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VISIONS OF A NATION: PUBLIC MOMENTS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY THAILAND

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วิทยานิพนธ์เรื่องนี้แสดงให้เห็นที่มาว่าอนุสาวรีย์ของไทยต่างๆมีส่วนทั้งในด้านการเมืองและประวัติศาสตร์ของไทยในสมัยคริสต์ศตวรรษที่ ๒๐ อันเป็นภาพลักษณ์ต่างๆของชาติอย่างไร อนุสาวรีย์ของไทยต่างๆมีความสำคัญในการกำหนดรูปแบบศิลปะสมัยใหม่ของประเทศไทย เป็นประจักษ์พยานของความสำเร็จด้านศิลปะและการเคลื่อนไหวทางการเมืองของสังคมไทยสมัยใหม่ ไม่เป็นเพียงแต่อนุสาวรีย์แสดงภาพต่างๆของแนวคิดของรัฐแต่ยังเป็น "วิสัยทัศน์ต่างๆ" ของสมัยนั้นๆทั้งยังเป็นการอธิบายประวัติศาสตร์และรื้อฟื้นวัฒนธรรม การศึกษานี้วิเคราะห์ว่าศิลปินไทยต่างๆใช้รูปแบบและสัญลักษณ์สำหรับการเมืองในมุมหนึ่งและอีกมุมหนึ่งสร้างสรรค์งานที่สวยงามอย่างไร หากจะจัดกลุ่มอนุสาวรีย์ของไทยที่มีชื่อเสียงบางแห่งเป็นกลุ่ม "วิสัยทัศน์ต่างๆ" เช่น สมบูรณาญาสิทธิราช ชาตินิยม วีรบุรุษของชาติและอื่นๆ วิทยานิพนธ์นี้ศึกษาทั้งว่าอนุสาวรีย์ของไทยแสดงแนวคิดของความเป็นชาติไทยและบทบาทความเปลี่ยนแปลงต่างๆของอนุสาวรีย์แห่งชาติต่างๆในการพัฒนาการของสังคมไทยในศตวรรษที่ ๒๐ อย่างไร

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This thesis attempts to trace how public monuments have functioned in both the political spectrum and national history in the twentieth century as they have been the images of the Thai nation. Public monuments, indeed, are essential in defining the modern art of Thailand. They have been the living witness of artistic achievements and political movements in modern Thai society. Not only are the monumental images visual manifestations of the state ideology, but more importantly, they also serve as the "visions" of their times, as they reinterpret history and revive culture. This study, hence, examines how Thai artists use scale, style, and symbol to produce political effect on one hand and create works of beauty on the other. Grouping some of the most well-known public monuments into different "visions"—absolute monarchy, modern nationalism, traditionalism, and diversity, this thesis explores both how the public monuments intertwine and interpret the concept of Thai nationhood and their changing roles in the development of Thai society in the twentieth century.

Program	Thai Studies	Student signature_____
Field of Studies	Thai Studies	Advisor's signature_____
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A smudge of sullen dust-gray permeates the night sky of Bangkok. The heaven dims, and the glow belongs on earth. In the center of the Royal Plaza stands the illuminated Equestrian Statue of King Chulalongkorn. Silhouetted against the European palace style Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall, the regal monument has been proudly overseeing its kingdom and subjects since the turn of the century. From far and near, many Thais gather in front of the statue to pay homage to their beloved monarch. The devotees set up altars with candles, incense, and pink roses, making the solemn plaza a sea of dazzling stars. Every twinkling light beholds a wish. Every wish awaits to be granted and blessed by the former King. The earnest prayers suffuse into the traffic noises from the ravishingly decorated Rajadamnern Avenue that leads to the Democracy Monument. While the majestic statue of King Rama V has been a sacred emblem of royal grandeur and a collective symbol of Thai identity, the abstractly structured Democracy Monument somehow remains abstract to its people. The Victory Monument nearby seems even more abstruse. The once glory of national triumph has become only the name of an awkward stone pillar, dwarfed by the surrounding neon billboards and mammoth elevated train-tracks. Few people nowadays know when and why it was built. Even fewer can remember what the "victory" exactly was.

Indeed, the power of monuments lies in their ability to remind. From a building to a sculpture to a written record, a monument refers to something that is set up to commemorate a person or an event in the customary sense.[1] It is the memory or the story behind a monument that keeps the static object alive. Otherwise, it becomes meaningless no matter how impressive it may be. Monuments, moreover, are built to affirm political authority or assert national identity. Before the age of mass communication, stupendous structures in public spaces were among the most comprehensible media to deliver abstract ideologies to the people. Being a part of the landscape and everyday scenery, monuments can be powerful propaganda. They can communicate with an extensive audience and arouse national belonging without any rhetoric or sound. As the illiterate or low-educated people can have only "a secondhand relationship to ideologies and

ideological movements", they must be convinced by means other than texts and writings.[2] In addition, abstract concepts are hard to understand. Even the well-cultivated can feel bewildered at times. Public monument, hence, emerged as the most effective vehicle to promulgate lofty notions. After all, monumental images are larger than life.

While history and politics inspire art, art inscribes history and interprets politics. The last century saw a drastic transformation in Thai society.[3] From the absolute kings to military strongmen to civilian leaders, each ruling elite has striven to put its unique stamp on the rapidly changing public milieu and consciousness. Not only are monuments visual remembrances of particular individuals or incidents, but they are also the leaders' visions of the Thai nation. Public monuments are the prizes of their times, as they renew memories, relive national glories, and revive history. Whether it is a statue honoring a legendary hero or an abstract structure registering a contemporary occasion, a monument reveals more about its builders—their perspectives, priorities and politics—than about to whom or what it is dedicated.

However, seasons change. Political power comes and goes. Whereas some beliefs are shared among various ruling regimes, others fade and are eventually forgotten. The monuments as physical objects still stay. From the old Siam to the new Thailand, they have been living witnesses of artistic achievements and political movements in the kingdom. The memory or the amnesia of them, consequently, is also the loving and lapsing narratives of the Thai nation—the vision and division of modern polity, culture, and society. In 1908, the erection of the Equestrian Statue of King Chulalongkorn by the monarch himself marked the beginning of public monument as pure politically committed art in the country. Thereafter, they have incessantly assumed a prominent role under every succeeding authority. Meanwhile, monuments are one of the most essential definitions of modern Thai art. In a society of fleeting and crashing values, they have even been deemed as "the means by which Thai art could be brought back to life".[4]

Purpose and Objectives of the Thesis

This thesis aims to explore the relationship between public monuments and national politics in twentieth-century Thailand together with the means of interpreting such images. Reviewing various public monuments in their own historical context, this study attempts to trace how monumental art has functioned within changing political spectrums in developing national ideology over the last century. It also intends to delve into how Thai artists have used scale, style, and symbol to produce political effect on one hand and create works of beauty on the other.

Potentially this is a vast and complex subject, and it needs to be approached selectively. Chapter One looks at monumental art and political power in Thai society against a historical background as well as provides the rationale and definition of terms. Chapter Two concentrates on the dawn of public monuments in Siam during the period of absolute monarchy, from the glorious Fifth Reign (1868-1910) to the more uncertain and unstable times of King Vajiravudh (r.1910-1925) and King Prajadhipok (r.1925-1935abd.). This section examines not only how the Chakri kings visualized themselves through regal monuments but also how different polities envisioned the throne both amidst the fall of the absolute monarchy and under the shifting currents of military and civilian governments. Chapter Three focuses on the nationalistic public monuments during the early constitutional era, underscored by the first regime of Luang Phibun Songkram (1938-1944). The Field Marshal had a modern blueprint for the newly named Thailand. The establishments of the Democracy Monument (1939) and the Victory Monument (1941) were then cornerstones in the reconstruction of all aspects of social and cultural life. Chapter Four, on the monumental figures that were dedicated to historic warrior kings, delineates the "*pattiwat*" yet "traditional" leadership of Sarit Thanarat (1959-1963) and Thanom Kittikachorn (1963-1973). The discussion centers on the representation of mythical icons like King Naresuan and King Taksin through public monuments. Chapter Five investigates the pluralistic themes of monumental art in Thailand after the uprising of October 1973, which overthrew the long tenure of military dominance. This chapter traces the different topics and trends that evolved throughout the last century but have become more pronounced from the 1970s until the century's close.

Scope, Source, and Methodology

Labeling is a difficult and unpleasing task. The goal of this thesis is to review the visions of different public monuments in different polities of twentieth-century Thailand. Nevertheless, it does not seek to categorize all the monuments that have been built in the kingdom during that time. As a thematic approach is applied, specific selection and grouping become inevitable. Both chronologically and topically, this study highlights important monuments in a political framework that reflects the principles of various regimes. Yet it does not mean to suggest the development of public monuments has merely been linear and simple. Whereas diversities exist within one period, continuities persist through different eras. The transition from one vision to another needs not imply an abrupt change from the former concepts. The shift is often subtle, owing as much to the previous notions as being a new invention. The distinctive visions introduced in this thesis, therefore, serve basically as points of reference, emphasizing the mainstream ideology instead of being an absolute statement. While an artwork is closely connected with its society and people, a public monument can be perceived in many ways. The "vision" that a monument is placed under by no mean limits its complexity to a singular label and the analysis to a one-dimensional level.

In terms of "ideological" visions, the historical sources are mostly from the viewpoints of the ruling elite and the state. Like most Thai historical research, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to systematically generate and objectively scrutinize the genuine opinions of the people. Finally, the focus is only on politically committed monuments. Religious monuments are dominant features in the Thai cultural landscape but a totally different topic that deserves separate investigation. Since this thesis explores monumental art in its historic and political context, most of the information is drawn from academic works in art history and political science, archive research and journals, as well as field examinations of all the monuments discussed.

The modern history of Thailand has always been an intriguing subject matter. Even the use of the country's name can be polemical. Since the Thai nation changed its name in 1939, the application of "Siam" and "Thailand" throughout this thesis, thus, follows this political dividing line. Siam refers to the pre-1939 period,

and Thailand is used in the post-1939 context, with the acknowledgment of the sensitivity surrounding the application of the kingdom's name from certain academic and political perspectives.[5]

On the other hand, the transliteration of Thai words using the Roman alphabet can be problematic. There is not yet a universally agreed system on transcribing Thai into Roman script. Also the spelling of Thai names, places, and terms are often different from their pronunciations in modern Thai, since the transcribing may be based upon the Sanskrit and Pali origin of the words or include only written but silent letters. Moreover, it is usual to see distinctive Thai transliterations in ways that do not accord with the principles of the Thai Royal Academy's "General System of Phonetic Transcription". This thesis adopts a modified version of the Royal system, which is most commonly employed by the English language press and Romanized road signs within Thailand. For instance, the spelling of "Ayutthaya" is more popular nowadays than the official "Ayudhya". Many Thai people, however, have their own preference in transcribing their names into the Roman alphabet. This study endeavors to acknowledge wherever this preference is known yet by no means intends to be disrespectful if it fails to do so. Neither does this thesis attempt to re-evaluate history with ideological or moral judgement as a whole. Rather it looks at political monuments in their own right, as works of art, symbols of the nation, and marks of a century.

Notes

[1] Dawn Ades, Tim Benton, David Elliott and Iain Boyd Whyte, eds., *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators 1930-45* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), p.50.

[2] Jeffrey C. Alexander and Steven Seidman, eds., *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.309.

[3]* The official calendar using by Siam then Thailand has been the Buddhist system. The application of the term "twentieth century" in this thesis does not attempt to impose the western menology into the Thai context, although the western calendar is also well known in Thai society. Instead, the concept of a century serves only as a framework for discussion, since this study considers the first political monument was erected by King Chulalongkorn in 1908 (B.E. 2451), and the story of monumental art spanned through about a hundred years.

[4] Apinan Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand: Nineteen and Twentieth Centuries* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.49.

[5]* Many social and political leading figures have voiced their disagreement with the use of Thailand as the name of the kingdom, for it enacts a sense of chauvinism and exclusiveness to an ethnically and culturally diverse society. Those famed individuals who prefer the term "Siam" include Pridi Banomyong and Sulak Sivaraksa. See Pridi Banomyong, *Pridi by Pridi: Selected Writings on Life, Politics, and Economy*, Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, trans. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2000). Also see Sulak Sivaraksa, "The Crisis of Siamese Identity", in *National Identity and Its Defenders: Thailand, 1939-1989*, Craig J. Reynolds, ed. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1991) and the same author, *Seeds of Peace: A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society* (Bangkok: International Network of Engaged Buddhists Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, 1992).

CHAPTER II
VISIONS OF HISTORY, NATION, AND MODERN ART IN THAILAND

Thailand in the last hundred years was full of amazement, ambiguity, and ambivalence. The story involves numerous actors and actions, although many more still remain unknown or misunderstood. All of the elements are intricately intertwined and impossible to view separately. Throughout the twentieth century, political art, in the form of national monuments, was one of the most outstanding aspects of modern Thai art. The rise of public monuments in Thailand was no isolated development. It was imbedded in the complex history of the kingdom as well as the political and artistic climate in the world. Before the analysis of the different visions that have prevailed in monumental images at different times, a concise coverage of the historical background and some key terms are important to the discussion.

Art History and Public Monuments

A monument weaves its own time and space, as it honors the memory of the past or contrives the concept of the future to its current viewers. Whether an abstract structure or a realistic sculpture, a monument leads the audience to pass through its present concrete form and follow its own course to a different realm, be it the heroic deeds of a legendary warrior or the romantic dreams of a utopian society. The "physical independence" of sculpture has contributed to its status as "the representative visual art of modernism" since the nineteenth century.[1] Unlike a building, a work of sculpture does not have to "carry more than its own weight"; likewise, neither does it have to hang on something else, like a painting.[2] Literally and conceptually, a monumental sculpture is an island, existing for and by itself.

Once monopolized by monarchy and religion, public monuments have lived up to a new promise of larger and more varied possibilities of expression in the twentieth century. Consciously exploited by political leaders, monumental arts have assumed important social dimensions due to their direct relation and interaction with the masses. As art history constructs the past by investigating an art object and placing it in its own context, the discipline becomes a translation of people, place and plot.[3] Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the practice of art

history and criticism has been a history of such evocation: drawing out of specific objects, the meanings they contain, and their differences from the time being.[4] Nonetheless, it is the connection and continuation of the past that means the most to the present.

It is through reviewing various public monuments of Thailand in this light of art history that this thesis is conceived. Despite the significant role that public monuments have played in modern Thai society, there are few studies, especially in English, that are devoted to their artistic and political achievements.[5] This study endeavors to explore Thai monumental art in terms of national ideologies, cultural history, and politics. A historical study of public monuments is not the "history" of Thailand. Neither is the undertaking of this thesis to render a comprehensive survey of Thai art and politics. It does, however, hope to provide an alternative outlook of Thai society through the monuments' narratives and memories. The story of Thai public monument in the twentieth century is tightly knitted into not only the fabric of its time-honored past but also the local and international intrigues of the times. While each of the four following chapters concentrates on a different aspect of this complicated issue, the subsequent section looks at the evolution of monumental art in the kingdom as well as its role on the world stage in order to better discern the many variations of Thai public monuments.

Public Monuments on the World Stage of the Twentieth Century

The marriage of art and politics has long been an intimate yet contestable relationship. From the Egyptians to Romans to Khmers, building exhortative public structures to propagate religious ideas and aver political sovereignty was as ancient as time. The beginning of the twentieth century signified a more forceful reunion between art and politics. The Great War (1914-1919) changed not only the map and power balance in the Western world but also the notion of art serving politics, reaching a new height with the Second World War (1939-1945). No longer was art seen merely as adornment for the sake of beauty and leisure. It became the weapon of power. Monumental structure thus triumphed as political prizes that challenged both space and time through the stamina of art.

The inter-war era witnessed the rise of dictatorships, such as Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany, Benito Mussolini in Fascist Italy, and Joseph Stalin in Communist Russia.[6] Each flaunted "a vogue for a colossal and self-aggrandizing 'monumentalism'" that strove to evoke the lustrous days of Caesar or Napoleon.[7] Public monuments, hence, have become an upholder for the state and oftentimes turned into a trophy of the leader's personality cult. Politicized art, or "propaganda art",[8] has since then been received with ambivalence, inseparable with warfare, extreme nationalism, and authoritarian regime. In particular, the Fascist art movement in Italy cast a tremendous influence on modern art development in Thailand, which is further discussed in Chapter Three.

Across the spectrums of ideological and political movement in the twentieth century, public art was also the conspicuous advocate for radical revolutions. In socialist inspired Mexico, monumental murals led by Diego Rivera revived visual arts and reinvented national history with an epic magnitude.[9] In the "red" East, colossal portraits and statues of Mao Zedong of China and Kim Il-Sung in North Korea were the fuel that mobilized millions of people and kindled national enthusiasm on a massive scale. Coming out of a colonial past, public monuments have been used by many independent countries in Southeast Asia, such as Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar, in order to reestablish a glorious past and reaffirm the new ideologies of their various governments.

The use of political monuments was not exclusively reserved for the "villains" or "radicals". One of the greatest monumental paragons of the twentieth century was neither a totalitarian dictatorship nor a struggling country but the leading "liberator", the United States. From its name to its architecture, the American capital is literally a huge neo-classical "memorial" itself. Completed with the Lincoln Memorial (1922), the Jefferson Memorial (1943), and the Vietnam War Veteran Memorial (1982), Washington D. C. is an ultimate monument that amplifies the noblest visions of the American "nation".[10]

Similarly, monumental art in Thailand has been the epitome of national politics and pride. Its standing as pure political art in its own right was actually introduced in the twentieth century, during the latter reign of King Chulalongkorn.

Be they showpieces for absolute kings or military regimes, monuments have been deemed by the Thai elite as the ideal manifestation of national ideology and identity. They laud the "official" stories of heroes and heroines, victories and revolutions, the living and the dead. They tell what, whom, and how the Thai people, as well as the world, should remember the past and the present. Together, the monuments construct a mosaic of a new nation for all the Thais. While public monuments are used to define a modern Thai nation, the concept of modernity and nation also need to be defined. On that account, it is important to offer key denotations to terms such as "modernization", "nation", and "nationalism" before the investigation of the visions of various monuments and the polities that initiated them.

Public Monuments and the Definition of a Modern Thai Nation

The Thai word for monument, *anutsawari*, is not always political and has many connotations. It refers to a wide range of structures, from religious establishments and sculptures to public monuments and statues in a western sense. Accordingly, Thai people saw as much, if not more, spirituality as political or historical allusions in monumental images.[11] They were symbols for the country's political power on one hand, and objects of worship on the other. The functions of conventional statues and edifices were blurred, as they incorporated the myths, faith, and politics of the kingdom. This belief indeed is still firmly maintained in the modern times.

The employment of western-style monument to serve politics was meant to be a public display of modernity. Notwithstanding, the usage of "modern" can be vague and misleading. The term can apply to so many aspects and occasions that it can end up meaning little. In theory, the concepts of "modernization" and "westernization" are always distinguishable; in application, they are seldom distinguished.[12] In the context of Thai history, modernization is usually perceived as a progressive yet internal transformation. Since the kingdom was never formally colonized, modernization was always attributed to the farsighted monarchs who initiated innovations and reforms "in the right direction at the right time".[13] The word "modern", consequently, renders an entity or event that is "westernized as opposed to traditional". This thesis will incorporate this general, although inconclusive notion.[14]

The concept of "nation" in Thai society was a product of "modernization". The definition of nation usually involves measures of homogeneity: a nation should speak a single language, have a mutual long-range history, share the same ethnic background, and be united by common political institutions. In the case of nationhood, cultural homogeneity may be secondary to a more intangible national spirit, an emotional commitment to the state and what it stands for. According to Benedict Anderson, the true identity of a nation lies not much in reality but as an "imagined community".[15] He believes that only through "the effect of imagining" can a nation exist. The new notion redefines the conventional understanding of a political entity. The modern nation with its imaginative spatial parameters and temporal homogeneity, thus, can be formulated in many directions and dimensions.

In order to embrace the idea of "nation", the meaning of the Thai word "*chat*" has shifted significantly since the end of the nineteenth century. According to a number of early Western dictionaries of the Thai language, *chat*, a term derived from Pali-Sanskrit, originally carried various meanings, such as birth, race, lineage, and origin.[16] The term as "nation" did not appear until the latter part of the Fifth Reign of King Chulalongkorn (r.1868-1910). It was then accepted and affirmed for such usage during his son King Vajiravudh's time (r.1910-1925).[17] King Rama VI further delineated this new concept of *chat* and its importance in the Thai identity with the famous slogan "Nation, Religion and King" (*Chat-Satsana-Phramahakasat*). Thereupon, many scholars have referred to this monarch as the pioneer of Thai nationalism.[18]

The definition of "nationalism" is more complex than it seems, however. The term is used to indicate "doctrines or ideologies about the character, interests, rights and duties of nations, as well as political programs or movements that propagate such ideas or attempt to realize them".[19] Yet nationalism has a sentimental side too. It also suggests "emotions in which individuals identify with and express a devotion to their own nation".[20] A new concept of "official nationalism" further emerged during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The ruling classes "considered it their task to impose their nationality, on all their subjects—of whatever religion, language or culture, and therefore, strengthening their state by creating within it a single homogeneous nation".[21] To some scholars, it

was this "official nationalism" that became dominant in Thai society.[22] It was also this idea of nationalism that the succeeding military governments strove to inject into the aspiring kingdom. Through constructing impressive public monuments, the various polities hoped the imaginative concept could be seen by the eyes as well as absorbed into the minds of the people, thereby, establishing powerful visions of the modern Thai nation.

Historical Background

Public Monuments do not exist in a vacuum. One must look at them in the context of their time to gain a full understanding of their significance. The use of art to serve Thai political and religious powers has an enduring history. In fact, figurative statues of royalty and religion were not unknown to the masses. The Thai monarchs have long "employed visual arts to reinforce sacral kingship".[23] The worship of the *devaraja*, the Hindu concept of a divine god king, has been fostered as part of the "royal prescription" since the time of Ayutthaya.[24] The royal images were "commemorated " in various forms, such as paintings, sculptures, and amulets. The creativity of these traditional depictions set the backdrop for the national monuments of modern times. In order to obtain a fuller picture of the ascent of public monuments in the twentieth century, a historical retrospective of the development of Thai art in the Bangkok period and the principal figures effecting its course is essential.

- **The Beginning of a New Dynasty: Art in Early Bangkok Period**

Founded in April 1782 by the first Chakri ruler, King Phra Phuttayotfa (r.1782-1809), Bangkok, "the City of Angels", was built to be a reincarnation of the lost capital Ayutthaya.[25] The new Chakri dynasty, hence, was a continuation of the divine sovereigns of the "Lord of Life".[26] Constructed at the beginning of this Ratthanakosin period, the Grand Palace was designed to be the novel symbolic center of the Siamese state as well as the Buddhist cosmos.[27] The Wat Phra Kaew and the Giant Swing, for instance, were more than practical architectures for royalty and religion.[28] They were both visual and ideological links that bridged the current ruling house to the previous Ayutthaya court. These imposing structures, furthermore, also served as political statements that validated the sacredness of the elite. They were an essential element in the rituals and celebrations of the Thai state.

They were the holy edifices in public spaces and the official symbols in the people's minds.

As the Bangkok forefathers strove to renew the glory and reclaim legitimacy from the past, they also paid evident attention to "the revival of Thai art", which was deemed as "the most important ornament of the country."[29] It was considered to be the king's responsibility to "patronize art in the same way as he did for Buddhism".[30] Accordingly, the royal art style relied strictly on traditional prescriptions that dated back to the Buddhist art of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya. There was a tradition of casting Buddhist statues to commemorate the monarchs. However, the images of these kingly figures lay with the "concept of perfection" and "ideal beauty" instead of "imitation from nature".[31] There was no attempt to "portray the likeness of the individual in the sacred images dedicated to the Chakri kings".[32] The royal statues, moreover, were made only for private worship among the elite. Notwithstanding, stylization began to give way to realism in the Third Reign (1824-1851) as a series of *phra thera* (patriarchs) sculpture endeavored to capture the physiognomy of the depicted personalities.[33]

- **The King and the West: Monumental Art in the late Nineteenth Century**

The major breakthrough in the convention came with the cultural and diplomatic exchange between King Mongkut (r.1851-1868) and European royalties in the middle of the nineteenth century. Although not as romantically as Anna Leonowens imagined,[34] King Mongkut did manage to maintain the kingdom's sovereignty during the tempest of colonization by changing the old milieu of the throne.[35] Recognized by the imperialist powers of the time, the Fourth Reign received the first western-style bronze bust and sculptures from Queen Victoria of England as a gift of goodwill in 1859.[36] A few years later, a gilded metal statuette of King Mongkut was sent from the French government to Bangkok in 1863.[37] Modeled and cast by the French sculptor Emile Francois Chatrousse, the fifty-nine centimeters high image features a realistic free-standing King Mongkut in a combined attire of tartan scotch cap, *sua channork* (jacket), *jongkraben* (Thai loincloth pants) and slippers. The Fourth Rama is also depicted with a decoration sash of *legion d'honneur* across the front. The feasibility of this statue was due to photography,[38]

in which the French sculptor could capture the likeness of King Mongkut in Paris without actually meeting and portraying the monarch in person.

Rama IV, nevertheless, seemed to be unsatisfied with the overly muscular portrait. He later ordered a local artisan, Luang Theprojana (later titled Phraya Chindarangsan), to make another life-size statue of himself.[39] This was the first ever commission of a royal statue of and by a living monarch in Siam. Like the work by Chatrousse, the Thai version shows a standing King Mongkut in a similar combination of western and Siamese apparels. The statue embodies the scholastic as well as regal qualities of the Fourth Rama. The figure holds the "Narai sword" in his right hand and carries a book in his left one. Unfortunately, King Mongkut passed away just before the statue's completion in 1868. Yet this realistic sculpture ushered in a novel trend and change in the local art world, as Phraya Chindarangsan smoothly blended the western mode—realism, proportion, and anatomy—with traditional Thai characters—idealism, simplicity, and grace. Widely replicated as the "official" portrayal of King Mongkut, this pioneer work is now placed in Wat Bowonivet, the royal temple where the King himself founded the Thammayut sect of Thai Buddhism and served as chief abbot during a portion of his twenty-seven years of monkhood before ascending to the throne.

On the other hand, this regal statue helped to contest the time-honored "superstition" that image-making of a living person, including photograph, portrait, and sculpture, was harmful to that individual.[40] The royal support of realistic art signified a new beginning of Thai politics. Thereafter, the living power elite became more willing to use and even actively utilize their images for personal and political purposes. Notwithstanding, the superstitious belief that portraiture or photo-taking would capture the soul of the person has positively impacted the status of monumental art. Because the general masses are convinced that the spirit of the revered personality, or at least some fragments of his or her essence, inhabit in the picture or sculpture,[41] the artwork then becomes a spiritual representation of that individual. It is a common scene even nowadays that the setting of a photograph or statue of a particular king or queen is at the center of worship. It is also a popular custom that Thai people pay homage and oblations to many of the royal monuments as scared images all over the country.

- **Era of a Modern Monarch: Art at the Turn of the Twentieth Century**

The actual incorporation of western notions into Thai art and politics was doubtlessly the feat of King Chulalongkorn. The Fifth Rama had always been fond of Western art and architecture.[42] In 1869, he assigned Prince Pradit Worakan to make a set of statues of the four previous Chakri monarchs.[43] Based on photographs of King Mongkut and people's recollections of the former kings, these life-size gilded metal sculptures showed a compromise of realism and idealism. The first three Rama were depicted half-nude and shoeless, each holding a different royal sword.[44] King Mongkut, on the contrary, was fully clothed in the same fashion as the earlier figure by Phraya Chindarangsan. Although these royal statues still appeared static and monotonous, the Thai artist's effort towards a more lively portrayal was apparent.

Meanwhile, King Chulalongkorn invited foreign art experts, such as painters, architects, photographers, and designers, to work for his court. The Western art style became the "Preferred Royal Style".[45] Fusing Siamese temperaments with European elements, the city of Bangkok reached an additional level of modernity during the Fifth Reign.[46] A significant number of European art works were imported into Siam. The first public museum was opened in 1874 at the Grand Palace, displaying the King's private collection. In 1876, King Rama V hired the British architect John Clunich,[47] whose works in Singapore had impressed the monarch, to construct the Chakri Maha Throne Hall and decorate it in the "Imperial Victorian style".[48] Similarly, many other royal buildings were created in a Western mode. The Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall in the Royal Plaza was designed to resemble the cathedrals of St. Peter's in Rome and St. Paul's in London with its enormous dome and green-gray marble. Wat Benchamabophit was built with marble from Carrara, while Wat Ratchabophit and Wat Nivethammaprawat were adorned with neo-Gothic interiors.[49]

King Rama V's two overseas trips in 1897 and 1907 further enriched the royal collection of European arts as well as encouraged the vogue of Western fashion and lifestyle in Siam—from tuxedos to cigars to cameras. Of course, the fad belonged exclusively to the royal house and aristocracy. The elite was especially captivated by the magic of photography, which as a result made significant inroads

in the Thai art scene. The realism brought by photographs inspired many local artists and artisans. Portraiture became extremely popular. The appreciation of realistic painting, printmaking, and photography was certainly more than a matter of taste and trend. The Siamese leaders also understood that such art works could well serve politics. As the actual features, physique, and aura of a royal or noble figure were recorded, the image recreated the personality and the power of the depicted person. More importantly, the individuals could be visually immortalized in history, with their faces and deeds faithfully preserved and remembered for generations to come.

During his European tour, King Chulalongkorn seemed to enjoy the company of artists, especially photographers and portrait makers. He visited several artists in their studios and even posed for them there. French and Italian arts particularly won the King's favor. The Italian and Thai "cultural link" reached an exceptional height in 1907 when many Italians artists were employed by the Public Works Department to build and furnish the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall.[50] That project was merely a start. Italian art style and artists would have a tremendous impact on modern Thai art as the century unfolded. In 1897, a life-size marble sculpture of Rama V was commissioned to an Italian "professor", Cesare Fantachiotti, in Florence.[51] The standing figure, now placed inside the Chakri Maha Throne Hall, was a realistic depiction of the King, wearing full Western military attire with metals and sashes, holding a top-hat in his right hand with his left hand leaning against a long sword that touches the ground. King Chulalongkorn was much delighted with the result as the image signified a westernized and civilized political power. The monarch later ordered Fantachiotti to model smaller bronze versions after this statue and then sent them to foreign sovereigns as well as local and provincial nobility as a token of diplomacy. Finally in 1908, the first public monument, the Equestrian Statue of King Chulalongkorn, was erected. A new chapter in monumental art history had officially begun.

- **The Founding Fathers of Modern Thai Art**

As Siam embarked into the twentieth century, a new epoch of Thai politics also made its entrance. Public art, accordingly, turned into an essential instrument in supporting political ideology of various ruling regimes, each with its own styles,

motives, and values. Laden with political inspiration and created as high beauty, monumental sculpture rose as one of the most renowned elements of modern Thai arts. Behind every success, there were vigorous and visionary individuals. In the story of Thai public monuments, there have been several personalities who profoundly shaped its direction and development. From royalty to foreigner, the following section looks at the careers of the founding fathers of modern Thai art: King Vajiravudh, Prince Naris Ranuwattiwong, and Silpa Bhirasri (Corrado Feroci) whose artistic accomplishments left a distinguished mark on the monumental history of Thailand.

King Vajiravudh and the Establishments of the State Art Institutions

When King Vajiravudh ascended the throne in 1910, he felt a strong need for revitalizing traditional Siamese art, which the King worried would otherwise be obscured by Western influence.[52] The refreshing impetus of tradition was behind many art works completed in the Sixth Reign, including the design and decoration of the main building at the Royal Pages School (1919), which is now the Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University. Moreover, King Vajiravudh did not endorse solely the development of visual arts. He was also an advocate for many art forms and studies, from literature to archaeology to performing arts.

Yet the King did not sponsor local artists exclusively. Rama VI was very fond of the works of Vittorio Novi and invited the famed Italian sculptor to decorate the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall as well as execute the sculptural panels on the Mahaiudthit Bridge (1914) that commemorated the death of King Chulalongkorn. King Vajiravudh later hired Novi's nephew, Rodolfo Nolli, for the "traditional" stucco ornaments that adorned the buildings of Chulalongkorn University. Likewise, the monarch appointed the Italian artists Annibale Rigotti to build and Cesare Ferro to decorate the Thai Khu Fah Building (Norasingh Mansion) and Banthomsin Building (Phitasnulok Mansion) in a "Venetian Gothic style" for his favorite courtiers Chao Phraya Ramrakop and Phraya Aniruttheva.[53] The most important contribution of the Sixth Rama, however, was his establishment of the Department of Fine Arts and the Arts and Crafts School (*Rongrien Poh Chang*) in 1912 and 1913 respectively, which have since played a substantial role in developing modern Thai art.

The Great Teacher and Artist: Prince Naris Ranuwattiwong

Another prominent royal art leader at the time was Prince Naris Ranuwattiwong, whose remarkable career in Thai arts spanned from the Fifth to the Seventh Reign. Born in April 28, 1863, Prince Naris was the sixty-second child of King Mongkut. Prince Naris received his early education in the Palace and graduated from the Royal Page Cadet School in 1882. He then served his brother King Chulalongkorn until the end of his reign in various positions, such as the Minister of Royal Treasure (1893-1894), the Minister of Defense (1894-1899), and the Minister of Royal Household (1905-1909). He retired from politics after 1909 due to health problems but continued to advise his nephew King Vajiravudh on art and culture through the Public Works Department and the Department of Fine Arts. During the Seventh Reign, Prince Naris resumed royal duty, as King Prajadhipok's Privy Councilor. When King Prajadhipok visited the United States in 1933, Prince Naris became the Regent of the Kingdom. He stayed in the position until King Rama VII abdicated in 1935 and never took up office again after then.

Prince Naris was a "Renaissance Man" accomplished in politics, military, art, music, and literature, to name a few. He was highly regarded as the "great teacher" (*borom khru*), and his impact on the history of Thai art was phenomenal. Prince Naris was the chief designer and supervisor of many important art projects including the architecture and the mural paintings in Wat Benchamabophit and Wat Rajathiwad, the drawings of *tosachat* (the ten lives of the Buddha) as well as the fans of rank for royal princes.[54] He also designed various early public monuments in Siam, for instance, the Statue of the Earth Goddess at Sanam Luang and the Monument of King Phra Phutthayotfa at the Memorial Bridge.

The most considerable achievement of Prince Naris was his outlook on arts. His understanding and openness towards Western arts led a new path for modern Thai art. Together with his contemporary scholars and artists, the prince laid out the concept of art development in the kingdom. They discussed the translation of the word "art" (*sinlapa*),[55] which was defined as "the production of objects of craft and skill [that] belong to the realm of the beautiful".[56] Five categories of "fine art" (*wichit sinlapa*) were acknowledged: architecture, sculpture, painting, music and literature.[57] This classification has been accepted and applied ubiquitously since. On

the other hand, the prince distinguished between the meaning of "artist" (*sinlapin*) and "artisan" (*chang*), and he preferred to call himself an "artisan".[58] Prince Naris believed that the word "*chang*" retained its traditional denotation that had not yet changed, whereas "artist" implied a more westernized individual whose works might include inappropriate subject matters like nudity.[59] Accordingly, the prince was not only devoted to preserve and improve the indigenous character of Thai traditions but also very cautious in selecting the suitable foreign elements for the Thai art world to adapt.

The Father of Modern Thai Art: Silpa Bhirasri

Encouraged by royal patrons such as Prince Naris, sculpture has gained a hefty importance since the turn of the twentieth century. As many of the princes and nobility had traveled or been educated in the West, they realized the political power of monumental sculptures in public spaces.[60] The success of King Chulalongkorn's equestrian statue further validated this notion. In 1924, a Florentine sculptor Corrado Feroci, who became better known by his later Thai name Silpa Bhirasri, was chosen out of two hundred applicants to be the official artist for the Sixth Reign.[61] Although Bhirasri was just one of the many Italian artists hired by the court at the time, he soon proved that his influence could shine and far surpass his contemporaries. Since Bhirasri's Thai name was widely accepted in modern Thai art history, this thesis uses this name for the sake of consistency, even in cases referring to his earlier works before he took-up Thai citizenship.

Bhirasri was born in Florence, Italy, on September 15, 1892. He graduated from the Accademia di Belle Arti in 1914 and became a teacher in sculpture at the academy. Meanwhile, he was involved in many monumental projects initiated by the Italian government and soon established himself as a popular sculptor of war memorials and heroic statues. In January 1923, the adventurous thirty-one year old left his home for Bangkok and worked as an official artist for King Vajiravudh. Bhirasri entered the Fine Arts Department in 1924 and gradually gained a reputation in the Thai art circle—especially the recognition by Prince Naris. The Italian artist continued to serve during the reign of King Prajadhipok after the death of King Rama VI. Nevertheless, it was under the various military governments that followed the end of the absolute monarchy that Bhirasri's career soared and peaked.

After the *coup d'état* in June 24, 1932, the constitutional government successfully replaced the Crown as the most prominent sponsor for art. While the visions projected in public monuments altered from one regime to another, the influence of Bhirasri remained constant. He was a master in monumental sculptures and produced numerous outstanding works in Thailand. Bhirasri believed that art could "engender high and noble ideas and aspiration".[62] "Heroic monument", which could be "understood by the majority of the citizens", was like "a poet that inspired intellectual activity".[63] Bhirasri's western training in realism obviously suited the tastes of the Thai aristocrats and officials alike. His early projects included a bust portrait of Prince Naris (1923), the Monument of King Phra Phutthayotfa at the Memorial Bridge (1929-31), and the Monument of Tao Suranari at Nakorn Rachasima (1934). Under the two governments of Phibun from the 1930s to 1950s, he added some of the most significant monuments in modern Thai history to his resume, such as the relief panels in the Democracy Monument (1939), the hero figures placed at the Victory Monument (1941), the Monument of King Vajiravudh (1942) at Lumpini Park, and the Equestrian Monument of King Taksin in Thonburi (1937-1953). Bhirasri continued to be an active artist and teacher under the rule of Sarit Thanarat. The Monument of King Naresuan in Suphanburi (1958) and the Walking Buddha that commemorated the 25th century of Buddhism in 1957, which was at last erected in Buddha Monton, Nakorn Pathom in the 1980s, were two of the most majestic works from his later period.

Apart from being the principal official sculptor, Bhirasri was involved in the founding of the School of Fine Arts (*Rongrien Praneet Silpakam*) in 1933,[64] which became Silpakorn University in 1943. At this time, Bhirasi took up Thai citizenship and the name Silpa Bhirasi, which also coincided with the political sensibility of the war. Henceforth, he always used "we", "our culture" and "our ancestors" in addressing his newly converted country.[65] As the Dean of the Faculty of Sculpture and Painting in the Fine Arts University, Bhirasri was the backbone of art study in Thailand. For over thirty years, he worked and wrote extensively on Thai art, ranging from the ancient art of Sukhothai to modern sculptures and paintings. Bhirasri maintained that the purpose of art education should focus on three issues: a unique national art style, the trend of contemporary art, and the understanding of

international modern art.[66] Therefore, he endeavored to synchronize Thailand's cultural legacy with the momentum and modernity that engaged European arts.

In addition, Bhirasri presented Thai artists to a broader audience by organizing Thai art exhibitions both domestically and internationally.[67] The First and Second National Exhibitions in 1949 and 1950 were two of the many projects he initiated. Under his direction, the School of Fine Arts successfully trained young Thais in painting and sculpture. The local talents then fulfilled many governmental commissions, including all of the public monuments nationwide, which used to be occupied by foreign artists.[68] Combined with the study of traditional Thai art, Bhirasri's western style academy prepared a new generation of qualified native artists and art teachers, such as Pimarn Mulpramook, Fua Haribhitak, Sithidet Sanghiran, and Sanan Silakorn, who all later became masters in their own right. On May 14, 1962, Bhirasri passed away in Bangkok at the age of seventy. Respected by not merely his students but also the royalty and government, Bhirasri has become the patron spirit of the art world and is widely esteemed as the "Father of Modern Thai Art".

- **Silpakorn University and the Rise of Public Monument**

The upsurge of Bhirasri and his monumental works were closely related to politics. In May 1933, the state set up a new Department of Fine Arts under the Ministry of Education to oversee various resources and art works from the defunct Royal Institute. Whereas the Royal Museum was expanded and renamed the National Museum, the Royal Institute of Literature has turned into the National Library and National Archives. The Department of Fine Arts and the School of Fine Arts became the production center of government sponsored projects during the height of Phibun's nationalistic Thailand, a new name that the Field Marshal decreed on May 8, 1939 that replaced "Siam". Bhirasri, the Italian monumental sculptor, stood up to be one of the most important figures in the art scene.

Headed by Bhirasri, the foundry in the School of Fine Arts then Silpakorn University became the official machinery of producing "institutional arts" in the kingdom. Immortalized in public monuments, the spirit of gallantry and the love for the nation were communicated to the people through images of national heroes and

past kings. “Heroic realism” rose as a new vogue at the time. It was ascertained to be more than a fad. Since the 1930s, these European-imported prescriptions have established themselves as the “ideals” of modern Thai art. Upheld by the government as “symbols of the Thai nation”, this formulated style was applied to and persisted in portrayals of monuments along with paintings, sculptures, and varied graphic designs.[69] Among all of the different expressions, public monuments were of exceptional prominence. It was surely due to their open and general exposure that they could far advance the state ideology. But perhaps more importantly, it was because the chief artist Bhirasri himself was a famed sculptor.[70] Many of his students keenly followed the footsteps of the master. They became winners of national prizes, and hence, the new and renowned artists of Thailand.

While Bhirasri and his students fulfilled the elitist demands with satisfying results, the government officials granted the artists constant commissions and promoted their social status into civil servants. However, Bhirasri and Silpakorn University did face certain criticism in the early 1940s. Some people felt that a “university” should have more than two faculties, painting and sculpture at the time. Others doubted the proficiency of the academy, for there was only Bhirasri who acted as the dean for both faculties.[71] The challenge strengthened the determination of Bhirasri and his students. The most effective way to prove their merit was through the virtuosity of their arts.

The creation of a monumental sculpture is no easy task. Both the three-dimensional nature that can be viewed from all sides and the noble spirit that the work needs to convey make special demands on the sculptors.[72] As most of the personalities that are being memorialized have either passed away or were legendary figures, there would be no original sketching or modeling. Likewise, only limited information can be drawn from photographs or old paintings, which basically show flat and frontal depictions. The lack of evidence and sources, especially with subject like a mythical hero, calls for vivid imagination from artists.

Accordingly, historical accuracy has to give way to the dramatic effect or the dogmatic message that a monument is destined to deliver. After all, it is the “story” of the monument that matters. For instance, no reliable record shows the

likeness of King Taksin. When Bhirasri executed the equestrian sculpture of the Thonburi monarch, the master of heroic realism incorporated "Chinese facial features" with a "strikingly angry" expression in order to portray the power of a fierce warrior, which the Phibun military regime patronized.[73] On the other hand, because of the open exposure and viewing fashion, the presentation of a monument requires particular exaggeration. Public sculptures are often overshadowed by sunlight and "eaten by the air".[74] Thus, "the depth of the eye-sockets or the contours of the muscles", for example, need to be amplified to prevent the disappearance of the details when it is erected in the outdoor location.[75] How much exaggeration should apply is an ultimate test and task for the artists.

Throughout Bhirasri's career and after his death, the dominating art style of heroic realism in monuments has changed little.[76] The impact of Bhirasri has been long lasting. Silpakorn University remained the only art school that taught and trained professional artists until 1983.[77] Its facility on campus was the birthplace and the method of casting set up by Bhirasri was the formula in creating all the official monuments across the nation until 1987.[78] On the other hand, abstract art did not seem to earn Bhirasri's favor. Although he traveled back to Italy and Europe many times and must have known the modern movements in western art circles, he preferred to keep his stand on "realism" and the trend of *Novecento*, "which was anti-abstraction and anti-avant-garde".[79] "No Surrealism or Abstraction is to be seen in Thailand", Bhirasri wrote as late as 1960, because "this kind of art, if not treated 'childishly', as in fact they are in too many cases, require an intellectual maturity which our artists have not yet reached."[80] The choice of the master has directed the course of modern monumental art, and to some extent the entire Thai art world, to date.

Being one of the apt students of Bhirasri's, Sanan Silakorn assisted his teacher in many projects including the Democracy Monument and the Victory Monument. He later became a famous professor and monumental sculptor himself. Sanan graduated from the School of Fine Arts in 1938, served in the military during the Second World War, and worked as an instructor in drawing and anatomy at Silapkorn University in 1943.[81] Inheriting the graceful and realistic attributes of Bhirasri, Sanan was highly recognized by the Phibun elite and the succeeding Sarit-

Thanom regime in the 1960s and 70s. His large-scale heroic monuments have spread all over the country, such as the Monument of King Ramkamheang in Sukhothai (1967), the Monument of King U-Thong in Ayutthaya (1970), and the Monument of Bang Rachan Villagers in Singburi (1976). In spite of the changing hands of government throughout the twentieth century, public monuments in Thailand firmly endured the predictable art style that Bhirasri established. They have eventually become the landmarks and "visions" of the Thai nation.

Notes

[1] Clement Greenberg, "The New Sculpture", in *Aesthetics and the Arts*, Lee A. Jacobus, ed. (New York: MaGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968), p.257.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Donald Preziosi, ed., *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.165.

[4] Ibid.

[5]* Dr. Nitthi Aeosriwong's *The Thai Nation, Thailand, Texts and Monuments on Culture, State and Conscience* (1985) has one chapter dealing with public monuments. There are a few well-received master's degree theses that touch on specific monuments and politics, such as Manit Nuallaor's "Political Symbol in Thai Politics: A Case Study of the Political Symbolic Uses during Field Marshal P. Pibulsonggram's Government, 1938-1944" (1990) from Chulalongkorn University, Saipin Kaewngamprasoet's "The Politics of the Thao Suranari" (1995) from Thammasat University and a more recent one by Malinee Khumsupha, "The Political Implications of the Democracy Monument in Thai Society" (1999) also from Thammasat Unversity. Of course, there are many books and articles, either written by or about Professor Silpa Bhirasri, which discuss the works of this monumental art master. In 1999, Dr. Thongchai Winichakul presented a paper titled "Thai Democracy in Public Memory: Monuments and their Narratives" in the International Conference on Thai Studies in the Netherlands. Most of the writings are in Thai language (except Dr. Thongchai's unpublished paper), and their focuses are mainly on political and social studies.

[6]* For a detailed account of the art development in Europe during this period, see Dawn Ades, Tim Benton, David Elliott and Iain Boyd Whyte, eds. *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators 1930-45* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1995).

[7] See Edwin Heathcote, *Monument Builders: Modern Architecture and Death* (London: Academy Editions, 1999), p.49.

[8]* The word "propaganda" can be traced back to the seventeenth century. "Pope Gregory XV named the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* [Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith] in 1622, a missionary organization set up by the Vatican to counteract the rival ideas of the Protestant reformation." Toby Clark, *Art and Propaganda in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997), p.7.

[9]* After the Mexico's revolution in 1910 that overthrew Porfirio Diaz, the new government began to sponsor public arts that inspired by Marxist nationalism. The most famous artists included Diego Rivera. His masterpiece *The History of Mexico* (1929-1935) was painted on three walls of the National Palace in Mexico City, depicting a new vision of the Mexican state. See Ibid., pp.35-7.

[10]* The memorial constructions in Washington D.C. began in the late 19th century and concluded in the 20th century. The first monument was Robert Mills' 555 feet tall obelisk-like Washington Monument (1884). The Lincoln Memorial by Henry Bacon was completed in 1922, and the Jefferson's Memorial by John Russell Pope was finished in 1943. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial (1982) was designed by Maya Lin. See Heathcote, *Monument Builders*, p.49.

[11] Nithi Aeosriwong, *Chat Thai*, *muang Thai*, *baab rian lae anutsawari* [The Thai Nation, Thailand, Texts and Monuments on Culture, State and Conscience] (Bangkok: Matichon Publishing, 1985), pp.89-90.

[12] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Goals of Development," in *Understanding Political Development*, Myron, Weiner and Huntington, eds. (Boston/Toronto: Little Brown and Company, 1987), p.28.

[13] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geobody of a Nation* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1994), p.12.

[14] Ibid., p.19.

[15] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions and New Left Books, 1983).

[16]* According to Thongchai: "The most significant semiological conjunction and shift involve the notion of *chat* or 'a nation' itself. Etymologically, *chat*, *chat-ti*, *chat-ta* mean birth or a collective noun for being born of a common origin, ethnically, temporally, or socially… After only a slight shift in the late 19th century, *chat* came to mean a community of people who shared a cultural commonality particularly defined by being the subjects of the same monarch. Both *chat* and *ban muang* therefore came to signify a common cultural and geographical community defined by royal power." See Thongchai, *Siam Mapped,* p.134. On the other hand, "the word *prathet* in the old usage simply meant a place or an area (district, region, town, and even an area of the forest)… this earth is fill of *prathet*, that is countries or nations. Traces of this old meaning still appeared in most of the dictionaries of the Thai language compiled in the late 19thor early 20th century… [although] the meaning of *prathet* as a nation was also appearing in some of them." Ibid., p.49. Also see D.J. B. Pallegoix, *Dictionarium linguage Thai sive Siamensis interpretatione Latina, Gallica et Anglica* (Paris, 1854), p.523; *Pallegoix Siamese French English Dictionary*, J.L. Vey, rev. (Bangkok: Printing Office of the Catholic Mission, 1896), p.776; Scot Barme, *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity* (Singapore: Institute of South East Asian Studies, 1993), p.15.

[17]* "In 1889, during King Chulalongkorn's reign, Phraya Phatsakorawong, a leading official in Rama V's administration, published an article in the royal journal *Varjirayan Viset*, in which he used the term *chat*, meaning nation, in the context of a discussion of the traditional Buddhist theory of kingship. In 1893, as Franco-Siamese relations reached a crisis point, the weekly newspaper *Thamasat Winitchai*, published by a British-educated official Luang Ratanayati, ran an editorial calling for unity against the French in order to show gratitude to the King, to defend Buddhism, and maintain the freedom and independence of *Chat Thai*, the Thai race/nation. In Vey's revised edition of Pallegoix's dictionary in 1896, [*chat* was translated] as "race, nation, origin, generation, sex", and shortly afterwards King [Chulalongkorn] himself began to use this term to refer to the Siamese political community. By the early years of the 20th century, the idea of a Thai nation (*Chat Thai*) was also being taught to school children in the *Thammachariya* series of civics texts produced by the well-known Thai educationist Chaophraya Thammasakmontri." Barme, *Luang Wichit*, p.15. Also see Eiji Murashiman, Nakharin Mektrairat, and Chalermkiet Phiu-nual, *Political Thoughts of the Thai Military in Historical Perspective* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1986), pp.8-24.

[18]* Detailed accounts of King Vajiravudh's contributions to Thai nationalism can be found in the following sources: Walter F. Vella, *Chaiyo! King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii, 1978), Kullada

Kesboonchoo, "Official Nationalism Under King Vajiravudh" (International Conference on Thai Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, July 3-6, 1987), Stephen Lyon Wakeman Greene, *Absolute Dreams: Thai Government Under Rama VI, 1910-1925* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1999), and Murashiman, *Political Thoughts*, pp.25-43. Also see the Monument of King Vajiravudh in Chapter 3 and the Monument of the First World War in Chapter 4 in this thesis.

[19] Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, as cited in *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates*, Jeffrey C. Alexander and Steven Seidman, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.24.

[20] Ibid.

[21] H. Seton-Watson, *Nation and States* (Colorado: Westwood Press, 1977), p.148.

[22] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.93; also see Murashiman, *Political Thoughts*, p.5.

[23] Apinan Poshyananda, "Portraits of Modernity in the Royal Thai Court", in *Asian Art & Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.38.

