

Case Study on the wooden Government Officials Residence in Bangkok during the reign of King Rama V - VI

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This research is a part of Master's Thesis - European Art Influences on the Residences of Government Officials in Bangkok during the Reign of King Rama V - VI, which concerns with the adaptation of European Art in traditional Thai House during the reign of King Rama V - VI of Siam.

Regarding to house forms, traditional Thai house is a one-storey house and raised above the ground to a just above head height. The height of the house provides security from the annual inundation during rainy season and unwelcome animals, for example, snakes, centipedes and scorpions, as well as burglars during night. Because the underneath of the house is relatively high, it can be used for storing agricultural implements or keeping animals. Moreover, people can use for other activities during other seasons. The varying levels of the different sections create a flow of space, which is related to adequate ventilation for tropical climate.

However, Thai house in European style is a two-storey house and usually raised approximately one metre above the ground, except one which is near the river whose height of the underneath of the house can reach to one and a half metres. Although the house is made of wood, the posts or platform that supported beneath are separated from the house and made of bricks. Some houses may show these posts openly, but some houses may connect the outer posts by a small wall.

Regarding to floor plan, traditional Thai house is in rectangular plan, while Thai house in European style has various plans, mostly in L-shaped or projecting L-shaped and T-shaped. The floor plan is related to the roof type. The traditional Thai house has a high-pitched gable in the Manila style with extended eaves. The roof covers each section of the house, while the eaves covers lower verandah and shelters sunbeam and the rain. Nevertheless, Thai house in European style use totally different roof type. Both houses in L-shaped or T-shaped plans use hip roof on the transverse section, while the extended front or side use the combination of either dormer, hip, gable, or mansard roof with valley roof.

Regarding to doors and windows, traditional Thai house uses wooden board for inswing twin doors and windows, while Thai house in European style shares only the same twin doors. The louvre windows are outswing, which can be used either as a casement or an awning. Some houses may replace a wall by lots of windows or attach many vents above the windows for better ventilation .

Regarding to wooden decoration, traditional Thai house has windbreak on the gable end of the roof called *Panlom*. Its lower section is decorated in either *ngao* (one kranok pattern) or *hang pla* (fish-tail) designs. Another wooden panel that is attached to gable called "Na Jua". It is a triangular board that has various pattern, such as sunburst or wooden panels. These two roof elements are removed from the house that is influenced by European Art. Though some of them use plain gable end, some share the same decoration with European Gingerbread House by adding finial and pendant-and-crossbar motifs at the gable and wooden carved at the fascia. Moreover, personal emblem or religious symbol can be found on the pediment.

According to the opposite opening direction of doors and windows between two Thai house styles, the wooden carved can be found on the different spot. By traditional Thai house, wooden carved is attached to the door or door frame and below the window. The pattern of this element is various, for example, floral or animal motifs, or balustrade design. However, by Thai house in European style, wooden carved can be seen above the door and window. Most of them are following traditional Thai framework, with principal flower at the centre and curved twigs. Nevertheless, the foreign flowers, such as lily or tulip, are used instead of local types. These foreign floral motifs can also be found along the beam under the ceiling or a bracket.

Even though Thai house which is influenced by European Art display architectural form and decorated elements which are absolutely different from traditional style, it might not import the characteristic directly from Europe. This hypothesis is based on lexicon used for different house type. The word *Punya* which represents hip roof in Thai, is probably derived from the word *Pancha* in Sanskrit, which means five. However, the pronunciation is similar to Persian language, which means a decorative ornament shaped like a hand, known as an *alam*. The adaptation may suggest that Thai architecture receive European Art through Muslim, who settled widely in the Malay Peninsula, where traditional hip roof called *Lima* (means five in both Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Malay) can be found.

The research indicate that the characteristics of Thai house, which is influenced by European Art, has been changed from the traditional one. However, some elements are based on local style and definitely differ from original European house because of climatic and geographical conditions.

References

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Illustrations



Рис. 1. Baan Praya Rajaksara



Рис. 2. Baan Ekanaga



Рис. 3. Baan Praya Hiranyudhakij



Рис. 4. Baan Praya Boriraksharaja