

CHAPTER IV

Reflection of Bronze Sculptures and Thai Society

Bronze art in Thailand have been very popular since last century. It had been the policy of the Thai government in different regime that all the provinces and the government houses should have the portraiture of the Royals or the monuments of the important pioneers. With the popularity of the monumental sculptures the fashion of establishing the sculptures on public places and in private and government houses, educational enterprises, hospitals etc. took very popular move that at present there are hundreds and thousands of such can be found all over Thailand. The chapter discusses on the popularity of the bronze sculptures of the Kings, the hero personnel and pioneers are unique Thai society and the different kind of belief system prevalent in the Thai society.

4.1 Bronze sculptures, reflection of Thai society

The tradition of making bronze sculptures of the Thai elites began its fast pace from the period of King Rama IV. Before Rama IV period only for the religious purposes statues of kings were made to consecrate in some wats as a offering on the service of the god. The reigns of King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn were the times when Thailand enthusiastically opened its door to western countries for political and economic reasons. As a result, western art came to gradually have an influence on Thai artisans and artists.¹

Ka F. Wang² had portrayed the nation with the means of public monuments. On the basis of public monumental images and narratives his discussion is unique on the study of Thai history. Public monuments were the means of visual manifestation of Thai regimes which symbolize how they have imagined their nation. From absolute monarchy

¹ Apinan Poshyananda, *Western- style Painting and Sculpture in the Thai Royal Court* (The Bureau of the Royal Household, Bangkok, 1992). p.263

² Ka F. Wong, *Vision of a Nation, Public Monuments in Twentieth Century Thailand* (White Lotus, Bangkok, 2006)

to the present people's democracy, they erected public monument and memorials of different kinds to legitimize their own rule and promulgate their own concept of modern Thailand to the people. Wang gave very comprehensive knowledge of the absolute monarchy, modern nationalism, traditionalism and diversity via public monuments which portray different stage of Thai political history as well as social and art history. To talk about only of the public bronze monumental sculptures, as stated before, the public bronze monuments were manufactured under the direct royal patronage from the time of King Mongkut apart from few foreign made and gifted bronze sculptures of the elites. The tradition of making bronze was reached to its zenith during the time of King Chulalongkorn and King Vajiravudh's regime. Therefore during the absolute monarchy the kings and elites used their bronze monuments to transcend their legacy on the general public. Bronze monumental sculpture representing the absolute monarchy was the famous equestrian statue of the King Chulalongkorn.

The equestrian statue testifies the absolute monarchy of the time. King Chulalongkorn tried to establish his power strongly with his visual representations of any means in front of public and its neighbor. He searched for a novel symbol for an ideal absolute monarchy. During King Chulalongkorn's entourage to Europe during 1897 and 1907, he was inspired by the portraiture of different kinds of the ruling monarchs which were then culture of Europe to display such in the public spaces. He must have thought to use royal portraiture as useful propaganda, as a way of presenting the rulers as civilized individuals as well as he used the Thai sentiment of *devaraja*, *chakravartin raja* or the incarnation of *Lord Vishnu* embodied on the king to reflect on the portraiture.

The traditional Thai custom believed that the soul of the persons dwell upon the photographs, portraitures and idols. The superstition of making an image of a living person, including photograph, portrait and sculpture was harmful to the individual changed after the living power elite became more willing to use and even actively utilize their image for personal and political purposes. The superstition positively impacted on the status of the monumental art of the elites. This are very flexible in nature and their



belief. They can adjust in any kind of situation if it gives them mental and spiritual satisfaction. As Wang states³,

“The general masses are convinced that the spirits of the revered personality, or at least some fragments of his or her essence, inhabit the picture or sculpture. The artwork that captures and conserves the image of that individual naturally becomes a spiritual representation of that person. It is a common scene now a day 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 icons all over the country.”

Even though the political scenario have changed toward the course of time in Thailand, the absolute rulers to the rulers of constitutional monarchy, military regime to the present peoples' government still revered the absolute Chakri rulers which is testified by still in practice of making bronze sculptures of those rulers.

