

# RETHINKING TRADITION—ANOTHER LOOK AT THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS AND MEANINGS OF RUEN THAI

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## Abstract

The essay explores the essential experiential characteristics of the traditional house, particularly those which may be appropriately interwoven into the fabric of Thai urban dwellings today. With hermeneutic phenomenology as its philosophical framework, the in-depth exploration takes the form of four comparative case studies, each representing a point in the line of tradition. Through a layering descriptive and interpretive process, five essential patterns emerge, each of which finds its meanings richly traceable to the various facets of the Thai culture. Together, the patterns and their meanings give rise to a framework, which reveals the many facets of a dwelling place, as well as their interrelationship and significance to the human experience. This evolving place structure underscores the long deserved significance of the aesthetic and metaphysical aspects of place. Finally, the essay

points out that tradition has served as a mirror which helps fostering an understanding of the present world. Through the everyday language and gestures, traces of forgotten meanings from the past re-emerge into light. In the end, the discoveries put forth in this paper raise a few issues revolving around the very idea of tradition—e.g. whether tradition can be viewed not as a “thing,” but rather a process in which the old interacts with the new, a selecting and filtering process wherein time is an essential agent, and we human are thus inherently conditioned by it.

*Tradition ... cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves in the first place, a historical sense, which ... involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence.... The past should be altered by the presence as much as the present is directed by the past ... the difference between the present and the past is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show.*

*T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”*

Tradition is no static “thing.” Rather, as this essay unfolds, I would like to rethink it as a critical agent in a meaning transformation process, where it serves as a mirror reflecting hidden or forgotten world views and issues in a society; a lamp, shedding light upon probable answers to present-day dilemmas. Or is tradition a process?—a selective process in which the old perpetually interacts with the new, filtering out feeble values of the time.

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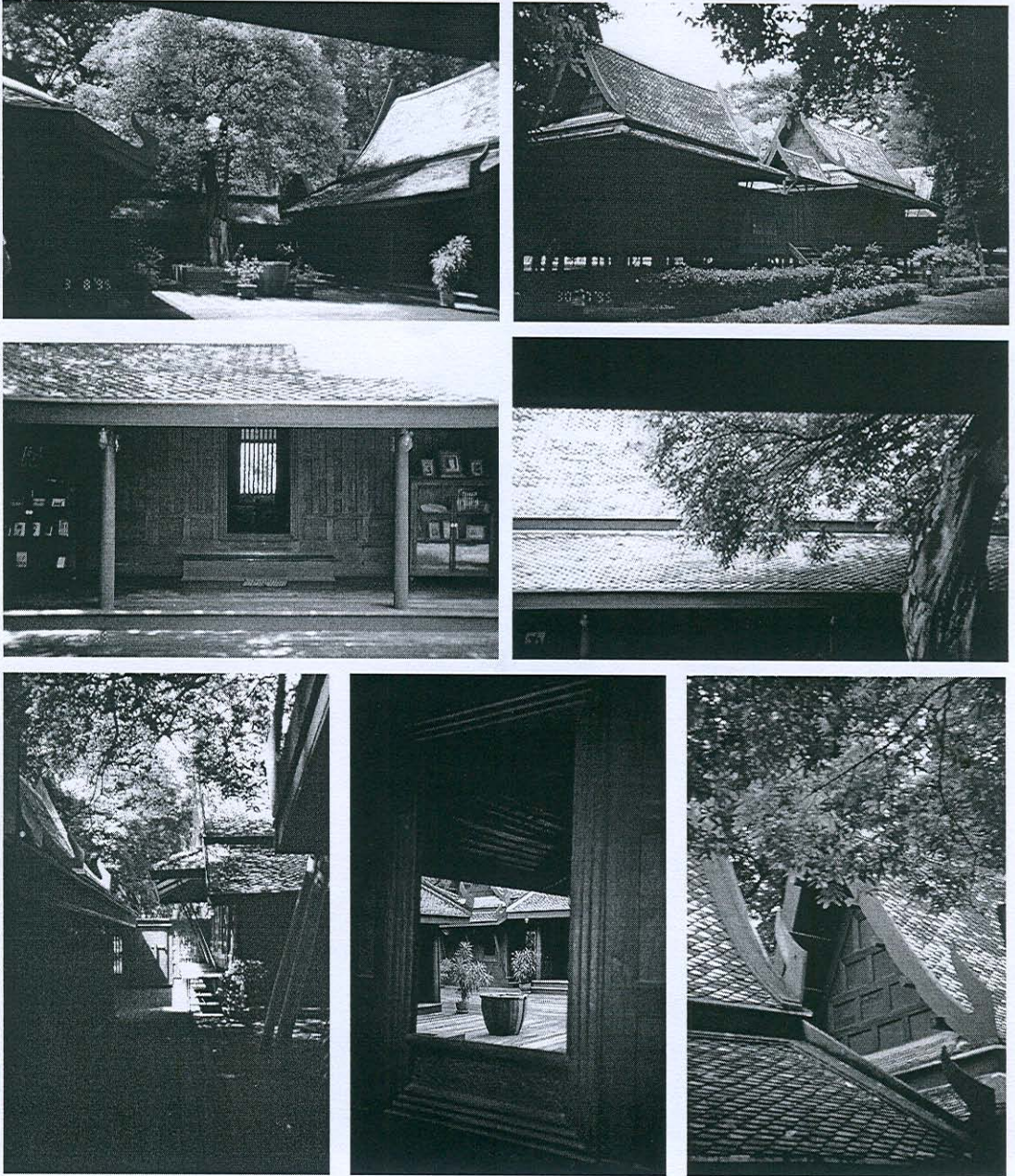


