

Bangkok Is Ringing: Sound Protest and Constraint in the City of Angels



Bangkok, the vibrant capital city of Thailand, is no stranger to protests and political tumult. However, in recent years, a new form of protest has emerged that is both creative and disruptive - the sound protest. This unique method of expressing dissent has become a hallmark of Bangkok's streets, echoing through its bustling markets and iconic landmarks, reverberating the grievances of a frustrated society.

Unlike traditional protests that rely on banners, placards, and speeches, the sound protest relies on the piercing sound of pots, pans, and everyday objects being struck together. The result is a cacophony of noise that is impossible to ignore, forcing both pedestrians and authorities to stop and pay attention.



Bangkok is Ringing: Sound, Protest, and

Constraint by Stephen Hawkins (Illustrated Edition, Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 10682 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 222 pages
Lending : Enabled



The Rise of the Sound Protest

The sound protest first gained prominence during the political turmoil that engulfed Bangkok in 2014. Known as the "Bangkok Shutdown," this series of protests aimed to paralyze the city and force the government to step down. As the traditional avenues of protest became increasingly constrained, protesters turned to unconventional methods to make their voices heard.

Initially, the sound protest was met with derision and ridicule. Many dismissed it as mere noise-making, devoid of any real impact. However, as the protests continued, the power of the sound protest became evident. The repetitive clanging of utensils and pots, coupled with the rhythmic chanting of slogans, created an atmosphere of defiance and unity.

The sound protest quickly gained popularity among Bangkok's disillusioned youth, who saw it as a way to express their frustration and disillusionment with the political establishment. Social media played a crucial role in spreading

awareness and organizing these grassroots movements, making it easier for like-minded activists to gather in specific locations and unleash a chorus of dissent.

Constraining the Sound Protest

As the sound protest gained momentum, the authorities scrambled to find ways to suppress it. They argued that the sound protests disrupted public order, disturbed the peace, and posed a threat to public safety. In response, a series of restrictive measures were implemented to curb the impact of this unconventional form of protest.

One such measure was the enforcement of noise pollution laws. Though a valid concern, these regulations were selectively enforced against sound protests, while turning a blind eye to other noise sources in the city. Critics argued that this selective enforcement was a clear attempt to stifle dissenting voices and curtail freedom of speech.

In addition to legal measures, authorities also employed psychological tactics to deter sound protests. They employed a range of strategies, including deploying large numbers of police officers to intimidate protesters, using high-pitched sonic devices to disperse crowds, and even orchestrating counter-noise protests to drown out the sound of dissent.

The Impact of the Sound Protest

Despite the constraints and challenges faced by sound protests, they have had a lasting impact on Bangkok's political landscape. They have disrupted the status quo and forced politicians to confront the grievances of the people, highlighting the growing dissatisfaction with the state of affairs.

Moreover, sound protests have paved the way for other creative forms of expression. Street art, performance art, and flash mobs have become increasingly prevalent, all owing to the pioneering efforts of sound protesters. These artistic mediums have allowed people to engage with political issues in a more accessible and visually stimulating way.

Furthermore, the sound protest has had a profound impact on the mindset of the average Bangkok citizen. It has shattered the notion that politics is the domain of a select few and encouraged ordinary citizens to actively participate in the democratic process. It has instilled a sense of empowerment and unity, reminding people of the power they hold when they come together to fight for a common cause.

The sound protest has become a rallying cry for the people of Bangkok, a city that refuses to be silenced by the constraints imposed upon it. It is a testament to the resilience and creativity of its citizens, who have found innovative ways to express their dissent and demand change. As the sound of clanging utensils continues to echo through the streets of this vibrant metropolis, Bangkok's status as the City of Angels takes on a new meaning - a city that rings with the sound of protest and constraint.



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Bangkok Is Ringing is an on-the-ground sound studies analysis of the political protests that transformed Thailand in 2010-11. Bringing the reader through sixteen distinct "sonic niches" where dissidents used media to broadcast to both local and diffuse audiences, the book catalogues these mass protests in a way that few movements have ever been catalogued. The Red Shirt and Yellow Shirt protests that shook Thailand took place just before other international political movements, including the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street. Bangkok Is Ringing analyzes the Thai protests in comparison with these, seeking to understand the logic not only of political change in Thailand, but across the globe.

The book is attuned to sound in a great variety of forms. Author Benjamin Tausig traces the history and use in protest of specific media forms, including community radio, megaphones, CDs, and live concerts. The research took place over the course of sixteen months, and the author worked closely with musicians, concert promoters, activists, and rank-and-file protesters. The result is a detailed and sensitive ethnography that argues for an understanding of sound and political movements in tandem. In particular, it emphasizes the necessity of thinking through constraint as a fundamental condition of both political movements and the sound that these movements produce. In order to produce political transformations, Bangkok Is Ringing argues, dissidents must be sensitive to the ways that their sounding is constrained and channeled.



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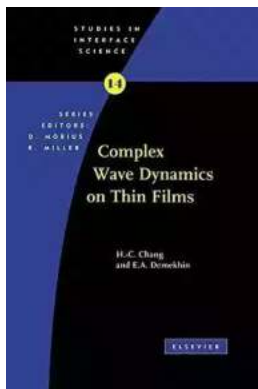
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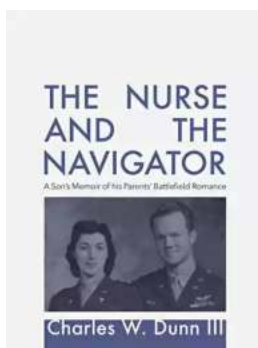
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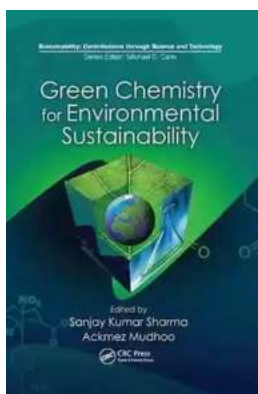
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