Another famous equestrian statue not to be forgotten in this context is the equestrian bronze statues of the King Naresuan. In early Bangkok period, Thai Historiography developed with the heroic deeds of the King Naresuan in Ayutthaya period. King Naresuan had reestablished the sovereignty of Ayutthaya after its first fall to the Burmese in 1569 by which he became a hero personnel.⁴ Position of King Naresuan I Thai society took a new meaning as a hero of Thai history which was recorded under the direct effort of the ruling regime. Thai historical records confined only among the royals was later from the time of King Chulalongkorn and King Vajiravudh' s time starts to emerge in general public with the means of education to bolster morale and provoke a sense of patriotism among the people. The effects of two world wars and the military government, Thai patriotism was reaching to its height with the glory of the stories of the King Naresuan. The military government started to establish monumental art of King Naresuan. The famous monuments of King Naresuan was made in 1958 by Bhirasri in

³ Ibid. p. 15

⁴ Ibid, p 87

front of don Chedi in Supanburi with narrative panels and others are in Pitsanulok, Ayutthaya etc. Until 2010 numerous bronze sculptures of King Naresuan were manufactured. The most recent is the one equestrian sculpture with the mobile heroic pose is under construction in the foundry of Fine Arts Department by Mr. Paradron Cherdchoo. Because of the society Thais lives in, even though the military initiates the monuments of the King Naresuan with political motives, the image of Naresuan has reached its height from hero figure, historic and military idol to a God. According to Wong statue King Naresuan is regarded as holy image that its worshippers believe the spirit of the King will protect the community as well as the country. Like Chulalongkorn Day, King Naresuan Day is celebrated on 25 January every year by performing colorful rituals and procession held around the Don Chedi monument in Supanburi and other places of the country. There are numerous bronze sculptures made during different regime by the famous artists of the Fine Arts Department. See some of the sculpture list in Appendix 10.

4.2 Spiritual dimensions and beliefs behind the making of bronze statues of Thai elites

Art work of any country not only possesses its aesthetic values, but also reflects in various aspects representative characteristic of a nation. ⁵ Art and religion reflects the society which become the identity of the nation. Thai society is the amalgam of different religious beliefs mainly, animism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Deep rooted animistic, ritualistic practice, belief is still prevalent in any modern or ultra modern people's thought. Any modern Thai from inside do have faith in spirit, supernatural power, astrological belief. So this is their social heritage that is prevalent in the Thai society.

Thailand has a long history of Brahmanic culture. Brahmanism and Brahmanic faith took hold in Thai since this part of land was influenced by Indian traders and mostly

⁵ Apinan Poshyananda, *Western- style Painting and Sculpture in the Thai Royal Court* (The Bureau of the Royal Household, Bangkok, 1992). p.258.



the Hindu Khmer civilization. Thai art and literature is replete with the Brahmanical faith and Sanskrit influence.

From the artistic point of view bronze monumental and commemorative arts was adopted in such condition by the extant Thais that the whole region was undergoing assimilation of many cultures of Southeast Asia. Literary works as well as various forms of arts are influenced by extant animism, Brahmanism and Buddhism. Hinduism has existed in Thailand in a syncretistic relationship with Theravada Buddhism since pre Thai period (at least since the fifth century B.C.). It is rooted in the land being a part of its sacred geography and archaeology. However its function, its meaning, and its relevance to a Thai differ fundamentally and radically from what it is for a Hindu in Indian subcontinent.

Hinduism is a religion of social order and culture. With the philosophical aspect Hinduism leads human being to Mokshya from the freedom of Samsara. In social order one has to perform the duty in the form of Dharma and proper fulfillment of his Dharma eventually prepares a Hindu for his final goal the Mokshya. Culturally Hindu religion is the source, the theme and the motif of sacred rituals, ceremonies, festivals, music, art and literature.