Figure 1 Tub Kwan Pavilion, Nakhon Pathom



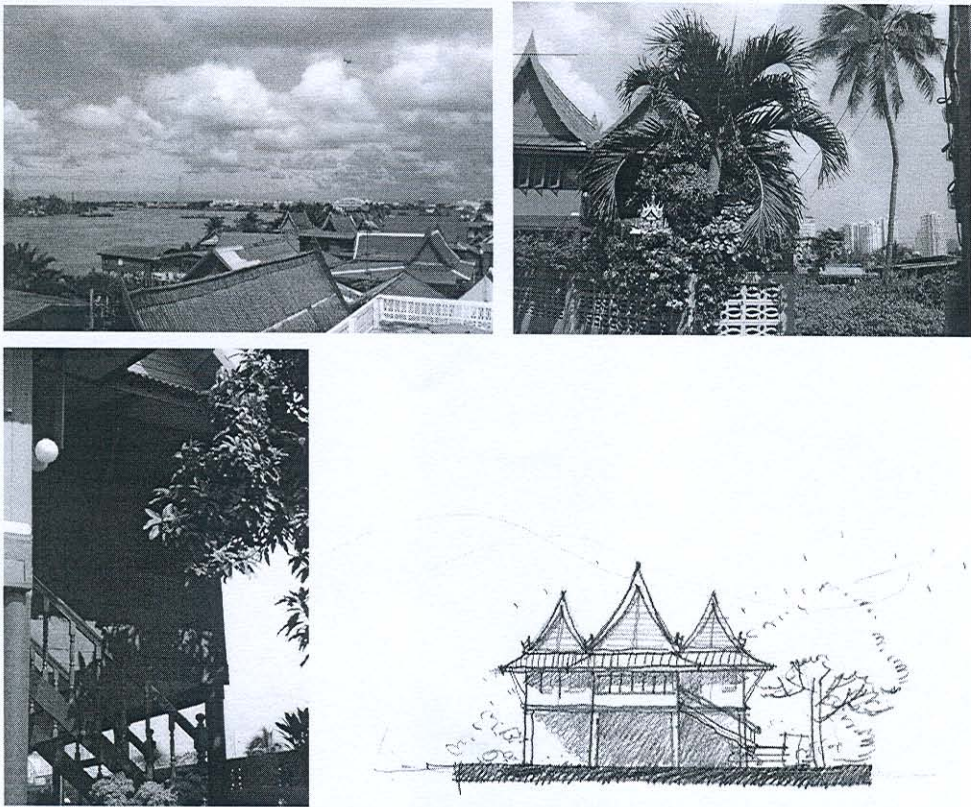


Figure 2 Baan Songkanong, Samutprakarn



Figure 3 101/1 House, Bangkok



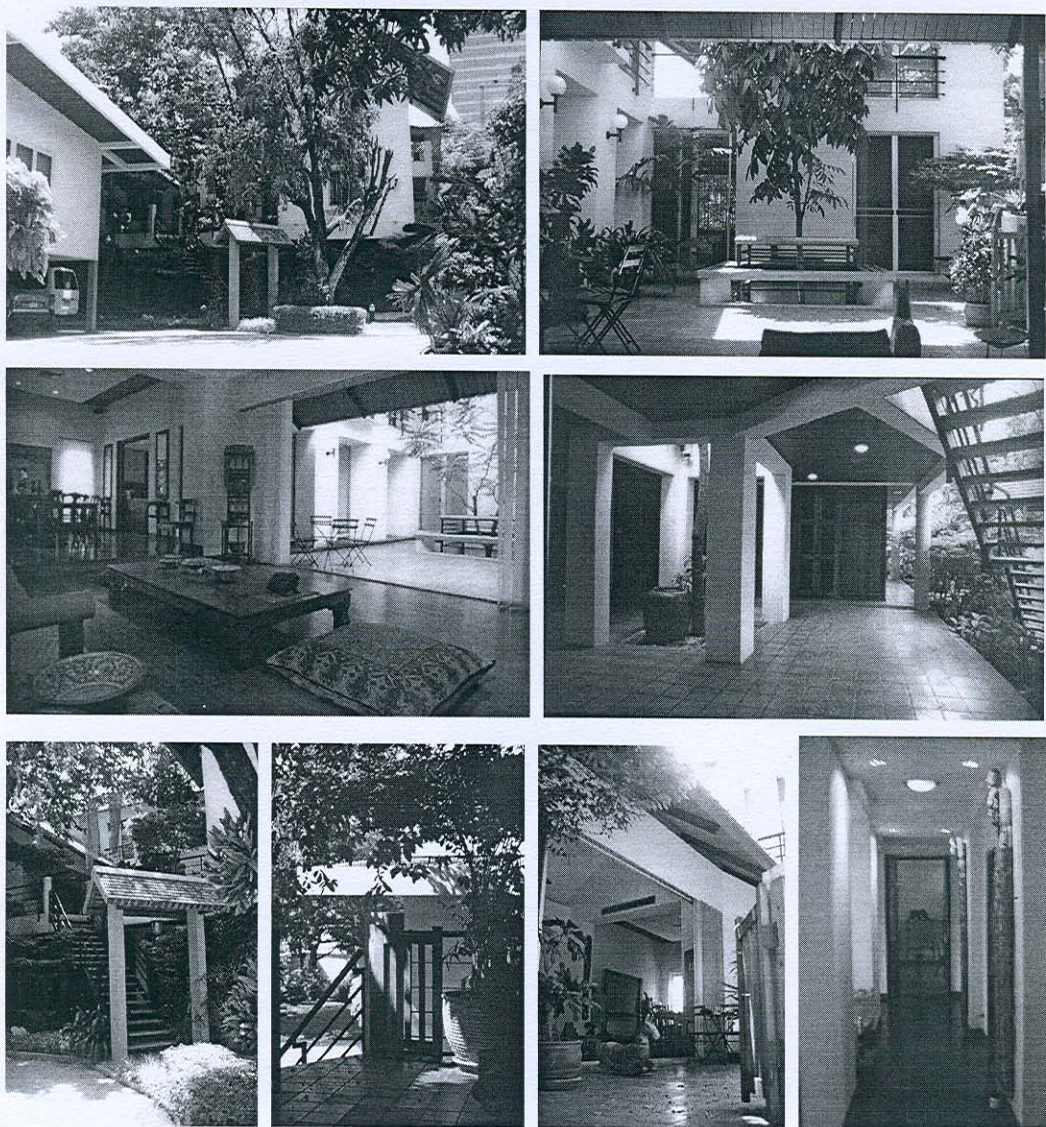


Figure 4 Chaipranin House, Sukhumvit, Bangkok



## The Study

The study is an attempt to look at an artifact of the past—*ruan thai*—the traditional Thai house of the *Chaophraya* River Plain—through new eyes. The goals are to explore the essential experiential characteristics of the traditional house, particularly those which may be aptly interwoven into the fabric of urban Thai dwellings today, and to unveil the layers of meanings these essential characteristics convey.

With hermeneutic phenomenology as its philosophical ground, the in-depth exploration takes the form of four comparative case studies, each representing a point in the line of tradition—that is, (1.) Tub Kwan Pavilion, an aesthetically acclaimed traditional house—“the ideal old” (1911); (2.) Songkanong, a lived-in traditional house—“the old in transition” (1933), (3.) an urban villa—“the new” (1978); and Chaipranin House, “the old and new intertwined”—a contemporary house which captures beautifully the poetics of the traditional spirit (1994). (Figs. 1-4) By contrasting the experiences of these houses and through a layering descriptive and interpretive process, five essential patterns emerge, namely: 1) The Tree and *Rom Reun* Quality; 2) Verticality and a sense of Hierarchy; 3) Enclosedness, Compartmentality and Drawing-In Effect; 4) Graceful and Refined Nature; and 5) Memory and Root. But what exactly are these qualities? Is there any significance they might contribute to our understanding of a dwelling place? The essay will be organized into 3 parts, beginning with the five emerging patterns, their meanings and traces in the Thai cultural contexts; then follows a brief

discussion of the evolving structure that might shed light on an understanding of place, and finally a conclusion.

## The Five Emerging Patterns

### 1. The Tree and *Rom Reun*<sup>2</sup> Quality

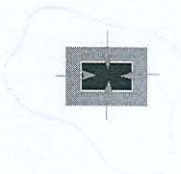
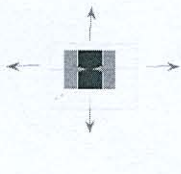
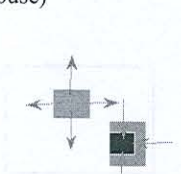
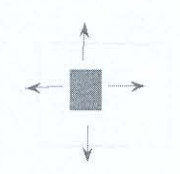
Trees present themselves as integral in the experience of *ruan thai*, whether in terms of formal analogy, construction materials, or everpresent views. Quite often, as in the case of Tub Kwan, an actual tree itself stands at the center of the elevated terrace (*chaan*), enriching it with a cool refreshing sensation—the *rom reun* sensation. At the urban villa, on the contrary, the closed stolid mass does not seem to allow any dialogue between the inside and the outside.

