
Traiphum: A Soft Power System in Contemporary Thai Society

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the Traiphum system as a cultural soft power mechanism deeply rooted in the collective consciousness of contemporary Thai society. It highlights that while the Traiphum system has its origins in religious scriptures, it has been transformed into a discourse that orders human values through the concepts of merit, sin, rebirth, and karmic results, all without overt coercion. This study uses an interdisciplinary framework that includes Soft Power (Nye's, 2004), Political Theology (Schmitt, Agamben, 1998), discourse and power (Foucault, 1972, 1977), Personalism (Maritain's, 1943), and Super Soft Power (Chareonwongsak, 2024). It explains how the Traiphum system has become a mechanism for reproducing social inequality through art, media, architecture, and rituals, by offering moral justifications that lead people to willingly accept inequality. The article finds that merit has become a form of symbolic capital used to legitimize social status and political power, leaving no room to question the underlying structure. The main proposal is to reinterpret the Traiphum system through the concept of a new cosmology (termed "Cosmological Redesign") that emphasizes respect for human dignity, equality, and contemporary ethics, in order to transform spiritual power into a creative, flexible, and just cultural force.

Keywords: Traiphum, Soft Power, Inequality, New Cosmology, Human Dignity