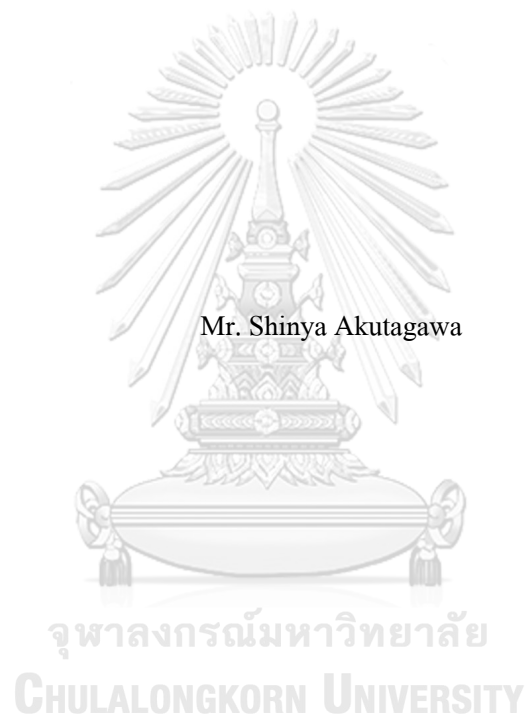


THAILAND AND BIENNIAL ART FESTIVAL: THE CASE STUDY OF BANGKOK ART
BIENNALE 2018, BANGKOK BIENNIAL, AND THAILAND BIENNALE



Mr. Shinya Akutagawa

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Southeast Asian Studies
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วิเคราะห์ให้เห็นว่าการเข้าร่วมงานมหกรรมใหญ่ระดับโลกของชนชั้นนำชาวสยามนั้นจะช่วยยกระดับ
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This thesis examines biennial art festivals in Thailand, namely Bangkok Art Biennale 2018, Bangkok Biennial and Thailand Biennale. Each festival had a different type of biennial respectively and all represented the first biennial in Thailand. The biennial art festival can be traced back to the world fairs and grand tours in Europe. In the 19th century, Siamese elite conducted a grand tour to Europe and participated in world fairs. As Thongchai (2000, 540) illustrates that Siamese elite believed that their participation in major world fairs would increase their recognition and elevate their status on the global stage, the biennials organizers in 2018 also believed that the biennial would raise the Thailand's cultural status on the global stage and set the city and themselves on the global art map. The thesis aims to depict the cooperative space production as the biennial by the state, private sectors, and art professionals. It analyses the politics of aesthetics on vague imagination of world class city.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sukhumbhand announced that architect Sumet Jumsai¹ would be assigned the task of transforming Siam-Ratchaprasong into a "world-class urban space".

Working toward the monarchy, Ünaldi, 2016

(after Red Shirts protest was put down at Siam-Ratchaprasong, Bangkok governor Sukhumbhand stated above. That time, Democrat party had the big cleaning day and encouraged urban dwellers to make their world-class city.)

World-Class Components of a Global Landmark Destination

Promotion of One Bangkok by Frasers Property Holdings Thailand Co Ltd

(Frasers Property Holdings (Thailand) Co., Ltd in PR Newswire, Jul 31, 2019)

1.1 World Class imagination

In the early modernizing period, World exhibitions/World Fairs shaped values just like the biennial art festival in the 21st century. Jean-Marc Poinot has stated on world-class exhibition that “extracting objects, particularly works of art, from their initial position or circulation, to give them a new meaning and value by virtue of their displacement and regrouping for the gaze of a nascent audience” (2007, 23). The artworks in the framework of World exhibitions is not limited to material but including the intangible space production. The production of space with art in public is constructed with citizen who expect the gaze from all over the world.

¹ Sumet Jumsai was named a National Artist of Thailand in 1998.

In the 21st century Asia, world class cities are booming. The attempt often involves a biennial art festival recognized as the basic standard of a world class city. In Southeast Asia, Singapore had its first biennial in 2006 which coincided with “Singapore 2006: Global City. World of Opportunities”, where Singapore played host to the Annual Meetings of the Boards of Governors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group, according to National Art Council Singapore 2006. The organizer presents a biennial art festival as an international platform, a conceptual showcase across the site in the city. As its planned as a perennial festival, biennial is expected to involve long term city-plan and industrial profit estimation (Jones 2018, Loc 2681). In Thailand, TCC Group aims to reach its goal of international recognition with their urban project² that directly connected to their own biennial art festival as a venue. They have cooperated with the state run institutions and bureaucrats. The ministry usually prefers to operate the conventional modern practices like cleaning public spaces, making a public park, building skyscraper and introducing a faster train with a vague imagination of world class city but with an urge to meet a global standard. Thus, if they need to meet the new world order, government officials would like to work with trustful well-experienced art professionals who can contribute to their city planning thereby making the role of art legible and identifiable for bureaucrats.

² The global architect collective SOM has been holding down a large number of clients from all over the world, noticeably in PRC, Malaysia, and Indonesia. These in emerging cities are trying to join the global collective concerns, remarkably on sustainability, as TCC Group also strongly emphasis on “Sustainability” on its annual report and website of Thai Beverage and Frasers. According to SOM's website, climate change has forced 21 million people to abandon their home countries. In the next 30 years, at least 200 million people will be environmental migrants. Globally, the built environment accounts for 40 % of total carbon emissions, 25 % of freshwater use and 60 % of the electricity consumed. 80 % of the emissions associated with the built environment are from buildings in use. People at SOM believe in the power of collaboration. SOM emphasizes on the need of new knowledge and collective work, so that they can lead the way to a sustainable future (SOM official website, accessed on 9th September 2019).

The biennial event is a temporary space production in existing location handled by the globally recognized art professionals. In Thailand, one of the biennials BAB was directed by the Minister of Culture, Apinan Poshyananda. He is a well experienced curator and a former avant-garde artist. He introduces the festival gaining a mutual interest between the private sectors and the state. From big companies' perspective, the biennial provides three advantages, firstly, corporate branding raises public awareness of services and products that bring new lifestyle meeting the global trends. Secondly, a temporary platform for mitigating the industrial profit and social responsibility, the governmental city-planning from local and liberal demand. Additionally, for enterprises, supporting an artistic activity is believed as not only valuable for attraction of a higher class, but also an instrument for taking the role of social responsibility. From the bureaucrats' perspective, in addition to the points above, the introduction of biennial is an opportunity to activate unused space and revitalize their city's appeal to public opinion.

As a cooperative sustainable festival in which many international art professionals participated, the festival itself is incorporated into their long-term city-planning. The biennial makes tangible and intangible cultural attraction visible. Tourism promotion is also an important factor which is an understandable gauge for bureaucrat and citizen when art professionals try to have a biennial event. Art professionals also think of the movability as the subject of their art practice. If a biennial gains good reputation listed in a global biennial art map, it will also boost the tourism. One of the biennials in Thailand 2018 among three, BAB is co-founded with Thai Beverage Public (in TCC Group). TCC Group is one of the biggest conglomerates in Asia. The main venue of BAB is One Bangkok that is under construction when the first BAB was held in 2018 by Frasers Property Limited (in also TCC Group). Frasers Property Holdings Thailand Co Ltd does public relations on it as "World-Class Components of a Global Landmark Destination" (Promotion of One Bangkok by Frasers Property Holdings (Thailand) Co., Ltd in PR Newswire, Jul 31, 2019).

Name	People	Family relation	Relation with BAB
TCC Group	Chairman: Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi	-	-
Thai Beverage Public Company Limited (ThaiBev) (TCC Group)	Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi (founder) Thapana Sirivadhanabhakdi, (president and CEO) Paul Choong (Vice President and External Affairs)	Thapana Sirivadhanabhakdi is a son of Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi	Thapana Sirivadhanabhakdi is Co-founder of BAB. Paul Choong as chief executive ³ of BAB (another chief executive is Apinan Poshyananda)
Frasers Property Limited (TCC Group) ⁴	Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi (Chairman) Panote Sirivadhanabhakdi (CEO)	Panote Sirivadhanabhakdi is a son of Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi	One Bangkok as venue, joint project with BAB
Fraser & Neave Ltd. (F & N)	Chairman: Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi	-	-
TCC Assets ⁵	Group CEO Panote Sirivadhanabhakdi	-	One Bangkok is venue and joint project with BAB

³ See Bangkok Art Biennale 2018 Official Guidebook, P 184

⁴ www.frasersproperty.com, accessed on 2020 April 17th. It was acquired by TCC Group in 2013.

See also The Straits Times <https://www.straitstimes.com/business/companies-markets/thai-billionaire-charoen-tcc-group-plans-us35b-bangkok-development-with>, accessed on 2020 April 17th.

⁵ <http://www.tccassets.com/aboutus>

TCC Land Co Ltd: from the early 2000s, Charoen successfully enabled the development of the development industry through the creation of TCC Land Co Ltd. The company is currently one of the largest real estate

Asset World Corp PCL	Wallapa Traisorat, CEO of Asset World Corp PCL	Wallapa Traisorat is a daughter of Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi	O.P.PLACE is one of venues of BAB
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TCC Groups and area of activity⁶

Food and Beverage Group	ThaiBev, Fraser & Neave Ltd, Sermasuk PLC, Oishi Group
Industrial and Trading Business Group	BJC, BJC Foods, BJC Logistics, Asia Books, Rubia, TCC Technology, Thai Glass Industrial
Finance and Insurance Group	SEIC Southeast, Southeast Capital, Southeast Insurance, Southeast Life Insurance
Property and Real Estate Group	TCC Land, Grand Unity Development, Univentures, Goldenland, TCC Capital Land, The Imperial Hotels & Resorts, Fraser & Neave Ltd. (F & N), TCC Assets, Asset World Corp PCL
Agricultural and Agro Industrial Group	Plantheon, Cristilla TCC Sugar Industry, Terragro, Mongkud, Siam Food

Group CEO Panote Sirivadhanabhakdi says that “We believe ‘One Bangkok’ is an offering worthy of what Thailand's capital can deliver on the world stage, and our goal is to see

developers in Thailand, investing and developing residential, hotel and commercial facilities, and is involved in property management, logistics, agribusiness and several real estate funds in Thailand and Singapore.

⁶[http://www.tcc.co.th/index.php?controller=businessGalish,%20Mac.%20Charoen%20Sirivadhanabhakdi:%20The%20short%20story%20of%20the%20Thai%20king%20of%20beer%20\(p.%205\).%20Kindle%20Edition](http://www.tcc.co.th/index.php?controller=businessGalish,%20Mac.%20Charoen%20Sirivadhanabhakdi:%20The%20short%20story%20of%20the%20Thai%20king%20of%20beer%20(p.%205).%20Kindle%20Edition)
accessed on 12th Dec 2019. Fraser & Neave Ltd. (F & N), TCC Assets and Asset World Corp PCL are added.

the country become the very epicenter of ASEAN.” (Fraser’s Property Limited). ““One Bangkok’ is a new global landmark destination - a fully-integrated district in the heart of the city. Once completed, it will be synonymous with Thailand and will enhance the country’s stature on the world stage.” (From the website of One Bangkok and SOM)⁷. At the same time, while the biennial art festival and urban mega project is planned and run by bureaucrats and big companies and oligarchic art professionals, the world class imagination is not only from top-down hierarchy. The world class imagination has been shared with citizen. On the matter of collective imagination of world class city, D. Asher Ghertner conducted interviews with citizens in Delhi, he found how people produce a space which is imaginary and physically shared with dwellers collectively even though they don’t know where the idea comes from and what exactly will happen when the beautification of the city is reinforced⁸. When he asked about the eviction for beautification, a group of boys answered that it is good because this is the capital of India and should be beautiful as people from all over the world come. Furthermore, people often overlook the reason why they should make the city beautiful/attractive for the people from all over the world. Similar cases have often occurred in Thailand. For example, when Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) was held in 2003, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) set up a large banner to hide the slums along the Chao Phraya River⁹ (Tamaki 2014, Johnson 2009). The forum also brought cleaning of the city, the partial destruction by BMA of a famous market (*Pak Khlong Talat*), an act intended to impress APEC visitors of the city’s beauty with open view of the city’s most famous temples (Herzfeld 2016, 67).

⁷ http://onebangkok.com/en/News/get_content_news/1425 accessed on 12th Dec 2019.

⁸ Not only in Delhi, in Asia there are a lot of case studies. Erik Harms reported, according to Herzfeld, even though people lament their catastrophic impact on their own social life by eviction, they see no contradiction in praising the new amenities. See Herzfeld 2016, 70 and Harms 2011, 173.

⁹ Interestingly, that time prime minister was Thaksin, known as saying he loves people. Pasuk and Baker introduce his remark, “...who should I be more loyal? The people? Or the Court? I love people. I want to work for them” (Pasuk and Baker, 2009, 3). Even Thaksin, he seems to feel shame of the existence of slum along Chao Phraya river when he was taking cruise with American president.

In general, beautification provides the foundation for improving how a city looks and works. The city is committed to improving the hygiene and image of the area, the private and public infrastructural needs and open spaces such as parks and walkways. In Thailand, the BMA has been authorized to perform the following principal functions within its jurisdictional area¹⁰ maintaining law and order, promoting and supporting the safety and security of lives and properties, maintenance of public places, improving slum areas and housing, promotion of tourism, democracy, and public participation in local development. With the engagement of BMA, the recent drastic change of Thai cityscape in Bangkok has been imposing a new standard toward people. Herzfeld draws the rhetoric of the city planner, their pursuit of urban renewal is the uncritically universalizing concept of “beauty” (*khwahm suai ngahm*) (2018, 68). According to Herzfeld, a plan commissioned by the authorities claims, along with what have become commonplace statements about the importance of the site for the “history, archeology, art, and architecture of Rattanakosin City¹¹ over a period of more than 200 years ... so as to preserve the historic appearance and the connections and linkage between the past and the society of today,” that its goal is to contribute to the beauty of the larger area of which it is a part (Herzfeld 2018).

The production of urban space is a cooperative project with several actors from ministerial institutes, private sectors, NGOs, and individual professionals. Establishing a biennial art festival tagged with a geographic label is essential to achieve the ambition of making a world-class city. In Thailand, the actors of the production of urban space are Sino-Thai conglomerates,

¹⁰ For General Responsibilities of BMA in detail, see its official website

<http://www.bangkok.go.th/main/page.php?&329&l=en>

¹¹ Rattanakosin Island is the historic center of Bangkok founded in 1782. It may be translatable in “The city of the jewel of Indra”. Rattanakosin came into being when King Rama I ascended the throne in 1782. He decided to establish the new capital on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River for better security from Burma.

King Rama I was determined to build a new capital to revive the glory and splendor of old Ayutthaya. The new capital was proclaimed “Krungthep Mahanakorn Amorn Rattanakosin Mahintra Yuttaya Mahadilokpop Noparat Burirom Udom Rachnivet Mahasathan Amornpimarn Avartarnsathit Sakkatiya Witsanukamprasit” and hence began the Rattanakosin era or Bangkok period under the glorious reign of the Chakri Kings (The Yaowarat Heritage Centre).

Ministry of Culture (MOC), Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Crown Property Bureau (CPB), Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), Office of Contemporary Art and Culture (OCAC), and international/national art professionals and citizens.¹²

The influence of change spread to parts outside of Bangkok as well. Once the new concept of urban space was introduced in the center, it spread to the whole state through the experience of inner-migration (Pasuk and Baker 2016) and media. Sopranzetti points out that rural tradition is reframed as *saeng mai set* (unfinished) while waves of modern necessity and desire arrive to fulfill and complete it. Throughout the rural landscape of Thailand, things that were accepted in the past are now seen as unfinished, incomplete, to be rethought and updated (Sopranzetti 2017, Loc 1720). The influence of change from the center and global trend has been strong. One of the functions of biennial is neutralization and the creation of platform for the interaction between local and global. Using the case studies on Thailand Biennale in a local city, Bangkok Art Biennale and Bangkok Biennial in the capital, the thesis will demonstrate that biennials can centralize and inter-localize a social capital and its influence both in domestic level and global level.

When three biennials were held in 2018, there had been several ongoing urban projects in Bangkok. It is almost impossible to grasp how many projects have been planned and are ongoing. According to his daughter Wallapa Traisorat, CEO of Asset World Corp PCL¹³ and executive director of TCC Land (in TCC Group) (BBC News, 3rd February 2013), even Charoen¹⁴ Sirivadhanabhakdi, a tycoon of Thai business world, does not recognize how many properties he owns. Despite the formidable construction rush in Bangkok, almost all projects are in the hands of major conglomerates such as TCC Group, The Mall Group, and Central Group

¹² Public agencies such as the military, Crown Property Bureau, and the railway authority are the biggest landowners in Bangkok (Evers & Korff, 2000:213, cited by Johnson, 2009, 38).

¹³ See Asset World Cooperation official website in detail, accessed on September 2nd, 2018.

¹⁴ The word “*charoen*” is similar to *Sivilai*. Thongchai (2000, 531) examines the relation/difference between Civilization and Progression through the word *charoen* and *Sivilai*.

with Crown Property Bureau¹⁵. Duangmanee Laovakul reveals that 10 percent of all landholders, roughly 1.5 million individuals or organizations, own over three-fifths of total land in Thailand (Duangmanee, 2016, 40). These conglomerates are also deeply involved with contemporary art projects as the branding and meeting the global standard are essential for them to achieve their goal. The goal is to attract the middle-classes and people earning a higher income, to supply what they demand and give the distinct impression of cultural and physical condition.

1.2 Biennial Culture and Urban Space¹⁶

Since the early modernization in Siam/Thailand, city-planners, property owners, retailers and ministerial institutes have needed to accommodate an art or cultural festival; this thesis shows that the biennial art festival can work for platform of spreading new world order in public. This thesis aims to explore the kind of motivation and the problems people in Thailand has faced as a result of the festival and the gaudy façade of cities with biennial art festival. It mainly deals with the Bangkok urban space with two biennials in the notion of the production of space, but it also addresses another biennial in southern part of Thailand.

¹⁵ Additionally, CP Group's Magnolia Quality Development Corporation Co, the property development arm of Charoen Pokphand (CP) Group. It provides mainly condominium rather than shopping mall. Thaksin's SC Asset Corporation Public Company Limited, managing director is Surathian. King Power owns King Power Mahanakhon, located in the heart of Bangkok's central business district at Chong Nonsi BTS station. Mahanakhon was set by PACE Development. King power purchased Mahanakhon from PACE in 2018. The development team of the building included German architect Ole Scheeren, former partner of the design firm Office for Metropolitan Architecture. Ole Scheeren is known as one of the main contributors of Cities on the Move. King Power company dominates an air-port sale. See Koompong (2009). Nai Lert Group is running one of biennial venue, Nai Lert Park Heritage is one of the venues of Bangkok Art Biennale 2018.

¹⁶ Jones says that biennial culture is resistance to history because of its planned continuity (2018, Loc 2681). It is expected to involve long term city-plan and industrial profit estimation as TCC Group shows its target and goal.

For many years, numerous biennials all over the world have been led by auteur-curators (star-curators) like Harald Szeemann, Hou Hanru, Okwui Enwezor with international artists¹⁷. The use of public space in biennial art festival is often called ‘city as museum’¹⁸, in which artists and curators usually cooperate with city-planners, industrial sectors and cultural ministry. While many people believe having biennial brings a local city and its people into the global stage and puts them on the global map, orchestrating the project requires understanding the global and local politics as well as the economy. The domestic impact of the framework of biennial is that the budget of cultural activities goes into biennial, the authority of auteur-curator is getting stronger, and a few number of art professionals coordinate various opinions and regulate the interests of private factors and state-interest, and control the local and global art as the global elite.

Since 1989, Biennial Culture represents the expansion of the social relation on the neoliberal approach to economic development. Biennial is no longer primarily national, or even regional, but that of a standardization of art on the global map, characterized as a global phenomenon, the self-actualizing collective fantasy of world art systems. While there are several factors as to how biennial culture has spread all over the world, in order to keep the thesis within reasonable bounds, this thesis will limit the study to ‘art in public’ (site-specific art) through the phenomena of biennialization in Thailand in the notion of travel and experience. This thesis will examine the three biennials in Thailand 2018 explaining how the state and private sectors and art professionals in Thailand create a space in public using the city as an exhibition space. Artworks and projects are called site-specific art, in other words, how the tendencies of site-specificity in

¹⁷ About the star curator or auteur curator, see C. Green and A. Gardner (2016, 19-41). See also Patrick D. Flores on Asian auteur-curators like Jim Supangkat, Apinan Poshyananda.

¹⁸ The development of the idea and practice of ‘city as platform’ and ‘city as museum’, see Caroline A. Jones and C. Green and A. Gardner. Jones says “...branding their cities as transformational sites or gateways mediating between the nation and a wider world”. (2018, Loc 2814). C. Green and A. Gardner cited from Nikos Papastergiadis and Meredith Martin that “Art Biennales and Cities as Platforms for Global Dialogue (2011, 45–62)” (2016, 74).

global, national, and neighbor level entangled themselves in the global imagination and concretized as the biennial.

1.3 The period of study

This thesis will be limited from 1992 to 2019 in order to examine an internationalization of Thai art and the phenomenon that drove the state to have biennial art festivals. The paper will also refer to the early modernizing period as Thai contemporaneity shows its continuity of the early modernization.