In Thailand on the other hand the main religious tradition is Theravada Buddhism which is also the basis of Thai social order. The role of Hinduism therefore is subordinate and peripheral to Buddhism. Hinduism exists not as a total tradition but as a piece-meal way, lacking in depth, structure, inner unity and cohesiveness.⁶ The Thai have acquired theology and philosophy from Theravada Buddhism not from Hinduism. Thus the Hindu scriptures, the Vedas, the Upanishads, Bhagavad Geeta- the very basic Hindu theological speculations and philosophic insights have absolutely no influence on Thai religious life. Apart from this, the Brahmanas, the priestly text on ritual and ceremony, the Puranas, the Hindu text on cosmogony, astrology and mythology, Dharmasutras, the aphorisms on duty and morality, the Dharmasastras, the Law books of the Hindus, especially the

⁶ Desai, Santosh, *Hinduism in Thai Life* (Popular Prakashan Private Limited, Bombay, 1980). p. 108.

Manusmriti, the Epics, particularly the Ramayana, in short the entire ritualistic, cosmogonical and Dharma literatures of the Hindus, has contributed a great deal towards the sanctification and embellishment of Thai religious, social, cultural and political life.⁷

According to Santosh significant contribution of the Hindu tradition to Thai life is in the form of rituals, ceremonies, certain cosmogonical and astrological beliefs, a reverence for Hindu major deities, Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma as well as for minor gods, and towards the development of the concept of Dharma, the law. It has also played an important role in the formulation of Thai script and their language which is rich in Sanskrit.

4.2.1 Devaraja, the God King

One effect of Khmer civilization on Thai is that, the Thai acquired and made their own was its religious dichotomy. They embraced two exclusive Indian religious systems, Hinduism and Buddhism. Until towards the end of Khmer empire, these systems were separate, the former appertaining to the court, and the latter to the people. The kings reinforced their absolute temporal power by claiming to be the mortal representative, and indeed the incarnation, of one of the Hindu deity Narayan, and a temple was built for each that became on his death his funerary monument and cult center. The people meanwhile devoted Buddhist most suited to their situation, nevertheless paid homage to their god king or *devaraja* as a matter of course. This system was acquired by Thai and modified by them to the extent that what had been a dichotomy became a duality. That is, the religion of the court continued to be Hinduism, the Thai king became an adherent of his people's faith. Thais adopted the Hindu concept of divinity and the Hindu coronation ritual which imparted divinity to the king in a situation devoid of other essential and integrative forces of Hindu concept. The notion of Hindu social system to regard the ruling class as *kshatriya* emplied on the Thai ruling class as well. The Buddha himself was from the same cast of *kshatriya*.⁸ At the present the Hindu element of the religious

⁷ Ibid, p. 109

⁸ Ka F. Wong, *Vision of a Nation, Public Monuments in Twentieth Century Thailand* (White Lotus, Bangkok, 2006).p.164.

duality is still strongly in evidence in the rituals of the Thai court and state. A chapter of Brahmin priest still attends and to a certain extent regulates the court and officiates at royal state ceremonies. The king is still clocked by the title of Rama deriving from the Hindu God. The ashes of the deceased monarchs is kept in the altar of the royal temples and still treated as a piece of veneration.

Likewise new phenomenon of modern monumental bronze statues of the different monarchs has played as a cult object to be venerated by the devoted citizens of Thailand. History of kings meant for normal Thais is like *tamnan* meaning folklore, legend, story or myth rather than history. The word *history* known as *prawatsat* in modern Thai word was acquired at the reign of King Rama V.⁹ Because of the long rooted tradition of believing in the folklore and legend, the Thais usually tend to admire their monarch's deeds and history and consider them as a hero figure or God that are benevolent to their well being.

4.2.2 Chakravartin monarch

Thai adopted the Buddhist belief of *Chakravartin* monarch which means the universal monarch. Wong¹⁰ states that,

“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. 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 and 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 sign of *chakra* to let the *chakra* world know that he will rule over it; (5) *Gandhari chakkawattiraja*, the *chakravartin* whose magic power enable him to fly in the sky and go underneath the earth.”

