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Abstract

“Houses that ghost dwells”

Ghostly matters in contemporary Thai home



Sunan’s living room

The wall facing the main entrance is occupied fully with combination of domestic remedies. From left to right: a picture of two Kings, an altar for King Rama V, two Chinese spirit shrines (one on the floor and the other above the doorway), an altar for a Buddha image, and an altar for an image of the Beckoning Lady on the cabinet

Thais in the post-modernisation period have been living in ‘a dual world.’ The public world is a realm where all aspects of life have been organised towards the modernised, Westernised hence Capitalist, world. On the contrary, the private sphere, they express themselves as having traditional ways of coping with everyday problems. Thais are reusing and reinventing some of the techniques of the traditional practices of domestic sanctification in order to help solve the problem of their anxiety. However, some householders describe certain hostility living in such place, most of which are related to the experience of haunting and estrangement.

This paper explores the particular kind of emotion--the fear of ghost--emerging as a symptom of living in the contemporary home with special reference to domestic interiors in the urban area of Bangkok, Thailand. Home for some Thais has become a profoundly ambivalent sphere the ways in which there is an anxious slippage between what seems homely and what is unhomely.

Keywords: Fear, Spatial Uncanny, Thai Domesticity