1.4 Research questions

The questions this study addresses are:

1. How did Siam/Thailand try to be a part of world exhibition as the global stage and what is the result?
2. How is urban space produced with mutual interests among art professionals, ministerial bureaucracies, capital investors and beneficiaries, and why do they run the biennial art festival rather than museum/white-cube based exhibition?
3. How does the biennials resonate other national level projects like re-branding Chao Phraya River, and a global level imagination as world-class city, and a neighbor level daily practice as urban cosmopolitanism?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This thesis will examine the practice of biennials in Thailand on the three dimensions as each biennial set their own organizations and concepts on the different social

levels, spaces rather than artists and their artworks¹⁹. For examining it, the thesis uses the space theory on mental-physical and active-passive space production as the fact that the meaning and value of space would differ up to the activator (user) even if space itself is physically constant, static. In accordance with it, using Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space in the notion of site-specific art may cover the research as Henri Lefebvre regards that space is not a neutral container but the flow of active participation towards space as the production of space. For examining historical legacy of the usage of space in Thailand, this thesis also uses Thongchai's research on a passive process and active practice of adaptation of Western culture by the early modernizing elite in Siam.

Historically, Thailand/Siam has frequently been required to meet the global standard from supreme nations. It is well known that its active participation of the League of Nations as only one country from Southeast Asia resulted with several social improvements, like abolishing slavery and so forth. According to Stefan Hell, being a member of the League of Nations as multilateral club also entailed obligations. The League exerted pressure on the Thai elite for social development and policy reforms. Siam's policy makers had to adapt domestic policies to new international standards in order to be recognized as a worthy member of the international system (Hell, 2010).

Both of Thongchai's and Lefebvre's space theories show the distinction between mental space and physical space. As three biennial art festivals in Thailand make use of existing space rather than having a conventional exhibition at white-cube, the theories are suitable to the study.

On the matter of site-specific art, "the art-*as*-public-spaces" model introduced by Kwon (2004, 75) through referring to Henri Lefebvre's idea of space is one of the distinct styles

¹⁹ A. Gardner and C. Green think that art history at the geopolitical level is needed for grasping the contemporary art. They said that a counterweight to artist-centered art history is needed. Art is imbricated with contemporary geopolitics and politics of display, and context informs the chronological development of biennialization (2016, 8-10).

of site-specific art in biennials as its mixture of vernacularity and publicity rather than monumental objects/buildings while the biennial event itself is planned as sustainable in a perennial cycle. This is distinct from “the art-in-public-spaces” which may be simply installed into public space as object. According to Kwon, Serra distinguished his practice from the modernism works that gives the illusion of being autonomous from their own surroundings. The artwork’s integration with the site (Kwon 2004, 95) is the matter when the artwork/project in biennial art festival is examined. On the notion of site-specificity, contemporary site-specific art became comprehensive space production by sharing with art-educated audience, visitors, tourists, local people who are not so interested in art (Kwon 2004, 83). Historically, the transition of the notion of public art occurred in 1989. C. Green and A. Gardner say that most studies of biennials posit 1989 as Year Zero in the formation of a global complex of exhibition making (2016, 51). Not only on biennials, but also on public art, there were a lot of cornerstone incidents in 1989. The removal of artwork of Richard Serra in public coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The removal may arguably represent the end of individual authorship driven primarily by art-specific concerns that had little bearing on the lives of the people who constitute the actual, rather than abstract or metaphorical, reality of the site. Kwon argues, Richard Serra envisioned not a relationship of smooth continuity between the art work and its site but an antagonistic one in which the art work performs a proactive interrogation – “manifest[s] a judgment” (presumably negative) – about the site’s sociopolitical conditions (Kwon 2004, 74). She continues, in Serra’s practice, site specificity is constituted as a precise discomposure between the artwork and its site. While Serra never speaks of merging sculpture and architecture into some new hybrid form to obliterate their categorical distinctions, so many contemporary artists are prone to do in the name of radicalizing artistic practice (Kwon 2004, 75). In the eye of the urban elite and city managers [of the U.S.] during the 1970s and 1980s, public art was also supposed to attract tourism, new businesses and work forces, and residential development, resulting in a boosting a city’s sense of identity (Kwon 2004, 181). The condition that Kwon shows seems to be still applicable to the biennialization in Thailand 2018. Obviously, the ministry of Thailand expects the culture from the biennial to attract tourists and bring Thailand to the global stage.

On the other hand, contrary in West, Sandra Cate says that in Thailand as well as throughout Southeast Asia, historically, art *was* everyday life. That is, objects such as Buddha figures selected, described, and analyzed as “art” by Western art historians, always had direct, intimate, and often performative functions in the lives of the people who grew up surrounded by them (Cate 2012, 75). Gridthiya Gaweewong says that adopting western art that was not represented in the Thai domestic context made the art foreign and thus alienated Thai culture (1996, 17). Considering the characteristics of Asian biennial adopted from Europe, examining the usage of everyday practices and everyday space is important to understand site-specificity of Thailand as the biennial art practice may bring the art back to the spatial harmony with local culture. As the biennial’s precursor, the artist-led grass root practices held in Bangkok and Chiang Mai in 1990s revitalized Thai vernacularity as contemporary art. Artists used existing spaces such as temples, streets, and renovated old houses for their installations and participatory artworks.²⁰

In Chiang Mai Social Installation, many participants found that the art theory from West does not work in Thailand: according to the book edited by David Teh “artist-to-artist, Chiang Mai Social Installation”, one participant Jay Koh explains that an agonistic approach, Clair Bishop’s famous theory of participatory art, doesn’t work in Thai community because of cultural difference (David Teh 2018, 67). In fact, while several western contemporary artists and art professionals emphasize the antagonistic approach on the relation between the artwork and its site, Chiang Mai Social Installation and its contemporary grass root community art in Thailand were a cooperative social activity (Kamin Lertchaiprasert on David Teh 2018, 81), not like a biennial event²¹. The antagonistic approach and cooperative approach have different characters each but both approaches bring into relief the repressed social contradictions that underlie public space through the socio-political artwork (Kwon 2004, 69, 75). Similar to Thongchai’s research on the spatial discourse of ‘*Siwilai*’ in the late 19th and the early 20th century Siam, the framework

²⁰ See David Teh 2018, 61, Uthit Atimana says that “We began to declare this wasn’t an Art Festival but a Cultural Festival.

²¹ Kamin Lertchaiprasert explained that Chiang Mai Social Installation was not like biennials or other art events... It was a cooperative social activity. Everyone invited their friends..., see David Teh 2018, 81 in detail.

of production of space would be flexible when considering the discourse in Thailand. According to Thongchai, it was a comparative geography of civilization, given that “geography” can mean not only the arrangement of actual space and the knowledge of it, but also the knowledge and discourses whose effects subsequently constitute spatial practices (Thongchai 2000, 529).

Taking all spatial idea by Lefebvre and Thongchai into account, the framework above is to be used on the thesis for spatial discourse through biennial art festivals in Thailand 2018.

1.6 Hypothesis/ Major argument

1. To evaluate the usage of city as space with art in the framework of biennial on grassroots level and global level and its past, the thesis examines the venues on socio-political background rather than individual artists. The thesis is founded on the hypothesis that the framework of biennial in Thailand would be continuous practice since the early modernizing period of Thailand (Siam). While biennial seems to offer visitors/local residents to access the best art of our times outside museum walls, as Kwon has stated, public art like Richard Serra’s work reveals which public art discourse functions as a site of political struggle over the meaning of democracy (Kwon 2004, 80). On this account, as a festive mood of biennial culture tends to avoid a serious art, appreciation and evaluation are also difficult because of many factors involved within the artwork/project. The observer is forced to participate in world-class cultic cosmopolitan mythology. Focusing on the state (governmental) level, the usage of art is arguably the tool of the creation of citizens (Connor, 2003, 27) through the production of space on behalf of gaining further profit in a neoliberal scrum and justification of eviction, the creation of public park.

2. To analyze how Siam/Thailand saw and participate in World Exhibition and biennials actively, I examine the inheritance of modernizing period and contemporary art practice. The World Fairs was a microcosm of the colonial world order, and Siamese elite were quick to catch up with the latest global trend. They believed that their participation in those major fairs would increase their

recognition and elevate their status in the eyes of the world (Thongchai, 2000, 540). Bangkok Art Biennale curatorial team also believed the biennial would bring the Thai art to the global stage. The chairman and co-founder of Bangkok Art Biennale (TCC Group) ties within their family business (One Bangkok so forth and its expansion to ASEAN) cooperating with art professionals and the state. Additionally, even in grass root art events like Chiang Mai Social Installation and Bangkok Biennial (BB), art professionals/people involved with the events also assumed global audience. For example, the local art activities of About Studio/About Café, a precursor of BB, supported the international exhibition *The Cities on the Move*.

Through the study, the thesis aims to show the fact that while a biennial art festival is celebrated in a festive mood, the biennial is not merely an entertainment show nor the catalysis of tourism business, but also prone to work as the creation of readable picture of city (world) for political and global elite. The biennial gives opportunities to the citizen to be active participants and active audience in the frame, at the same time, the ideal worldview by political/capitalist elite would be imposed oligarchically through the event.

3. On an affirmative aspect, the biennials encourage tourists/visitors to see the selected space with its cultural and historical background compared to commercial tourism that often bring the tourists in thoughtless manner. At this point, biennials in Thailand 2018 have led to success in producing the space between art people and tourists. Additionally, for the sake of the characteristic of biennial as perennial events, it catches up with the latest trend, its contemporaneity resists the stereotypical image of culture at large toward people from all over the

world. Educational programs were also successful. BAB's 'Dek BAB'²² and TB's local-community art projects²³ bridged people-to-people relation through the event.

1.7 Research Method

The study mainly relies on document research and field research, including documents from primary and secondary sources. The documents are books, articles, journals, official documents and accredited website, and interview.

Primary source consists of official publication from internal art festivals, Biennales, and catalogues. The study also uses resources from online newspapers to collect viewpoints from artists, curators, critics, academics and so on. I also conducted field research of biennial art festivals in Bangkok and Krabi in order to examine the relation between artworks and sites, and visitors who intentionally visited the biennials, and tourist who happened to encounter the biennial.

1.8 Significance and usefulness of the study

The finding of the study will be useful to researchers in the field of urban study and contemporary art. The study will help understand how contemporary art is related to other fields. The study will also help them understand why Thailand has three biennials. The study will also be useful to people in other fields to the ones mentioned above, as the presence of biennial

²² According to its official website, Dek BAB is a training program for art professionals open for students and citizen. Participants work closely with the team in facilitating guided tours and provide information to the visitors, and work with artists, or assist with the production and installation of the exhibition. See <http://dekbab.bkkartbiennale.com/about> in detail.

²³ TB provided the public art project with local sculptors. It also invited several artists/collectives who had community-based project. To promote the importance of alternative energy, JIANDYIN conducts a socially-engaging art project for TB 2018. Jana Winderen from Oslo has collaborated with Usen Sumalee, Supan Rachakan, Mhan local fisherman at Tha Pom, Palin Anusinha for her site-specific installation (Thailand Biennale Krabi 2018, Edge of the Wonderland Short Guide, 2018).

culture causes a significant change in public space because of its characteristic involved with several fields such as economy, education, tourism and political science.

1.9 Chapter Outline

The first chapter explains rationale and related subjects. It gives an overture for readers to understand the research questions and how I theorize and how I apply the notion of the production of space and site-specific art to this study. Chapter 2 frames the history of biennial as a cultural practice. It highlights the arrival of biennial culture in Asia and Southeast Asia. Chapter 3 explains how Thailand adopts biennial culture and its articulations between Thai government, ministry of culture, curators, artists on both global and local aspects. Additionally, how Thai art professionals responded to such practices. Chapter 4 analyses the practices of three biennials and the imagination. The Chapter 5 presents the conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIENNIAL CULTURE

2.1 History of the term “Biennial”

Biennials are often named ‘biennale’, an Italian form of the word “biennial”. The word ‘biennial’ is in English, “Biennale” is in Italian, and ‘Bienal’ like ‘Bienal de la Habana’ in Spanish. While there is merely translation issue, some people prefer to use Italian “biennale” for seasoning a traditional legacy of Venice Biennale as the first biennial in the world²⁴, an orthodoxy of biennial culture. However, while Venice Biennale continues to accommodate pavilions sorting out these up to the nation-state, almost all biennale or biennial alter the Venice pavilion model²⁵.

2.2 Types of biennial

While some scholars are willing to classify biennials as decorative arts, design, music or architecture, it’s almost impossible to count exactly as some biennials seem to appear and disappear. Robert Storr, at the conference on biennials organized in December 2005 by the Biennale de Venezia, put the number at 110. Rosemary O’Neill, co-organizer of the February 2006 College Art Association panel - “Installation Art in the Age of Globalization,” estimated 200. In this thesis, I will restrict their specification to those showing contemporary art only.

The thesis examines how artists and curators produce the space focusing on tourism, travel, and encountering a notion of ‘experience of aesthetics’, rather than ‘appreciation

²⁴ The first Biennale in Venice, 1895 aimed to break free from centralized national control, while seizing the publicity apparatus of a national world’s fair, according to Jones (2018). It constituted itself as a trade-specific venue for art and trade was an explicit goal: it was hoped that La Serenissima would become a center for sales of contemporary art; the biennial would take a portion of the sales. The “Biennale”, its characteristic mix of publicity and populism was born, its independence from state and church secured through the invocation of an “international” committee revoking local conventional society. While “World Fair” lost its position in Lyon, Paris, Venice was having the first Biennale.

²⁵ In Egypt, national pavilion as Venice model was adopted in the Cairo International Biennale.

of art piece'. Movability itself is often conceptualized within thematic exhibition. Curator team and global artists are traveling from city to city to realize art-project and audiences are touring to experience biennial. While biennials emphasize its urban metropolitanism, a state interest and the interest of organizers often harmonize. At the same time, there are a lot of anti-biennial/counter-biennial have occurred like "Manifesta" in Europe, grass-rooted & artist-run biennial like "Something Else OFF Biennale Cairo" in Egypt and "New Tendency" in the former Yugoslavia.

2.3 The brief history of Biennial culture

While we can find several theories that state what the origin of Biennial culture is, the trigger of biennial is often described with Grand Tour and Cook's tourism business (first entrepreneur running package tour)²⁶, and World Fairs.

The terms 'biennial', 'biennale', 'biennial culture', 'biennialization'; are words that address not only 'events held every two years', rather it addresses the art phenomena itself including several factors of globalization and neoliberalism, and contemporaneity above the art exhibition in a manner of modern appreciation of art-object inside white-cube.

Although the definition is diverse amongst scholars, a striking feature of biennial art (global art in biennial culture) is the obvious interconnection of art production with the idea of art as 'contemporary' and 'experienced' as defined by several scholars such as Green and Gardener, Caroline A. Jones, Thomas Fillitz. While a museum collects and shows the discipline of appreciation of artwork as objects, biennial art is placing the art activities and the result of these in networks of circulation. One of the prominent artists in contemporary Thai art, Tiravanija, who emphasizes context rather than the object itself, has been active in biennials like Venice biennale and Bangkok Art Biennale 2018 operating as an artist and international advisor.

²⁶ According to Jones, Thomas Cook invented the "package tour" to convey Britons to the Great Exhibition. Although relations between the Grand Tour, industry, and infrastructures of transportation existed previously, they would emerge as utterly codependent in the world's fairs (2018, Loc 2150).

Originally biennial is a European phenomena. However, in non-western countries there are important biennials. For example, the São Paulo Biennial (1951), the Third Havana Biennial (1989), the second Johannesburg Biennale (1997), Magician de la terra (1989), Artist's Regional Exchange in Perth (since 1987), the Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Brisbane since 1993 and the Fukuoka Asian Art Exhibition since 1990 (former event title "Asian Art Show" since 1979)²⁷. These peripheral events had a significant impact in European biennial culture. In turn, biennial showed transcultural development in the West and outside West interactively. Consequently, establishing these events by non-western cities (and other cities) has significantly contributed to perceiving biennial culture as a global phenomena.

Additionally, the Biennial is to be interpreted within a corporative model. Enhancing tourism, fostering the art market in local to global, and stirring urban dwellers in several social classes to become global citizens. The construction of the tentative events is organized by traveler of curator team and nomadic artists as several scholars like Caroline A. Jones, Green and Gardener depicted the development of biennial with tourism such as Grand Tours and Cook's package Tour. With those characteristics, Biennialization may be irrevocably tied to the spectacle culture of neoliberalism, with exhibitions sponsored through a mix of state and corporate support designed to lure international tourism to sites struggling on the edges of global trade while several art-practices are addressing development of contemporary art itself. As Okwui Enwezor, the first non-western curator in Documenta (one of most well-known mega-exhibitions in the context of biennial culture, held every 5 years in Kassel, Germany since 1955), had a biennial in South-Africa, titled 'Trade Routes', the biennial is almost one process of enhancing and rethinking on travel and tourism and global market and trade, historical reconsideration and festival, globality and locality, colonialization and globalization.

To follow biennial culture can offer profound, critical insights into art's nexus with globalized commerce and political interests in general understanding. Elena Filipovic

²⁷ David Teh has stated that Fukuoka has generated the most sustained curatorial research on Southeast Asia, led by Ushiroshoji Masahiro and Kuroda Reiji (2018, 38).

believes the biennial often overlooks serious art practice (Filipovic 2010). At the same time, other scholars like C. Green and A. Gardner, Carlos Basualdo and others warned its possible subversive tendencies. Celebrating world level artists, exhibition, participating on the global stage is swallowed into commercial and political intentions, even though an organization of biennial is often struggling with mediating the local communities, as Carlos Basualdo argued, biennials have the potential for cultural and social subversion because of its festive mood toward neoliberal spectatorship.

2.4 Regionalization / Localization of Biennial Culture in Asia

At the same time, the dichotomy has been re-examined in Brisbane and Fukuoka, according to C. Green and A. Gardner. Contrary to mega biennial, it intentionally narrowed the scope into “Asia” regionalism. Their events are based on institution-based perennial with home-curator and their own venue, examining from tradition to contemporary without a world class aspiration.

By the 1990s, new, large and recurring survey exhibitions were springing up across the Asia-Pacific region: Taipei, Gwangju, and other cities began important international biennials or triennials that garnered international attention. The rise of such biennials over the decade, it might have been presumed, was yet another symptom of global power stretching out from colonial-era centers, with the Venice Biennale and Documenta at the apex of a pyramid, was often touted as exemplifying the triumph of neo-liberalization, according to Green and Gardener (2018, Loc 2872)²⁸.

Although there was a certain attempt in Fukuoka and Australia in 1970s-80s, these would have featured the selection of locally celebrated, contemporary exponents of the heritage of arts and craft. In the lead-up to their 1979 Asian Art show, Fukuoka’s curator

²⁸ McEvelley referred to Istanbul practice, a show that has striven to go beyond the influence of classical Modernism is the Istanbul Biennial, begun in 1987, and curated in 1992 by Vasif Khortun under the influence of the "Magiciens de la terre" exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, in 1989.

witnessed fierce hostility and antipathy between traditional and contemporary artists. Apinan Poshyananda picked the incident in the book “Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions / Tensions” in 1996. In fact, their question on tradition may be self-pondering- in which way tradition and difference should be appreciated. With their critical thinking on their identity and regionalism, biennials in Asia that enacted in 1990s offered newcomers to a global stage on which to participate in the contemporary art and upmarket tourist industries, while enabling a dramatically expanded audience the chance to see recent art. Earlier biennials like Havana, had not prioritized the direction of this trajectory to the same degree at all. They instead deliberately created their specific model like the Bienal de la Habana which sought for forming the South-South relation. Indonesia, especially in Yogyakarta where they often challenged the established orthodoxies with alternative concept / theme like ‘equator’, is distinct from other biennials in Asia.

However, compared to European’s biennials, many scholars like C. Green and A. Gardner think that Asian biennials are quite conservative. The post-cold war biennial like Manifesta, Documenta constantly and radically experimented with the form of a biennial itself (C. Green and A. Gardner 2016). As the result of tendency of self-criticism, biennials in Europe and some countries often encountered boycotters and protesters. Several artists protest auteurs-curators’ political control: The 10th Bienal de São Paulo of 1969 by Hans Haecke, in 1971 São Paulo Bienal by Gordon Matta Clark and Hélio Oiticica, in documenta 5 by Donald Judd, , in Busan Biennale 2014 by several local artists, in Europe “Manifesta” as an event of “anti-biennial”. Contrabiennial is the blue-color counter biennial movement, Julio Le Parc participated (Jones 2018, Loc 6605).²⁹ Julio Le Parc also participated in several collective art practices and ‘New Tendencies’ in the former socialist Yugoslavia against hegemonic Venice biennale.

²⁹ According to Lukin, the contradictory role of artists in society was another prevalent topic. Julio Le Parc’s two-page manifesto was formatted as a numbered list with the title “Social Function of Art in Contemporary Society.” Point twelve argued that to fight the totalitarian view of art promoted by power, the artist’s status needed to be leveled to that of a common blue-collar worker.