Besides the delightful sensations they provide, trees bear rich, multifaceted layers of ideas and meanings. First is the notion of trees as shelter, which is played out in many ways in the Thai context—physical/formal, sensorial, and conceptual. All of these, however, seem to revolve around a simple term “*kwaam rom reun*”—a cool, refreshing sensation commonly associated with tree shade. Here, the term “*rom*” (umbrella, shade, shaded) denotes the physical/formal aspect of a shelter, while “*reun*” entails a delightful sensation in terms of sight, sound and comfort. Together, they sum up in one word the physiological, psychological and aesthetic modes of experience.

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<sup>2</sup> A cool, refreshing sensation commonly associated with tree shades—one of the preferable aspects of a place for the Thai.

Table 1. The four case studies: general information.

	Tub Kwan Pavilion	Baan Song Kanong	Chaipranin House	101/1 House
<b>Nature</b>	Full-featured traditional Thai house	Living traditional Thai house	Contemporary Thai house with traditional characteristics	Modern villa-type house
<b>Location</b>	Nakhon-Pathom province (1 hour from Bangkok)	Phrapradaeng, Samut-Prakarn province (in the vicinity of Bangkok)	Sukhumvit 11 (near the heart of Bangkok)	Sukhumvit 101/1 (Bangkok suburban area)
<b>Year of Construction</b>	1911 (abandoned: 1920's; restored: 1970's)	Approx. 1900-1910's	1994	1978
<b>Mass-Space Organization</b>	- courtyard-type - inward-focused 	- covered courtyard - outward focused 	- courtyard-type (with a villa-type existing house) 	- villa-type - outward focused 
<b>Inhabitants</b>	N/A (currently unoccupied, but built as a summer palace)	Middle class Mon-based professionals	Upper middle class young professionals/ new family with young children	Middle class professionals
<b>Interesting Features</b>	Aesthetically acclaimed as one of the best examples of existing full-featured Central Thai houses	Traditional built environment in transition, with pressing tension between modern way of life and traditional environment and values	A coexistence of the modern villa-type in-law's house and the courtyard-type new house, the presence of traditional extended family system in a new urban environment	A representation of both the typical middle-class villa-type living, a point of contrast to the traditional one, and a clarification of my background as an interpreter

Another trace of the sheltering nature of trees in the Thai culture lies in the interchangeable use of the terms “romyen pen suk” (to live happily and

peace fully) and “yuu yen pen suk” (to live in happiness and peace). Here, what is interesting lies in the way the word “rom” (shade, umbrella) is used in the



Table 2. The essential characteristics of the four houses.