[24] Apinan Poshyananda, "Contemporary Thai Art: Nationalism and Sexuality *A La Thai,*" in *Contemporary Art in Asia: Tradition/Tensions* (New York: Asian Society, 1996), pp.102-3.

[25]* Since the beginning of the Rattanakosin period, the Chakri dynasty deliberately shaped the cultural landscape of its new capital, turning Bangkok from a small village into a reincarnation of the glorious "Ayutthaya". The construction of the city, especially the Grand Palace, used bricks transported from the ruins of the old capital. This arrangement was perhaps necessary because of the lack of resources at that time. However, it might also have served a symbolic purpose. Bangkok was built both literally and spiritually from Ayutthaya, declaring the continuation of the Siamese culture as well as establishing the legitimacy of the ruling Chakri monarchs. See David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1984), p.146.

[26] Thawisan Ladawan "The Monarchy," in *Thailand: King Bhumibol Adulyadej—The Golden Jubilee 1946-1996* (Bangkok: Asia Books, 1996), p.88.

[27] Craig, J Reynolds, "Buddhist Cosmography in Thai History, with Special Reference to Nineteenth-Century Culture Change", in the *Journal of Asian Studies* (February, 1976), p.211.

[28]* King Rama I ordered his own Grand Palace complex including Wat Phra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha) and the Front Palace to be constructed in 1782, and later Wat Suthat in 1807, which housed the Phra Sisakayamuni image from Wat Mahatthat in Sukhothai, directly linking his dynasty to the ancient Thai kingdom. The Giant Swing was also built in 1807 immediately to the north of Wat Suthat. It was used at the annual Brahman "Ceremony of the Swing" which involved the Hindu gods Shiva and Vishnu. From the beginning of the First Reign of the current dynasty until 1932, royalty was always present at these ceremonies. See Clarence Aasen, *Architecture of Siam: A Cultural History Interpretation* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.122-9.

[29] Apinan Poshyananda, *Western Style Paintings and Sculptures in the Thai Royal Collection* (Bangkok: Amarin Printing Group, 1992), p.334.

[30] Ibid.

[31]* "Idealized religious images in royal regalia were made to remind worshippers of the late monarchs… Examples include Buddha images dedicated to the Ayudhya monarchs. In Bangkok period, Buddha images dedicated to King Phra Phutthayotfa [Rama I] and King Phra Phutthaloetla [Rama II] were executed at the command of King Phra Nangklao [Rama III]." Apinan Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand: Nineteen and Twentieth Centuries* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.7-8. These two figures dedicated to the first two Chakri kings are now housed inside the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in the Grand Palace, Bangkok.

[32] Ibid., p.8.

[33]* "King Nangklao [Rama III] played a significant role in promoting realism by commissioning dedication images of Somdet Phra Phuttha Kosachan in 1843 and Somdet Phra Sangkaraja Suk in 1844. The monks are seated in conventional meditative pose, but an attempt has been made to capture their physiognomy". Ibid.

[34]* Anna Leonowens was the first English lady to be hired by King Mongkut as a full-time teacher, or a governess which she always termed, in the palace for the royal children, including Prince Chulalongkorn at that time. She left Bangkok in November 1867 and soon published two popular books about Siam: *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* (Boston, 1870) and *The Romance of the Harem* (Boston, 1872). Her accounts of Siam and King Mongkut drew upon as much her personal experiences as her imagination and plagiarism. Her biography can be found in *Descriptions of Old Siam*, Michael Smithies, ed., (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.190.

[35] For a bibliography of the Fourth Reign see Constance M. Wilson, "Towards a Bibliography of the Life and Times of King Mongkut, King of Thailand, 1851-1868", in *Southeast Asian History and Historiography*, Cowan and Wolters, eds., pp.164-89; Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp.181-90.

[36]* In 1859, Queen Victoria of England sent to Siam bronze busts of Emperor Napoleon III and Empress Eugenie de Montijo executed by Emilien Niewerkerke. They were the first European royal busts ever to arrive in Bangkok. See Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.8.

[37]* This statue of King Mongkut by Chatrousse was labeled as "the Royal Image 63". See Apinan, *Western Style Paintings*, p.339, and *Modern Art*, p.8.

[38]* "It is assumed that Khun Samutkhochorn (who later held the title of Chao Phraya Ratanathibase) has brought a photograph of King Mongkut wearing a Western-style jacket, traditional Thai-style trousers, and a tartan cap to the French Art Exhibition in 1892. The French government commissioned Chatrousse to model [the statue] from that photograph." Apinan, *Western Style Paintings*, p.340.

[39]* Prince Damrong Rajanubharb described:
I assume that a royal photograph was sent either by royal command or by someone else to the artist. Unfamiliar with His Majesty's physical appearance, the sculptor made his statuette according to a Western art concept portraying a muscular, robust body. Due to his dissatisfaction with the French portrait, His Majesty commissioned the working of his life-size statue.

Prince Damrong Rajanubharb to Prince Narisaranuwattiwong, May 12, 1934, in *Sarn Somdet*, vol.3 (Bangkok: Ongkarn Khurusapha, 1983), pp.169-70, translation from Apinan, "Portraits", p.39.

[40] Apinan, *Western Style Paintings*, p.341.

[41] See H. G. Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies: Their History and Function with Supplementary Notes*, reprint (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1992), p.173.

[42] The art development in the Fifth Reign can be found in Apinan, *Modern Art*, pp.11-22.

[43] Ibid., p.9.

[44]* All three statues of the first three Rama are designed and cast in similar fashion. They are all half-nude, wearing a lower garment gathered in folds, and fastened by a belt with ornamented buckle. Each King holds a different sword: King Rama I "Phrasaeng Chaipetch", King Rama II "Phrasaeng Wiet" and King Rama III "Phrasaeng Funplaa". Although the posture of the three statues looks too static, the portrayal does try to capture the likeness of the kings and their facial features, including their small pot bellies. They are now housed in Royal Pantheon, the Grand Palace. Ibid., pp.9-10.

[45] Ibid., p.12. For the royal favorite European arts see Apinan, "Portraits", pp.40-6.

[46] Apinan, *Modern Art*, pp.6-22. Also see Leopoldo Ferri de Lazara and Paolo Piazzardi, *Italians at the Court of Siam* (Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing, 1996).

[47]* John Clunich was the chief architect with Henry Clunich Rose as his assistant. On the Thai part, Phraya Bhanuwong Mahakosathibodi was the Director of Construction. The foundation stone was laid on May 7, 1876, and the building was completed in 1882 in time to celebrate the centenary of the founding of Bangkok. See Naengnoi Suksri, *The Grand Palace* (Bangkok: River Books Guides, 1998), p.107.

[48] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.15.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., pp.17-18; also see Ferri de Lazara, *Italians*, for a detailed account of most famed Italian artists and their works in Siam.

[51] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.13.

[52] Ibid., p.23.

[53] Ibid., p.24.

[54] Ibid., p.19.

[55]* Prince Naris worked closely with not only European artists like Silpa Bhirasri, Hercules Manfredi, and Edward Healey, but also Thai scholars like Phraya Anumanrajadhon, Phra Promphichit, Phra Thewabhinimit and Luang Soralaklikhit. See Ibid., p.21-2.

[56] Ibid.

[57] The category of music and literature also include dance. Ibid.

[58]* Prince Naris wrote: "It has been said that I am a good artisan (*chang dee*) but I am not the one to judge whether that is correct… I prefer to use the Thai word *chang* as its meaning has not altered.'" See Phraya Anumanrajadhon, *Cherdchu Kiat Luang Wisan Silpakam* [The Reputation of Luang Wisan Silpakam] (Bangkok: Department of Fine Arts, 1981); also see Ibid., p.22.

[59] Phraya Anumanrajadhon quoted in Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.22.

[60] Ibid., p.21.

[61] *Contemporary Art in Thailand* (Bangkok: Fine Art Department, 1989), pp.5-6; also see Apinan, *Modern Art*, pp.34-51 and Ferri de Lazara, *Italians*, pp.177-95.

[62] Silpa Bhirasri, *Articles on the Fine Arts* (Bangkok: Fine Arts Department and the Cremation Rites of Professor Silpa Bhirasri, 1963), p.8.

[63] Ibid.

[64]* The model of setting the School of Fine Arts was based upon an Italian art academy with an equivalent study on Thai arts. Besides Bhirasri, the founding instructors included Phra Soralaklikhit (painting), Phra Thewabhinimit (Thai art), Luang Wichit Wattanakan (Thai history), Phra Promphichit (Thai architecture), and Phra Sarotrataniman (art history). See Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.31.

[65] See Ferri de Lazara, *Italians*, p.188.

[66] Silpa Bhirasri (Corrado Feroci), "Modern Sculpture and Painting in Siam", Charoon Molkul, trans., in *Silpakorn* (June), pp.57-64.

[67]* Bhirasri was important in introducing Thailand to many international art exhibitions. In 1953, Thailand became a member of the International Association of Plastic Art at Maison de l'Unesco in Paris and participated in the International Competition of the Unknown Political Prisoner at the Tate Gallery in London. In 1960, "Bhirasri arranged for Thai artists to show their work at the German Council of Art in Cologne, the Graphic Center of the Pratt Institute in New York City, and the second International Biennial Exhibition of Prints in Tokyo." See Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.59.

[68]* Bhirasri stated: "The practical result of this art training has been that from the year 1937 Thailand had the first group of Thai artists able to execute works required by official departments and ministries, which in the past were made by foreigners." Silpa Bhirasri, "Notes on the Establishment of the University of Fine Arts", *Articles From the Catalogues of the Annual National Art Exhibition* (Bangkok, 1963), p.14.

[69] Apinan, "Contemporary Thai Art", pp.102-10; also see Helen Michaelsen, "State Building and Thai Painting and Sculpture in the 1930s and 1940s", in *Modernity in Asian Art*, John Clark, ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), pp.60-73.

[70] Craig, J. Reynolds, *National Identity and Its Defenders: Thailand, 1939-1989* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1991), p.10.

[71] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.45.

[72] A quote from Chin Prasong, head of the Sculptures Division of the Fine Arts Department, in "Larger than Life", *A Heritage of Cultural Diversity* (Bangkok: Bangkok Post Publishing, August 2000), p.31.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76]* "Bhirasri aroused fanatical loyalty in his admirers and students, many of whom credited him with almost superhuman powers". Ibid., p.93. Also see Niphon Khamwilai, ed., *Acharn Silpa kab luksit* [Professor Silpa and Students] (Bangkok: Silpa Bhirasri Memorial Museum, 1984).

[77]* In 1983, Chulalongkorn University founded the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts. Chiang Mai University also established its Faculty of Fine Arts in the same year.

[78]* In 1987, the Department of Fine Arts granted a more spacious site for the foundry and sculptors outside of Bangkok in Buddha Monthon.

[79] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.55.

[80] Silpa Bhirasri, "Contemporary Thai Art", *Modern Art of Asia: New Movements and Old Traditions* (Tokyo: Japan Cultural Forum, 1961), p.81.

[81] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.48.

CHAPTER III
VISIONS OF CHAKRI ABSOLUTE MONARCHY

There is no quality as essential to the integrity of the Thais as their monarchy. The throne represents something serene, stable, and sacred. It is more than a time-honored tradition; it is a wholehearted conviction. Although the veneration of Thai kings as sanctified icons has long been a cardinal characteristic of Thai culture, the beginning of the twentieth century marked a new era of the Thai Crown. The Equestrian Statue of King Chulalongkorn was the first politically committed art in the kingdom. It was a western-style monument that was built solely to create a novel public memory of the monarch in public space. The prominence of the Rama V's bronze statue, however, comes not merely from the likeness of the King that the figure portrays or even the institution of the kingship itself. More importantly, it rises from the reverence that the monument renders. The statue signifies the vision and vitality of a national hero, the elegance and excellence of a modern monarch.

For more than two hundred years, the Chakri dynasty has seen war and peace, life and death. Thai society, for better or for worse, has also experienced days of boom and doom. The dawn of the twentieth century was not a time of benevolence towards absolute monarchy. From China to Russia to Turkey, the once fairy tale reigns of Emperors and Czars all concluded on a tragic note by the 1920s.[1] The 1932 *coup d'état* that overthrew the absolutist rule of the Chakri Kings, or in the more officially correct term "change of government", seemed almost pleasant compared to the fates of their royal contemporaries. As public monuments were erected to embody and often recreate the memory of a particular individual or part of history, one cannot help but ask how the different governments and artists envisioned the role of the Chakri Crowns through the creation of the Bangkok Kings' monuments in such formidable times.

A study on the evolution of public monuments of the Chakri monarchs forms the central thread of this chapter. The subject is explored in three sections. From a historical perspective, this chapter first traces the traditions of kingship in Thai culture. It is followed by an investigation of the monumental images of the Chakri kings in relation to the social and political arenas of the last century. The

focus underscores four major works that project different "visions" of the Chakri absolute monarchs, namely the Equestrian Statue of King Chulalongkorn (1908), the Monument of King Phra Phutthayotfa (1932), the Monument of King Vajiravudh (1942), and the Monument of King Prajadhipok (1980). Finally, the profound legacy of these monuments is reviewed, and their roles in the development of modern Thai kingship are observed.

Traditional Kingship and Thai History

The image of a Thai King is sacred. Even a foreigner who has limited understanding of Thai culture realizes the mystique and might of a kingly portrait. The five reigns of the Chakri Kings in the twentieth century have felt many drastic challenges. Yet the Thai kingship remains intact, and to some extent, has become even more popular today than during the last two decades of the absolute monarchy. The public display of a Thai monarchial image is such a powerful apparatus that few politicians, and at times the kings themselves, can resist utilizing it for political purposes. The eminence of the Thai kingship, of course, has evolved from a long and complex tradition. In order to comprehend the significance of the various monumental presentations of the Chakri monarchs, an overview of the history and concept of the Thai kingship is necessary.

- **Thai Kingship in a Historical Context**

The notion and emotion of Thai-ness always found its roots in the time-honored past. From Sukhothai to Ayutthaya to Bangkok, it was told that a rich and revered legacy had been passed down. The monarch, in the "greatest man theory of history", became the most important actor in the national discourse.[2] The present Chakri dynasty is the extension of this linear and ancient tradition, the protector of the Thai people, and the guarantor of the kingdom's independence and prosperity. This view of Thai history, notwithstanding, is rather modern. Even the term "history" (*prawatsat*) itself is a twentieth-century innovation, departing from its older forms of folk legend (*tamnan)* and royal chronicles (*phongsawadan*).[3] The historical narrative of the geo-body that comprised the old Siam,[4] or contemporary Thailand, is a more diverse and complex one.[5]

The creation of a centrist national "history" was tied closely to the Chakri monarchs' conception of a Thai "nation-state" that began in the second half of the nineteenth century. The effort then peaked during the military regimes between the 1930s and 1950s, in which a national history was shaped.[6] National heroes and heroines were then identified and idolized. The chosen characters, be they warrior kings or royal queens, were further memorialized in the visual form of paintings, amulets, bank-notes, stamps, and most significantly, public monuments. To the ruling elite, these heroic images have been a weapon to both instill a sense of patriotism and legitimize their authority.[7] To the masses, the monumental icons have provided much inspiration and pride. A historical study of the institution of Thai kingship, therefore, is essential in understanding the visual power of these royal images.

However multifaceted Thai history can be, the concept of kingship has invariably been an integral part since the beginning. The spread of Theravada Buddhism provided a sound base for monarchial and religious rule in various Thai kingdoms in the region.[8] During the legendary time of Sukhothai, especially under King Ramkhamhaeng (r.1279-1317), the crown was portrayed as a paternalistic ruler, the "Father of the People" (*phokhun*).[9] In the self-promoting inscription of 1292,[10] Sukhothai appears to be an "idyllic kingdom", and its king to be "just, benevolent, and thoroughly accessible".[11] Despite the historical authenticity of such an ideal kingdom,[12] the power of Sukhothai was short-lived. Its political dominance fell as quickly as it rose and perhaps did not even outlast the reign of King Ramkhamhaeng himself.[13] It was not until almost seven centuries later that the paternal yet liberal leadership of Sukhothai once again captured the admiration of the Thai monarchs, particularly since the reign of King Mongkut (r.1851-1868).[14]

The upsurge of Ayutthaya (1351-1767) turned a new page in Thai kingship. For more than four centuries, the glory of Ayutthaya surpassed other neighboring states and firmly established itself as the center of the Thai world. Ruling over an extensive territory with more intricate politics,[15] the court of Ayutthaya accentuated the concept of divine kingship to secure its throne. The incorporation of Hindu and Khmer elements drew many mythical colors to this Buddhist monarchy. Royal cults such as *Devaraja* (the god-king)[16] and the creed of *Kshatriya* (Lord of the Land)[17]

were adopted. They further mixed with the Buddhist beliefs of *Chakravartin* (the Universal Monarch)[18] and *Bodhisattva* (Buddha-to-be)[19] and thus ushered in a unique style of Thai kingship.[20] The idea of the crown as a supernatural being is a powerful message. The adoption of the god-king concept did more than just safeguard the monarchy. It also helped the state to function socially, politically, and religiously. The kingdom of Ayutthaya was a bygone history. Yet its resplendent image of the divine Thai king prevailed for centuries to come, and in some aspects still continues today through monumental arts.

- **Thai Kingship in the Early Bangkok Period**

Despite its tragic destruction in 1767, the legacy of Ayutthaya lived on. Its cultures with the monarchy as its core provided much inspiration for the subsequent reigns of King Taksin of Thonburi (1767-1782)[21] and the Chakri dynasty of Bangkok (1782-present). Although King Phra Phuttayotfa (r.1782-1809)[22], the First Rama of this Ratthanakosin period, has been widely accredited for reviving the golden age of Ayutthaya, the new sovereignty "was not or could it have been simply a return" to the preceding regime.[23] For all its grandeur, Ayutthaya had stumbled. There must have been something "wrong" with it. The fault, as it always had been, was the "moral decay" of the Crown himself.[24] The preceding volatile reign of Thonburi, moreover, also brought about many reservations in the minds of the Chakri royal house.

To the newly established dynasty, a "morally" better monarch was desired. To the newly crowned King Rama I, an improved monarchical institution was needed. The "restoration" of the splendid Ayutthaya was after all an imagination of an ideal yet concluded past.[25] Basing its legitimacy upon the former model,[26] the Chakri kings deliberately redefined traditions to control the present and guide the future. In the following half a century, the early Bangkok kings successfully laid out their laws, tightened their rule, and expanded their territory, making their Siam a greater kingdom than the previous Ayutthaya.

- **Thai Kingship in the Modern Era**

As a result of both the threat of European colonialism and the inspiration of Western ideas, the Thai kingship underwent a significant transformation during the

Fourth and the Fifth reigns in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The political stakes then were much higher than the kingdom had ever experienced before. The Thai rulers found themselves in the middle of a dangerous game of foreign aggression, diplomatic maneuver, economic concession, and cultural subjugation.[27]

The pressure of retaining yet reforming the monarchy was deeply felt during King Mongkut's time, as he opened up Siam through the Bowring Treaty of 1855.[28] Despite its quasi-divine quality, the outlook of the Thai throne inevitably appeared dated or even "uncivilized" in Western eyes.[29] The "exemplar of kingly conduct as the Universal Monarch with his shimmering jeweled disc celebrated in such details in cosmography" seemed to find little "realization in the world" of the nineteenth century. "Demythologizing of the monarchy" became an unavoidable course.[30] King Rama IV "broke with tradition to allow his subjects to gaze upon his face when he paraded in public".[31] He also began to employ Westerners to serve in his court, from translators to technicians to ministerial advisors. The use of realistic sculptures and photographs, as discussed earlier, became a novel means to exhibit the image of the modern Thai monarchy.

The formidable task of "modernizing" the kingdom as a whole and the kingship in particular ultimately fell upon the shoulders of King Chulalongkorn (r.1868-1910). With his own genius and charisma, King Rama V himself had personalized the concept of "absolute monarchy" and ushered in a new Siam. Notwithstanding, the successors and sons of King Chulalongkorn, King Vajiravudh (r.1910-1925) and King Prajadhipok (r.1925-1935 abd.) were eventually caught between the promise and risk of being an absolute monarch in the chaotic twentieth century. The seeds of "modernization", planted by Rama IV and Rama V to secure the Chakri throne, ironically sprouted into insurgent social forces that finally led to the *coup d'état* of 1932 that brought about the end of absolute monarchy.

Faced with such a rapidly-changing world, the challenge was how the ruling elite—from the absolute kings themselves to the military and civilian governments—presented the Chakri crowns in the people's eyes, and how the symbol of kingship manifested a "modernized" notion yet maintained a "traditional" ground at the same time. The public monuments of the Bangkok kings

erected in the twentieth century provide much insight into the changing "image" and "idea" of the Thai monarchy. The monumental statues tell not only how various rulers wished the Chakri throne to be seen in public, but also more importantly, how the different elite saw history themselves.

Public Monument and the Absolute Chakri Kings

The Thai kingship is tightly woven into the fabric of politics and society. In order to fully explore the development of Chakri kings' public monuments in the twentieth century, this section focuses on four influential works in Bangkok that signify such relations, tensions, and transformation. The following part looks at a series of monumental project that spanned the last century—the Equestrian Statue of King Chulalongkorn, the Monument of King Phra Phutthayotfa, the Monument of King Vajiravudh, and the Monument of King Prajadhipok—as visions of the absolute monarchy perceived and projected by various polities in modern Thailand.

- **The Rise of the Absolute Monarchy and the Equestrian Statue of King Chulalongkorn**

Although the image of a Buddhist monarch or a mystical god-king seemed absolutely powerful, the power of a traditional Thai king was by no means "absolute" in reality. It is often overlooked that "the old Siam was less an absolute monarchy than it was a nominal monarchy ruled *de facto* by a small oligarchy of noble families who controlled the departments and ministries of state".[32] The fact that the king assumed divine quality and resided at the apex of the society distanced him from not only his people but also affairs of the state. The life of a king involved "so much religious ceremony that he could hardly perform his [executive] functions".[33] As a result, the nobility and officials took over the responsibilities, and thereafter monopolized authority with sons succeeding their fathers for generation after generation. The *sakdina* system, furthermore, transferred the economic power into the hands of the feudal lords and noble houses. Regardless of the idea that land officially belonged to the monarch, he could never personally control the resources or mobilize his people.[34]

While the nobility kept politics and the economy under their wings, their cooperation with or resistance to the monarchial institution was vital to the survival of the king. This dilemma persisted up to the reign of King Chulalongkorn.[35] The

"Front Palace Crisis" (1874-1875) was an indicator of the danger underlying the prestigious yet fragile kingship.[36] Similarly, Siam was only "loosely centralized" with amateurish military forces and "provincial administrations under the control of the semi-independent individuals and families".[37] Even the royal succession had more to do with liaisons among and favoritism of the dominant noble houses than the actual bloodline.[38]

King Chulalongkorn determined to make a difference. Time had changed. So must the Thai kingship and the kingdom. Assisted by his brothers and closest ministers, King Rama V accomplished a phenomenal reform in the last two decades of his reign. "Absolute monarchy", in its full western sense, was born.[39] The gulf between the formality and reality of the king's power was bridged. The structure of modern Thailand was brought into being.[40] Skillfully and slowly, King Chulalongkorn consolidated the power that had long laid in the hands of the influential nobility, such as the Bunnag, Shinhasenim and other prestigious clans, and established an effective hierarchical order and bureaucracy.[41] Both ministerial and provincial administrations were placed under the centralized control of the crown, headed by members of the royal family and staffed by competent specialists. [42] A comprehensive reform was undertaken, from drafting modern law codes to introducing western fiscal procedures to constructing railways and telegraphic communications to founding educational institutions and modern military and naval forces.[43] Semi-feudalistic Siam, ringed by dependent tributary kingdoms, began to metamorphose into a modern state. A new "*prathet chat*" was contrived.[44] The redefined term, like the newly-reformed society, successfully combined traditional values and modern notions to embrace the concept of a Western "nation".

The Equestrian Statue of King Chulalongkorn

A modern Thai nation needed a new vision. The ideal "absolute monarchy" required a novel symbol. The iconographies of *devaraja* or *chakravartin*, as potent as they might had been, found difficulties in measuring up to the "modernized" throne, needless to say the contemptuous Westerners. If it was the glory of eighteenth-century European emperors that inspired King Rama V's absolute rule, then the glamour of their statues must have impressed the Thai crown. King Chulalongkorn viewed "royal portraiture as a useful instrument for the purpose of propaganda,

particularly as a way of presenting the rulers as civilized individuals".[45] King Chulalongkorn was indeed very aware of his public image. All his official portraits were carefully selected by the monarch himself, from the photographs used in postal stamps to the colored-mosaic (1882) commissioned in Venice that was placed in front of the Chakri Maha Throne Hall. In search of a new monumental image, the King's two trips to Europe in 1897 and 1907 seemed to have provided him with an answer. He was most delighted when he saw Gian Lorenzo Bernini's version of King Louis XIV on horseback in the gardens at Versailles in 1907.[46] It was about time, King Chulalongkorn decided, that the Thai throne enjoyed the same immortality.

Commemorating Rama V's fortieth anniversary on the throne and the longest reign of a Chakri King at the time, the unveiling of the Equestrian Statue of King Chulalongkorn on November 11, 1908 also commenced the role of public monuments in modern Thai history. While the King was in Paris on his second tour, he posed for the French sculptor Georges Ernest Saulo who completed the bronze statue a year later in time for the occasion.[47] Funds were raised among his subjects in order to pay for this ambitious and important project.[48] The opening event was as momentous as the monument itself. Being a triumph of the King's mastery of "politics and state theater", the celebration drew thousands of citizens, rejoicing at the exalted statue that their contributions made possible.[49] Although the style of the statue may look common or even conventional nowadays, it was definitely new and even radical to the masses in Siam a century ago.

This first public monument established King Rama V's modern vision of Siamese absolutism and marked a new form of national enthusiasm. Through this royal public art, the monarch connected the traditional Thai kingship to European sophistication. Depicted in a more profane manner, the monument resembled a national leader of a modern state rather than a supernatural god-king in a feudal kingdom. Highlighted by this monument, the abstract of his new "nation" was clearly defined, developed, and delivered to his subjects. The image of King Chulalongkorn, an elegant and westernized horseman, was the embodiment of the nation. The modern King was the new Siam.[50] It was through the crown's guidance that the country would progress and prosper.

The larger-than-life bronze statue was regal but realistic, emphasizing anatomy instead of idealization and mysticism. King Chulalongkorn was shown as a cavalier in European-style military uniform with tasseled hat, high-top boots, and a long sword on his left side. Muscular and majestic, the royal horse bears the monarch effortlessly. Together, they make an overwhelming image of grace, strength, and power. Standing high on a lofty pedestal, the statue sets itself apart from the spacious surroundings. It celebrates not only the liberation of monumental sculpture from architecture but also the marriage of politics and art. Filled with respect for King Chulalongkorn, this royal statue became a new national icon. While his centralized rule has been regarded as "an ideal stage in Thai political history",[51] this portrayal has been reckoned as a visual manifestation of such achievement. Many of the subsequent rulers, from monarch to military to civilian, followed this "uniform" image as the symbol of political power.

Although King Chulalongkorn passed away on October 23, 1910, just two years after the erecting of the statue, its popularity did not end. In 1912, King Vajiravudh decided to preserve a special day for his father and dedicated the date of his death as the Chulalongkorn Day.[52] The first observance of this national holiday was impressively orchestrated with King Rama VI and the nobility presenting memorial wreaths in front of the equestrian statue.[53] On the other hand, the government provided numerous entertainment for the occasion. The masses, who could remember no other monarch than King Chulalongkorn, spontaneously assembled and bid their farewell to the late monarch in front of the monument. The day was not only designated as a school holiday but also regarded as a day for "the later generation to praise and honor the great death" since the "rulers of Siam have done their utmost to foster" the spirit of the kingdom.[54] The regal memorial, hence, has been coined a symbol for this particular celebration as well as the collective memory of the King as a whole.

The Equestrian Statue of King Chulalongkorn still touches his subjects dearly today. The monument has recently been reinterpreted through animism. It is widely worshipped as a holy idol, especially for the cult of *Sadej Poh Ror Ha*. Rama V's devotees believe that faith in the renowned monarch can bring miracles

and success. Some of them even think King Chulalongkorn's spirit descends from heaven and returns to earth through this statue on the appointed days of Tuesday and Thursday.[55] They gather in front of this European style monument with altars of varied offerings, paying their respects and making requests to their revered monarch. The original propaganda of the absolute king now provides spiritual release for Thai people, from urban entrepreneurs to prostitutes who are coping with hardship in a difficult time.[56] Nithi Aeosriwong suggests that King Chulalongkorn stands for "modernity, compassion and progress, a symbol of an ideal state that people desire but does not exist in reality".[57] This phenomenon, which emerged evidently after the military *coup d'état* in 1992, has been further elucidated as a response to modernization by the Bangkok middle class, whose new needs could not be satisfied by the rigid political system and conventional religious practices. Under the heroic shadow of the equestrian monument, the stories of Rama V are passed on to the next generation, and the glory of King Chulalongkorn radiantly lives on.

- **The End of the Absolute Monarchy and The Monument of King Phra Phutthayotfa**

The political and social climate when Rama VII, King Prajadhipok (r.1925-1934 abd.)[58] ascended the throne was unstable. Darker days were yet to come. The absolute Chakri monarchy was facing pressing economic issues and deteriorating state affairs. Unexpectedly succeeding his controversial brother King Vajiravudh, whose reign will be discussed in the next section, King Prajadhipok "remained a rather shadowy figure in history".[59] He had not anticipated to be crowned; he "apparently never wanted to be king".[60] While the Sixth Rama's reputation, for all his talent and passion, had not been high in the eyes of many of his contemporaries, the new Rama VII's "standing was correspondingly low".[61]

Meanwhile, Western culture kept making inroads on traditional Thai society. The elite became more ideologically fragmented and politically active, especially the young overseas-educated Thai students who came from prominent families and the bureaucracy.[62] "Their technical and professional skills were a source of power, and the prestige attaining to things Western gave additional weight to their ideas".[63] Although this group was rather small in numbers, their influence far surpassed their

size. With first-hand knowledge of the West and high positions in the government, they believed in their political convictions more than the old social hierarchy, including the absolute monarchy. Among the most outstanding were the bright lawyer, Pridi Banomyong,[64] and military officer Plaek Khittasangkha (later titled Luang Phibun Songkhram).[65] Whereas these bold young men were enthralled with ideals, the "strikingly honest" King Prajadhipok only encouraged those who considered themselves better qualified to govern with his "unusual willingness to admit mistakes".[66]

The Monument of King Phra Phutthayotfa

Clouded by doubts yet filled with hopes, King Prajadhipok sought to restore the prestige of his government and the monarchy. Although the King was known for his "economy" and "simplicity",[67] the gigantic Monument of King Phra Phutthayotfa was commissioned to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Bangkok in 1932. Due to economic and political discontent, rumors had been widespread in Bangkok since the early 1930s that an overthrow of the government would happen anytime.[68] Moreover, the Seventh Reign was haunted by an old prophecy that was said to have been made by Princess Narinthewi at the time the dynasty was founded in 1782. As the younger sister of King Rama I, she predicted that the Chakri rule would last for only 150 years, which was April 6, 1932.[69] There was nothing better to counter such uncertainty than a grand public spectacle. Building a monument of the Chakri dynasty's founder, therefore, had a rational and spiritual justification.

The project was an attempt to revive the glory and restate the legitimacy of the absolute monarchy. The bronze statue was designed by Prince Naris and molded by Bhirasri. The casting took place in Florence, Italy, during a home trip of Bhirasri in 1930. The reason for this decision was that local technology and facilities were believed to be inadequate for such a large project.[70] The monument was then installed at the foot of the newly built Memorial Bridge for the auspicious occasion. Unveiled on April 6, 1932, the Monument of King Phra Phutthayotfa was a centerpiece in the celebration of the birth of the Chakri dynasty as well as the establishment of Bangkok.[71]

While the figure of the First Rama is depicted with modern realism, the monument reveals the nostalgia of a powerful king in a time of unrest. Sitting soundly with a ceremonial sword across his lap, the forefather appears in traditional attire of royal helmet, embroidered gown, and pointed slippers as a Thai sovereign. The larger-than-life statue is enshrined in an architectural setting that resembles an imperial throne, maximizing the dramatic effect of royal splendor and the deference of the viewers. With his back towards Thonburi, the former capital of King Taksin, the figure solemnly oversees the new "City of Angels" that the First Rama created. The monument is impressive not only in style but also size. It is by all means a huge statue (4.75 meters in height), especially considering the time when it was built. The image of the first Chakri monarch is unmovable; as was the wish of King Prajadhipok for his rule. It was perhaps the final psychological boost that the Seventh Rama needed to uplift his morale. In terms of being effective propaganda and attractive art, the statue was certainly a success.[72]

Although this regal monument immortalized the mysticism of Rama I, the absolute sovereign of the current Crown had not been equally blessed. From early in his reign, King Parjadhipok had been pondering possible constitutional changes to make "the monarchy less absolute and introducing a measure of representative government". Yet many deemed the progress too slow.[73] A group of young civilians and military officials, including the "Promoters" like Pridi and Phibun, were increasingly dissatisfied with the absolutist government and believed a major change was inevitable. As it was, on June 24, 1932, one hundred and fourteen "Promoters", in the name of the People's Party, staged a *coup d'état* in Bangkok.[74] King Prajadhipok promptly bestowed a constitution with a historical yet "simple-worded document".[75] The absolute rule of the Charki dynasty was ended briskly and bloodlessly, eleven weeks after the unveiling of the imposing memorial of its founder. Despite the fact that King Rama VII was marginalized in the establishment of the constitutional government, "official" history written by later regimes somehow interpreted his role differently, which will be reviewed through the Monument of King Prajadhipok (1980) in the later section.

- **Thai Nationalism and The Monument of King Vajiravudh**

Not long after the coup of 1932, it was rather clear that the military was the heavy-weight of the Thai political future, something that King Chulalongkorn had foreseen and found worrisome.[76] The power struggle immediately followed the founding of the constitution proved that the military was the only group that had the might to crush its opposition and impose order. Phibun, one of the original "Promoters", soon came out as the winner. The Boworadet Rebellion of October 11-26, 1933 not only extinguished the last hope of the die-hard royalists for a comeback but also further worsened the tensions between the monarchy and the government.[77]

When King Prajadhipok abdicated in 1935, the ten-year-old King Ananda Mahidol was named his successor as Rama VIII (r.1935-1946). The boy-king was still in school in Switzerland then and did not return to Bangkok until after the war in 1946, except for a brief two-month visit in 1938-9. Rising to the occasion, Phibun emerged as the most prominent figure. On December 26, 1938, he became the third Prime Minister of Siam. With nationalism and militarism prevalent at the time, the erection of public monuments, such as the Democracy Monument (1939) and the Victory Monument (1941), was seen as a milestone of Phibun's cultural reform and state building, which is reviewed in detail in Chapter Three.

In spite of being instrumental in abolishing the absolute rule of the Chakri monarchy, Phibun found useful inspirations from the dynastic past. To the Field Marshal, the glamour and power of the former absolute kings provided as much resolution to exert "tough policies and urge the Thai people forward" as justification for his rule.[78] If Phibun was the action hero of Thai nationalism, King Vajiravudh was definitely its pioneer. The Sixth Reign (r.1910-1925) marked a significant watershed in both Thai culture and nationalism.[79] While "westernization" was in vogue during his father King Chulalongkorn's reign, the Sixth Rama inherited a throne that faced the dilemma of a contradictory identity. As the first Thai monarch who was educated in the West, King Vajiravudh felt that traditional Thai values were fading away and had to be reconciled with western influence, which was overpowering both local thoughts and landscapes. Hence, he further delineated the concept of *chat* and its importance in the Thai identity. Rama VI perceived that "unthinking acceptance of western ways" was bound to endanger the essence of

Thai-ness.[80] His response to the challenge, consequently, was to launch his own program of nationalism, "a method of fighting fire with fire".[81]

The King's promotion of nationalism was vividly stated in both governmental policies and his own writings. In fact, King Vajiravudh was responsible in realizing a modern Thai kingdom, from strengthening the Thai military and paramilitary forces to introducing surnames, the tricolor national flag, the three pillars concept of the nation, to founding Chulalongkorn University.[82] The keystone of his nationalism was not merely creating a modern sense of unity and patriotism but also defending the legitimacy of absolute monarchy.[83] Such endeavors were difficult enough in the complicated political environment of the 1910s and 20s. The task became even harder when many of the officials and royal family members disparaged the King's lavish tastes, personal favoritism, and private lifestyle.

The Monument of King Vajiravudh

Because of the rocky relationship between the monarchy and Phibun,[84] it might sound odd that his government would establish a monument for a Chakri king. Like the monarch himself, the Monument of King Vajiravudh (1941) at Lumpini Park at first sight seems to be an enigma. Despite the Sixth Rama's notable contribution to Thai nationhood, he was probably the least understood and most controversial Bangkok king. Honoring him, hence, appeared to be less threatening to Phibun's military regime in terms of unduly glorifying the Chakri dynasty. Although the popularity of King Vajiravudh had not been very high during his own time and in the immediate years of the following reign, the late 1930s and early 1940s saw the revival and even the development of a cult of King Rama VI among the new elite.[85] And it was fifteen years after his death that Phibun chose to commemorate this previous monarch.

The Field Marshal, nevertheless, deliberately detached the achievement of King Vajiravudh from the monarchical institution. Speaking at a fund-raising event for the monument in January 1940, Phibun described this royal predecessor as an "incomparable individual" whose greatest merit laid in his "responsibility in rousing the Thai nation as a whole from its lethargy to realize the importance of carrying out

patriotic and other good acts for the betterment and glory of the nation."[86] King Rama VI, thus, was seen as a person, a patriot of the nation instead of the paragon of the absolute monarchy.

Most of the wartime regime's nationalistic programs, indeed, owed as much to the Sixth Rama as to Fascist inspirations. In many ways, Phibun's cultural reform was an extension of King Vajiravudh's notions, weighted towards militaristic institutions, "economic nationalism, language purity, and historical glory".[87] Phibun openly praised King Vajiravudh. More than just following the footsteps of the former King, the Phibun elite often expanded and exaggerated the monarch's ideas into nationwide campaigns. The militaristic youth organization of *Yuvachon* resembled as much the Italian *Ballilla* and the German *Hitlerjugend* as the Boy Scout Movement and Tiger Cubs (*Luk Sua*) of the Sixth Reign.[88] In addition, King Vajiravudh wrote an essay called "The Jews of the Orient". It was nothing more than a sarcastic criticism, bashing Chinese dominance of the Thai economy on one hand and urging the Siamese to resume a more active role in national politics and economy on the other.[89]

However, this anti-Chinese sentiment turned into comprehensive legislation under the slogan of "Thailand for Thais" in the 1930s and 40s.[90] For instance, the government took over important industries from the Chinese and limited their occupations. Tax and registration fees were enforced on foreign residents. Many Chinese newspapers and schools were placed under tight control or even closed down. In a public lecture, Luang Wichit Wathakan, whose important role in modern Thailand is discussed in later chapters, not only "compared the Chinese in Siam to the Jews in Germany" but also "implied that the Nazi's policies toward them were worth considering".[91] Despite their differences, both King Rama VI and Phibun believed that a strong centralized leadership was vital in advancing the country. The two rulers also had an earnest faith in militarism as being one of the most "essential foundations of the Thai nation".[92] When the power of the Crown shriveled during the 1930s and 40s, it was only natural that a resolute military figure like Phibun would carry on the torch of Thai nationalism lit by King Vajiravudh.

In order to pay homage to the patriotic monarch, the Phibun government decided to build a Rama VI statue in 1940. Perhaps the regime also wished the monument to ratify the nationalistic measures by the state with a royal reference. The location chosen was in front of Lumpini Park. The site was once designated for the "Siamese Kingdom Exhibition", a grand international fair that King Vajiravudh envisioned to promote the country's trade. In 1919, the King donated the 22,000 square meters of land at Sala Daeng for this public park. He bestowed the name "Lumpini", the birthplace of the Buddha, and began to develop it for the world exhibition.[93] Yet the King's dream was never realized. He passed away on November 25, 1925, just before the fair. Shortly after, the new Rama VII and his government decided to cancel the project. The Monument of King Vajiravudh at Lumpini Park, hence, was a sensible tribute to the one who had made this beautiful park possible.

In 1941, Bhirasri took up the project of designing and molding the three times life-size statue of the Sixth Rama. Bhirasri might have had strong motivations for this commission, for it was King Vajiravudh who had first invited the Italian master to work in Siam. Although the monarch is better known for his literary gifts, the portrayal is more as a military leader in line with Phibun government's preference. The King is depicted in full Western military attire, with plumed hat, high-top boots, as well as numerous decorations and metals on his jacket. The free-standing figure, slightly stepped forward, is supported by a long sword in his left hand while holding a small scepter in his right one.

Unlike other nationalistic monuments, the statue seems less heroic or dramatic. Rather, the figure is extremely realistic. Bhirasri has idealized neither the King's physique nor his deeds. The image reflects a modern, subtle and calm ruler, without extravagant sensation or overpowering action. It is probably how the Phibun regime saw, or how they wanted the people to see, the nationalistic monarch. Nonetheless, some find the monument fails to demonstrate the monarch's intellectual quality as a scholar, for it seems to "balance awkwardly on a small pedestal exposed to the scorching sun and bare concrete".[94] To some extent, the statue might be a reflection of the place of King Vajiravudh in modern Thai history.

- **Thai Democracy and The Monument of King Prajadhipok**

Greeting the eyes of the visitors of the Monument of King Prajadhipok (1980) in front of the new Parliament Building, more than the majestic image of the monarch, is the handwritten inscription on the base platform, King Rama VII's famous abdication statement:

> I am willing to surrender the powers I formerly exercised to the people as a whole, but I am not willing to turn them over to any individual or any group to use in an autocratic manner without heeding the voice of the people.[95]

Since the curtain of the constitutional government opened, "democracy" and "dictatorship" have been two contesting yet inseparable contenders dominating the center-stage of modern Thai politics. They act as rivals at times, fighting against each other in the moral battle between good and the evil. Sometimes, they are allies, with one imposing its will or disguising itself in the name of the other. Even during the zenith of tension between the Promoters and royalists in the immediate years after the *coup d'état* of 1932, the issue of political development was still about "democracy versus dictatorship and never about the royal power".[96] The Monument of King Prajadhipok epitomizes this political struggle between the two poles on one hand, but on the other hand, the statue symbolizes the triumph of Thai monarchy in this power battle.

In spite of his fondness for a more democratic kingdom, King Prajadhipok was sidelined in the early constitutional era. He was even disparaged and sued by the Phibun government and soon passed away in 1941 in England.[97] The prestige of Rama VII, however, was resurrected by the military leaders who succeeded the wartime Field Marshal. In September 1957, General Sarit Thanarat seized the state's power and toppled the second Phibun regime.[98] The coup and the later government of Sarit (1959-1963) was regarded as "popular" at the time, which is discussed in Chapter Four.[99]. Its *pattiwat* (revolution) style of rule loomed heavily in modern Thai politics and endured until the October 14, 1973 uprising that deserved the name "revolution" more than the authoritarian program of Sarit and even the Promoters' *coup* of 1932.[100]

Because of its universal and timeless appeal, the original critique of the "People's Party" given by King Prajadhipok on his abdication was reinterpreted by the 1973 student movement to denounce military rule. This rendition of his statement was perhaps something Rama VII had never expected when he gave up the throne. Nonetheless, his royal remark has since become the vanguard of Thai democracy. His involvement in the 1932 "change of government" has also been reversed from a passive one into a heroic act, while the roles of the Promoters, like Pridi and Phibun, were neglected.[101] Accordingly, it was King Prajadhipok's great "sacrifice" to grant the Thai people a constitution; however, the People's Party betrayed the monarch's democratic sprit, leading to the abdication of the King in 1935.[102] What then followed was a long tenure of authoritative and military rules. This new perspective, inspired by an excerpt from the King's poignant yet powerful speech, not only revived the status of the former monarch himself but also averred the historic role of the Chakri dynasty in fighting dictatorship and bestowing democracy.

The Monument of King Prajadhipok signifies the renaissance of the Thai kingship that began in the Sarit period. The Field Marshal reinstated the crown to a more visible and dynamic role in society. He publicly made a "show of allegiance to the throne", revived traditional ceremonies that had been slighted since 1932, and encouraged King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit to appear nationwide and overseas.[103] The monarchy came out even stronger after the 1973 event, as King Bhumibol refused to support the clique of Thanom-Praphas.[104]

Yet the political environment after the 1973 uprising was unstable and at times violent, especially after the Communists had victoriously swept through Indochina and Cambodia. The day of October 6, 1976 marked one of the bleakest moments in modern Thai history, which is discussed in Chapter 5. Student demonstrations eventually ended in a brutal suppression. The military once again moved in, and so did a right-wing government with Thanin Kraivichien as the Prime Minister. As a civilian and a lawyer, Thanin was ironically considered "more authoritarian and repressive than any of his military predecessors".[105] It was the Thanin administration that started resolutely, "with super sensitivity, in adding the phrase 'with the Monarch as the Head of the State' to the word 'democracy' every

time the word was mentioned on all occasions". Only then, the regime declared, could the Thai "democracy" be distinguished from the "Communist's people democracy".[106]

The Monument of King Prajadhipok

The Thanin regime brought the long-awaited Monument of King Prajadhipok into life by conferring a huge budget right after the tragic episode of 1976. The idea of building a monument for King Rama VII first arose in 1952 and then in 1969. While the proposal was not yet realized, there was a "bizarre" suggestion made twice, that the bronze replica of the constitution atop the two golden bowls above the round turret at the Democracy Monument should be pulled down and replaced by the statue of King Prajadhipok.[107] This idea came to nothing, however. After October 1973, support for the monument project overall gained momentum, partly due to the revived popularity of King Rama VII for his famous declaration, and partly because of the rising esteem for the Charki monarchy as regards to King Bhumibol. Furthermore, the right-wing Thanin government of 1976-77 desperately needed positive publicity to clean up its undesirable image after the October 1976 incident. A public monument for the "democratic" king was a natural and safe investment.

The unveiling of the monument on December 10, 1980, Constitution Day, was done with impressive public fanfare under the government of Prem Tinsulanoda (1980-1988)[108], who has been one of the strongest supporters of King Bhumibol and the monarchy. For the opening ceremony, "gold and silver medals of various prices, stickers, television advertisement and many other publicity materials were produced with slogans indicating the king gave birth to democracy".[109] Designed by Sanan Silakorn, the statue portrayed King Rama VII in full royal regalia as a traditional god-king. Sitting confidently on an exquisite throne, the one-and-a-half life size figure exemplifies the importance of King Prajadhipok in the course of Thai "democracy" and the actualization of it. The monument, after all, is placed in front of the new Parliament where the constitutional government functions.

The decision to depict a modern monarch in ancient divine grandeur is perhaps more political than artistic. The image notably resembles the Monument of King Phra Phutthayotfa at the Memorial Bridge, which was erected at the very end of the Seventh Reign. By visually linking King Prajadhipok, who abdicated his crown, to his legendary forefather, the statue attempts to elevate the still "shadowy" king to a "mythical icon". If it was the First Rama who founded the absolute monarchy of Siam and chartered the Chakri dynasty, then it was Rama VII who established the constitutional monarchy of Thailand and led the royalist democracy. The statue of King Prajadhipok, thus, represents an "ideal" kingship rather than a political individual, surmounting all the bitterness that might still linger around his reign and especially the monarch himself.

As the historical events blur into fragmented memories and reconstructed myths over time, the Monument of King Rama VII has transformed from propaganda for the military regime to a sacred icon of Thai democracy. Whether it is aimed for publicity or spirituality, political parties or social activists often pay homage to the statue in hope of clean and successful campaigns during elections.[110] The monument, moreover, is the pivotal symbol of the celebration of the Constitution Day on December 10, in which the present King has annually paid his respect to this statue to mark the event. On the other hand, the monumental figure glorifies the tradition of the Chakri kings and the institution of monarchy as the foundation of the constitutional government. Hence, reverence is also attributed to the esteemed King Bhumibol, who is the successor and personification of the "Thai democracy".

The Legacy of the Monuments of the Absolute Chakri Kings

Filled with dramatic challenges and drastic changes, the twentieth century was a paradox to the Bangkok dynasty. The attempt by King Chulalongkorn to build a modern nation through an absolute monarchy was perhaps a paradox by itself. While monarchial systems in the rest of the world either had collapsed or "democratized" after the turn of the last century, the Thai crown, "by the end of the Fifth Reign, was more absolute than ever before".[111] This extraordinary feat, more than anything, depended on the determination, dedication, and diligence of King Chulalongkorn himself.[112]

Yet with the passage of time and the death of the King, the absolute monarchy inevitably seemed “anachronistic or retrogressive”.[113] While there was surely no objection to King Rama V’s absolute rule,[114] it might be doubtful when applied by others. The prestige and power of monarchy, in fact, has always been tied personally to the merits of the occupant of the throne rather than the institution itself. In a way, the seemingly “easy” *coup d'état* of 1932 was the result. Political critics “only had to find personal faults with the king to challenge his legitimacy”, and unfortunately King Vajiravudh and King Parjadhipok offered their rivals many chances.[115] Like the monarchs themselves, the popularity of royal monuments rely more on the persona of the figure erected than artistic criteria or innovative style of the work. Whereas various statues of King Rama V are highly esteemed and widely reproduced for worship, lesser attention is paid to those of his two succeeding sons.

If the status of royal monuments is closely affiliated with the merit of the ruler, then the beloved King Bhumibol Adulyadej has doubtlessly affirmed the veneration of the throne. The monumental art for the present royal house is discussed in Chapter Five. As a whole, King Bhumibol has revived the glory of the Chakri dynasty and the integrity of the Thai kingship. Since the late 1950s, the Thai monarchy has once again taken the center stage in society. The regal monuments for the Chakri Kings have returned into the spotlight and are publicly celebrated on national holidays. Paying tribute to the Monument of King Phra Phutthayotfa by King Bhumibol marks the Chakri Day on April 6.[116] The impressive observance on every October 23, King Chulalongkorn Day, focuses on the Rama V’s equestrian monument. The image of this royal statue, furthermore, is often replicated into objects of worship for the occasion nationwide. More statues and monuments for the Bangkok monarchs have continued to be built and worshipped, including the Statues of King Chulalongkorn and King Vajiravudh (1990) in Chulalongkorn University, and the Monument of King Rama II, Phra Buddha Lertla Napalai, (1996) at Wat Arun. In addition, monumental images can be seen in many other art forms, from stamps to amulets to the covers of publications. For example, the Equestrian Monument of Rama V is featured on the current issue of the ten-baht banknote, the Monument of King Rama VII on the fifty and the Monument of King Rama V and King Rama VI in Chulalongkorn University on the one hundred.

Absolute monarchy was history in Thailand, but how to interpret and remember it is a total different story. The royal monuments can be a central element in such an endeavor. They evince how politics have used art to reflect and imagine history, portraying an institution that is traditional yet modern, belonging to yet above the masses. However, a monument often times takes on a life of its own despite the official dogma. Although the introduction of realistic monumental statues was meant to signify a modernized polity, they eventually found a place in spirit worship. The public moments of the four absolute Chakri kings embrace this paradoxical existence. As political and liberal as the Thai society has become, the monarchy itself is still an entity of tradition, mysticism, and magic.

Notes

[1]* While the absolute monarchy in Russia began to collapse after 1905, Turkey's Ottoman Empire also started to break down by the year of 1908. The Chinese Manchuria dynasty was overthrown in 1912, and a Republic of China was formed. Meanwhile, Mexico experienced a democratic revolution in 1910, and a nationalistic movement was growing in India at the same time.

[2]* "The 'great man' theory of history, which is indispensable to the motif of national liberation, seems… notable not as a legacy of royalist historiography, in which the monarchy is the most important actor, but as a paradigm common else where at the time. The qualities of diligence, self-reliance and robust character, projected onto a single person, whether it be the national leader or the ordinary citizen, are intended to inspire everyone in the nation". Craig J. Reynolds, "The Plot of Thai History: Theory and Practice", in *Pattern and Illusions: Thai History and Thought* (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1992), p.325.