⁹ Ibid. p. 162

¹⁰ Ibid p. 165.

The virtue of the five elements of the *chakravartin* character is supposedly reflected on the equestrian or other types of monumental bronze statues of Thai monarch. When the statues are made, the sculptures bring those as far as they can to portray those qualities which are in the respected monarchs and heroes of the Thai history.

4.2.3 The Bodhisattva king

Thai kings are often regarded as Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. Avalokitesvara enjoys a special place in the hearts of millions of Buddhists worldwide whether they follow the Mahayana or the Theravada traditions of Buddhism. Also in the Buddhist pantheon of deities, he embodies the essence of the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism, for he is the compassionate one, the one who personifies the compassionate nature of the Buddha. According to Nandana Chutiwongs, "Avalokitesvara, the Ever-watchful, lord and personification of universal compassion (*Mahakaruna*) represents the highest ideal of Mahayana Buddhism and, consequently became the most important figure in the vast Mahayana pantheon. He is, in other words, the very being in whom the evolution of Mahayana thought is reflected"¹¹. The idea of the Bodhisattvas are found in The Mahayana belief of the 'would be' Buddha and the Theravada belief in the past Buddha as exemplified in the Jataka stories.¹² Bodhisattvas are an enlightened and self sacrificing being who postponed his own entry into nirvana in order to help others achieve salvation. Thai Chakri kings were named by the Buddhist names which denote of being a Bodhisattva. As Wong states,¹³

"..... such as King Rama I, Pra Puttayotfa(Buddha Yotfa), King Rama II, Phra Phuttaloela(Buddha Loshia), and King Rama III, Phra Nangklao(Nan Klau) given respectively by King Mongkut (Rama IV) denoted that the monarchs were Bodhisattva. *The Chronicle of Buddhist Councils* (1789) explicitly the king and his brother (Prince of the Front Palace) as Bodhisattva.

¹¹ Nandana Chutiwongs, *The Iconography of Avalokitesvara in Mainland South East Asia* (New Delhi, India: Aryan Books International, 2002), p.14

¹² Sutra Translation Committee of the United States and Canada, *The Seekers Glossary of Buddhism*, (Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2000), p. 44

¹³ Ka F. Wong, *Vision of a Nation, Public Monuments in Twentieth Century Thailand* (White Lotus, Bangkok, 2006). p.165.

Meanwhile Rattanakosin dynasty was seen as the beginning of a new era, and the king himself referred to as a savior- king.”

Wong also states that, the assertion of the king as Bodhisattva not merely evoked and admiration of the monarch’s subjects but could as well justify his position in terms of merit accumulation. According to Tambiah, the Buddhist conception of kingship as understood in Sukhothai and Ayutthaya times and later in 19th century can be simply puts as: “*Chakravartin equals Bodhisattva*”¹⁴

Hence in the monumental bronze statues of the Thai kings the utmost care was taken to show the compassionate nature on their face and on their body language. For example the statues of King Chulalongkorn and the present King Bhumibol reflects aforementioned characteristics. To conclude, the monumental statues of the Thai monarchs denote the resemblance of the Devaraja, Chakravartin and the Bodhisattva nature.

4.3 Different patronage on making of bronze statues

In Thailand, art has generally been under royal patronage. According to Silpa Bhirasri¹⁵, as far as the economy of the state is concerned, in the old days, there were no ways to dispose of financial resources on so many necessities or luxuries. A large amount of the income of the nation was invested in the erection of temples because this was the highest merit making a Buddhist could perform in his life. Thus religious structures rose one after another without interruption, which enabled Thai artists to be very active in all branches of religious art. In the last quarter of the 19th century, under the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910), western civilization was adopted, involving the construction of railways, road, hospitals, schools, water supply installations, electricity etc. the revenue of the nation was devoted to works of public welfare, the erection of Buddhist temples came to an abrupt standstill and accordingly traditional art no longer had its natural outlet of expression. Likewise sculptures and paintings of realistic semi commercial character were imported into Thailand together with many other objects

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 166.