Tub Kwan	Songkanong	101/1	Chaipranin
Trees & <i>Rom Reun</i> Quality	<i>Rom Reun</i> Quality	[a green outside]	<i>Rom Reun</i> Quality
Verticality	Hierarchy	[hierarchy (social)]	Verticality & Upward Movement
Enclosedness, Compartmentality	Overflowing Quality & A Gift-Box Effect	Overflowing Quality & Shut-in Effect	Enclosedness, Compartmentality & Rhythm
Drawing-in Quality		Outward Focus	Drawing-in Quality
Enticing & Graceful Quality		Resting, Massive, Weighty	Intimacy & At-homeness
			Solemnity, Mystery & Root

place of “*yuu*” (to live, to dwell), thus confirming a meaningful tie between the notion of shelter and that of dwelling.

This sheltering characteristic and meaning of trees can, perhaps, be traced back to the significant role of trees and forests in the traditional context—i.e., as the abode of life. In fact, in the Thai culture, trees permeate every level of supernatural beliefs and symbolism. At the most common level, certain trees are believed to be spirit abodes. Bhodi and banyan trees have been held sacred. In Bhramanic belief, the bhodi tree represents the symbol of the universe—the axis mundi linking the upper, human, and under worlds.(Figs.5-6)

This last association is quite striking, particularly when thinking of the house posts as tree trunks. Considering the symbolic significance of the posts (the principal posts (*sao ek*) especially) in the traditional house, with the rituals

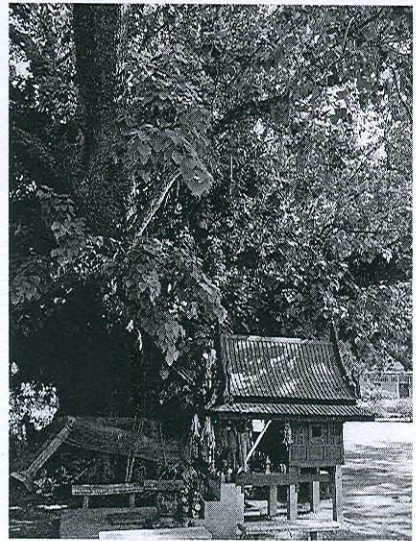


Figure 5 The tree and the spirit house.



surrounding them, the principal post may be seen as an axis mundi. The house, therefore, becomes a miniature model of the universe, brought near into the everyday human life.

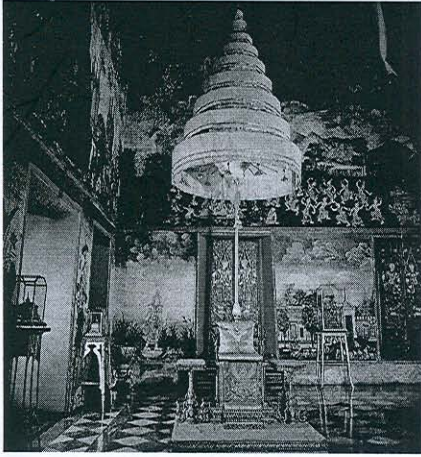


Figure 6 A nine-tiered *Chat*—one of the royal insignia [photo from M.R.Nangnoi Suksri. *Moradok Sathapattayakam Krung Rattanakosin* (Bangkok: Sumnak Rajalekathikarn, 1993).]

## 2. Verticality and a Sense of Hierarchy

The second pattern, verticality, is manifested in the traditional house in various ways: in the physical form, in the space, and in the formal expression of the house as a whole. Verticality implies an upward direction, a rising movement and an upper-lower relationship, all quite hierarchical in nature. It also characterizes a peculiar relationship between the house and the outside world of nature, the ground and the sky.

Here, the apparent hierarchical values underlying the upward direction and the rising movement of *ruan thai* seem parallel to the inherently hierarchical nature of the traditional Thai society itself.

Beside many traces in the course of history, clear manifestations of the vertical social relation range from such everyday things as the way people address and greet each other, to religious and superstitious beliefs expressed in the configuration of physical environments. In Thailand's "democratic" society today, the trace of social hierarchy remains strong. The multitude of personal pronouns in the Thai language is but a fine example. For the one English "I," there are more than a dozen commonly used Thai pronouns one can choose from, depending on one's age, gender, and personal or social status. The personal pronoun one uses in a situation reveals one's (assumed) position in relation to one's conversation counterpart.

Another trace of verticality in the traditional Thai house lies in the unique position of the house in relation with the ground and the sky. As one can see, the house is lifted up as if dissociating itself from the ground and the immediate surroundings, opening up instead to the sky. The inside-outside relationship here is vertically articulated—the inside is the upper, the outside the lower. But why?

An explanation, on the one hand, might be based upon our subconscious conception that the ground is the realm of the known, the finite, the thing tangible, or something equal or inferior to humans. The sky, on the other hand, is the realm of the unknown, the intangible, the superior, the infinite somewhere human beings have long aspired to reach.