Most famously, Harald Szeemann, the pioneer of the biennial culture cooperated with private sectors and brought ‘experience of art’ in the biennial culture³⁰, was contested by one artist, Robert Smithson. Smithson criticized Harald Szeemann’s documenta 5 (1972), stated “It would be better to disclose the confinement rather than make illusions of freedom”, according to Caroline A. Jones (2018, Loc 6605), documenta 5 in 1972 is a turning point in the history of biennial, and the remark from the artist Robert Smithson shows the gap between curator or organizer as fundraiser and artist.

Additionally, like Cairo’s “Something Else OFF Biennale Cairo”, when local artists are not satisfied with out of date framework of biennial in their own city, they run their own artist-led biennial. In 1992, installation artist Dadang Christanto held the counter biennial in Indonesia to coincide with the 1992 Yogyakarta Biennale of Painting (Asia Society Galleries 1996, 231).

2.5 History of biennial in Asia and Southeast Asia

Turkish director Bige Örer, who worked as the director of the 2008 and 2017 Istanbul Biennial, explains for art people in non-western cities (emerging cities like Istanbul), it is the crucial to make the biennial of their own city focused on the international contemporary map and gained a reputation for its experimental and unique character (Bige Örer 2013, 119)³¹. At the same time, Melissa Chiu and Benjamin Genocchio warn that contemporary Asian art was still at risk of becoming just another European invention, like the early fantasy conception of the exotic orient (Melissa Chiu and Benjamin Genocchio 2008, 9). As Southeast Asian art professionals, Apinan Poshyananda and Jim Supangkat experienced the presumption of exotic orientalism through their artistic careers and it was one of the reasons they turned from an artist to a curator and had biennials and its precursor events in their own countries respectively. Challenging the

³⁰ Szeemann has proposed the concept of documenta 5 in 1970 and 1971. He has stated that Documenta should be a place of programmed events, an interactive space, and an accessible program structure with staggered centers of action (Harald Szeemann 2007, 93).

³¹ See P. 119, Bige Örer, Signs Taken in Wonder, Searching for Contemporary Art about Istanbul in detail.

idea of 'Asia' or 'Others' misunderstood by the west on the international level, they need to engage in cooperative work with the state rather than an individual practice. On the Non-Aligned Movement Exhibition held in Jakarta 1995 as a governmental project (Directorate General of Culture, Department of Education and Culture in Indonesia), Jim Supangkat was asked by Fumio Nanjo (Japanese curator, an advisor for BAB 2018, director of Mori Art Museum), "what exactly is their position?" at the talk show (discussion) held in Studio Oncor in Jakarta in 1995 including Harsono, Dolorosa Sinaga, Andar Manik. Jim Supangkat says that Fumio Nanjo's question reflected the confusion of other foreign curators and critics. While Jim Supangkat listed several factors why the discussion brought a confusion, he emphasizes two reasons. Firstly, Indonesia was not on the international visual art map when the GNB exhibition was planned and held. Secondly, this exhibition was a part of government politics as the governmental project, and the government's attitude to "freedom of expression" was under question among artists (Jim Supangkat, 1995, 2).³² Apinan Poshyananda's "Traditions/Tensions" aimed to reveal aspects of cultures in transition that may shift stereotypes and fixities of Otherness (Apinan Poshyananda 1996, 49) (see Chapter 3, section 2.5 in detail).

The first participation of Documenta by Thai artist Sakarin Krue-on is in documenta 12, curated by Roger Buergel and Ruth Noack. According to David Teh, despite the large funding from national agencies, the documenta 12 made little reference to artists' origin countries. The less emphasis on nationalities is the legacy of Documenta 11 by Okwui Enwezor.³³ The non-west 'other' or peripheral artists / curators define themselves on the global stage. On the biennial culture in 'Other' cities, the regional specificity is obvious for the sake of the difference on the consciousness of colonialism. While we can divide the earth into West and East, at the beginning I would like to delve deeper to understand the name 'Asia' because of its diversity. The word originated from the Greek term for part of Anatolia (modern Turkey), the word was first

³² On the matter of confrontation of dichotomy of west and east, see Jim Supangkat, "White Paper" on the Non-Aligned Movement Exhibition, 1995, see also Multiculturalism/Multimodernism, 1996 in *Contemporary Art in Asia*, 2011.

³³ See David Teh 2016, 4-5, as the national tag does not represent the artist's career, Teh introduces "... it had been irreverent where an artist came from."

used by the fifth-century BC historian Herodotus to distinguish the Persian Empire from Greece and Egypt. We now use a lot of words related to it, such as Southeast Asia, East Asia, South Asia, however, it's almost impossible to have a comprehensive notion on Asia with its physical size and cultural diversity. While there are a variety of alternative ways to address the space on the globe, like economic architecture BRICS, ASEAN, we think of a Eurasian landmass of non-West on the globe as East (Asia). In the end of 20th century, many art people set their conception of Asia on thematic/regional exhibitions and debated what is the name of Asia, especially in Brisbane and Fukuoka. Reflecting on the history, around five hundred years ago the simplistic belief "Asia" including different cultural regions like India, China, Southeast Asia was confined to the inhabitants of the far western flank of the Eurasian continent, according to Stephen N. Hay. This vague recognition of the other inhabitants of the earth's largest landmass as belonging to a single "Orient" was inherited from the Romans and sharpened by the medieval conflicts between the world of Christendom and the worlds of the Mongols and Islam (Stephen N. Hay, 1970, 6).

The great voyages of discovery, like Diaz's Africa in 1486, Columbus' failure to reach the Indies in 1492, Da Gama's success in this aim in 1498, fostered Western expansionism. Through the European expansion (Stephen N. Hay, 1970, 4), they grew the idea of the West, and its dichotomy, Oriental or East. Stephen N. Hay points out that after the idea of Asia was introduced to Asia from Westerners, Indians, Japanese and Chinese started to study European languages and maps. They came to think of themselves as being what the "Westerners" told them they were "East". Consequently, each side of people believed firmly in the existence of a global dichotomy between "Eastern" and "Western" civilization. However, the three Asian communities accepted it differently. The Indian population knew themselves as 'spiritual' quintessential (perfect example of) "East" from their English conquerors. The Japanese readily accepted the designation of Easterner when it was applied to them by the European and their American cousins, since Japanese already thought of themselves as Easterners with reference to the Chinese. Chinese intellectuals were indifferent from the concept of East until 1890s. Shozan Sakuma's "Eastern ethics and Western science" in 1840s did not become popular in China.

Instead, Chang Chih-tung rephrased it as “Chinese learning to provide the [moral] basis, Western learning to provide the [technical] means” (Stephen N. Hay, 1970, 4).

In Asia, Southeast Asia is the region which is located on the Southeast side of the Eurasian continent. Donald K. Emmerson argues, World War II affected the idea of “Southeast Asia”. After the War, the region was made visible for American people. While there are a lot of indigenous cultures and kingdoms there, the idea of Southeast Asia was relatively recent invention. In 1945, a Division of Southeast Asian Affairs was born in the U.S. Department of State. Before that, for the Americans, Southeast Asia was regarded as a region between South Asia (East India) and East Asia (Southern China). It was not until the fall of Berlin Wall that the dichotomy between the West and the East became outdated. After the year 1989, transculturation has been spread on the global scale and several important ‘global exhibitions’ have emerged in Southeast Asia. Many Asian biennials tried to show their unique characteristics. Below is the list for some Asian biennials and in some biennials that accommodate Thai artists as participants.

The list of Biennials and relevant exhibitions in Asia

Year	Name	City	information
1952	The Tokyo Biennale	Tokyo	Focused on Northeast Asia (East Asia)
1968	The Triennale-India	New Delhi	
1979	Fukuoka's Asian Art Show	Fukuoka	
1981	the Asian Art Biennale	Dhaka	
1986	Bharat Bhavan Biennial of Contemporary Indian Art	Bhopal	
1987	the Istanbul Biennial	Istanbul	

1988	The first Biennale Jogja (BJ)	Yogyakarta	
1991	“The Integrative Art of Modern Thailand” tours the United States	Tours the United States	
1992	The first Chiang Mai Social Installation	Chiang Mai	
1992	the 9 th Jakarta Biennial	Jakarta	curated by Jim Supangkat
1992	the counter biennial held by installation artist Dadang Christanto	Yogyakarta	It coincided with the 1992 Yogyakarta Biennale of Painting.
1993	the Sydney Biennale	Sydney	Vasan Sitthiket, Kamol Phaosavasdi, and Kamin Lertchaiprasert exhibited
1993	The Venice Biennale	Venice	Rirkrit Tiravanija was selected for the “Aperto”, selection of the Venice Biennale
1993	The 1st Asia-Pacific Triennial	Brisbane	Vasan Sitthiket, Kamol Phaosavasdi, Montien Boonma, Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, Apichai Piromrak, and Prasong Luemuang exhibited
1994	the Havana Biennale	Havana	Montien Boonma and Kamin Lertchaiprasert exhibited
1995	Istanbul Biennale	Istanbul	Montien Boonma exhibited

1995	Contemporary Art of The Non-Aligned Countries 1995	Jakarta	
1998	1st Taipei Biennial	Taipei	
1999	1st Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial	Fukuoka	
2000	1st Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial	Echigo-Tsumari	General Director Fram Kitagawa, art advisor: Okwui Enwezor, Apinan Poshyananda, Jean de Loisy, Alrich Schneider, and Yusuke Nakahara
2001	1 st Yokohama Triennale	Yokohama	
2003	1 st CP Open Biennial	Jakarta	Curator: Rizki A. Zaelani
2005	Yokohama Triennale	Yokohama	Artistic director: Tadashi Kawamata, curators: Taro Amano, Takashi Serizawa, Shingo Yamano
2006	1 st Singapore Biennale	Singapore	Curator: Fumio Nanjo
2011	Yayasan Biennale Yogyakarta (YBY)	Yogyakarta	YBY launched the project of Biennale Jogja Equator series (Biennale Equator) focus on the region of the equator belt.

2.7 Conclusion

Biennials as large-scale exhibitions have flourished in the emerging climate fostered by the neoliberal globalization of capital (Lucy Steed 2013, 25). Biennials have been spread all over the world. Apart from historical legacy and its structure, the important aspect of biennial framework is its duration and cycle as it is perennially producing the tentative space.

Through the transculturation between the Western and non-Western world, contemporary biennial is pervasive all over the world, especially in recent decades in Asia. While Asian art people have adopted the style of event, the biennial is not only the way of event and exhibition technically, but the phenomena that required contextual reading of the biennial format. As biennial art is usually aimed by politicians and city planners, curators, and people in cultural ministries and industries than artists and audiences, the result are often showed as the exaggeration ‘to suggest an event that would reaffirm the state’s position on the cultural map’, the artists in Kochi Biennale had kept serious observation on the issues (Robert E. D'Souza and Sunil Manghani 2016, Loc 300). On the other hand, several biennials in the 21st century aim to focus more on local citizen. According to Lee Weng Choy, the Singapore Biennale’s first and second artistic director Fumio Nanjo has stated that these events are primarily meant for local audiences rather than for the international art professionals and audiences (2008, 213). Although the format of the biennial in non-west is inevitably rooted in a colonial heritage, many practices in biennial are attempts to use biennials as a way to give form to cultural independence, local-led activation. Like Nigerian curator Okwui Enwezor, Indonesian collective ruangrupa³⁴, many non-west art person/collective have practiced transcultural and truly cultural independence globally and domestically. For example, McEvilly emphasized that the exhibition that has rejected Western values most thoroughly is the Havana Biennial. Once known explicitly as the "Third World Biennial," this show has rarely shown First World artists and its impact is still significant in later biennials in both West and non-Western regions. Lucy Steed has stated that ‘Magiciens de la Terre’ may be seen to have developed a transnational and project-based approach (2013, 25) while the

³⁴ According to its website, ruangrupa (in English, Ruangrupa) is a Jakarta-based collective established in 2000. It has participated in several biennials such as Gwangju Biennale (2002 & 2018), Istanbul Biennial (2005), Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (Brisbane, 2012), Singapore Biennale (2011), São Paulo Biennial (2014), Aichi Triennale (Nagoya, 2016). <http://ruru.ruangrupa.org/index.php/about-ruangrupa/> accessed on June 9th 2020.

Western/Non-Western distinction itself is no longer adequately categorized as Apinan Poshyananda and Elizabeth Harney remarked³⁵.

Like Elena Filipovic, many researchers are concerned about the post-cold war biennialization often result as merely tourist-oriented festival, the serious notion of contemporary art has been strayed from the event itself (Filipovic 2010). However, this is one of the tendencies of biennial; the biennial is a demand of structural organization riding on the wave of neoliberal spectacle. According to Robert W. McChesney, neoliberalism is the defining political economic paradigm of our time. It refers to the policies and processes whereby global elite are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit. Instead of citizens, neoliberalism produces consumers. Instead of communities, it produces shopping malls (1998, Loc 27, 87). As the framework of biennial is implanted into the free market, the art professionals is expected as a mediator for local as if the biennial contributes to all citizens from people in poverty to people in wealthy family in the name of its site-specificity. Through the combination between the site-specific art and neoliberalism which articulated by global elite as the biennial, the deformed participatory democracy is implanted in a city resulted as a neoliberal public spectacle on behalf of the local reception. On the other hand, the general public have begun to directly voice their contentions (Lee Weng Choy 2008) as several counter-biennials have been happened.

³⁵ See Elizabeth Harney, In Senghor's Shadow ART, POLITICS, AND THE AVANT-GARDE IN SENEGAL, 1960–1995, Loc 4346 "...However, the Western/non-Western distinction on which this narrow focus was based is no longer tenable, if it ever was, and it has been rejected in other areas of anthropological inquiry. Furthermore, the practice of visual anthropology is expanding beyond its traditional focus on film and photography to incorporate the anthropology of art.

CHAPTER 3

THAILAND AND THE BIENNIAL CULTURE

The chapter shows the development of biennial culture in Thailand. First, section 3.1 depicts how the early modernizing elite researched and adopted the World Fairs, a precursor of the biennials, through grand tours. Second, section 3.2 shows how young Thai artists at that time played a leading role in building contemporary art exhibitions and events in Thailand through traveling abroad and participating in traveling exhibitions. After they came back from abroad in 1990s, young art professionals at that time struggled free from Western orthodoxy, tried identifying themselves on the global stage toward global audience. They joined several traveling exhibitions, had an artist-led art projects as neighbor level community project, especially in Chiang Mai and Bangkok. Third, section 3.3 introduces three biennials in Thailand 2018. Section 3.4 shows how the private sectors cooperated with art professionals and the state in the biennials in Thailand 2018.

Thai contemporaneity in the field of arts developed when young Thai artists/curators experienced other cultures through travel and study abroad. In 1980s, many young Thai artists came back from study abroad such as Apinan Poshyananda, Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, Montien Boonma, Kamol Phaosavasdi, and Chumpon Apisuk (David Teh 2018, 29, Gridthiya Gaweewong 1996, 33). Some of them like Montien Boonma and Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook worked in Chiang Mai University after their study abroad³⁶. While Bangkok has been a center of art scene in Thailand, through their experiment with site-specific approach in Chiang Mai, the city became an internationally recognized experimental place.

Young Thai artists in local cities also gained influence from its capital. Their domestic journey also brought new knowledge on a local art scene in Thailand. For example,

³⁶ The Faculty of Fine Arts at Chiang Mai University (CMU) is the first art school outside Bangkok. See David Teh 2018, 13 in detail.

David Teh introduces, local young artists in Chiang Mai journey to Bangkok acquire a new trend. These travels and experiences of Western institutes and Bangkok art scene fostered a new movement in Thai art scene eventually leading to artist-led activities and international cooperation into artistic practice.

Considering the historical link from the early modernizing period to the present, according to C. Green and A. Gardner, Jones and Lippard, biennial culture can be traced at Grand Tours in global art history. The early times of biennials were the hybrid between tourism and cosmopolitan “world as a picture”³⁷, which visitor found a miniature of world same manner with world fairs and expositions. At the very early biennials Venice biennial 1895, audiences concentrated on its map rather than the artwork tinged with package tourism rooted in Grand Tour, according to Caroline A. Jones (2016, Loc 2870). The biennial attracts tourists who are interested in cultural aspect of a city where they visit. C. Green and A. Gardner say, biennials met these demands, offering newcomers to the global scene as a stage on which to participate in the contemporary art industry, while enabling a dramatically expanded audience the chance to see recent art (2016, Loc 376).

The location of biennial is where people from all over the world see and experience the space with art. Some organizers explicitly introduced their biennials as the 21st century version of Grand Tour (e-flux March 10, 2007). While several critical biennials by art professionals brought new norms onto the art world like documenta 5 and 11. This practice and concept of traveling has still been linked at a fundamental level to the early time. As the biennial and its precursor is a Western form of art festival, a journey/travel has been important factor for Thai people who experienced and brought it to their own country from Western countries. For understanding the historical link, firstly the chapter shows Siamese version of grand tours conducted by the King Rama V in the end of the 19th century. Second, it shows contemporary

³⁷ Timothy Mitchel studied about it in his book ‘Colonising Egypt’. See also John Clark who examines the Asian world-making on his article “Contemporary Asian Art and Exhibitions: Connectivities and World-making”.

Thai artistic activities since 1980s. On several points, these art practices paved the way of three biennials in Thailand 2018. Third, it introduces three biennials in 2018. Finally, it introduces and examines private sectors which have been involved with biennialization in Thailand, changed the idea of public space in Thailand by co-working with art professionals and bureaucrats and city administration. While several private sectors have been involved with biennials in Thailand, this chapter introduces one conglomerate, TCC Group, run by Sino-Thai family that co-founded the biggest biennials in Thailand in 2018 with their urban villages, shopping malls as venues of the biennial in Thailand 2018.

On the matter of linking fine art and tourism/travel, Lucy R. Lippard shares her case study where Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija had a traveling art-project in the U.S. in 1998. Tiravanija had traveled the U.S. in a motorhome across the country with five fine art students from Chiang Mai University. They kept a record of the journey and put it on the web, as Tiravanija's medium is not a material but the people's interaction, illustrated by his description of the project as "typical family vacation". Lippard points out the project Tiravanija is introducing America to means of communication with "foreigners" as much as the other way around (Lippard 1999, 38).

The biennial art festival brings the art practice outdoor. While museums and institutes already exist, the concept of biennial art is different from white-cube based exhibition. Curator Rosa Martinez illustrates the difference between biennial and museum: biennial is regarded as, according to Rosa Martinez cited by Caroline A. Jones, "a context for the exploration and questioning of the present": [A biennial] looks beyond the present and into the future... Biennials are the most advanced arena for this expanded field precisely because they do not function like museums. Museums are temples for the preservation of memory... Biennials are a context for the exploration and questioning ... of the present (2018, Loc 2699)³⁸. The Biennial

³⁸ The 'temple' is of course a metaphor here. In Thailand, a temple is regarded as 'more familiar means of outreach for the arts to the wider public than did the museum' (Gridthiya Gaweewong 1996, 10). A temple has been widely used for contemporary art practices as a venue like in CMSI, BAB so on.

framework provides the work in progress through ‘experience’ and ‘travel’ rather than appreciation of objects inside museum/white cube. At the same time, many organizers of biennial in the globe like Raphael Chikukwa answered they need “platform” where young/local art people meet established art professionals on the global stage (2012, 122). Primarily, organizers of biennial are required to put the existence of their biennial on the global art map, this indicates they need a continuous dialogue on the global stage. So why do they think it is essential that they should bring local art scene on the global stage? The answer should be attained through the examination of historical/cultural specificity similar to way art professionals in Brisbane and Fukuoka has examined what regionalism is. Considering the Thai art scene in the late 20th century and the early 21st century, people in Thailand are relatively ignorant to think of the necessity of the creation of biennial art as a platform in their own country, compared to other Asian countries like Indonesia and Singapore. It is plausible to say that building a cooperative relationship between art professionals, bureaucrats and private sectors is difficult in Thailand under the continuous political turmoil. Yet even without the support of nation-state and city administrations, several internationally recognized contemporary art practices as a precursor of biennials in Thailand have been held in 1990s. The chapter explains these art practices and reports the specific historical legacy of biennials in Thailand/Siam as it is the only country in Southeast Asia that has held a research trip to a precursor of biennials and their respective activities. With the knowledge they acquired through the research, Siam/Thailand participated in several world expositions and world fairs thereby implementing into their country³⁹.

³⁹ See Thongchai 2000, Peleggi 2012 on how colonial elites in other countries like (today’s) Singapore, Indonesia reacted the world fairs.

3.1 King Chulalongkorn's grand tours and His Majesty's Curiosity in Art

For understanding historical legacy of the early modernizing period of Siam, it is important to know the Siamese/Thai version of the Grand Tour held by King Chulalongkorn and his city-planning based on the king's experience of grand tours.