[3]* "The Thai word *prawatsat*, meaning history, is a modern word coined during the reign of King Rama VI (r. 1910-1925)… In the old days the most frequently used words for history were *tamnan* [story, folklore, legend or myth], *phongsawadan* [dynastic chronicles] and *chotmaihet* [short reports of particular events]." Charnvit Kasetsiri, *The Rise of Ayudhya: A History of Siam in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press/Duang Kamol Book House, 1976), p.1.

[4]* "The Chinese applied the name 'Sien' to the kingdom of [Sukhothai]. 'Syam' was the name used by the Khmers for the 'savages' from the middle Menam … The earliest use of the word so far discovered is in a Cham epigraph of the eleventh century, which mentions Siamese in a list of prisoners of war. The name seems to be a variant of the word 'Shan', applied by the Burmese to the wedge of hill states running southwards from Mongaung and Mohnyin in the far north. Its etymology is unknown. After the foundation of [Ayutthaya] in 1350 the territory that owed obedience to its monarchs became known as Siam. Europeans often called the city itself 'the city of Siam.'" D.G.E. Hall, *The History of South-East Asia*, 4th ed. (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1981), p.191.

[5]* The continuity of Thai kingdoms and ascendancy of Thai kingship, from Sukhothai to Ayutthaya to Thonburi and Bangkok, seem to have developed in the mid-19th century. Before Sukhothai, there believed to have had "Thai/Tai" in the kingdom of Nanchao in the south of China as well as several other *muang* in the region. This linear historical notion was refined and reaffirmed by the writings of King Mongkut's son, Prince Damrong Rajanubhap, who was widely regarded as "the Father of Thai History". This modern royal discourse was further maintained by Western scholars in the 1920s like W.C. Dodd, *The Tai Race: Elder Brother to the Chinese* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1923) and W.A.R. Wood, *A History of Siam* (1st ed., 1924; Bangkok: Chalermnit Press, 1994). Nevertheless, there was actually no particular reference to Sukhothai in the Ayutthaya chronicles. Instead, the Ayutthaya dynasty seemed to see Sukhothai as simply a political rival, just like Lopburi, Lanna or Nakhon si Thammarat. Moreover, the people of Ayutthaya did not perceive themselves as the political and cultural descendant or inheritor of this northern *muang*. See Nithi Aeosriwong, *Prawattisat rattanakosin nai phraratcha phongsawadan Ayutthaya* [A history of Bangkok in the royal chronicles of Ayutthaya] (Bangkok: Bannakit, 1980); David K. Wyatt, *Studies in Thai History: Collected Articles* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1999), pp.1-21; Thongchai Winichakul, "The Changing Landscape of the Past: New Histories in Thailand Since 1973", in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol.26, (March 1, 1995); Charnvit, *Ayudhya*, pp.14-5.

[6] Charnvit Kasetsiri, "Thai Historiography from Ancient Times to the Modern Period", in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, Anthony Reid and David Marr, eds. (Singapore: Heinemann Education Books, 1979), pp.156-70. Also see Thongchai, "The Changing Landscape", p.103.

[7]* During the Phibun Songkram regime (1938-1944), the Field Marshal and his literati Luang Wichit Wathakan were particularly inspired by King Taksin of Thonburi (r.1767-1782). In the governments of Sarit Thanarat (1959-1963) and Thanom Kittikachorn (1963-1973), the leaders chose to identify with King Naresuan of Ayutthaya (r.1590-1605). For a discussion of the monuments for these two ancient monarchs see Chapter 4.

[8]* "In Thai, the relationship between the central and local rulers was primary one of personal subordination under the high king. The king of major towns still held limited power and kingly regalia. The kingdom held together as long as personal subordination to the supreme king remained… The unit of status in the hierarchy was indiscriminately called *muang*, which meant the governed area, that is the area under the righteous protection of the overlord. This pattern applied to the relationship among several kingdoms including the one between a regional major kingdom like Siam and Burma and its tributary kingdoms, such as Lanna, Lan Sang, and the Malay states… Fundamentally, these tributaries were regarded as separate kingdoms." Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geobody of a Nation* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1994), p.81.

[9]* "Whether the term *phokhun* might have been coined or adopted by the king himself is a question to be answered by reference to the historical background of the Thai before they established the Sukhothai dynasty. Most scholars agree that the Thai migrated towards the south from western part of China. They were in [Nanchao] where Maung Sai (Talifu) was their capital; the name of one king, Phokhun Borom (729-749) suggests affinity with that of Sukhothai. So the concept of *phokhun* may have been merely an ancestral heritage preserved by King Ramkamhaeng." Aye Kyaw, "The Institution of Kingship in Burma and Thailand",in *Journal of Burmese Research and Studies* vol. 112, 1 and 2, (December 1979), p.125. Also see Manich Jumsai, *A New History of Laos* (Bangkok, Chalermnit, 1971), p.8.

[10]* The 1292 inscription is quoted in almost every contemporary Thai history textbook and memorized by all school children.

> In the time of King Ramkhamhaeng this land of Sukhothai is thriving. There is fish in the water and rice in the fields. The lord of the realm does not levy toll on his subjects for travelling the roads; they lead their cattle to trade or ride their horses to sell; whoever wants to trade in elephants, does so; whoever wants to trade in horse, does so; whoever wants to trade in silver and gold, does so. When any commoner or man of rank dies, his estate—his elephants, wives, children, granaries, rice, retainers and groves of areca and betel—is left in its entity to his son. When commoners or men of rank differ and disagree, [the King] examines the case to get at the truth and then settles it justly for them. He does not connive with thieves or favor concealers [of stolen goods]. When he sees someone's rice he does not covet it, when he sees someone's wealth he does not get angry… [King Ramkhameang] has hung a bell in the opening of the gate over there: if any commoner in the land has a grievance which sickens his belly and gripes his heart, and which he wants to make known to his ruler and lord, it is easy; he goes and strikes the bell which the King has hung there; King Ramhamhaeng, the ruler of the kingdom, hears the call; he goes and questions the man, examines the case, and decides it justly for him. So the people of this *muang* of Sukhothai praise him. If anyone riding an elephant comes to see him to put his own country under his protection, he helps him, treats him generously, and takes care of him; if [someone comes to him] with no

elephants, no horses, no young men or women of rank, no silver or gold, he gives him some, and helps him until he can establish a state of his own.

A. B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara, "The Inscription of King Rama Gamhen of Sukhodaya (1292 AD): Epigraphic and Historical Studies, no.9", in *Journal of Siam Society*, pt.2 (July 1971), p.205-8.

[11] David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1984), p.54.

[12]* The authenticity of the 1292 Ramkhamhaeng inscription is still a controversial topic among academics and historians. See James F. Chamberlain, ed., *The Ramkhamhaeng Controversy: Selected Papers* (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1991).

[13] Charnvit, *Ayudhya*, p.14

[14] Sulak Sivaraksa. "The Crisis of Siamese Identity", in *National Identity and Its Defenders: Thailand, 1939-1989*, ed., Craig J. Reynolds, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1991), pp.42-43.

[15] Detailed accounts of Ayutthaya history can be found in Charnvit, *Ayudhya,* chapter 3-7; Wyatt, *Thailand*, chapter 4-5.

[16]* Inherited from India and nurtured by the Khmer, the cult of *Devaraja* developed into one of the most important features in the concept of Thai kingship. This belief attributed the supremacy of the rulers to the manifestation of the Hindu god Shiva or Vishnu. Further readings about the notion of *Devaraja* are available in the following works: I. Mabbett, "Devaraja", in *Journal of Southeast Asia History* vol.10:2 (1969), pp. 202-23; Nithi Aeosriwong, "Devaraja Cult and Khmer Kingship at Angkor", in *Explorations in Early Southeast Asian History: The Origin of Southeast Asian Statecraft*, Kenneth R. Hall and John K. Whitmore, eds. (Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, 11, 1976), pp. 107-48. Information on *Kshatriya*, *Chakravartin* and *Bodhisattva* can be found in B.G. Gokhale, "Early Buddhist Kingship", in *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 26:1, (November 1966), pp.15-22; John W. Spellman, *Political Theory of Ancient India: A Study of Kingship from the Earliest times to circa A.D. 30* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964); Kyaw, "The Institution of Kingship".

[17]* The Ayutthaya kings translated the idea of *kshatriya* in the Indian caste system into C*hao Phandi*, "Lord of the Land". The concept originated from Pali texts in which *Mahasammata* (The Great Elect) was a *kshatriya*, and the Buddha himself also came from a noble *kshatriya* family. See Kyaw, "The Institution of Kingship", p.148. Also in Gokhale, "Early Buddhist Kingship", pp.15-22. As the title C*hao Phandi* suggested, the king now both theoretically and mythically possessed the land. Since the throne claimed his legitimacy from the myth of *Mahasamata*, coronation became a quintessential formality of kingship. This splendid ceremony endorsed and elevated him as *anekchonikorn samosorn sommot* (elected by the people), making "a *de facto* ruler into a *de jure* one". Phya Srivisarn Vacha, "Kingship in Siam", in the *Journal of Siam Society*, vol.XLII:1 (1954-1955), p.2.

[18]* The idea of *chakravartin* (universal monarch) evolved to accommodate the various godly identities of the Thai kings. The word *chakra* originally meant wheel. It then was linked to the wheel-turning sovereign (*dhamma*) of the world and elucidated as the sun and the symbol of Vishnu. Besides, the favor of white elephant also arose from this belief, for white elephant was one of the seven treasures of the universal monarch. In Buddhism, there are five kinds of *chakravartin*, primary based on weapons, wealth and power. They are as follows: 1) *Awudhawattiraja*, the *chakravartin* who has various kinds of weapons. 2)

Punnawadda chakkawattiraja, the *chakravartin* who has enormous wealth that never runs off. 3) *Anachakkawattiraja*, the *chakravartin* whose power is so great that he can depute lifeless fetters to catch *naga*. 4) *Punnachakkawattiraja*, the *chakravartin* whose feet are marked with the signs of *chakra* to let the *chakra* world know that he will rule over it; and 5) *Gandhari chakkawattiraja*, the *chakravartin* whose magic power enable him to fly in the sky and go underneath the earth. See Kyaw, "The Institution of Kingship", p.165.

[19]* Thai monarch has often been esteemed as a *bodhisattva*: an enlightened and self-sacrificing being who postponed his own entry into nirvana in order to help others achieve salvation. Almost all Thai kings claimed to be *bodhisattva*. The posthumous Buddhist names for the earlier Chakri kings, such as King Rama I, Phra Puttayotfa (Buddha Yotfa), King Rama II, Phra Phuttaloela (Buddha Loshia), and King Rama III, Phra Nangklao (Nan Klau) given respectively by King Mongkut (Ramam IV) denoted that the monarchs were *bodhisattva*. The Chronicle of Buddhist Councils (1789) explicitly depicted the king and his brother (Prince of the Front Palace) as *bodhisattva.* Meanwhile, the Rattanakosin dynasty was seen as the beginning of a new era, and the King himself was referred to as a savior-king. See Somdet Phra Wannarat of Wat Phra Chettuphon, *Sangkhitiyawong: Phongsawadan, ruang sangkhayana phra tham winai* [The Chronicle of Buddhist Councils, 1789] (Bangkok, 1923), p.441. The assertion of the king as *bodhisattva* not merely evoked the respect and admiration of the monarch's subjects but could as well justify his position in terms of merit accumulation. See Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State, Ceremonies, Their History and Function* (London, Bernard Quaritch Ltd., 1931), p.39. The claim of a king as *bodhisattva* also transmitted "from popular *jataka* that a person who killed the pre-Buddha of the Gotama Buddha had to suffer all sorts of timeless and limitless miseries and tortures". The monarchy was then secured, as the Buddhist *jataka* legends "act as a deterrent to would be usurpers." Kyaw, "The Institution of Kingship", p.163. Also see S.J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp.96-7.

[20]* According to S.J. Tambiah, the Buddhist conception of kingship as understood in Sukhothai and Ayutthaya times and later in the 19th century can be simply puts as: "*Chakravartin* equals *Bodhisattva*". Ibid. Tambiah's book, indeed, provides an insightful study of the history and evolution of Thai kingship. Also see Jeremy Kemp, *Aspects of Siamese Kingship in the Seventeenth Century* (Bangkok: Social Science Association Press of Thailand, 1969).

[21]* "King Taksin was a general in the last days of Ayutthaya. When Burmese sacked the Siamese capital and had the royal family destroyed, Taksin taken up the staff of leadership and began to rebuild the nation. By organizing and mobilizing Ayutthaya's survivors into a loyal and determined military following, he was able to first reunite the network of Thai principalities that Ayutthaya had governed and then to lead them to victory over the Burmese invaders. His constituents rewarded the general by crowning him their king. Taksin then sat upon a new throne in Thonburi, near present day Bangkok, and from where he directed the expansion of the kingdom and the subjugation of neighboring territories as a barrier against further attacks. In the span of fifteen years, King Taksin managed to rebuild the Thai nation and to expand its domain." Joseph J. Wright, *The Balancing Act: A History of Modern Thailand* (Bangkok: Asia Books, 1991), p.96. A further discussion of the legend of King Taksin can be found in the Monuments of King Taksin in Chapter 4.

[22]* King Rama I, Phra Phuttayotfa Chulalok, was born on March 21, 1736, with an original name Duang or Thong Duang. His family had long served the Ayutthaya court, perhaps dated back as early as the reign of King Naresuan (r.1590-1605) and included the

government of King Narai (r. 1656-1688). Whereas Rama I's father was a secretary to the *Mahathai* (Ministry of the Northern Provinces) in the late Ayutthaya period, his mother was "a beautiful daughter from a richest Chinese family" [A quote by King Rama I's grandson, King Mongkut (Rama IV), in John Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam*, p.65-6]. Married to a lady from a prominent family in Ratchaburi, King Rama I entered local politics by 1762 and was the *yokrabat* (similar to an inspector-general) then governor of the province. Within a decade, he was titled *Chaophraya* Chakri in 1772 as the head of *Mahathai*. Both the king and his younger brother (known as *Chaophraya* Surasi) were military officers in King Taksin's resistant of the Burmese invasion. They had successfully pursued an extensive military campaign all over the unrest kingdom. When the two brothers were still engaged in an operation against Cambodia in early 1782, King Taksin was deposed in Thonburi. Under the consensus of the power elite, *Chaophraya* Chakri was invited to accept the crown. On April 6, 1782, at the age of forty-five, he became King Rama I, the new king of Siam. The biography of King Rama I is derived from the following sources: *Ratchasakunwong* [Royal Genealogy], 8th ed., (Bangkok, 1969), p.1; King Mongkut's Siamese account of the origins of the Charkri Dynasty, "Pathomwong [Forefathers]", in *Prachum phongsawadan*, Khurusapha, ed., vol. 8, (Bangkok, 1964), pp.229-253; Letter from King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam* (London, 1857; reprint, Kuala Lumpur, vol. 1, 1969), pp.63-9; Also see both of Wyatt's works: *Studies*, pp.131-72 and *Thailand*, pp.145-62.

[23]* Since the fall of Ayutthaya, neither the leader nor the people "could have been satisfied simply with a king and a government content to rule as previous kings had ruled". King Rama I hoped "things would be carried out as in the time of King Borommakot [r. 1733-1758] of Ayutthaya but not like King Taksin". See "Ruang tamra krabuan sadet lae krabuan hae tae boran" [An Ancient treatise on Royal Processions], in *Latthithamniam tangtang* [Various Customs], pt. 10, Khlang Witthaya, ed., vol. 1 (Bangkok, 1961), p.495, dated April 9, 1782, three days after King Rama I's accession to the throne. See Wyatt, *Studies*, pp.140-2.

[24] Ibid.

[25]* "The chronicle of Ayutthaya sponsored by Rama I and edited by Somdet Phra Phonnarat towards the end of the First Reign is the first version of the royal chronicles that treats Ayutthaya as a concluded era, of thirty-four kings and 417 years. The name of Ayutthaya was continued in the formal name for Bangkok, but there had been a clear and definitive break with the past, and for that break Rama I actively took the responsibility." Ibid., p.169.

[26] Ophat Sewikun, *Phraracha bida haeng kan-pathirup* [The father of administrative change] (Bangkok, 1970), pp. 64-79. Also see the letters exchanged between King Rama IV and Bowring in M.L. Manich Jumsai, *King Mongkut & John Bowring* (Bangkok, 1970).

[27]* On his dead-bed, King Rama III is reported to have told Phraya Si Suriyawong (Chuang Bunnag) that: "There will be no more wars with Vietnam and Burma. We will have them only with the West. Take care, and do not lose any opportunities to them. Anything that they propose should be held up to close scrutiny before accepting it: Do not blindly trust them." Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, *Phraratcha phongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin ratchakan thi 3... ratchakan thi 4* [Royal chronicles of the Third and Fourth Reigns of the Rattanakosin period] (Bangkok, 1963), p.366, translation from Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.180.

[28] Detailed account of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1855, also known as the "Bowring Treaty" can be founded in Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp.183-4.

[29]* Initiated in early sixteenth century Ayutthaya. the encounter between Siam and the West first started with the Portuguese then followed by the Dutch, English, and French. The mutual relationship flourished as Siam became a center of international commerce, attracting foreigners near and far, from envoys to merchants to missionaries to adventurers. Yet the westerners came more as equals than conquerors. They tended to fit relatively smoothly in the existing structure instead of trying to change it. Not only did foreigners seek and make fortunes in the exotic kingdom, but they also became involved in local politics. During King Narai's reign in the 1680s, the intrigue story among foreign ministers seemed more dramatic than a contemporary soap opera, with characters such as Phaulkon, the king's Chief Minister, and Forbin, the Admiral and General of the Armies as well as Governor of Bangkok. After the Industrial Revolution, the gap between Europe-America and Southeast Asia, like Siam, was distanced drastically, particularly in terms of technology, arms and sciences. The West has since regarded as "superior" and far more "civilized" than Siam.

[30] Reynolds, "Buddhist Cosmography", p.217.

[31] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.188.

[32] Wyatt, *Studies*, p.274.

[33] Kyaw, "The Institution of Kingship", p.172.

[34]* The *sakdina* is often referred to "dignity marks" or translated as "power over fields". From the late 16th century, every resident below the King was theoretically awarded a ranking measured in units of *sakdina*. This numerical measure ranged from *that* (slaves) with a *sakdina* of 5 to the ordinary people (*phrai*) with 25 to the *uparaja* (heir-apparent or second king) with 100,000, and the King being infinite. Although *sakdina* has always been confused with feudal land grants, no land was attached to these ranks. However, a high *sakdina* person indicated his ability to command large numbers of labor power, which was the most important resource in a feudalistic and agricultural society. Since the King had infinite thus none *sakdina*, the crown could not directly control his people in reality. See Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thailand: Economy and Politics* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 1999), p.11. The following works also provide insightful analysis of the *sakdina* system and the Thai monarchy: Akin Rabibhadana, *The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period, 1782-1873* (Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., 1996); Craig, J. Reynolds, *Thai Radical Discourse: The Real Face of Thai Feudalism Today* (Ithaca, New York: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1987); Suehiro Akira, *Capital Accumulation in Thailand 1855-1985* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1996), pp.90-8.

[35]* King Chulalongkorn stated that:
When I ascended the throne I was only fifteen years and ten days old. My mother had died. Of my maternal relatives, they were either unreliable or they were in unimportant positions. My paternal relatives in the Royal family had fallen under the power of the Regent, and had to protect their own interests and their own lives, and most did not support me in any way. As for the government officials, although there were some who were very close to me, most of these were but minor officials. Those who had important positions did not have the ability to support me in any way. My brothers and sisters were all minors, younger than I, and not one of them was able to do anything. As for myself I was but a boy. I had no great knowledge or ability in governmental affairs by which I might carry out my duties except

for what my father had been able to give me. I was sick almost to the point of death. I grieved constantly because of my father's death. At that time, I was like a headless person, my body propped up as a puppet king… and there were enemies whose intentions were openly bared around me, both within and without, in the capital and abroad, and my bodily illness was afflicting and tormenting me beyond endurance.
King Chulalongkorn, *Phraborommarachowat nai ratchakan thi 5* [Royal Advice of the Fifth Reign] (Bangkok: 1960), pp.20-1.

[36]* The Front Palace Crisis of 1874-1875 was a "reform" conflict between two parties. On one side there were young King Chulalongkorn and his radical supporters, and on the other camp were the much older and powerful second king (heir-presumptive) Prince Wichaichan who was elected by the Regent Somdet Chaophraya Si Suriyawong and the old guards, *hua boran* (ancients) as the king called them. The rift intensified when a fire broke out inside King Chulalongkorn's Palace on the night of December 28-29, 1874. Prince Wichaichan's fully armed troops demanded admission to the Palace in the name of helping to quench the fire. While the King's members refused and put off the fire by themselves, Prince Wichaichan fled his Front Palace and took refuge from the British Consulate. As the foreign powers decided not to involve in this domestic discord, Prince Wichaichan unwillingly returned while King Chulalongkorn re-considered the pace and content of his reforms. For a detailed account of the incident see Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp.191-4. According to Wyatt, "Chulalongkorn survived the crisis of 1875 only by deciding, or perhaps agreeing, to postpone further reform until time had removed from power his strongest opponents and enemies… For nearly a decade after 1875, Chulalongkorn undertook no further reforms save within his own personal establishment, and most of his previous reforms were allowed to wither on the vine". Wyatt, *Studies*, p.280.

[37] Wyatt, *Studies*, p.217.

[38]* For instance, after the death of King Rama II, Prince Chetsadabodin was invited to the throne as Phra Nangklao (Rama III). Yet he was only a prince of *phra ong chao* rank, the son of a concubine. In theory and tradition, he was lower status than his half-brother Prince Monghut who was born to a royal queen. See Walter F. Vella, *Siam under Rama III, 1824-1851* (New York: J.J. Augustin 1957), p.4. However, it was up to the accession council, which was led by members of the royal family, powerful nobility, together with high monks and elders, to choose the successor. It was not until the Sixth Reign (r.1910-1925) that the right of succession was limited to only *Chaofa* rank, the sons of the king and queen, by the law of *kot-monthianban wa duai kan-sup marudok* of 1924. See Thawi Mukthorakosa, *Phramahathiraratchacao* [A Philosopher King] (Bangkok: Phrae Phithaya, 1963), p.649. Also Prince Chula Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life* (London: 1960), p.82.

[39] See Nithi Aeosriwong, *Chat Thai*, *muang Thai*, *baab rian lae anutsawari* [The Thai Nation, Thailand, Texts and Monuments on Culture, State and Conscience] (Bangkok: Matichon Publishing, 1985), p.107; Toru Yano, "Political Structure of a 'Rice-Growing State'", in *Thailand: A Rice Growing Society*, Yoneo Ishii, ed. (Kyoto: Kyoto University), pp.118-20; Wyatt, *Studies*, pp.281-4. Also see Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thailand: Economy and Politics* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 1999), pp.211-43.

[40] Wyatt, *Studies*, p.282.

[41]* "Rama V succeeded in establishing a fixed pattern of autocratic rule, instituting rule by royal dictatorship in the 1880s. The key step involved was to successfully downgrade the Bunnag clan, which had played an excessively influential role in the decision-making process up to the time of Rama IV, to the status of technical bureaucrats.

The king then began to formulate policies in consultation with members of the powerful royal family, which were implemented by officials with conferred titles known as *khunnang*. Simultaneously, he succeeded in reforming the bureaucratic system in such a way that it was possible to extend royal authority nationwide… Prince Damrong and Prince Thewawong later supported Rama V in his role as absolute monarchy. The administrative reforms of 1892 functioned as the final damper on the regional control of the various clans. With the establishment of a modern bureaucratic system based on division of labor, territorial control by the central government became a reality." Yano, "Political Structure", pp.120-6.

[42]* The "one language, one syllabus, one Buddhism, and one nation under one king idea" was created in the Fifth Reign. King Chulalongkorn's idea of "nation" went beyond the domains of Bangkok and Ayutthaya and included a vast territory of diverse ethnicity, from Chiang Mai to Nakhon si Thammarat to Kamphaengphet. In 1885, King Rama V proclaimed: "The Thai, the Lao, and the Shan all consider themselves peoples of the same race. They all respect me as their supreme sovereign, the protector of their well-being". See Pasuk and Baker, *Thailand*, p.233; Thongchai, *Siam Mapped*, pp.101-2. The King also said: "The history [of Siam] should begin with Muang Luang, or some call it Hang or Chang, which was the site of Thai people originally, followed by Chiang Saen, Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Sawankhalok, Sokkhothai [Sukhothai], the old Ayutthaya, the new Ayutthaya, Lawo, Lopburi, Nakhonchiaisi, Nakhon si Thammarat, or those *muang* which ruled over other *muang* like Kamphaengphet, Chainat, Phitsanulok, San, Suphan, Kanchanaburi, Phetchaburi, for instance. All of them had been powerful at times and made up the unified *prathet sayam* [Siam] of today".
King Chulalongkorn, "Samakhom supsuan khongboran nai prathet sayam" [The Antiquarian Society in Siam], pp.45-6, translation from Thongchai, *Siam Mapped*, p.162.

[43] For detailed analysis on King Chulalongkorn's various reforms, see both of Wyatt's books, *Studies*, pp.219-84 and *Thailand*, pp.190-222; Also see Kullada Kesboonchoo. "Official Nationalism Under King Chulalongkorn" (International Conference on Thai Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, 3-6, July 1987).

[44] For the new definition and usage of nation (*chat*) in the Fifth Reign see Chapter 1, note 17.

[45] Apinan Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand: Nineteen and Twentieth Centuries* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.12.

[46]* "King Chulalongkorn must have seen equestrian monuments of King Louis XIV at Versailles, King George II at Windsor, Emperor Marcus Aurelius in Rome, and Bartolomeo Colleoni in Venice [during his first trip to Europe] in 1897. The king was most impressed when he saw Gian Lorenzo Bernini's version of King Louis XIV on horseback in the gardens at Versailles [in 1907], which in turn had been inspired by the statue of Emperor Constantine in the Vatican. As a result he planned to have his own equestrian monument executed in time for the commemoration of his fortieth year on the throne." Ibid., p.15-6.

[47]* King Rama V posed in the studio of Georges Ernest Saulo (1865-unknown) for this equestrian statue in 1907. It was then cast at the foundry of Susse Freres in Paris. Apinan Poshyananda, "Portraits of Modernity in the Royal Thai Court", in *Asian Art & Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.45.

[48] The fund raising for the Equestrian Statue of King Chulalongkorn reached almost two millions baht.

[49] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.16.

[50]* "King Chulalongkorn's ideological justification for transforming the state into an absolutist system was that the interest of the state coincided with those of the people. This laid the ground for the development of the Thai nation state as the embodiment of the community of the people… In 1893 when the officials and the people volunteered to fight against the French over the Paknam Incident, they did it in the name of their gratitude to the King and the word nation was not mentioned at all." Kullada, "Official Nationalism", p.2.

[51] Yano, "Political Structure", p.126.

[52] Walter F. Vella, *Chaiyo! King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii, 1978), pp.141-2.

[53] Ibid., p.141.

[54] "Alien Enemies and Their Internment", an article in *Bangkok Times* quoted in Ibid., p.142.

[55] Marc Askew and William S. Logan, eds., *Cultural Identity and Urban Change in Southeast Asia: Interpretative Essays* (Victoria: Deakin University Press, 1994), p.110.

[56] See Askew, *Cultural Identity*, p.110. The following accounts also provide insightful information about the Rama V's cult. See Sanitsuda Ekachai, "Sadej Pho: What Lies Behind a Cult of Worship", *Bangkok Post* (August 18, 1993); Suthon Sukpisit, "Devotion and Conflict in the Statue's Shadow", *Bangkok Post* (February 2, 1993), and Apinan Poshyananda, "Contemporary Thai Art: Nationalism and Sexuality *A La Thai,*" in *Contemporary Art in Asia: Tradition/Tensions* (New York: Asian Society, 1996), p.103.

[57] A comment made by Nitthi in his lecture "Heroes in Thai Culture", quoted in Apinan, "Contemporary Thai Art", p.103, and 110n.8.

[58]* King Prajadhipok, the seventy-sixth child and the last son of King Chulalongkorn, was the sole male survivor of King Vajiravudh full-blooded brother when the King suddenly died on November 26, 1925. Since King Vajiravudh only had a two-day old daughter, he named Prajadhipok as his heir as Rama VII. King Prajadhipok was born in 1893. He received his education at Eton and the Woolwich Military Academy in England and returned to Siam most recently in 1924 from Ecole Superieure de Guerre in France. In fact, he was not prepared at all for his new responsibilities as King. His reign, the shortest in the history of the Bangkok dynasty, was poignant and dramatic as it witnessed the end of a-century-and-a-half of the Chakri absolute monarchy.

[59] Benjamin A. Batson, *Siam's Political Future: Documents from the End of the Absolute Monarchy* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1974), p.1.

[60]* In 1926 King Prajahipok described the situation at the end of the Sixth Reign: The late King was beginning to lose the confidence of the people towards the end of the Reign and the question of Succession caused great anxieties. The only High Prince with any reputation was Prince Paribatra [Boriphat] and many people would have liked the succession to go to him, while it was well known that the King was expecting to have a

child, and should not have a boy the succession would go to his brothers whom, I am sorry to say, the majority of people did not think much of. For myself, I was a dark horse and in any case inexperienced in affairs of state.
A Letter to Francis B. Sayre in "King Prajadhipok's Memorandum, 1926", quoted in Benjamin A. Batson, *The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.29; the whole memorandum in full can be found in Baston, *Documents*, pp.13-36.

[61] Baston, *Documents,* p.95.

[62] Ibid., p.4; also see Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.238.

[63] Baston, *Documents*, p.55.

[64] For precise accounts of Pridi Banomyong's life and achievements see *Pridi by Pridi: Selected Writings on Life, Politics, and Economy*, trans., Pasuk Phongpaichit & Chris Baker (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2000); also see Thak Chaloemtiarana, *Thai Politics: Extracts and Documents 1932-1957* (Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, Thammasat University, 1978), pp.51-69. Sulak Sivaraksa, *Powers That Be: Pridi Banomyong through the Rise and Fall of Thai Democracy*, S.J., trans., (Bangkok: Committees on the Project for the National Celebration on the Occasion of the Centennial Anniversary of Pridi Banomyong, Senior Statesman [Private Sector], 1999); Morakot Jewachinda, "The Image of Pridi Banomyong and Thai Politics 1932-1983" (MA Thesis from the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, 1994).

[65] The details of Phibun Songkram's life can be seen in Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thailand's Durable Premier: Phibun through Three Decades 1932-1957* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995), and B.J. Terwiel, *Field Marshal Plaek Phibun Songkhram* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1980). Also see Chapter 4 of this thesis.

[66] Baston, *Documents*, p.6.

[67]* The British Minister in Bangkok in 1925 and 1926 remarked that:
The note struck by King Prajadhipok is economy, simplicity and accessibility. His intention is to return as far as possible to the golden age of his father, King Chulalongkorn. Although he appears to have been fond of his late Brother, everything he says and does is in fact the exact opposite of what King [Vajiravudh] said and did.
Great Britain, Foreign Office Records, F 78/78/40 (December 3, 1925), Greg to Chamberlain; F847/78/40 (January 29, 1926), Greg to Chamberlain, quoted in Baston, *Documents*, p.51.

[68] Ibid., p.85.

[69] Judith A Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand: A Story of Intrigue* (London: Hurst & Company, 1991), p.1; also see Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.241.

[70] Steve Van Beek & Luca Invernizzi Tettoni, *The Arts of Thailand* (Hong Kong: Periplus, 1999), p.205.

[71] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.25; also see Steve Van Beek, *Bangkok Only Yesterday* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Publishing Co. Ltd., 1982), p.15.

[72] Nithi, *Chat Thai,* p.107; also see Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.25.

[73]* "[King Rama VII's] important act as king was the creation of the Supreme Council of State, which while limited to high members of the royal family was nonetheless a significant step away from one-man rule and towards collective leadership by a royal oligarchy. In 1927 came a second major constitutional change—and the last actually effected before the coup of June—the establishment of the Committee of the Privy Council." Batson, *Documents*, p.42.

[74]* Organized by Pridi and Phibun, the group of Promoters consisted of 49 military and naval officers together with 65 civilians. Details of the 1932 coup can be found in Thawatt Mokarapong, *History of the Thai Revolution: A Study in Political Behavior* (Bangkok: Chalermnit, 1972); Thak Chaloemtiarana, ed., *Thai Politics: Extracts and Documents 1932-1957*(Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, Thammasat University, 1978), pp.1-107; Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp.243-52.

[75]* King Prajadhipok replied to the Promoters on June 24, 1932:
I have received the letter in which you invite me to return to Bangkok as a constitutional monarch. For the sake of peace; and in order to save useless bloodshed; to avoid confusion and loss to the country; and more, because I have already considered making this change myself, I am willing to co-operate in the establishment of a constitution under which I am willing to serve.
Translation from Kenneth Perry Landon, *Siam in Transition: A brief Survey of Cultural Trends in the Five Years Since the Revolution of 1932* (Chicago, 1939; reprint, New York, 1968), p.10.

[76]* As Benedict Anderson puts it: "The modern Thai army (and navy) had no serious external defense function, and indeed virtually never fought except against 'domestic' forces. The Thai military was mainly a means for 'internal' royalist consolidation; it was in addition, an emblem of modernity for the outside world". Benedict Anderson, "Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies", in *The Study of Thailand: Analyses of Knowledge, Approaches, and Prospects in Anthropology, Art History, Economics, History, and Political Science*, Eliezer B. Ayal, ed. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University, Center for International Studies, Southeast Asia Series no. 54, 1978), p.203. Also see Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.243.

[77] The Boworadet rebellion is discussed in Chapter 4, the Monument of the People Revolution.

[78]* "In 1941, for example, when critics dared to label the Leader a dictator, Phibun defended himself by evoking both the 13th century ruler of Sukhothai, King Ramkhamhaeng, and a more recent monarch King Chulalongkorn the Great. He reminded his critics that these great leaders had used absolute power to enforce tough policies and to urge the Thai people forward, often in spite of themselves. Though Phibun had faith in the nation's potential, he seems to have had little faith in the will of the people to realize it. Thai history had demonstrated to Phibun what strong-willed leadership could contribute to the nation. His first goal, therefore, was to inject the nation with a dose of his own will, just as the past kings had done." Wright, *Balancing Act*, p.96.

[79]* King Vajiravudh was born on January 1, 1881, the eldest son by Queen Saowapha. When the first Crown Prince Vajirunhis died at the age of seventeen in 1895, King Chulalongkorn named Prince Vajiravudh the Crown Prince, who was then studied in England—military training at Sandhurst and studied history and law at Oxford. He returned to Bangkok at the beginning of 1903 and spent the next decade in literary pursuits and governmental reform experiments in his own palace. After fifteen years of preparation, he

succeeded his father as the Sixth Rama in 1910. Detailed accounts of the life and contributions of King Vajiravudh can be found in the following works: Vella, *Chaiyo!*; Stephen Lyon Wakeman Greene, *Absolute Dreams: Thai Government Under Rama VI, 1910-1925* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1999); Kullada Kesboonchoo, "Official Nationalism Under King Vajiravudh" (International Conference on Thai Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, July 3-6, 1987).

[80] Walter F. Vella, "Vajiravudh of Thailand: Traditional Monarch and Modern Nationalist" (Hawaii: University of Hawaii, 1978), p.2.

[81] Ibid.

[82] For King Rama VI's nationalistic programs, see Vella, *Chaiyo*, pp.27-243.

[83]* In King Vajiravudh words:
It is the duty of all the members of the nation to do their best to preserve their king. Those who harm the king must be regarded as those who harm the nation (*chat*), who destroy the dignity of the country (*banmuang*), and who break the peace and happiness of the community. They must regarded as the enemy of all the people.
King Vajiravudh, *Plukchai suapa* [Instilling the Wild Tiger Spirit] (Bangkok, 1914/5), p.55, translation from Murashima, "State Ideology", p.92.

[84]* For the relationship between the monarchy and the early constitutional governments, especially under Phibun, see the discussion of the Monument of King Parjadhipok in this chapter and the Monument of the People Revolution in Chapter 4 and the Monument of King Taksin in Chapter 5.

[85] Batson, *Documents*, p.95n.3.

[86] Phibun's speech at the opening of the campaign to solicit funds for the statue of King Vajiravudh, *Bangkok Times* (January 11, 1940); cited in Vella, *Chaiyo*, p.272.

[87] Ibid., p.270.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.229.

[90]* The Phibun government determined to take over the Chinese economic dominance by forming a state corporation. They competed with the Chinese in the rice trade and practically won out the salt, tobacco, petroleum, and pork business. Besides, numerous occupations were limited to only Thai. A new revenue code raised taxes on the commercial class, mostly Chinese, and all non-citizens had to pay an alien registration fee. Chinese schools were limited to teach Chinese language for two hours a week. All except one of the Chinese newspaper were closed down. Of course, the government explained the measure was not discriminating against race but citizenship. From Phibun regime's point of view, and that of many other Thais, these regulations were necessary in returning the control of the economy back to the hands of the Thais. Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.254. Also see Yoshihara Kunio, *The Nation and Economic Growth: The Philippines and Thailand* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.32-5.

[91] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.254; also see Vella, *Chaiyo*, p.270.

[92] Vella, *Chaiyo*, p.178.

[93]* King Vajiravudh "donated to the government this large tract of land he owned personally, naming it Lumphini Park, and began to develop it with money from the privy purse. The land was leveled, and a gateway, clock tower, permanent exhibition hall, and several temporary stalls were erected. Electric generators were ordered from Germany to light the fair grounds. A brochure was prepared as a guide to exhibitors and fairgoers. The work was well advanced by November 25, when the King died." Greene, *Absolute Dreams*, p.164.

[94] A quote from Saeng-arun cited in Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.47.

[95]* King Parjadhipok's Abdication Statement on March 2, 1935 from Novel, England:

> I was already in favor of such a system (constitution monarchy) and was considering how such a change in the administration of Siam could be made without upheaval. Since the coup had taken place and the leaders said that they wanted only to establish a constitution which in fact, was also my intention, I thought that for the sake of order and peace in the country it was proper for me to go along with the wishes…
>
> I tried to assist in maintaining good order so that this important change could be made as smoothly as possible, but my efforts were without avail, because the new leaders failed to establish real political freedom, nor did they truly listen to the wishes of the people…
>
> Because the People's Party did not establish real political freedom, and the people had no opportunity to express their opinions before important policy decisions were made, a rebellion broke out, with Thai killing Thai…
>
> I am willing to surrender the powers I formerly exercised to the people as a whole, but I am not willing to turn them over to any individual or any group to use in an autocratic manner without heeding the voice of the people…
>
> I deeply regret that I am no longer able to serve my people and my country in accordance with the hopes and intentions, which I inherited from my forefathers. I can but pray that Siam will prosper and that the people will have happiness.

Quoted in Batson, *Documents*, pp.101-2.

[96] Thongchai Winichakul, "Thai Democracy in Public Memory: Monuments and their Narratives" (The 7th International Conference on Thai Studies, Amsterdam, 4-8 July 1999), p.6.

[97] See Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.253; also see Scot Barme, *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity* (Singapore: Institute of South East Asian Studies, 1993), p.171n.5.

[98]* After the fall of Phibun, the coup leader Sarit and his follower Lt. Gen. Thanom allowed Phote Sarasin to be the Prime Minister on September 21,1957. Yet a new political party "*chat sang khom niyom*" was soon formed with Sarit as the head, Thanom as deputy, and Praphat Charusathian as party secretary. When Phote resigned the premiership on December 26 that year, Thanom assumed the top position since Sarit was sick at the time. After Sarit left for the United States for major surgery, Thanom's government faced its crisis. On October 20, 1958, Thanom resigned. Sarit staged another *coup d'etat* and became the 14th Prime Minister on February 9, 1959. See Murashima, *Political Thoughts*, pp.91-2; also see Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp.278-81.

[99] For a detailed analysis of the politics in Sairt-Thanom government see Thak Chaloemtiarana, *Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism* (Bangkok: Thai Khadi

Institute, Thammasat University, 1979), pp.122-356; also see Chalermkiet, *Political Thoughts*, 91-140. The discussion of Sarit-Thanom regime is in Chapter 4.

[100]* "Student demonstrations began in June 1973 over the expulsion of university students for anti-government publications and snowballed in October when critics calling for a constitution in public handbills were arrested." Massive demonstrations were reported to have "between 200,000 and 500,000 people, including university and school students, members of the middle class." This led to clashes with the police, and a major social conflict. "On October 14, 1973, Thanom and Praphas were forced to resign and hastened out of the country to exile abroad". See Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp.297-302.

[101]* For instance, Thai grade-school books nowadays still project history as royal chronicle. Not only is there "no place for ordinary people in this view but history itself stops short in 1932. [Although] the text books mention Thailand had democracy in 1932, which means people participate in government somehow by way of exercising their right to vote, an [honest] historical and structural [overview still] suspends in the air, and so the better part of the twentieth century remains without actors [and] is denied as history". "The [monarch-centered] approach… [glosses] over the structural causes and systematic problems of corruption, exploitation, and social injustice, thus making [education system] a… tool in the service of the rich and powerful". See Niels Mulder, *Thai Images: The Culture of the Public World* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1997), pp.50-61.

[102] See Thongchai, "Thai Democracy", p.6.

[103] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.281.

[104]* The October 1973 event was regarded as a great accomplishment in the following years or two. In 1974, Their Majesties presided over the royal cremation for those who died in the uprising. See Thongchai, "Thai Democracy", p.11.

[105]* "In the wake of October 6, 1976, the military Administrative Reform Council had installed as prime minister over an appointed government a former high court justice, Thanin Kraivichien; ironically, it turned out that this man, a civilian and a lawyer, was more authoritarian and repressive than any of his military predecessors. While the right wing was too exultantly triumphant in imposing censorship, silencing labor union, undergoing anti-Communist indoctrination, the left wing, including student leaders of the 1973-1976, prominent intellectuals, and many moderates were alienated as to flee to exile or to join the insurgents in the hills and forests." Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.303.

[106]* Thongchai, "Thai Democracy", p.7. The notion of the Thanin ideology can be seen from the following comments by himself: "There are two forms of devotion to the King of his subjects. The first one is the devotion which descends from their ancestors. Thai people naturally learn to love and worship the King by themselves. The second form of devotion originates from their deep impression of the Royal virtues and Royal activities which His Majesty the King does selflessly for the welfare of Thai people. The devotion to the King of Thai people is so strong that nobody can wipe it out without eradicating the independent Thai nation". Thanin Kraivichien, *Thai Monarchy in the Democratic System* (Bangkok: Ministry of Education, 1977), p.40, quoted in Murashima, *Political Thoughts*, p.3.

[107] National Archives, M. Ed. 0701.44/1, letter from Mr. Banyat Thephatsadin na Ayutthaya, Minister of Interior to Luang Ronnasitphichai, "Re: The construction of the Monument of Rama VII, Jan 17, 1953"; also National Archives, K/P7/2512/2, *Chaothai*,

December 18, 1969 and K/P8/2513/33, *Chaothai*, January 3, 1970 (newspaper and memoirs), cited in Thongchai, "Thai Democracy", p.7, and 28 n.34.

[108]* In November 11 1977, General Kraingsak Chomanand succeeded Thanin as Prime Minister and was able to at least stem the right-wing violence. Nevertheless, his power base was rather weak. The Vietnam invasion of Cambodia early that year, moreover, cast a dark shadow over the security of Thailand. General Prem Tinsulanonda, commander-in-chief of the army, finally forced him from office in February 1980. Despite continuous difficulties both in politics and economy, Prem maintained his position much longer and firmer than his immediate predecessors because of his charisma and the support from the royal family. See Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp.302-5. For the life of Prem, see William Warren, *Prem Tinsulanonda: Soldier & Statesman* (Bangkok: M.L. Tridosyuth Devakul, 1997).

[109] Thongchai, "Thai Democracy", p.9.

[110] See *Bangkok Post* (September 11, 2000).

[111] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.223.

[112]* King Chulalongkorn "worked enormously hard at his tasks—his daily diary entries always close with some such statement as 'then retired upstairs to go over papers with so-and-so until 2 am,' and he personally read and acted upon many hundreds of pieces of official correspondence every day. He was a man of high intelligence, especially in his pained consideration of the problem of distinguishing between 'borrowing from the West' and 'making modern' his state". Wyatt, *Studies*, p.284.

[113]* Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.223. In fact, the wind of a constitutional change had started to blow as early as 1885 in a petition known as "The Presentation of Opinions on Governmental Reform Submitted to King Chulalongkorn from the Royal Princes and the King's Servants". In January 1885, Prince Prisdang (1852-1935), a grandson of Rama III who studied in England, was appointed Siam's first minister of legation, initially to England in 1882 and then to France in 1883. Anxious about the war between Burmese and the British and the Franco-Burmese negotiations in Paris, King Chulalongkorn consulted Prince Prisdang in Paris on Siam's security in 1884. The prince discussed with three of the king's younger half-brothers who were in London at the time as well as seven other people. The eleven members then submitted to King Chulalongkorn "The Presentation", which was probably the first petition to the King about the adoption of Western liberal ideas to build a modern-state. It noted that "no *chat* (nation) in Europe can believe that Siam maintains justice since everything is decided by the king…[Thus, Siam should] change the absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy, establish a cabinet system and reform legal system on the Western model, and promote freedom of speech". Department of Fine Arts, Thailand comp., *Chaonai lae kharachakan krapbangkhomthun khwamhen chat kanplianplaeng rachakanphaendin Ro. So. 103* [The Presentation of Opinions on Governmental Reform Submitted to King Chulalongkorn from the Royal Princes and the King's Servants in 1885] (Bangkok, 1967), pp.21-5, translation from Murashima, "State Ideology", p.84.

[114]* On March 8 1888, King Chulalongkorn responded to constitutional reform:
In Siam there is no written law pertaining to the power of the king because it is under stood that the king has absolute power. But in fact the king must always practice moderation and justice. I am not against having a written law on the powers of the king such is found in other countries… However its contents is the problem. In Europe, where the power of a king is limited, political events caused by the dissatisfaction of the people brought about the limitation of the king's power. Even among European countries the degree of limitation is different because of differences in historical process… In Siam there has never been such a

political event where the people were against the king. Contrary to what happened in Europe, Siamese kings have led the people that both they and the country might be prosperous and happy. Moreover, it is impossible for the king to govern the country following the European way because it is hard to find able persons to be members of parliament. Also, the people would never be pleased to have Western institutions. They have more faith in the king than in any members of parliament, because they believe that the king more than anybody else practices justice and loves the people. It is enough, therefore, just to write into a constitution what already has become accepted royal custom. King Chulalongkorn, *Phrarachadamrat nai phrabat somdet phrachulachom klao chao yuhua song thalaeng phraboroma rachathibai kaekhai kanpokkhrong phaendin* [King Chulalongkorn's Speech Explaining Governmental Reform] (Bangkok: 1972), pp.62-3, translation from Murashima, "State Ideology", p.86.

[115]* As modernity and rationality penetrated the institution of kingship, the mystery of it naturally faded away. The king became a more human and political figure. His power, hence, could no longer solely relied on and justified by some otherworldly myths. Rather than a non-disputable premise, the excellence of the crown was increasingly viewed in the light of the monarch's own "merits" such as ability, personality and compassion. If the kingship was no longer an untouchable decree but a political entity, then changing such institution or even overthrowing it would appear less "amoral" or "sinful" and even could be deemed as rightful at times. See Kullada, "Official Nationalism", p.26.

[116]* Chakri Day was first termed on April 6, 1919 by King Vajiravudh and observed as a national holiday. King Rama VI opined that the Chakri Day was the "National Day" that was comparable to the French July 14 or the American July 4. See Vella, *Chaiyo*, p.142.

CHAPTER IV
VISION OF MODERN NATIONALISM

While the monuments of the Bangkok Kings publicly exalted the grandeur of the monarchy as the essence of Thai society, there were also different visions in conceiving a modern Thailand. The notion of a nation involves ideological strength, the sensibility of pride and passion. It also expresses itself in more tangible forms, such as a clearly defined territory or an adequate measure of political power and armed force.[1] As the twentieth century unveiled its course, the drama soon proved to be a long saga of warfare. In the name of "nation", wars were fought on a scale and with a brutality that humanity had never seen before. The two World Wars presented the Thai elite with a whole new horizon of politics, and consequently, the creation and propagation of a Thai "nationalism".

As monarchical dynasties around the world dwindled by the end of the Great War, the 1932 *coup d'état* ended a century and a half of the Chakri absolute rule in Siam. The various monuments erected during the early constitutional period, hence, served a different political agenda. In order to turn a new page in history, the new elite strove to reshape the old milieu of the kingdom. The effort climaxed between 1938 and 1944 under the third Prime Minister, Luang Phibun Songkram.[2] During the high tide of nationalism worldwide, Phibun aspired to instill a sense of modernity and patriotism in the masses. Besides conceptual promulgation, his government also attempted to express and expand the national ideology visually. The landscape of Bangkok, thus, undertook a modern transformation.[3] The erection of public monuments, such as the Democracy Monument (1939) and the Victory Monument (1941), marked both a milestone of cultural modernization and a triumph of nation building. Specifically made for and shared by the public, these monuments aimed not only to manifest the official dogmas, but also more importantly, to weave them into national history and pride.

Public monuments were the superstars of the Phibun wartime regime. They attracted ardent crowds and parades and were featured in posters, stamps, and magazine covers. As the political powers that erected the monuments came and

went, the passion for them waxed and waned in due time. For better or for worse, the monumental structures, if not their memories, still remained. They have become a part of the country and witnesses to history. To some people, they are trifles of a bygone period not worth remembering. To others, they are reminders of a turbulent epoch that should never be forgotten. While the involvement of the Phibun government in the Second World War was always deemed a rather embarrassing footnote in Thai history, the origins of and stories behind many of the same regime's monuments were seldom discussed. Notwithstanding, both local and international politics during this period were very intricate. It would be easy but unidimensional to coin the Phibun premiership simply as extremist and the monuments as fascist tools.[4]

In the era of war and nationalism, public monuments in Thailand took on a new role and reached a new height. This chapter explores the topic in three sections. First, it studies the outset of nationalistic monuments in the twentieth century through the Monument of the First World War (1921) and the Monument of the People Revolution (1936). The next focus falls on the cultural and social discourses of the controversial Phibun regime, and the importance of public monuments in its ambitious curriculum. A detailed discussion of two monuments from this period, Democracy Monument and the Victory Monument, then follows. The final section reviews the legacy of these monuments of modern nationalism and their evolution in contemporary Thailand.

Public Monument and the Vision of a modern Thai Nation

Phibun was not alone in visualizing the Thai state through the lens of nationalism. Neither was the Field Marshal the first and only leader that used public monuments to express a modern vision for the twentieth-century Thai nation. Indeed, there have been monumental foregoers that marked patriotism and revolutionary victory prior to the noted efforts of Phibun. A specific study of the Monument of the First World War and the Monument of the People Revolution is a fundamental prologue to not only Phibun's nationalistic visions of Thailand but also the artistic transformation of monuments that accommodates such development.