¹⁵ Bhirasri, Silpa, *Contemporary Art in Thailand* (Fine Arts Department, 1963). Bangkok, p. 4

which for the sake of novelty engendered in the upper class a new taste in art. The equestrian statue is the very famous example on this context. (Fig.217) On the patronage of Thai kings many westernized bronze statues were imported from Europe and the realistic art was very famous that the custom of making the bronze statues of the royal elites started to manufacture in the foundry of France and Italy and later in the foundry of Fine Arts Department. Under the direct patronage of the ruling monarch still bronze statues are made of their ancestors and consecrated on the public places in Bangkok and other provinces. The very example is the recently installed King Rama III's statue at the side of Grand Palace. (Fig 121)

Likewise under the direct patronage of present and past Kings of Thailand ancestor worship is on practice until present. On the particular ancestor's day the royals and people gather around the past monarch's statues and pay respect by offering flowers and wreaths. Every year 23 October is celebrated as Chulalongkorn Day. King Chulalongkorn passed away on the same day in 1910 AD. His son and successor King Vajiravudh decided to honor his father by declaring the anniversary of his death as Chulalongkorn Day, or *wan piya maharat* (the day 'wan' of the Great Beloved King). Since King Vajiravudh is regarded as the 'Victorian Siamese Princes', his act of commemorating his father by celebrating as Chulalongkorn Day was influence of the Victorian British custom. Irene Stengs argues that Chulalongkorn Day sprang from the kind of modern nationalism promoted by prince Damrong. But it was the continuation of the royal ancestor worship elaborated by King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn which was in combination with already existing practice of paying homage to deceased kings by the general public.¹⁶

Similarly every year 6 April is celebrated as Chakri Day. The present King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit pay respect to eight gilded life-size statues of the previous kings of the Chakri dynasty. The statues are enshrined in the Royal Pantheon in the Wat Phra Kaeo complex in the Grand palace. The temple has become the palace of divine

¹⁶ Stengs, Irene, *Worshipping the Great Moderniser: King Chulalongkorn, Patron Saint of the Thai Middle Class*, (Nus Press, Singapore, 2009). pp.129-130

ancestors of the Chakri Dynasty. The kings of Thailand worshipped their ancestors as guardian spirits of the monarchy and the kingdom. King Chulalongkorn cast images of his Father King Mongkut as *phra sayam thewathirat* and other previous kings from King Rama I to Rama III as objects of worship. The system was established by his father King Mongkut.¹⁷ According to Apinan, although the statues were made according to the custom and feature like making of crowned Buddha, they are true portrait statues which were reproduced the feature and anatomy of each king.¹⁸ At present Chakri Day is celebrated as traditional royal ancestor worship and modern National Day.

Irene Stengs¹⁹ gave an example of very strange patronage on the establishment of statues of the kings performed by a religious person for example an abbot of Wat Doi Chang temple of northern Chiang Mai. Once the abbot of the temple saw vision of the king Chulalongkorn sitting on golden throne wearing golden attire and the king himself addressed him to make a statue identical to the vision which in search happens to be the moment of the King Chulalongkorn's 2nd coronation ceremony. The abbot collected sufficient amount of donation money to make the statue and the statue was made of wood and gilded with gold. The statue is a masterpiece of its kind which was placed in a wihan. The abbot was very much influenced by the notion of the king and divine king and in pursuit of royal protection, embedded in nationalism, induced the abbot to have two more kingly statues made: a more than life size wooden statue of King Naresuan and a statue of King Taksin now placed to the left and right of the king Chulalongkorn's statue. Stengs argues that the nationalist sentiment that goes with the royal images becomes clear that the kings were chosen for their successful defense of Thai nation. King Chulalongkorn and other two kings represents as *phra sayam thewathirat* (the divinity protecting Thailand and its inhabitants) or representing as a protective power the nation can rely on.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 131

¹⁸ Apinan Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand. Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. (Singapore: Oxford University Press. 1992). P. 348

¹⁹ Ibid, pp.100-104

In Thai history, various military governments who came in power in the 20th century gave rise to the fashioning of the famous hero figures to give some message to the nation and the people. As Ka F. Wong²⁰ states that filled 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 rising new 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. He further states that the fabulous stories of royal warriors have long fascinated the Thai elites. It was during the tenure of Sarit Thanarat(1959-1963) and Thanom Kittikachorn(1963-1973)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 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 circle and became symbols of the Thai nation.