The modernization in Thailand has often been depicted as both 'active' and 'passive'. In the 19th century, Siam was under the colonial threat (Thongchai 2000). *Siwilai* was a necessary measure to save the country by satisfying the Europeans or minimizing the preconditions of colonialization. *Siwilai* is transliterated from the English word civilized. The term was a subject with which King Mongkut (r.1851–1868) and probably the elite of his generation were concerned (Thongchai 2000). The prevention of colonialization of Siam by European threat was unquestionably for the sake of the Siamese rulers in the transformation, according to Thongchai. At the same time, while the Siamese elite were anxious about colonialization, their desire to be in the league of supreme nations was also true because of their fondness of the culture of *farang* (the Westerners). According to Povatong, an English visitor to in 1862 kept a record on Rama IV's taste: "A spirit of Anglomania appeared to pervade the second king's mind; his palace was furnished with carpets, sofas, easy-chairs, footstools, chandeliers, and all the appurtenances of European civilization. One of the rooms was fitted up as a library, with English books of science and history, mathematical and astronomical instrument &c." (Povatong, 2011, 70, cited from E.B. Lewis 1867). They collected and adopted Western commodities, had grand tours to Europe and saw the World Exhibition/World's Fairs. To a certain degree, modernization in Siam/Thailand was accelerated by experience of World Exhibition/World's Fairs since the time of King Chulalongkorn.

According to Peleggi, King Chulalongkorn described the main purposes of the first visit of Europe in the following terms: First, to see how life is in Europe. Second, to study how wealth and goods originate. Third, to fathom their strength were they to attack us. Finally, to enjoy myself as well (Peleggi 2002, 31). After they experienced Western gaze and their taste of commodity and European World Fairs through Grand Tour, the Siamese/Thai started to produce space in their country. Peleggi has stated (2002, 143) they also engaged in representing Siam by means of its material culture for the European and American audiences of world exhibitions

(World's Fairs). For example, in their own country, they built several buildings at *Bang Pa-in*, such as Chinese style mansions, neo-Gothic ordination hall, Alpine-style chalets, even “Siamese-style” pavilion in the middle of the central pond to complement this exoticizing built environment. Peleggi thinks that the modernizing elite had a strong aspiration to become one member of the enduring world aristocracy, and being a nation builder who made use of Western commodity for the purpose of showing their hegemonic supremacy rather than spreading education to citizens (2002, 20)⁴⁰.

It should be noted that while national division is self-evident, the early times of modernizing elite with King Chulalongkorn, people in Thai in cold war period and people in post-cold war global Thai, they all shared global taste with their contemporary in each epoch respectively. As Peleggi points out, that King Chulalongkorn shared taste of ‘global kitsch’ with European and other colonial elite that time, for example. According to Povatong and Thongchai, after national and international exhibitions had become one of the most potent invented traditions of 19th century Europe, the Siamese elites soon joined the global trend during the 1860s by sending Siamese exhibitions to various international exhibitions (Povatong, 2011, 115). The urban elite’s aspiration of being in the league of supremacy nations is the trigger of modernization and globalization in Thailand⁴¹.



3.2 Thai contemporaneity from 1980's to 2010s

Section 3.2 introduces art events and art movements that occurred in Thailand as the precursor of biennials in Thailand 2018. Before biennial landed in Thailand 2018, Thai art professionals along with transcultural cooperation had internationally known practices.

⁴⁰ Kasian introduced, while Siam accomplished modernization faster than Japan, the literacy rate was lower than Japan in the early modern time Siam. See Kasian, *Commodification of Marxism*.

⁴¹ See Wasana Wongsurawat (2019, Loc 189-206). She introduces one perspective of the early modernizing elite, “In these more progressive narratives, King Chulalongkorn is described as governing his own realm as if it were a colony and modernizing Siam as the British did in Malaya and the Dutch in the East Indies.”

“Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions” by Apinan Poshyananda (Bangkok Art Biennale 2018 artistic director), “Cities on the Move” by curator Hou Hanru and Hans Ulrich Obrist who invited several Thai artists like Surasi Kusolwong, Navin Rawanchaikul & Rirkrit Tiravanija. Among these exhibitions/events, “Chiang Mai Social Installation” might be the most important independent perennial art event in Thailand, Montien Boonma, Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, Kamol Phaosavasadi, Vasan Sitthiket participated in. These contemporary art events/activities paved the way for biennials in 2018. These events or activities are based on project-logic that differentiated from conventional object-appreciation at white-galleries. These art projects have usually focused on traveling experience, international cooperation, and the production of space for grassroots activities with local participation. David Teh has stated (2016, 29) young Thai art people outside Silpakorn elite salon enjoyed their freedom as the decade from the mid-1990s until about 2004 saw the high-water mark of Thai modern art’s independence from state interest. Additionally, under the economic boom, Thai artists and curators flourished all over the world and their practices are the cornerstone of biennialization in Thailand. Many young Thai artists went abroad and came back to Thailand with their newly acquired contemporary art practice, introduced Thai contemporaneity to global audience. For maintaining their freedom, some of important activities were basically self-funded or gained small support from foreign institutes, not supported by cultural ministry but often collaborated with foreign settlers in Thailand with the idea of cosmopolitanism. The legacies directly and indirectly remain the characteristics of three biennials in Thailand 2018. It is important to note that international artists like Navin Rawanchaikul, Arin Rungjang, Apitchatpong Weerasethakul owe nothing to Silpakorn university for their success (David Teh 2018, 28) while many national artists graduate from Silpakorn university. David Teh calls Silpakorn University ‘artist-civil servants’ of the elite national academy (2018, 16)⁴².

⁴² Although on the thesis there is no introduction, Mit Jai Inn contributed Thai international art practice, see David Teh 2018, 19-21.

From the artist centric art history, the breakthrough of Thai contemporaneity happened with Montien Boonma's international success (David Teh 2016, 30). David Teh believes that Montien Boonma was the real pathfinder aesthetically while it is hard to overstate Apinan Poshyananda's contribution as an iconoclastic young artist experimenting with new media, the author of an indispensable English language history as well as an active global curator (2016, 30-34). Apinan Poshyananda also plays central role on Thai biennialization. He belongs to the generation figures as Pramuan Burusphat, Itthi Khongkakul, Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, Montien Boonma, Kamol Phaosavasadi, Chumpon Apisuk.

3.2.1 The Bhrasri Institute of Modern Art (BIMA)

According to Gridthiya Gaweewong, the birth of modern art in Thailand was defined by Bhrasri as having occurred in 1943 when Silpakorn University was established (Gridthiya Gaweewong 1996, 19). Bhrasri characterized the differences between traditional arts and modern arts by their materials and subjects. After he passed away in 1962, succeeding to his plan for making output for Thai modern art, his friends and students set the Bhrasri Foundation and Bhrasri Institute of Modern Art (BIMA). One of the prominent contributors was Princess Panthip Boripat who became the chairperson of its foundation's board of directors (Gridthiya Gaweewong 1996, 19, 22, David Teh 2018, 30). It provides a site and an audience for experimental and non-traditional practices.

The BIMA divided Thai art into two categories between traditional arts (such as mural paintings, Buddhist sculpture and religious based works of art) and contemporary arts (such as works that were created by modern Thai artists) (Gridthiya Gaweewong 1996, 26). According to Gridthiya Gaweewong, the BIMA undertook the role of making platform to exchange ideas between Thai artists and international artists while Gridthiya Gaweewong points out that it failed to promote the exchange of art between Thailand and foreign countries (1996, 36). This indicates that Thai art person as individuals and as a small collective gained international language on the arts through institutes like the BIMA, however, the nation branding was left untouched. BIMA's

programming swung back and forth between promoting local and international artists in addition to offering contemporary and traditional art exhibitions mainly during 1970s.

In the 1980s, a rising second generation of Thai artists who had studied in the U.S. were mainly students of the U.S. alumni who had been with the first generation of Thais to have studied abroad (Gridthiya Gaweewong 1996, 33). The BIMA provided the space for them to show the new idea attained in the U.S.⁴³. One of the landmark shows at BIMA was Apinan Poshyananda's 'How to Explain Art to a Bangkok Cock' (1985), which showed strong influence from Joseph Beuys's work 'How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare' (1965)⁴⁴. . Apinan Poshyananda is the first artist who attained the annual national award as non-Silpakorn elite (Gridthiya Gaweewong 1996, 20). Many young artists at that time like Kamol Phaosavasadi⁴⁵, Chumpon Apisuk whose later days participated in biennials or relevant events in Thailand also had opportunities to experiment with BIMA. The BIMA was closed in 1988 (Gridthiya Gaweewong 1996, 35).

3.2.2 Chiang Mai Social Installation

The section introduces the grassroots perennial art festival Chiang Mai Social Installation (CMSI). CMSI is an artist-led art event making use of the existing public space. CMSI gave Chiang Mai international visibility (David Teh 2018, 32). 1. Expansion of scale, the internationalization. 2. The use of non-art locations. 3. New wave from non-capital, non-institutional support. 4. Engagement with a public consisting of 'ordinary' people. The great majority of support was in the form of volunteer labor and venues offered were rent-free with

⁴³ The National Gallery on Chaofa Road also accommodated young artists returned from graduate studies overseas (David Teh 2018, 14) in 1987. Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook and Apinan Poshyananda, in 1989 Montien Boonma.

⁴⁴ Apinan Poshyananda if non-west artist appropriates the western art. See Apinan Poshyananda P 49.

⁴⁵ Kamol Phaosavasadi showed his work at Wat Prayoon in BAB 2018. He also founded Dozza Art Lab at N22 art complex in Bangkok (BAB 2018 Official guidebook, 2018).

artists responsible for bringing their own materials did not receive fees (David Teh 2018, 24). The early editions of CMSI received modest funding from a few Bangkok collectors, including stockbroker Chongrux Chantaworrasut (a major collector of Montien Boonma's work) and media tycoon Sondhi Limthongkul (conservative ideologue in later his life) (2018 24-5). David Teh has stated that CMSI was an escape route from the Silpakorn system, but its Thai participants did not need to burn their bridges (2018, 42). According to David Johnson cited by David Teh, CMSI was 'a far cry from corporate sponsored exhibitions (David Teh 2018, 25).

3.2.3 About Studio/About Café⁴⁶

The artistic activities at About Studio/About Café did not have a relation with either Silpakorn salon or the generation who enjoyed studying abroad. In Bangkok 1990s, many young artists and art professionals experimented community-based activities at this artist-led institute. The activities of About Studio/ About Café influenced with participants of Bangkok Biennial later days. Several art people at Nana street⁴⁷ (China Town), like Anikamon (Monny) and Justin Mills and Jeff Gompertz and Francois Langello⁴⁸ emphasis that the most important space at Nana street is "About Studio/About Café". As a precursor, it went ahead of Bangkok contemporary art practice. On Nana street, Thai photographer Nopadon Kaosam-ang and his wife Klaomas Yipintsoi opened About Studio/About Café in a two-story old building for community-based art in 1997. Unfortunately, it has already put the shutter up. Gompertz says, "About Studio/About Café was set in Nana street, of course everybody tells a different story, but it was a cool contemporary art space and at that time quite rare in Bangkok." The place where it was situated in is now a childcare center, in which they care of homeless kids. As Gompertz says, the About Studio/About Cafe was a sort of art community space and their friends and art person gradually visited Nana street after it was set up. Another artist settled down, at first only friends

⁴⁶ David Teh calls it 'About Art Related Activities (AARA)' (2016, 30).

⁴⁷ At Nana street, original buildings and property belong to a Persian family who came to Nana when King Rama IV's reigned (reign: 1851 to 1868) as Gompertz and Monny say. Much of the property in both neighborhoods (as well as in Khlong San across the river) is owned by the Nana family.

⁴⁸ Conducted interviews with Monny, Mills at Bangkok Art Gallery and Gompertz, Langello at Nana Street.

of theirs because they started several activities: roof top film screening event, selling art goods, exhibition, talk show so on. These activities were in close relation to each other, just a friendship. Gompertz says, it became known as the grassroots community-based art space for Thai contemporary art which was rare at that time in Thailand. Monny recalled the day people gradually gathered and settled on Nana street: in the circle of art person, they came to see here and loved the place so they gradually moved to Nana street. According to Monny, many were coming 3 years ago (2013, interview was conducted in 2016). It was slow pace, but people gradually settled down in Nana street. Companies of architects and photographers have moved in. They are residents, not settling down for commercial purpose.

3.2.4 Cities on the Move, Bangkok⁴⁹

Hou Hanru and Hans Ulrich Obrist, curators of Cities on the Move, have argued that a key task for Asian artists is to invent alternative “sub-spaces” or “non-institutional “artist-run-spaces” (1997, 4). As the traveling exhibition, Cities on the Move traveled six locations: New York, Bordeaux, Copenhagen, London, Helsinki, and Bangkok. The exhibitions has a certain linkage with BAB and BB in 2018. Several art professionals who participated in the exhibitions also worked in BAB 2018. About Studio / About Café, which collaborated with the Cities on the Move Bangkok, is a precursor of BB in China Town using private space as an exhibition space and working. On the initiative of AFAA (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and the overall guidance of the French Embassy in Thailand, traveling exhibition project ‘Cities on the Move Bangkok’ was organized by the Siam Society with the support and artistic contribution of the Asia Europe Foundation, in collaboration with the European union member states and the European Commission. About Studio/About Café also collaborated with the project. “Cities on the Move, Bangkok” was curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Hou Hanru, Ole Scheeren, held the exhibition throughout the City of Bangkok in 1999⁵⁰. While the exhibitions in other locations like

⁴⁹ See yipintsoi.com, Bangkokpost.com, buroos.com, gotomanager.com, trfineart.com, artsnetworkasia.org

⁵⁰ Initiated in 1997, held in Bangkok in 1999 (David Teh 2016, 34). It showcased a host of “starchitect” brands including Rem Koolhaas, Herzog& de Meuron, Norman Foster, and Renzo Piano (David Teh 2016, 34).

New York were held inside museum, those curators finally have chosen the Bangkok city itself as a venue because Bangkok had no museums for contemporary art that could host many contemporary art events or activities at that time. According to the website “there was another reason, the city of Bangkok itself was full of the reality of an Asian metropolitan condition”. It also introduces, “About Studio/About Café dedicated itself as a space to process the art project under the concept -an exhibition on the Asian city could only be accommodated by the Asian city itself –not by any singular (interior) exhibition space.” Some artists who worked with *The Cities on the Move* also participated in Bangkok Art Biennale like Heri Dono who presented his artwork at several venues in Bangkok Art Biennial. Rirkrit Tiravanija and Navin Rawanchaikul had Tuk Tuk installation with *The Cities on the Move*. Tiravanija worked with Bangkok Art Biennale as an international advisor as well. Additionally, “Here and Now” was also sponsored by the French government. Artist-curator Chitti Kasemkitvatana participated in both *The Cities on the Move* and *Here and Now* (David Teh 2016, 207).

3.2.5 Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions

While Thai art professionals enjoyed their freedom in 1990s, they also found that the Thai cultural show curated by the foreigners did not produce the image that represented the Thai contemporaneity. Apinan Poshyananda says these exhibitions such as “*The Integrative Art of Modern Thailand*” organized by an American anthropologist, were biased while the organizers claimed to be “the first exhibition of contemporary Thai art ever to travel to the United States” (1993, 123). Through cultural diplomacy, Thai national identity is constructed for an American audience by an American curator/anthropologist (1993, 124). In 1990s, Apinan Poshyananda (the Bangkok Art Biennale artistic director in 2018) had an important international exhibition. The touring exhibition “*Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions*”, held in 1996, was organized by the Asia Society that aims to educate American people on all the aspects of Asian society. The main purpose they set was to help foster a change in Western perceptions of Asian Art (Vishakha, 1996), in order to demonstrate that tradition should not be interpreted as the opposite of contemporaneity (Apinan Poshyananda 1996, 15). The supposed “Asianness” observed by outside viewers generally turns out to be simply that which contrast with what is familiar to Western eyes rather than that which responds to it (Vishakha 1996, 13). On the touring

exhibition, their goal was to suggest the contemporaneity of Asia that makes conventional antimonies such as “East/West” or “traditional/modern” outmoded (Vishakha 1996, 13) as Thai and other Asian art professionals were struggling with the notion of Asian-ness in the end of 1990s. For them, how to articulate the native perspective of tradition is important to establish contemporary art in Asia. Apinan Poshyananda explains that multifaceted societies of Asia reflected countless layer of hybridity. The “cross-breeding” of Asian tradition which interwoven within Asian myth so forth is reflected in the works of contemporary Asian artists and may explain why they do not fit neatly into the image of Otherness constructed according to Western paradigms (Apinan Poshyananda 1996, 27).

3.2.6 Thai participation of documenta 12 in 2007 and Venice Biennale in 2003

The first Thai pavilion was set in Venice in 2003. Patrick D. Flores depicted, when Apinan Poshyananda advocated setting up the first Thai Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2003, his efforts reinforced the longing of Southeast Asian curators to move beyond the exotic (Patrick D. Flores 2012, 184): even in the 21st century, the community of Euro-centric art society dominated by westerners tend to stare at others with their simplified glasses. The experience on Venice first Thai pavilion would engrave in Apinan Poshyananda’s mind. From Western perspective, Thailand is often seen as “the land of smile”⁵¹, in the Cold War as “the Oasis in the conflict continent”. As the curator from a nation stigmatized as non-colonized nation but also non first-league nation under a hegemonic country, Apinan Poshyananda may have thought his role was important in making Thailand truly culturally independent on the global stage. The government's Office of Contemporary Art and Culture (OCAC) supported Araya Rasdjamrearnsook and Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and Pratchaya Phinthong at dOCUMENTA (13) in 2012. Contrary to the prejudice that Thai bureaucrats only supports conventional art events, OCAC supports even non-traditional art forms. David Teh analyses that OCAC has taken

⁵¹ Even in the 21st century, the stereo-typical characteristic of Thai people is used: when US president Barak Obama attended a meeting with prime minister Yingluck Sinawatra, he used the ‘land of smile’ as diplomatic language. See <https://theconversation.com/does-us-pressure-really-risk-driving-thailand-into-chinas-arms-37335>

two different approaches. One is from the ministry, the bureaucratic defense of the conventional Thainess and Thai culture, and another is that creative industry (2016, 35-37).

Apart from Thai national pavilion, Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija worked for Utopia Station at Venice Biennale 2003 with Hans Ulrich Obrist and Molly Nesbit. They experimented with the experience of art at Utopia Station at the 2003 Venice Biennale, the station was spilling out of the Arsenale into the garden. Obrist has stated that it is interesting that artist curated exhibition like Marcel Duchamp's famous Surrealist Exhibition, and the curatorial work of artists such as Joseph Beuys or Nam June Paik. For him, the role of artist Rirkrit Tiravanija is significant on his curatorial work (Obrist 2012, 111).

3.3 Three biennials of Thailand 2018

The idea of biennial differs considerably between three biennials. The table shows both BAB and TB basically followed an orthodox biennial style on the matter of budgets, a structure of organization such as artistic curators/leading curators who invited international artists. Compared to other international contemporary biennials on financing, these biennials in Thailand budget in the conventional sense⁵². While two biennials (BAB and TB) rely mainly on public support and sponsorship, BB has neither sponsors nor public support.

Event name	Bangkok Art Biennale 2018 (BAB)	Thailand Biennale (TB)	Bangkok Biennial (BB)
Founders, executive Producers, Chief Executive, Chairman	Thapana Sirivadhanabhakdi (CEO and president of Thai Beverage Public Company Limited) as	(founded by the government) Executive Producers: Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry	Anonymous

⁵² According to Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV), Istanbul 11th edition sets 1,900,000 euro. Berlin 6th edition sets 3,085,000 euro, Gwangju 8th edition set 7,277,000 euro, Manifesta 8th edition sets 3,187,863 euro. Revenue distribution of the Istanbul Biennial 2009, budget 1,900,000 euro, 33 percent from Sponsorship, 20 percent from Total Public Support, 11 percent from biennial income, and 36 percent from other (Shifting Gravity 2012, 155).

	Chairman and Co-Founder of the Bangkok Art Biennale Foundation Apinan Poshyananda as Chief Executive and artistic Director	of Culture (Vimolluck Chuchat) Krabi Province (Pol.Lt.Col. Kitibodee Pravitra)	
Curatorial team	Artistic Director: Apinan Poshyananda Curators: Patrick D. Flores Adele Tan Luckana Kunavichayanont Sansern Milindasuta Wutigorn Kongka	Lead Curator: Jiang Jiehong Assistant Curators: Vipash Purichanont Vichaya Mukdamanee Curatorial Team: Haisang Javanalikhorn Nhung Walsh Palin Anusinha Panatchakorn Viratmalee Federica Mirra Ajjana Wajidee Kornkaew Nokkaew	Each of the pavilions that make up Bangkok Biennial is self-conceived, managed and curated. There is no main curator and no director (Bangkok Biennial guide to pavilions, 2018)
Theme, concept	Beyond Bliss	Edge of the Wonderland	No concept
Sponsors, contributors	(main sponsors) Tourist Authority of Thailand Amazing Thailand BMA BACC Bank of Thailand Learning Center	A cooperation between more than 30 organizations, from the public and the private sectors. (Edge of the Wonderland Short Guide, 2018) contributors: the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Energy,	No sponsor (participants found sponsors by themselves)

	<p>The Customs Department (Thailand)</p> <p>Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau</p> <p>ThaiBev</p> <p>ONE BANGKOK</p> <p>AMARIN 34HD</p> <p>CENTRAL BANGKOK</p> <p>SIAM PIWAT</p> <p>K Bank</p> <p>Thai Smooth as silk</p> <p>GMM 25</p> <p>AIS NEXT G</p>	<p>the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) and others (Edge of the Wonderland Short Guide, 2018)</p>	
About Artists	<p>Famous international artists and emerging artists pushed by curators with their network.</p> <p>Heri Dono</p> <p>Sakarin Krue-on</p> <p>Wisut Ponnimit</p> <p>Yuan Goang Ming</p> <p>Gauri Gill</p> <p>Hooptam Laos-Thai</p> <p>Imhathai Suwatthanasilp</p> <p>Kamol Phaosavadi</p> <p>Kawita Vatanajyankur</p> <p>Yayoi Kusama</p> <p>Latthapon Korkiatarkul</p> <p>Marina Abramovic</p>	<p>Commissioned work by 57 artists, including 50 artists (groups) from 25 countries and areas, invited through our curatorial research. Additionally, 3 artists (groups) were selected by the Jury Panel through the Artist Open Call and 4 National Artists of Thailand were recommended by OCAC (Jiang Jiehong, 2018). Kamin Lertchaiprasert</p> <p>Yuree Kensaku</p> <p>Dusadee Huntrakul</p>	Up to the pavilions.