- **The Monument of the First World War**

Although the Great War that spread like a grass fire in Europe seemed remote to Siam at the time, King Vajiravudh took a more personal and passionate view. The Sixth Rama saw the war as a great opportunity to exert a new range of public policies and propaganda.[5] Since King Vajiravudh received his education in England, his preference towards the Allies was fathomable despite the fact that his government pledged neutrality.[6] The situation, however, was more than just a sentimental matter. On the one hand, the Thai court was increasingly worried that the lack of support for the Allies might become an excuse for the time-honored European powers to further encroach against Siam. On the other hand, if the kingdom joined the "right" side, it could be an effective move towards the ending of the unequal treaties.[7] After the Americans entered the battle on April 6, 1917, Siam found "its moral grounds" for declaring war on the Central Powers three months later on July 22.[8]

King Vajiravudh always believed in militarism. His founding of the Wild Tiger Corps (*Sua Pa*), a nationwide mass paramilitary organization on May 1, 1911, only six months after he became King, was one of the most evident examples.[9] Rama VI expected his corps to be a new "instrument for bringing the Thai nation together" as it stimulated martial values and broke the parochial and personal interests.[10] Accordingly, the corps wished to create "among the Thai people a new national spirit, the spirit of the Wild Tigers".[11] The First World War, hence, provided an exemplary justification for King Vajiravudh to promote his nationalistic campaign and imbue patriotism in his subjects.[12]

The monarch was enthusiastic in using the war to serve his politics. He considered the war a great chance to improve Siam's international image and standing as a modern nation. In late 1914, the King purchased a new warship for the Thai navy from a national subscription of public funds. The light cruiser was named *Phra Ruang* after the legendary founder of Sukhothai. The entry into World War I, furthermore, brought about a new striped tricolor national flag of red, blue and white, which put "Siam more fully in harmony with the Allies".[13] Designed by King Vajiravudh and decreed on September 28, 1917, the flag remains as the national flag of Thailand today.[14] Under the new Thai flag, an expeditionary force of 1,300

men, including “an ambulance section, a flying squadron, and a group of automobile drivers and mechanics” was sent to France in June 1918.[15] In the face of a massive war in Europe, King Vajiravudh successfully offered new dimensions to Thai nationalism in an air of urgency yet from a rather safe distance.[16]

Siding with the victorious Allies proved to be a wise decision. It “earned Siam a place at the Versailles Peace Conference”, where the Thai delegates negotiated painstakingly for a full autonomy in taxation together with an end to extraterritoriality and unequal treaties.[17] It was a long diplomatic maneuvering that stretched from 1920 to 1926.[18] Yet at home in Siam the triumph was celebrated without delay. King Vajiravudh proclaimed the armistice on November 11, 1918 and pronounced a long series of festivities.[19] The Monument of the First World War was one of the Crown’s efforts in hope of a patriotic outpouring for the nation and particularly the royal leader himself.

The monument is both literally and figuratively a memorial for the Great War. On September 23, 1919, King Vajiravudh bestowed the internment of the nineteen war martyrs’ ashes in the base of a permanent monument near Sanam Luang, although none of the casualties had actually died in combat.[20] On the fourth anniversary of Siam’s declaration of war, July 22, 1921, the monument was unveiled.[21] The celebration was an impressive public event, with myriad flags of the Allies and Siam flying high around the location. Led by King Vajiravudh, various sections of the population—nobility, government officials, foreign diplomats—presented wreaths at the memorial and took part in a royal ceremony.[22]

Concurring with the taste of the throne, the monument was an artistic paean to militarism. The style and structure followed a classical Buddhist tower (*chedi*),[23] which traditionally held the relics of the Buddha and some times kings. With the ashes of the deceased soldiers enshrined, the status of modern warriors was elevated through a spiritual allusion. Religion, moreover, was used to support the militaristic nature of warfare and nationalism. King Vajiravudh delicately combined the opposing ideas of Buddhism and militarism, justifying the “sinful” killing in combats as a rightful defense of the *dharma*, the moral law.[24] The Central Powers were thus painted as the evil forces, and Siamese the upholder of the Buddhist

mores. “If there were no right we could not exist as nations,” the King maintained; “this principle is so important that we have to fight for it”.[25] Similarly, art should be at the nation’s disposal as well. To the Sixth Rama, “art was for life’s sake, an instrument by which people might be brought together to share a common vision of a better world and to bring that world into being”.[26] The war memorial was a collaboration between the European court artists and local artisans from the Department of Fine Arts, which the King established to carry on that mission.

If the Monument of the First World War extolled the victory of modern warfare in a traditional architectural form, the nationalistic notion of Rama VI was actually a conventional temperament packaged with a novel glaze. After all, Siam was still an absolute monarchy. In many ways, King Vajiravudh’s concept of modern nationhood was rather “self-contradictory”.[27] He believed that the Thai nation was founded on a “trinitarian mystery” of nation-religion-monarchy, in which all three elements were intricately intertwined as an absolute one.[28] Loyalty to any one of the three meant loyalty to all three, whereas disagreement with one was an insult towards all.[29] The nation was by nature hierarchical. Every member of the society, hence, needed to unquestionably obey all higher powers “in the name of the triune authority”.[30]

While the Crown was deeply involved in the political process and modernization programs under the new undertaking of nationalism, “the justification of the monarchy” became tightly dependent on the success and progress of those reforms.[31] When modernization did not deliver the result that people had anticipated, or the King did not behave the way that people expected, the pursuit of “the national interest” might bring the public “into conflict with the structure of the monarchy and the government”.[32] Nonetheless, the seed of a western-inspired “nationalism” had already been sowed in the minds of Siam, especially among the young and ambitious. A change in the concept and practice of the nation was inevitable. A decade later, the messages of King Vajiravudh received a full and at times exaggerated appropriation. The public monuments erected in the early constitutional governments, the Phibun regime in particular, would prompt such nationalistic ideas into a visual reality.

- **The Monument of the People Revolution**

The atmosphere in Siam since the 1932 *coup d'état* had been uneasy, charged with an uncertain heaviness that augurs a violent storm. The high hopes and good will of the constitutional government were clouded by a precarious balance between the royal house and the new elite. Despite criticism from King Prajadhipok, the constitution was approved on December 10, 1932.[33] Although the drafters did consider the advice from the monarch and made certain changes from the provisional one prepared by Pridi immediately after the coup of 1932, the power of the King was still regarded more "illusory than real".[34] One of the groups that seemed dissatisfied with the result was an element of the royal family. The Chakri princes, who once headed all the prominent ministries in the bureaucracy, were now above politics. They were no longer allowed to engage in "overtly political activity" and "ministerial posts" besides "technical positions" or "advisers" in the government.[35] King Rama VII's absence in the "anniversary of coronation day" on February 21, 1933 seemed to further touch off speculation of discord between the royalty and the constitutional regime.[36]

The political tempest finally hit in late 1933. In March, Pridi presented his controversial economic plan.[37] Inspired by a utopian "socialistic scheme" which called for nationalization of land and labor as well as incorporation of all society members into the government bureaucracy,[38] Pridi's proposal openly widened the rift that had already existed within the divided government. The more conservative faction soon suspended the plan, and Pridi was sent to France to "pursue his study of agricultural economics" under the heat.[39] A government communiqué criticized that the plan was "of a communist nature", and an anticommunist law was first introduced. The press also disfavored Pridi's idea, stating that "the radicals had spent most of their times in Europe and did not understand the Thai peasant… on whom we all live".[40]

The departure of Pridi, however, did not cease the tension. The government continued to experience difficulties with the younger and bolder faction, especially among the junior military officers. On June 20, 1933, the German-educated military leader Phya Phahon overthrew the first constitutional government of Phya Manopkarn (Mano). He became the second Prime Minister of Siam and recalled

Pridi back to the kingdom. In the following months, Bangkok was filled with rumors and restlessness. Pridi arrived in Bangkok at the end of September. A crowd of law students, who were excited that "Pridi had finished his studies," greeted him with great enthusiasm.[41] Yet others were less optimistic and concerned that Pridi's return would provoke the conservatives to stage a coup.[42] In less than a fortnight, their worries became a reality.

Discontented with the new government, Prince Bowaradet, a grandson of King Chulalongkorn and the former Minister of War under King Prajadhipok, "appeared at the head of a provincial army revolt" and led a rebellion from the Nakhon Rachasima (Korat) garrison.[43] Joined by the forces from Saraburi and Ayutthaya, Prince Bowaradet made his move towards Bangkok. He demanded that the government resign because of its "disrespect of the king and of fomenting communism".[44] On October 12, the rebels captured the Don Muang airfield. As the prince marched into the northern outskirts of the capital, he met with the government's counterattack, organized by the field commander of the military forces Lieutenant-Colonel Phibun. Between October 13 and 16, fierce fighting took place on the fringes of Bangkok, around the Laksi area. The rebel forces were eventually repulsed and retreated in the direction of Korat in the Northeast. The government troops reached Bangkok on October 25, while Prince Boworadet and his clique took refugee in Saigon in French Indochina.

The real motive behind the Boworadet rebellion remains unclear, although the revolt has been "generally regarded as royalist and reactionary".[45] Nevertheless, there was not a close connection between Prince Boworadet and King Prajadhipok or other leading princes such as Prince Boriphat and Prince Purachatra.[46] Prince Boworadet was even regarded by some observers as having been involved in the 1932 *coup d'état* that overthrew the absolute monarchy.[47] Whereas the political assertion by the rebels was to fulfill the "duty to Country and the King", the government claimed that Prince Boworadet in fact wanted to seize the throne for himself.[48] King Prajadhipok and the queen were at the Hua Hin palace when the revolt broke out, and they swiftly sailed down south to Songkla at the height of the conflict.

The exact reason behind the King's move was also obscure. While some speculated that the Crown wished to escape the possible capture by the rebel garrison at Petchaburi, others thought the departure was to avoid seizure by the government forces. The only official expression from King Rama VII was his regret that "Thai were fighting Thai".[49] The dilemma that the King faced at the time was no doubt difficult and perhaps dangerous. There were reports that "at least some members of the court were in sympathy and contact with the rebels".[50] The failure of the revolt, according to Prince Davawongs, had more to do with the unpopularity of Prince Boworadet rather than a firm support for the new regime.[51] In any case, many believed King Prajadhipok "could have exerted sufficient influence either to cause the success of the revolt or its suppression" and thus ensure a quick resolution without bloodshed.[52] Although no evidence implied King Pajadhipok had supported the rebellion, the government's suspicion of the monarch certainly increased and finally led to the King's abdication in 1935.[53]

The quelling of the revolt was one of the first military triumphs of the constitutional government.[54] The victory was also followed by the passage of an "Act for the Protection of the Constitution" and the promise of a fully elected Assembly when the educational level of the populace permitted. A memorial, moreover, was commissioned to the newly reformed Department of Fine Arts to be dedicated to all the patriots who had fought for the national cause. On October 15, 1936, the Monument of the People Revolution (Boworadet Rebellion) was unveiled at the Laksi Circle. The location is approximate to the battle-zone near Don Muang airfield. It was the first public monument erected in the Eighth Reign, in which the eleven-year-old King Ananda Mahidol was then still at school in Switzerland. He was represented by an appointed regency consisting of two senior princes and Chao Phraya Yommarat, whose power was seemingly overshadowed by the rising elite. The Wat Prasi Mahathat was also built nearby in order to inter the sacrificed heroes and since then has been an important temple for the 1932 coup members.

The Monument of the People Revolution is a combination of new fashion and old tradition. It takes on the architectural form of a *chedi* like the Monument of the First World War. Like its precedent, the memorial elevates the status of the war

heroes to the supreme level of religious saints. Only this time, the relinquished did not fight against the "evil" foreign foes but a different camp of Thais who held different political view and strove to gain political power. The winner, accordingly, proudly claimed the overcoming of the conflict as the success of "people revolution". Aside from the *chedi*-style of the monument, there is a more direct reference to the legacy of King Rama VI. The poem "Harmony of the Nation" by King Vajiravudh is featured on one side of the memorial and a list of the martyrs on another.

Meanwhile, the memorial also includes modern aspects, which departed from the former model and would be further developed in later works. The tall, narrow structure is conducted in a much simpler approach without the elaborate decorations and flowery pediments of the previous war monument. Instead of a typical tapering spire with an uppermost orb as in a *chedi*, the top part of the memorial now places the dual golden offering bowls that uphold a bronze replica of the constitution. The message is clear. The old order has passed. In the new Phahon government, the newly established constitution itself is the apex of the modern Thai nation. This metaphorical bearing would remain and become even more prominent in the subsequent design of the Democracy Monument a few years later.

Besides the symbolic constitution, many traits of the Democracy Monument can be found in the Monument of the People Revolution. Apart from the list of deceased soldiers and King Vajiravudh's poem, the other two sides of the monument both exhibit relief sculptures. One of the base walls spots a *dhamma* wheel, while on another side is a bronze-relief picturing a Thai family of husband, wife and a child. Although the couple appears to be farmers, their costumes reveal a sense of sophistication. The two adults both sport short hairstyle, dress in modern outfits with all button-up shirts and short lower garments despite their bare-feet. The husband holds a sickle in his left hand, whereas the wife carries a bundle of rice in her left arm. Gripping a lasso, the little boy in front of his parents only wears a *jongkaben*. The trio is portrayed with realism, and their facial features are distinctly Thai. The balance of anatomy and perspective is also notable, especially the child whose body shows the artists' mastery of such technique. The overall representation, however, still looks rather stiff. It seems to be a transitional

experiment, which would lead to the more mature relief sculptural works of Bhirasri later.

Extolling the defeat of the military threat and the ability to pacify internal challenges, the Monument of the People Revolution is not just a novelty of propaganda for the new government but also an illustration of the artistic metamorphosis of Thai nationalistic monuments. As the crisis itself is often overlooked in modern Thai history, there is an inevitable puzzlement attached to the monument. Nowadays, it stands awkwardly in the middle of a busy traffic circle. Few people recognize the story behind this *chedi*. The maintenance of it, likewise, seems to be forgotten. Unlike the memory today, the public support for fighting the revolt had been considerably strong at the time, "especially in Bangkok where many volunteered to join the government troops".[55] One of the most important outcomes of this strife was the enhancement of the reputation of Phibun, the commander of the triumphant government forces.[56] Phibun, the new and "popular man-on-horseback" hero, soon replaced Phanon in December 26, 1938 and rose to the pinnacle of the nation as the third prime minister of the kingdom. Siam was never the same since then.

Nationalism and the Public Monuments in the Phibun Regime

Only a handful of people personally put their stamps on Thai history, and Phibun was definitely one of them.[57] His ascendancy marked a turning point in the country. Through his vision of new polity and politics, Siam underwent a dramatic change. The monumental arts were the epitome of Phibun's state-building process and nationalistic movement. They signified a modern Thai nation, which had departed from its past and was marching towards a brighter future. Even though these nationalistic structures may mean little to contemporary viewers now, the monuments represented something different for their original audience then. Therefore, to understand the significance of these works fully, one must look at the monuments in the context of their time.

- **The Birth of a Nation**

Despite the shift of political power immediately after the coup of 1932, little changed in the cultural landscape of the kingdom and the lives of the commoners.

The majority of Thais still kept their wholehearted veneration for the monarchy as an institution and the King himself as their Lord, regardless of some incomprehensible laws that limited his power.[58] When King Prajadhipok abdicated in 1935, the people naturally felt lost. While King Ananda was still a young child and far from his homeland, Field Marshal and Prime Minister Phibun became the most powerful figure in the kingdom.[59] On May 8, 1939, Siam was named Thailand through the "First State Convention" (*Rattha Niyom*) to not only accentuate the country as "the land of free people" but also highlight the "kinship with the Tai speaking" populaces outside the borders of "Old Siam".[60] The *Maha Anachak Thai* or "Great Thai Empire" was what the elite hoped to achieve.[61] A series of modernization and nationalistic programs, from economic to social to cultural reforms, soon followed to pursue this dream.[62] Phibun's premiership and central role in the development of modern Thailand would last for almost two decades until 1957, broken only by a short period from 1944-1948.

Shaped by Phibun's power and vision, Thailand during his first government began a new chapter in mass nationalism. The campaign was "a social and political phenomenon that was more nearly egalitarian in its implications" that the country had not experienced in prior monarchist times.[63] Of course, it would be naïve to assume that Phibun was unaware of the international political climate. The rise of Fascism in Europe along with the upsurge of a militaristic Japan in Asia surely verified his beliefs. Phibun and Luang Wichit Wathakan,[64] the most prolific writer and poet laureate in the early constitutional regime, openly expressed their admiration for authoritarian figures like Hitler of Germany, Mussolini of Italy, and Mustapha "Attaturk" Kemal of Turkey. To the new elite, a strongman leadership model was deemed to be the right and best direction for the emerging Thailand.[65]

Nationalism and militarism were prevalent at the time; however, to conclude that Phibun was just following the trend in Europe and Japan undervalued his passion for and faith in the military. He loved the military, from the uniform to its discipline to its strength and glamour.[66] Moreover, the internal political power struggle had been complicated and oftentimes chaotic since the dawn of the constitutional government. Apart from the long-standing colonial powers and emerging Japan, local factions among the royalists, civilians, and the military all

had their own ideas for the kingdom.[67] To Phibun, the military was the savior of national unity and the answer to modernization. It came naturally that he promoted nationalism by way of publicly exalting the image of military men to both justify his authority and undermine his political rivals.

By Phibun's reckoning, culture was the most effective tool to advance Siam into the ranks of the modern nations.[68] He believed that the survival and integrity of a country were tied closely to its culture. It was not until the national culture was soundly chartered that the dream of being a "great nation" in the "world community" could be fulfilled.[69] Therefore, Phibun initiated perhaps the "most comprehensive socio-cultural reforms by a post-1932 Thai leader" in order to remold the physiognomy of the kingdom, and more substantially, the mentality of the Thai people.[70]

Between 1939 and 1942, a total of twelve "State Conventions" (*Rattha Niyom*) were decreed to the public, prescribing the parameters of Phibun's ideal citizenry.[71] Correspondingly, Thais were to learn the national anthem, salute the flag, and use the official language. They were to support domestic products and engage in current affairs. In addition, they were required to maintain a modern lifestyle in terms of hygiene, diet, etiquette and fashion. In 1942, the National Assembly passed the National Culture Act, and the National Council of Culture—headed by Luang Wichit—was set up to supervise the ambitious socio-cultural reforms.[72] With the promise of a modernized nation, Phibun offered his people the prospect of order and development, although to some, the price for that was far too high to pay. Ironically, some of his reforms were so successful that Thais nowadays have regarded those traits as traditions, including the greeting phase "*Sawasdee*", without knowing that they are supposed to be modern and their origins cannot be traced back beyond the 1940s.[73]

- **Public Monuments and Nationalism in Thailand**

Besides enforcing the modern decorum, Phibun opined that a new national identity needed to be imbued in the masses in order to unify a modern Thailand. For the new political elite in the early constitutional regime, overthrowing the absolute monarchy was a rather smooth operation. Replacing the semi-feudalistic values and

time-honored culture that the Chakri Dynasty had come to represent was a far more difficult task. Likewise, consolidating the government's legitimacy in the society was no easy endeavor. Phibun certainly recognized the problem. Following the ideas of contemporary authoritarian leaders in Europe, he determined to "change the essential public structure of Bangkok" by introducing "a new sense of politics and nationalism".[74] The erection of public monuments became a promulgation of not only the government's achievements but also its ideology of patriotism, cultural homogeneity, and national pride.[75]

Since Phibun aspired to the life of military heroes, it came as no surprise that he found the "heroic realism" or "*Fascismo*" art style fascinating and functional to his cultural agenda. Nationalistic art appealed to some audiences in Europe who saw avant-garde movements, such as Futurism, failing to both console the historical bruises caused by the First World War and provide emotional solutions to the economic depression. In Italy, the beginning of the twentieth century marked a renaissance of Neo-Classicism with a new nationalistic quality.[76] The perfect hero, resurrected from the Golden Age of the Roman Empire complete with muscular physique and superhuman spirit, once again became popular in art. Only this time the modern heroes were saluting elatedly as they marched to war or dying melodramatically as they sacrificed for their nation. The sensational art trend was doubtlessly fueled by politics under Mussolini and the Italian Fascist regime.[77] Commissioned by the government, numerous war memorials together with soldier-hero statues were erected in public spaces, hoping to not only arouse the citizen's support for the state but also "boost the morale and patriotism of the Italians".[78] As the leading artist in Thailand was Bhirasri who was originally a famed monumental sculptor of Italy, the artistic affiliation between the two nations was firmly sealed.

Under the direction of Bhirasri, official artists keenly pursued the theme of nationhood and the style of "heroic realism" during the height of nationalism in Thailand. The gallant spirit of the warrior and intense devotion to the nation were celebrated in impressive monumental works all over the country, such as the Monument of a Thai Hero designed by Bhirasri and cast by Sanan at the Vajiravudh Army Base in Nakhon Si Thammarat. In both of the Phibun governments, Bhirasri was involved in almost all of the important monuments and statues in the country.

This chapter focuses on two major works participated by him and his students in Bangkok during the first Phibun regime—the Victory Monument (1940-41) and the Democracy Monument (1939-40)—as reflections of the artistic achievements of the School of Fine Arts as well as nationalistic visions of the Phibun premiership.

The Victory Monument

As the tension among the world powers mounted in the 1930s, a massive war was unavoidable. Still enraged at the French for the Crisis of 1893 in which the French blockaded Bangkok and forced King Chulalongkorn into giving up control of Laos and Cambodia, the Thais were waiting for a chance to avenge the wrongful past. The military success of Japan in China since 1937 and the fall of France to the Nazis in June 1940 made this dream possible.[79] In November 1940, conflict intensified on the long-troubled Thai-Indochina border. On December 15, 1940, French planes bombed several border towns in the northeastern province of Nakon Phanom, and the Thai army retaliated.[80] In spite of the heated passions in Hanoi and Bangkok, the fighting was brief. In May 1941, the mediator Japan stepped in and forced an agreement "that satisfied neither the Thais nor the French but which neither side could reject."[81] As a result, both countries presumed to be the "winner". For Thailand, some of the "lost" territories were returned, including the province of Siamreap in Cambodia, which was renamed "Phibun Songkram" in the Field Marshal's honor. Although a minor footnote to the tumultuous events of the time, the so-called victory looked rather glorious for Phibun himself.

Not only to memorialize the fifty-nine Thais who sacrificed their lives during the incident but also to bask in its "triumph" over the traditional oppressor France, the government decided to build the Victory Monument in Bangkok even before the final treaty was signed.[82] Phibun commissioned this project to M.L. Pum Malakul who would build an obelisk-like stone memorial.[83] Furthermore, Bhirasri and his assistants were to cast five twice-life-size bronze figures at its base, displaying activities of soldier, sailor, airman, policeman, and civilian.[84] The military statues, indeed, were impressive. Charged with heroic realism, they were portrayed with robust physiques and chivalrous mores, toiling in various stances, be it replenishing a cannon to attack the foe or upholding a rifle to defend the people. Since the war with France, patriotic spirits had dramatically heightened in the

kingdom. Even the old guard and social critics temporarily forgot their political differences in the face of a common enemy. The frenzy reached its vertex on April 27, 1941. Phibun proudly presided over the celebration of Thailand's victory, reviewing thousands of newly-returned troops before the new monument. The excitement was also carried throughout the country as the pleased leader sent his "warriors to parade in all the major urban centers".[85]

The purpose of the Victory Monument was to evoke nationalist feeling and enhance the government's esteem. It popularized the vitality of strong military men as the future of the nation. Many social and educational organizations initiated by the state at the time, such as the *Yuvachon* (Militaristic Youth Movement), further enkindled the warrior spirit promoted by the militaristic monument.[86] Not merely exemplified by the "victory" of the Siam-French conflict but also inspired by the Japanese warrior-code *Bushido*, military gallantry became the ultimate national spirit of the time. The highlight of propagating the nationalistic audacity came in 1944 with the Fourteen *Wiratham* or "Code of National Bravery".[87] Thailand was described as "a nation of capable warriors". The Thais were "harsh to their enemies" and would deliberately "follow their leader". Notably, Phibun also pledged to liberate his people from other forms of foreign exploitation. His target, in this regard, was the immigrant Chinese community that had long dominated the Thai economy. Finally, the monument should also be seen in the light of Phibun's effort in modernization. The opening of this monument complemented the new look and demeanor of an urban Bangkok, as Rajadamnern Avenue had just been renovated and the Democracy Monument built.[88]

While some do not regard the battle as a victory, the monument itself has not been widely considered a triumph either. Connoting a sword and masculinity, the obelisk-style had long been a classic choice for memorials since the golden age of Egypt. Its simplicity and symbolism continued to capture the imagination of modern states. It was understandable that the Victory Monument was conceived as an obelisk. Meanwhile, sculptures of courageous heroes were popular nationalistic art during the war. The chemistry of mixing the two, nevertheless, did not seem to work well in this case. To some critics, the bronze figures on the pedestal looked out of proportion to the vertical monument.[89] The hero sculptures became a

disruption rather than a compliment. As a result, the Victory Monument did not succeed artistically in blending abstract form with realism, and thus, ended up as "a half-hearted attempt to be modern".[90] After the monument was completed, Bhirasri always referred to it as "The Victory of Embarrassment," confirming the limited control that artists had when it came to public arts at the time.[91] Still Bhirasri's career kept soaring after this project. Highly approved by the elite, he and his assistants were then engaged in a string of state-sponsored commissions. As they rose to the fame of official artists, the School of Fine Arts also developed into the national center of institutionalized arts.

The Democracy Monument

Of all the public monuments in Thailand, the Democracy Monument may not have been the best received, but it definitely is the most important in the course of modern Thai history. In 1939 Phibun commissioned a monument to be built on Rajadamnern Avenue. It was to commemorate the National Day (June 24) of the 1932 *coup d'état* that not only overthrew the absolute monarchy but also inaugurated democracy to Thailand. Phibun, moreover, envisaged this project as the cornerstone of a westernized Bangkok, making Rajadamnern Avenue the *Champs Elysees* and the Democracy Monument the *Arc de Triomphe* in Paris.[92] The propitious assignment was awarded to architect Mew Aphaiwong, whose brother Khuang was a leading member of the new regime who later became prime minister three times.[93] Bhirasri, at the time, was appointed to design relief sculptures that would present the events leading up to the constitutional government.[94]

Situated in the middle of Rajadamnern Avenue, the Democracy Monument surely makes an impression. Different from other statues or memorials, the theme of the monument delineates the concept of democracy instead of a historic hero or a war epic. Accordingly, the abstract notion is symbolized in an abstract symmetrical structure. The bronze-cast replica of the constitution, the essence of Thai democracy, is presented on top of two golden offering bowls above a round turret. Enclosing the turret are four angular concrete wings, which signify the four foundations of Thailand—the King, Nation, and Religion, together with a new element, the Constitution.[95] In addition, the four wings also stand for the four branches of the armed forces—Army, Navy, Air force, and Police—that played an

important role in the 1932 event.[96] The bases of the four wings include two sets of friezes with four different designs, illustrating the accomplishments of the revolution and the ideals of democracy.

Being the showpiece for the new regime, the Democracy monument itself was constructed with auspicious details.[97] Both the height of the wings and the radius of the monument are twenty-four meters, indicating the date of the coup, June 24. The three-meter height of the turret that holds the Constitution stands for the month June, the third month of the traditional calendar. The seventy-five small cannons buried around the outer ring of the monument's base represent the year 1932, 2475 in the Buddhist Era. Last but not least, there are six swords guarding the six gates of the turret, referring to the six policies of the People's party: Independence, Internal Peace, Equality, Freedom, Economy, and Education.

Stamped with nationalistic notions and heroic realism, the relief panels achieved more than just narrating the events related to the establishment of the constitution. They were also meant to invent a modern myth for the new government, a democratic utopia, in order to replace the old feudalistic one. The four chosen designs, featuring a total of forty-one figures in various ages, classes and postures, reveal four ideal scenes of Thai democracy: "the Promoters Discussing Their Plans, the Soldiers Fighting for Democracy, the Personification of the People, and the Personification of Balance and Good Life".[98]

Visualized in the relief sculptures, the new nation is of equality, ethics, and energy. The protagonists are neither kings nor divinities but ordinary people. Of course, it is still a man's world, namely, military men. There are only two women altogether, and both are shown as domestic care-givers. One of them is a mother nursing an infant in a village setting; the other serves as a teacher instructing pupils in a classroom. Likewise, the importance of religion is not accented, for there is merely one monk present. The monarchy is absent in all scenes. A remote hint to the crown is the allegorical figure of "Balance" as a traditional deity, sitting in a lotus position on the throne while holding a small set of scales on one hand and a sword on the other.

All the attention belongs to the military. With half of the total figures and in more exciting roles, the armed men are standing upright as the guardians of the people, discussing plans as the founders of the constitution, or marching forward with tanks as the defenders of the country. Even the commoners, depicted as muscular athlete, blacksmith, and farmer, take on the warrior qualities of strength and endurance. In all four relief friezes, the flow of the story moves from left to right, and the focal point rests on the figures in the middle. Three of the center images are the civilian or military officers except the allegorical figure of "Balance" in one.[99] Delighted with Bhirasri and his students' works on the monument, Phibun believed that the School of Fine Arts should be upgraded to the status of a Fine Arts University (Silpakorn University), which he finally did on October 5, 1943.[100]

The Democracy Monument is a perfect illustration of how Phibun used politicized art "to promote mass nationalism, not just elite nationalism" in the early stage of Thai nationhood.[101] The monument marked the beginning of Phibun's nation-building programs, as he defined and dignified the revolutionary ideas to the public. Unveiled with the decree of the Twelve *Rattha Niyom* (1939-42), the monument served as the ocular embodiment of the spirits of the edicts. Inevitably, the state-built monument upheld typical "institutional art" that aroused similar "militaristic sentiment" in European authoritarian regimes.[102] Even though the portraits of the Promoters in the coup were not included, the praise of their leadership was omnipresent. Further, the monument reflected the elitist vision of strong military men as the protector of the Thai nation in an era of clear and present danger.[103] Phibun himself acclaimed the Democracy Monument as "the great symbol of the nation" and believed that "most visitors agree that [it] is one of the most attractive monuments they have seen in the world".[104]

There is no doubt that the Democracy Monument is propaganda of nationalism. Nevertheless, there were not many people who could appreciate the abstract structure at the time. "Democracy" had not yet impacted or improved the lives of the majority. Only a small group of people understood the concept of democracy. Even a smaller number of them directly benefited from it. There is no inscription of the revolutionary event or the idea that the monument represents. By just looking at the Democracy Monument, it is difficult, if not impossible, for the

viewers to realize the consequential measurements of the structure or count the exact amount of the decorations. All those symbolic numbers and heroic deeds on the monuments, as of the event of 1932 itself, obviously meant much more to the elite than the people.[105]

The abstract style of the monument is also open for different interpretation. While some may see the design as a minimalist lotus flower, others perceive the four inward-curving wings as the backbone of an invisible dome of a *chedi*, which enclosed the most sacred scriptures—the constitution—in the dual offering bowls. Certain friezes of relief, furthermore, were perceived differently from what was intended. For instance, the panel of the "Soldiers Fighting for Democracy" with a "congested scene of soldiers rushing with rifles toward 'the bowl of the constitution', was seen as a resurgence of pro-royalist soldiers against the new regime".[106] While Phibun urged his citizens to share the glory of the constitution, many of them saw no point for revelry because they were still devastated by the abdication of King Prajadhipok. Conversely, the building of the monument raised public resentment rather than joy. Property owners along Rajadamnern were ordered to vacate their premises within sixty days to make way for the monument.[107] The widening of the avenue and the construction itself led to the cutting down of numerous trees, causing unbearable heat and discomfort to residents and passers-by at the time.[108]

However, the Democracy Monument achieved far more than Phibun ever anticipated. It was the first attempt by the Thai political leaders to promote a national identity, reuniting the various races and classes of the people living in the boundaries of Thailand under a civic theme of "democracy" instead of the mythical framework of religion or monarchy. The monument expressed the conviction in progress, revolution, and democracy.[109] With its missive and art style, the structure was a landmark of the future, the symbol of a greater and better Thai nation. It illustrated the "beauty and order" as well as the "uniformity and morality" that Phibun sought to achieve.[110] In addition, it was built by neither royal nor religious institutions but by the "constitutional" government, although there were valid doubts about how accurately the government represented the people. The elitist and limited scope of democracy in Thailand of the 1930s may seem lame today. Yet it

would be unfair to view history from a contemporary perspective. The idea of democracy or dictatorship meant something different to the people then from now. Even today the definition of democracy is anything but absolute.[111] Despite all odds, the spirit of democracy did attempt to transcend the limitations of the time and take root in the soil of Thailand. The subsequent transformation of the Democracy Monument and its role in modern Thai history will be discussed in the next section.

The Legacy of Phibun's Public Monuments and Nationalism

Whereas the bandwagon of nationalism served the Phibun regime as a crucial element of cultural engineering and nation building, the erection of public arts advanced the cause. There were numerous monuments set up nationwide during his two governments. During the World War II period, Bhirasri and the foundry of the Fine Arts Department worked at full capacity, receiving abundant commissions in Bangkok as well as in the provincial centers.[112] The most common subject matter was herculean patriots of noble ideals who selflessly advocated the mission of the state, be it in farming, industry or battle.[113] Notwithstanding, many felt monumental arts became "stereotypical and formulaic" as they were directed by the government and under the influence of only the one school of Bhirasri.[114] At times, other critics voiced that the monotonous qualities of the works did not comply with the nature of the sites; nor can they sparkle the imagination of the viewers.[115] For better or for worse, the state-commissions grounded solid conventions for art to "serve the national interest".[116] The trend of "consensus art", thereafter, prevailed in the Thai art world for the next half century, where mainstream art seldom challenged authority or portrayed sensitive political and social issues.[117]

Whatever the content and caliber of Phibun's leadership, the heroic monuments erected in his regime exemplified a remarkable step in shaping the Thai nationhood. Aside from the often self-serving motivations, the Victory Monument and the Democracy Monuments were built for the public. They were equally accessible to every member of society in spite of ethnic background, economic status, political party, or social class.[118] Hence, monuments became the most effective vehicle to promulgate the Phibun regime's new vision of the nation. They were featured in many of the publications and advertisements of the time and widely regarded as the symbols of Thai modernity and nationality.[119] Reinforced by

Luang Wichit's cultural songs, plays, dances, and novels, nationalism definitely exalted a new summit in Thailand.

On the other hand, the nationalistic monuments promoted the elitist idea of a Thailand in which the military was the builder as well as protector of the country. Depicted with vigor and verve, the military heroes were immortalized as modern icons of reverence, a prestige once accorded to only kings and religious figures. In the unrest of wartime, Phibun represented the kind of "strong and principled leader to whom the Thai elite had historically turned to arbitrate differences" and the sort of "shared focus the Thai people had come to lack since the decline of the monarchy".[120] He "had played the role of king as had no man in living memory, and as such no man could even hope to replace him".[121] The Field Marshal envisioned military leadership as the best model for his nation. His view was actually shared by many of the upper class and capitalist bourgeoisie, as they all looked to the army for order at the time of uncertainty.[122] Although Phibun briefly stepped off the center stage in 1944, the military remained a major actor in Thai politics. In less than three and a half years, on April 8, 1948, Phibun was once again invited to head the government, and he stayed as the premier for nearly a decade longer.

However brave the warrior heroes are or look, they are now past their time. Many of the Fascist monuments in Europe as well as the Communist leaders' statues in Russia have been removed together with the powers that erected them. The monuments established by the Phibun regimes have had better luck. They still survive. Nonetheless, they seem lost and displaced nowadays. During the Indochina war and especially after the Cold War, warfare seemed loathsome and unnecessary. The warrior monuments and the ideology behind them, thus, became out-dated and even offensive. Sitting at busy traffic intersections, many monuments are overshadowed by the more colorful commercial surroundings or elevated mass transit trains. A lot of them are indeed quite difficult to access.

After the coup of Sarit in September 1957, Phibun was forced into exile and could not return to Thailand in his lifetime. Nithi Eaesriwong maintains that "cultural heroes are essentially the personifications of ideals. They will be honored as long as their actions are still perceived as beneficial. Once they stop being

relevant, they will fall off the stage."[123] While history is written by the victor, the vision of Phibun, together with the monuments that embodied it, have been replaced and gradually forgotten. Whereas the Democracy Monument was considered unworthy of conservation by the government in 1979,[124] the Victory Monument can at best incite a vague memory to most people today, if anything at all.

Since public monuments are made for the people, the people can reinterpret the memory or the myth of the monuments to come to terms with the contemporary needs of the people. Some of the monuments, accordingly, have evolved to assume new and refreshed roles in Thai society. Living up to its name, the Democracy Monument has become a national symbol for Thai democratic movements. For more than sixty years, it has seen the rise and fall of military dictatorships. It has witnessed the tears and blood of the people as they struggle towards a better tomorrow.

Regardless of its nationalistic origin and Fascist art style, the monument has grown in prominence over time. Although the original story behind the monument has withered from the new generation's memory, the essence of "democracy" has not. Democracy continues to be esteemed by wide segments of society, from the urban intelligentsia to rural villagers. Because of its name, the Democracy Monument has played an integral role in contemporary political emancipation, namely the two student movements of the mid-1970s and again during the 1992 uprising. In a positive light, its abstract form and lack of inscriptions allow the creation of a new democratic myth for a new social class. The revival of the monument, furthermore, also owes to its location, at the heart of the capital's political and bureaucratic center where public rallies take place. Thongchai Winichakul asserts that the "tasteless, huge and ugly stack of cement in the middle of the road is now restored to life through the most democratic means—the people's demonstration".[125] The monument has transformed from a state mouthpiece to the people's stage of genuine democracy.[126] Due to its "political connotations", the military and even the monarchy seem to have distanced themselves from the monument over the years.[127] In order to tone down its tragic past, the current governments have all been trying to beautify the monument, adorning it with pots of flower and webs of light.

As long as the Thai masses keep seeking to find their true voices, the Democracy Monument will continue to serve as their forum. Observances of previous uprisings and various political protests often happen at the monument. During the national elections, the Democracy Monument has always been featured in the press and campaigns as the icon for “democracy”. In many ways, memories are regained, and the myth is renewed. The life of the monument is enriched and enlivened.

Notes

[1] H.J. De Blij, *Human Geography: Culture, Society, and Space* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), p.474.

[2]* Field Marshal "Plaek" Phibun Songkram was born on July 14, 1897, the second son of an orchard owner in Central Thailand. He joined the Bangkok Infantry Cadet School in 1909 when he was 12 year-old and graduated in 1915. His first assignment was in the 7th Artillery Corps in Pitsanulok where he met his wife Laiad. In 1921, he entered the Military Staff College. Finished at the top of the class two years later, Phibun won a scholarship to further his studies in artillery in France. In 1924, Phibun left for France and first studied at Poitiers and later Fontainebeau Academy. It was there where he got involved with other young Promoters, such as Pridi Banomyong, who became the founding members of the 1932 *coup d'état*. On returning to Thailand in 1927, he was given the title of Luang Phibun Songkram. After the 1932 coup, Phibun's political career continued to soar. He was well known for his crushing of the Boworadet Rebellion of October 11-26, 1933 and was appointed as the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Minister of Defense by 1934. Moreover, he was also named the Rector of the Chulalongkorn University in 1936. With Phraya Phahon relinquished his premiership at the end of 1938, Phibun was backed by the military and selected by the National Assembly as the successor. On December 26, 1938, he became the third Prime Minister of Siam. The details of Phibun's life can be found in Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thailand's Durable Premier: Phibun through Three Decades 1932-1957* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995), and B.J. Terwiel, *Field Marshal Plaek Phibun Songkhram* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1980).

[3] See David K Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1984), pp.252-60; also see Marc Askew and William S. Logan, eds., *Cultural Identity and Urban Change in Southeast Asia: Interpretative Essays* (Victoria: Deakin University Press, 1994), pp.85-116.

[4]* Some critics describe Phibun's first government as "ruthless and one of extreme nationalism", see Donald F. Cooper, *Thailand: Dictatorship or Democracy* (Montreux: Minerva Press, 1995). Yet others may take a different view. In Sirin Phathanothai's recount of Phibun, he was "a perfect military commander" as well as a "lively" gentleman of "refinement and neatness", see Sirin Phathanothai, *The Dragon's Pearl* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p.19. "Since a great number of [Phibun] contemporaries regard [him] as a political opponent, much that has been written by them tends to highlight the negative aspects of his character and his administration. A similar unfavorable treatment has been given to the Field Marshal by the majority of scholars, Thai and foreign… [But for] some of those who had lived through the Phibun years, most agreed that on the whole Phibun was doing what was right for the country… [including] siding with Japan during the Pacific War. In private, some of his political opponents, Khuang, for example, admitted that Phibun was the best man for the job at the time." Kobkua, *Durable Premier,* Preface, vii-viii. Also see Joseph J. Wright, *The Balancing Act: A History of Modern Thailand* (Bangkok: Asia Books, 1991), pp.94-104.

[5] Walter F Vella, *Chaiyo! King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1978), p.93.

[6] Stephen Lyon Wakeman Greene, *Absolute Dreams: Thai Government Under Rama VI, 1910-1925* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1999), p.102.

[7] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.230.

[8] Ibid.

[9]* From a coronation speech given by King Vajiravudh on December 3, 1911, cited in *Bangkok Times* (December 5, 1911). The King stated:

> The aim of this national institution is to instill in the minds of the people of our own race love and loyalty towards the High Authority that controls and maintains with justice and equity, the political independence of the nation, devotion to Fatherland, Nation, and our Holy Religion, and not less of all, the preservation of national unity and cultivation of mutual friendship. These qualities form the strongest foundation on which our national existence will rest and not belie its name as the Nation of the Free. Thus shall we deserve well of our ancestors who gave their life's blood in firmly planting the home of our ancient race in this land of Siam.

By early 1912, the total membership of the Wild Tiger Corps reached about four thousand men and was "complemented by a junior Boy Scout movement that endured much longer". See Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.225.

[10] Vella, *Chaiyo*, p.28.

[11]* Ibid., pp.28-9. "The King cast his arguments for the corps in historic terms. The very name Wild Tigers, he said, was an old one, used [in King Naresuan's times] for men who kept watch on the frontiers of the country, observing enemy movements, sending back reports to aid the Siamese army. The Wild Tigers of former days had qualities of ruggedness, loyalty, and fearlessness combined with expert knowledge of nature and warfare".

[12] Ibid., p.95.

[13] Ibid., p.140.

[14] Ibid., p.95.

[15] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.230.

[16]* In another speech to the Wild Tigers on December 5, 1914, King Vajiravudh declared it was the time for the Siamese to prepare themselves as the European powers were at war.

> Foreigners already have their eyes on our rich country. Even if they do not grab our land but only send off many of their people to live here, to eat our food, to suck our blood, what do we do? Let them come and then prepare ourselves? But then there would be no time to prepare! We must be prepared before they come. We must be prepared before anyone makes plans to come. We've talked about it, so now let's truly prepare. We must prepare now while they are fighting and have no time to think of us. We must be prepared! The time is now.

In *Phraboromrachowat Sua Pa* [Wild Tiger Speeches] (Bangkok: 1920), pp.31-2. Also see Vella, *Chaiyo*, p.93.

[17] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.230.

[18]* The negotiation was directed under the Foreign Minister Prince Devawongs until his death in 1923 and then under his son, Prince Devawongs Varodaya, who succeeded him. The effort was strongly supported by two Americans who served as advisors to the Foreign Ministry, Eldon James and Francis B. Sayre (President Woodrow Wilson's son-in-law). "The United States led the way in yielding to Siam's case with a new

treaty at the end of 1920. France finally agreed, in February 1925, followed by the Great Britain in July; within the next year all the other treaty powers had followed suit". Ibid., p.231.

[19]* "On November 19, 1918, King Vajiravudh issued a Proclamation of Victory. In this proclamation he set aside December 2, the anniversary of his coronation, as a day of national thanksgiving for the victory". Vella, *Chaiyo*, p.118.

[20] Ibid., p.120.

[21] Ibid., p.121.

[22] See *Bangkok Times* (July 21, 1921).

[23]* "*Chedi*" is the Thai term for the Indian stupa, a dome-shaped monuments that held the relics of the Lord Buddha. For a discussion of Thai *chedi*, see K.I. Matics, *Introduction to the Thai Temple* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1992), pp.36-48.

[24]* Vella, *Chaiyo*, p.223. During the Sixth Reign, the Supreme Patriarch, Prince Vajiranana, was a strong supporter of King Vajiravudh's nationalistic policy. The prince was Rama VI's uncle, King Chulalongkorn's brother, as well as the preceptor of King Vajiravudh when he was in the monkhood. The Supreme Patriarch's support for the King was clearly stated in many of his sermons, such *as The Buddhist Attitude towards National Defense and Administration* (Bangkok, 1916) and *Right is Right* (Bangkok, 1918).

[25] In *Phraboromrachowat Sua Pa*, p.111.

[26] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.228.

[27] Ibid., p.229.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., pp.229-230.

[33] See *Bangkok Times* (November 18, 1932).

[34] Benjamin A. Batson, *The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.244.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., p.245. Also see *Bangkok Times* (February 21 and 22, 1933).

[37]* For a precise outline of Pridi's economic plan see Pridi Banomyong, *Pridi by Pridi: Selected Writings on Life, Politics, and Economy*, Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, trans., (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2000), pp.83-123.

[38] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.247.

[39] *Bangkok Times* (January 12, 1934).

[40] *Bangkok Times* (April 3, 1933).

[41] Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p.245.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.248.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p.246.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48]* "The rebels claimed, in Prince Sithiporn's words, to be 'merely doing our duty to Country and King.' And they officially cited the return of Pridi and the danger which they served his doctrines posed to Siam." Ibid.

[49]* Ibid. From an account by F.K. Excell, an American diplomat at the time, he summarized the rationale behind the King Rama VII's escape to Songkla during the rebellion.

> As in the case of the original revolution, the King himself was at Hua Hin at the time and left immediately by sea for Singora [Songkla]. It might have been better had he stayed where he was and made public announcement. In my opinion, whichever side he had come on would have finished on top. Whatever else he did would be open to misinterpretation. Some said he had gone further south to raise support for Bovoradej [Bowaradat]. Others said that he had fled south for fear of being taken into custody by the revolutionary [government] party and held as a hostage against Bavoradej. Some said he was out of sympathy with the rebellion and that he wished to disassociate himself from it entirely. The fact was probably that he would have gone to at lengths to avoid the shedding of Siamese blood but he did not know which way to go.

See F.K. Excell, *Siamese Tapestry* (London: Robert Hall, 1963), p.181.

[50] *Potter to the Secretary of State*, United States National Archives (Washington), Dispatches from Siam, S-892.00/115 (November 7, 1933).

[51]* A final comment of the rebellion was provided by Prince Davawongs, writing to Francis Sayre from Europe early in 1934. Prince Davawongs attributed the failure of the revolt to its leadership:

> The rising would have been successfully if Prince Bovoradej [Bowaradet] (whom I think you know) hadn't taken part as leader. He is not popular and is credited with the idea of establishing a military dictatorship. There were many factions and groups of men besides his own who hated the present government and were ready to help to overthrow the government, but as soon as it was learnt that Prince Bovoradej was leading the troops from Korat, many of them, especially those of Bangkok, abstained. The government was able, therefore, to defeat Prince Bovoradej and his friends who have taken refuge in French Indochina. Prince

Bovoradej has really done a lot of harm to the cause of the Princes. He shouldn't have taken part, but should have let his friends do it in co-operation with other groups.

In Davawongs to Sayre, February 23 1934. "Siam" files, *Papers of Francis B. Sayre*, Library of Congress (Washington).

[52] Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p.246.

[53] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.248.

[54]* There were also special courts set up for the trials of those who were accused of the Bowaradet revolt. Several of the convicts received death penalty, but the death sentences were later replaced by life imprisonment. See *Bangkok Times* (November 23, 1933) and (January 12, 1934).

[55] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.248.

[56] Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p.246; also see Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.248.

[57] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.252.

[58] See ML. Thawisan Ladawan , "The Monarchy", in *Thailand: King Bhumibol Adulyadej—The Golden Jubilee 1946-1996* (Bangkok: Asia Books, 1996), p.91.

[59]* Within a month of his premiership, Phibun "quelled all possible opposition by arresting some forty members of the royal family, old bureaucratic nobles, elected members of the Assembly, and army rivals, including Phraya Songsuradet… After trials of dubious legality, eighteen were executed—perhaps the first clearly political executions in Siam in more than a century." Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.253. More explicit details of the Phibun's political movement in this period can be found in Benjamin A. Batson, "The Fall of the Phibun Government, 1944", in *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol.62, (July 1974); Charnvit Kasetsiri, "The First Phibun Government and Its Involvement in World War II", *Journal of the Siam Society*, 62: July 1974.

[60]* In 1939, Phibun officially discarded "Siam" as the English translation of the country's name. He claimed that *Muang Thai,* the indigenous name of the kingdom that literally meant the domain of Thai, should be used in the context of foreign affairs. In the First State Convention (or Cultural Mandate), he stated: "Whereas the name of the country has been called in two manners: 'Thai' and 'Siam', the people prefer to call it 'Thai' thus the government considers as the State Preference that the appellation should be in accord with the exact name of the race and the preference of the people." Wright, *Balancing Act*, p.99; also see Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.253.

[61] Charnvit Kasetsiri, "From Siam to Thailand", *The Nation* (February 14, 2000).

[62]* According to the official doctrine, the Field Marshal's nation-building program consisted of four main aspects "the reform and reconstruction of the socio-cultural aspect, the reform and re-education of the people, the accelerated physical reconstruction of the country, and the strengthening and modernization of the forces." Kobkua, *Durable Premier*, p.103. In terms of economic reform, "under the slogan of 'A Thai economy for the Thai people' [from 1938], the Phibun government attempted to take the urban economy [out of the Chinese hands] and under state management… The government set out to control the rice trade… public utilities…urban labor market for Thai… Phibun argued that government control was necessary to achieve the economic progress required for national strength

[because] the alien Chinese business exploited the 'Thai' people and exported the profits." Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thailand: Economy and Politics*, 2nd ed. (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.259; Also see Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.254.

[63] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.252

[64]* Luang Wichit Wathakan was one of the most important figures in Phibun's nationalist program during the war period. Born into a family of Chinese provincial traders, he finished temple school from Wat Mahathat and joined the expanding government as a junior clerk at the age of twenty. Wichit soon rose through the foreign affairs bureaucracy. He held many high official positions over the next four decades and became the key figure in Phibun regime's nationalism. Appointed as the Director-General of the Department of Fine Arts (1935-1942), he was since then inseparable from most of the national and cultural campaigns in modern Thailand. Later important posts of him included Foreign Minister and Ambassador to Japan (during World War II), Minister of Finance (1951), Minister of Economic Affairs (1951-2), Ambassador to India (1952-3), Ambassador to Switzerland, Austria, and Yugoslavia (1953-7). He was a special advisor to Prime Minister Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat (1958-62) until his death in 1962. Luang Wichit's major works can be found in *Wichitsan* [Selected Works of Luang Wichit Wathakan], 5 vols. (Bangkok: Monkol Printing, 1965-1966). Regarding his historical plays, see Pra-onrat Buranamat, *Luang wichitwathakan kap lakhon prawattisat* [Luang Wichit Wathakan and historical plays] (Bangkok: Thammasat University Press, 1985). A detailed account of his earlier works and contributions can be found in Scot Barme, *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity* (Singapore: Institute of South East Asian Studies, 1993).

[65] See Terwiel, *Field Marshal,* p.13; Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.253; Wright, *Balancing Act*, pp.96-104.

[66] Kobkua, *Durable Premier*, p.44.

[67]* As Charnvit points out political affiliation under the complex situation after the 1932 coup was not easy to pinpoint. Terms like "royalist" and "new elite" are only descriptions for convenience sack. For instance, a "royalist" might not necessarily prefer absolute monarchy, and within the "new elite" of civilian and military leaders, they could be friends as well as enemies. Even the Assembly itself was at times viewed as a threat to the government, for the representatives did not always agree with the elite and often urged the premier to resign. See Charnvit, "The First Phibun Government", pp.27-32.

[68]* Phibun stated in a cabinet meeting in 1941 that:
In an effort to build a nation with a firm and everlasting foundation the government is forced to reform and reconstruct the various aspects of society, especially its culture, which here signifies growth and beauty, orderliness, progress and uniformity and the morality of the nation… [Culture] is an important instrument for the acceleration of the nation-building process so that it achieves the targets set. No matter how beautiful and numerous our building and infrastructure facilities are, or what great wealth our country may boast, if the people remain poor in culture and exhibit ignorance about hygiene, health, clothing, and rational ways of thinking, our country could never claim to be civilized, neither could it survive as it possessed no firm foundation…
In "Phibun to the Cabinet and Senior Officials", October 16, 1941, (3) SR 0201.55/7. Also see Kobkua, *Durable Premier*, p.110.