Public monuments in commemoration of the national heroes were established during military regime. During Field Marshal Sarit's period, in 1958, a monument of King Naresuan was established in front of Don Chedi in Supanburi. The statue was designed and mould by Silpa Bhirasri. The Don Chedi was supposedly built by King Naresuan himself to commemorate his victory over the Burmese crown prince in the elephant combat in 1592. The inauguration of the monument held in 25 January in 1858 which is celebrated as Army Day. It seems that the Army still has that tradition at present. In the foundry of the Fine Arts Department a colossal statue of King Naresuan riding a horse showing his heroic depiction is under the making process. This statue is going to establish at the same place at the site of Don Chedi in Supanburi. (Fig218)

²⁰ Ka F. Wong, *Vision of a Nation, Public Monuments in Twentieth Century Thailand* (White Lotus, Bangkok, 2006). pp. 75-99

Another kind of patronage of making the statues is commenced by the provincial government to develop tourism in the province and for reestablishing the identity of the place. Recently Phetchburi provincial government with the permission of the Royal Household has made a project of constructing the King Mongkut Memorial Park on the empty space of the summer palace of King Mongkut. Principle reason of the project was to honor Rama IV who initiated the modernization of Siam. And another reason to choose the land was that, the King Rama IV bought 714 rai of land at Phetchburi by his own money in 1858 and built the palace at Phra Nakhon Khiri. This is Thailand's first palace located on the hill. Currently there are 24 rai of land left which is available for the construction of the statue. The colossal sculpture to make in bronze is under construction in the foundry at Salaya. (Fig. 219)

Likewise government offices, hospitals, universities etc. place Thai King's and Queen's statues in their premises. Wherever the statues are, the space around is sanctified and people gather around to pay respect to such monumental sculptures.(Fig 220)

4.4 Social behavior on the veneration of bronze statues

Silpa Bhirasri²¹ expressed that art has a moral and spiritual purpose in the life of every race. Art expressions varies from one another; some are comprehensible , others being too advanced, are difficult to understand, but the goal of every artists is to do work, which are intellectually and spiritually beneficial to mankind. The art works may be moral, a moral and even immoral. The immoral is in a sense that the artists sometimes use an immoral subject to correct us from vices and defects. Through evil the artist shows us the right path which we have to follow. In Bhirasri's version morality means to abide by the social laws which are laid down to protect different ethical groups and accordingly each group has its peculiar moral laws. But over these self protecting laws there is one morality which belongs to the whole human family; it is the laws of good conduct, of pure thoughts and pure aspiration, a law taught both by religions and art. The difference

²¹ Bhirasri, Silpa, *Art and Moral*, Journal (National Theatre Bangkok, 1965). p. 13

between religion and art is that the former affects our soul if we believe; the latter affects our soul if we feel.

Art expression is divided into two kinds: one treats subjects of history, ethics, religion and even politics. It is educational and for this reason has an important role in the social affairs of a nation. This art inspires social advancement; love for the nation, teaching right living and in the whole stimulates an appreciation of beauty. In stating that this kind of art is comprehensible to the majority of the people it does not mean that such an art has a commercial character. A noble art engenders high and noble ideas and aspirations. For example, a monument to a hero may be understood by the majority of the citizens and serves to inspire them to emulate the hero honored, while monument to a poet inspires intellectual activities. The other kind of art is the one termed for art's sake. In this case the artist is free to do what he likes without the consideration of its usefulness to the human family. The artist works for himself; on the contrary, he firmly believes that his work will be very useful for the progressive development of mankind.