	Montien Boonma Yoshitomo Nara Angki Purbandono	Mayrhofer-Ohata MAP OFFICE Vong Phaophanit & Claire Oboussier	
budget	150 million baht for three cycles (2018-2022)	100 million Baht for the festival. It is funded and engaged in by over 50 governmental and private agencies, involving thousands of officials and local people (Thailand Biennale Krabi 2018, Edge of the Wonderland Short Guide, 2018)	zero
Organizers /consultants	Paul Choon, chief executive of Bangkok Art Biennale, vice president and external affairs at Thai Beverage Public Company Limited	(Consultants) Vira Rojpojchanarat Minister of Culture (Consultants) Kitsayapong Siri Permanent Secretary for Culture (Consultants) Vimolluck Chuchat Director-General, Office of Contemporary Art and Culture (Consultants) Pol.Lt.Col. Kitibodee Pravitra Krabi's Governor	Anonymous

		<p>Kesorn Kummerdpech Krabi Provincial Cultural Promotion (Executive Producers: Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture (Vimolluck Chuchat) Krabi Province (Pol.Lt.Col. Kitibodee Pravitra)</p>	
<p>Advisors International Advisory Board</p>	<p>Alexandra Munroe Eugene Tan David Stuart Elliot Nigel Hurst Nanjo Fumio Rirkrit Tiravanija Sunjung Kim</p>	<p>Fram Kitagawa Yuko Hasegawa Mary Jane Jacob Arin Rungjang</p>	<p>No advisor</p>
<p>Venues</p>	<p>One Bangkok Bank of Thailand Learning Center Wat Arun Ratchawaram Ratchawaramahaviharn (Wat Arun – Temple of Dawn) Wat Phra Chetuphon Vimolmangklararm Ratchawaramhaviharn (Wat Pho – Temple of the Reclining Buddha)</p>	<p>Venues in Krabi like Noppharat Thara Beach, Ao Nang Beach, Than Bok Khorani National Park Khao Khanab Nam Krabi International Airport Khlong Muang Koh Klang Krabi Town Noppharat Thara Beach</p>	<p>Various spaces like galleries, private houses, abandoned buildings, a former post office so on. Many venues of BB like Speedy Grandma are having a relationship with</p>

	<p>Wat Prayurawongsawas Waraviharn (Wat Prayoon – Temple of Iron Fence) O.P. Place The Peninsula Bangkok Hotel Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok The East Asiatic Building Bangkok Art and Cultural Centre (BACC) Siam Square One Siam Discovery Siam Center Siam Paragon Central World Central Embassy Nai Lert Park Heritage Home Alliance Francaise Bangkok BAB Box, One Bangkok The EmQuartier Theatre of Indulgence</p>	<p>Poda Island Railay Beach Tha Pom Khlong Song Nam Than Bok Khorani National Park</p>	<p>BAB as ‘Friends of BAB’</p>
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3.3.1 Bangkok Art Biennale 2018

Bangkok Art Biennale artistic director Apinan Poshyananda once wrote: ... the Asia Society is an ideal place for artists to intervene and arbitrate the fixity of such simplistic dichotomies as East versus West, Orient versus Occident, Asia versus America, us versus them, history versus modernity, tradition versus contemporaneity (Apinan Poshyananda 1996, 15). On that remark, the practice by Apinan Poshyananda was crucial as it was essential for realizing biennial to persuade several people on the national level and keep the contemporaneity within biennial from both the Thai perspective and the global perspective. According to Bangkok Post, with a 150 million baht budget set aside for the Bangkok Art Biennale's first three editions, to take place over the next six years, this is the first artistic project of such scale to take place in Thailand in the taste of the festive industrial urbanism as corporatist event that celebrates the Neoliberalism.

Apinan Poshyananda had been appointed as Director-general of the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture in 2003, as Chairman of the Office of Knowledge Management and Development, Prime minister's Office in 2006, as Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Culture in 2008, and as Director-General of the Department of Cultural Promotion, Ministry of Culture in 2010 (Patrick D. Flores 2012, 183). He was also instrumental in setting up The Art Center at Chulalongkorn University, where a rival fine arts program was challenging Silpakorn's academic hegemony (David Teh 2016, 30). Apinan Poshyananda played a pivotal role as representative of Thai contemporary art as the national level with the establishment of the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture (OCAC), Director-general for 6 years (David Teh 2016, 35). Apinan Poshyananda works a key mediator between local and international spheres. The BAB is based on a real cooperation between Thai bureaucrats and private sectors through the royalist-led capitalist space expansion.

The BAB is the fruition of Apinan Poshyananda's generation who educated in Western countries and away from Silpakorn system. On the matter of BAB, chapter 4 will examine the revitalization of very old framework "Oriental Venice" with re-development project along Chao Phraya river and shopping malls at Siam-Ratchaprasong area, the thesis shows how a biennial event strongly commits itself to state and capitalize world class vision.

3.3.2 Bangkok Biennial 2018

While participants and organizers of Bangkok Biennial did not insist on protesting other biennial in Thailand, their style would be regarded as counter-biennial, local-led grassroots activity as chapter 2.4 introduced. At this point it is similar to the artist-led biennial like the case in Cairo. It is also regarded as the protest of biennial culture in global at large as the event set a concept on biennial itself. Yet the activities are by local art persons in Thailand, the definition of the locality in Bangkok is not straightforward as it is regarded as a metropolitan / cosmopolitan city which accommodates a lot of foreigners. Both Thai and foreign artists who are doing artistic activities in the form of grass-root in Bangkok did the self-funded and self-curated event set of gimmickry pavilions which ridicules the ‘traditional biennale’ of Venice, contrary to the notion of “Oriental Venice” by Bangkok Art Biennale, challenges the conception of "Biennial" itself as Bangkok Biennial 2018. The biennial shares the idea of the usage of space (city) with precedent grassroots perennial like Chiang Mai Social Installation, and the legacy of “About Studio / About Café” in China Town. For analyzing the Bangkok Biennial compared with other biennials in Thailand, the thesis addresses Yaowarat (China Town) as one of important locations of the events in chapter 4. Yaowarat is also the birthplace of contemporary Bangkok conglomerates that support biennials in Thailand, from where many founders of conglomerates have started their family businesses after they migrated from the Southern part of China. Considering cosmopolitanism, the complicity is that Bangkok has a long history with not only Chinese migrants but also individual westerners who engage in the field of arts, especially after the second World War. According to Matthew Phillips, in the era of Cold War, Jim Thompson was not only a celebrity known as “*farang*” regarded as the person who understands the Thai locals (referred to as “*klong culture*”), but several individuals also decided to stay in that time. With introduction of Thai as peaceful and safe country by American magazines in the mid-20th century, Thailand was introduced as “The oasis on the troubled continent”, apart from Thai governmental cultural strategy, even in the 21st century, some scholars believe that many foreign

settlers still tend to keep the conception of Thai culture that was mold during the Second World War. The legacy would affect the contemporary cosmopolitanism in Thailand.

According to Ariane Kupferman-Sutthavong (Bangkok Post 2018), while the Bangkok Biennial will have trouble competing with its rival in terms of budget, it will rely heavily on the energy and activism of local artists and independent art spaces in Thailand (Ariane in Bangkok Post, 25 Dec 2017). They provocatively presented a real urban Bangkok opted to community-based, D.I.Y, eschew the formal structures of the art world (flaunt.com, April 18, 2019).

The Bangkok Biennial did not take place in the capital alone. They had a partnership with art spaces in Khon Kaen, Chiang Mai, Narathiwat, Pattani, and Ratchaburi that have announced their participation in the project (Bangkok Post, 2018)⁵³. Several nationalities were also involved with the event.

3.3.3 Thailand Biennale 2018

While two biennials BAB and BB are held in the capital, TB in 2018 was held in southern parts of Thailand. Produced by the government's Office of Contemporary Art and Culture (OCAC) and Ministry of Culture (MOC), the Thailand Biennale took place in Krabi as its first edition. The artwork and events mainly took place outdoors, the artwork/projects were set in the Andaman coast. Thailand Biennale was curated by Jiang Jiehong, who is a director of the Centre for Chinese Visual Arts at the UCE Birmingham Institute of Art and Design. The curatorial team emphasizes on the site-specificity of the event, “this four-month outdoor exhibition in Krabi is not curated to display traditional forms of artwork, such as sculptures or paintings within the notion of ‘public art’, but rather, it stimulates creative strategies and innovative practices for site-specific installations” (Edge of the Wonderland Short Guide, 2018). The festival aims to promote the government’s policy by generating money for locals, boosting tourism and upgrading the Thai contemporary art scene onto the global stage. “Beside the governmental

⁵³ While Speedy grandma’s Lee declined the action of the protest other Biennials in Thailand, in global history of Biennial their activity may be regarded as anti-biennial or artist-led biennial or counter biennial.

initiation, local participation is also the key factor to make this event happen,” said Krabi’s governor, Lt-Colonel ML Kitibodee Pravitra. As a national initiative of contemporary art, the institution of this Biennale is designed to choose different cities and venues in Thailand for each edition (Edge of the Wonderland Short Guide, 2018). In 2018, Thailand was under military rule and a self-appointed Prime Minister⁵⁴ Prayut Chan-o-cha formulated several policies. The ministry was officially trying to impose 12 Thai values issued by the Prime Minister to the citizen. Minister of Culture Vira Rojpojanarat, (Consultant of TB 2018) has stated that the ministry especially focuses on “honesty”, “maintaining discipline”, “living self-sufficiently” and “considering the greater good”, with collaborative effort from both governmental offices and private organizations (Elite Plus Magazine December 2016 / January 2017). Similar to Bangkok Art Biennale, Thailand Biennale organizers also believe that the biennial festival is a cooperative effort with private sectors, several external parties⁵⁵.

Director-General of Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Vimolluck Chuchat says that “the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture, is the sole governmental organization which oversees contemporary art in Thailand. The mission includes aiding artists in developing quality artworks, providing platforms for artists to showcase their talents, and promoting the works domestically and internationally” (Edge of the Wonderland Short Guide, 2018). OCAC’s area of activities on art is diverse. According to David Teh, it covers film, literature, music, the performance arts and visual art. It has administered annual Silpathorn awards since 2004. It also provides small grants to artists, backs independent filmmakers winning plaudits at international festivals and assists Thai productions and exhibitions overseas. Since 2003, it has commissioned a Thai pavilion at the Venice Biennale (David Teh 2016, 36)⁵⁶. “Thailand Biennale is the biggest ‘*Pracharat*’ project that the ministry of culture has organized

⁵⁴ In 2018, Prayuth was self-appointed prime minister. Since 5th June 2019 through general election, he has been an electoral prime minister.

⁵⁵ According to its official guidebook, Thailand Biennale has brought together a cooperation between more than 30 organizations, from both the public and the private sector in terms of finance, knowledge, technology and expertise. The cooperators include the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB).

⁵⁶ OCAC contributed on documenta 12 and 13, see chapter 3.2.

concerning art so far. It involves thousands of officials and local people”, according to Culture Minister Vira Rojpojchanarat (The Thaiger and The Nation, September 25, 2018). It invested 100 million Baht for the festival. It is funded and engaged in by over 50 governmental and private agencies, involving thousands of officials and local people (Thailand Biennale Krabi 2018, Edge of the Wonderland Short Guide, 2018). The biennials introduces emerging Thai artists like Yuree Kensaku, Dusadee Huntrakul at the public space in Krabi while their works have usually been seen at urban space or white cube. Free from the vivid urban art scene in Thailand, the biennial chose the tourist spot and tried to show and share the art with local people and tourists. The research/curatorial team went to Venice and Setouchi for research.

3.4 Family conglomerates and their contributions to Biennial Culture

This section shows how private sectors play an important role on biennials in Thailand. In Thailand, shopping malls and urban vertical residential spaces are run by conglomerates based on family business. In Western theory of economics, it is quite rare that family businesses are examined (Akira Suehiro, 2006, 1). On Western orthodoxy, the style of family business is merely regarded as one stage of transformation of company to be dissolved in the process of development of cooperative capitalism. However, almost all conglomerates in Thailand is under the style of family Business. According to Nikkei Asian Review, Central Group is often seen as one of the most family-dominated conglomerates in Thailand compared with other groups. According to Claessens, 61.6 percent of companies in Thailand are owned by family business type companies while only 9.7 percent in Japan, 19.9 percent in Britain (Suehiro, 2003, 10). In Southeast Asia, Chinese discipline has strictly regulated business world. According to TCC Group’s website, Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi family believes four Chinese principles: 1. *Yim* 忍 (patience, which leads to success and helps achieve goals); 2. *Yeong* 仁⁵⁷ (sacrifice will help keep dangers away); 3. *Jae* 静 (silence, caution leads to wisdom); 4. *Luk* 樂 (cheerfulness brings happiness and longevity). The strict Chinese discipline has been married with the royalist

⁵⁷ The pronunciation 仁 “Yeong” is close to Korean pronunciation, but 仁’s meaning is “to helps keep dangers away” in modern Chinese.

sympathy so that Rama IX granted the family the name “Sirivadhanabhakdi” to Charoen family in 1988. Broadly speaking, all members of the Sino-Thai family business may agree that one can only achieve success through hard work and strong family bond. According to Akira Suehiro, Claessens shows the fact that many companies in France, Germany, Italy and Spain are also based on family business (Claessens et al 1999, 30 cited by Suehiro, 2006, 10-12). In other advanced countries like Britain and Japan, industrialization progressed at a slow pace, so family business was quite conservative and replaced other forms of the company. On the contrary, in emerging countries like Thailand, family business has an advantage of pooling money in the case of a sudden social change or drastic capital development. Furthermore, decision making is easy within family bond as they maintain trust (Suehiro, referring to the study of Nakagawa 1981, 2003, 35).

In fact, the rise of prominent family-owned conglomerates has been one of the most striking factors in Asia's growth over the past several decades (Nikkei Asian Review, Yukako Ono, 2017). While Sino-Thai family business conglomerates in Thailand are strictly nepotistic and based on cronyism, recently some conglomerates have been leaning towards abolition of the mode of family business. Charoen Pokphand Group (CP Group) is a good example. CP Group is the agribusiness-to-retail-to-telecoms empire led by Dhanin Chearavanont. In contrast to Central Group, most of CP's major assets are listed and its management includes non-family executives who head core listed subsidiaries such as Charoen Pokphand Foods and 7-Eleven operator CP All (Nikkei Asian Review, Yukako Ono, 2017). Thus, CP Group has tried to adopt more flexible and open system in a highly competitive global market. Senior Chairman of CP Group Dhanin Chearavanont says "Bringing a son on board could also jeopardize the company's future, ... Not only would the company lose valuable [outsider] executives [who feel they will not be able to get a promotion], it would have trouble ensuring a smooth transition from one leadership to the next". However, while Dhanin Chearavanont forbade hiring the children of family members for CP core businesses for the purpose of recruiting talented employees, he promoted two of his sons to group chairman and CEO to replace himself in 2017 (Yukako Ono in Nikkei Asian News, January 17, 2017). As family ties knitted by bonds of mutual trust within Sino-Thai family remain strong, this double standard is common in Thailand.

Thaksin Sinawatra, former prime minister, laid the groundwork for his family business only in his lifetime while his father had a certain network in Chiang Mai before Thaksin started his career. Pasuk and Baker say that Thaksin has an extensive network of kin, in-laws, and classmates spread across the military, police, and senior ranks of the bureaucracy (Pasuk and Baker 2009, 180).

1. Charoen Pokphand (CP Group) was in group of Thaksin politics on the first stage⁵⁸, but Thaksin was also afraid of these influences, that is the reason he reinforced de-centralization policy supported by the masses. According to Pasuk and Baker, CP Group withdrew its support when Thaksin shifted his policy to ‘populism’ style (2009, 232-239).
2. Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi’s ThaiBev was strongly supported by Thaksin, while Singha Beer suffered from political pressure with unfair taxation. Pasuk and Baker have stated that the excise tax rate on the liquor produced by Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi’s group was reduced, while those on imported liquor were increased (BP, 23 January 2003). When Boonrawd launched a new beer against Charoen’s Beer Chang, within days the Excise Department revised upwards the tax assessed on the Boonrawd product (BP, 20 November 2003, cited by Pasuk and Baker 2009, 379).
3. Thaksin attacked Prawase Wasi⁵⁹, known as advocacy of social reform and political participation (Pasuk and Baker, 2009, 155). For Prawasi, Thaksin’s style of family business hampered politics. According to Pasuk and Baker, Prawasi advised that “Mr. Thaksin is a very able person but people still doubt whether he is a statesman or a business politician. A complete withdrawal from family businesses will give the prime minister more ethical power” (TN, May 2003, cited by Pasuk and Baker 2009, 380).

⁵⁸ According to Pasuk and Baker, CP Group withdrew its support when Thaksin shifted his policy to ‘populism’ style. See Pasuk and Baker 2009, especially 232-239.

⁵⁹ Prawasi is a prominent Buddhist, promoted democratic decentralization, and supported the establishment of NGOs. He chaired the Democracy Development Committee, which led to the drafting of the 1997 constitution.

3.5 Shopping malls and Biennial Culture

Section 3.5 introduces the importance and vernacularity of shopping malls in Thailand, and the cooperators of BAB 2018 which are running shopping malls and luxury hotels in Bangkok.

3.5.1 Contemporary art and Shopping mall

This section examines why a shopping mall is so important for Thai people (the royalist capitalist, elite in the field of art, urban middle-classes, and inner-migrants), and why art professionals chose the specific shopping malls as the venues. It concentrates on Siam-Ratchaprasong, and recently along Chao Phraya River. While there are a lot of arguments why Thai people love shopping malls, if featuring only on behavioral patterns, it may be applicable to say that Thai people like going to shopping malls because it is too hot in the Bangkok streets. However, as Ünalı argues how the space of Siam-Ratchaprasong has been produced by cooperation between capitalist elite and CPB, the symbolic function of shopping mall is above the physical, behavioral pattern. Ünalı argues, the mall and hotels are extraordinary in Thailand. It was sacred, and this is how it was advertised (Ünalı 2016, 158). While successful alchemy between capitalism and the monarchy, the economic impulse often crushed, while carefully avoiding the royal family's direct financial interests (see Ünalı 2016, 160). As for showing the significance of shopping malls as a political space, the celebratory fair on the Queen's birthday is a good example. The fair was traditionally located around Sanam Luang in the old city but it was now relocated to the Central World shopping mall at Ratchaprasong intersection (Ünalı 2016, 159). For Thai and Southeast Asian, the shopping malls is not only for luxury and entertainment. When Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc visited Thailand, a red carpet was rolled out for him at Central Group's Central Ladprao, a shopping complex in downtown Bangkok (Yukako Ono, in Nikkei Asian Review, September 15, 2017). The retail conglomerate like Central Group, TCC Group, which are running a large amount of shopping malls, are based on family business model (family-owned conglomerates) same with Charoen Pokphand Group.

Bangkok Art Biennale has been co-founded with TCC Group, which is having an urban project 'One Bangkok'. The plot for One Bangkok and Bangkok art Biennale belongs to CPB (Crown Property Bureau), which completed the contract with the Pre-Cadet School and the Suan Lum Night Bazaar.⁶⁰ The cooperation within conglomerates and CPB, and capitalist elite and art professionals and Ministry of Culture can be traced back to the era of King Chulalongkorn.

In the past, several national festivals have been held for development and modernization in Siam/Thailand. According to Kanthika, the expansion of Bangkok to the southeast and south of the city can be traced by the Rice Exhibition 1909, followed by the Agriculture & Commerce Exhibition 1910 and 1911 and the plan to hold the Siamese Kingdom Exhibition in January 1926 (see Peleggi, Thongchai, and Kanthika 2006). These exhibitions were held on royal property and expanded from smaller ones, which may signify the development of business and industry in Siam, Kanthika has stated (Sriudom Kanthika, 2006).