[69] See "Phibun's Address to the Nation on the Occasion of National Day", June 24, 1942 in *Royal Gazette*, vol.59 (July 7, 1942), pp.1730-32.

[70] Kobkua, *Durable Premier*, p.103.

[71]* The Twelve State Conventions (*Ratha Niyom*) or translated as "Cultural Mandates" were:

1. The use of names for the country, people, and nationality
2. Preventing danger to the nation
3. Further use of the name of the Thai people
4. Saluting the national flag, the national anthem, and the royal anthem
5. Calling the Thai to consume domestic products
6. The tune and words of the national anthem
7. Persuading the Thai to build their nation
8. Changing the word Siam to Thailand in the royal anthem
9. The use of the Thai language and on the duty of good citizens
10. The dress of the Thai people
11. The daily activity of the Thai people
12. The treatment of children, the elders, and the handicapped

[72]* The Phibun government began cultural reform with the establishment of the "*Dharma-niyom* Committee" headed by Luang Wichit on June 8, 1939. It became the "*Rattha Niyom* Committee" on July 26, 1939. The main reason for decreeing the *Rattha Niyom* was that Thai attire worn in public was perceived to be unrefined and disorderly. The elite also thought the people lacked social manners, which would lead foreigners to ridicule and belittle Thailand as being uncivilized, and hence, not qualified to the same sovereign status as other developed nations. See "Chief Secretary to the Cabinet to Wichit Wathakan", June 8, 1939; also see Kobkua, *Durable Premier*, p.155. The new established National Council of Culture consisted of five bureaus: the Department of Culture for the Mind; the Department of Fine Arts; the Department of Culture for Literature; and the Department of Culture for Women's Affairs. See Kobkua, *Durable Premier*, p.112. Besides Phibun and Wichit, the main supporters in the regime for the cultural reform included Prince Wawaitthayakorn, Phraya Anuman Rajathon, Phra Thamnithet, Luang Wichien-phatthayakhom and Sang Phatthanothai. See Murashiman, *Political Thoughts*, p.69.

[73]* "One example is the 'traditional' greeting, *sawadee*, a sort of Southeast Asian aloha that can mean either hello or goodbye. This word was apparently contrived by the government in the 1940s... [One of the sources] notes that while *sawadee* is indisputably an authentic Thai word (though derived from a formal and archaic dialect), [but] it was before the *Sammai Sanghcat* never used as the everyday, universal greeting it then became. Prince Prem Purachatra, who penned a daily column for an English language daily during the 1940s, argued in print that it was hardly appropriate to use *sawadee* as the government suggested: 'Why not stick to the good old Siamese way of greeting, just a silent, unspoken *wai*? This is a very effective gesture… a convenient form of salutation which involves neither too intimate contact nor lot of meaningless words'." See Wright, *Balancing Act*, pp.103-4.

[74] Apinan Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand: Nineteen and Twentieth Centuries* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.36.

[75]* The public monuments during the Phibun period served as the apotheosis of "nationalism and cultural homogeneity". They represented "a feeling of national rather than local pride and, in particular, patriotism" in the country. Ibid. Also see Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp.252-60.

[76] Dawn Ades, Tim Benton, David Elliott and Iain Boyd Whyte, eds., *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators 1930-45* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1995), pp.121-128; also see Apinan, *Modern Art*, pp.34-5.

[77]* "In the 1920s, the Fascist National Institute of Culture and the Ministry of Popular Culture were formed to disseminate propaganda. Italian artists began to adopt a new classicism. A group of painters known as the Milanese 900 began to take an interest in the metaphysical painting of Giorgio de Chirico, while the Novecento movement sought to maintain a sense of continuity with the past. Rationalism and hero-worship became fashionable themes, and were supported by Mussolini's government." Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.34.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.255.

[80]* A detailed account of this conflict can be found in Wright, *Balancing Act*, pp.105-11; Charnvit, "The First Phibun Government", pp.48-51; Cooper, *Dictatorship*, pp.12-8.

[81]* Both the French and the Thai governments agreed to the settlement by May 9, 1941: "The thalweg of the Mekong River now served as the new border between the antagonists, giving the Cambodian provinces of Battambang, Sisipphon and Siemreap (except for the provincial capital and the nearby ruins of Angkor Wat) to the Thais. Thailand also gained a small corner of Laos previously under the French, but this represented only a fraction of Lao territories claimed by Bangkok. For Bangkok, she had to pay France six million Indochinese piastres as compensation for the ceded territories." Wright, *Balancing Act*, p.108.

[82] Ibid., pp.105-11.

[83] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.45.

[84]* The assistants of Bhirasri in the Victory Monument project were Cham Khaomeecheu, Sitthidet Sanghiran, Sawang Songmangmee, Pimarn Mulpramook, Anuchit Saengduan and Sanan Silakorn. Ibid.

[85] Wright, *Balancing Act*, p.110.

[86]* Phibun sought to make his own mark on the educational scene to counter Pridi's newly created University of Moral and Political Sciences (Thammasatt University) in 1934-5. As early as late 1934, Phibun inaugurated a display of tanks and other weaponry at one of the Bangkok's leading high schools. Pupils were invited to try their hand at rifle practice. Within a few months this turned out to be a pilot experiment for a youth movement called *Yuvachon*. See Judith A. Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand: A Story of Intrigue* (London: Hurst & Company, 1991), p.85.

[87]* The Fourteen *Wiratham*, "Code of National Bravery", in 1944 (SB 9.2.1/5) were:

1. The Thais love their nation more than their lives
2. The Thais are a nation of capable warriors
3. The Thais are good to their friends but harsh to their enemies
4. The Thais are honest and sincere
5. The Thais are earnest and grateful people
6. The Thais value their faith in Buddhism more than their lives
7. The Thais are a peace-loving nation

8. The Thais are diligent in industry, commerce, and agriculture
9. The Thais are a self-reliant nation
10. The Thais pass on their national heritage from generation to generation
11. The Thais aspire to a high standard of living
12. The Thais are a well-dressed nation
13. The Thais care for children, women, old people, and the weak
14. The Thais are considerate to one another and follow the leaders

[88] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.46.

[89] Rattakasikorn Saeng-arun, "Monument Made by the Thai", *Buildings, Trees, and Saeng-arun: An Architect's View* (Bangkok: Komolkeenthong, 1987), pp.31-48. Also see Apinan *Modern Art*, p.46.

[90] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.46.

[91] Pipat Pongrapeeporn, "Professor Silpa Bhirasri, Art and Silpakorn University", in *Bulletin of the Art Gallery of Silpakorn University*, (September 1, 1984), p.16-7. Also see Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.46.

[92] Stowe, *Siam*, p.123; also see Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.36.

[93]* Khuang Aphaiwong was a three-time prime minister of Thailand. He held office in August 1944-August 1945, January 1946-March 1946, and November 1947-April 1948.

[94] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.47.

[95] Ibid., p.37.

[96] Ibid.

[97]* The construction details of the Democracy Monument are from the following sources: *A Survey of Thai Arts and Architectural Attractions: A Manual for Tourist Guides* (Bangkok: The Continuing Education Center, Chulalongkorn University, 1987), p.126; also see Apinan, *Modern Art*, pp.35-41.

[98] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.38.

[99] Ibid.

[100]* The relief panels exhibit the talents of Bhirasri and his assistants. They also show the "advanced training they had received at the School of Fine Arts in anatomy, composition, foreshortening, and proportion. Because the relief [panels] were created at the School of Fine Arts, live models were used in the studio to achieve accuracy and balance in their figures before clothes, uniforms, and ornaments were added." Ibid.

[101] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.252.

[102] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.47.

[103] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.250.

[104] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.47.

[105] Ibid., p.41.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Stowe, *Siam,* p.123.

[108] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.41.

[109]* The Phibun regime widely promulgated "the progress of the Six Principles of *khana rasadorn*, *manus phatiwat* (human revolution) and *wattana* (progress)". See Murashima, *Political Thoughts*, p.85.

[110] See "Phibun to the Cabinet and Senior Officials", October 16, 1941; also see Kobkua, *Durable Premier*, p.110.

[111]* "Democracy means many things to many people… Around 1932 it meant a constitutional regime… By 1947 and thereafter, military regimes made constitutions a joke, tearing and rewriting at will. For the demonstrators in 1973, it meant the end of the military rule. That was not enough when they turned radicalized and fought for people democracy. The ultra royalist in 1976, however, insisted on having a phrase, 'with the Monarch as the Head of the state', attached to the word 'democracy' every time it is uttered. Outside Thailand, finally, it means a multi-party system, elections, and so on." Thongchai Winichakul, "Thai Democracy in Public Memory: Monuments and their Narratives" (The 7th International Conference on Thai Studies, Amsterdam, July 4-8, 1999), pp2-3.

[112]* A series of government-sponsored commissions for monuments followed the unveiling of the Victory Monument. Many memorials and statues were set up in Bangkok and the provinces alike. In most productions, "Bhirarsi would model the head and let his assistants complete the torso and minor details." Apinan, *Modern Art*, pp.46-7.

[113] Aasen, *Architecture of Siam*, p.240.

[114] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.48.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Aasen, *Architecture of Siam*, p.240.

[117] Apinan, "Contemporary Thai Art," p.104.

[118] Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.40.

[119] Anake Nawigamune, *A Century of Thai Graphic Design* (Bangkok: River Books, 2000), pp.82-7.

[120] Wright, *Balancing Act*, pp.88-104.

[121] Ibid., p.113.

[122] Murashiman, *Political Thoughts*, pp.71-4.

[123] Sanitsuda Ekachai, "A Country Less Fit for Heroes to Live in", *Bangkok Post* (March 17, 2000). The article reports on a lecture by Nithi Eaesriwong in "Heroes in Thai Culture". Also see Apinan, "Contemporary Thai Art", p.110.

[124] See Malinee Khumsupha, "The Political Implications of the Democracy Monument in Thai Society", MA thesis, Thammasat University, 1999; also see *Bangkok Post* (June 24, 1999).

[125] A quote from Thongchai Winichakul in *Bangkok Post* (June 24, 1999). Also see Nithi Eaesriwong quoted in Thongchai, "Thai Democracy", p.3.

[126] Malinee cited in *Bangkok Post* (June 24, 1999).

[127]* Malinee argues that both the monarchy and military have distanced themselves from the Democracy Monument over the years because of the 1970s and 90s uprisings. King Rama IX celebrated his 25th coronation anniversary in 1971 by presiding over proceedings from the monument's platform, for the 50th anniversary celebrations in 1996, the podium was moved to another location nearby". Ibid.

CHAPTER V
VISION OF TRADITIONALISM

The creation of a national hero or heroine usually begins with the identification of a national enemy. Every protagonist needs a villain. Otherwise, the drama of grace and gallantry cannot be completed; the stamina of the hero cannot be fully contrasted. If Burma was the ultimate "enemy" of the Thai state, then the Thai leaders who had successfully triumphed over this neighboring foe would no doubt be the greatest heroes in Thai history. There have not been many such extraordinary examples, however. King Naresuan of Ayutthaya (r.1590-1605) and King Taksin of Thonburi (r.1767-1782) were undeniably the two most famous of all. Of course, the ascent of such indigenous heroes who defended national independence and defeated national enemies was closely related to the tidal waves of nationalism that swept away the old world order after the Second World War. The tension continued to surge in the Cold War period. In the newly-conceptualized region of "Southeast Asia",[1] this notion of nationalism had never been more urgent and powerful.

Imbued with the qualities of vitality, antiquity and industry, the image of mythical heroes captured the attention of Thai military leaders in the chaotic post war years. The monarchy suffered a sudden tragedy when the returned King Ananda was found mysteriously shot in bed at the palace on June 9, 1946.[2] The new King Rama IX, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, was then a young and unfamiliar figure in Thai politics.[3] On the other hand, Phibun's Fascist-inspired nationalism eventually met its downfall with the war. The previous monumental themes of splendid absolute monarchy and modern nationalism appeared to be sensitive or dated at the time. The rising Thai rulers, who had limited historical credentials for their legitimacy, desperately needed a new icon as the old ones faded. The search inevitably laid its grounds in time-honored legends.

Fabulous stories of royal warriors have long fascinated the Thai elite. Nonetheless, it was during the tenures of Sarit Thanarat (1959-1963)[4] and Thanom Kittikachorn (1963-1973)[5] that mythical heroes, particularly King Naresuan, enjoyed a lofty appropriation. Intensified by the public monuments that were

dedicated to them, the resurrection of these ancient forefathers was not simply a gesture for nostalgia or a quest for history. More significant was the use of these meritorious figures to serve contemporary politics. In an era of foreign intimidation, domestic disputes, and internal power struggles within the military, these traditional kings stood soundly as icons for the ruling cliques, and accordingly, became symbols of the Thai nation.

This chapter explores the vision of traditional heroes in public monuments from the 1950s to 1970s in two aspects. The first section begins with the restoration of Phibun after the war and his revised political standing. It is illustrated by the promotion of King Taksin and the monumental projects that accompanied it. The second segment concentrates on a study of the succeeding Sarit-Thanom military regimes and their utilization of the myth of King Naresuan. From a historical perspective, it traces the narrative of King Naresuan in Thai historiography, especially through the literary and historical works of Prince Damrong Rajanubhab and Luang Wichit Wathakan in the twentieth century. The next discussion examines how the warrior hero has been expressed in public monuments to accommodate the military leadership at the time, with the emphasis on the Dual Monuments of King Naresuan in Suphanburi and the subsequent monuments established in Pitsanalok and Ayutthaya. Finally, the significance of the monumental imagery of these mythical monarchs is reviewed.

The Restoration of Phibun and the Revival of King Taksin

The return of the military leadership in Thailand merely three years after the Second World War was amazing. Perhaps even more so was the comeback of Phibun whose wartime record seemed to be in opposition to the Allies. Although the blame of Thailand's siding with Japan diverted to Phibun personally, many saw his decision as not too much a wrong judgement but rather the only choice that the kingdom had in order to uphold its independence and "national self-respect".[6] While the new Seri Thai regime accepted no responsibility for the war, Phibun himself was also able to avoid any war criminal charges.[7] In fact, the complexity of the war history in Thailand has not thoroughly been revealed, and hence, allowing not merely the

restoration of Phibun but also the "myth" of the military as the national defender to retain powerful.

However passionately the Western powers, especially the United States, would have liked to see democracy succeed in Thailand, they were also convinced that military rule was "the best hope for both Thailand and their interests" in the country under the threat of Communism in the late 1940s and 50s.[8] Although Phibun resumed the premiership after the coup of 1948, the real power was no longer in his grip. The "Manhattan coup" of 1951 not only pressed a physical and political charge against Phibun but also signified the power change in the elite.[9] The limelight shifted to the Coup Group (*khana ratthaprahan*),[10] eminently Sarit Thanarat and Phao Siyanon. To the young and aggressive military leaders, the Field Marshal was "useful" but "expendable".[11] While Phao built up his power through the police force, Sarit gathered his strength within the army.[12] Being "the only principal national leader remaining of the 1932 Promoters", Phibun remarkably survived as Prime Minister for a decade by maneuvering among the two local star rivalries and his American patrons.[13]

As reality changed the position of Phibun, the seasoned Field Marshal correspondingly whittled down his former ideas of creating a modern nation. Although most of his ambitious edicts were immediately abandoned after the war, Phibun did not totally give up his belief in cultural and social reform. One of the first agendas after Phibun resumed office was the establishment of the Ministry of Culture. Headed by Phibun himself, the ministry "sent out cultural cadres to schools, organized radio [shows], circulated pamphlets and even had [out-reach] mobile units indoctrinating people on the finer points of Thai culture and social behavior".[14] As "anti-Communism and pro-Americanism" topped Phibun's public policies at the time, he attempted to promote such alien thoughts to the Thai masses with traditional flavors, such as through reviving folk arts and patronizing Buddhism.[15]

Diverging from his earlier fancy for Western style leadership, Phibun reinvented himself as a more compassionate figure and developed historical claims

for his authority. More than just a national leader (*phunam*) as he used to be, the Field Marshal sought after a more conventional expression of his regained yet delicate power.[16] He seemed to have grown out of the Fascist or Japanese model this time. Instead, Phibun harped on the age-old theme of filial piety, family values, and religion.[17] He endeavored to be a loving father-figure (*phokhun*) for the people. In return, they would revere, obey, and believe in their ruler.[18] The different style in leadership was surely "two sides of the same coin".[19] It was basically the identical militaristic premise disguised in "popular acclaimed sovereignty".[20] The "*phokhun*" concept can also be seen as Phibun's "personal crusade" in his political struggle to "outmaneuver the military junta" led by Sarit.[21] Ironically, it was Sarit who would later capitalize on this idea intensely. Under Phibun's guidelines, good citizenship meant that the juniors would respect their parents and elders, who ought to reciprocate by listening to and taking care of the children.

As the leader himself assumed the fatherly role of the nation, Phibun seemed to encourage "alternative sources of legitimacy" that "competed with the King",[22] who was still studying in Europe and had never lived in Bangkok until his return in 1951. The relationship between Phibun and the Chakri nobility, and to some extent the monarchy, had not been smooth since the beginning of the constitutional government.[23] His suppression of the Boworadet Rebellion of 1933 made him a rival of some of the princes and their supporters, and this appeared to have eclipsed Phibun's faith in the royal house.[24] Several assassination attempts allegedly launched by die-hard royalists further worsened the tension.[25] Phibun, thus, had both personal and political reasons to move against the traditional regal esteem, such as "prohibiting the home display of the pictures of the ex-King Prajadhipok and suing him for misuse of crown property".[26] There was no better way to undermine the royal institution than by challenging its legitimacy. In the quest for a potent non-Chakri icon, King Taksin of Thonburi sensibly came into Phibun's mind.

- **The Legend of King Taksin**

The heralding of ancient warriors for modern politics began long before Phibun and Sarit. During the Sixth Reign, King Vajiravudh's interest in Thai history brought three classical heroes to public attention: King Naresuan the Great of Ayutthaya,

King Taksin of Thonburi, and Phra Ruang of Sukhothai.[27] However, it was during the two decades after the Second World War that all these righteous kings finally received their monumental honors. While the Sarit-Thanom regime favored the might of King Naresuan, Phibun was fond of the myth of King Taksin.

King Taksin has been an ambiguous figure in Thai history. Ayutthaya chronicles complied in the early Rattanakosin period mentioned that he was a great warrior. Undoubtedly, King Taksin was an excellent military tactician and strategist. Being the son of a Chinese trader and a Thai lady,[28] Taksin's claim on the throne seemed most unlikely at the time. Through his charm and personal skills, this Sino-Thai merchant named Sin became the governor of Tak and was popularly referred to as Phraya "Tak-Sin".[29] On the edge of the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, he saw the hopelessness of defending the capital. Instead he made his way out to seek a new base for resistance. Certainly, there were many contenders struggling for power in the heartland of the old Thai states. Taksin soon established himself as a "power to be reckoned with", capturing eastern Chanthaburi in July 1767 and before long taking the small port of Thonburi in the west by October.[30] Within three years, he successfully regained the territory of the old Ayutthaya from the hands of the Burmese, securing Phimai, annexing Battambang and Siamreap (now in Cambodia), subduing Nakhon Si Thammarat, and conquering Pitsanulok, Fang, and finally Chiang Mai.[31] From December 1768, Taksin started to reign from Thonburi and was officially crowned as the head of the Thai kingdom that succeeded Ayutthaya.

The victory of Taksin was inseparable from not just his superb military leadership but also his personal charisma. In a time of hostilities, King Taksin was able to "convince others that he was a 'man of merit', one whose karma from previous existences and meritorious actions was so strong as to allow him to lead others".[32] Perhaps this asset of King Taksin was the attribute most admired by Field Marshal Phibun. Unfortunately, the holder of the Thonburi throne seemed to have better luck being a warrior than a monarch. The rule of King Taksin lasted a mere fifteen years. Much about his downfall is still controversial. Derived from French missionary reports and chronicles written in the Rattanakosin period, the popular version tells that King Taksin suffered from religious illusions or went insane late in

his reign. It is said that the King claimed himself as a Buddhist *sotapanna* who was on the road to enlightenment, and thus required the monks to recognize and worship him.[33]

In spite of the accuracy and intensity of King Taksin's delusion, there were definitely dissents both within the capital led by the Buddhist Sangha and across the various vassal states.[34] A revolt broke out in April 1782, and King Taksin was overthrown. Hastening back to Thonburi from an expedition to Cambodia, Chao Phraya Chakri was invited by the coup members to the throne as King Phra Phutthayotfa (Rama I) who began the Bangkok dynasty that continues to this day.[35] King Taksin, on the other hand, was believed to have met his end by a royal execution.[36] Although the monarch's final tragedy was obviously not what Phibun hoped to emulate, the military strength of the Thonburi king and his "unjust" death did provide the Field Marshal a sound platform to advance his political agenda.

- **The Monument of King Taksin in Thonburi**

Although Phibun foresaw modernity as the future for Thailand, he did not forget the important linkage between the past and present. In fact, Phibun's interest in reviving the myth of King Taksin went back to his first government. During the war, most nationalistic leaders drew much of their appeal from history and sometimes a reinterpreted version of history.[37] To Phibun, people's unconditional loyalty to the absolute warrior kings was an inviting concept with which his authority could be justified. Throughout Siamese history, the founder of a new dynasty had always been "a general who built a power base among the military and offered strong leadership to an elite disillusioned with a weak and divided existing order".[38] In the years of internal political struggle and global warfare, it seemed natural that the Field Marshal found King Taksin an inspiring hero. Hence, establishing a monument to commemorate the former King was not unexpected.

Like Phibun, King Taksin was also of humble origins who through military service had successfully reunited the people, defeated the intruders, and risen to the apex of his country. The warrior crowned monarch, furthermore, resurrected the kingdom from the disastrous fall of Ayutthaya and attained the throne merely by his

own courage and leadership without any aristocratic affinity. Phibun certainly identified with those traits. On the other hand, making reference to King Taksin might also be a "move to slight the ruling royal house".[39] It had been King Phra Phutthayotfa, a general of King Taksin, who replaced the rule of the Thonburi Crown and founded a new dynasty in Bangkok. Consequently, honoring King Taksin allowed Phibun not only to advocate his more traditional outlook on militarism but also cunningly evoke questions about the virtues of the Chakri kings.

To the Field Marshal, King Taksin was as much a people's nation-builder as was Phibun himself. His upsurge from a captain before the 1932 coup to Commander-in-Chief and Minister of War to Prime Minister in the six following years was less bloodstained but equally brilliant. His return to office after the notorious post war intrigues surely proved his might if not his merits in Thai politics. Phibun emulated King Taksin in many ways. Both leaders were determined to rebuild the country beginning with "the military" in addition to ingraining a "warrior spirit" and patriotism among the people.[40] Whereas King Taksin freed the Siamese from the Burmese invaders by organizing a zealous military following, Phibun promised his citizens independence from the arrogant and aggressive colonial neighbors with his martial prowess. The "victory" over the French in the early 1940s was one good endeavor. The growing Communist insurgencies in the 1950s readily prompted the historical foes like Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia back into the psyche of the Thais. Phibun, the veteran politician, thus, seized the opportunity to promote his leadership, which was now glossed in archaic glamour.

The design for the monument of King Taksin at the Wongwianyai Circle, Thonburi, was first submitted to the Phibun government in 1937. The proposal signaled a vindication of King Taksin who had been disparaged in early Rattanakosin history.[41] In mid-1937, Luang Wichit produced "The King of Thonburi" (*Phrachao Krung Thon*), a play which emphasized the warrior king's leadership and chivalry.[42] Yet the construction of the monument was only begun after the war during the second Phibun regime. In 1950, Bhirasri and his assistants began to work on this one-and-a-half time life-size equestrian figure.[43] To Bhirasri, the commission was "a golden opportunity to display his technical virtuosity in

monumental sculpture" and his theatrical proficiency of "heroic realism".[44] Completed in 1953, the fully metal cast King Taksin monument was impressive in both style and price, as the building of the statue cost more than five million baht.[45]

Although the Monument of King Taksin is an equestrian statue like the one of King Chulalongkorn, the portrayal of the Thonburi monarch is quite different from the precedent image. King Taksin's figure is seen in traditional Siamese attire as a knight in action, riding on horseback with his head looking up slightly and his right arm raising a sword. Both King Taksin and his charger display the ideal muscularity and strength of heroism. Facing the Chakri Bangkok, the warrior king looks as if he is about to strike, while his running horse comes to a halt with its tail still in the air. Nevertheless, not everyone is pleased with the result. Some art critics note that the posture of the horse contradicts the idea of motion, with its legs stationed firmly but its tail awkwardly raised up.[46] Therefore, the figure "betrays" rather than conveys the stalwart spirit of the King.[47] Despite its mixed reviews, the monument for King Taksin, at the very least, helps people to remember a significant personality in Thai history. As for being propaganda of patriotism, the statue restates Phibun's conviction in strong military leadership as the only key to the nation's stability, especially during wary times, such as the Japanese aggression of the 1940s and the Communist threat of the 1950s.

- **The Monument of King Taksin in Chanthaburi**

The quandary of national security intensified during the 1970s, especially along the border area that strongly felt the heat from the Indochina war and the numerous following skirmishes in the neighboring countries. Situated on the eastern frontier adjacent to Cambodia, Chanthaburi, the "City of the Moon", has long been a sensitive and strategic outpost for the Thais. Acclaimed as a center for the gem trade since the fifteenth century, Chanthaburi was a refuge for all hopefuls from the region, such as the Vietnamese, Shans-Burmese, Chinese, and Khmers.

Christian Vietnamese, however, comprised the majority of the ethnic immigrants in the town. A vast number of them had been settling there over the last two centuries, from fleeing the anti-Catholic persecutions of Cochin China to

escaping the French colonial rule in the late nineteenth century and notably during the 1970s. Even the French left their presence.[48] From 1893 to 1904, they held Chanthaburi against King Chulalongkorn for the giving up territories along the Cambodian and Laotian border.[49] To avoid a military conflict, King Chulalongkorn reluctantly agreed to the treaty. Moreover, Chanthaburi played an important role in the formation of modern Thai sovereignty. This bastion province was vital in King Taksin's Burmese campaign and hence the resurrection of the kingdom. The Thonburi monarch has since held a special place in the hearts of the Chanthaburi townsfolk. Nonetheless, the erection of the monument for King Taksin had as much to do with the politics of the time as historical reverence.

Placed in the center of finely landscaped King Taksin Memorial Park, the equestrian statue of King Taksin was one of the most impressive works of monumental propaganda in the early 1970s. The twice life-size monument was designed by Suphorn Sirasongkroh with Chin Prasong and Pakorn Lekson who molded the horse. Although King Taksin is portrayed as a cavalier like Bhirasri's earlier statue at Thonburi with his right hand raising up a sword, the new image is no longer a maverick fighter. The monument creates a dramatic scene by including four robust soldiers by the sides of the King, each endowed with lethal weapons and engaged in different poses.

The monarch, likewise, is also on the move, resembling the heroic portraits of European Classicism.[50] Dressed as a knight in traditional helmet and attire, King Taksin firmly holds up his sword and drives his warriors to battle with the enemies. Even the royal stallion is ready for combat, strenuously leaping forward with both of its front legs still in the air. All figures are depicted in typical heroic realism, with accurate anatomy and powerful expression. Together, they form a dynamic composition and convey a complicated tension within the action and thoughts of the majestic rider. The representation was rather different from the stagnant statue in the past. This new development was initiated by the master Bhirasri in his later works of the 1950s, which is reviewed in the following section on the Monuments of King Naresuan.

By recreating the heroic deeds of King Taksin and his loyal warriors, the message of the monument is resonant. From the monarch's stronghold in Chanthaburi, foreign foes were defeated and the Thais were reunited. Although King Taksin might not have been a favorite star of the Sarit-Thanom era, the use of traditional heroes in monumental art to serve politics was most prominent in their governments. The monument was unveiled in 1972 during the end of the Thanom regime and against the backdrop of a pressing communist threat. In a frontier area like Chanthaburi, which was ethnically diverse and physically vulnerable, this monument provided an inspiring vision, which the masses could identify and understand easily.

Since the Thonburi monarch was highly respected in the province, the grand monument sensibly rose as the pride of the locals. The King Taksin marine camp, on the other hand, also built a shrine for the martial leader in the form of his helmet. All the monumental structures became an effective propaganda to instill national unity and fight against communism. More importantly, heroism is no longer seen as an isolated entity. King Taksin's victory, as manifested in this monument, was accompanied by the support from his faithful followers. The people, hence, should be proud to obey their military leaders just like their patriotic ancestors did in order to protect the country's independence. As a whole, the realistic monument provokes an imposing ambience as the central point of the spacious park, arousing excitement among the viewers through its powerful action and larger-than-life presence. Accordingly, it is both an artistic and political success. The image is featured on the back of the current issue of the twenty-baht banknote, marking the only non-Chakri figure in this series.

The Sarit-Thanom Government and the Legend of King Naresuan

Among all the historic heroes, there was no one better than King Naresuan to capture the imagination of the Thai elite. The royal warrior also holds a momentous and even mystical place in the hearts of the people. Few heroes in the past could compare with his vigor and virtue, and none could surpass him. Although King Naresuan was a noted military leader in his times, his fame as an ideal Buddhist king came much later.[51] The arrival of the twentieth century brought a new

interpretation of history. King Naresuan has since dominated the landscape of Thai culture and never ceased to be celebrated in art, literature, and even religion.

The glory of the ancient king reached an exceptional pinnacle during the Sarit-Thanom government. Drawing from popular historical episodes, the public monuments of King Naresuan from this period have disconnected from the previous Field Marshal Phibun regime and become the epitome of a new era of politics. An overview of the Sarit-Thanom political ideology, therefore, is a key to the understanding of the public reverence for King Naresuan, particularly in the form of monumental art, in Thai society.

- **The Rise of Sarit and His Traditional *Pattiwat* Movement**

The triumph of Sarit was the triumph of a new generation of Thai militaristic leadership. Toppling the "dirty" politics of the old Phibun government, the *coup d'é tat* of September 1957 was regarded as a "popular" one.[52] The later Sarit administration, accordingly, claimed its legitimacy on "popular will" as well.[53] Besides other personal factors, Sarit first and foremost validated his military power in the eyes of the people by seeking the approval of the Ninth Rama, King Bhumibol.[54] Also clinging tightly to modern Thai politics was the "revolution" (*pattiwat*) style of rule, often referred to as "despotic paternalism",[55] that was set out by Sarit and followed by Thanom. His "revolutionary" movement, which was pronounced as more indigenous—*lakkan Muang Thai*—in nature, abolished the political ideology and constitution inherited from 1932. Although the magnetic premiership of Sarit lasted for only five years—he died in December 8, 1963, his philosophy dominated the decade to come. His successor Thanom was generally deemed as "modest and more flexible", who did little to change Sarit's legacy and eventually brought about the uprising of October 1973.[56]

The group of Sarit-Thanom was the first generation of modern Thai leaders to have been educated entirely in Thailand. Lacking first-hand knowledge and experience of western ideas, their frame of mind was essentially "Thai". They had less affection for liberalism and democracy but greater respect for conventional systems and values.[57] To the Coup Group, foreign ideals or "alien institutions"—

such as representational government and political parties—had caused instability in the country rather than progress and harmony.[58] The western seeds of democracy, hence, had to change "revolutionarily" in order to grow in the Thai reality.[59] After all, they were the "Coup Group", not even trying to be the "people's" party. Nonetheless, their appreciation of traditional principles could not be detached from the influence of Luang Wichit. Since his early days with Phibun, Luang Wichit had long been a believer in the strongman authoritarian model of government. His nationalistic plays and literature were highly popular and respected by the masses. The erudite writer definitely inspired Sarit. Accordingly, Luang Wichit was invited into politics once again, helping Sarit to create a new Thai nationalism for his new regime.[60]

Field Marshal Sarit sought to make his own mark as the utmost authority of Thailand. Indeed, the Coup Group had little historical basis for power compared to those former leaders like Phibun or Pridi, who were key figures in the 1932 coup that overthrew the absolute monarchy and introduced the Constitution.[61] Sarit had to look further back in time to find his claims. Encouraged by Luang Wichit, Sarit founded his rule on traditional concepts of social hierarchy and paternalistic government. Instead of calling for the people's patriotism for "an abstract state or constitution" as Phibun had done, Sarit emphasized the monarchy as both "the focus of loyalty for the citizen and the source of legitimacy" for his office.[62]

Sarit further developed the *phokhun* leader concept that Luang Wichit had begun in the second Phibun government. While the country was seen as a large family and the monarch as the father,[63] Sarit's military reign became the "secular arm of the semi-sacral kingship and was worthy of respect and obedience by virtue of that connection".[64] Sarit, on one hand, took the responsibility of heading the "family" on behalf of the king.[65] On the other hand, he endeavored to strengthen the monarchial institution and its exposure.[66] Meanwhile, the new Prime Minister staged public spectacles of allegiance to the Crown, which gave its nod to the regime in return.[67]

Since the traditional Thai kingship was where Sarit drew his inspirations, King Naresuan's legendary supremacy was a sensible vision for the military leadership in an epoch of local and international intrigue during the 1950s and 60s. This era was colored by the alarming hue of red. The tide of Communism was sweeping over the East, from China to Korea to Southeast Asia. The rising communist power was felt strongly in Thailand as its neighbors and "brothers" like Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia were all in crisis. National security was once again a military concern. In order to maintain national solidarity, Sarit determined to campaign against communism.[68] The alien ideology was denounced as the antithesis of the country and "Thai-ness", namely Nation, Religion, and Monarchy. Regardless of its real nature, any slight upon the regime, which considered itself as the defender of the three pillars of the nation, was equated to communism.[69] In any case the Thai masses, unfamiliar as they were to Marxist ideas or leftist thoughts, were preoccupied by the patriotic frenzy of opposing it.

Sarit did not reject everything foreign, however. The United States played a prominent role in Thai politics during the years of communist insurgence.[70] In the face of "red" danger, it was easy for the government to assert its suppression in the name of the "nation". It was also necessary for the military regime to justify its action as time-honored and virtuous, for it was as much "Thai" as was backed by the American interests. Every nationalistic movement required an icon. King Naresuan, who represented the traditional feat of safeguarding the kingdom and battling for independence, came expectedly to the minds of the military elite.

Surely, more than communism preyed on Sarit's regime. The reverence for King Naresuan was also an attempt to rival other domestic factions contending for political dominance. Since the late 1940s, the use of force as a means to power had become a common and "acceptable feature of Thai political life".[71] Both the Silent Coup and the Manhattan Coup in 1951 gave rise not only to Sarit's power but also his understanding of it.[72] Although Sarit believed his rule was popular, there was still political ambivalence. One obvious and rather successful diversion to his autocratic politics was prosperity (*phatthana*) and development (*khwamcaroen*), mostly in terms of the economy.[73] Another less materialistic but more mystical

detour was to link the military regime with historical leadership, mythical figures that Thai society always esteemed. Nevertheless, rifts existed even within the military, especially between the Army and the Navy. The choice of a hero, who could perfectly stand for the army clique of Sarit, fell on King Naresuan, the mighty warrior of the "land".

- **King Naresuan and the Evolution of Thai Historiography**

The prevalence of King Naresuan is tied closely to the conception of Thai history during the foundation of the Chakri dynasty. The Ayutthaya chroniclers themselves paid no special attention to documenting the wars between Siam and Burma.[74] The change of temperament came only after the tragic fall of the capital in 1767. The reconstruction of the Ayutthaya chronicles in the early Bangkok period established the image of King Naresuan as the hero of the Thai state.[75] The "great man" leadership, manifested in mythical Buddhist terms, has since become both a claim to legitimacy and a model for the ruling elite to carry out.

In fact, the destruction of Ayutthaya scarred the memory of the Thais. The new Chakri kingdom was emotionally haunted by the defeat and physically devastated from the havoc caused by the invasion. The Burmese, "who since the death of King Naresuan in 1605 had never been perceived as a dangerous enemy", were again reckoned as the bloodthirsty foes of Siam.[76] King Naresuan, who reclaimed the sovereignty of Ayutthaya after its first fall to the Burmese in 1569, naturally became a heroic inspiration. He was "the one and only king who successfully crushed the Burmese army on several occasions and led two expeditions into the Burmese heartland".[77] Since the Third Reign (1824-1851) of the Bangkok period, Burma has not actually posed any major military threat to the kingdom.[78] The last conflict between the two countries concluded in 1853.[79] The ruling class continued to disseminate the bitter past not because of any present danger from Burma, but rather, to bolster morale and provoke a sense of patriotism among the people. While the Burmese remained the "archetypal" enemy of the state, King Naresuan was upheld as the ultimate national hero.

The position of King Naresuan in Thai society took on new meanings in modern time as mass education became available. As important as the chronicles were, the historical records belonged exclusively to the royal house. Readership was limited to a very few within the upper class. The commoners had yet to share the knowledge of "history". It was not until the latter reign of King Chulalongkorn that national history became a cardinal element of the Thai identity. The effort peaked during the time of King Vajiravudh and was then further carried on and amplified by various military regimes after the *coup d'état* of 1932.[80]

Newly adapted to its modern context, the legend of King Naresuan soared again during the historic convulsions of the twentieth century. From colonial encroachment to Japanese aggression to Communist threat, the security of the Thai kingdom walked on a thin line. Accordingly, the stories of the past were molded into a linear and nationalistic narrative and further magnified as "the life of the Thai versus other nations" by the elite in order to face the dilemma.[81] The fundamental theme of history was now devoted to "national liberation".[82] The individuals, who had met the challenges of their times, emerged as great heroes and heroines. Fulfilling the task and character in every way, King Naresuan evolved from a royal warrior of Ayutthaya to a "national" hero for all Thais.

Immersed in the light of "nationalism", King Naresuan was no longer merely a king who combated for natural resources or territorial expansion. He fought for a nobler cause. He was the major actor in the story of the "national struggle for independence".[83] He was the "universal monarch" who upheld the faith of the Thai people. It was through his guns and spears that the Buddhist nation was saved from the wrongful invaders. The notion of protecting the spiritual and physical well-being of the kingdom from external menace became an inseparable rudiment of subsequent Thai leaderships, especially among the military elite. During the time of political instability in the 1950s and 60s, the government conveniently repressed any challenge by labeling it a threat to the nation. The reinterpretation of King Naresuan thus offered the Sarit-Thanom regime both responsibility and respectability for suppressing its "national enemies".

- **King Naresuan and Modern Historical Writings**

In the twentieth century, the exemplary accounts of King Naresuan were perfected by the works of two leading Bangkok writers—Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (1862-1943)[84] and Luang Wichit (1898-1962)[85]. Prince Damrong marked a new phase in Thai historiography. He bridged "the gap between traditional and modern outlooks on the interpretation, the writing, and the recording of Thai history", transforming the style of royal chronicles to modern history.[86] Authored in 1917, "Our War with Burmese" (*Phongsawadan ruang rao rop phama*) was one of the most famous works of the prince. He followed the chronicles closely. Yet he also discerned and displayed his sources differently. "Our War with Burmese", as its title declares, has become one of the "most powerful and effective themes of Thai history".[87] Prince Damrong filtered the past through the new lens of nationhood. History was seen as the arduous journey of twenty-four wars with Burma spanning more than two centuries (1539-1767), in which the Thais struggled for independence. In addition, the kingdom of Ayutthaya was perceived as the Thai nation, in defiance of the fact that in King Naresuan's time many parts that composed the modern kingdom, like Chiang Mai, were actually the opponents of Ayutthaya.

Not only redefining the historical relationship between the Thai and the Burmese, the work of Prince Damrong also recreated the principal narratives about the achievement of King Naresuan. The warrior king, consequently, became the one chosen by heaven (*devatas*) to redeem Siam's independence from the foreign oppressor.[88] His life story was then full of adversary and adventure, twists and turns. Together with his brother Prince Ekathotsarot, King Naresuan's military talent and leadership were glorified. Moreover, the personal rivalry between the monarch and the Burmese Crown Prince, from cock-fighting to the final mortal combat, was also depicted and detailed colorfully.[89] Another historical piece by the prince, "The Biography of King Naresuan the Great" (*Phraprawat somdet Phra Naresuan Maharat*), further exalted the tale of the royal warrior. It has since become the established authority for writing school texts and history books about the Ayutthaya king.

While Prince Damrong was the "Father of Thai History", Luang Wichit was the prominent scion of modern historical literature. As discussed earlier, he was the most prolific and popular writer in the constitutional regime whose novels, plays, songs, and essays were essential in creating a nationalistic Thailand. Most of Luang Wichit's works revolved around the theme of patriotism in a historical setting, such as the origin of the Thai race, the founding of the Thai kingdoms, the fight for independence, and the unification of the Thai nation.[90] Despite tints of romance or tragedy, Luang Wichit's plots were generally a "comedy" in Hayden White's classification—the peaceful Thai people were plagued by evil enemies, actions were taken to tackle the crisis, and the threat was eventually outplayed by the effort of the Thais.[91] There were not many native heroes who could flawlessly fit into this plot. King Naresuan was an obvious one.

The warrior monarch's story inspired Luang Witchit's first historical play, "King Naresuan Declares Independence" (*Phra Naresuan prakat itsaraphap*), which premiered in 1934. In Luang Wichit's rendition, King Naresuan came vigorously alive to protect the people from Burmese brutality and restore the "independence" of the kingdom. The opening dialogue between King Naresuan and a noble clearly injected this "modern" nationalistic feeling into the sixteenth century monarch. The King said: "We must recover our independence. Independence is the heart of our life. For any *prathet* without independence, people of that *prathet* are not human."[92] After his victory over the Burmese commander, the King finally urged his subjects to "follow his example in bravery, sacrifice, and never-ending effort against the enemy" and pledged to "look after the country forever".[93]

Embellished for political purposes, the "history" of King Naresuan was a mixture of fact and fiction. The life of the past hero was often seen through modern sentiments. Historical accuracy at times had to give way for artistic effect, and more importantly, the promotion of nationalism. For instance, the triumphant battle of 1592 in which King Naresuan slashed the Burmese crown prince Phra Maha Uparaja in a single fight on elephant back was not particularly emphasized in the *Luang Praset Chronicle of Ayutthaya* (1680).[94] It was after almost two centuries that this combat was described vividly in early Bangkok chronicles.[95] The battle was

further enriched with details and celebrated with awe in Prince Damrong's and Luang Wichit's masterpieces. The King Naresuan portrayed by both writers was so popular that the precision of the persona or events of the historic King became insignificant. It is from these elitist works that the public monuments derived their themes. King Naresuan's declaration of independence, the single elephant combat, and his gun-shot across the Stong River that killed the Burmese general Surakamer, have all been immortalized in various monumental images all over the country.

Public Monuments of King Naresuan and Thai Militarism

The public glorification of King Naresuan by the state began decades before the Sarit regime. In the last years of the absolute monarchy, King Rama VII appointed the court artist Phraya Anusatchitrakorn (Chan Chitrakorn) to paint large murals of the life of King Naresuan at Wat Suwandararam in Ayutthaya in 1929-1931.[96] The status of the gallant monarch was elevated to "a divine king who succeeded in herculean tasks" that resembled "the achievement of the Buddha during his cycle as a human".[97] Aside from the rehabilitation of King Taksin, Phibun also bestowed official recognition to King Naresuan in 1952. The Army dedicated January 25, the date reputed to be the elephant dual between King Naresuan and the Burmese Crown, as Royal Thai Army Day.[98]

Notwithstanding, it was Sarit who brought the veneration of the chivalrous hero to an apex. In order to distinguish his leadership from Phibun's, Sarit needed a new image that could promote militarism yet was different from the style of his predecessor. Like the former Field Marshal, Sarit was a true military man. He loved the splendor and vigor of the army.[99] Besides, he knew his control of the country depended upon it. Instead of looking up to the West, Sarit looked back to the past. While the modern bronze soldiers of the Victory Monument seemed out-dated after the Second World War, the abstract design of the Democracy Monument was too foreign to be "Thai". Sarit wanted an indigenous symbol for his traditional worldview. He desired a puissant icon for his military politics. There was no figure better than King Naresuan. Following the designation of the Army Day, Sarit unveiled the Dual Memorials of King Naresuan in Don Chedi, Supanburi in 1958. The prevalent memory of the warrior hero was finally visualized and immortalized.

- **The Monument of King Naresuan in Don Chedi**

Through the Dual Monuments of King Naresuan in Don Chedi, Sarit successfully reinvented an ideal archaic military rule in space and time. The memorial project included two parts. It started with the restoration of the Great Pagoda (*Chedi Yutthahatthi*), which was supposedly built by King Naresuan himself to commemorate his victory over the Burmese crown prince in the elephant combat in 1592. Meanwhile, in front of the pagoda, Bhirasri was commissioned to design and mold a statue of King Naresuan that depicted the winning act. The search for the site of King Naresuan's Great Pagoda was commenced in the Sixth Reign. Prince Damrong accomplished the mission in 1913 when he identified the ruins in Suphanburi as the original site of King Nareduan's *chedi*. To celebrate the discovery, King Vajiravudh personally led a seven-day march with a thousand men from his Wild Tiger Corps from Nakhon Pathom to Supanburi.[100] The royal troop reached the remnants on January 28, 1914, the approximate day of the famous elephant fight. Rama VI, at the historic spot, praised the heroism of King Naresuan and urged his people to be loyal to their leader like their "ancestors" who fought for the ancient ruler.[101]

In the midst of national insecurity since the 1950s, Sarit skillfully made use of the attainment of the former absolute monarch. The Coup Group appointed General Pin Chunawan in charge of reconstructing a new version of the Great Pagoda surmounting the remains. The Don Chedi project was finally concluded in 1958. It was one of Sarit's greatest public displays when it was opened on January 25, the Army Day, in the same year. In fact, Suphanburi was one of the principal states in Thai history since the beginning of the fifteenth century. The natives have long been notable for their patriotism. Luang Wichit's poignant historical musical, "The Blood of Suphanburi" (*Luat Supan*), which set two star-crossed lovers against the backdrop of the Ayutthaya-Burmese wars, was an effort to romanticize and popularize the heroic spirit.[102] The official restoration of King Naresuan's relic further fueled the national pride. Sarit, however, did more than arouse enthusiasm for the nation. By erecting King Naresuan's pagoda, the Field Marshal and the Army actually assumed the role of the monarch. They rebuilt the victorious symbol

of King Naresuan, and thus, associated their militaristic rule with the legacy of the esteemed king. Doubtlessly, the erection of King Naresuan's monument, the almighty warrior of the land, also signified the Army's full control of Thai politics, surpassing other segments in the military including the Navy and the Air Force.

The bronze statue of King Naresuan on elephant back completed the heroic scene and concluded the public ebullience. Serving the state for more than four decades, Bhirasri was the most renowned artist and professor in the country. The monument of King Naresuan in Don Chedi, which he started in 1956, was one of his last undertakings, and it marked an important step in the evolution of Thai monumental art.[103] Recreating the legendary battle of the sixteenth century, Bhirasri portrayed the warrior-geared King Naresuan with his famed heroic realism. The regal warrior is seen riding on the neck of the elephant and slashing his two-bladed spear (*ngaw*) to the right. There are also two other characters on the war elephant. One is the pilot who is holding two royal symbols and signaling direction on the top seat with all the weapons, while there is another mahout clinging to the back. The one-and-a-half life size statue is elevated on a nine meters high platform with two relief panels on each side. One depicts a similar scene of the 1592 combat when King Naresuan's elephant forcefully overthrows the enemy's one, and the King is lashing his spear towards the Burmese crown prince.[104] The other panel presents King Naresuan's declaring independence of Ayutthaya in front of his army commanders in 1584 by pouring water to the ground from a goblet.[105]

In this memorial of King Naresuan, Bhirasri breathed new air and brought new dimensions to Thai monumental art. The historical works of Prince Damrong and Luang Wichit obviously provided major inspiration. At the same time, the images visually crystallized and dramatized the sensational moment in the literature. Unlike Bhirasri's earlier works, the monument of King Naresuan was not shown in a static position. Rather, he is engaged in action, about to kill his enemy and accomplish his most heroic feat. No longer are public monuments confined to portraits of a freestanding or an enthroned character. Like stills from a motion picture, modern monuments attempt to capture the climax in the most daring episode in history. The sculpted figures become the leading stars in a staged epic

and are often accompanied by a supporting cast. Through the gesture of the statue and its theatrical settings, the viewers are reminded of not only the name of the heroes but also the best moment of the narrative as well as the moral that people should follow.

The Monument of King Naresuan together with the Great Pagoda behind it exceeded the role of just memorializing a character. They actually tell the story about him. The pagoda is open to the pubic as a museum of King Naresuan. A standing bronze figure of the royal warrior, that was modeled after another Bhirasri statue of King Naresuan (1959) at the Army base in Pitsanulok, is housed at the entrance for worship. Circling the base of the historical ruins are displays of the monarch's achievements in panels, pictures, and models. The various battle scenes between the Ayutthaya King and the Burmese troops are recreated, signifying the accomplishments of the royal warrior and his armed forces. The biography of King Naresuan in the museum also provides similar insights. The military success of the King is highlighted. Above all, the theme of "independence" and the idea of King Naresuan as a military politician—"a genius in military affairs, politics, government, and international affairs" who headed the "Thai army" are noted.[106] The myth of the medieval warrior is thus charged with modern values, in which the contemporary military elite perceived and justified themselves.

Finally, the statue of King Naresuan in Don Chedi has become a paragon of historic monument in Thailand. Since the late 1950s, there have been countless memorials of King Naresuan built all over the country. Every army camp, for instance, has at least one. Many later works mimicked the theme and artistic approach of this statue or simply replicated it. The depiction of the warrior king on elephant-back has also been recognized as a symbol for many polities and organizations, which identified themselves with the vivacity of the king.

- **Monuments of King Naresuan in Pitsanulok**

Besides the Dual Monuments in Suphanburi, Sarit also commissioned several public monuments of King Naresuan in Pitsanulok, which is regarded as the warrior king's birthplace. Before King Naresuan succeeded his father King Maha Thammaracha to

the Ayutthaya throne, he had governed this northern province since the age of sixteen.[107] In order to bestow further honor to the legendary monarch, Sarit ordered the construction of a series of monuments in Pitsanulok during his five-year suzerainty, connecting the military regime with and arousing patriotism through the images of the ancient king. An actual-size statue of a seated King Naresuan, depicted as declaring independence by pouring water, was built at the site of his old Chan Royal Palace in 1961.[108] Situated on the ground of Pitsanulok Phitayakom School now, the King Naresuan statue and its shrine were also funded by the local residents. The monument attracted pious devotees from all around the region, as the ancient King was believed to be their guardian spirit.

The sacred figure, moreover, became the model for various following projects in the same theme, including the Monument of King Naresuan in King Naresuan University (1993). The twice-life size statue was designed by Saroj Jarak with the assistance of Somkuan Umtrakul, Sirichai Limpraphan, and Sophit Phuttarak in molding. The grand image of the warrior hero is traditional and tranquil, seated with a sword across his lap in classical attire and hairstyle. The depiction is realistic, with an air of solemnity as the King is entering a crucial moment in history by declaring the "independence" of Ayutthaya. Beginning in the Sarit regime, a number of the monarch's monuments were erected at King Naresuan Army Base. The statues of the King are even enshrined in the *wihan* of the most revered temple, Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat, in Pitsanulok. In fact, monumental images of King Naresuan are everywhere in town.

