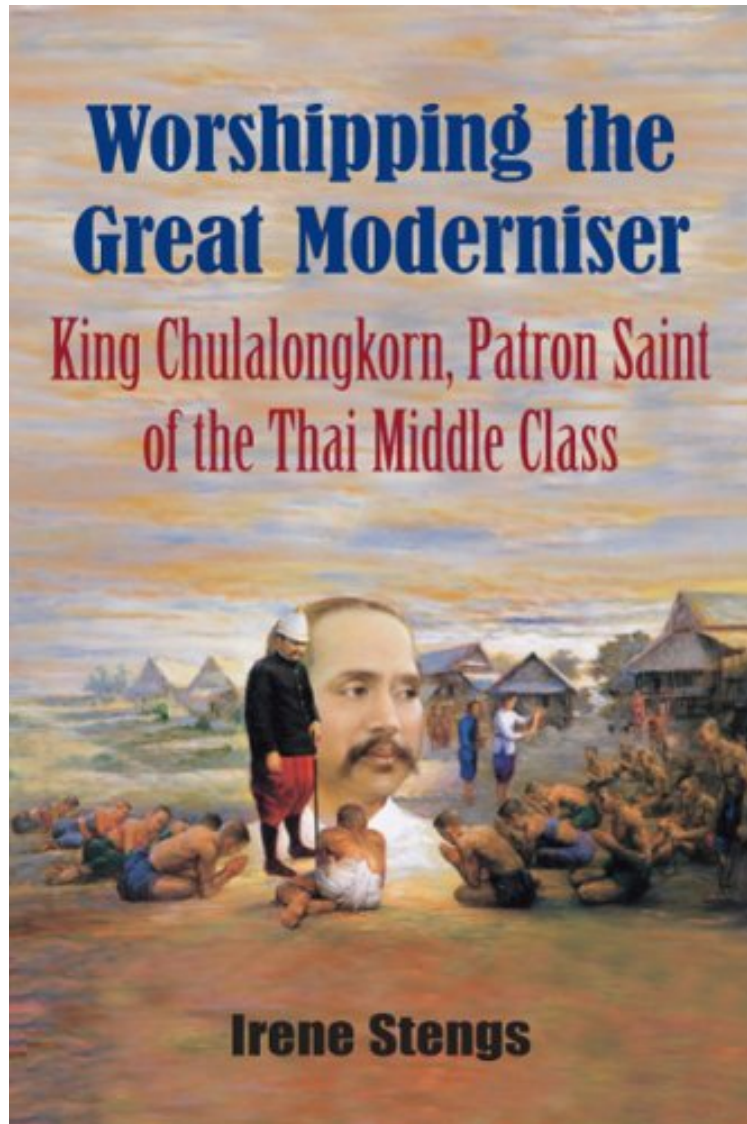


(Get free) Worshipping the Great Moderniser: King Chulalongkorn, Patron Saint of the Thai Middle Class

Worshipping the Great Moderniser: King Chulalongkorn, Patron Saint of the Thai Middle Class

Irene Stengs

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Contemporary Thailand has seen the rise of an immense cult focused on King Chulalongkorn the Great (r. 1868-1910). In *Worshipping the Great Moderniser*, Irene Stengs explores the continuing appeal of King Chulalongkorn and considers what this ruler's unprecedented popularity says about modern Thai society. Arguing that the exalted expectations of kingship are a product of the ambitions and anxieties of Thailand's expanding middle class, she compares the popular image of King Chulalongkorn with that of the present king, the highly venerated King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Stengs demonstrates how ideas and imaginings of Thainess, modernity, and kingship have culminated in what she terms "modern Buddhist kingship," a concept that draws on traditional idioms but is highly modern. Her search for the social imaginary surrounding Thai kingship and Thainess during the past century and a half yields an intriguing amalgam of popular religion, Buddhist kingship, nationalism, and material culture.

"[It] introduces the reader to many major components contributing to the Thai religious repertoire. The work should be lauded for maintaining a focus on material and visual objects, thereby making it a work that should be read in the fields of visual culture, anthropology, art history, and religious studies." Luke Schmidt, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, Vol. 18

About the Author Irene Stengs is a research associate in ethnology at the Meertens Institute, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in Amsterdam.