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Protecting Siam's Heritage



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PREFACE TO THE CENTENARY VOLUME

The number 108 is auspicious or magical in many cultures but especially in Thailand. The number 100 is an inevitable cause for celebration in our decimal cultures. Here we combine both. The first issue of the *Journal of the Siam Society* is dated 1904, yet the *Journal* only now reaches its hundredth volume after 108 years because of issues missed, mostly during the two world wars.

To mark this centenary, the Council of the Siam Society decided to have a special volume, dedicated for the first time to a single theme. As the Society was in the process of launching a project on Siamese Heritage Protection, the choice of theme required little thought and provoked no dissension.

I owe thanks first and foremost to James Stent who identified many of the authors, cajoled them to agree, and contributed the introduction.

We both are greatly indebted to the authors who responded with such enthusiasm and skill to our invitation to participate in this volume. We are especially grateful to Piriya Krairiksh, Sumet Jumsai, and Phuthorn Bhumadhon who jointly anchor this collection. All of the chapters appear here in their current form for the first time. Only one has appeared earlier in Thai.

We are grateful to the President of the Society, Khun Bilaibhan Sampatisiri, and two successive Councils, for unfailing support. Khun Kanitha Kasina-Ubol, Khun Euayporn Kerdchouay and other members of the Society's staff have helped throughout in various ways. Paul Bromberg was responsible for the technical editing. Thanks also to San San May, Steve Van Beek, Bonnie Brereton, and Trasvin Jittidecharak.

This volume of the *Journal* appears in parallel as a book, entitled *Protecting Siam's Heritage*, co-published with Silkworm Books.

The chosen theme of the volume is a battlefield. The concept of heritage itself is fiercely contested. The definition of what constitutes heritage (and what does not) provokes debate. The protection of heritage is at the mercy of political priorities and conflicts. These tensions are reflected in this collection.

Chris Baker
Honorary Editor

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