3.5.2 Shopping malls and Hotels, and vertical residential complex in Bangkok: the venue of Bangkok Art Biennale

There are several conglomerates which have involved with BAB 2018. Among them, president/ CEO/exec director of Thai Beverage Public Company Limited (TCC Group) is the co-founder of the festival.

1. TCC Group (by Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi)

One Bangkok and O.P. PLACE were used for BAB's venues. TCC Group emphasizes on sustainability, expand the market to ASEAN. Apart from One Bangkok, TCC

⁶⁰ The city-like project will be located on a 104-rai plot formerly used by the Pre-Cadet School and the Suan Lum Night Bazaar on the corner of Wireless and Rama IV roads opposite Lumpini Park. It was leased from the Crown Property Bureau (CPB) after an auction in 2014. Chatri has stated that the Crown Property Bureau has begun gradually not renewing the rental contracts with old tenants (Chatri 2012, 138).

Group has several projects in Bangkok. N.C.C. Management and Development Co, a TCC Group subsidiary, plans to invest 6 billion baht to renovate and develop an additional construction area of 180,000 square meter at the convention center (Bangkok Post, 4th Apr 2017). Chairman and co-founder of Bangkok Art Biennale Thapana Sirivadhanabhakdi is president/ CEO/exec director of Thai Beverage Public Company Limited. He is also on the board of Oishi Trading Co Ltd and Oishi Ramen Co Ltd. His brother, Panote Sirivadhanabhakdi is CEO of Frasers Property (Thailand) Public Company Limited (“FPT”),⁶¹ both are under his father’s conglomerate, Thai Charoen Corporation Group (TCC Group). Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi is founder/Chairman of TCC Group. TCC Group is in hands of Charoen family in much the same way as Thailand's other Chinese tycoons as a strictly family business (Pasuk 2018; Jonathan Head in BBC News, 2013, Ono Yukako in Nikkei Asia News, September 15, 2017).

Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi, according to Akira Suehiro, achieved his success by seizing opportunities during a crisis. Under the 1997 Asian financial crisis, he seized the chance when the government decided to privatize the state-owned distilleries which were providing him with most of his profits⁶². While many Thai people paid attention to another business tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra, Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi also developed his family business at that time. While Thaksin family grabbed the political opportunities after Asian financial crisis occurred in 1997 because the crisis enhanced free-market and neoliberalism and populace policy than paternalism, Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi has engaged themselves into the way Ünaldi called “royalist-led capitalist development” (Ünaldi, 2016). He avoided showing himself in Thai Public, instead, in Singapore he often appeared in the media. Under the crisis in 1997, Pasuk reports that

⁶¹ Frasers Property Holdings is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Singapore-based property firm Frasers Centrepoint Limited (FCL), which has over 605 billion baht in assets worldwide. Frasers Property Limited has a deemed interest of 80.77% in Frasers Property (Thailand) Public Company Limited (“FPT”), the largest developer and manager of industrial & logistics properties in Thailand and a leading provider of smart integrated property platforms.

⁶² Akira Suehiro describes how Charoen won the Whisky War in Thailand, before the Asian financial crisis. See Akira Suehiro 1991 “Thai no zaibatsu (Industrial conglomerates in Thailand)”

much of the distressed assets were transferred to foreign hands, but some Thai business people notably Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi gained these distressed assets from others who were desperate to sell assets for their survival (Nualnoi 2008, Porphant 2008, cited by Pasuk 2018, 41). Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi's early growth depended totally on exploiting patrimonial connections and the absence of the rule of law, but his later development as a regional conglomerate has required him to go straight (Pasuk 2018, 49) as the patrimonial connections are less reliable. When Thai conglomerates were under "the whisky war", Charoen stepped up as president (See Suehiro 1991).

"When One Bangkok is completed, the district will have a gross floor area of 1.83 million sqm. It will comprise of five Grade A office towers, four differentiated retail precincts, five luxury and lifestyle hotels, and three luxury residential towers, offering a comprehensive array of activities and providing more than 60,000 people a place to work, shop, play and create. More than 200,000 visitors are expected daily at One Bangkok", said Ms. Su Lin Soon, CEO Development - One Bangkok (Fraser's Property Holdings (Thailand) Co., Ltd on PR News writer, Jul 31, 2019). The land plot of One Bangkok (SOM official website, accessed on 9th Sept, 2019) is close to Rama VI's statue at Lumpini Park. Rama VI (King Vajiravudh) used to state the significance of a place for foreign visitors: "Rama VI had a great vision that Thailand needed a lot of development and needed foreign investors, foreign technology, during that period" (CPB, interviewed by Ünaldi, 2016, 185). Since the early modernizing period, showing the state as being civilized toward people from supreme nations, meeting the global standard has been the primary concern for the Thai elite. In fact, Lumpini park, which is located adjacent to One Bangkok is the plot where Rama VI's (King Vajiravudh) unrealized project was set. It designed to display pavilions, gardens and parks for international fairs (Peleggi, Askew 2002, 43, Bangkok Art Biennale guidebook, 2018, 11). As King Vajiravudh was concerned in the past for the production of space, the plot should meet the global standard. LEED® Platinum certification for Neighborhood Development⁶³ has been adopted on One Bangkok, it promises the healthy and

⁶³ LEED has also been adopted by Taipei 101.

comfortable living conditions for their occupants, according to City of Houston Overview and U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC 2019).

2. Central Group

Their properties/retailer shopping malls are used for Bangkok Art Biennale's venues. The CEO of Central Group Tos Chirathivats is the grandson of the founder. The group has been constructing a new shopping mall near the airport, Central Village as first international Luxury Outlet shopping village in Bangkok. Central Pattana is the developer of Central Village. In 1956, the family opened Thailand's first department store in Chinatown. In 1957, Tiang's son, Samrit Chirathivat, opened the first Central Department Store in Wangburapha, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok.

3. The Mall Group

Their properties/retailer shopping malls such as Emporium, Siam Paragon, EmQuartier were used for Bangkok Art Biennale's venues. The Mall Group is one of Thailand's largest mall operators, headquartered in Bangkok. It was founded in 1981 by Supachai Umpujh and Nongluck Umpujh. Its parent organization is Lukrak Supachai Company Limited. The founder Supachai Umpujh's daughter Supaluck Umpujh succeeded the business, chairs and runs The Mall Group. According to Franz Kraatz, CEO Project Development of The Mall Group, Siam Paragon Mall was one of the first malls in Thailand to integrate luxury brands with lifestyle concepts, such as a multiplex cinema, a large aquarium, and a fully-fledged department store with the specialty gourmet super market⁶⁴.

4. The Kadoorie family (Michael David Kadoorie)

The Peninsula Bangkok Hotel was used for Bangkok Art Biennale's venues. Michael David Kadoorie holds the position as a chairman of The Shanghai and Hong Kong

⁶⁴ <https://www.theceomagazine.com/executive-interviews/retail-wholesale/franz-kraatz/> (accessed on June 2020, 13th)

Hotels which is the second largest group in his family. The operators and owners of these hotels are well renowned as the Peninsula Hotel Group.

5. Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group is a member of the Jardine Matheson Holdings Limited, which is a British conglomerate incorporated in Bermuda and headquartered in Hong Kong. Mandarin Oriental Bangkok was used for Bangkok Art Biennale's venues.

6. Nai Lert Group

Nai Lert Group is running Nai Lert Park Heritage. It is one of the venues of Bangkok Art Biennale 2018. Nai Lert is not a royalty but Thailand's first and foremost developer, investor from distinct family in Thailand/Siam. Same with Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi (TCC Group), King (Rama VI) bestowed him and his wife a royal title. Nai Lert started working for various firms and became a partner at the Singapore Strait Company (later to become Fraser and Neave) by the age of 20. In 2012 ThaiBev (TCC Group) acquired a 22% stake in Fraser and Neave.

3.6 Conclusion

The chapter 3 has shown Thai artists and curators' activities in global stage like Cities on the Move, Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions and some projects by Thai artists. Organized by established international artists/curators, these traveling events are curated by auteur-curator like Apinan Poshyananda, Hou Hanru, Hans Ulrich Obrist. In the global context as a collective fantasy of the art world, auteur-curators like Harald Szeemann and Okwui Enwezor standardized contemporary biennial. As the theme and title of several events literary indicated that a biennial and the relevant event are often linked to the notion of mobility/movability, curatorial team and artists are physically moving from city to city. They often show the project on the concept of mobility. Visitors/audiences/tourists are encouraged to travel to see exhibitions/projects located to several spaces, several cities. Individual artists also found their theme on the mobility, for example, on the account of Navin Rawanchaikul's rolling

exhibition “Fly with Me to Another World” (1999-2000), David Teh has stated that mobility had become more than a professional rite of passage, and more than a metaphor for Navin Rawanchaikul (David Teh 2018, 94). Miwon Kwon has stated on itinerant curator/artist, and visitor based on cosmopolitanism and nomadic attitude: Kwon says, the increasing institutional interest in current site-oriented practices that mobilize the site as a discursive narrative is demanding an intensive physical mobilization of the artist to create works in various cities throughout the cosmopolitan art world⁶⁵.

C. Green and A. Gardner have stated, biennials have drawn local practitioners into ostensibly globalized networks of art-world attention and financial support, publicizing regions or cities previously deemed “peripheral” to the metropolitan centers. The biennial is often introduced as a platform where local practitioners and global art professionals interact with each other, many people happen to see the artwork/project in public. The phenomena of biennial as a platform is on the new phase of transculturation, especially because of the development of non-western nations like Thailand and their autonomy. However, on another level, all this equality suggests that these exhibitions may have served as mirrors to the spread of transnational capital and imperialist politics associated with globalized neoliberalism. Few global elites have the right to choose the artwork in the name of global standard making use of world class imagination. Biennials may be little more than a spectacle of “festivalism,” as critic Peter Schjeldahl has argued, with art replicating and reinforcing the neocolonial flows of international commerce, politics and power, according to C. Green and A. Gardner (2016, Loc 313).

According to Bangkok Post interviewing with Stephan Vanden Auweele, the chief hospitality group officer of Asset World Corporation (AWC), a property developer owned by Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi's TCC Group, run by President/CEO/Executive Director Wallapa Traisorat, daughter of Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi and sister of Thapana Sirivadhanabhakdi: the World Tourism Organization reports Thailand is projected to welcome 50 million tourists in 2030 (Dusida Worrachaddejchai in Bangkok Post, 31 Jul 2019). Lucy R. Lippard has stated, tourists

⁶⁵ see Kwon (2004, 46) about nomadic artists as well.

may long for warmth, beauty, exoticism, whereas locals may long for escape, progress, and an improved economy... local residents both possess and become a “natural resource which produces more pleasure, and tourists are necessary to its conversion to wealth” (Lippard, 1999, 13) . Ünalı addressed “the cleaning day” after Red Shirts has gone at Siam-Ratchaprasong (Ünalı, 2016). For removing the trace of the protest by mainly people in rural and inner migrants and slum dwellers, the governor introduced the idea of ‘world class urban space’ corresponded with the feelings of Bangkok middle-classes who were fed up with ‘invasion’ by others within Thailand. The usage of the term ‘world class’ is nothing complicated here: the world class space is the place where the poor and rural villagers could not invade, keeping obvious distinction from them with brand tagged commodities, meeting the global standard like LEED⁶⁶ and ready to show it to people from developed countries as the state’s public face.

While institutes like BIMA and The National Gallery played a significant role for Thai contemporary art and the development of biennial culture, several grass root artist-led practices also brought the contemporaneity of Thai art. As deliberately un-curated (David Teh 2018, 14), artist-led and group initiative, Visual Dhamma Gallery by Alfred Pawlin is one of the outstanding precursors. He started ‘Magic Set’ in 1992. Navin Rawanchaikul occasionally took part in these experimental art events in 1990s. He worked with the second ‘Magic Set’ in 1993 and at Visual Dhamma, ‘Melancholic Trance’ in 1992, The Cities on the move in 1996 so forth. CMSI, About Art, these grass root activities in community are distinct Thai contemporary art.

BAB was held in 2018, under the junta regime and remained resonance of political turmoil since the emergence of Thaksin⁶⁷. The chairman of Bangkok Art Biennale Foundation, Thapana Sirivadhanabhakdi, the son of billionaire Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi with TCC Group, participates in the nation branding and capital gaining through the urban project

⁶⁶ LEED is the American Standard introduced to Bangkok by architect team SOM, it standardizes the greenish, healthy, safety, airy, and SOM even sets an art experience inside the plan for One Bangkok.

⁶⁷ The event was held in 2018, while some believed the upheaval of two-parties public dispute has disappeared, some like Buchanan think the political disparity remains. See James, Buchanan, The land of forced smile (2017).

“One Bangkok” with BAB, leased from CPB. It presents World Class Masterplan, urban village at one of the expensive districts in Bangkok, Lumpini. Asking for Western recognition of Thailand on the global art map, artistic director of BAB Apinan Poshyananda’s dream has come true: having the biennial art festival in Thailand. Several failed attempts by other influential art professionals in Thailand demonstrated that it was not easy in Thailand. He recognizes that biennial is the project cooperating with several actors, especially with the state ministry and commercial forces. It has been possible through the support of both the government and private sectors (Apinan Poshyananda on Bangkok Art Biennale 2018 guidebook, 7). Biennial is the production of space in which several actors expect to collect a prospective interest. Their intention and expectations are obvious by the choice of venue. With world class vertical village One Bangkok, with shopping malls, with luxury hotels, and with reminiscent and the revitalized idea “exotic version of Venice” sharing it as a strategy of nation re-branding with Bangkok Observation Tower and several new shopping malls like ICONSIAM along Chao Phraya river (examined in chapter 4 in detail). From the national perspective based on state-interest, the artworks with Biennial art festival itself has been vulnerable to be devaluated as merely decoration for the national project apart from artist’s intention or concept. In global art history, the functional art has been popularized after the collapse of Berlin Wall. The cooperative art practice with the state, institute and market as functional art and site-specific art has involved long arguments among the art critics like Rosalyn Deutsche (1996), Miwon Kwon (2004).

The biennial art event is needed to examine its site-specificity from several academic viewpoints like urban studies. Audience cannot appreciate the artwork in the manner of conventional artist-centered aesthetics. Public infrastructures like walls and public environments like air are elements of the biennial art even when art professionals did not intend to do. For example, if there is a biennial art in a shopping mall, the wall of shopping mall would be an element of the artwork or project while white-cube’s wall is behind the scene. Ünalı says on the wall of shopping malls: “The closed walls around Sra Pathum Palace also tend to frame identities and perceptions of space because the cultural tendency to conceive of space as relational constrains both the architect and the spatial user. The relational ordering of social goods and

people is more firmly circumscribed and rule bound than in societies that attach more importance to the rational choices of spatial users” (Ünaldi, 2016, 172).

In general, an artist tends to avoid the aestheticization of public space straightforward manner because they know the social context of physical space deeper, under the surface. The tendency distinguishes fine artist’s work from commercial production⁶⁸. However, as contemporary art practice has been framed by biennial culture on the global stage, artists are required to emphasize on aspects of art’s social function in contemporary urbanism, provide a well tamed art project inside artistic director or curator’s urban project. While several artists in the past challenged for the hierarchy of art, the public art in biennial culture are basically touted as “socially responsible”, “site-specific”, and “functional” in its functionalist rhetoric that Rosalyn criticizes (Rosalyn 1998). Audience also lost the standpoint as they are not informed of what extent artists are involved with the city-planning in a serious manner⁶⁹. Rosalyn contends the functional art after the collapse of Tilt Arc by Richard Serra in 1989, site-specific art has been popular and has helped design and contributed to the “beauty” and “utility” of its newly redeveloped urban sites (Rosalyn Deutsche, 1998, XV). The characteristic is seasonable to biennial culture. However, considering the social condition in Thailand 2018, it is arguable to celebrate redevelopment as a “revitalizing” and “beautifying” process. Instead, the production of space with art is revealing the relations of domination and oppression and transforming cities for private profit and state control.⁷⁰ Herzfeld casts analysis on the city-planning in Bangkok with his research at local communities at Pom Mahakan⁷¹. Because cooperative city-project have been launched by conglomerate, CPB and intellectuals in the field of contemporary art, the state used the festivals as an opportunity to endorse and proceed the eviction using the site-specific art as

⁶⁸ See Catherine Grout, *Actualité de l’art, questions urbaines*, and Rosalyn Deutsche, *Eviction*.

⁶⁹ In reality, the majority of audience’s concern is with selfies and Instagram which provided art in biennial that is work considered as backdrop.

⁷⁰ See Rosalyn Deutsche, *Eviction* in XIV

⁷¹ Herzfeld notes that he would not take a one-sided view of their ongoing conflict at Pom Mahakan. See Herzfeld 2016, 50.

concealment and monuments rather than questioning. As Herzfeld shows, bureaucratic elite stay in a different world to the people who have room to re-think the meaning of production of space. While some believe the biennial become a mass-media in themselves (Joseph Crima, 122), the biennial has top-down structures organized by a few global elites including politicians and entrepreneurs⁷².

For the purpose of realizing biennial art festival, art professionals have to compromise and find the mutual interest with the ministry of culture and private sectors. For bureaucrats, the art festival is merely an event that is expected to bring more tourism. Gridthiya Gaweewong, Thai curator and director, introduced her experience when she and her collaborators tried to have a challenging biennial art festival in Patthaya. The officers responded to her proposal saying that they already have sufficient tourism and they did not need more (Curator Meeting 2013, session 5, 188). In the past, Montien Boonma also proposed a deliberately regional art initiative, a ‘Mekong Biennale’ (David Teh 2018, 33) but it never materialized.

In fact, while several newspaper and art magazines enjoyed “Yayoi Kusama at Bangkok shopping mall”, many art professionals in other countries were at a loss when the Apinan Poshyananda chose the shopping mall for the venue of contemporary art⁷³. Many Thai art professionals and critics avoided talking on shopping mall installations by BAB. It may be a reason that the installation at shopping malls does not conform to fine art. However, as Ünalđi argues, the shopping malls at Siam-Ratchaprasong could not be explained with the Western orthodoxy of development of modernism. Consequently, fine art at shopping mall in Bangkok also failed to be explained by the conventional mode of contemporary art on the global art

⁷² See Pandit Chanrochanakit 2011, 239-244, how artists especially art professionals who become an insider of governmental body are prone to work for a part of the governmental propaganda.

⁷³ It might be reason that a contemporary art is expected to be in neutral or challenging places initiated by artist as individual or collective. If art were located at commercial place, and if artist couldn’t address the space itself by themselves, it would be impossible to appreciate the work. See Rosalyn Deutsche, Miwon Kwon and others like Euyoung Hong (The Spatial Politics of the Sculptural: Art, Capitalism and the Urban Space).

practice. On the contrary, shopping malls are battle fields in the country which adopted the royalist-led capitalist development. According to Ünalı, the history of Siam-Ratchaprasong is largely one of royal involvements in capitalist development (Ünalı, 2016, 117). Ünalı argues that many scholars dropped into the pig hole, framework of “post-modernism”: expansion of the free market in Bangkok introduces a “divorce” between royal tradition and modernity, and that with this “dissolution of a generally defined meaning of Bangkok, the architecture became post-modernist” (Evers and Korff, 2003, 95, cited by Ünalı, 2016, 140). On the contrary, the space of shopping mall is the product of the royalist-led capitalist space expansion as chapter 4 shows Bangkok’s rapid change of public space in the name of the royal-national history⁷⁴.



⁷⁴ On the restoration of ‘Siam’, See Herzfeld: “Those who have argued for the restoration of the national name “Siam”, for example, suggesting that it is not as ethnically exclusionary as “Thailand,” perhaps overlook the implications that this reversion would have for the reconstitution of an imperial system in which minorities -and weaker groups more generally - were subjugated to centralized power in a system of vassalage. The power of the ethnic majorities remains untouched” (Herzfeld 2016, 71). Ünalı also introduces that “we have Intercontinental Hotels anywhere in the world, so the prefix to the name of hotel should be prefix to the name of the hotel should be “Thailand,” but Thailand has a modern meaning. The country with the older history -with the older name- is Siam. So he [(Chalermchai)] chose the name Siam to prefix Intercontinental companies.” (Interview 18 July 2011 by Ünalı, 2016, 131).

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE PRACTICES OF THE THREE BIENNIALS AND THE PUBLIC SPACE IN THAILAND

This chapter analyses the practices of three biennials in order to find the historical link in the early modernizing period and change and usage of public space on three levels. First, it examines the idea of inter-localization in the notion of sufficiency economy by Thailand Biennale. Second, it examines the re-branding and re-development of projects along Chao Phraya river⁷⁵ with its tributary canals as Bangkok Art Biennale 2018 set several venues at the bank of Chao Phraya River with the notion of city of the exotic version of Venice. While Biennial art festival was pervasive in Asia in the post-cold war, there are distinct characteristics on the biennialization in Thailand 2018. Through biennials the art professionals and capitalist elite (global elite), and ministerial bureaucrats want to revitalize the classical idea of “a city famed for being the Venice of the East (Montira Horayangura Unakul 2012, 196)”. The state-interest and profit of private sector’s urban project has been ongoing behind the cheerful contemporary art festival.