Another, perhaps more local, part of the explanation is that, in such a wet-rice agricultural society as central Thailand,



the soil/ ground becomes second to water in its productive role.<sup>3</sup> For the rice farmers here, it is rainwater that is the heart and soul, the main economic catalyst. In contrast to death and disease of the ground, the sky means sun and rain, the very essential agents of life. By opening itself toward the sky, then, the traditional *ruan thai* thus enhances and corresponds to the Thai attitude toward the sky.

### 3.Enclosedness,Compartmentality, Drawing-in and Enticing Quality

#### Enclosedness and Compartmentality

At Tub Kwan, a sense of enclosedness and compartmentality characterizes one's spatial experience. In contrast to the shut-in and monotonic space of the urban villa, the courtyard space and the veranda at Tub Kwan offer a sense of privacy and security while remaining in touch with nature's delight. In fact, at Tub Kwan, as in most typical *ruan thais*, there is a hierarchy of enclosedness—from the relatively open *chaan* to the semi-enclosed veranda, to the fully enclosed interior. Moving around, one can also feel a hint of rhythm, both the repetitive/ modular architectural elements, and that of the movement itself.

Let me expand upon these related features of the traditional house a bit. Here the sense of enclosedness characterizes the experience of being within a space. It is the feeling of a comfortable embrace, a sheltering nature, of something "closed yet open." Compartmentality, on the other hand, suggests a clear demarcation of spatial boundaries, and the resulting rhythmic movement through these spaces.

To put this compartmenting nature in its cultural context, we need to look no further than the traditional Thai view of space. In contrast to the absolute Newtonian space—infinite, similar and immovable,<sup>4</sup> the Thai concept of space indicates a series of definite, segmented "realms," each with its own distinct characteristics and specific set of rules. When entering another space, one needs to "transform" oneself to correspond to that new space's set of rules.<sup>5</sup> One manifestation of this spatial concept lies in the *Tri Bhumi* cosmology (figs. 7-8), the very conceptual system underlying the various forms of classical Thai arts and architecture. In this three-existential-plane system, each of the "planes" is subdivided into regions and/or strata, each with its specific rules—specific kind of existence allowed to be in that little world. To move up into a higher sub-stratum, one has to acquire the existential characteristic of that higher plane, most commonly good deeds or merits. In a modern context, this existential transformation can be bodily gestures, language, or the way one dresses.

<sup>3</sup> See Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Involvement* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press), 30-1.

<sup>4</sup> Roger Scruton, *Modern Philosophy: An Introduction and Survey* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994; reprint New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 361.

<sup>5</sup> Nithi Eawsriwong, Peuntee Nai Khati Thai, in Phakhaoma Phasin Kangkengnai Lae Eun Eun (Bangkok: Matichon Publishing, 1995), 130-149.



In this light, it seems that this view of space still plays a crucial role in the lives of people in modern Bangkok.<sup>6</sup>

### Drawing-in and Enticing Quality

Drawing-in and enticing quality suggests a kind of inward movement toward the house and a sense of mystery, an alluring attraction associated with femininity. At Tub Kwan, besides the drawing-in nature of boundaries and the poetic contrast of darkness and light at the entrances, it is the enticing indirect approach, which gently reveals the house as one progresses toward its central *chaan*, that lends the old house an air of mystery.

One important thing the drawing-in quality seems to convey is the notion of the house's controlled relationship with nature. That is, it "lets nature in" with moderation, instead of reaching out toward its natural surroundings as perhaps in the case of a Japanese *Sukiya* (tea-house style) dwelling.<sup>7</sup> At Tub Kwan nature is *let into* the house through the central *chaan*, in the form of the large sheltering tree, the sun, the wind, and the rain, among other things. The *chaan* thus becomes a layer of artificial ground above nature's ground—a "refined nature." This idea of abstracted nature is evident in the various Thai visual arts and crafts. I will come back to this refined, abstracted characteristic in the discussion of the upcoming pattern, graceful and refined nature.

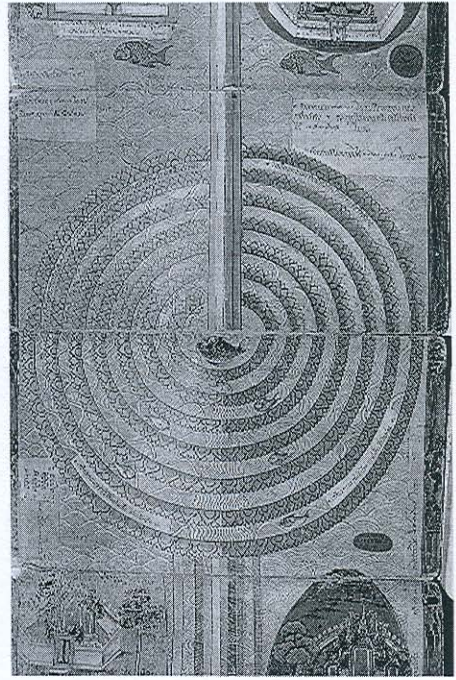


Figure 7 The plan of the Tri Bhumi model. [Chote Kalayanamitr. *Sathapattayakam Baeb Thai Doem*, in *Laksana Thai*. Ed. M.R. Kukrit Pramoj (Bangkok: Thai Wattananapit, 1982).]