Max Weber²² argues on the every specialized art that is uncommon and not widely disseminated is regarded as a magical charisma, either personal or more generally, hereditary, the acquisition and maintenance of which is guaranteed by magical means. He further gives an example of the non privileged classes who are changed by the effects of the newly emerged cult in a sense that a product of the inevitable accommodation to the needs of the masses, may be formulated generally as the emergence of a personal, divine or human divine savior as the bearer of salvation, with the additional consequence that the religious relationship to this personage becomes the precondition of salvation. One form of the adaptation of religion to the needs of the masses is the transformation of the cultic religion. The lower the social class, the more radical are the forms assumed by the need for a savior, once this need has emerged. Some phenomenon can be found from some religion which recruits followers from the lower social classes or at least were influenced by them. The transfer of salvation doctrines to the masses practically always results in the emergence of a savior, or at least in an increase of emphasis upon the

²² Weber, Max, *The Sociology of Religion* (Beacon Press, Boston, 1991). pp. 97-117



concept of savior. Weber gives some examples of the emergence of Buddha and the Vaishnava cult and the basic notion of the Bhakti piety relates to them. Similar phenomena can be found in Thailand, the newly emerging Chulalongkorn cult and the Chao Mae Kuan Yin cult. The former is based entirely upon the supernatural and animistic belief of the lay Thai and the later is related to the incarnation concept of the Chinese Buddhist practice.

Recent phenomenon is spirit of the King Chulalongkorn visiting a spirit medium. This is really astounding that what is his soul doing in a mediums body? This is the popular belief in any part of the world. This kind of spirit medium can be found from all over Asian countries including India, China and Nepal. The mediums proclaim that the gods and the famous people's spirit enter their body and address and solve problems of the people. A lady name as Mae Wan, a spirit medium in Saraphi, a district bordering Chiang Mai city from northern Thailand used to possess spirit of King Chulalongkorn. She has been a medium for King Chulalongkorn since 1992 but her carrier started as a medium since she was seventeen and now she is on her fifties sixties.²³ Later two more spirits of King Chulalongkorn's wives, Chao Dara Ratchami and Mae Bua Khiaw appeared on the spirit medium. Chao Dara Ratchami was the king's only wife from Chiang Mai and she was the daughter of Phra Chao Inthanon, the city's vassal ruler. Mae Bua Khiaw was the king's wife from Wiang Kalong in Chiang Rai, another Northern Thai city.²⁴ At the Tamnak (residence) of Mae Wan Chulalongkorn's statue with other famous monks were consecrated.

King Chulalongkorn's spirit usually arrived every two weeks on a Sunday when Irene Stengs was conducting his research. While receiving his spirit she used to dress like an official, with white jacket, blue trousers, and white stockings and western style brown hat. And during Thai New Year Songkran, she used to wear Northern Thai Lan Na style indigo blue farmer's shirt and trousers with *pha khao ma*, a checked loincloth.²⁵ The

²³ Stengs, Irene, *Worshipping the Great Moderniser: King Chulalongkorn, Patron Saint of the Thai Middle Class* (Nus Press, Singapore, 2009), p. 148.

²⁴ Ibid, p.151.

