Richard A. Rosengarten
Editor
The Journal of Religion

Dear Editor:

Please find enclosed my manuscript entitled "Buddhism, Copying, and the Art of the Imagination in Thailand," which I request you to consider for publication as *Original Article* in *The Journal of Religion*.

Through this study, I present a hypothesis on new urban religioscapes in metropolitan Bangkok. Bangkok is a city that comprises contradictory modernities; in other words, it contains cultural contexts that are modern and essentialist at the same time. To this end, I examined the architecture of two contrasting Buddhist monasteries—Wat Phra Dhammakaya and Sanam Chan Monastery—through fieldwork conducted between the years 1998 and 2002. The former represents the modern affinity of order and discipline of the radically neo-conservative Dhammakaya Movement (Body of Dhamma), and the latter is a chaotic, flamboyant, and kitsch monastic space located on the outskirts of the Bangkok. In addition, Sanam Chan Monastery shares similarities with the contemporary consumerist "Buddhist" style architecture consisting of shopping centers and arcades. Therefore, I argue that Sanam Chan is a postmodern representation of sanctity, a response to modernity, while Dhammakaya, besides its spectacular beauty, reflects the essentialist conditions that are inherent in modernity.

The most notable aspect of these monasteries, however, is that regardless of the stark difference, both the monastic spaces challenge the established religious hierarchy, its perceived orthodoxy, legitimization, and the ethical bases of the civic religion in Thailand. Thus, my study is the first of its kind to theorize urban religioscapes on the basis of the symbolism that their architecture depicts, pertaining to how they represent the development of Buddhism in Thailand. In this vein, I also propose that these dissimilarities as well as commonalities are one of the major reasons for Thailand's historical dilemma in attempting neutralization or negation of the existing cultural differences.

I believe that the findings of this study are relevant to the scope of your journal and will be of interest to its readership. The manuscript has been carefully reviewed by an experienced editor whose first language is English and who specializes in editing papers written by scientists whose native language is not English.

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This manuscript has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration by another journal. I have approved the manuscript and agree with submission to *The Journal of Religion*. There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,
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