<sup>7</sup> In a *Sukiya* house, a rather static and calm horizontally oriented interior space opens out to the moon-viewing platform, which extends itself out beyond the broad eave into the embrace of the garden and the reflecting pond. The platform's level is merely a foot off nature's ground, where at one spot a stepping stone emerges to greet the bamboo plane. As such, the house seems to encourage its dwellers to immerse themselves in the natural surroundings, to step down into the garden. It is a unification of man and nature.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



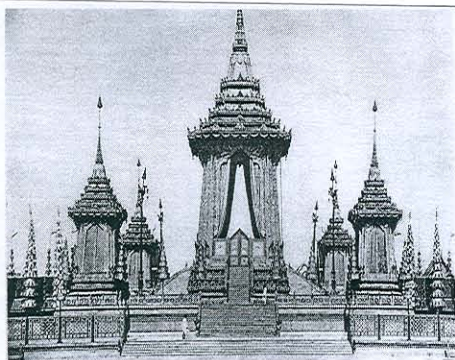


Figure 8 King Chulalongkorn's pyre, or "meru,"—a representation of Tri Bhumi cosmology. [Sumet Jumsai. *Naga: Cultural Origins in Siam and the West Pacific*, (Oxford: Oxford U.Press, 1988).]

#### 4.Graceful and Refined Nature— A Feminine Aesthetic

Graceful and refined nature constitutes another salient characteristic of the traditional Thai house. At Tub Kwan both the physical forms and the spatial experience help contribute to gracefulness. Based on the Thai adjectives, *on choy* and *on waan*<sup>8</sup>, the graceful quality seems to embody a hint of sweet gentleness, an ideal characteristic of women rendered by much Thai classical literature. But why "feminine" characteristics? Is there any trace of their significance in the Thai culture?

First of all, feminine characteristics pervade the various forms of Thai arts. One best example lies, perhaps, in the abstract, streamlined curves of the *Sukhothai* style walking Buddha image

<sup>8</sup> *On choy* means "graceful, gracious" or elegant, while *on waan* is the quality in persons or things that are "sweet (in manner), suave, and gentle." Here the term is employed in the sense of something sweet, and gentle.

(13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). In fact, Silpa Bhirasri has pointed out the resemblance between the serene, faintly smiling oval face of the Sukhothai Buddha with that of Thai women (figs. 9-10). That the artists tried to capture the characteristics of the Tai race of Sukhothai is understandable, but as to why female traits is somewhat beyond logical explanation.

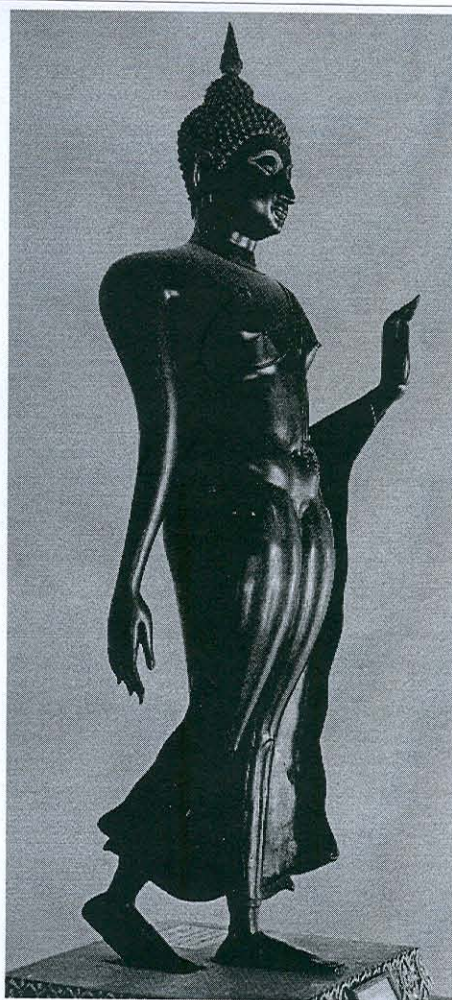


Figure 9 A Sukhothai Buddha.  
[Boribal Buribhan and A.B.Griswold. *Thai Images of the Buddha*, (Bangkok: The Fine Arts Department, 1990).]



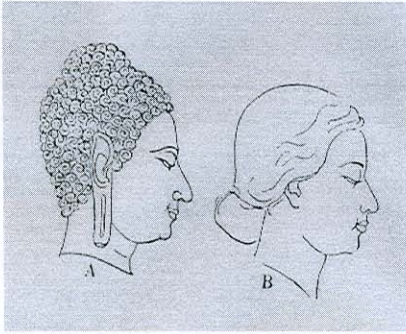


Figure 10 A profile comparison between the Sukhothai Buddha and a Tai woman.

[Silpa Bhirasri, *An Appreciation of Sukhothai Art*, (Bangkok: The Fine Arts Department, 1990).]

We may assume, then, that the feminine characteristics conformed more to what these artists held as their aesthetic ideal.<sup>9</sup>

Tracing further back into time, it seems to me that this refined taste associated with femininity may have its roots in the long established roles of women in Thai wet-rice agricultural society. With the high labor demand in such a society, women became a crucial force in the field.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, as labor exchange networking was highly significant, it is in fact women who were in charge of the labor exchange activities.<sup>11</sup> In the traditional society, Thai women long enjoyed a comparatively powerful status.<sup>12</sup>