Thirdly, to examine the modernizing framework ever since the early modernizing era by bureaucracy and a struggle against it by dwellers, the chapter shows the links of the early modernizing practices to a rapid change of public space in the name of the royal-national history, and historical communities. Finally, it also addresses another biennial event, the Bangkok Biennial that is set mainly at Yaowarat (China Town) as grass-root activities. While the commercial center has moved from Yaowarat to Siam-Ratchaprasong, on a national level, a recent revival of the bank of Chao Phraya River is obviously a strategy of national-branding

⁷⁵ On refurbishing Rattanakosin, see Herzfeld 2016, 73.

through the mega urban projects such as ICONSIAM⁷⁶, Bangkok Observatory Tower with a lot of beautification city-plans for reproducing the royal-nationalist landscape. The production of space, same with Bangkok Art Biennale 2018, seems to be framed in the notion of ‘the Venice of East’ from the western perspective although Bangkok is no longer an aquatic city. On a grass-roots level, Yaowarat (Nana street) became a hip space with many independent art-spaces and bars where the local art people there have started grass-root biennial, Bangkok Biennial.

As city-planning has been reinforced, several small communities are about to be demolished while the value of community has been discussed for a long time. While bureaucratic city-planning with the royal-national history clear congestion downtown for their ideal landscape, both the state and dwellers in local communities reify ‘legible’ to opponent (Herzfeld 2016, 40) as the small communities is a miniature of the state, has microcosmic nature. Under such a rampant development and disputed demolition, several venues of BAB 2018 were situated at the bank of Chao Phraya River. The event chose several luxury hotels as its venues. While shopping malls have been developed with the Sino-Thai family business, the first luxury hotel was established by a European businessperson, founded by Captain Hans Niels Andersen from Denmark. The East Asiatic Company’s building, one of the venues of BAB, stands on the bank of Chao Phraya River next to the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. The plot is also adjacent to the pier at which a public art by Denmark and Norway artists⁷⁷ have been installed for BAB. In 1881, Niels Andersen bought the premises of the current Mandarin Oriental Hotel Bangkok and built the first luxury hotel in Siam. It is said that its Venetian-inspired aesthetic was designed to intentionally reflect Bangkok’s former alias as the “Venice of the East”.

⁷⁶ According to its website, “ICONSIAM is the Icon of Eternal Prosperity that shows the world what Thai-ness means, aiming to promote and preserve the imagination of this era that everyone admires and will pass on to the next generation, who will carry on the priceless heritage”, accessed on May 29th 2020.

⁷⁷ Elmgreen & Dragset installed their site-specific sculpture, ‘Zero’ 2018. Inside the East Asiatic Building, Thai young artist Anupong Charoenmitr showed his artwork. He went to research in Copenhagen. His loop video showed the view of how Hans Neils Anderson might have seen Bangkok (official guidebook 2018).

This chapter shows the legacy of grand tour by Rama V, the idea and practices of *Siwilai* (being civilized) and its limit including the precursor of Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) and Crown Property Bureau (CPB). Over time, the king established several institutions and reinforced nation-branding apart from industrial and technological development⁷⁸. In addition, after the brief introduction of Chao Phraya River, it examines the idea of revitalization of Chao Phraya River in the notion of the exotic version of Venice, and reservation program through the studies by several scholars like Herzfeld, Chatri with my own notes from field research. According to Chatri, the main purpose of the clearing of the national park is to make the royal-national monuments and buildings visible as an ideal landscape. Chatri shows examples, the state has conducted projects to create the landscape of the Chao Phraya riverbank for Wat Bowornsathansuthawat, Wat Pho, the Grand Palace, and the Golden Mount. The project to create a public park at Mahakan Fort is simply to create vacant space that offers a grand vista of nearby monuments, including Mahakan Fort, the city wall, Loha Prasat, and Wat Sakae (Chatri 2012, 143).

The residents in small communities along the Chao Phraya River and its canals are economically poor but some are legally the owners of houses in which they lived⁷⁹. They speak of “self-development”, according to Herzfeld, which is a term that allows them to calibrate their experience to the dominant developmentalist ideology (Herzfeld 2016, 84). The chapter also introduces Yaowarat as an old commercial center. At the district, community-based art space

⁷⁸ Rama V ventured engineering as well. He appointed Phraya Thewetwongwiwat as its Ministry and a Belgian-American, Fariola de Rozzoli, introduced new systems for garbage removal, the construction of public latrines and urinals, building law, giving the city engineer more control of the construction of new buildings, sanitary system, façade design. The Sanitary Department took over the construction and maintenance of Bangkok roads from the Public Works Department (PWD), thereby increasing its role in the shaping of the city (Povotong 2011, 181).

⁷⁹ In small communities, some residents own legally certificated ownership, but some do not. In Pom Mahakan, dwellers do not own the property rights at all, while some dwellers in Ban Khrua do. Both residents emphasize the royal-national history, for example, how the monarchy gave the residential space to them.

About Studio/About Café was set as pioneer of an individual & grass root art activities. The practice guided later day's grass root event BB. From a broader point of view, both small communities and local art activities are classified as self-development and autonomic activities in contrast to bureaucratic city-planning with BAB, TB.

4.1 Thailand Biennale in the notion of sufficiency economy

Under a national polarization and the military rule, Thailand Biennale was held at Krabi in the Southern part of Thailand. As the theme of biennial 'The edge of Wonderland' indicated, the site-specific artworks were installed at the edge of peninsula toward Andaman ocean. In summary, the list below is the characteristics of the festival.

1. Site-specific art: while accessibility had a problem, the artworks/projects harmonized with nature: smooth interaction between local people and artist/artwork in nature.
2. Local engagement worked well- sculpture installations by local artists. It is similar to Chiang Mai's international flower festival with public art by Thaksin. It also accommodates public art inside the plot.
3. As Krabi is already popular with tourists, it brought tourists to see site-specific art, introducing Thai and international artists.
4. Not like military imposed royal history, the festival focused on locality and the nature as the curator Jiang Jiehong placed great emphasis on the diverse histories of Asia and its geography rather than the Chakri history.
5. While it was not belonging to TB, Tsunami Memorial Sculpture in Had Nopparat Thara (YourKrabi, 13th March 2007) by Louise Bourgeois (2007) was installed. David Teh says that OCAC 's most conspicuous marks on the domestic landscape came in the form of large-scale, big-budget spectacles - contemporary art as "megaproject" (2016, 36). It installed public art by Bourgeois, Yoshitomo Nara, Marina Abramović⁸⁰ as international luminaries (2016, 36). David Teh has stated that the "megaproject" was a hallmark of

⁸⁰ BAB 2018 installed Yoshitomo Nara's work at Nai Lert Park Heritage Home, Marina Abramović's work at BAB Box, One Bangkok.

Thaksin's populism, designed to justify leaps of scale in his government's infrastructure (2016, 208). When Apinan Poshyananda was appointed as the director of OCAC, he negotiated with the artist and it was donated by the artist. Unfortunately, the passage made of wood for the artwork was broken and inaccessible (visited in 2018 September). The maintenance of public art is generally poor.

6. Though it was an environment friendly event, the bureaucrats did not appeal the point. Accordingly, it may sound paradoxical, but artists seemed to feel free to create artworks on the matter of the environment and art as site-specific art, as though the artists in former Socialist block happened to find a certain freedom except for political art if their creation met the state-imposed standard.

The festival was conducted in an atmosphere that remained congenial to the nature throughout. The streets of Thailand in 2018 were already calm, there seemed to be no after-effects of the political turmoil. The state chose Krabi as the first Thailand Biennale because there were no serious political problems and was deemed suitable to show the state policy beside a famous tourist spot.

In the past, the state imposed their authentic landscape on the people in local place. According to Matthew Phillips, in the cold war era, to prove the fact that local Thailand kept a pristine rural community engaged in a simple life, trips were organized to transport urban residents of Bangkok along with a stream of fascinated foreign visitors into the provinces of the north and northeast. There, further re-enactments portrayed these 'pristine' communities as secure in their spiritual beliefs, living in harmony with nature (Phillips 2017, 1). Withey and other scholars show the similar process of creation of space and picture in Europe in the 18th and the 19th century. Even the 21st century, Thai urban dwellers believe that rural villagers should keep their rural wisdom, pristine Thai. The idea was made use of anti-Thaksin sentiment (Sopranzetti 2017). On this remark, tourism is not only luxury or entertainment, but the experience and impression that strongly modified the identity of the Thai people and transformed the Thai Public

Space, and lastly, how to appreciate the space for the purpose of proving their cultural status towards anonymous global observers.

Additionally, American tourists during the Cold War did not only enjoy a luxury but had cultural tourism as a means to understand others, although such a climate of public opinion was covertly imposed by the U.S. political elite under Domino theory (Christina Klein, 2003, Fabian Johannes 2017)⁸¹. The American attitude soon influenced the Thai middle-class, resulting in them seeking to travel to new places within Thailand. While the popular tourism still shares the concept with old-time Grand Tours, such a sentimentalism is different from the early modern Siamese elite's one who traveled in domestic Siam for pseudo ethnographic curiosity and Western style of colonial attitude.

In summary, under the influence of World Fairs, the modernizing elite conducted an ethnographical survey within their state. It accelerated the centralization of the state and gave a broad outline of Thainess. During the Cold War, cultural tourism in Thailand became popular with American tourists. As the American tourists were interested in Thai local culture, the middle-class Thais were curious on their own culture. They gradually sought for the pristine Thainess in rural villages. At that time, with Domino theory under the threat of communism, cultural tourism began to embrace the 'democrat idea'. In Post-Cold War, Thailand enjoyed neoliberal development but experienced the Asian financial crisis. The crisis brought two major changes in rural Thailand. Firstly, emerging new leader Thaksin encouraged the locals to work as entrepreneurs as means to be economically and politically active. Secondly, the policy of a self-sufficient economy was enforced by The Rama IX. Under the junta regime, Thailand Biennale was held in 2018 as a cooperative mega-project, arguably the biggest Pracharat project ever held in Thailand.

⁸¹ See Cold War Orientalism Asia in the Middlebrow imagination, 1945 – 1961 by Christina Klein, 2003 and Phillips, Matthew, Thailand in the Cold War, 2017, P 157

4.2 Chao Phraya River: The Venice of the Far East

In 1911, an Italian nobleman Salvatore Besso described the Thai capital city as ‘The Venice of the Far East’. The capital is still wrapped in mystery, in spite of the thousand efforts of modernism amid its maze of canals’ (Askew 2002, 41, cited in Sternstein 1982: 13). While semi-aquatic landscape has been replaced to massive skyscrapers and traffic jams, the city is proud of the history of canal city as with the restoration of the name of ‘Siam’. The notion has still been used for a cultural framework and nation-branding. In the 21st century, only a few canals like Khlong Saen Saep canal are active as a transportation channel for urban dwellers as most of the traditional waterways have vanished when Bangkok transitioned to land from amphibian.

In the early day of the district, Pasuk and Baker depict that Europeans who visited Siam in the 1820s thought much of the Chao Phraya delta was a ‘wilderness’. Settlements clung to the banks of the main rivers. Even along the Chao Phraya River from its estuary past Bangkok and into the upper delta, most of these banks looked ‘deserted’ and densely wooded (Pasuk and Baker 2008, 81). Since King Taksin allocated the capital at west side bank of Chao Phraya River, the growth of cities and plantation populations in colonial Asia created a rapidly growing demand for food, accelerated the early expansion of frontier settlement (Pasuk and Baker 2008, 82).

On the relocation of the capital of the Siam to Bangkok, the city was moved across Chao Phraya River, built on similar principles to Ayutthaya (Pasuk and Baker 2008, 27). An island was created by closing a river meander with a canal. The word ‘Ayutthaya’ was inscribed in the city’s official name. The remains of shattered Ayutthayan monuments were brought to the city and incorporated into its new buildings.⁸² All surviving manuscripts were

⁸² Soprzanetti shows how Siam built new city. “... for rebuilding their urban structure and cosmological tradition, and court rituals into Krung Rattanakosin, brick from Aytthaya's most notable buildings were shipped and used in the new city (Soprzanetti, 2018, Loc 754)... what the Burmese pillage had left standing, the Chakri

sought out and compiled into recensions of laws, histories, religious texts, and manuals on the practice of every aspect of government (Pasuk and Baker 2008, 27). The arrangement of the entire ensemble in the new capital roughly corresponded to the plan of the royal palace at Ayutthaya (Povatong, 2011, 56). In the time of rapid social transition of market economy, King Monkut revived a great deal of royal ritual, which had been neglected since the fall of Ayutthaya, including the annual festival of the great swing. He enforced the biennial ritual of allegiance in which the provincial ruler and officials gathered, often at the royal wat, and drank the water of allegiance while facing towards the capital (Pasuk and Baker 2008, 49). To fortify the capital against enemies, he built six new forts, but also created a new city pillar which cast a new horoscope for the country (Pasuk and Baker 2008, 49).

4.3 The legacy of King Chulalongkorn's grand tour: urban vista and wide view

Compared to Siam-Ratchaprasong, the condition of the Old City along Chao Phraya River and its tributary canals are more complicated as culture-specific criterion is required to produce the space as urban beauty rather than a commercial center⁸³. According to Chatri, the discourse on conservation entered Thailand in the late nineteenth century through the elite of the court as part of the process of developing a modern nation-state, in much the same way as in the rest of the world. Since then, thinking on conservation has gradually developed in Thailand (Chatri 2012, 126). Interestingly, according to Povatong, new establishment of temples ventured by Rama V was a scant amount compared to former kings' establishments. Rama V had to restore and conserve the old temples which were built by former kings, like the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, rather than establishing anew separate from a zeitgeist of modernism. Additionally, while Rama V regarded Buddhism as a significant national norm, in the global phenomena, he

dynasty disassembled and reconstructed in the new capital as a way to save money and as material evidence of Rama I's self-professed role as the restorer of the Ayutthaya Kingdom" (Sopranozetti, 2018, Loc 754).

⁸³ According to Herzfeld, beautification is a mantra for modernist planners worldwide, but their conception of it has a specific, narrow history, mostly in Western schools of architecture and planning (Herzfeld 2016, 68).

proceeded several modern and colonial style space productions. Along to Rachini Road, the king constructed the canal-side promenade after research of the street and canals with bridges of Dutch Batavia during his 1871 trip (Povatong, 2008, 112). He also created Saranrom Gardens as an open public park that was first laid out as a formal landscape design with a wide lawn at its center, surrounded by European-style partners, ponds, fountains, pavilions and bandstands (Povatong, 2008, 112).

Thus, according to Povatong, as the social, economic, and institutional transformation of the Siamese state during the reign of Rama V was profound (2011, 28) on the matter of civilization, preservation, modernization. While Siam maintained its autonomy, they believed that they should have acquired Western civilization and modernization under the increasing influence and pressure from France and Britain. In 1882, Rama V proceeded with several urban projects: the new Courts of Justice, a monument to the King Rama I. Opening the first Siamese National Exhibition, inauguration ceremony of the new Chakri Throne Hall. According to Povatong, the year 1882 was a milestone in Rama V's reign. Within fifteen years of rule, the king inculcated a sense of progressive minds in a group of Siamese aristocrats (Povatong 2011, 121). Under the threat of new world order, architecture was conceived of as an effective tool to send out messages to local and global audiences in a mix of traditions and modernity as Siamese-style architecture and neo-classical designs (Povatong 2011, 121). Rama V also moved around abroad besides the domestic social rebuilding. The king had several field trips in colonial cities like Singapore and Dutch Batavia. The royal elite collected documents on western modernization. After years of reading and hearing about Europe, of visiting the simulacra of the West in their Asian colonies. While this research was instructive for the Siamese elite, the king's first grand tours to Europe in 1897 brought the decisive social reform to Siam, the king embarked on a huge project to remake Bangkok into a modern Siamese capital (Povatong 2011, 173, Thongchai 2000, 539, Peleggi 2002).

Povatong described that during the nine months journey, the king was fully impressed with life because of the wealth and its source, the power, and the pleasure in Europe

(Povotong 2011, 175). During the grand tour, Rama V and the Siamese aristocrats quickly learnt that even in Europe there were varying degrees of “civilization;” not everything in Europe was favorable. Neither were living traditions swept away or completely replaced by modern civilization (Thongchai 2000, 538, cited in Thiphakorawong 1971, Povotong 2011, 176). According to Povotong, during the grand tour to Europe Rama V also found the dark side of civilization in Europe. The king visited the house of a wretchedly poor vegetable seller to inspect her living conditions. “There was a room to prepare the vegetables, and an utterly dark bedroom with just a small bed. When they are poor, the *farang* [Europeans] are actually extremely poor” (Povotong 2011, 176). Apart from such a serious observation of life of the people conducted Rama V, the king almost always enjoyed civic pageantry and spectacles. Especially those created in his honor or anything that suggested strong ties between the European rulers and their subjects (Povotong 2011, 179). For urban vistas, throughout the entire trip the king repeatedly complimented on European cities’ wide avenues and boulevards. By 1897, old congested areas of most European cities were already regularized and ameliorated by the severe geometry of the boulevards. These findings of Rama V directly affected the urban project in Siam and even policies by bureaucracy in the 21st century. Rama V’s attempt to civilize his populace through architecture and civic space was readily applauded by many, especially the foreign community in Bangkok (Povotong 2011, 112).

For understanding the background of biennials in 2018, this chapter 4.3 introduces the development of city planning in the early modernizing period of Siam. In the late 19th century, the modernizing elite also inaugurated and established several bureaucrat institutions. For managing property and public space, King Rama V set up a new department which has been succeeded by BMA. Modeled by the British colonial PWDs, the Siamese The Public Works Department (PWD) was established in 1889. It had a central role in the creation of building programs in the early modernizing era of Siam. It first consisted of five Sections: Engineering, Architectural, Roads, Canals and Creeks and Buildings. In the beginning, the PWD’s focus was on the improvements of roads, bridges and other engineering works (Povotong 2011, 134). In conjunction with the Chakri Reformation’s tendency to centralize and modernize, the

aspiration for European standard and taste led to the establishment of the PWD. Povatong says that while the Siamese aristocrats readily embraced European architecture in their palaces, public offices and pleasure gardens, traditional Siamese-style temples were also constructed. The ability to move deftly between the Eastern and Western realms of architecture was crucial to the modern Siamese aristocracy's public image (Povatong 2011, 104). The early modernizing elite's idea is, to a larger degree, identical to today's bureaucrats in Bangkok (Povatong 2011, 105). Povatong depicts that since the establishment, the PWD steadily grew. In 1892 King Rama V pushed forward a major reform of the administrative system. The various ministries and departments that had functioned since the reign of Rama I had been totally reorganized into twelve ministries. The PWD was elevated into a Ministry of Public Works. Apart from the Administrative Office, the new Ministry consisted of five Departments: Public Works, Railways, Post and Telegraph, Goldsmiths, and the Ten Crafts. The new PWD undertook all of the Siamese government's building projects (Povatong 2011, 135).

In Thailand city-planning is conducted by BMA while the land is owned by CPB. Building itself is initiated by private sectors but the land is leased by CPB and private sectors understand the royalist-led capitalist development well. According to Yongtanit, The Crown Property Bureau (CPB) is one of the most prominent landlords in Thailand. CPB has been managing royal assets since it was established in 1938 and it has been run by at least four royally-appointed directors and includes the minister of finance until now. The extent of the CPB's wealth is not known. In 2012, Forbes magazine estimated its value in property and other investments came to more than \$30bn (BBC 2018). The roots of the Bureau can be also traced back to the reign of King Rama V. During the era of absolute monarchy, all land belonged to the King and was under the responsibility of Phra Khlang Maha Sombat (the National Treasury) and Phra Klang Khang Thi (the Privy Purse). King Rama V separated his private properties from the national properties (Yongtanit 2012, 104). The CPB has approximately 37,000 rental contracts covering a total area of 41,000 rai or 16,400 acres (Grossman 2011: 294–295, cited by Yongtanit 2012) in thirteen provinces in Thailand. The profitable properties of the CPB are only 7 percent of the total, while the remaining 93 percent are rented out at zero or minimal rates to nonprofit and

governmental organizations. Despite the small proportion of profitable properties, the CPB enjoys a significant income from the rental business, reported as 2.7 billion baht or 900 million USD in 2011 (CPB 2012: 10–11, cited by Yongtanit 2012). The properties of the CPB are mostly located in the inner city or business core areas where land values are high. For example, as the thesis introduced previously that CPB leases its property to TCC Group’s One Bangkok in Lumpini. Apart from this rental income, the CPB also has income from the dividends of three leading public companies, namely Siam Commercial Bank Plc (SCB), The Siam Cement Group (SCG), and The Deves Insurance Plc (Yongtanit 2012, 104). In 2017, according to the BBC, The Crown Property Bureau said “it transferred ownership of the assets to His Majesty following a change in the law. His Majesty may take decisions on all matters pertaining to their charge and management at his discretion”. The statement went on to say: "His Majesty made the decision to make the 'Crown Property Assets' be subject to the same duties and taxation as would assets belonging to any other citizen" (BBC 2018).