- **The Monument of King Naresuan in Ayutthaya**

Even after the Sarit-Thanom regime, the reverence for King Naresuan as the Thai Army's icon has still unwaveringly endured. The Monument of King Naresuan the Great in Ayutthaya (1999) was one of the most impressive monumental projects sponsored by the Royal Thai Army. Resembling the dual memorial in Don Chedi, the Monument of King Naresuan in Ayutthaya was also constructed on a grand scale with a monument compound and a pagoda as the backdrop. Only this time the *chedi* was not a testimony of victory but defeat. The pagoda was built to commemorate the Burmese King Bayinnaung (r. 1551-1581) of the Toungoo

Dynasty, who had successfully invaded Ayutthaya in 1564 and 1569. The stalwart Burmese monarch was responsible for installing King Maha Thammaracha to the Ayutthaya throne after its fall and keeping the young Prince Naresuan in Pegu as a hostage. Yet it was King Naresuan who swore the independence from King Bayinnaung's rule and killed his son in the legendary elephant combat. Erecting a monument of King Naresuan in front of the Burmese pagoda, hence, serves as a propitious counter-force, at least in the minds of the military elite.

Placed in the middle of a splendid marble structure, the twice-life size metallic statue of King Naresuan is seen on horseback holding a long lance, an image taken from a legendary scene in which he slew a Burmese general around this area. The figure is further elevated on a high pedestal decorated with bronze relief sculptures depicting the life of the warrior King, with the episode of him proclaiming independence at the center. At the four corners of the compound are replicas of the auspicious weapons of the monarch—sword, gun, helmet, and spear—that brought triumph and freedom to the Thai people. With its illustrious milieu, the larger-than-life monument reprises the mythical power of King Naresuan that can not only instill militarism in the armed forces and patriotism in the public but also miraculously undo the historical wrongs.

The Legacy of Sarit's Traditionalism and its Public Monuments

The history of Ayutthaya would be different without King Naresuan. Likewise, the popularity of the royal warrior would not have been the same without Sarit. While the Field Marshal "hitched the country to the brightly blazing American star", he also avowed to restore a Thailand that buttressed traditional values and hierarchy.[109] Archaic heroes became his political inspiration and source of legitimacy. Pioneered by Phibun, the Sarit-Thanom regime successfully nurtured a militaristic national culture that outshone its creator. The notions of warrior bravery and self-sacrifice for national interest were then firmly imbued in the Thai identity. As King Naresuan was the personification of this noble feat, the military, namely the Army, became the modern upholder of national sovereignty. After all, the domestic stability of Thailand during the 1950s and 1960s was brought by military force.

Besides King Naresuan and King Taksin, various kingly heroes were also elevated to monumental standings in many provinces in order to propagate national identity and safeguard national security. The list is extensive. It includes many of the remarkable works by Bhirasri and Sanan, for instance, the Monument of King Narai in Lopburi (1966), the Monument of King Ramkhamhaeng in Sukhothai (1967), and the Monument of King U-Thong in Ayutthaya (1970).

To the Sarit-Thanom elite, the realms of history and politics were much connected. To most people, the line between official dogma and popular legend in public monuments was blurred. The monuments of mythical kings borrow the action and drama of a re-imagined history and accordingly become the symbol of a re-constructed "Thai-ness". Traditional heroes are glorified. The "national" enemy is condemned, in which undesirable oppositions can be conveniently alluded to or accused. Under the watchful eyes of the monumental forefathers, people are urged to live up to the heroic examples, such as respecting the leader resolutely and repulsing the foes relentlessly. Not only were the historical figures resurrected to Sarit's will, but history also seemed to be on his side, at least in his lifetime.

Sarit was a powerful leader. His political legacy, although "at the expense of egalitarianism and even human rights", was difficult to overcome.[110] This was partly because of his economic achievements and to some extent his identification with traditional heroes. He took pride in the fact that he was a "progressive leader" who based his political legitimacy upon indigenous elements and brought prosperity and development to a modernizing Thailand.[111] He was neither a "philosopher nor a fanatic ideologist" but a true "soldier".[112] Above all, Sarit did possess an "anachronistic public image as a man-on-horseback who got things done and cared about the ordinary people".[113] Nevertheless, the death of Sarit and the notorious fight over his nearly 150 million dollar estate among his wife, his children and more than fifty mistresses rocked the public spectrum with controversy. The authoritarian rule of Sarit was well known and to certain degree even accepted. Yet the exposure of his excessive lechery was beyond scandalous. The explicit disclosure of convoluted connections, more precisely corruption, between the military elite and business tycoons shocked many. Among them were the young officers who did

have some ideals and were outside of the Thanom-Prapas family linkage that succeeded Sarit.[114]

The political "heir" of Sarit, however, lacked the charisma of the former Field Marshal. Thanom was by no mean a "strong man".[115] Prapas Charusathian, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, had the aggressiveness and ambition, but he did not have charm or the desire to restrain his arrogance and greed. Although the military conservatives clung onto power for another decade, the traditionalism inherited from Sarit seemed out of tune with an increasingly educated and solvent middle class. Perhaps Sarit himself and his followers did not realize the intricate consequences of "modernization", and thus were unable to encompass—either in their minds or in their policies—the "irrationalities" and diversions that came with the process.[116] The close tie with American policy towards Indochina also created burning social protests.[117] Like the monumental warriors, the people eventually took heroism in their own hands. The outcome was the October 14, 1973 student uprising, which led the country into a historic, if brief, experiment with "democracy".

Although the military regimes utilized public monuments for political purposes, those powerful images have outlived politics and now lead a life of their own. The monuments of King Naresuan and King Taksin have transcended the role of governmental propaganda. They are as much an icon for the military as a spiritual guidance for the general masses. For instance, the Suphanburi locals take much pride in the Monument of King Naresuan and the relic in Don Chedi as their own treasure. The political statue now has become a holy image. Its worshipers believe the spirit of King Naresuan will protect the community and the country. Adjacent to the dual monument complex is a shrine of King Naresuan with a standing statue for further religious adoration. According to recent historical findings, the authenticity of Don Chedi as the original site of King Naresuan's Great Pagoda is doubtful. Most likely, the battle with the Burmese crown prince occurred and the original pagoda was built in Ayutthaya.[118] Nonetheless, the news does not stop the enthusiasm for the hero. On every January 25, a colorful parade is held around the Don Chedi monument, recreating the epic combat scene with elephants

adorned with war gear and thousands of participants dressed in period costumes. Similar celebrations of the warrior monarch are held in many provinces including Pitsanulok on that day. In the hearts of the folks, King Naresuan is more than a historic king or military idol. He is a “god”.

Notes

[1]* The term and concept of Southeast Asia was first used in an Austrian geographical magazine as early as 1900. It did not become a currency in politics and history until the Pacific War and has only gained its weight during the Indo-China war since the 1950s and 60s. Certainly, nine out of ten of the "nations" that compose the present-day "Southeast Asia" were still part of European colonies until the second half of the 20th century, including Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, and Brunei. The only exception was Thailand (Siam) which has maintained its independence all along. See Michael Leifer, "Southeast Asia", *The Oxford History of the Twentieth Century*, Michael Howard and W.M. Roger Louis, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.227.

[2]* "On June 9, 1946, the young King Ananda Mahidol, who had returned to Bangkok in December, was found in his bed, shot through the head with a pistol. The mysterious circumstances surrounding his death were only heightened by the government's ineptitude in handling this major crisis. They first announced the death to have been an accident. Then a government commission, including American and British doctors, appointed to investigate the affair reported that the king probably had been murdered. The three chief witnesses were hurriedly tried and executed. Public opinion, quick to associate Pridi with anti-royalist sentiments and remembering his violent disagreement with King Prajadhipok over his Economic Plan of 1933, held responsible for King Ananda's death, either indirectly as head of the government in power at the time or in a more sinister fashion." David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1984), p.263.

[3]* King Bhumibol Adulyadej went back to Switzerland after the dead of his brother King Ananda. He returned to Thailand and was officially crowned in May 1950.

[4]* Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat was born in Bangkok on June 16, 1908. His father was an army major who among other things did Cambodian translations. At the age of three, he went with his mother, who was of Lao's origin, to live in the Mukdahan district of Nakhon Phanom province in the northeast of Thailand. He returned to Bangkok for some schooling and then at age eleven enrolled in the army cadet school. He was graduated in 1928 and immediately started his military career. His early service had all been stationed in Bangkok. Not until 1938 that he was sent to the Shan states during the war years. It was from there he met and made connections with Phao Siyanon and Phin Chunhawan who assisted him into national politics. In 1948, Sarit joined them in staging the coup that restored Phibun to power. Accordingly, he rose rapidly in the second Phibun government and became major-general right after the coup. He carefully based his power upon the critical First Army in Bangkok and assumed the post of Lieutenant-general in 1950, general in 1952, field marshal in 1956, and finally as the 14th Prime Minister in 1959. After a significant five-year reign, he died on December 8, 1963. The military succession passed on to General Thanom Kittikachorn who had long been Sarit's deputy.

[5]* Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, a son of a civil servant family, was born in the northern province of Tak in 1911. His earliest education was from the temple and enrolled in cadet school at the age of nine. He entered the military service in 1930 and rose to power with Sarit. Thanom participated in the coup that overthrew the second Phibun government in 1957. When Phote resigned, Thanom took over the premiership for Sarit was having medical treatment overseas at the time. Yet his first brush in office was short-lived. After Sarit returned to Bangkok in 1958, another coup was staged. Sarit became the Prime Minister, and Thanom stayed as his deputy. He succeeded Sarit in 1963 as Prime Minister

again and carried on the political philosophy of Sarit. Throughout this period, as deputy prime minister and minister of the interior, General Praphas Charusathien posed an immense presence in the country. The alliance between Praphas and Thanom was further affirmed by the marriage of Thaonom's son, Narong, with Praphas's daughter. The Thanom-Praphas regime lasted for a decade until the 1973 uprising.

[6]* For example, Sir Berkeley Gage, a British Ambassador to Thailand in 1950s, mentioned in his book *A Marvelous Party* (1954-7): "Who could blame [Thailand] for bowing to the inevitable? She was clever enough to give the minimum co-operation to her occupiers; she retained her own government and where possible, gave succor and comfort to British prisoners of war… With greatest respect and admiration I was apt to compare her political stance to that of an agile oriental fish, which could swim very fast in any direction, emitting an ink cloud to conceal its movements. As a result, she retained her independence and, unlike her colonial neighbors in French Indo-China and British Malaya, her national self-respect"(p. 176). Donald F. Cooper, *Thailand: Dictatorship or Democracy* (Montreux: Minerva Press, 1995), p.37.

[7]* Phibun was arrested after the war by the passage of M.R. Seni's War Criminals Act of 1945, but he was soon released from trial. The Supreme Court, the San Dikka, ruled that because *ex-post-facto* legislation was constitutionally invalid, the law could not be implemented. See "Ruling of the Dikka Court on War Criminals", Case No 1/2488 of March 23, 1946. Also see Ibid; and Angkana Kiatttisanukul, "War Criminal Trails in Thailand, 1945-1946" (MA Thesis from the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, 1989).

[8] Daniel Fineman, *A Special Relationship: The United States and Military Government in Thailand, 1947-1958* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997) p.12.

[9]* "On June 29, 1951, Phibun was participating in a ceremony aboard the dredge *Manhattan*, which the American government was presenting to Thailand as part of a major increase in its economic and military aid. The occasion was interrupted by navy officers and men who took Phibun prisoner and hustled him away to confinement on the flagship *Sri Ayutthaya*. For a few hours, negotiations took place to induce the Coup Group to yield power, but these soon broke down, and by the next day, fierce fighting raged in Bangkok between the government, supported by the army, police and air force, and the navy and marines. When the air force bombed the *Sri Ayutthaya*, Phibun was able to swim away as it sank. He eventually reached friendly forces and broadcast an appeal to the navy to cease fighting. The *Manhattan* coup soon ended, but with well over 3,000 causalities, including 1,200 dead, most of them civilians. As a result of the coup, the navy was cut to a quarter of its previous strength, and many arrests followed, including fifty students at Thammasat University, charged with having communist associations." Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp.269-70.

[10]* The "Coup Group" of the November 9, 1947 *coup d'état* consisted approximately 40 junior army officers. The major leaders were Lt. Gen. Phin Chunhawan, Col. Kat Katsongkhram, and two figures who later became most prominent in the 1950s' Thai politics, Col. Phao Siyanon and Col. Sarit Thanarat. A complete list of the officers and army personalities involved can be found in Thak Chaloemtiarana, ed., *Thai Politics: Extracts and Documents 1932-1957* (Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, Thammasat University, 1978), pp.558-62. Also see Fineman, *Special Relationship*, p.37.

[11] Thak Chaloemtiarana, *Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism* (Bangkok: Thai Khadi Institute, Thammasat University, 1979), p.56.

[12] For an explicit account of Phao and his penetration in the police force see Ibid., pp.81-91.

[13] Ibid., pp.94-5.

[14]* Ibid. "Phibun remained as the Minister of Culture until 1955 when Admiral Luang Yutthasat took over. Madame Phibun soon too became deeply involved in cultural revitalization".

[15]* Ibid., p.96. "Popular radio soap operas were ordered not to present programs which were sad, depicting illicit love affairs, broken homes and the like, which Phibun felt would make the people depressed and neglect work. Programs were to emphasize filial piety, nationalistic themes, and national security… Attempts were also made to use *likae* or traditional folk opera to propagandize against communism to the peasants… Thai music and other art forms were revived and attempts were made to elevate the social status of performing artists". In Thak's accounts: "Phibun also tried to make himself the *de facto* patron of Buddhism. He was deeply engaged in the restoration of national monuments, temples and shrines… According to his government's statistics, a very large number of temples were given financial assistance for improvement and restoration". One of the most publicized projects was the 25th Centennial Celebration in 1956 and the establishment of Buddha Monthon. Ibid, pp.97-9.

[16]* For a detailed account of Phibun as a leader (*phunam*) see Thamsook Numnonda, "When Thailand Followed the Leader", in *The Review of Thai Social Science: A Collection of Articles by Thai Scholars* (Bangkok: The Social Science Association of Thailand, 1977).

[17] Thak, *Despotic Paternalism*, p.96.

[18]* The national slogan was "*Chue Phunam Chat Cha Phonphai*" meaning "believe in the Leader and the nation will escape danger". Ibid., p.95n.77.

[19] Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thailand's Durable Premier: Phibun through Three Decades 1932-1957* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.85.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Thak, *Despotic Paternalism*, p.97.

[23]* "Phibun did not try to emphasize the monarchial institution as the source of his legitimacy, as can be seen from the policy statement precisely refrained from mentioning that the government would support the monarchy… Anti-monarch attitudes among the military men still held on until Sarit Thanarat and his new type of military men engineered the coup in 1957". See Eiji Murashima, Nakharin Mektrairat and Chalermkiet Phiu-nual, *Political Thoughts of the Thai Military in Historical Perspective* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1986), p.66.

[24] See the discussion on the Monument of the People Revolution in Chapter 4; also see Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.248.

[25]* Even before Phibun was the Prime minister, he suffered several assassination attempts that were rumored to be launched by the royalist who sought revenges for Phibun's suppression of the Bowaordet Rebellion. The first one was in February 1935, then in December 1937, and at least three times in 1938. See Scot Barme, *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity* (Singapore: Institute of South East Asian Studies, 1993), p.171n.5.

[26] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.253; also see Ibid.

[27]* King Vajiravudh paid special attention to three historical figures: "King Naresuan, Taksin, and Phra Ruang. All three were kings, all three were military leaders, all three were unifiers of the Thai people". Walter F. Vella, *Chaiyo! King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii, 1978), p.207.

[28]* According to the most popular legend, Taksin was born in March 1734 to a Chinese merchant and a Siamese lady. Referring from several Chinese chronicles, Nithi Aeosriwong opines that Taksin was the son of a trader named Tae Yong (Yong Sae Tae) and a Teochiu–speaking merchant from Ching Hai district of the large port of Shan-tou in Guangdong (Canton) province. On the other hand, Nithi also thinks that Taksin's mother was not from Thai noble origin but most likely from a Hokkien-speaking immigrant family in Petchaburi. Soon after Taksin was born, his father took him to the residence of Chao Phraya Chakri (Phetphichai), a nobleman in the royal court who later adopted him as a son. According to Wyatt and Nithi, the defeat of the Burmese by King Taksin in fact relied heavily on the support from the Chinese (Teochiu) community rather than the old Ayutthaya court. See Nithinand Yorsaengrat, "The Beginning of Thonburi", *The Nation* (January 3, 2000); Also see Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.140.

[29]* The Thonburi chronicle stated that before he was king, Taksin had traveled the country as a merchant and he could speak many languages including Thai, Teochiu, Hokkien, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Laos. The chronicle also praised him as an intelligent man who had a good head for business. He was often consulted by the governor of Tak on various matters before the governor passed away and succeeded by Taksin. Indeed, when the governor died, the chronicle reported that Taksin went to visit his adoptive father Chao Phraya Chakri and arranged certain financial support to facilitate his appointment to the governorship. Ibid.

[30] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.141.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., p.140.

[33]* The chronicle *Jodmai Het Krom Luang Narindhradevi* by Princess Narindhradevi noted that King Taksin began expressing a serious interest in *vipassana* meditation after the war with Burma ceased in 1776. He was convinced that he had embarked on the first of the four stages of being a *sotapanna.* Another chronicle entitled *Phra Rachaponsawadan Thonburi Chabab Phan Chanthanumas* recorded that King Taksin had ordered the punishment of Buddhist monks, since they refused to pay homage to laymen who claimed to have attained enlightenment. In a letter written to the directors of

the Foreign Missions Seminary in 1780, a French missionary based in Thonburi named Coude marked that King Taksin passed all his time in prayer, fasting and meditation in order to be able to fly through the air by these means. See Sujit Wongthes, "The Last Years of King Taksin", *The Nation*, (January 10, 2000); also see Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp.143-4.

[34]* In 1781, a rebellion in Cambodia led to the death of its king and widespread unrest. An even more serious disturbance broke out in the provinces of Saraburi and Ayutthaya the next year. According to the Thonburi chronicles, the rebels who were led by Nai Bunnak, Luang Chana, and Luang Sura demanded that King Taksin temporarily stepped down from the throne and entered the monkhood for three months. Twelve days later, Phraya Suri-aphai (Thong In), the governor of Nakhon Ratchasima and a nephew of Chao Phraya Chakri, arrived in Thonburi at the head of an army for a "coup". Ibid.

[35] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.145.

[36]* King Taksin is reported to have "tied up in a velvet sack and struck on the back of the neck with a sandalwood club, later to be secretly buried in the outskirts of Thonburi. A persistent folk tradition insists that another unfortunate was substituted for Taksin in the velvet sack, while the ex-king was spirited off to a retreat hidden in the hills above Nakhon Si Thammarat where a luxurious palace was built for him". Ibid.

[37]* "For Italian Fascism the point of reference was ancient Rome, for Hitler's Germany a combination of the racially pure barbarians of the Teutonic forests and medieval knighthood, for Franco's Spain the age of the triumphant Catholic rulers who expelled unbelievers and resisted Luther. The Soviet Union had more trouble taking up the heritage of the Tsars… but eventually Stalin also found it convenient to mobilize it, especially against the Germans." Dawn Ades, Tim Benton, David Elliott and Iain Boyd Whyte, eds., *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators 1930-45* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1995), p.15.

[38] Joseph J. Wright, *The Balancing Act: A History of Modern Thailand* (Bangkok: Asia Books, 1991), p.94.

[39] Thak, *Despotic Paternalism*, p.97.

[40] Wright, *Balancing Act*, p.96.

[41] See Sujit, "The Last Years"; also see Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp.143-4.

[42] Barme, *Luang Wichit*, p.127.

[43]* In the making of the Monument of King Taksin, Bhirasri was assisted by Sitthidet Sanghiran, Sanan Silakorn, and Pakorn Lekson. See Apinan Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand: Nineteen and Twentieth Centuries* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.47.

[44]* Bhirasri saw the project as a great opportunity to show his talent and theory. He said that "from nature one could grasp the secret of creation, and from nature one produced realistic art. For his preliminary studies, he had brought a Thai horse from the Veterinary and Remount to the foundry for sketches and further studies". Ibid.

[45]* The cost of the Monument of King Taksin was 5,197,822.45 baht. Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48]* During the occupation of Chanthaburi, the French undertook the restoration and enlargement of the Christian church, the Church of the Immaculate Conception, which is still the largest cathedral in Thailand.

[49]* For the detailed accounts of the Franco-Siamese conflict in the Fifth Reign see Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp.199-208.

[50]* The pose of the horseman resembles many classical European paintings of the nineteenth century, such as the painting *Napoleon at the Saint-Bernard Pass* (1800) by Jacques-Louis David.

[51]* King Naresuan was known as an exceptional warrior in his times. Many foreign records or chronicles documented his military campaign. He was regarded as the *Raja Api* in Malay, *Pra Narit* in Burmese, and the "Black Prince" among the Westerners such as the Portuguese. His younger brother Prince Ekathotsarot, who later succeeded him, was known as the "White Prince". King Naresuan's presence can also be found in *Peter Floris: His Voyage to the East Indies in the Globe 1611-1615*, W.H. Moreland, ed. (London, 1934); "Translation of Jeremias van Vliet's *Description of the Kingdom of Siam*," L.F. van Ravenswaay, tran., *Journal of Siam Society*, pt.1 (1910), p.1-108, and the same author's *The Short History of the Kings of Ayutthaya*. Moreover, the mighty force of King Naresuan was mentioned in the Chinese chronicles of the Shen Jong Emperor of the Ming Dynasty as well as the Burmese Royal Chronicle, the Glass Palace Chronicle. However, King Naresuan seemed to spend most of his lifetime in warfare and less in reigning his kingdom. It was not until the early Bangkok period that his status as a great king was glorified. Of course, another well-spread account of King Naresuan came from the oral stories of the folks, like Siamese prisoners of war in Burma. See Sunait Chutintaranond, "Great Warrior King in inspires the Thai Armed Forces", in *The Nation* (January 25, 2000).

[52]* On March 3, 1957, Sarit commented about the recent election conducted under Phibun. He said: "If you ask me directly, I will say that they were dirty, the dirtiest. Everybody cheated." See Thak *Despotic Paternalism*, p.108-9. After the coup, Phibun fled Thailand immediately. Phao, on the other hand, asked Sarit for an exile to Switzerland. With Phibun and Phao out of the scene, Sarit was in complete control of the country. Yet Sarit and his follower Lt. Gen. Thanom Kittikachorn let Phote Sarasin be the Prime Minister on September 21,1957 instead. A new political party, "*chat sang khom niyom*", was formed with Sarit as the head, Thanom as deputy, and Praphat Charusathian as party secretary. When Phote resigned the premiership on December 26 that year, Thanom assumed the top position because Sarit was sick at the time. After Sarit left for the United States for major surgery, Thanom's government faced its crisis. On October 20, 1958, Thanom resigned. The returned Sarit staged another coup and became the 14th Prime Minister on February 9, 1959. For the details of the causes and aftermath of the 1957 coup see Thak, *Despotic Paternalism*, pp.106-26; Chalermkiet, *Political Thoughts*, pp.91-2; Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp.278-81.

[53]* On September 15, Sarit said to the demonstrators against Phao and Phibun in front of his house:

> In the name of the army and deputies of the second category, I have conducted my activities based upon the popular will and the interests of the people—your coming here gives me moral support to continue.

See *Sayam Nikon* (September 17, 1957), translation in Thak, *Despotic Paternalism* , p.119.
In the press conference on the coup day, Sarit stated:

> I do not feel at all glad at the actions taken. Necessity and the popular will demanded this… Our actions were precipitated by two reasons: that the government should resign, and that Phao should also resign from his position as Director-General of Police. Our aims were these two reasons which the people clamored for. The people and the press had always reminded me never to retreat and that I should make them successful. Now they are achieved."

See *Sayam Nikon* (September 18, 1957), translation in Thak, *Despotic Paternalism* , p.124.

[54]* "Sarit used many claims to legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Basically, these claims were four: approval by the throne, close identification with the "popular will", active support by the students and the knowledgeable public, and his own charismatic personality". Chalermkiet, *Political Thoughts*, p.91.

[55]* For a detailed analysis of the politics in Sairt-Thanom government see Thak, *Despotic Paternalism*, pp.91-140.

[56] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.286.

[57]* Ibid., p.279. One of Sarit's supporters, Thanat Khoman, said shortly after the 1958 coup:

> The fundamental cause of our political instability in the past lies in the sudden transplantation of alien institutions on to our soil without careful preparation and, more particularly, without proper regard to the circumstances which prevail in our homeland, the nature and characteristic of our own people—in a word, the genius of our race—with the result that their functioning has been haphazard and ever chaotic. If we look at our national history, we can well see that this country works better and prospers under an authority, not a tyrannical authority, but a unifying authority around which all elements of the nation can rally… On the contrary, the dark pages of our history show that whenever such an authority is lacking and dispersal elements had their play, the nation was plunged into one disaster after another."

See *The Bangkok Post* (March 10, 1959); also see Thak, *Despotic Paternalism*, p.156.

[58]* According to Chalermkiet Phiu-nual, "alien institutions" meant "Western democratic institutions such as parliaments and political parties. They were seen as the political problems in themselves that led to political instability. Sarit criticized the democratic political system inherited from 1932, saying 'if you recall the condition of the country prior to the revolution [1958], you will observe clearly that there were severe divisions, intrigues… and the desire to destroy each other." Sarit Thanarat, "National Day Speech", June 24, 1959, translation in Chalermkiet, *Political Thoughts*, p.100.
Another spokesman of the regime announced that:

> The Revolutionary Council wishes to make the country a democracy… and to be able to bring this about, it must correct the mistakes of the past… The revolution of October 20, 1958 abolished democratic ideas borrowed from the West, and suggested that it would build a democratic system, which would be appropriate to the special characteristics and realities of the Thai. It will build a democracy, a Thai way of democracy.

Army Radio "20", August 17, 1965, in *Prachathipati baeb Thai* (Bangkok: Chokchai Thewet Press, 1965), p.65, translation in Thak, *Despotic Paternalism*, p.157.

[59]* In another Army Radio broadcast, the speaker stated: "Let us hope that our democracy is like a plant having deep roots in Thai soil. It should grow amidst the beating sun and whipping rain. It should produce bananas, mangoes, rambutans, mangosteens, and durians; and not apples, grapes, dates, plums, or horse chestnuts". Army Radio "20", August 11, 1965, in *Prachathipati*, p.40, translation in Thak, *Despotic Paternalism*, p.158.

[60]* Luang Wichit was appointed as Deputy Director of the Revolutionary Headquarters (Civilian Section) and also the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council's Committee for Educational Planning. He drew up plans for Sarit's *pattiwat* movement in 1958, including the drafting of all proclamations which would be announced after the coup. Chalermkiet, *Political Thoughts*, p.99. Sarit's relationship with Luang Wichit is discussed in details in Thak, *Despotic Paternalism*, pp.179-86.

[61] Chalermkiet, *Political Thoughts*, p.103.

[62] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.281.

[63]* Sarit spoke at the National Conference of Vice-Governors and District Officers in 1957:

> In this modern age, no matter how much progress is made in political science, one principle in the traditional form of Thai government which still has utility and must be constantly used is the principle of "phoban phomuang" (father of the family and father of the nation). Then nation is like a large family—provincial governors, vice-governors, and district officers are like the heads of various families. Local administrators must keep in mind that the people under their jurisdiction are not strangers, but are sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews of a large family. Poverty, happiness and problems which the people experience are family problems which the parent/father must look into closely and rule through love and mutual goodwill."

Sarit Thanarat, "Opening Speech at the National Conference of Vice-Governors and District Officers, April 27, 1957", translation in Chalermkiet, *Political Thoughts,* p.98.

[64] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.281.

[65]* Sarit once remarked: "The Prime Minister is the father of a large family". In Sarit Thanarat, "*Khamklao pedkanprachum paladchangwad lae naiamphur thua racha-anachak*" [Opening speech at the National Conference of Vice-Governors and District Officers] (April 27, 1959), translation in Thak, *Despotic Paternalism*, p.165.
On another occasion, Sarit said to a group of hooligans: "I do not hate you. For even though you are hooligans or not, you are my compatriots. I have always maintained that the nation is like a large family. Be it because of *bun* [merit] or *kam* [demerit], I happened to have the responsibility of being the head of the family at this moment." See Sarit Thanarat, "*Owat lae khamklao pidkanobrom anthaphan*" [Reminder and closing speech before the release of hooligans] (September 6, 1960), translation in Thak, *Despotic Paternalism*, p.166.

[66]* After the 1958 coup, Sarit immediately assured the King that the monarchy would be remained as one of the perpetual foundations of Thailand under the new regime. The message to the King Bhumibol by Sarit maintained:

> In this revolution, certain institutions must be changed. However, one institution which the Revolutionary Council will never allow to be changed is the institution of the monarchy representing the nation as a whole. The Revolutionary Council will stand form in preserving this system and have promised the people in various proclamations regarding this point. I would like to give your majesty personal assurance that the new constitution will preserve this particular feature.

Revolutionary Council Headquarters, Document No. 8/2501 (October 20, 1958), translation in Thak, *Despotic Paternalism*, p.150.

[67]* In the "Royal New Year Address in the Thai People, 1961", King Bhumibol Adulyadej said:

> Regarding the domestic scene, I am glad that you live in peace and happiness. Also, the government is trying to promote national development in a most competent way. Today, with the cooperation of responsible public officials and experts in various fields, the government has drawn up a plan to revitalize the economy and improve the education of the people. This plan will be implemented this year. I believe that it will be useful for the nation. However, the important thing is to carry out the programs under the plan with togetherness from all sides. Only then would the nation profit. I hope that you will cooperate with the government on these matters in the future."

King Bhumibol Adulyadej, "*Phraratchadamrat Phararatchathan kae Prachachon Chao Thai nai okat wan khun pi mai,* 2504 [Royal New Year Address to the Thai people, 1961]", in *Phraratchadamrat lae phrabaromarachowat khong phrabat Somdet Phrachaoyuhua Bhumibol Adulyadej lae Somdet Phranangchao Sirikit phrabaromarachini* [Speeches and Advice of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Her Majesty Queen Sirikit] (Bangkok: Bandansat Press, 1966), p.110, translation in Chalermkiet, *Political Thoughts*, p.104.

[68] Chalermkiet, *Political Thoughts*, p.116.

[69]* Ibid. Many important "leftist" intellects in the 1950 were prosecuted by the Sarit regime. For instance, Jit Poumisak, who was a brilliant literary critic and writer from Chulalongkorn University in the early 1950s, whose later became best known for his book *Chomna sakdina* [Thai The Face of Thai Feudalism] (1957), was imprisoned in 1958-64. He died in 1965 fighting as an insurgent in the northeast. For a translation of Jit's work see Craig, J. Reynolds, *Thai Radical Discourse: The Real Face of Thai Feudalism Today* (Ithaca, New York: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1987).

[70]* The "friendship" of the American government was vital to Sarit's position. See Fineman, *Special Relationship*, pp.241-63.

[71]* The various coups of 1947, 1948, 1951, 1952, and 1957 showed that military force as a means to power was highly feasible. Chalermkiet, *Political Thoughts*, p.94.

[72]* The detailed account of the Radio or Silent Coup of November 29, 1951 can be found in Thak, *Despotic Paternalism*, pp.64-78.

[73]* For the economic development plan and analysis of the Sarit era, see Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thailand: Economy and Politics* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 1999), pp.126-30, and pp.275-96. Also see Ammar Siamwalla, "The Thai Economy: Fifty Years of Expansion", in *Thailand: King Bhumibol Adulyadej—*

The Golden Jubilee 1946-1996, Anand Panyarachun, ed. (Bangkok: Asia Books, 1996), pp.137-47.

[74]* "Ayutthaya chronicles, unlike Bangkok's, did not seriously consider wars conducted against Burmese as being more important than other historical events. In actual practice, the Ayutthaya rulers were more concerned with military expeditions into the territories of Sukhothai and Chiang Mai in the north, Cambodia in the east, Tavoy, Mergui and Tenasserim in the west, and Malaya in the south, but not into the heartland of Burma. It was not until the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767 that Siam's political and intellectual leaders started to realize the unbridled violence of the Burmese and the resultant perils to Thailand, and showed more concern for investigating and reconstructing the past circumstances of their hostilities with this neighbor." Sunait Chutintaranond, "The Image of the Burmese Enemy in Thai Perceptions and Historical Writings", in *The Journal of Siam Society* (80:1, 1992), p.1.

[75]* According to Nithi Aeosriwong's *Prawattisat rattanakosin nai phraratchaphongsawadan ayutthaya* [Bangkok history in the royal chronicles of Ayutthaya] (1984), the most important reason for the early Bangkok rulers to revise the chronicles of Ayutthaya was to create or reemphasize the image of King Naresuan as the ideal Buddhist hero. The revision served its purpose of rousing a feeling of militarism, which was badly needed among the early Bangkok upper class. Also see Somkiat Wanthana, "Thai Studies in Thailand in the 1980s: A Preliminary Remark on the Current State of the Arts" (International conference "Thai Studies in ASEAN: State of the Art", Bangkok, September 21-23, 1987), pp.27-8.

[76] Sunait, "Image of the Burmese", p.7.

[77]* "King Naresuan was the only Thai king ever to lead a military campaign into Hanthawaddy and Taunggo, the ancient capitals of Burma". See Sunait, "Great Warrior". Also see Sunait, "Image of the Burmese", p.10.

[78]* On his dead-bed in 1851, King Rama III was reported to have told Phraya Si Suriyawong (Chuang Bunnag) that: "There will be no more wars with Vietnam and Burma. We will have them only with the West. Take care, and do not lose any opportunities to them. Anything that they propose should be held up to close scrutiny before accepting it: Do not blindly trust them." Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, *Phraratcha phongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin ratchakan thi 3... ratchakan thi 4* [Royal chronicles of the Third and Fourth Reigns of the Rattanakosin period] (Bangkok, 1963), p.366, translation from Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.180.

[79]* Despite of minor warfare in 1810, the western frontier between Siam and Burma was quiet through most of the Second Reign (1809-1824). The security concerns lay mostly in the eastern sides with Vietnam and Cambodia. After the Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852), Burma posed no crucial hazard to Siam in the Fourth reign of King Mongkut (1851-1868). Instead, the threat was from the British. See Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp.162-83.

[80]* It was in Prince Damrong's *Royal Autograph Edition of the Chronicles* (1913) that the kingdoms of Ayutthaya and Thonburi were concluded as "*Siam Prathet*". The chronicle was also the first historical work that introduced the idea of "national liberation" and "independence" to the warfare between Siam and other countries. See *Phraratchaphongsawadan chabap Phraratchahatlekha lem 2 ton 1 lae 2* [The Royal

Autograph Chronicle, parts 1 and 2], part 1, p.484 and part 2, p.3; also see Sunait, "Image of the Burmese", p.22.

[81] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geobody of a Nation* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1994), p.163.

[82] Craig J. Reynolds, "The Plot of Thai History: Theory and Practice", in *Pattern and Illusions: Thai History and Thought* (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1992), p.325.

[83] Thongchai Winichakul, "Phurai nai prawattisat thai: karani phra mahathammaracha" [Villain in Thai history: the case of King Mahathammaracha of Ayutthaya], in *Thai Khadi Suksa*, Kanchanee La-ongsri, et al. (Bangkok: Ammarin Printing, 1990), pp.173-96.

[84]* Prince Damrong Rajanubhab was the son of King Mongkut, a half-brother of King Chulalongkorn. The prince was one of the most prominent Thai writers, historians, and educators in the kingdom. He was highly regarded as the "Father of Thai History". His early interests in foreign language and history was seemingly inspired by an English instructor, Francis George Patterson who was hired by King Chulalongkorn to tutor the royal princes. At the age of 15, Prince Damrong graduated from the Military Pages School and soon involved in the administration of the School. In 1887, he was appointed as the Director of the newly created Education Department under King Rama V's reform. He later became the Minister of Interior in 1892 and remained in the post till 1915. He was also named the Chairman of the National Library in 1925 and appointed as the Director of the new Royal Academy by King Rama VII. The 1932 *coup d'état* removed Prince Damrong from office, and he then took up residence in Penang in 1933. He returned to Bangkok in 1942 only passed away a year later at the age of 81. There has yet been a definitive bibliography of Prince Damrong's writings. The National Library listed over 1,000 titles. His major works include *The Royal Chronicle of the First Reign* (1901) and *The Royal Chronicle of the Second Reign* (1916), *the Royal Autograph Edition of the Chronicles* (1913). His most famous one, of course, is "Our War with Burmese" (1917). For details of Prince Damrong's life and writings, see Kennon Breazeale, "A Transition in Historical Writing: The Works of Prince Damrong Rachanuphap", in the *Journal of the Siam Society* (July, 1971), pp.25-49.

[85] For the life and work of Luang Wichit Wathakan see Chapter 4, note 64. Also see Barme, *Luang Wichit*.

[86] Breazeale, "Historical Writing", p.25.

[87] Thongchai, *Siam Mapped*, p.163.

[88] Prince Damrong Rachanuphap, "Our Wars with Burmese, part 1", U Aung Thein, tran., in the *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, 38: 1953, p.181.

[89] Prince Damrong gave an explicit biography of King Naresuan in his writings. See Prince Damrong, "Our Wars with Burmese", part 1, pp.181-96, and part 2, pp.135-200.

[90] Thongchai, *Siam Mapped*, pp.156-7.

[91]* Ibid. Hayden White argued that nineteenth-century European historians applied basic story-types that people used to make sense of their own lives in order to familiarize and conform to the public's consciousness. He classified such story-types into four categories: Tragedy, Comedy, Romance, and Satire. Historians, he claims, have always employed one or more of these four types to construct their history writings. See Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press), pp.7-11. Also see Reynolds, "The Plot", p.317.

[92] See "*Phra Naresuan prakat itsaraphap*" [King Naresuan declares independence], in Luang Witchit Wathankan, *Wichitsan* [Selected works of Luang Witchit Wathakan], vol.1: 125, translation from Thongchai, *Siam Mapped*, p.157. Also see Pra-onrat Buranamat, *Luang wichitwathakan kap lakhon prawattisat* [Luang Witchi Wathakan and historical plays] (Bangkok: Thammasat University Press, 1985), chapter 4.

[93] Thongchai, *Siam Mapped*, p.157.

[94] See *Phrarachaphongsawadan chabap Luang Prasoet* [The Luang Prasoet Chronicle of Ayutthaya] in *Prachum phongsawadan phak thi* (Bangkok: Kaona, 1963), pp.136-7; also quoted in Sunait, "Image of the Burmese", p.2.

[95] See *Phrarachaphongsawadan Krung Sayam* [The Chronicle of Siam of the British Museum Edition] (Bangkok: Kaona, 1964), pp.196-216, cited in Sunait, "Image of the Burmese", p.1.

[96]* The commission for the paintings of King Naresuan at Wat Suwandararam in Ayutthaya was extraordinary because temple murals usually only recorded the life of the Buddha. The painter of the murals, "Chan Chitrakorn (1871-1949) became court artisan during the Fifth Reign at the age of 22. He made numerous illustrations for King Vajiravudh. After the completion of the paintings at Wat Suwandararam, he was awarded a gold cigarette case with the signature of King Prajadhipok engraved on it". Apinan, *Modern Art*, p.24 n.10.

[97] Ibid., pp.24-5.

[98]* The date was calculated by Chanthit Krasaesindhu, see Sunait, "Great Warrior".

[99]* Sarit's biographer in the Cremation Volume noted his love for the army:
Throughout his life, he was proud and deeply involved with the army. He often said "I have lived in the army since my youth, and if I had to leave the army it would break my heart. Therefore, I vow that if I should die, let it happen while I am in the army." He kept that vow, for even when he was promoted to high offices he never left the army. He did not merely hold onto positions in the army while engaged in other work, but personally took care of important administrative work. He tried his best to attend all important functions of the army. Often he remarked to his close associates that no matter where he was, nothing could compare with the army. Especially during annual meetings to consider promotions of army officers, he would never be absent, but would attend their opening or closing ceremonies, and he never failed to deliver lengthy speeches.
Prawat lae phonngan khong chomphon Sarit Thanarat, khanarattamontri phim nai ngan phraratchanthan pluengsop [Biography and work of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, published by the Cabinet for his cremation ceremony] (April 17, 1964), p.53, translation in Chalermkiet, *Political Thoughts*, p.127.

[100]* The Wild Tiger Corps (*Sua Pa*) was to be named the same as the old *Sua Pa Maew Morng* of King Naresuan's armed forces. The ancient corps' main function was to provide advance scouts for the regular army, seeking out the enemies, pinpointing their locations, and reporting on their activities. See Stephen Lyon Wakeman Greene, *Absolute Dreams: Thai Government Under Rama VI, 1910-1925* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1999), p.41.

[101] King Rama VI's speech at Don Chedi can be found in *Bangkok Times* (February 14, 1914); *Chotmaihet Sua Pa* [Wild Tiger Records], no.10 (February, 1916), pp.347-52. Also see Vella, *Chaiyo*, p.208.

[102]* The play "The Blood of Suphanburi", debuted in Bangkok in August 1936, was a huge success. It featured the romance of a doomed couple, the Burmese general Mangrai and a Suphan native girl named Duangchan. Of course, the play also emphasized self-sacrifice and patriotism. The anthem sang by Duangchan in the last scene stated:

The blood of Suphan is brave in war, tough and bold and never will flee.
Never will shiver or tremble before the foe,
take dagger or sword, come join in the fight.
Come on together, come on together, the blood of Suphan,
The blood of Suphan, face the enemy, do not worry or fear.

Translation in Barme, *Luang Wichit*, pp.121-2. Barme also provides a good review of this play in his book, pp.121-4.

[103]* Started in 1956, the Monument of King Naresuan was designed and molded by Bhirasri with Sitthidet Seanghiran, Pakorn Lekson and Sanan Silakorn as his assistants.

[104]* The detailed description of the story of the elephant combat as depicted in this panel can be found in Prince Damrong, "Our Wars with Burmese", war no. 10, pp.156-68.

[105]* The precise account of this episode of King Naresuan declaring Independence can be seen in Prince Damrong, "Our Wars with Burmese", War no. 5, pp.172-96.

[106]* From the "Biography of King Naresuan the Great" in the Great Pagoda Museum, Don Chedi, Suphanburi:

> King Naresuan, born in 1555, was the son of Somdet Phra Maha Thammaracha, a descendant of the Phra Ruang dynasty of Sukthothai, and Queen Phra Wisut Kasattri of the Suwannaphum dynasty of Ayutthaya. He was a brave king who declared independence from the Pegu kingdom in 1584 and succeeded his father in 1590. King Naresuan was a genius in military affairs, politics, government, and international affairs. Through his personal strength Ayutthaya regained its independence. He protected his realm and people and spread the might of the Ayutthaya kingdom in all directions and was highly respected by all neighboring states. He died in 1605 as he was leading the Thai army into the enemy's territory. It was a heroic act deserved to be praised and honored with pride by all his subjects.

[107]* A detailed account of the historical importance of Pitsanulok and King Naresuan can be found in Prince Damrong, "Our Wars with Burmese", part 1, pp.175-80.

[108]* The Chan Royal Palace was said to be built in the reign of King Boromtrailokanath of Ayutthaya (1448-1488). It had been the residence of King Naresuan when he governed Pitsanulok. Now it is the Pitsanulok Phitayakom School.

[109] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.285; also see Donald F. Cooper, *Thailand: Dictatorship or Democracy* (Montreux: Minerva Press, 1995), pp.200-1.

[110] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.285.

[111] See Sombun Woraphong, *Comphon Sarit Thanarat* [Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat] (Bangkok, Kasemsamphan Press, 1964), pp.485-6; also see Toru Yano, "Political Structure of a 'Rice-Growing State'", in *Thailand: A Rice Growing Society*, Yoneo Ishii, ed. (Kyoto: Kyoto University), p.144.

[112] Yano, "Political Structure", p.145.

[113] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.285.

[114]* The political alliance between Thanom and Prapas was further cemented by the marriage of Thanom's son, Narong, with Praphas's daughter, in which the King personally presided over the wedding ceremony.

[115] Cooper, *Dictatorship or Democracy*, pp.235-6.

[116] Yano, "Political Structure", p.149.

[117] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.285.

[118] Nantiya Tangwisutijit, "Historian Confirms Pagoda Theory", *The Nation* (July 2, 2000).

CHAPTER VI
VISION OF DIVERSITY

The last day of the twentieth century was anticipated with high hype yet ended on a low key. In turns confused and calm, glamorous and gloomy, revolutionary or reactionary, Thailand in the final three decades of the previous century also experienced flights of fancy and times of disappointment. The world has accelerated in speed and scale drastically since the 1970s. New wealth was made, new knowledge was invented, and new nations were created. More importantly, new ideas and perspectives about the world were recognized. One of these, diversity, was better acknowledged. Thai society gracefully danced to the same tune. From student upheavals to provincial pride to courageous women, different visions have begun to jostle for monumental memories in public space. Monuments were no longer solely a eulogy of the Bangkok elite. Neither did they have to revolve around the centralized framework of Chakri monarchs, modern nationalism, and mythical kings that dominated the landscape in the earlier years.

Since the late 1950s, the Thai military leaders began to enrich their narrow nationalistic agenda and embraced the notion of "development" with economic growth as the chief measure.[1] The central concept was actualized in a series of "National Plans" with the first one commencing between 1961 and 1965. The age of Industrialization had begun. Despite the conservative outlook of society and "despotic" style of politics, the Sarit-Thanom regime brought rapid urban development, economic growth, and foreign investment to Thailand in the two decades of the 1960s and 70s. The "self-sufficient" agricultural kingdom took on a sleek capitalistic look. With promises of prosperity, the government strove to freeze the political system by diverting national attention to pocketbooks. The policy was successful only temporarily. No matter how hard the regime tried to stall the clock, it could not stop time entirely.

The political aspirations of the Thai people were bound to catch up with their economic status. An urban middle class with better-educated citizens became an eminent force in the new "civil society". They increasingly made demands upon

the closed political structure and started to question the military clique's mandate. To the bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, the authoritarian government was perceived to be a suppressor of democracy rather than a symbol of traditional heroism. These reactions were further complicated by external affairs. While the Thai elite willfully stood behind the Americans in Indochina, waves of social protest against the war only turned louder and stronger. Pressure mounted. The conflict culminated on October 14, 1973. The military-style regime, which had been created by Phibun and enhanced by Sarit-Thanom, came to an end after more than three decades of dominance.

A revolution is not merely the abrupt overthrowing of a political power. Its noblest and boldest attempt is to reconstruct the world. The popular uprising of 1973 against military rule has been deemed "a political and intellectual revolution" that shook the historical and social paradigm.[2] Without overly romanticizing or idealizing, at the very least, the event questioned conventional narratives of the past and their unconditional acceptance. The intrigues of Thai history have since surfaced for exploration. The door for political and ideological discussion has started to open. New views of the Thai nation have become feasible.

Power shifts in politics challenged the institutionalized relation between art and the people. The toppling of the military government, the vigor of mass demonstrations, and the passion for social issues aroused the political sentiments of Thai artists of the 1970s. In 1974, the Artists' Front of Thailand and the Art Exhibition of Thailand were formed as counterparts to the established art authority, namely, Silpakorn University and the Department of Fine Arts. To memorialize the anniversary of October 1973, the new art forces organized a public exhibition on Rajadamnern Avenue, displaying thousands of paintings and posters on the theme of democracy. Many presentations delved into political meanings, such as art for the masses, protests against American military bases in Thailand, and commemoration of the dead during the uprising. The function of arts, whether to serve the power or the people, became an issue to generate discussions for decades to come. Although the realm of monumental art still remained closely tied to the elite, changes did begin to take place.

In an era of dynamism and development, various visions have competed for public remembrance. This chapter plots the many facets of modern Thailand through public monuments of diverse themes that have evolved in the last few decades of the twentieth century. The subject matter is vast, and it is impossible to include the full range of all monuments in this thesis. Hence, three topics are selected—monuments for women, monuments for ordinary heroes, and monuments for the present royal family. Of course, the line of differentiation can be vague. The classification serves only as an angle for investigation instead of an absolute measure, as a monument can assume many roles and allow many interpretations. Furthermore, the alternative visions did not emerge suddenly from obscurity. Neither were they totally disconnected from the official dogmas. It is the continuation and contradiction of these monuments that have made them fascinating expressions of their times.

Monuments of Thai Women

Thailand is a man's world. Be they Dusit-style matrons elegantly arranging the lotus kratong with lovely children against a backdrop of temple ruins or the bikini-clad dancers swinging around poles to ear-splitting disco music in the racy Patpong street, there has long endured a sexist cliché that Thai women exist purely for the male gaze.[3] Living under the hovering dominance of Theravada Buddhism and patriarchal traditions, Thai women have had meager opportunities to express their aptitude and aspirations.[4] They seldom enjoyed a luminous adulation in history. Even when female figures did appear on the chronicle pages, their roles have largely been confined to consorts of men and rarely exceeded a few lines. Throughout Thai history, no woman ever attained the throne in Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and the Bangkok dynasty. There is evidence of only three female rulers in the northern Lanna kingdoms—Chamthewi of Haripunchai (Lamphun), Chirapraphathewi and Wisutthithewi of Mangrai (Chiang Mai) dynasty, which was not officially included as a province of the Thai nation until 1899.

Indeed, the twentieth century marked a breakthrough for Thai women. A handful of renowned ladies have gracefully entered the pantheon of "official hero" and achieved the stardom of monumental reverence. No longer are females cast automatically as the weaker half of the gender. Thai women can fight the enemies,

protect the country, and at times selflessly martyr themselves for the national cause. The creation of Thai heroines indubitably has more to do with promoting patriotism than correcting the sexist bias of the past. It was under the pennant of nationalism that Thai women received monumental honors in public space although the "historical" lives of these figures are still a matter of conjecture. This section begins with the emergence of legendary Thai women in the modern context. A discourse of three public monuments of these exceptional heroines is then presented, namely the Monument of Thao Suranari in Nakhon Ratchasima (1934), the Monument of the Sisters Thao Thepsatri and Thao Srisunthorn in Phuket (1966), and the Monument of Queen Suriyothai in Ayutthaya (1995).

Legendary Heroines and the Twentieth Century

The status of women enjoyed a significant elevation in the beginning of the twentieth century. While making a realistic statue of a lady bared to the open sun and rain was perhaps still an unimaginable concept at the time, a porcine monument was erected at the foot bridge across Klong Lod next to Wat Rachapradit in tribute to Queen Saowapha Phongsi, the most influential consort of King Chulalongkorn and the mother of his successor, King Vajiravudh. The golden boar monument, portraying the zodiac sign of the year in which the Queen was born (1863), was a commemoration for her fiftieth birthday in 1913. It was designed by three royal artists, including Prince Naris who was too born in the same year of the boar as the Queen. Nearby, on the northeast corner of Sanam Luang stands the gilded statue of Mae Toranee, the Earth Goddess. It was originally part of a fountain built by Queen Saowapha to provide Bangkok citizens with fresh drinking water. Also designed by Prince Naris, the enshrined image depicts the glorious moment when the Earth Goddess wrings the water from her hair as she witnesses Buddha's defeat of the forces of evil.[5]

The empowerment of women certainly needs more than allegorical memorials. Queen Saowapha was also a principal figure in female education, even though King Chulalongkorn did not seem to be very enthusiastic about such a development.[6] Her Majesty's bequest led to the establishment of a number of girls' schools in Bangkok and later in various provincial centers. Followed by private groups and Christian missionaries, many girls were thus able to receive a formal

education in Bangkok by the beginning of the twentieth century.[7] In the highly competitive and calculated network of arranged marriages within the elite families, female education served as no more than a precious dowry. It was thought to be an enhancement of a young lady's desirability as the "intelligent companion for her husband" and "wise guide to her children" instead of an encouragement to her individuality and independence.[8] The efforts for equal educational opportunities bared fruit in 1927 when women were accepted to university-level education in Chulalongkorn University.[9]

In a more open and positive milieu, the idea of a strong woman started to gain popularity in Thai society. The expansion of women's education "facilitated a growing female consciousness of their place" in the modern nation.[10] In April 1906, the first commercial women's monthly publication, *Kunla Satri* (High Ladies) made its debut in the kingdom.[11] The magazine targeted elite and educated women who were princesses from the royal house, ladies from the noble families, as well as the daughters and wives of the wealthy Chinese merchants.[12] The outlook of the magazine was conservative. In an article entitled "A Woman's Duty" (*na-thi khorng ying*), a female writer under the pseudonym Sangwanphet upheld the secondary position of women in society and compared their roles to the "hind legs of an elephant" (*chang thao lang*), a metaphor which is still widely used today.[13]

Nonetheless, *Kunla Satri* also sought to define a new image of Thai femininity. The premiere issue brought three outstanding past heroines to attention, including Queen Suriyothai of sixteenth-century Ayutthaya together with the warrior-sisters Thao Thepsatri and Thao Srisunthorn in the south in the late eighteenth century. During the reign of King Vajiravudh, the royal elite adopted a nationalistic stance, and the media followed suite. Making its appearance in 1914, another women's publication *Satri Niphon* similarly highlighted female protagonists with a martial ethos who contributed in national affairs and fought for the kingdom's sovereignty.[14] Articles like "Stop Underestimate Women" (*ya pramat satri*), accordingly, emphasized female historical figures in this context, such as Queen Suriyothai, Thao Thepsatri and Thao Srisunthorn, as well as Thao Suranari, the wife of the Nakhon Ratchasima governor during the Third Reign of the early Bangkok period.