In the Thai language, too, there are ubiquitous indications of matriarchal influence with the mother compound words e.g. mother of water = river; mother of iron = magnet; mother of strength = car

jack; mother of cowrie shell = hood of a snake; and even mother of force = military commander.<sup>13</sup> The word “mother” or *mae* in these terms connotes the idea of the center, the source of power or support. When it comes to the Thai house, the term *mae sri ruan* (she who graces the house) comes to mind. Perhaps, the house, with all its graceful and enticing characteristics, was in the Thai’s mind a realm graced by a woman’s presence through a subtle yet powerful exercise of control and support.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> “The body has a graceful undulation, the trunk swinging lightly to the side, and the hanging arm rhythmically following this curve. The head is shaped like a lotus bud, the neck spreading at its base merges harmoniously into the shoulder. Each detail, as for example, the delicate outline of the lobes of the ears which curve a little outward serves to emphasize the harmony of the whole composition. The hand, in particular, are modeled with a grace and elegance.” See Silpa Bhirasri, *An Appreciation of Sukhothai Art Thai Culture*, New Series No. 17 (Bangkok: The Promotion and Public Relations Sub-Division, The Fine Arts Department, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> Similar observation was made in William Clifton Dodd’s *The Tai Race, Elder Brother of the Chinese: Results of Experience, Exploration and Research* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch, 1923).

<sup>11</sup> L.A. Peter Gosling, class lecture *People and Culture of Southeast Asia* University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, April 2, 1996.



## 5. Memory and Root— A Celebration of Nostalgia

It is perhaps the enticing and intimate qualities from the previous sections that lead us to the last pattern, the expression of memory, age and tradition. On the one hand, the notion of memory suggests richness in place experience that reaches beyond the immediate presence. Also revolving around the notion of time, age and tradition hint at a charm of things that has been touched by human use and the elements of nature, as well as the fascination with one's past and identity. At Tub Kwan, for instance, it is the weather-worn look of the wooden surfaces and the stains of age on the earthen roof tiles that add a unique charm to the house—that of memory, of time. It evokes images of use, of human touch, of history which then furnish the house with a mythical dimension, a dignified, solemn, or *khlang*, atmosphere.

In the end, it seems that what matters most here is that the sense of memory, age and tradition not only make room for one's imagination, but that they give one a reassurance of one's identity and purpose of being. And that is perhaps what makes *ruan thai* so tempting, especially when compared to the vast, all-seen-in-one-glance space of the villa that is a part of my daily life. It stirs my imagination. It is a locus of dreams. It is a celebration of nostalgia.

### From a Tree to a Dwelling Place—an Overarching Theme

How, we now have to ask, do these sets of qualities, or patterns, and the issues they unfold, come together to form a

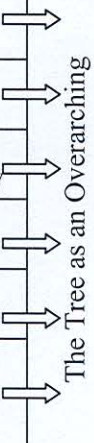
meaningful whole? Here, the patterns seem to assume distinct roles in an overarching conceptual structure, that which, perhaps, can help shed light on an understanding of a place. First of all, the *rom reun* sensation of the tree reflects a *tactile* (specifically thermal) or *physical* facet of a place. Then, as a central characteristic of the Thai society, verticality and the hierarchical nature point toward a *social* aspect. The next set of qualities—enclosedness and compartmentality, and drawing-in and enticing nature—revolves around the Thai's articulation and understanding of space. But the sense of enclosedness and compartmentality seems to suggest also the ideas of psychological (and social) security and control, whereas the drawing-in and enticing nature leans toward a cognitive and cultural side. Then, graceful (*onchoy-onwaan*) and refined nature, unmistakably represents an *aesthetic* facet.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> It seems to me that the modern concept of gender "equality" is an entirely Western idea, which in turn imposes many negative views on the social status of the Southeast Asian women, e.g. the idea of Thai women as being socially suppressed. In fact, as one Thai female colleague once mentioned to me (and I shared her view), many Thai women had a hard time sympathizing with the Western feminist debates on female equality. Not that we approve of, or surrender to, blind discrimination based solely on the gender, but we rather believe that women are powerful in a *different* way, and although indeed some tasks seem equally appropriate for both men and women, yet there are many things that women can do better than men, and vice versa. After all, shouldn't we celebrate constructive difference between the sexes, rather than blind equality?



Table 3 The Extrinsic Structure:  
A Place Model Based on the Five Experiential Characteristics of Ruan Thai

Patterns		Place Model
1. Tree + <i>Rom Reun</i> Quality		Tactile + Sensate + Thermal
2. Verticality + Hierarchical Nature		Social
3.1 Enclosedness + Compartmentality		Spatial / Emotional + Cognitive
3.2 Mystery + Enticing Nature		Spatial / Cultural + Cognitive
4. Graceful + Refined Nature		Aesthetic
5. Memory + Root The charm of age, time and tradition		Existential / Metaphysical

Finally, the sense of memory and roots represents an existential aspect of the place experience. In the end, it is the image of the tree that becomes a figurative/ metaphorical element of the whole framework, one that embodies each of the facets in it and makes them a greater and more fulfilling whole.<sup>16</sup> (See Table 3 and Figures 11-12.)

Moreover, the sequential order of these

facets also suggests the layers through which the experience of a place is constituted. With this structure, the most fundamental layer of thermal or tactile experience becomes a basis for the socio-cultural and ideological framework, which then informs the spatial or organization, which in turn presents itself as a structure for the aesthetic preference and the psychological image of a place.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> William J. Klausner, *Reflections on Thai Culture* 4th ed (Bangkok: The Siam

<sup>14</sup> This is not to be confused with notion of domestic realm/ "woman-in-the-kitchen" in a western context, as the "house" in this sense encompasses all the physical, formal, and spatial senses of a dwelling place. In the Thai context, as well as other parts of mainland Southeast Asia, women take care of economic (rather than domestic) matters in and outside the house.