‘The Venice of the East’ may be an activation code for the re-development project along Chao Phraya River. Several recent projects may be jointly implemented with “Bright Chao Phraya River Project in Honor of His Majesty the King” (Chatri 2012)⁸⁴. Povatong says that on the first day Rama V arrived in Venice, the king climbed up its tallest structure, St. Mark’s Campanile, and enjoyed the grand vistas (Povatong 2011, 178). The king enjoyed immensely the panoramic bird’s-eye-views of the great European cities (Povatong 2011, 178). Interestingly, according to Povatong, although one of the key components of nineteenth-century European architecture was its modern design, the king did not seem to care much. Apart from the Kiel Canal and the Eiffel Tower, the king did not show particular interest in modern architectural and engineering projects. Even in the description of Crystal Palace, only the entertainment and the

⁸⁴ Chatri Prakitnonthakan, “Rattanakosin Charter: The Thai Cultural Charter for Conservation”, he shows the “Bright Chao Phraya River Project in Honor of His Majesty the King”, 2008 (Journal of the Siam Society, Vol. 100, 2012). Italian photographer and journalist Jan Daga presented an exhibition of photographs taken within the Mahakan Fort walls, 'Last Stand For Pom Mahakan' (Amarine 2018).

dinner were mentioned (Povatong 2011, 178). Rather, the king enjoyed mostly the historical styles of the architecture of his time. His preference towards the historical, academic styles of architecture resembled his taste in art, according to Povatong (2011, 179).

When viewed in the long perspective of history, it is not difficult to find the linkage between the early modernizing elite and bureaucrats in the 21st century. Povatong says the ability to move deftly between the hybrid worlds was crucial to the modern Siamese aristocracy's public image. A logical response to the Siamese elite's dual needs was to maintain their social dominance within the kingdom and to create an image of "civilized" Siam for global audience (Povatong 2011, 179). What comes to mind at the production of space for dual need by the early modernizing elite is the royalist-led capitalist development.

Since the enthusiasm of Rama V's bird-eye-view was noticed, Bangkok built several taller buildings. By the middle of the twentieth century, these were located at Yaowarat (Chinatown). Central Group established a taller department store there in 1950s. The plots for shopping malls and skyscrapers have been shifted to Siam-Ratchaprasong (as chapter 2 shows)-demonstrated by the national project of revival of Venice of the East, Bangkok Observation Tower⁸⁵ which was registered in 2014. The Bangkok Observation Tower Foundation was originally chaired by Visit Malaisirirat, CEO of Magnolia Quality Development Corporation Co, the property development arm of Charoen Pokphand (CP) Group. The position was later taken over by former Finance Minister Panas Simasathien. The 459 meter & 29 story Tower is to be perched on the Charoen Nakhon Soi 7 at the bank of Chao Phraya River (Bangkok Post, 29 Jun 2017). The tower will be built on a state-owned land plot in Khlong San close to where The Jam Factory⁸⁶ is located, Bangkok Post reported. Both ICONSIAM and Bangkok Observation Tower would also represent historic conservation and reconstruction while adopting new technology as contemporary buildings with art museum and art district.

⁸⁵ According to personal informants, the institute does not provide any public information.

⁸⁶ The Jam Factory is a complex with art gallery, green park, offices, café, restaurant.

4.4 China Town and Bangkok Biennial

The section 4.4 shows the relation between biennial culture in Thailand and the China Town (Yaowarat) as the thesis shows the role of Sino-Thai family business on the biennial culture in Thailand. Additionally, many venues of BB are located in Yaowarat used for an experiment by young Thai artist as the section 3.23 and 3.3.2 introduce. Yaowarat has kept full of stories of the early times of Chinese migrants and their family business. By 1835, the Chinese settlements at Sampheng had become a thriving market stretching two miles along a brick-paved road (Pasuk and Baker 2008, 33). The early arrivals were mostly entrepreneurs associated with the growing rice trade from Siam to China. Around 7,000 people arrived each year in the 1820s, rising to 14,000 people by 1870. About half of them returned home after a few years. Those remaining to settle accumulated to around 300, 000 people by the 1850s (Pasuk and baker 2008, 33). The Chinese were the pioneers of a market economy in Siam/Thailand. The government appreciated their value, imposed taxes on their enterprises. It gradually abandoned trade monopolies and hired more of the Chinese entrepreneurs as tax-farmers. It is the typical story of the origin of Sino-Thai family businesses. Thaksin family also started their business from tax-farmer⁸⁷. With growing Chinese trade and immigration, the market economy expanded in the Chao Phraya heartland and down the peninsula (Pasuk and Baker 2008, 45). In Thai history, market driven economy was first triggered by the British victory over China. According to Pasuk and Baker, in 1842 Britain humbled China in the Opium Wars, showing the consequences of defying British demands for 'free trade'. The impact of the war ruined the Siam-China junk trade, and persuaded Siam to look to westerners for a substitute. The British victory also meant that both India and China, the sources of so much of Siam's old culture, had fallen under western domination. Increasingly, the elite's gaze swiveled westwards (Pasuk and Baker 2008, 45). The Chinese people in Bangkok formed self-help and self-defense societies. The 1855 Bowring treaty further stimulated the market economy, and increased the strain on the old administrative system that did not work for controlling Chinese merchants in a specific way⁸⁸. After the 1932 revolution,

⁸⁷ See Pasuk and Baker "Thaksin". Thaksin was not from a poor family, on the contrary, their family is one of the most prominent families in Chiang Mai. They started their family business from tax-farmer.

⁸⁸ See Wasana 2019 as well, the impact of Bowring treaty is tremendous not only on Siamese, but especially on Sino-Thai entrepreneurs. Wasana says that the termination of the Siamese court's monopoly on international

the activities and the influence of formerly important princes was greatly reduced as they lost status as leaders of society and cultural patronage, by a radical cut in royal budget (Askew 2002, 45). In terms of socio-economic change in the country at large and Bangkok in particular, a number of trends and changes were notable. The most important result was the emergence of ‘bureaucratic capitalism’ whereby Chinese entrepreneurs forged mutually beneficial alliance with state officials (Askew 2002, 46, Suehiro 1989, 130, see also Pasuk and Baker 2008). According to The Yaowarat Heritage Centre, Sampheng district (三聘) was Bangkok's biggest market in the early Rattanakosin period. During the early Rattanakosin period, Sampheng was the only densely populated community outside the city wall. The only “road” outside the city wall was the Sampheng alley-way, a narrow, 800-meter walkway stretching from Saphan Han Gate and lined solely by shops and houses owned by the Chinese. The large numbers of younger generation Chinese with Thai-Chinese blood have no major problem in assimilating into Thai society (The Yaowarat Heritage Centre, visited in 2016).

Once the thriving business center in Yaowarat has handed over its position as a largest business center to Siam-Ratchaprasong as the Thai elite felt the name of Yaowarat was unsuitable for the modern Thai center (Ünaldi 2018). They revived the name ‘Siam’, business center was relocated in east Bangkok. The transition of the commercial center happened in 1950s. The list of tallest buildings shows how Bangkok business district has moved from Yaowarat to the east of Bangkok (Millet, Chungsirawat, Grossman, 2013):

name	place	years	stores
Ched Chan Building	Chinatown	1920	7 stores
Kao Chan Building	Chinatown	1946	9 stores
Chokchai Tower	Sukhumvit	1982	32 stores, 126 m

trade had a severe impact on leading Chinese entrepreneurs because the Chinese were no longer the only foreigners allowed to travel and trade freely throughout the Siamese kingdom (2019, Loc 1941). The impact of the Opium War is significant in Asia. Wasana also states that King Mongkut of Siam agreed to sign the Bowring Treaty because he knew of China’s devastating defeat in the Opium War and was certain that Siam would suffer the same fate if it resisted the demands of the British Empire (2019, Loc 3623).

Jewelry Trade Center	Silom	1996	59 stores, 220.7 m
Baiyoke 2 Towers	Pratunam	1997	88 stores, 304 m
Empire Tower 1	Sathorn	1999	49 stores, 227 m
Maha Nakorn	Sathorn	2016	77 stores, 314 m

While the commercial center has moved to East side of Bangkok, Yaowarat is still one of the busiest business districts from where Chinese commodities are distributed and to where they are collected. It is also known as a place that accommodates edgy art spaces and bars for artists and youth at Nana street. In Yaowarat, there is a short lane furtively, Nana street between Maitrichit and Charoeng Krung roads. The area used to be notorious location for junkies and prostitutes. It was not until an artist decided to settle down and run a community space contemporary art practice that the previous establishments disappeared. Since the first art person ran the art space, Thai and western artists have been attracted to Nana street. They started to settle down there, renovated the old buildings for their studio/art spaces. Below is the result of my interview and field research in Nana street in 2016.

The ‘old commercial center’ China Town is the place several Sino-Thai conglomerates developed their business at the first stage of their business. While Nana street at China town becomes ‘hip’ places for urban dwellers in the 21st century, China Town was replaced by Wang Mai (Pathumwan) as the center of business district in 1990s.⁸⁹ Contrary to Chinatown’s old day’s reminiscence, “Siam” area was invented by General Chalermchai. The idea was that the name of the building to be developed on this piece of land should convey the meaning of Thailand as a long established country with a long history and heritage (Ünaldi, 2016, 131). The

⁸⁹ See Ünaldi (2016, 134-5) about the trend that moved Bangkok’s central business district from Wang Burapha and Yaowarat (China Town) to Pathumwan.

investors thought if Bangkok's important places had peasant names, then it would not be the civilized and sophisticated capital that it is (O'Connor, 1990).

The dwellers of Bangkok are very keen on exercise, they are avid fans of the Yoga, running and aerobics which have now become a new social trend. During the evening, several public multi-purpose spaces, like park and parking-lots are popular with work-out fanatics. Some scholars call this phenomenon the new cult of Bangkok dwellers (Kannapa Pongponrat, 2015). As they always have, people came to a public space beneath a bridge along Chao Phraya River. They were self-absorbed in their public aerobics sessions. Many participants did not even notice that it was also the opening ceremony of Bangkok Biennial. The guerilla-like biennial blended into the local Bangkok landscape beneath the Rama VIII bridge. Among the sport fanatics, the festival began two inflatable tube men at both sides of the stage with 'Bangkok Biennial' printed on their bodies. The inflatable tube man is a familiar face in Bangkok streets and shopping malls. He has a wacky face and has a wave. The man is often twisted toward unusual directions, often flopping and snagged along the street of Bangkok.

As the first chapter introduces, Bangkok Biennial is a sort of counter biennial which rejects the top-down hierarchy. They cut several of the main essences of biennial, such as the position of auteur curator, the thematic exhibition, cooperation with major companies, collaboration with bureaucrats. Two national, city level 'official' biennials brought site-specific art and socially engaged art links between national history and the economy in Thailand in 2018. In contrast to these biennials, as the guerrilla-like activities based on the daily life of the participants, they are rooted in local Bangkok and know the impact it has on urban life. While the living culture represented by the dwellers at Pom Mahakan is a microcosmic mirror of the nation, the anonymous organizers of Bangkok Biennial tried to encourage the city to think critically. The participants of Bangkok Biennial do not necessarily attach themselves into the local and national history and market. Adding the self-funded grass-root Bangkok Biennial to the other two official biennials meant the trio of biennials gave people the scope to see how the public space with art is in Thailand. It clearly reveals that the orientation of biennial art is decided by source of the

budget. Its taste is carefully polished by political fabric. It is not too self-evident but for a long, culture has been used as black box when it was addressed (see Johnson 2008). Especially in Asia, people tend to avoid constructive critics of art and politics that might create an argument. However, it's almost impossible to think about the Thai art scene without referring to the political turmoil. Although the biennial does not show any direct political actions, their everyday practice come from the need of people in an urban city shedding light on the urban space. At this point, the biennial is inevitably open to everyone.

One of the pavilions of BB, Speedy Granma's Unchalee "Lee" Anantawat believes that the participants of BB had to find a way to do things by themselves with DIY attitude that Thai people have always had, if they wanted to take an action (Lee 2018 on the interviewed by Flaunt Magazine). Emphasizing its sense of grassroots ground and urban practice of citizen in Bangkok, Speedy Granma, Soy source gallery, ba:nana:press at Yaowarat, WTF Gallery, Cartel Artspace and Artist + Run and Tentacles at N 22, several independent galleries gathered into the grass root festival. According to Lee, the biennial was inspired by the Philippines Biennale. She banded together with her fellows, Gompertz and Liam Morgan to make the grass root biennial event anonymous. The choice of the venues is up to the active participants. According to Ariane, a number of pavilions have been set up in unusual locations; from a temple in Nang Loeng district (the Supernatural Pavilion) to the Bangkok Bazaar market (for "Quid Pro Quo"), a light bulb shop (for "Sanguinal 2551") or even an internet website (lololol.net) (Bangkok Post 2018 28th, August). At the same time, Bangkok Biennial also used a typical site-specific art installation at the Praisaneeyakarn building (Bangkok Post 2018). Curated by curatorial collective the Charoen Contemporaries art group, several Thai and foreign artists like Miti Ruangkritya, Anon Chaisansook and Wolfgang Bellwinkel installed their artworks recollecting the modernism of Thailand through the old building.

People in Thailand has been exposed to the upheaval of political landscape for a long time. The polarized social fabric brought the emerging young artists who grew up under continuous political upheaval in Thailand. The junta ruler strictly censors film, literature but

contemporary art is less censored, relatively (The guardian, 2019 March 15). Ariane had a discussion with Silpakorn University art historian and lecturer Thanavi Chotpradit, she emphasized the emerging young artists who are taking central stage. Their approach of politics differs from established activist-style Thai artists like Vasan Sitthiket or Manit Sriwanichpoom (Bangkok Post 2018). Several art galleries that participated in Bangkok Biennial provide alternative opportunities for these young artists who usually find it difficult to express their political identity in Thailand (Bangkok Post 2018). For example, in the early 2018 WTF Gallery invited graffiti artist Headache Stencil. The artist exhibited the satirical statues of two politicians, Thaksin and Prayuth both played a card game together.

A lot of private studio were used as a pavilion. For example, photographer Darkle uses his private renovated shophouse as a venue. At ba:nana:press, Justin opened his studio for his show and photographer Cedric Arnold had an installation of his photography at its rooftop. It was exposed outside air at Nana street where the artwork decayed, the same as his real memory. Bangkok Biennial also cooperated with the southmost and the northeast. While the Southmost is known as a conflict zone, Re/Form/Ing Patani aimed to interpret the word “Patani” as both historical and contemporary, ranging from religion and tradition (the official guidebook 2018). Khon Kaern Manifesto in the northeast also cooperated in Bangkok Biennial. The aesthetics are of the resistance of centralization with its artistic and cultural approach of a marginalized community (the official guidebook 2018). While Bangkok Biennial was tagged as the capital city Bangkok, it nevertheless showed grass-root network diversity.

4.5 Conclusion

Chapter 4 showed the legacy of the early modernizing elite in the late 19th century on the biennial culture in Thailand 2018. Thai elite preferred to adopt the image of Siam/Thailand from Western gaze towards Siam/Thailand since the middle of 19th century. The aspiration is also tactics to survive in globalization. The rebranding of Chao Phraya River side is based on the idea in the early modernism of Siam revitalized by the global elite in Thailand. The

thesis also showed that the historical linkage between the early modernizing elite and today's bureaucrats. It examines how Siam/Thai struggled with the global standard: mutual interest within art professionals and bureaucrats and private sectors: set the world-class urban space using the art as branding, as the royalist-led capitalist development. On the other hands, the grass roots biennial Bangkok Biennial provides a space especially for young and local artists, its daily practice presents the taste and reality of a city that only the people who live a specific city can understand. In outside Bangkok, Thailand Biennale in 2018 showed its hybridity with several policies like self-sufficient economy by Rama IX, mega-project by OCAC.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The biennial gives opportunities to the citizen to be active participants/audiences in public space, at the same time, the ideal worldview by political/capitalist elite would be imposed oligarchically through the event with the imagination of global gaze. The biennial art in Thailand has been a junction between national level construction of Thai identities and grass root artist-led activities involving a local community, private sectors, bureaucrats, and citizen. Even though the first attempt was often practiced by artists and small communities as an active grass root movement, the ambition that set themselves on the global map is landed on a global institutional consolidations where the artist seems to have become just a cog in the cultural industry machine (Jean-Marc Poinot 2002, 2007, 21).

In the modernizing period, the Siamese ruling class tried to catch up with the global trend. Through the grand tours / journeys, they gained new trends and returned it to their own country. They believed that their participation in major World Fairs would increase their recognition and elevate their status in the eyes of the world (Thongchai, 2000, 540). Bangkok Art Biennale curatorial team also believed that the biennial would raise Thailand's cultural status on the global stage. The chairman and co-founder of BAB ties their biennials within their family business (One Bangkok so forth and its expansion to ASEAN) in cooperation with art professionals and meeting the state-interest. Apart from the framework of biennials that is originally from Europe and pervasive in Asia, the biennialization in Thailand 2018 shows Thai ambitions for being a global member consisting of talented Thai global elites in several fields like art, business, politics, who have worked and made deep inroads into global art history and set themselves on the global art map.

While officially acknowledged nation/city level biennials with ample funds are paving the new landscape with their art projects and new urban projects, other, counter biennials were held in downtown Bangkok. In fact, many of the precursors of biennials in Thailand as

contemporary art practices such as Chiang Mai Social Installation, About Café / About Studio, are grass root and community-based art practice without national support. The two currents in 1990s - the global art practice and local community activity - paved the way for three biennials in 2018.

On the national level, the legacy of the early modernizing elite in the late 19th century can be traced to two biennials (TB and BAB). In Thailand, several administrative cultural projects like creative industry (Thaksin), megaproject (OCAC with Apinan Poshyananda)⁹⁰ are finally crystalized as biennials.

The cooperation with Sino-Thai family conglomerates is a Thai style neoliberalism that harmonizes with the institutional monarchy and military regime. According to Wasana Wongsurawat, in the early modernizing period under the absolute monarchy, Siam was attractive to the transnational Chinese as a base for conducting and expanding business (2019, Loc 225). Thailand's ethnic Chinese minority had substantial status and a critical role in the nation-building process of the modern Siamese state (2019, Loc 1069). In 2018, the state enjoys its development with trustful Sino-Thai family entrepreneurs in the same manner as the early modern time. In the 21st century, Sino-Thai family conglomerates have contributed catching up with the new global standard with their new service and biennial art festival. The production of urban space is a cooperative project with several actors from ministerial institutes, private sectors and individual art professionals. The result of development of loyalist-led capitalist economy brought the combined effect of the rebranding and reinforcement of the royal history and the globally recognizable nation branding which attracts the global rich and wealthy tourists who are interested in art, history, a clean and sustainable environment. The BAB, celebrating neoliberalism and capitalism, does not weaken the influence of the monarchy and the military but the production of space by BAB was carefully conducted to be in line with the political and economic elite's interests. This interest fostered the centralization of capital and promoted a world class city for people in wealthy families, while, the artistic director of BAB Apinan Poshyananda,

⁹⁰ On the contribution of Apinan Poshyananda on OCAC and the influence of Thaksin's Creative Industry to OCAC, see David Teh 2016, 56, 59-60.

emphasized the difficulty and challenges under the Junta ruled political condition during the BAB in 2018⁹¹. The early modernizing elite's aspiration and anxiety has been succeeded to Thailand in the 21st century in the form of biennials.

The characteristics of biennial such as the site-specificity, trans-culturalism and the platform between regionality and globality mitigates the relation between global art practice and local culture as the biennial is perennial and a temporal space production.

In summary, the biennials as a production of urban space is a cooperative project with several actors from ministerial institutes, private sectors, NGOs and individual art professionals. Additionally, accommodating contemporary art festival/fairs tagged with a geographic label is essential to achieve the ambition of becoming a world-class city. TB is the state-led biennial that is located in the southern part of Thailand as the first edition. The inter-localization is successful, but some art works/projects made local dwellers angry. BB, as mentioned earlier, takes the form of a counter biennial, thereby challenges the conventional style of biennial culture. It eliminates the important factors of biennial like theme, support from the state and private sector, qualities local dwellers deem important.

This thesis has shown how urban space is produced with mutual interests among art professionals, ministerial bureaucracies, capital investors and beneficiaries through the biennials. The thesis has also shown how biennial culture has been involved with citizen's imagination on space and city. While the two Thai biennials, BAB and TB, celebrate the neoliberalism in a festive mood, the biennials are not merely entertainment shows nor advertisements for a new service by global companies, but in fact are the creation of a visible picture of city (world) for political elites and citizens. While the biennials give opportunities to the citizen to be active participants in contemporary art, at the same time, the ideal worldview by political/capitalist elites are imposed through the event as a few art professionals chose the artists and artworks. As the biennial uses a lot of the governmental or municipal budget/subsidy, other local art practices are

⁹¹ See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/21/risk-taking-artists-defy-thai-taboos-bangkok-art-biennale>

losing opportunities to be supported, and their activities are authorized by global players. As it is difficult to avoid the global trends and world demands, the biennial will continue to bring contemporary movements and with it global viewers to perennial art festivals.



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