As nationalism reached a new climax after the *coup d'état* of 1932, the domestic and national roles of Thai women also marked a new height in the 1930s and 40s. The monogamy law was promulgated in 1935 by the second constitutional government of Phraya Phahon (1933-38). In order to achieve Phibun's own vision of a civilized nation, women needed to be respected if not yet enjoying an equal status to men. Phibun once explained that "women are mothers of every Thai" and "they are the mould of the nation".[15] Husbands, especially those in the government service, were required to maintain and honor their wives, such as kissing their spouses before and after leaving the house for work.[16] Likewise, women were also accepted into the armed forces, with a corps in the Army, a cadet academy, and a non-commissioned training school all designated for females. Phibun's wife, Than-phuying Laiad, was the real force behind the campaigning for these women's military corps. She was bestowed the rank of a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Artillery Regiment herself.[17] Moreover, Laiad set up nationwide philanthropic organizations including the Women Cultural Club in 1943. Using the image of Queen Suriyothai as symbol, the club successfully expanded into almost all the provincial centers by the mid 1950s.

The second half of the twentieth century saw a series of successes in the women's movement. The year 1950 witnessed the first victory of a woman in a national election.[18] Under the "*pattiwat*" leadership of Sarit and particularly pressure from the international community, prostitution was officially prohibited in 1960.[19] However, Sarit himself might not be a true believer in women's equality, as he was known to have maintained more than fifty mistresses. After the 1973 student uprising, Article 28 of the Constitution of 1974 proclaimed that men and women have equal rights.[20] In fact, the "economic miracle" in the late 1980s and mid 1990s would have been impossible without "the backs of women".[21] As Thai women continued their journey of seeking parity and recognition in society, the various governments also used the rising position of women to promote a nationalistic agenda. It was in this light that the handful of historical heroines were brought back to public memories. The images of these legendary women were further immortalized in monuments, indicating not only the elitist visions of the Thai nation but also the increasing significance of women in a more diverse Thailand.

- **The Monument of Thao Suranari**

Since the establishment of the Bangkok dynasty, the Northeast region, which was mostly composed of ethnic Laotians, has long maintained an uneasy relationship with the central Thai rulers. Following the defeat of Vientiane by King Taksin in 1779, the Lao principalities became vassal states of Siam. While the Laotian leaders found themselves bound by the will of the more powerful Thai monarchs, much of the indigenous population and lucrative trade were controlled by the *yokkrabat* (governor) of Nakhon Ratchasiman (Korat) who had allied himself with the Bangkok court.[22] The situation intensified during the Third Reign. The Vice King of Vientiane Chao Anu was an ambitious leader who yearned to unite the Lao states. Especially after his son Chao Yo became the ruler of Champassak in 1819, Anu began a series of preparatory tasks for the "return" of the holy Emerald Buddha, which he thought belonged to the Lao, and readied for a "confrontation" with the enemy.[23] Meanwhile, King Rama III, Phra Nangklao (r.1824-1851), had also attempted to expand the Thai kingdom by annexing Laos and Cambodia.[24] At last, the strife broke into the open. Led by Anu, the Laotians marched from Vientiane and Champassak towards Bangkok in January 1827 with an excuse of counter-attacking a British invasion.

Colored with modern nationalism, the story of Thao Suranari, or better known as Than Phu-ying Mo or Ya Mo (Grandmother Mo), was set against this crucial conflict in the early nineteenth century. Anu's troops soon reached the border of Nakhon Ratchasima. The popular belief told that Thao Suranari, the wife of the governor, plotted a scheme against the Lao invaders since her husband was out of town at the time. After a brief clash, the resistance gave up, and the Korat city gate was opened for Anu's armies. Thao Suranari and her female contingents offered an elaborate banquet to celebrate the truce. Of course, it was only a trap. The agile and able lady promptly led her people to attack the drowsy intruders in the middle of the night. Accordingly, the Thais succeeded, and the oafish foes were either slaughtered or ran away. Another version portrays the governor's wife more as a martial heroine as she and other women, who had been seized by the Laotians, fiercely fought back. Finally, her dauntless actions made the adversaries retreat out of fear. In any case, the Anu revolt was doomed to fail and tragically ended in the

disastrous sack of Vientiane.[25] Whereas the heroic action of Thao Suranari was recorded only briefly in Thai chronicles during the Third Reign, the legend of this courageous woman was kept vividly alive among the Northeastern folks. A century later in 1934, the monument of Thao Suranari was erected in the heartland of Nakhon Ratchasima.

The heroine's memorial was both artistically and historically remarkable. It was the first women's statue in public space. It was also the first public monument erected by the constitutional government, which had recently overthrown the absolute monarchy. Furthermore, the monument was the first project commissioned to Bhirasri under this new form of government. Designed and molded by the Italian master, the one-and-a-half life size bronze figure of Thao Suranari was executed with his famous realistic style, emphasizing anatomy, balance, and likeness. The freestanding pose, which has been a classic in Italian Renaissance sculpture, was applied to the portrayal of this lordly lady. She is seen standing with her legs slightly apart, as her left hand rests on her waist and her right hand holds a long ornate scepter that signifies her status. The bare-footed heroine is depicted in traditional costume, sporting a short hairstyle and dressed in a *sabai* sash on top with a pleated *phatong* tube skirt of typical early Bangkok fashion. The facial details, moreover, capture the beautiful features of a Thai woman who is calm, confident, and competence.

Beyond a sentimental salute to her legend, the erection of Thao Suranari's statue was also related to national politics. It was the year 1934, and the Phya Phahon government had just survived the Boworadet rebellion. The October 1933 revolt did have some interesting parallels with the undertakings of Anu a century ago. Both mutiny forces, for instance, started their campaigns by cooperating with or "seizing" Korat.[26] As King Prajadhipok left the kingdom for Europe in January 1934, the new constitutional government sought to find appropriate historical reference to ensure its legitimacy and enhance its popularity. Having saved her people from falling into the hands of the enemies, Thao Suranari was a pertinent icon in a time and place of uncertainty. She was regarded as a "national heroine" who fought for a national cause. After all, she was the wife of the governor. Her loyalty was sworn to the Thai people as a whole and the Bangkok ruler in particular.

While the "surrender" of Korat during the 1827 rebellion was undeniable,[27] the historical accuracy of Than Phu-ying Mo raised some doubts among skeptical scholars. The prevalence of the heroine's story was partly due to the efforts by the Korat governor's descendants to rehabilitate the reputation of their ancestors in the "easy" fall of this northeastern bastion. In late 1995, a work by Saipin Kaewngamprasoet's titled *The Politics of the Thao Suranari Monument* discussed the glorification of the heroine as a result of national and local politics. Notwithstanding, the publication provoked the testy ire of the townsfolk. The people of Korat felt offended at the author's treatment of their local heroine and demanded that she beg forgiveness in front of the revered statue.[28]

Standing tall on a pedestal at the western gate of the old city walls in the center of town, the monument of Thao Suranari is the focal point of the brisk northeastern hub. Despite the controversy, Than Phu-ying Mo remains a beloved patron for the Isan people. The realistic sculpture by Bhirasri has become a holy idol to which many devotees lay garlands and light incense at her feet, praying for her protection and guidance. At the end of every March, a week long festival is held in honor of this brave "grandmother" of Korat, with colorful parades, traditional dances, folk theatre, and music around the heroine's statue.

- **The Monument of Sisters Thao Thepsatri and Thao Srisunthorn**

In line with the story of Than Phu-ying Mo, the tale of Thao Thepsatri and Thao Srisunthorn, two sister heroines who drove back an assault from foreign foes in Phuket island in the late eighteenth century, also connects to the realm of modern politics.[29] The legend tells that Thao Thepsatri, also known as Khun Chan, was the governor's wife of Muang Thalang (Phuket) during the First Reign (1782-1809) of the Bangkok period. Since the Chakri dynasty had only established itself as a regional power shortly after the deposition of King Taksin of Thonburi, neighboring kingdoms eyed this a great opportunity to expand their territories and test the might of the newly crowned Thai ruler. The time-honored rival Burmese seized the moment. Accordingly, King Bodawhpaya of Burma (r. 1781-1819) sent more than a hundred thousand troops against Siam in 1785.[30]

One of the Burmese forces set its target on the Southern island Thalang, where the governor had just passed away and a successor had not been named. Nevertheless, the defense was not as frail as the invaders expected. The wife of the deceased governor, Thao Thepsatri, courageously undertook the leadership. Together with her sister Thao Srisunthorn, also known as Khun Mok, the lady warrior effectively organized the people of the island into a stalwart resistance. Even after a five-weeks siege, the city had not yet fallen. Lacking in food supplies and fighting spirit, the Burmese troops vainly withdrew.

The valiant feat of Thao Thepsatri and her sister Thao Srisunthorn was not mentioned in the Thalang chronicle at the time. Neither did their acts receive serious attention from the court of King Rama I. The heroines' deeds were documented more than three decades later by a grandson of Thao Thepsatri during the Reign of King Rama III. However, the background of the ladies and the details of the event were still rather unclear. Thao Thepsatri seems to have had at least two husbands, and it was her last husband who took the governorship of Thalang.[31] In some popular versions, both Thao Thepsatri and Thao Srisunthorn were the daughters of the Thalang governor.[32] More lively stories recall the two sisters disguising themselves as men and rolling up banana leaves to look like musket barrels in order to frighten the Burmese. In any case, the two martial ladies became a legend in the prosperous southern island. They were later incorporated into the centralized Thai history during the Fifth Reign and promoted to the status of national heroines who deserved a monumental commemoration in the modern time of foreign threats.

By the 1960s, the shadow of the Indochina war towered heavily over Thailand. From the Thai and the American perspective, the situation looked alarming as the open warfare between North and South Vietnam resumed. While Laos and Cambodia were caught in the middle, the People's Republic of China also became more aggressively involved, including lending its support to the communist insurgency in Thailand.[33] The kingdom's direct participation in the conflict began with the Thanom government (1963-1973). A Royal Thai Air force contingent was sent to Saigon in mid-1964 and a naval unit in 1965; meanwhile, the army was engaged in Laos by 1966.[34] Carrying on the torch of Field Marshal Sarit's utilizing

the myth of King Naresuan, the Thanom regime followed the use of traditional heroism to stir public support and justify its rule. The erection of the statue of Thao Thepsatri and Thao Srisunthorn, hence, lay in this political ambience.

Designed and molded by Sanan Silakorn, one of the favorite and most talented students of Bhirasri, the one-and-a-half life size heroine monument was set up on Thao Thepsatri Road in Thalang district, Phuket in 1966. The two women warriors are depicted standing side by side, elevated in a roundabout pedestal on top of a fort-like platform. Heroic realism anchored by Bhirasri has made a deep and lasting impression on the official style of monumental sculpture. The dominant mode continued in this work of Sanan. With a short, slick back *rongsong* hairstyle, the noble ladies are shown in classical attire, wearing long sleeve upper-garments with *bangma* sashes across the front, *jongkraben* pants, but no shoes. Both gallant figures each hold a sword in their right hands, while Thao Srisunthorn's left one holds her sister's arm, uniting the couple into one. The heroines resolutely glance toward the horizon at their outpost, conscious of the danger waiting for them yet at the same time proud of the duty of protecting their land. Unlike the graceful statue of the Korat lady Thao Suranari, this sister monument displays the two female leaders as capable fighters. Once only assumed by men, women now could execute such heroic acts with comparable vitality. The idea is simple. Regardless of gender, one should stand up and repulse the enemies that imperil the King and the country. In an era of pressing communist insurgencies, the message was never more apparent. Notwithstanding, the monument rises above timely politics. As the chivalrous swords of the ladies are now decorated with flower wreaths, the heroine statue has become not only the guardian spirit of the island folks but also a landmark of Phuket.

- **The Monument of Queen Suriyothai**

The sublime idealism of elegance, loyalty, and selfless devotion in a woman ultimately comes with the memory of Queen Suriyothai. The tragic life of the Ayutthaya queen has all the trappings of a legend. Historical accounts of this royal martyr are still highly uncertain,[35] but the queen's heroism was never in doubt in popular belief. Although the Luang Prasoet chronicle and prisoners of war testimonies contradict each other to some degree, they both tell of a courageous

court lady who sacrificed herself on the battlefield in order to save the life of her royal consort during the wars between the Ayutthaya monarch Maha Cakraphat and the Burmese king Tabinshwethi of Hongsawadi in the late sixteenth century.[36] In the early Bangkok period, the accentuation on Queen Suriyothai as a faithful heroine by chronicle compilers became more evident and elaborate. "The British Museum Chronicle of Ayudhya", a chronicle unearthed by a senior Thai historian Kachorn Sukhabanij in 1958, distinctly recorded the demise of the queen. Similarly, Prince Damrong noted the heroic event in his renowned *Our War with Burmese* (1917) in details and titled the war number two as "Somdet Phra Suriyothai died on the neck of the elephant in the year of the Monkey, BE 2091 (AD 1548)".[37]

The story of Queen Suriyothai was set in a time of political intrigue within the Ayutthaya court. As the news of disorder in the Thai capital reached the ears of the ambitious Burmese king Tabinshwethi, he decided to expand his kingdom at the expense of his eastern neighbor. War was thus unavoidable. Learning that the Burmese troops were converging upon Ayutthaya, King Cakraphat, together with his two princes, Phra Ramesaon and Phra Mahin, went out of the city to meet with the invading force. At the same time, Queen Suriyothai, the chief queen of King Cakraphat, also mounted her royal elephant, Song Suriyakasat, dressed herself as the Viceroy, and followed her family to battle. The showdown soon became a single elephant duel between the Ayutthaya king and the commander of the Burmese army, the Viceroy of Prome. Unfortunately, King Cakraphat's royal elephant made a false move and lost its position. The Viceroy of Prome seized the opportunity to pursue the King. Witnessing the imminent danger of her husband, Queen Suriyothai drove her royal elephant to intercept the enemy. While King Cakraphat was able to escape, Queen Suriyothai met the scythe of the Burmese chaser. He struck Queen Suriyothai on the shoulder and slashed down to her breast. Phra Ramesuan and Phra Mahin tried to save their mother but it was too late. Queen Suriyothai died on the neck of her elephant. However, the Ayutthaya king and the two princes were able to withdraw from the battle and retreated to the capital safely with the corpse of the queen, who was finally cremated in the municipality of Suan Luang.

The creation of a Thai nation and conception of national history that began in the late nineteenth century deliberately buttressed the heroism of Queen

Suriyothai in public memory. She was described as a devoted lady who sacrificed her own life for the safety of the king, the symbol and manifestation of the nation. The first public visual portrayal of Queen Suriyothai was presented in the Fifth Reign.[38] In 1887, King Chulalongkorn organized an art exhibition of ninety-two paintings chronologically narrating the Thai national history at the cremation of his daughters, Chaofa Phahuratmanimai and Chaofa Triphetrutathamrong, and his royal consort Phraungchao Saovapharknaarirat. The episode depicting the death of Queen Suriyothai was accompanied by a poem by King Chulalongkorn himself, recounting the war with the Burmese and lauding the courage of the queen. The Ayutthaya martyr also captured the patriotic heart of King Rama VI. King Vajiravudh glorified the queen's deed of protecting the Nation, Religion and Monarch from the evil foes as "an epitome of respectable behavior".[39] As a result, the legend of Queen Suriyothai has been included in history books along with school texts and celebrated as the ideal of modern womanhood.[40]

The monumental remembrance of Queen Suriyothai, moreover, would become more impressive as the film "Suriyothai" by M.C. Chatrichalerm Yukol (Prince Than Mun), one of the most renowned Thai directors, debuts in late 2001. The much-anticipated film, with the highest budget in local filmmaking of more than 400 million baht, is expected to further inspire the Thai masses through a historical reconstruction and artistic imagination of the life of the Ayutthaya queen. Together with her grandson King Naresuan, Queen Suriyothai has become one of the most revered icons in Thai history.

The most earnest attempt to revive the life of this royal heroine through art arose in the 1990s. Thanks to the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, who personally admired the bravery of the ancient queen, the spirit of Queen Suriyothai has been kept sparkling in the Thai public's eyes, perhaps brighter than ever in the last decade of the twentieth century. The Monument of Queen Suriyothai in Ayutthaya was one of these great efforts. In 1995, the memorial complex was unveiled at the Makamyong Plain, the site of the fatal combat where she saved her king but was killed by the Viceroy of Prome. The original project was conceived on a massive scale, creating the tragic yet heroic scene of the Queen's martyrdom with three sets of monumental sculpture: a statue of Queen Suriyothai, a group of four

opposing Burmese war elephants, and a crowd of commoners who witness the heartbreaking moment. Although the final layout excluded the figures of the Burmese troops, the other monuments are notwithstanding spectacular and sensational.

The statue of the Ayutthaya Queen was designed by Khaimook Xuto, who was an exceptional female student of Bhirasri and one of the most favorite artists of Queen Sirikit. Embodying the realistic style of her teacher, Khaimook not only portrayed the heroine on elephant back in battle. But more importantly, she also set the figure in a dramatic scene that was composed of more than the Queen alone. While the face of the heroine struck a resemblance to the present Queen, the whole image echoed Bhirasri's earlier work King Naresuan in Don Chedi (1958). Likewise, the female fighter was depicted on her royal elephant in traditional male warrior attire, holding a long spear at her right side. Besides the elephant pilot, she was also accompanied by four soldiers, which approximated the imagery from the Monument of King Taksin in Chanthaburi (1972) by Suphorn Sirasongkroh. There were two warriors on each side of the elephant, armed with distinctive weapons and striking various poses to assist the queen to save her king. While Queen Suriyothai had rescued her royal consort by interposing herself in front of the Burmese antagonist, the monument captured this very moment that the heroine was about to be slashed by her attacker. The whole representation evinced a sense of elegance and beauty, yet is also charged with tautness and intensity.

In order to magnify her selfless feat and heighten emotional effect, an assembly of her people is put at the bottom of the monumental complex, attesting this moving episode of the Queen. The ten sculptures of individual folks are executed in superb realism, portraying people of all ages and both genders, from little children to able adults to the elders. Every figure is engaged in different positions and expresses different reactions. Be it an old man somberly bowing down to the ground, or a woman quietly weeping her tears, or a young man sincerely paying his respect to the Queen, the spatial arrangement and dramatic immediacy of the statues reveal the strain of humanity in witnessing such tragedy.

The only standing figures in the group are a young couple. Holding her infant in her arms, the mother looks up to the Queen with solemn admiration. The father figure, on the other hand, faces down to his child, telling the next generation this unforgettable event of Thai history and vowing to follow the Queen's example. As a whole, the memorial complex strives to impart the final moment of the physical and moral struggle of a dignified heroine, and hence, advocates the ultimate duty of a Thai citizen—the self-sacrifice for the King and the nation.

Monuments and Memories of Thai Women

The monumental memories of heroic women are not notably different from their male counterparts. The nationalistic story-lines are the same, such as defending the kingdom, defeating the enemies, and devoting one's life for the cause. Many facets of these "historical" heroines are still speculations and hearsay. Yet they are verified by the state and included in "national history". The public monuments dedicated to them are oftentimes established for political ends rather than celebrating the ladies' own identities.

Nonetheless, Thai heroines can also be created by public power in modern times. The upsurge of the myth of Princess Suphankalaya is an excellent illustration. While the effort to situate Princess Suphankalaya in chronological history proves to be difficult, her life-story, garnished with all the flavors of a melodrama, emerged effortlessly as a revered icon among the Thai folks. As the legend goes, she is said to be the older sister of King Naresuan. In order to free his younger brother Prince Naresuan from the Burmese hostage, she exchanged herself to be the consort of King Bayinnuang, only years later to be killed by the furious monarch who learned that King Naresuan had slaughtered the Burmese crown-prince in the famous elephant duel.[41] The elaborate and climactic accounts, in fact, are largely owed to the endeavors of a Thai-monk and a businesswoman.[42] The Ayutthaya princess's image, a long-haired young lady in pink with otherworldly beauty, came into an ardent explosion during the early days of the economic crisis in 1997. Despite the challenges launched by the Department of Fine Arts, the popularity of Princess Suphankalaya continued to rise. The "non-institutionalized" heroine eventually gained a monumental honor. For instance, a gilded statue of the princess was erected at the Third Army base in Pitsanulok in 1998. Derived from

popular imagination, the figure depicts a lovely young lady in elegant court attire overseeing her believers and standing next to the monuments of her heroic brother, King Naresuan.

Through the founding of their public monuments, a handful of legendary Thai women have marched a major step in promoting the female gender in Thai society. While successfully invented muscular and militaristic figures for the mythical warriors, monumental art of the twentieth-century also fashioned a new public image of Thai women. They are not only brave and bright but also more importantly loyal to their country. This outcome was surely related to nationalism. However, the vision that females can possibly achieve arduous tasks and deserve public reverence was memorable in itself. They are seen, at the very least, as a vital element of the modern Thai nation. The commemorations of the martial women were only a beginning. Various outstanding royal ladies in the twentieth century have also come out of the enclosed inner-court and appeared as public figures. Their accomplishments in contemporary Thailand earned them monumental salutes, for instance, the Monument of the Queen Grandmother (1971) by Sanan in Chonburi and the many memorials for the Princess Mother by Manop Suwanpinta in the 1990s, which are discussed in the subsequent section.

Monuments of Ordinary Heroes

The October 1973 student uprising raised the curtain for alternative visions of the Thai nation. While the transformation had begun before the "revolutionary" event, the potential and prominence of such notions were only realized in the post 1973 context.[43] The "one-man, authoritarian rule" came to an end, even though the dominant role of the military in Thai politics had not yet to been relinquished.[44] The episode of 1973 signaled a "consciousness" and "necessity of sharing political power more widely than had ever been in the past". As the centralized structure and traditional relations of power faced an inevitable change, a new group of local and ordinary men correspondingly emerged as monumental heroes.

The bloom of locality indeed was helped by this shift of political powers. Often evasive but at times aggressive, provincial communities had long resisted the overbearing of the Bangkok elite. For instance, the *phu mi bun* millenarian revolt of

1902 in the Northeast was one noteworthy dilemma.[45] Since the 1950s, socialist movements in Indochina and more alarmingly in the rural areas of Thailand proved to be a vexing concern for the government and its powerful American partner. The Thai military had been "the willing ally of the United States in the task of defending Southeast Asia from Communism".[46] In return, Thailand became the recipient of "a generous flow of funds, weapons, training, and political support".[47] Large military bases were set up in different frontiers of this "domino" bastion, such as Nakhon Ratchasima, with paved highways and facilities that efficiently linked the remote villages to the crux of authority. As a result, the real power fell into the hands of the military chiefs in upcountry areas instead of the political leaders in the insurgent-free central region. Beginning in the mid-1970s, the generals who later rose to eminent positions, including Prime Ministers Prem Tinsulanond (1980-1988) and Chavalit Yongchaiyudh (1996-1997), mostly came up through the Second, Third, and Fourth Armies rather than through the First Army that was based in the capital. [48] Their faith in and passion for the local constituencies consequently put the periphery into the list of central concerns.

While the growth of provincial centers proceeded at a rapid pace, voices demanding political power on the national level also grew louder. Many of the civilian leaders with strong regional support have outshone the Bangkok elite and even attained the top post of premiership, such as Banharn Silapa-archa (1995-1996) from Suphanburi and Chuan Leekpai (1992-1995 and 1997-2001) from Trang. Like the coining-name of *Phleng Luk Thun*g (country music) in 1964, local activity and personality soon became a popular currency of Thai society.[49] With flourishing tourism, interest in regional cultures has sometimes turned into a fascination with the exotic and a source of commercialization. Yet as mass education and economic development spread over rustic areas, the attributes of indigenous cultures and history, which do not always conform to the "national definition", have arisen into the pride of local identity.[50] After all, Thailand is more than just Bangkok. For better or for worse, once marginalized or even forgotten elements of the Thai nation have grown into a force that cannot be ignored.

Turning away from the time-honored mix of Chakri monarch and militaristic figures, monumental artists began to cast the less glamorous and non-royal

commoners as the leading stars, be they rural villagers, romantic writers, or even radical students. They are members of the Thai nation; their lives, therefore, should also be remembered. The complex subjects cover a variety of issues, people, and history as Thailand leaps towards a new century of diversity. Many champions stood out in the spectrum of monumental images, and the following section presents some of the most memorable works that celebrated local and ordinary individuals, including the Monument of Khruba Srivichai in Chiang Mai (1946), the Monument of Sunthorn Phu and Phra Aphai Manee in Rayong (1970), the Monument of Ban Rachan Villagers in Singburi (1976), as well as the Monument of 6 October 1976 (2000) at Thammasat University in Bangkok.

- **Northern Star: The Monument of Khruba Srivichai**

Khruba Srivichai was probably the most distinguished Buddhist monk in northern Thailand in the twentieth century. Even though religious monuments are not the topic of this study, the statue of Khruba Srivichai, dedicated to his spirited individuality, deserves attention for its social and artistic significance. The monk was born in 1877 in a small village south of Chiang Mai on a night of awesome "omens".[51] He was ordained into the monkhood in the city but in 1904 decided to retreat to the remote forest in pursuit of meditation and asceticism. The tradition of forest monks has long had a meritorious and magical presence in Thai culture.[52] His withdrawal to the wilderness, hence, earned him an exalted reputation. He was lionized as a *tonbun*, a figure of great spiritual power, among the peasantry of the surrounding area.

In the 1900s, Srivichai "promoted a movement of Buddhist resurgence that was apart from, and implicitly in defiance of, the authority of the Sangha".[53] He traveled extensively in the north, promulgating the religion and converting hill-tribes to Buddhism. A generous and tireless campaigner, the monk breathed life into Buddhist worship in the north by organizing the restoration of over a hundred old temples, employing mainly voluntary labor between 1904 to his death in 1938. These included Wat Phra That Haripunchai in Lamphun and Wat Phra That Doi Tung near Mae Sai. His most remarkable undertaking was the construction in 1935 of the paved road up to the magnificent Wat Doi Suthep, which could only be reached by several hours of hill climbing before. The famed project was completed

in just six months, using the most primitive tools and entirely by volunteers from all over the north.[54]

In spite of the fact that Srivichai had won the hearts and faith of the northern folks, his relationship with the Sangha was less exultant. His ordination of monks, which had long been a local convention but was put exclusively under the central legislation in the 1902 Sangha Act, made him suffer rebukes from the government and religious administration.[55] He continued his practices, nevertheless. Because of his unbent determination, miraculous merit, and more significantly, his vision of a Buddhist society, Srivichai became "a symbol of resistance to the encroachment" of Bangkok, "a leader of the periphery against the center".[56] When massive crowds turned up to accompany him to appear before the authorities under the charge of "illegal ordination" in Lamphun, the government "proclaimed the procession a 'revolt' (*khabot*) and made many arrests".[57] Popular hearsay spread that Srivichai possessed supernatural power that could defy state authority.[58] Even some "peasants urged him to progress from the role of religious leader to that of righteous king".[59] Notwithstanding, it was only fair to view such suggestion in its own context. The political situation and monarchial position in the mid-1930s, in which King Prajadhipok had just abdicated in 1935 and the tension of a world war was mounting, was very different from the present time.

The extremely popular Srivichai died in 1938 at the age of sixty-one. It was not until a decade passed by that recognition from the government was bestowed. In 1946, the newly returned King Ananda sponsored a royal cremation ceremony for Srivichai after hearing the renowned monk's story. Of course, the tribute was also related to politics. The end of the war brought back Senior Statesman, Pridi, to the center stage of power. His support of the "Free Thai" regimes of Thawi Bunyaket (August-September 1945) and Seni Pramoj (September 1945-January 1946) together with his negotiations with the Allies successfully voided Thailand's declaration of war and repudiated all agreements made with Japan by Phibun. Pridi finally took up the premiership himself in March 1946 and drafted a new constitution that came into effect in May.[60] The "outlook for democratic, civilian government seemed good".[61] Great expectation was set for a "stable political leadership" that could alleviate the lingering bitterness of the war.[62] Unfortunately,

the situation soon turned against the Senior Statesman, especially with the controversy encircling the death of King Ananda.[63] However, in Pridi's short yet more open regime, revered local personalities began to gain recognition from the central government. The public monument for Khruba Srivichai was a product of the time. It was commissioned by the Department of Fine Arts and later placed at the foot of the Doi Suthep hill in Chiang Mai.

The life size statue of Srivichai was designed and cast by Bhirasri with Khien Yimsiri as his assistant. The gilded freestanding figure is executed in realism, with the detailed physique and features of the monk specifically captured. Departing from the royal grandeur of kings and fierce gallantry of warriors for which Bhirasri was famous, the image is seen in old age, bare-footed, but standing erect in a robe and holding a long stick in his right hand. The statue reveals a personal kind of expression in a subtle manner. The face is one of kindness and intimacy. Yet the wrinkles that have been deepened by numerous seasons and the eyes that have witnessed worldly sufferings tell another story. It is the very portrait of an extraordinary individual. It depicts a man of courage, charisma, and compassion, out of humble origin, who, by his own merits and diligence, earned the highest respect from the people and eventually the approval of the state. The monument obviously has become a shrine of worship. The statue itself is an idol that devotees adorn with flower garlands and various oblations. To the northern folks, Srivichai is their saint. The statue, as a result, reflects the synthesis of realistic art into mysticism.

- **Romantic Poet: The Monument of Suthon Phu and Phra Aphai Mani**

The monumental realm in Thailand seems to be one of militarism and machismo, perhaps the last place that one would expect to find fantastic romance. The Monument of Suthon Phu and Phra Aphai Mani in Klaeng, Rayong province, proves to be an outstanding exception by all means. Not only is the memorial dedicated to Suthon Phu (1786-1856), a brilliant poet from the early Bangkok period instead of a royalty or warrior, but the monument is also closely integrated into the beautiful landscape of a public park, with mythical characters from the writer's most famous work, *Phra Aphai Mani*. It was through the genius of Suthon

Phu that an ordinary individual could earn the remembrance of the masses, and accordingly, a monumental place in the Thai nation.[64]

The life of Suthon Phu was colorful yet volatile. Widely regarded as one of the greatest Thai poets, he is said to have based much of his work on his own experiences, including the romantic escapades of *Phra Aphai Mani*. By all accounts, Suthon Phu was a fascinating character, a commoner alternately in and out of favor at the Bangkok court where he lived for much of his life. As a child from a broken marriage, he was taken to the Grand Palace as an infant with his mother who worked as a wet nurse to a young princess. His father, conversely, returned to his hometown of Klaeng in Rayong. Suthon Phu's first brush with royal appointment was in the Second Reign (1809-1824), and he soon established himself as the King's literary aide.

It was during this glorious period, beginning in 1820, that he started work on *Phra Aphai Mani*, which eventually took twenty years to finish. However, he quickly fell out of royal patronage when Rama III (r.1824-1851), whose literary efforts Suthon Phu had once rashly criticized, ascended to the throne. The poet took to the bottle, was left by his court-lady wife, and even landed himself in jail for drunken fights. Dropped from the royal service, he entered the monkhood in desperation, only to leave it several times. Immersed in his blue melancholy, Suthon Phu wandered to various places and produced most of his masterpieces, such as *Phleng Yao Thawai Owat*, *Nirat Phukhaothong*, and the completion of *Phra Aphai Mani*. A few years before his death, his fate turned again as he was invited back to court when Rama IV (r.1851-1868) was crowned.

Besides authoring several timeless romances, Suthon Phu is remembered as a significant innovator of Thai poetry, which until the end of the eighteenth century had largely been the domain of noble courtiers and kings. The traditional poems were mainly derived from the Hindu epics. Written in an elevated rhetoric and complicated structure, they were incomprehensible to most of the population. Suthon Phu changed all that. His most importantly achievement was the use of common, everyday language. The laureate chose the simplest verse form of *klon* and injected doses of realism into his poetry. He wrote of heartbreaking departures,

love triangles, and thwarted romances. He also composed travel poems (*nirat*) about his own journeys and drew his inspirations from famous places in the kingdom. Although Suthon Phu's works may seem too melodramatic and even "sexist" nowadays, his literary gifts and craft were truly peerless in his time and even generations to come.

Over thirty thousand lines long, *Phra Aphai Mani* tells the adventures of a handsome young prince in a whimsical world of giants, mermaids, and of course, pretty women with many of whom he inevitably falls in love. The story is lengthy, full of twists and turns. The characters depicted in the monument concern the early voyage of the princely Phra Aphai Mani. Enchanted by his beauty, a sea ogress named Phee Sue Samuth captures and retains him with her under the sea for several months. Longing for home, the prince successfully persuades a mermaid, Nang Ngeuak, to help him escape. The ogress tries to pursue them but is sent to sleep when Phra Aphai Mani finally plays his magic flute. The couple then fall in love and live happily on the nearby island of Ko Samet (then called Ko Kaew Pisadan) for a while. Nonetheless, Nang Ngeuak soon loses her charm to keep the prince's untamed heart. In quest of another fabulous journey, Phra Aphai Mani leaps aboard a passing ship. This time he encounters a princess, and so another exciting and romantic episode unfolds.

The monument of Suthon Phu and Phra Aphai Mani is composed of four statues in a compact and beautiful park located in a town named after the poet in Klaeng, Rayong province. The setting of the monuments mimics the imaginary wonderland in the verse. The monuments were designed and cast by four different artists. The one-and-a-half life size figure of Suthon Phu was molded by Sukij Laidej. Sitting on top of a small hill overseeing the characters he has given life to, the seasoned poet is portrayed realistically in a *rajapattan* suit and *jongkraben* pants. His facial expression is sincere and parallels to his action, writing the *Phra Aphai Mani*. And a sensational episode of his masterpiece is born: the life-size statues of the love triangle among Phra Aphai Mani, Nang Ngeuak, and Phee Sue Samuth. The three figures were a collaboration of three sculptors. While Kraisorn Srisuwan designed and cast the prince, Sanan was responsible for the mermaid and Thana Laohaphaikul for the female giant.

Gracefully playing his magic flute at the foot of the small hill, Phra Aphai Mani, who is dressed in ancient costume with refined ornaments, sits on a rock with his right leg crossed over his left one. Unlike the image of Suthon Phu, the prince is portrayed with idealism in line with the depictions of celestial figures in classical sculpture. The image displays an otherworldly elegance, which not only accents Phra Aphai Mani's fictitious existence but also strikes a contrast to the realistic representation of the laureate. On the other hand, the two female characters are situated in a pond next to the hill. Notably, both figures are half-naked, breaking a conservative tradition of public art in showing nudity. The beautiful mermaid, whose appearance resembles her western counterparts with long hair and fish tail, lies closer to her prince. She lifts her left hands solemnly as if she is trying to stop the ogress's pursuit. At the far end of the pond stands the desolate Phee Sue Samuth. The homely face of the sea ogress is also a face of defeat. Emerging from the water, the one-and-a-half size giantess flings her right arm out to reach her distanced prince as her left hand cannot help but rest on her broken heart.

The group of statues that completed Suthon Phu's monumental tribute is remarkable in creating a dynamic memory of the poet and his work. The memorial is no longer just a still standing or seated figure that is raised up on a high pedestal. Rather the complex has redefined the spatial and emotional relation between the viewer and the art. While the figures themselves are already set in a theoretical scene, the audience is invited to walk around the verdant panorama, examine each piece individually, and become a part of this dreamy landscape where Suthon Phu's epic adventure takes place. The effect of a monument in recollecting and representing a personality, therefore, takes on a brand new level. Finally, the making of this lovely memorial park is possible seemingly due to the development of the Eastern region of Thailand. In the 1970s, the government launched the Eastern Seaboard Scheme to build new port facilities in Chonburi and Rayong, which eventually gained momentum in the early 1990s. And it was in this propitious light that Suthon Phu was commemorated as a homecoming son of Klaeng in Rayong. The monument is a favorite attraction site in the province. Numerous visitors frequently pay their respects to the litterateur with flowers and

incense. The poet, moreover, is remembered annually on Suthon Phu Day on June 26, for his great contributions to Thai society.

- **Peasant Heroes: The Monument of Ban Rachan Villagers**

The most famous story of peasantry's power is no doubt the tale of Ban Rachan in eighteenth-century Ayutthaya. It recounts the poignant yet dauntless tale of a group of villagers from Thung Wiset Chaichan in Singburi facing an enormous attack from the Burmese, which eventually brought down the Siamese capital in 1767. The ordinary folks rose to a heroic height as they defended their lands against foreign invaders till their last breath. The message of fighting and sacrifice for the nation is an ancient one. Yet casting common villagers as leading protagonists is something new in monumental history.

The spectacular Monument of Ban Rachan Villagers was the fruit of the revolutionary epoch of mid-1970s. The protests of students, workers, and farmers in 1973 had successfully sent the military junta of Thanom-Praphat into exile. The triumph empowered the masses in a way that was unprecedented. After the October 14 uprising, the barriers to political education and experimentation were removed. Translations and publications of works that had been banned in previous regimes started to flourish, including Marxist texts as well as Thai radical writings from the late 1940s and 1950s like Jit Poumisak's *Chomna sakdina Thai* (The Face of Thai Feudalism).[65] Heroism that carried on the shoulders of the "grass-roots" was never more befitting and believable. The portrayal of Ban Rachan seems to have all the timely themes written on it. Regardless of their small force, the villagers take their lives in their own hands instead of depending on authority. From near and far, they attract people hiding in the forests and hills, uniting them together to fight guerrilla battles against the foe. Eventually, they are martyred in the cause of protecting their freedom and people.

Although the legend of the Ban Rachan villagers seems to be aged-old, the popularization of their lives by the state essentially began in the early twentieth century under the surge of nationalism. Their deed has since been included in every history textbook and often cited as one of the greatest events leading to Thailand's rise as a "nation state".[66] While the bravery of Ban Rachan entered into Prince

Damrong's classic, *Our Wars with Burmese* (1917),[67] the more prevalent version came from the novel *Bang Rachan* (1968) by Mai Muangdoem (Kan Phungbun na Ayutthaya).[68] With creative imagination and solid historical background, Mai reconstructed the warrior folks into vivid characters with whom every Thai is familiar, such as Nai Chan who sports a bristling moustache, the monk Dhammachote with his magical knowledge of incantations, and Nai Thongmen, a drunkard who rides his buffalo into the fight with the Burmese.

By all means, the villagers' story has been filtered through the lens of patriotism, either by the government or different interest groups. It is still told to young children today as an example of how their ancestors fought and died for their beloved country. Television dramas, films, and stage plays, mostly based upon Mai's best-seller, have further embellished the mettlesome heroes and heroines. The newest film version of *Ban Rachan* (2000) by Thanit Jitnukul was a phenomenal success with a box office of more than 100 million baht. Depicted in dashing cinematography and modern sensibility, the intrepid villagers are once again brought to life on the silver screen and in the audience's mind. Director Thanit admits that the Monument of Ban Rachan served as an inspiration.[69] Accordingly, his film attempts to capture the larger than life sense of heroism. The "characterizations" of the actors are even based upon the likenesses of the warrior statues in the memorial.[70]

Under the design and supervision of Sanan, the Monument of Ban Rachan is surely inspiring. The casting of the life-size hero figures is a collaboration of nine artists with Sanan taking on Panrueng and the buffalo.[71] The monument is one of the exceptions that feature half-nude images. The reason is more than a need for authenticity, in which the villagers' appearances should be faithfully registered. More significantly, it is a vehicle for artistic expression, a rare chance to demonstrate the technical virtuosity of the sculptors that would otherwise be inappropriate in portraying revered royalty and mythical kings. Indeed, Sanan long appreciated the Italian figures of masculine athletes. He was particularly fascinated with F. Matania's "sepia sketches of muscular Roman soldiers in action" that were shown in western art magazines.[72] The Ban Rachan monument was a special channel to manifest his artistic vision. Sanan's ideal physique of Thai men took on a

new dimension of robust looks, which has become the historical “archetype” of maleness nowadays.

The villager’s statues widen heroic realism to a more exciting horizon. Holding various weapons and engaging in different poses, the stalwart protagonists are all geared for an epic combat. The anatomy plays an ever more important part in this prelude to action. The rugged torsos, bulging arms, and strong limbs of the men give promise of power. Each swelling vein and flexing sinew boosts the emotional vibration of the ordinary villagers’ extraordinary conviction. The sublime is conceived by the heroes as a muscular realm of physical strength. Their extended bodies congest to form a circle, in which they are about to break through and burst out their wrath. Of course, realism is parallel with imagination in the depiction of the monument. There was most likely never a moment that all these villagers actually rallied together. The faces and physiques of the heroes are also sprung from the creativity of the sculptors. As Sanan puts it, a lot of times artists have to “go against historical records to convey a convincing work”.[73]

Situated on top of a round quadrilateral platform, the monument is elevated and electrified with dynamism. It is composed to be seen from multiple points of view. As one walks around it, the aspect and characters of the group change despite the stillness of the memorial as a whole. The audience has become an inspector, examining the villagers for the one last time before they head off to the battlefield. The hope can be seen from their fiery eyes, and the ravings can be felt from their intense expressions. Each character can be considered as an individual piece. Nevertheless, their overlapping position and overreaching gesture bond all of them into one, imparting chaos yet unification at the same time. Perhaps knowing their fate makes their deeds even more heroic, and the statue more powerful. The Ban Rachan monument was completed in July 1976 during the brief government of Seni Pramoj (April-October 1976). The unveiling of the tragic warriors’ statue somehow foresaw one of the most tragic moments in modern Thai history, in which ordinary student and peasant’s protest met its end in violent suppression.

- **Traumatic Memory: The Monument of 6 October, 1976**

> What is most regrettable is the fact that young people now have no third choice. If they cannot conform to the government, they must run away. Those interested in peaceful means to bring about freedom and democracy must restart from square one.
>
> Dr. Puey Ungphakorn from "The Violence and the Coup of 6th October 1976".

Beside the front gate of Thammasat University lies a rectangular red granite memorial. Surrounded by the inscribed quote from Dr. Puey on a black marble border,[74] the stone monument simply marks the word "6 October" on it. Taking a closer look, however, bronze relief sculptures of various faces and figures emerge in the spaces between the letters. While the monument appears to be simple and subtle, the memory of October 6, 1976 is still overwhelmingly distressing, as many Thais are still trying to come to terms with their grief, anger, and the loss of beloved ones on that day.

Little has yet been revealed about the intrigues leading to the event.[75] The 1973 uprising had ushered in a Thailand that was ideologically divided and politically unstable. The empowered students continued to protest against nearly every aspect of social issues, from bus fares to corruption to American influence to the root of Thai feudalism.[76] Notwithstanding, the January 1975 election was an encouragement to the left-aligned parties.[77] In March, the new Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj (1975-1976) announced that "his government would get the US troops out within twelve months, abolish the anti-Communist law, raise the minimum wage, build public housing, provide free busing for the poor, and create a special fund for village development".[78] Yet the amicable climate shifted drastically in a month. Indochina fell in April. Images of the Americans hastily fleeing from Vietnam and the "sullen youths with AK-47s taking over the cities of Saigon and Phnom Penh" stunned the world and shocked the Thais.[79] On one hand, the student movement was seen as "too preoccupied with its own agenda" and hence "somehow marred by radicalism".[80] The international crisis, on the other hand, proved to be an opportunity for the military and the conservatives, as they found an excuse to link the "student-peasant-worker activism" and the Communist Party of Thailand to the dangerous red neighbors.[81]

While “old techniques of military repression hardly seemed adequate” at the time,[82] the right-wing groups reacted slyly by maneuvering politics and media through a new network including the Internal Security Operation Command (ISOC), [83] the Nawaphon organization,[84] the Village Scouts, [85] the Red Gaurs (*Krathing Daeng*),[86] and even Buddhist monks.[87] Rhetoric against the left tuned vituperative. Whether it was related to the rightist schemes or not, peasant and union leaders were assassinated at an alarmingly rate and in a conspiratorial manner.[88] On December 2, 1975, the Laotian monarchy was abolished. It marked a changing point for the elitist sensibility and strategy.[89] The rightist propaganda hoisted Communism and the trinity of nation, religion, and king as absolute antonyms “with no possibility for a middle ground”.[90] Any signs of sympathy with the demonstrating “student, worker and peasant” or any “compromise with liberal ideas which wanted to temper extreme authoritarianism” were all “labeled as Communism, and thus, by definition treasonous”.[91] Chaos, consequently, stormed the streets of Bangkok.[92]

To worsen the discord, both exiled junta leaders Thanom and Prapat returned to the kingdom. On September 19, 1976, a few weeks after Prapat’s return for “medical treatment”,[93] Thanom came back to Bangkok as an ordained novice monk and stayed in the royal temple Wat Boworniwet. While guards of Nawaphon and Village Scouts mounted support, the outraged students began their daily demonstrations and called for the “dictators” to leave. Hostility accelerated. On October 5, several Bangkok newspapers published photographs depicting the Thammasat students’ stage drama of the hanging of two activists by the police. The suggestion was that the effigy was the Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn.[94] Further inflamed by army radio, massive assaults were launched against Thammasat University by members of the rightist.[95] On the morning of October 6, 1976, they attacked the campus, leading to the deaths of hundreds and the arrests of over three thousand.[96]

The brutal repression once again brought in an era of imposing censorship, silencing opposition, and propagating anti-Communist indoctrination. “Books were banned and burned, journals closed, libraries raided, publishers harassed, political meetings outlawed, and union activity suppressed”.[97] The black list of communist

suspects included the former civilian Prime Minister Kukrit, the next two civilian Prime Ministers, Anand Panyarachun (1991-1992) and Chuan Leekpai, as well as Dr. Puey, to name a few.[98] Some eight thousand were charged with "being a threat to society".[99] Meanwhile, another two or three thousands either fled overseas or joined the insurgents in the hills and forests, with many still missing.[100] The military re-established control immediately, but its prestige was unavoidably tarnished.

"6 October" was one of the most painful and unforgettable days in modern history; however, how to represent, interpret, and remember it seems to be as ambivalent as the event itself. After more than two decades of wrangling, the Monument of 6 October was finally unveiled in 2000 at Thammasat University, the very site where the tragedy befell. The red stone memorial by Surapol Panyawachira resembles a day that was covered with fear and blood. Scattered in between the letters spelling the word "6 October" are a number of bronze relief depicting different agonizing scenes from this nightmarish episode. The sculptural images tell a fragmented story, a crashed dream, and lives that died for the cause. There is a profile of Dr. Puey in the upper part of the right hand corner, while in the lower corner lies the haunting portrayal of Wichitchai Amornkul, a Chulalongkorn University student who was hanged on a tamarind tree at Sanam Luang. Other tormented figures include victims being lynched, dragged, and stepped on.

Although the monumental elegy may look ordinary, the historic and personal memory that it commemorates is far from prosaic. It is not easy for those who have lived through the traumatic event or lost their loved ones. It is also difficult for the Thai society, from all political camps and as a collective whole, to address such a controversial past. The polemic of "6 October" certainly will not rest with the founding of the stone monument. At the very least, the memorial honors the struggles of this group of ordinary Thais, who were also a part of the nation, whether the individuals were idealistic students "who abhorred injustice, anarchists who hated every kind of state power or Leftist of any shade".[101] The issues revolving around the mayhem, of course, have not been fully resolved. Yet the monument has laid the foundation for the process of reconciliation. Despite its artistic value, the "6 October" memorial along with the monument of Pridi Banomyong and the various statues set in the sculptural garden dedicated to the

theme of democracy reaffirm the role of Thammasat University in modern Thai politics. After all, the vision of tolerating and even recognizing the divisions within the nation is a remarkable one.

Monuments of the Royal Family

It would be impossible to think of Thailand without the exalted image of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. From citizens to tourists, everyone in the country recognizes the popular and powerful presence of the monarch. King Bhumibol ascended the throne in 1946 after the mysterious death of his brother King Ananda Mahidol. With his compassion and dedication, the Ninth Rama soon overcame the tragic circumstances. Since his coronation in May 1950, King Bhumibol has become the guiding light for all walks of life in the kingdom. For more than five decades, His Majesty has been "the only stable figure" who stands for "unity and social harmony in the throes of change in modern Thailand",[102] from coup to coup, and from economic boom to bust.

King Bhumibol, who is the longest reigning monarch in Thai history, is the very manifestation of twentieth-century Thailand himself. The Thai monarchy that is led and developed by the Crown has been far more than "an ancient institution linking past and present"; it is the "vital force" that forms "the core of what [it] means to be Thai".[103] Although statues and monuments that are directly dedicated to the throne have been few, the public displays of the King's images are ubiquitous. From modest rice farms to the bustling city streets, pictures of the King are visible everywhere and respected by everyone. Imposing modern structures are often named after their majesties, such as the Rama IX Bridge and the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center.

In various occasions that continuously take place all year long, particularly on the King's birthday on December 5, which is also the National Day since Sarit replaced it with the original June 24 (date of the 1932 *coup d'état*) in 1960, royal flags and photographs of the monarchy are common sights all over Thailand. One of the most magnificent settings can be seen along Rajadamnern Avenue in Bangkok. Glistening lights, ravishing flowers, and larger-than-life portraits turn the busy road into a monumental tribute to the King. Whether they depict the monarch reigning in

his splendid regalia or working industriously in the countryside, these illustrative and illuminated images of the Throne have become a form of public art, a part of the public memory, and a vision of the Thai nation.

The reverence for the King has also brought in a renaissance of the monarchial institution and the prestige of the royalty. Beginning at the time of Sarit in the late 1950s, court pageants have been promulgated both locally and internationally. Royal edifices have been restored and reinforced as the emblems of Thailand, from the historical parks in Sukhothai and Ayutthaya to the Grand Palace in Bangkok. Monumental homage, moreover, is paid to the royal family members. Notably, the statues of Chakri princes are set up and commemorated as the "founding fathers" of various ministries. The list includes many works of Bhirasri and Sanan like the Monument of Prince Damrong (1968) at the Ministry of Interior, the Monument of Prince Rachaburi Direkrit (1969) at the Ministry of Justice, and the Monument of Prince Chanthaburi Narunat (1972) at the Ministry of Commerce.

