

**Power, Identity, and the Rise of Modern Architecture:
from Siam to Thailand**

by

Koompong Noobanjong

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POWER, IDENTITY, AND THE RISE OF MODERN ARCHITECTURE:
FROM SIAM TO THAILAND

by

Koompong Noobanjong

B. ARCH, Rangsit University, Thailand, 1993

M.ARCH, University of Colorado at Denver, 1998

A thesis submitted to the
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in partial fulfillment
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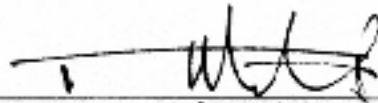
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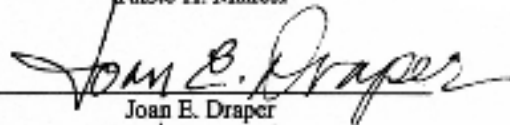
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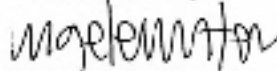
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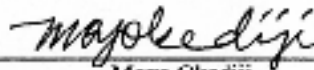
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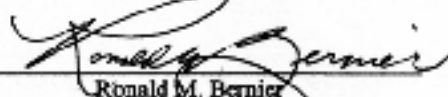
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Power, Identity, and the Rise of Modern Architecture: from Siam to Thailand

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Taisto H. Mäkelä

ABSTRACT

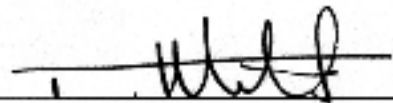
Modern architecture is a creation of the West. In a non-Western context, it normally reflects a direct intervention of Western powers through colonization. Thailand, formerly known as Siam, is an exception. Thai people have argued that they adopted and assimilated modern architecture into their unique cultural tradition without being physically colonized.

The shift toward Western culture and Modernity is evident in 19th and 20th century Thai architecture, particularly in the capitol city of Bangkok. Major public buildings signify the country's domestic political circumstances, its Westernization and Modernization processes, in addition to the discourse of colonialism and anti-colonialism. Many of the best-known works resulted in hybrids between European and Siamese design characteristics. They hold more importance than simply stylistic developments, and in essence show a manifestation of social and political awareness, as well as national and cultural identity known as Thainess or *khwampenthai*.

This dissertation examines the evolution of Western and Modern architecture in Siam and Thailand. It illustrates how various architectural ideas have contributed to the physical design and spatial configuration of places associated with negotiation and allocation of political power, which are throne halls, parliaments, and government and civic structures since the 1850s.

In order to advance multi-cultural and cross-cultural studies, the buildings are investigated for their social, political, economic and cultural signification, considering the issues of cultural borrowing, appropriation and transformation, national and cultural identity, socio-political authority, as well as the native's resistance and reconciliation to the process of colonization.

This abstract accurately represents the content of the candidate's thesis. I recommend its publication.

Signed  _____
Taisto H. Mäkelä

DEDICATION

This dissertation is inspired by, and dedicated to, my fellow Thais who lost their lives, as well as those who suffered physically and mentally for their resistance to colonization and any form of oppression. The appreciation also extends to those who were punished by their own society, simply because they dared to question the basis of their existence: *khwampenthai* or Thainess.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks are owed to the many people who made this dissertation possible. First, my sincere gratitude goes to Prof. Taisto H. Mäkelä, principle advisor and mentor, for his support, encouragement, and guidance, as well as to Prof. Joan E. Draper, Moyo Okediji, Ronald M. Bernier, and Mark G. Gelernter for their patience, insight, and constructive criticism. Together, not only did they contribute to my academic progress--from improving my poor English to studying new ideas and undertaking research--but helped me in times of difficulty.

I wish to extend my appreciation to the Director of the Ph.D. Program in Design and Planning, Prof. Willem van Vliet, for his generous support and kindness. Throughout the years in the United States, Prof. van Vliet--along with my fellow Ph.D. students--expressed their encouragement and belief in the value of this dissertation. Various discussions with them convinced me of the validity and importance to undertake it. Also, I appreciate Melanie Shellenbarger and Joel Jensen as my valuable readers.

I would like to acknowledge my colleagues at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology, Lardkrabang for their moral support. Comments from Thongchai Winichakul, whose research has been vital to me, were significant. Many thanks to Pensupa Sukata, the staff at the Department of Fine Arts, the Library of the Parliament, the National Library, the Royal Archives, and the Bureau of Royal Household for providing valuable access to archival materials for my research in Thailand. An interview with the Speaker and President of the House of Parliament, Uthai Pimchaichon, was highly appreciated as well.

Finally, I must admit that without the love, care, encouragement, and help from my parents, I would never have been able to finish this dissertation, let alone pursue my Ph.D. studies. Last but not least, my special thanks goes to Deborah F. Barrow, whose affection made my staying in the U.S. one of the most memorable experiences. Her dedicated and persistent editing brought this dissertation to its final form.

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