect the land and house. This Buddhist temple-like spirit house is generally located in the compound of every single house. Due to the intense use of the ground floor and limited land area in the urban area of Bangrak, many spirit houses have been transformed into shared-spirit houses of neighborhoods in the same alley, or have been relocated to the roofs of the houses (see Figure 24). Another type of spirit house is a shrine built as a miniature Thai traditional house with four columns; Thai people believe that it houses land spirits and ancestors. In Bangrak, the first type of spirit house is generally found, but both types are located together in small alleys. The location of spirit houses is related to a group of neighborhoods and visual perception. Specifically, 44% of Spirit houses are located at the end of small alleys that form the neighborhood of that alley; 23% are located in the middle of alleys; 11% are placed at the corner of alleys, while 11% are individual spirit houses that are attached to one single owner. The physical aspects of spirit houses are



systematically found in both orientation and appearance (see Figure 25).

The theoretical and traditional orientation of spirit houses relates to the social status of the house owner. The spirit houses that face North were believed to be for elitist and royal families. On the other hand, the spirit houses of the wealthy or millionaires faced to the South. East-facing is for ordinary people, and can have three different orientations, i.e., North-East, East, or South-East according to the best orientation of the specific shrine (Department of Religious Affairs, 2009). The orientation of spirit houses in Bangrak primarily face East and South-East (47%, 7%), followed by North (21%), South (16%), and West (9%). The spirit houses are only found in three colors, white, red, and gold. There are a few cases of both types of spirit houses located together due to the limited space in Bangrak.

### Chinese style shrines

Secondly, Chinese-style shrines found in the Chinese quarter generally act as a center of the community. These shrines are primarily oriented to the East (46%), followed by the West (27%), South-East (18%), and South (9%). They are located at the end of alleys (64%) and the corner of alleys (27%) due to the easy access to the center of Chinese neighborhoods (Figure 26: left).

### Brahma shrines

Lastly, Brahma shrines are found only in front of the big hotels. Most of them face East and South-East (66% and 34%). The only colors used in this type of shrine are white and gold (Figure 26: right).

**Figure 23**

*Locations of Sacred Places Along Si Phraya Road to Charoen Krung Road*



*Note.* Examples of Sacred Places in the North of Bangrak are located in different cultural clusters. Spirit houses are generally found in small alleys of communities. From Rāingān wičajai chabap sombūn khroṅkān chattham thānkhōmūn lāe phānthī mōradok mūāng sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhon [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] (p. 5-96), by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

**Figure 24**

*Locations and Arrangement of Sacred Places in Small Alleys of Bangrak*



*Note.* Various placements of spirit houses inside “Trok” (small alley) show the significance of spirit houses in the community; these spirit houses can function as an individual’s shrine or it may be commonly shared and maintained by all the residents of the alley. From Rāingān wīchai chabap sombūn khroṅkān chattham thānkhōmūn læ phānthī mōradok mūrang sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok], by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.



**Figure 25**

*Locations and Arrangement of Spirit House in Bangrak*



*Note.* (Left) A diagram showing Sacred Places at the ends of small alleys (Thin Lines) connected to the main road (Thick Lines) (Right) Photos of Spirit Houses located inside “Trok” in context. When compared to the diagram on the left, these photos show the usage of shared elements in the alleys. From Rāingān wičhai chabap sombūn khroṅkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phānthī mōradok mūrang sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok] (p. 5-107), by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

**Figure 26**

*Chinese and Indian Brahma Shrine in Bangrak*



*Note.* (Left) Chinese Shrine on Saphan Tia alley in Si Phraya area with parking areas which can support a crowd (Right) Small Brahma Shrine in an alley along Charoen Krung Road, in the Indian quarter of Bangrak. From Rāingān wičhai chabap sombūn khroṅkān čhattham thānkhōmūn læ phānthī mōradok mūrang sāman khēt Bāng Rak Krung Thēp Mahā Nakhōn [Inventory and Mapping project of Ordinary Urban Heritage in Bangrak District, Bangkok], by P. Jhearmaneechotechai, 2022, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Copyright 2022 by Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

## CONCLUSION

The concept of Ordinary Urban Heritages of Bangrak provides an alternative lens for consideration of heritages in the urban area, and generate open discussion about heritage conservation expertise in Thailand and Bangkok. There are still heritages that are worth studying for conservation that have been excluded and overlooked from the mission and practices of Thai governmental agencies. The heritages of ordinary people reflect the different identities of people through their daily uses; they are also the production of society. Being the heritages of the present day, they express their adaptation to urbanization in the past, and point to the need for continued adaptation to urbanization now and into the future.

Even though the process of identifying selection criteria of ordinary urban heritages for the case of Bangrak is based on theoretical approaches of international literature review, those heritages need to be contextualized with analysis of maps and observational surveys. The cartographic analysis and surveys bridge existing gaps in understanding of heritage that serves people in situ. Ordinary urban heritages have strong relation with the times, the local people and their activities, reflecting the identities of different cultures.

With respect to ordinary heritages in the urban context, urbanization of the study period (pre-1974) also has a strong influence on ordinary urban heritages in terms of threats concerning the locations, values, and intensive use of lands in the urban area. Ordinary Urban Heritages of Bangrak display the ability to adapt as the influence of urbanization transforms them from their original form and purpose to keep them current with changing times. These changes and adaptation to heritages create challenges for those involved in heritage study, process, and conservation. Since ordinary urban heritages are constantly dealing with changes and adaptation to the contemporary urban context and daily life activities, they can be considered as part of the process of heritage conservation. They are not solely nostalgic elements reminding the past; rather, they are products of both the past and present society. Even though ordinary urban heritages of Bangrak have demonstrated the particular ability to adapt to the urbanization of

Bangrak in the past, they are vulnerable to current and ongoing urban redevelopment. Ordinary urban heritages are attached to local people and daily activities for a certain period, in the manner that people also manifest their cultures through ordinary urban heritages in daily life.

The selection these criteria of Ordinary Urban Heritages in Bangrak have not been undertaken with the objective of having them used by experts; instead, they are intended to be used as the starting point for recognizing the existence of heritages of ordinary people and everyday life. The criteria should reinforce the use of a bottom-up process in which the criteria will be used in a participatory process involving local people and government agencies. The identification of Ordinary Urban Heritages from this paper is not yet finalized; on the contrary, it should provide the starting elements of the next step in the process of local engagement with local people.

Since the five selection criteria from the case of Bangrak are contextualized, the application of these selection criteria for other areas needs to be intensively studied. Under particular circumstances of the study site, particularly in the urban context, the surveys of Bangrak found that ordinary urban heritages related not only to the site context, but also are a representation of temporality, changing of times, activities in a day, and events. Ordinary Urban Heritages of Bangrak can contribute to and fulfill the heritage conservation in Thailand. Furthermore, this research can also raise awareness of the equality of productions of ordinary people and their heritages that are worth studying and conserving for Bangkok.

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