<sup>15</sup> In this paper the term aesthetics is used to connote the notion of beauty, as well as the values, tastes, attitudes and standards involved in human experience of and judgments about things made by humans or

found in nature that we consider beautiful. See also Peter Angeles, *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Philosophy* 2ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 4.

<sup>16</sup> It must be noted that the theoretical construct which evolves out of each pattern represents only the dominant, and not the exclusive, aspect of that pattern. Indeed, cross categorizations of elements in the patterns are probable as the qualities are quite inter-related.

<sup>17</sup> Indeed, this layout can only be a simplified model of the actual process, which may not be simplistically one-directional, but quite dynamic and even reciprocal.



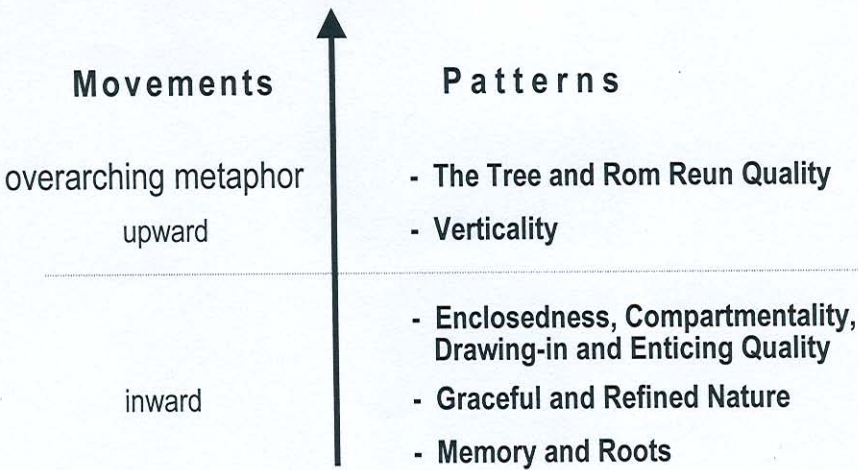


Figure 11 Diagram showing the type and order of movements in the five patterns

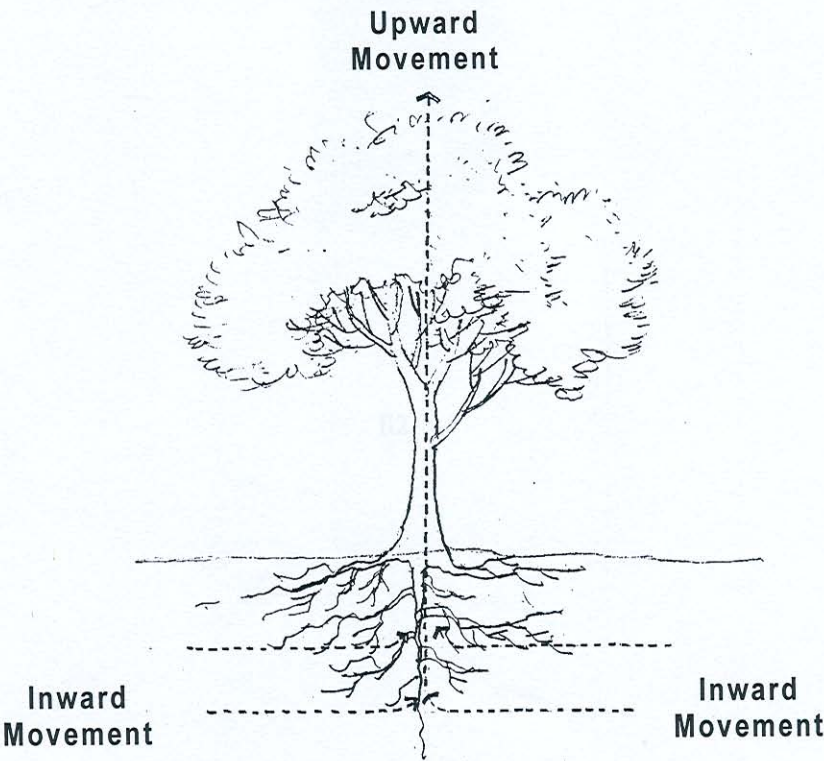


Figure 12 The Tree as a Figurative Structure.



## **Epilogue**

I began this journey searching for the poetics of the old so as to bring them back to the here and now. What had been learned and rediscovered along the way, however, turned out to be much more gratifying and worthwhile. The product of tradition—the Thai house—acts as the tip of the iceberg leading us to issues lying just beneath the surface. Each of the five patterns finds its meanings traceable to the various aspects of the Thai culture and unfolds in front of us the various issues that had been buried under the rapid change in Thai society over the course of modernization; the forgotten metaphysical significance of trees, the vertical structure fundamental to Thai society, the basic yet integral need for physical and psychological security in the urban jungle, and the once powerful role of women in the social structure are but the striking few.

Finally, it is the structure that evolves out of these traits that reveals to us a larger framework that promise an

understanding of the many facets of a dwelling place—tactile, social, spatial, aesthetic and existential—as well as their interrelationship and significance to the human experience. This evolving place structure, by underscoring the long deserved significance of the aesthetic and metaphysical aspects of place, becomes evidently more encompassing than such prominent existing frameworks as Relph and Canter's models of place or Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs in which the aesthetic and the metaphysical are somewhat under developed.

Finally, it becomes clear over the course of the exploration that tradition has served as a mirror which helps foster an understanding of the present world. And it is such simple things as everyday language and gestures, among other things, that reveal themselves as a means by which traces of forgotten meanings from the past re-emerge into the light. And a process in which the old interacts with the new, a selecting and filtering process wherein time is an essential agent, and we humans are thus inherently conditioned by it.