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## สยามสมาคมในพระบรมราชูปถัมภ์

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### THE SIAM SOCIETY UNDER ROYAL PATRONAGE

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20 August 2012

M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra  
Bangkok Governor  
Bangkok Metropolitan Administration  
173 Dinso Road, Sao Chingcha,  
Phra Nakhon, Bangkok 10200

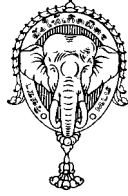
Subject: Conservation of historic quarters adjacent to Rattanakosin zone

Dear M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra,

The Siam Society Under Royal Patronage is the oldest non-government organisation in Thailand. The Society was founded in 1904 and has been working to promote cultural studies, research, dissemination, investigation and to participate in cultural and environmental conservation activities in Thailand and neighbouring countries. The Siam Society has recently established the Siamese Heritage Trust in order to focus on the Society's conservation efforts, thereby creating a more tangible impact to society. One part of the work at Siamese Heritage Trust is to coordinate with other conservation groups, exchanging ideas and opinions at national and international levels. This networking has resulted in the setting up of the Cultural Heritage Conservation Alliance.

During the preparation phase of the 3<sup>rd</sup> revised Bangkok Comprehensive Plan a movement arose to call for the preservation of a number of historic quarters and communities in Bangkok, notably those in Pom Prap Sattru Phai and Samphanthawong districts. Mass rail transit construction is coming to the districts, and, as a result, massive development projects have been initiated. The Cultural Heritage Conservation Alliance—comprising academics, historians, archaeologists, architects and ordinary citizens who care about their communities' heritage—believes that the land use policy as stated in the latest draft of Bangkok Master Plan, as well as the related Bangkok city ordinance, does not provide for or reflect awareness of the preservation of these historic quarters and communities. Hence, we offer the following comments:

1. The areas of Samphanthawong and Pom Prap Sattru Phai districts, especially around Charoen Krung Road, Yaowarat Road, Anuwong Road, Songwat Road and Ratchawong Road are rich in ethnic diversity. Each of the communities there has a



long inherited way of life and culture its own. There are many buildings and groups of buildings with historic, archaeological, artistic and architectural significance. They should be preserved and promoted as important repositories of Bangkok's cultural heritage by relevant authorities. In this way, the people's quality of life will improve, and pride in the city will return to these irreplaceable cultural tourism areas.

2. The land utilisation policies in the current Bangkok Comprehensive Plan and the upcoming 3<sup>rd</sup> revised plan designate these areas as relatively high-density commercial, allowing constructions of large buildings with floor area ratio (FAR) of 7. Consequently, there is a high probability that old and valuable buildings will be torn down unless preventive measures are put in place. By allowing larger buildings within 500-metre of a mass transit railway station under the proposed new plan, the demolition of traditional communities and historic quarters becomes even more likely.
3. Bangkok City Ordinance B.E. 2542, which limits height of buildings, provides protection only in the areas around religious places. This is inadequate, because it does not cover other valuable types of historic buildings.
4. Although the communities and historic quarters do qualify as ancient monuments according to the definition in Article 4 of the Act on Ancient Monument, Ancient Objects, Artistic Objects and National Museums B.E. 2504, the procedure for ancient monument registration with the Department of Fine Arts It appears that most of the registered heritage are temples, ancient monuments or inhabited archaeological sites which normally owned by the government or public institutions, not the urban historic quarters or communities which are different in terms of complicated ownership and tenure. The process of turning the communities and historic quarters into ancient monuments will face many limitations and will be too late..

Therefore, the Cultural Heritage Conservation Alliance proposes that Bangkok Metropolitan Administration—as a local administrative body legally in charge of the preservations of cultural heritage, customs, traditions and respectable ways of lives of the citizens—should approach the conservation of historic quarters and communities as follows:

1. Reconsider the town planning measures and land utilisation ruling, especially the FAR bonus allowance within 500 meters of a mass transit railway station. The allowance should be revoked in the historic areas.
2. Improve or issue a Bangkok City Ordinance to protect every historic quarter and community. The ordinance should prohibit the demolition of buildings with historic, architectural or artistic significance. This can be done according to Articles 8 and 9 of



Building Control Act B.E. 2522. The ordinance should, however, be subject to public hearings where opinions of stakeholders are listened to. Genuinely correct and relevant information must be collected thoroughly during the process.

3. Encourage the communities and historic quarters to live in and preserve the old buildings. Provide a variety of measures and motivations such as initiating a community development project that involves the rehabilitation of old buildings, sponsor proper refurbishment, etc.

The Cultural Heritage Conservation Alliance is not against development, nor does it oppose the economic growth of the city or the nation. What we ask is for the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration to consider an appropriate type of development that takes into account the values of historic communities—Charoen Krung, Yaowarat and other similar quarters—which have made Bangkok a city of culture unique in the world. Around the world, cities with highest level of economic development are often also the staunchest advocates of historic conservation. Conservation and development need not be on a collision course. Both can work together for a more balanced development, to bring about an economic system that can truly benefit the country.

Sincerely yours,

Bilaibhan Sampatisiri  
President of The Siam Society Under Royal Patronage

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