Finally, there are substantial monuments specifically dedicated to the royal family. Honoring the Prince Father Mahidol and Princess Mother Sri Nagarindra of the present King, for instance, are the monuments for the Prince Father (1972) by Saroj Jarak at Chiang Mai Hospital and the Monument of Prince Father and Princess Mother in Chonburi Monumental Park (1999) by Manop Suwanpinta. While the Prince Father is always depicted in a doctoral gown, the Princess Mother's figures are often seen in casual attire and thus live up to her image of benevolence and diligence. Designed by Bhirasri and molded by Paitum Muangsombron, the Monument for King Ananda was established by King Bhumibol at the northwest corner in Bangkok's Wat Suthat as a public and personal tribute to the deceased young monarch and older brother. All the regal monuments are executed in realistic fashion, embracing not only the actual features of the royal family members but also highlighting their grace. In order to commemorate King Bhumibol's golden jubilee in 1996, a marble monument of a three-headed elephant is planned for the foot of Phra Pinklao Bridge on Rajadamnern Avenue by 2001.[104]

Public Monuments and the End of the Twentieth Century

The era of the 1970s was full of confusion, which saw two of the most powerful yet poignant people movements in Thai history. In 1980, the well-respected General Prem Tinsulanond achieved the premiership and was able to bring in a relatively long period of stability. Economic development was restarted. Nevertheless, history repeated itself in the 17-20 May 1992 urban uprising in Bangkok. The crisis itself had all the traits of 1973 and 1976.[105] The massive demonstrations brought down the strongman rule of General Suchinda Kraprayoon (April-May 1992) "who saw himself as the heir of Sarit".[106] This time the tenure of military dominance was eventually broken. The final decade of the twentieth century rendered a string of civilian governments as the military retreated from the foreground. Filled with hopes of open democracy and commercial success, Thailand aspired to roar like a tiger and soar like a dragon in the global arena. The magic of an economic bubble did not last. The kingdom's farewell to the twentieth century was bid in a less rosy exhilaration, as it has still not totally recovered from the 1997 economic crisis.

- **Unfinished Memorials: Monuments of the October 1973 Event**

The episode of October 1973 ushered in a new era of monumental visions. However, the milestone event itself has not yet received permanent monumental recognition although it has given a new life to the Democracy Monument. October 1973 was considered a "breakthrough for popular democracy".[107] Unfortunately, its memory is filled with ambivalence. Its place in modern history also provokes uneasiness. The October 1973 uprising has never been included in school textbooks. Naowarat Pongpaiboon, one of the most celebrated poets in Thailand, was commissioned by the Ministry of Education in 1994 under the first Chuan government to write the first official account of the event. Yet the attempt to add the incident to history texts incites much controversy.[108] The monumental project shared the same fate. There have been numerous talks of building a memorial for nearly three decades. Because of the political overtone of the event and particularly land ownership problem,[109] the realization of an October 1973 public monument still remains up in the air. The closest call came in 1998, the 25th anniversary of the uprising, in which the former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun personally negotiated with the Crown Property Bureau, which supposedly agreed to provide the land for the monument.[110] A commission was also said to have been made to a

local artist. Nonetheless, no further commitment is finalized to date. Similarly, the quest for the May 1992 monument also turns silent.[111] Despite the enthusiasm shortly after the incident, the plan faced immense oppositions within the bureaucracy.[112] These two unfinished projects, perhaps more so than the various monuments of diverse themes, remind that the road to a more tolerant society is by no means a smooth one.

- **Public Space and Monuments at the End of the Twentieth Century**

Thailand at the end of the twentieth century was a very different country from the kingdom of a few decades earlier. In a time of rapid change, public memory has become a contestable space, both literally and metaphorically. While monumental images continue to represent the Thai nation, their themes have taken off from a single trajectory to spread into a wider range of directions. The legacy of monarchy, nationalism, and mythical heroes is still carried on. Yet new subjects, such as womanhood, locality, and individual achievements of ordinary people, have also emerged and can be interpreted along with or even apart from the national discourse. Even the dark moment of 6 October uprising is remembered through the erection of its memorial in Thammasat University although the tribute appears to be more private than official.

As the symbolic environment of Thailand has been profoundly transformed by urban capitalism, the role of public monument as a spur to national ideology has altered also. Especially in Bangkok, fantastical structures of rectilinear glass and concrete create complicated arrangements of geometrical patterns and functional space that dazzle the eyes of the viewers. Meanwhile, these architectures are towering monuments to modern time. The striking high-rise buildings and neon-lit shopping malls become the new “public monuments”, advocating the very notions of prosperity, technology, and materialism, whereas corroded columns of abandoned construction sites stand ruefully as paradoxical memorials. As traditional figurative statues juxtaposed with colorful fashion billboards, the visions of the Thai nation at the end of the twentieth century, as seen through the world of public monuments, have never been more complex.

Notes

[1]* Beginning in the late 1950's, the military elite enriched their narrow nationalistic agenda and embraced the notion of "economic development", such as "modernity, progress, wealth, and the efficiency of the state". Following the footsteps of Phibun and Sarit, "military leaders such as Thanom, Prapat, and Narong were among the cult personalities" who continued to single-handedly dictate Thai politics and "impose their personal ideas on the people in the name of the Thai state". See Panitan Wattanayagorn, "Thailand: The Elite's Shifting Conceptions of Security", *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, Muthiah Alagappa, ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp.421-2.

[2] Thongchai Winichakul, "The Changing Landscape of the Past: New Histories in Thailand Since 1973", in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26 (March 1, 1995), p.99.

[3]* The historical, religious, and social development of Thai women is an important yet complicated issue. While this thesis only focuses on a number of legendary figures depicted in public monuments, the investigations on Thai feminism can be found in readings like Virada Somswasdi and Sally Theobald, eds. *Women, Gender Relations and Development in Thai Society*, vol. 1 & 2 (Chiang Mai: Women's Studies Center, Chiang Mai University, 1997).

[4]* For Buddhism and Thai women, see Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, *Thai Women in Buddhism: Questions and Answers* (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1998). The works of Chatsumarn Kabilsingh are also quoted in Rebecca Warner and Holly Hayley, "Feminism and Buddhism in Thailand: The spirituality-based social action of Chatsumarn Kabilsingh", in *Socially Engaged Buddhism for the New Millennium: Essays in honor of the Ven. Phra Dhammapitaka on his 60th Birthday Anniversary* (Bangkok: Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, 1999), pp.213-26. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, one of the leading Thai Buddhist scholars, has been ordained as a *bhikkhuni* (female monk) named Dhammananda at Wat Songdharmakalani in Nakhon Pathom in spring 2001.

[5]* The statue of the Earth Goddess illustrates a Buddhist legend related to the historical Buddha's enlightenment. While the Buddha was sitting under the Bodi tree in meditation towards his enlightenment, Mara, the force of evil, sent a host of demons with earthy temptations to distract him from his path. Yet the Buddha remained collected. He pointed his right hand towards the ground to call the Earth Goddess to bear witness to his countless meritorious deeds, which had earned him an ocean of water stored in the earth. The Goddess, accordingly, arose from the earth, wrung her long hair, and engulfed Mara's demons in a deluge.

[6]* King Chulalongkorn did not seem to be very enthusiastic for female education. Some scholars suggest that the king's disinterest was due to his own experiences with the controversial English governess Anna Leonowens who had tutored him as a young man. King Chulalongkorn noted: "I cannot bring myself to think about my daughters' education. I have never endorsed it… because it reminds me of my own teacher who authored a book which many believe. So whenever the suggestion is made that a girls' school be founded, I am quite annoyed." See Suwadee Tanaprasitpatana, *Thai Society's Expectations of Women 1851-1935* (Ph.D. dissertation, Sydney University, 1989), p.106. According to Suwadee, the king warned the Minister of Education that "the government's revenue had better be used for boy's education. Do not promote girl's education too much". Ibid., p.140.

[7] See *Bangkok Times* (July 9, 1902); *Bangkok Times* (June 19, 1905); *Bangkok Times* (December 6, 1905).

[8] See Scot Barme, "Proto-Feminist Discourses in Early Twentieth-Century Siam", in *Genders & Sexuality in Modern Thailand*, Peter A. Jackson and Nerida M. Cook, eds., (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1999), p.137; also see Suwadee, *Expectations of Women*, p.81.

[9] Amara Pongsapich, "Feminism Theories and Praxis: Women's Social Movement in Thailand", in *Women, Gender Relations and Development in Thai Society*, vol. 1, Virada Somswasdi and Sally Theobald, eds. (Chiang Mai: Women's Studies Center, Chiang Mai University, 1997), p.21.

[10] Barme, "Proto-Feminist Discourses", p.150.

[11] Ibid., p.140.

[12]* "The size of this elite readership was estimated by the promoters of the magazine to be in the vicinity of between 360-600 people". See *Kunlasatri* (April, 1906), quoted in Ibid.

[13]* In this article "A Woman's Duty", the writer Sangwanphet began her account by characterizing male and female roles as complementary: "A man is like the front legs of an elephant while a woman is like its hind legs. When the front legs move forward the hind legs must follow. If one takes a false step, both will suffer, but if they are both in step things will work well". See *Kunla Satri*, (May, 1906). Also see Ibid., p.141.

[14] See *Satri Niphon*, (October 15, 1914); also see Ibid., p.147.

[15]* Phibun said: "women are mothers of every Thai as women are mothers of all things. They are mothers who give birth to children and they are the mould of the nation… Mothers are the mould of the character of men since childhood… If we have no good mould, we can never build the Thai nation…" *On Propaganda*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, 2/2: 15, (February 1, 1943); also see Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thailand's Durable Premier: Phibun through Three Decades 1932-1957* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.158n.79.

[16] Kobkua, *Durable Premier*, pp.127-8.

[17] Ibid., p.128.

[18] Amara, "Feminism Theories", p.23.

[19]* Prostitution was legal in Thailand from 1905 to 1960 under the control of the Venereal Disease Control Act (1909) and Sex Trade Control Act (1928). In 1960, Sarit officially prohibited it. However, "the promotion of tourism since the Vietnam war and the decade after encouraged diverse forms of prostitution in Thailand. The authority did not try to cope with the problem, viewing prostitution to be part of Thai society since day immemorial… The inclusion of the definition of Bangkok as a city known for prostitution service in the *Longman Dictionary* in 1994 was one incident which wakened the government on the seriousness of the issue." Ibid., p.30.

[20] Ibid., p.31.

[21] See Peter Bell, "Thailand's Economic Miracle: Built on the Backs of Women", in *Women, Gender Relations and Development in Thai Society*, vol. 1, Virada Somswasdi, and

Sally Theobald, eds. (Chiang Mai: Women's Studies Center, Chiang Mai University, 1997), pp.55-82.

[22] See Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, *Paths to Conflagration: Fifty Years of Diplomacy and Warfare in Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, 1778-1828* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1998), p.42.

[23]* "Chao Anou [Anu], who appreciated [the Emerald Buddha's] full significance, saw to it that the Phra Kaeo was 'returned' to the Lao by ordering the creation of handsome substitutes and many new pagodas. Anou restored and raised the foundation of Vientiane's Wat Ho Phra Kaeo, which invaders had razed in 1779. To remind the Lao of their Emerald Buddha's power and to focus and magnify the political energy of this symbol, Anou ordered the carving of a new emerald Buddha, Phra Nak Savatsadi Huan Kaeo, which was housed in the new pagoda… A Wat Phra Kaeo was founded by Anou at Srichiangmai, across the river from Vientiane. His ally, Chao Noi, Prince of Siang Khuang, also constructed a Wat Phra Kaeo in his capital, decorated like the one in Vientiane... Anou's effort to return the sacred Buddha to the Lao also indicates that he was summoning his resources and gathering his inspiration and strength in preparation for the supreme, ultimate confrontation with Bangkok." Ibid., p.56-7.

[24]* "King Rama III decreed that tattooing be extended to the population in most of the Lao possessions; their inhabitants were considered to be under the jurisdiction of Siam, not of the Lao kingdoms and principalities that were tributaries of Siam". Ibid., p.131. On the other hand, the Siamese ambition towards Laos and Cambodia seemed to be inspired by the Anglo-Indian Empire's expansion. While Siam would help Britain in gaining territorial conquests in Burma, the Britain should therefore allow Siam to expand into Laos and Cambodia to keep pace with its European counterpart. Ibid., p.134.

[25]* The Thais soon captured Chao Yo in Champassak and defeated Anu who later fled to Vietnam. Fifty years after the Chakri forefather conquered Vientiane, the army of the Third Rama once again marched into the Laos capital. But this time the city was totally destroyed to the ground and its people killed or captured, sparing "only grass, water and the savage beasts". A French writer Jules Harmand interviewed the survivors of the tragic fall of Vientiane in 1827-1828 and called it "*la grande guerre*" of burality. See Jules Harmand, "*Les laos et les sauvages de l'Indochine*", *Le Tour du Monde* (Paris, 1879-1880), p.302 and 880. Notwithstanding, some Thai writers justify the sack of Vientiane was necessary in countering a Vietnamese threat that rose in the early 1870s. For the details of the revolt see Ibid., pp.60-2; also see David K. Wyatt, Tha*iland: A Short History* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1984), pp.170-1.

[26]* For the parallels of these two historical rebellions, see Benjamin A. Batson, *The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.247.

[27]* A historian of Rama III's reign reported in the official document "*Hua Muang Lao Fai Tawanook*" [The Lao Town in the East] that the Siamese King never forgave the governor of Khorat for having surrendered this stronghold, which was Bangkok's only bastion in the area. See Prathip Chumphol, *Phun wiang: watthanatham haeng kankotkhi botkawi haeng kankotkhi loem raek khong thai* [Political Analysis of Rama III's Laos Policy] (Bangkok: Samnakphim Adit, 1982), pp.55-6; also see Ngaosyvathn, *Paths to Conflagration*, p.135.

[28] Craig J. Reynolds, "On Gendering of Nationalist and Postnationalist Selves in Twentieth-Century Thailand", in *Genders & Sexuality in Modern Thailand*, Peter A. Jackson and Nerida M. Cook, eds. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1999), p.267.

[29] For a detailed account of the two sisters' legend see Sunai Ratchphantharak, *Thao Thepkrasattri* (Phuket: Phuket Cultural Center, Phuket Teachers' College, 1982).

[30]* "Rama I's state met its first great test in a massive Burmese invasion in 1785. King Bodawhpaya of Burma sent more than a hundred thousand troops in five armies against Siam. The first was sent against the peninsular region, crossing overland from Mergui to Chumphon and Chaiya and thence south. The second pushed off from Tavoy across the mountains to Ratburi and Phetburi to meet up with the force at Chumphon. The main force, under the command of Bodawhpaya himself, crossed the Three Pagodas Pass from Martaban toward Kanchanaburi and was directed against Bangkok. The fourth army was to proceed to Tak and Kamphaengphet and the close in on the capital from the north; the fifth moved form its base in Chiang Saen to Lampang and thence southeast toward Phitsanulok. This was an exceptionally ambitious, and for the Siamese, dangerous attack". Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.149.

[31]* Thao Thepsatri's first husband died early and apparently was not the governor of Thalang. See Amara, "Feminism Theories", p.18.

[32] Ibid.

[33] See Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.287.

[34] Ibid., p.288.

[35]* Some historians, such as Vinai Pongsripien at Silpakorn University, suspect the lauded heroism of Queen Suriyothai might not have been based on truth but a creation of nationalism. See *The Nation* (August 17, 2000).

[36]* The Luang Prasoet Chronicle [*Phraratcha phongsawadan Krung Si Ayudhya chabap Luang Prasoet*] was written in the seventeenth century by a royal astrologer in the Ayutthaya court, using Thai language rather than Pali. See Sunait Chutintaranond, "Suriyothai in the context of Thai-Myanmar History and Historical Perception", (From Fact to Fiction: A History of Thai-Myanmar Relations in Cultural Context, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, November 27-29, 2000), p.3.

[37]* The story of Queen Suriyothai is recorded by Prince Damrong Rachanuphap. See Prince Damrong, *Our Wars with Burmese, Part I*, U Aung Thein, tran., in the *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, vol. 38 (1953), pp.131-6.

[38] Sunait. "Suriyothai", p.6.

[39]* The glory of Queen Suriyothai is described in "The Souvenir of the Siamese Kingdom Exhibition at Lumpini Park, BE 2468", a booklet which accompanied the exhibition. Queen Suriyothai was mentioned in the Ayutthaya chapter:

> At this supreme crisis, King Maha Chakrabad [Cakraphat], together with his devoted wife, offered a valiant resistance, placing himself always at the forefront of his forces. So devoted and valorous was the royal consort [Queen Suriyothai] that, in a hand-to-hand fight from elephants which ensued, she received such a severe wound that she passed away immediately, an absolute martyr to loyalty and in fact, affording an example can be seldom paralleled in history, and we are speaking absolutely from memory from the moment in the case of the ancient British Queen Boadicea, with her scythed-chariots, against the Roman invaders, and of Joan of

Arc, who so heroically headed her countrymen, in the then extraordinary guise, for a woman, of a man in preserving her country's independence.

See "The Souvenir of the Siamese Kingdom Exhibition at Lumpini Park (BE 2468)", p.35; also see Sunait, "Suriyothai", p.4.

[40] Ibid., p.6.

[41]* For the legend of Princess Suphankalaya see Sunait Chutintaranond, *Phra-Supankalaya: Jakthamnaan-suna-prawatsat* [Princess Suphankalaya: from Legend to History] (Bangkok: Phimthi Borisat Prachachon-jamkad, 1999).

[42]* Detailed description of the life of Princess Suphankalaya only existed a few years ago in the writings of a Thai monk, named Luang Phu Ngon Sorayo (from Wat Phra Phuttabaaat khao-ruak) who claimed the spirit of the princess visited him during a meditation session. Meanwhile, the media representation of Princess Suphankalaya can be attributed to cosmetics entrepreneur, Dr. Nalinee Paiboon. After her business collapse and subsequent divorce, she visited and prayed at the shrine of King Naresuan. After hearing about the tale of Princess Suphankalaya, her luck suddenly changed. Her new business venture started booming. Nalinee then funded research into the life of the princess at Chulalongkorn University's history department and started to mass-produce a "picture" of the beautiful Princess Suphankalaya. See Ibid.

[43] See Thongchai, "The Changing Landscape", p.101.

[44] See Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.300.

[45]* For a discussion of the *phu mi bun* revolt see Yoneo Ishii, "A Note on Buddhistic Millenarian Revolts in Northeastern Siam", in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 6, no.2, 1975, and Charles F. Keyes, "Millennialism, Theravad Buddhism, and Thai Society", in *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 36, no.2, 1997.

[46] See Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thailand: Economy and Politics*, 2nd ed. (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.323.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., pp.324-5.

[49]* The genre name of *luk thung* was first coined in 1964. Prior to that this kind of music usually just named as *phleng talat* (market music). Ibid., p.77, and p.87n.22.

[50] Ibid., pp.67-86.

[51]* According to the local people, Khruba Srivichai's birth coincided with a supernatural thunderstorm and earthquake. Hence, he was named *Fuan*, "Great Jolt".

[52]* For the tradition and history of forest monks in Thailand, see Stanley J. Tambiah, "The Buddhist Arahant: Classical Paradigm and Modern Thai Manifestations", in *Saints and Virtues*, John Stratton Hawley, ed. (Berkley: University of California Press, 1987), pp.111-126. Also see J.L. Taylor, *Forest Monks and the Nation-State: An Anthropological and Historical Study in Northeastern Thailand* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993).

[53] Pasuk and Baker, *Thailand*, p.73.

[54]* "Khruba Srivichai emphasized the spiritual significance of these works of communal labor, and many came to participate to gain merit". Ibid.

[55] "Between 1908 and 1938, Khruba Srivichai was summoned before the authorities several times and accused of illegal ordination. Each time he suffered the rebuke and repeated the practice". Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58]* The rumors said: Lord Indra had given Khruba Srivichai "a sacred golden sword called *Hariphunchai* for use in rituals so that he could do many things without submitting to the control of the authorities". See Shigeharu Tanabe, *Nung luang nung dam tamnan khong phunam chaona haeng lanna thai* [Wearing Yellow Wearing Black: The Stories of Peasant Leaders of Lanna Thai] (Bangkok: Sangsan Publishing House, 1986), p.231.

[59] Pasuk and Baker, *Thailand*, p.73.

[60] Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.263.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] For the death of King Ananda, see note 2.

[64]* For the achievements and analysis on the work of Suthon Phu see Sombat Chantornwong, "The Political World of Sunthonphu", in *Traditional and Changing Thai World View*, Amara Pongsapich, ed. (Bangkok, Chulalongkorn University Press, 1998).

[65]* "Among all the works created, translated or rediscovered in this period, none had the same power as Jit Poumisak's *Chomna sakdina Thai* [The Face of Thai Feudalism]. Jit had been imprisoned in the sweep after Sarit's 1958 coup and was killed by the police after joining the insurgents in Sakon Nakhon in 1964. Before that, he had been a rebellious student, teacher, linguist, tour guide, journalist, and poet. For a new radical generation, he was a hugely appealing hero and martyr. *Chomna sakdina Thai* had been published in 1957 in the Thammasat University Faculty of Law Yearbook. In 1979, it was rediscovered and republished several times, and became the focus of political debate. Jit argued that *sakdina* was the same as European feudalism, thus aligning Thailand with classic Marxist theories of history. The exploitation of peasant by landlord was the dominating theme of Thai history right up to the present day." See Pasuk and Baker, *Thailand*, p.305. For the work of Jit, see Craig, J. Reynolds, *Thai Radical Discourse: The Real Face of Thai Feudalism Today* (Ithaca, New York: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1987).

[66] See *The Nation* (December 29, 2000).

[67]* The Ban Rachan story is told in Prince Damrong's *Our War with Burma*, war no. 24. See Prince Damrong, *Our War*, pp.322-9.

[68] See Mai Muangdoem, *Bang Rachan* (Bangkok: Samnakphim Bannakhan, 1968).

[69] See *The Nation* (December 29, 2000).

[70] Ibid.

[71]* The different figures in the monument were molded by different artists. Sanan was responsible for Panrueng and the buffalo. Nai Chan was cast by Saroj Jarak, Nai Dok and Nai Kaew by Anik Somnoon, Nai Tan and Nai Thongmen by Sukij Laidej, Nai Muang by Kwanmuang Youngprayoon, Nai Chote by Lamthian Kashaphuti, Khun San by Boonsong Nuchnomboon, Nai Inn by Soonthorn Srisoonthorn, and Nai Thong by Pratueng Thammarak.

[72] Apinan Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand: Nineteen and Twentieth Centuries* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.48.

[73] Ibid.

[74]* Dr. Puey Ungphakorn was born of Thai Chinese parents of modest economic means. He graduated from a local university before obtaining a scholarship to England where he received a Ph.D. in economics. The Second World War, nonetheless, interrupted his education, and during this time he served in the Seri Thai resistance movement. When he returned to Thailand after the war, Dr. Puey joined the Ministry of Finance and was appointed as the Deputy Governor of the Bank of Thailand at the age of 37. However, he soon resigned from that post because of a conflict with the government but rejoined the Ministry of Finance short after to be posted to the United Kingdom. His ability became known to Sarit who invited Dr. Puey to be the first director of the newly formed Budget Bureau when the Field Marshal took power. The economist later became the first director of the Fiscal Policy Office at the Ministry of Finance and then the Governor of the Bank of Thailand, all of these within the five years of Sarit's regime. As Governor of the central bank, he tried to exert greater control over the commercial banks and wean them away from the close connection with politics. It was toward the later period in his career when he increasingly devoted his time to promote rural development and give a voice to Thailand's poor. Unfortunately, Dr. Puey, one of the most important individuals to build up Thai capitalism, was accused of being a Communist and was forced to exile in 1976. See Ammar Siamwalla, "The Thai Economy: Fifty Years of Expansion", in *Thailand: King Bhumibol Adulyadej—The Golden Jubilee 1946-1996*, Anand Panyarachun, ed. (Bangkok: Asia Books, 1996), p.143.

[75]* The information about the October 6 event cited in this thesis derived from the following articles: See Benedict Anderson, "Withdrawal Symptoms: Social and Cultural Aspects of the October 6 Coup", (*Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, vol.4: 3, 1977); Jil Giles Ungpakorn, "The Day murder and brutality came to campus", in *The Nation* (October 4, 2000) and the same author, "Without student voices, democracy is pointless", in *The Nation* (October 6, 2000); Thongchai Winichakul, "Remembering/Silencing the Traumatic Past: The Ambivalence Narratives of the October 1976 Massacre in Bangkok", (6th International Conference on Thai Studies, Chiang Mai, October 14-17, 1996); and the same author, "Facing up to a painful past is crucial", in *The Nation* (November 1, 2000); Subhatra Bhumiprabhas, "Recalling a Massacre", in *The Nation* (October 5, 2000).

[76] See Pasuk and Baker, *Thailand*, p. 306.

[77]* "Among the 22 parties which contested the poll were Socialists, New Force, Socialist Front, People's Justice, Populist, and Free People. Never before had so many left-aligned parties campaigned openly. The three major left-wing parties attracted 14 percent of the votes and won 37 seats". Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] See "Media must reflect on its guilt for October 6", *The Nation* (October 6, 2000).

[81] See Pasuk and Baker, *Thailand*, p.306.

[82]* "The numbers of people involved in the demonstrations, strikes, and movements of 1973-6 were quite different from the political opposition faced in earlier decades… The army was still internally disorganized after the fall of Thanom-Praphat and subsequent purges. Krit was angling to move from the army to a political career after retirement in 1976, and was concentrating on building his political links. The first Division of the First Army could not be mobilized to disperse the forces of disorder in the style of the 1940s and 1950s." Ibid., p. 307.

[83]* "Established in the mid-1960s under US auspices to co-ordinate counter-insurgency, the Communist Suppression Operation Command (CSOC) had originally been placed directly under the Prime Minister. In 1969, the unit was transferred to direct control by the military. After October 1973, it was renamed as Internal Security Operation Command (ISOC) to denote a wider role". Ibid.

[84]* In 1974, Wattana Kiewvimol, a head of the Thai Students Association in the States returned to Thailand. He claimed to have forged links with the CIA and induced ISOC to fund and support a new organization called Nawaphon, variously translated as "New Force" or "Ninth Power" in reference to the Ninth Reign. Nawaphon asserted that it stood for the defense of nation, religion, and king in the face of communist threat. It was assisted, at least on an individual and non-official basis, by senior military officers and by members of the civilian bureaucracy, particularly from the Ministry of Interior. The main target for recruitment was local businessmen and officials. Ibid.

[85]* "The Border Patrol Police set up the Village Scouts Movement in 1971 as one of many attempts to build up rural organization to counter-insurgency in the critical area of the far northeast. The main function of the movement was to organize villagers in ritual displays of loyalty to nation and king. By early 1976, it had changed and expanded in urban area. The first training program in Bangkok was held in January 1976. By September, 36 groups with almost 20,000 members had been recruited in the city". Ibid, p. 309.

[86]* Two of the better-known leaders of the Red Gaurs were directly connected to ISOC: They were Praphan Wongkham, identified as a "27-year old employee of the Internal Security Operations Command" and Suebsai Hasdin, a son of Special Colonel Sudsai Hasdin, who was formerly in charge of the Hill Tribes division of ISOC. See *Bangkok Post*, (June 1, 1975). According to Benedict Anderson, "well-informed sources in Bangkok confirm that many of the Red Gaurs were ex-mercenaries and men discharged the army for disciplinary infractions, but add that a sizeable fraction were high-school dropouts, unemployed street-corner boys, slum toughs and so forth. Hired by various cliques within the ISOC and other agencies specializing in police and intelligence work, the Red Gaurs were not recruited primarily on the basis of ideological commitment but rather by promises of high pay, abundant fee liquor and brothel privileges, and the lure of public notoriety" See Anderson, "Withdrawal Symptoms", p.26.

[87]* "Conservative monks lent their weight to the rightist reaction. Phra Kittivuttho had built his monastic career by involvement in conservative politics with the Sangha. In 1972, he rose to the position of Supreme Patriarch. In 1975, he became active with Nawaphon. In mid-June 1976, he gave a published interview in which he argued that it was correct for Buddhists to kill communists.

> I think we must do this, even though we are Buddhists. But such killing is not the killing of *khon* (people). Because whoever destroys the nation, religion and monarchy is not a complete person but *mara* (evil). Our intention must be not to kill people but to kill the devil. It is the duty of all Thai… It is like when we kill a fish to make curry to place in the alms bowl for a monk. There is certainly demerit in killing the fish, but when we place it in the alms bowl of a monk we gain much greater merit… Thai must kill communists. Anyone who wants to gain merit must kill communists.

See Somboon Suksamran, *Buddhism and Politics in Thailand* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982), pp. 150-5.

[88]* "On December 6, 1974, the peasants' leaders of Chiang Mai and Bangkok joined and founded the *Sahaphan Chaona Chaorai Haeng Prathet Thai,* the Peasants Federation of Thailand (PFT). Branches were formed in 41 provinces. A journal was started. Membership grew, by some estimates as large as 1.5 million. The president was Chai Wangtaku, a Pitsanulok peasant and with Intha Sribunruang, a Chiang Mai village headman, as vice president… However, from early April until August 1975, leaders of the PFT were murdered at a rate of roughly one per week. Eighteen were assassinated in this period, including Intha Sribunruang, five others [members] in Chiang Mai, and leaders from seven other provinces. After the assassination campaign stopped, remaining PFT leaders continued to be harassed by Nawaphon organizers accusing them of being communist and anti-Buddhist. The campaign worked. As a result, the PFT crumbled". See Pasuk and Baker, *Thailand*, p.298 and 307.

[89] See Anderson, "Withdrawal Symptoms", pp. 23-4. Also see David Morell and Chai-Anan Samudavanija, *Political Conflict in Thailand: Reform, Reaction, Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Oelgeschlager, Gunn and Hain, 1981), p.272.

[90] See Pasuk and Baker, *Thailand*, p.310.

[91] Ibid.

[92]* In the election campaign of February-April 1976, "over thirty people were killed [and] the [New Force party headquarter in Bangkok was] fire-bombed…In March, the Red Gaurs threw two bombs and a grenade into a student demonstration in Bangkok against the US presence. On the next day, they lobbed another bomb, which killed four and wounded many. In August, the police attacked the home of the Prime Minister Kukrit". Ibid.

[93]* Ostensibly for medical treatment, Praphat returned to Thailand in August 1976 and even had an audience with the King. "Student demonstrations against Praphat were attacked by the Red Gaurs, leaving two dead". Ibid.

[94]* The dramatic satire by the Thammasat students mocked the event of two activists from the Provincial Electricity Authority in Nakhon Prathom who were arrested and hanged for distributing posters criticizing Thanom. For the detailed account of the incident see Wyatt, *Thailand*, p.302; also see Pasuk and Baker, *Thailand*, p.310.

[95] Ibid.

[96]* Although the official number of death was 46 and the number of people arrested were 3,154, many witnesses told a different story. For the memory of the October 6, 1976 event see Thongchai, "Remembering/Silencing the Traumatic Past"; also see Jil Giles Ungpakorn, "The Day murder and brutality came to campus", *The Nation* (October 4, 2000).

[97] See Pasuk and Baker, *Thailand*, p.311.

[98] Ibid.

[99] See Marian Mallet, "Causes and Consequences of the October '76 Coup", in *Thailand: Roots of Conflict*, Andrew Turton, Jonathan Fast, and Malcolm Caldwell, eds. (Nottingham: Sokesman, 1978), p. 91; also see Prudhisan Jumbala, *Nation-building and Democratization in Thailand: A Political History* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute, 1992), pp.83-5.

[100] See Pasuk and Baker, *Thailand*, p.311.

[101] Thongchai Winichakul, "Ignoring history is just self-delusion", in *The Nation* (November 2, 2000).

[102] A quote from former premier Anand Panyarachun, in *Asiaweek* (December 3, 1999).

[103] Anand Panyarachun, *Thailand: King Bhumibol Adulyadej*, p.7.

[104]* The monument will be built by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, while the Department of Fine Arts will supervise the construction. It is supposed to be completed by 2001. "Monument to Honor HM the King", *The Nation* (May 26, 2000).

[105]* Charnvit Kasetsiri stated that "Thai history is more like indoctrination". "If Thai society understood what happened on Oct 4, 1973 and Oct 6, 1976", he believed, the May 1992 incident would not have happened. See Charnvit Kasetsiri, *The Nation* (February 13, 2000). For the details of the May 1992 event see Pasuk and Baker, *Thailand*, p.411-2.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Thongchai Winichakul, "Thai Democracy in Public Memory: Monuments and their Narratives", (International Conference on Thai Studies, Amsterdam, 4-8 July 1999), p.10.

[108]* Naowarat's first draft has been under fire from all camps, from former student leaders to academics to politicians to the bureaucracy. The result seems to be anything but a satisfactory consensus. See *The Nation* (February 13, 2000).

[109]* The monument of October 1973 "faced indescribable obstruction until 1998. Several years were waste because the project was abandoned or ignored due to student radicalism. Despite endorsement by many governments, the rest of the story is rather absurd. In brief, the land was owned by the Crown Property Bureau (CPB) which rented to the army, which leased to the Association of Lottery Sellers. For all of those years, neither the army nor the CPB could do anything to free the property for the monument construction." Ibid., p.11.

[110] Ibid.

[111]* "The call for a monument for the 1992 event arose shortly after the incident… [Meanwhile,] a project was proposed for all the sacrifices in 1973, 1976 and 1992 combined. A new site was selected to circumvent the perennial obstacles at the old one owned by the CPB. It was another area on the Ratchadamnoen Avenue where two government buildings were burnt down during the turmoil. The supreme patriarch at the time offered the name for the proposed memorial park as the Peace Garden [*Suan Santiporn*]. However the project was strongly opposed within the bureaucracy". Ibid., p.13.

[112]* The May 1992 Monument was objected by the Finance Ministry for three reasons. "First is the plan for an open space, a public park, to relieve traffic congestion. Second, the park was planned to include the royal monuments of other Chakri kings who have not yet had ones in Bangkok. Third, it argued, quite sarcastically in content but not in tone, that the name Peace Garden should be for the memorial of a truly peaceful event. A memorial of a political unrest for popular democracy should be at the old site which is close to the Democracy Monument. As the plan to relieve traffic in the area got a support by the King in 1995, the memorial project for the May 1992 event was quietly put off". See the letter from the Minister of Finance to the Secretary of the Prime Minister, May 4, 1993, translation in Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Under the setting sun, the colors of Bangkok assume an almost peculiar richness of grayish orange and purple. Six o' clock befalls. The national anthem once again floats loftily into the air. On the television screen appears the montage of the country, the mosaic of Thailand, to accompany the exalted song.[1] For this minute of national pride, the anthem features not only the splendid images of His Majesty the King and the proudly flying tricolor flag. But more significantly, many versions also encompass public monuments as the manifestation of twentieth-century Thailand, from the radiant constitution on top of the Democracy Monument to the benevolent father-ruler of the Monument of King Ramkhamhaeng to the invincible warrior monarch of the Monument of King Naresuan.

The farewell of a century always seems to be a good time for retrospect. In fact, this is what monuments are about. They are memories of a past that has been artistically reconstructed and often invented for the sake of the present and the future. The holistic view of the Thai nation, which found its immortality in public monuments, was limited to a narrow circle of elite, politicians, and artists. They embraced a myth of history, a saga of the unified and patriotic Thai people who under compassionate and courageous leaderships defied threats from foreign foes and eventually survived, succeeded and prospered. Monuments, accordingly, are the showpieces of this coherent identity and the epitome of Thai-ness. The images are the messages.

The twentieth century in Thailand began with the bravest, and perhaps the most ambitious resolutions, a promise to make the kingdom modern. The Equestrian Statue of King Chulalongkorn marked the glorious moment of Siamese absolute monarchy. The regal memorial was a pure European import—it was made in France, by a French artist in Western fashion. Yet it has become one of the most celebrated art works and the symbol of the Thai nation. The striving for modernity and nationhood reached a new zenith and zeal under the leadership of Phibun, a crucial member of the 1932 *coup d'état* that installed the constitutional monarchy.

Phibun's wartime government in the 1930s and 1940s set the tone, trend, and even the name of the modernized country. It begot not merely a series of patriotic monuments like the Victory Monument to exemplify the novel notions but also established the heroic realism of the Italian-born Bhirasri as the national art style.

The western style found its grounds in local substance. From the Monument of King Taksin in Thonburi to the Monument of King Naresuan in Suphanburi, the gallantry of legendary figures was reborn. From the late 1950s to the early 1970s, the past heroes came vividly alive through realistic portrayals and creative imagination in monuments. The grand images were both responses to an era of national insecurity and a confirmation of the traditional outlook of the Sarit-Thanom regime. Since the October 1973 uprising, public monuments have accentuated a variety of themes to express the complexity of a Thailand that diverged from the linear and centralized convention. Although the style of monumental art still remains conservative, different subject matters, including the Monument of Queen Suriyothai that commemorates distinguished womanhood, the Monument of Suthon Phu that celebrates a romantic poet, and the Monument of the 6 October that recognizes a tragic episode of modern Thai history, have all earned notable tributes. Together with the time-honored representations from the past, public monuments envisioned a nation that aspired to diversity and democracy as the century drew to a close.

Public monuments provide many of the images of what Thais regard as their genuine history and cultural icons. Furthermore, they have played an eminent role in the Thai art world. The desire to promote official dogma does not necessarily contravene the desire to create marvelous works. Established by Bhirasri and endorsed by the Fine Arts Department, monumental art has been highly admired by many as one of the most important aspects of modern Thai art. Although monuments have more to do with myth than reality, the prevalent realistic portrayal has transformed fantastic myths into solid public memories. Despite the fact that life-like statues standing on top of a platform are deemed rather outdated in the Western world, they continue to capture the imagination of the Thai state and its artists.

The popularity of a public monument is fragile. It can take years to build but just a blink of the eye to demolish. Art always relates and reacts to the period in which it is made.[2] Public monuments are especially "timely" as they pay homage to particular events or persons that have special meanings to their contemporary audiences. As the political and social milieu changes over time, people's memories for certain monuments inevitably dwindle. To remain relevant, a monument needs to interact with the lives of the masses and be revived in public consciousness. A successful metamorphosis can transcend a monument's original purpose into new roles that far surpass the intents of its builder. It can become even closer to the hearts of the people and at times enter the realm of supernaturalism.

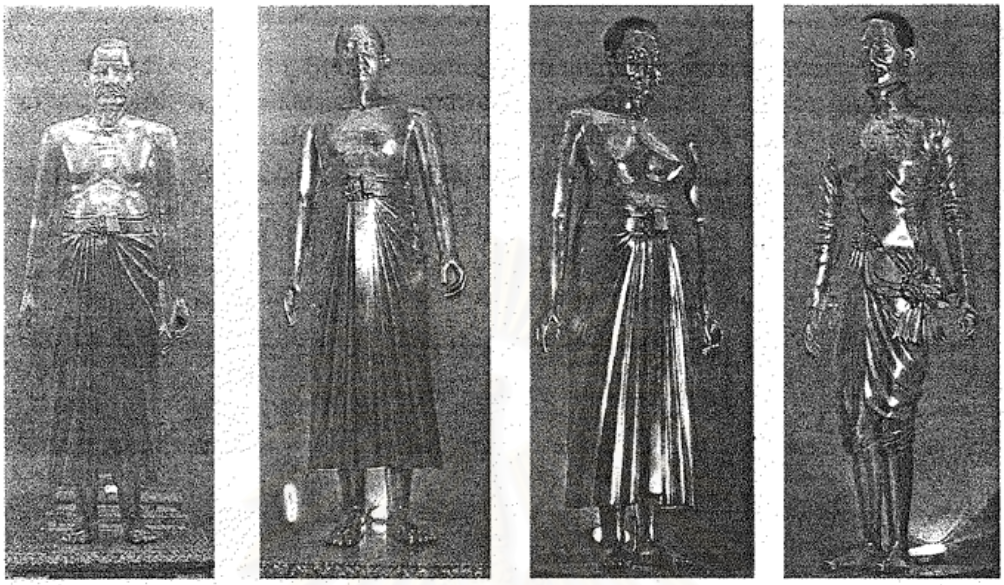
History can be conceived not only verbally but also visually. Almost every aspect of life in Thailand has changed during the twentieth century. While many intrigues of the past hundred years have yet to be fully revealed, public monuments, as national symbols and witnesses of their times, can serve as a window to gain some understanding of this complex epoch of history. Of course, this thesis does not assume to contain interpretations that are incontestable. The focus is the monuments themselves, as art created under deliberate political agendas and in specific cultural contexts. The meanings of these works are forever open to discussion and doubt. What is not open to doubt is the very presence of these extraordinary monuments, which stand so closely with the history and progress of Thailand in the twentieth century, signifying the highest values and ideal visions of the Thai nation.

Notes

[1]* At six o'clock, local television stations, namely Channel 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11, all play the national anthem. While each channel has its own visual picture for the song, public monuments have been a major element in many of them.

[2] Karl Ruhrberg, Manfred Schneckenburger, Christane Fricke, and Klaus Honnef, *Art of the 20th Century*, vol. I, Ingo F. Walther, ed. (Koln: Taschen, 1998), p.390.

FIGURES



The four gilded statues commissioned by King Chulalongkorn in 1869 of the four former Chakri monarchs, designed by Prince Pradit Worakan; they are now placed in the Royal Pantheon at the Grand Palace, Bangkok.
From Left to Right:
Fig.1 The Statue of King Rama I
Fig.2 The Statue of King Rama II
Fig.3 The Statue of King Rama III
Fig.4 The Statue of King Rama IV
Courtesy of the Department of Fine Arts.

Fig.5
The Giant Swing (1807), north of Wat Suthat, Bangkok. It was used at the annual Brahman "Ceremony of the Swing" which involved the Hindu gods Shiva and Vishnu. From the beginning of the First Reign of the current dynasty until 1932, royalty was always present at these ceremonies. Photo by author.

Fig.6
The Theppaksi figure, a mythical creature with human head and a bird body. Designed and cast in early Ratthanakosin period, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, the Grand Palace, Bangkok. Photo by author.

Fig.7
The relief panels by Vittorio Novi, the Mahaiudthit Bridge (1914), Bangkok. Photo by author.

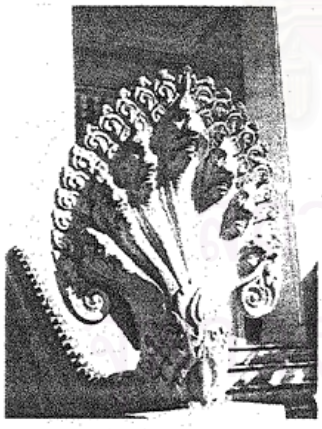


Fig.8
The Naga sculpture (1919) by Rodolfo Nolli, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. Photo by author.

Fig.9
The Monument of King Mongkut (1868) by Phraya Chindarangsan (Luang Theprojana), Wat Bowonivet, Bangkok. Courtesy of the Department of Fine Arts.

Fig.10
The model of a Statue of King Chulalongkorn, Department of Fine Arts, Bangkok. The design was taken from the marble figure (1897) by Cesare Fantachiotti, which now placed inside the Chakri Maha Throne Hall. It has been used as the paragon for many statues of Rama V nationwide. Photo by author.

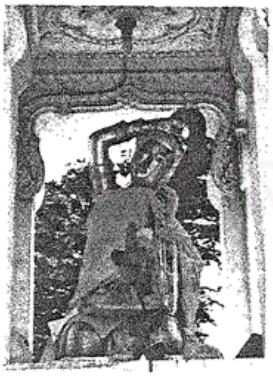


Fig.11
The statue of the Earth Goddess, the northeast corner of Sanam Luang, Bangkok. Designed by Prince Naris. Photo by author.

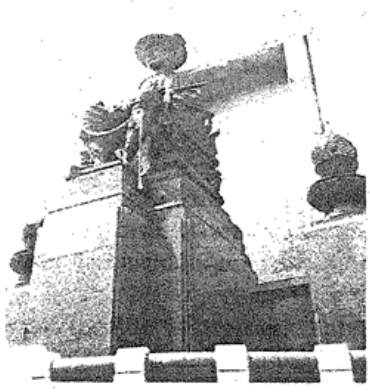


Fig.12
The Monument of King Rama I (1932), the foot of the Memorial Bridge, Bangkok. Designed by Prince Naris and cast by Bhirasri. Photo by author.

Fig. 13
The Equestrian Monument of King Chulalongkorn (1908) by Georges Ernest Saulo, the Royal Plaza, Bangkok. Photo by author.

Fig.14
The Monument of King Vajiravudh (1941) by Bhirasri, in front of Lumpini Park, Bangkok. Photo by author.

Fig.15
The Monument of King Chulalongkorn and King Vajiravudh (1990) by Khaimook Xuto, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. Photo by author.

Fig.16
The Monument of King Prajadhipok (1980) by Sanan in front of the National Assembly, Bangkok. Photo by author.

Fig.17
The Monument of King Rama II (1996) at Wat Arun, Thonburi, commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of King Bhumibol's reign. Photo by author.

Fig.18
The Monument of the First World War (1918), Sanam Luang, Bangkok. Photo by author.

Fig.19
The Monument of the People Revolution (1936), Laksi Circle, Bangkok. Photo by author.

Fig.20
The Victory Monument (1941) by M.L. Pum Malakul, Bangkok. The five bronze hero figures at the base were by Bhirasri. Photo by author.

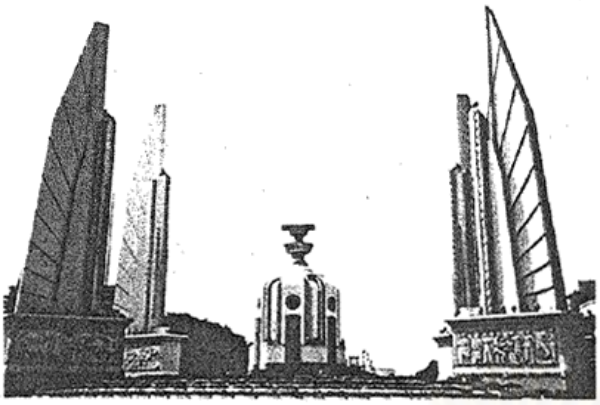


Fig.21
The Democracy Monument (1939) by Mew Aphaiwong with relief panels by Bhirasri, Rajadamnern Avenue, Bangkok. Photo by author.

Fig.22
The Dual Monument of King Naresuan (1958), Don Chedi, Supanburi. The statue in the front was by Bhirasri, whereas the white pagoda at the back was supposed to be the great *chedi* erected by King Naresuan himself to commemorate the victory of the elephant combat with the Burmese crown prince. Photo by author.

Fig.23
The Monument of King Taksin (1953) by Bhirasri with his assistants Sanan, Sitthidet Sanghiran, and Pakorn Lekson, at Wongwianyai Traffic Circle, Thonburi. Photo by author.

Fig.24
The Monument of Thao Suranari (1934) by Bhirasri, Nakhon Ratchasima. Courtesy of Department of Fine Arts.

Fig.25
The Monument of Queen Suriyothai (1995) by Khaimook Xuto, in Makamyong Plain, Ayutthaya. Photo by author.

Fig.26
The Boar Monument (1914) for Queen Saoqapha Phonsi's fiftieth birthday. It was designed by Prince Naris and built next to Wat Rachapradit, Bangkok. Photo by author.

Fig.27
The Monument of Khruba Srivichai (1946) by Bhirasri with Khien Yimsiri as assistant, the foot of the Doi Suthep Hill, Chiang Mai. Photo by author.

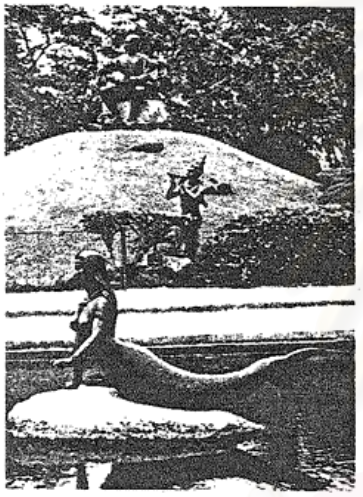


Fig.28
The Monument of Suthon Phu and Phra Aphai Man (1970). The statue of Suthon Phu was by Sukij Laidej (top); Kraisorn Srisuwan designed and cast the prince (middle); Sanan was responsible for the mermaid (bottom), Suthon Phu Memorial Park, Klaeng district, Rayong. Photo by author.

Fig.29
The Monument of Prince Father and Princess Mother (1999) by Manop Suwanpinta, in Chonburi Monumental Park, Chonburi. Photo by author.

Fig.30
The Monument of Ban Rachan Villagers (1976) in Singburi. It composes of eleven hero figures and a buffalo. The chief designer of the monument was Sanan who also cast the figure of Panrueng and the buffalo. Nai Chan was by Saroj Jarak, Nai Dok and Nai Kaew by Anik Somnoon, Nai Tan and Nai Thongmen by Sukij Laidej, Nai Muang by Kwanmuang Youngprayoon, Nai Chote by Lamthian Kashaphuti, Khun San by Boonsong Nuchnomboon, Nai Inn by Soonthorn Srisoonthorn, and Nai Thong by Pratueng Thammarak. Photo by author.

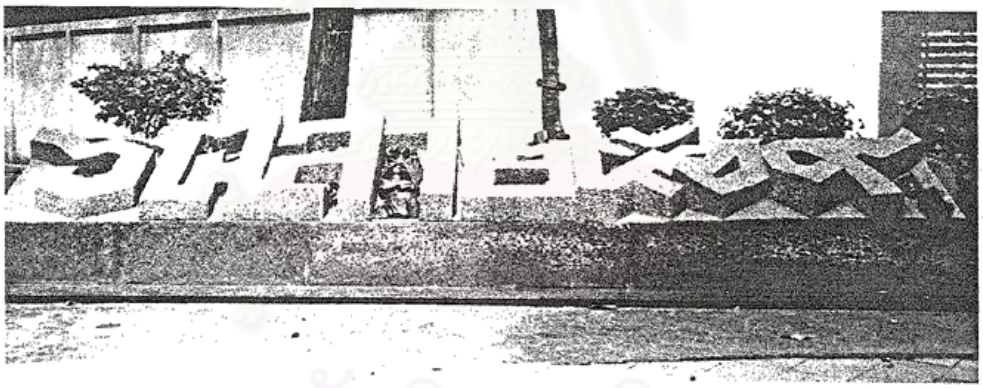


Fig.31
The Monument of 6 October (2000) by Surapol Panyawachira, Thammasat University, Bangkok. Photo by author.

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APPENDECES

Appendix 1
Reigns of the Kings of the Chakri Dynasty

Rama I: Phra Phutthayotfa	1782-1809
Rama II: Phra Phutthaloetla	1809-1824
Rama III: Phra Nangklao	1824-1851
Rama IV: Mongkut	1851-1868
Rama V: Chulalongkorn	1868-1910
Rama VI: Vajiravudh	1910-1925
Rama VII: Prajadhipok	1925-1935
Rama VIII: Ananda Mahidol	1935-1946
Rama IX: Bhumibol Adulyadej	1946-Present

Appendix 2:
Prime Ministers of Thailand (June 1932- January 2001)

Phraya Manopkarn (Mano)	June 1932-June 1933
Phraya Phahon	June 1933-December 1938
Phibun Songkhram	December 1938-July 1944
Khuang Aphaiwong	August 1944-August 1945
Thawi Bunyaket	August 1945-September 1945
Seni Pramoj	September 1945-January 1946
Khuang Aphaiwong	January 1946-March 1946
Pridi Banomyong	March 1946-August 1946
Thamrong Nawasawat	August 1946-November 1947
Khuang Aphaiwong	November 1947-April 1948
Phibun Songkhram	April 1948-September 1957
Phote Sarasin	September 1957-December 1957
Thanom Kittikachorn	January 1958-October 1958
Sarit Thanarat	October 1958-December 1963
Thanom Kittikachorn	December 1963-October 1973
Sanya Thammmasak	October 1973-January 1975
Seni Pramoj	February 1975-March 1975
Kukrit Pramoj	March 1975-April 1976
Seni Pramoj	April 1976-October 1976
Thanin Kraivichien	October 1976-October 1977
Kriangsak Chomanand	November 1977-February 1980
Prem Tinsulanond	March 1980-April 1988
Chatchai Choonhavan	April 1988-February 1991
Anand Panyarachun	February 1991-April 1992
Suchinda Kraprayoon	April 1992-May 1992
Anand Panyarachun	June 1992-September 1992
Chuan Leekpai	September 1992-May 1995
Banharn Silapa-archa	May 1995-1996
Chavalit Yongchaiyudh	1996-November 1997
Chuan Leekpai	November 1997-January 2001

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