²⁵ Ibid p. 159

outfits were chosen according to the famous portraiture of the King Chulalongkorn. On the day of the spirit's arrival the Tamnak is prepared with offerings of pink and red flowers, right choice of wine and cognac, cigars and right choice of fruits which was prepared by five middleclass women. The king presiding in the body of the spirit medium gives royal marks on the forehead of the audience and addresses the people generally. The image of the king during these sessions was fatherly and his speech and behavior evoked the image of the wise and compassionate ruler who genuinely cared for each of his subjects. He used to address to the children as a grandfather, to be humble, should practice patience and endurance. Since the scenario occurred during the economic crisis of 1997, the King addressed his subjects to economize their expenses. Another feature of the king as stated by Stengs is the King's constant reminding of the modernization process he had done in his time just like, introduction of electricity, railways and roads etc. He also used to point out that because of his visit as a spirit the area around the Tamnak had developed with better roads, connection of the area to the waterworks, and the presence of the telephone in the Tamnak. Interestingly the King was easy to reach by telephone that he periodically received phone calls from his followers. He used to show his auspicious power during sessions that whenever he mentions any number in any form the people take note of that number to buy lottery ticket. People eagerly gather to take the note of the number. Likewise the followers mostly women at these sessions are very important for the spirit medium Mae Wan. Because of them she seems to be able to possess the Kings' spirit or the spirit chose those who support his presence.

This speculation can be relevant with the view of Waber that the spirits or soul may dwell more or less continuously and exclusively near or within a concrete object or process. They may somehow possess events, things or categories thereof, the behavior and efficacy of which they will decisively determine. These and similar view are specific notion of animism. Other notion of supernatural powers may intervene in the destiny of the people in the same way that a person may influence one's course of life. A supernatural power may be the power which emanates from a great hero after his death. Either personification or de- personification may be a later development. In Thailand

there are different groups of people who believe in the worshipping the kings and heroes but majority of the people seems to pay respect to such figures.

In the famous thought of anthropology the, “Primitive Religion”, which was propounded by E.B Tylor, defines religion in such a way that all forms of it could be included, namely as ‘the belief in spiritual beings’. He firmly states that religion was a cultural universal, for no known cultures were without such belief. He sought an explanation of how the belief in spirits could have arisen. According to his theory early men must have noted that difference between a living body and a dead one.²⁶ After death the soul leave the body permanently, but it sometimes appeared in dreams, acting as if it were alive. Thus people had belief that soul continued to exist after death of man. This belief was easily extended to include all other living beings and even non- living objects, because plants and animals as well as weapons, boats and clothes, sometimes appeared in dreams. Early man thus began to believe that everything possessed life and soul and this early phase of religion was called by Tylor as ‘animism’. He also pointed out that the soul was superior to body, because of its greater mobility and durability of existence. It was also believed that they protected their own families and tribes, and watched over their moral behavior. Attempts to communicate with these souls led to prayer and active worship. The idea that souls and spirits must reside somewhere gave rise to belief in an afterlife, while their freedom to move about and to appear everywhere led to the idea that they could enter into the bodies of living and thus, the notion of spirit – possession was created.²⁷

While the research was under way, an encounter with Mr. Wuttichot (nick name as Oan), who was the coordinator of the Rama IV statue being manufactured in the foundry of the Fine Arts Department in Salaya was very interesting in defining how much people still believe in dreams and supernatural power of a soul. He said that some supernatural force was guiding him to conduct the task he was not expecting he have to do before it came to his hand. When he was very young he said that he dreamt King

²⁶ Jha, Makhan, *An Anthropological Thought* (Vikas Publishing House PVT LTD, New Delhi, 1983), p. 32.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 32.

Mongkut's photograph (Fig. 221) in his dream, which was taken on his 60th birthday. At that time he didn't realized the significance of the photograph. When he knew that it was the King Mongkut's historically important photo, he searched for the photograph for a long time. The photograph was very rare and it was accidentally found from a foreign auction company. He is very proud that same photo was selected for the bronze statue. Mr. Oan thinks that some spiritual force of the King Rama IV was guiding him do perform this task. The photograph is very meaningful that the crown the King Rama IV is wearing bears a diamond on the top which represent mount Sumeru. That crown was made at the time of King Mongkut. The statue is based on this real image which reflects a status of the king through his traditional dress and five royal regalia.²⁸ This is one of his diplomatic protocols which helps Thailand survive amid the colonialism. The detail of sculpture, such as the design of the Kingly dress, furniture and accessory i.e., chair and crown will symbolize the majestic status of Thai King. All the accessories as seen in the picture are now kept confidentially in Grand Palace. Those who are interested in this field will be able to visit this monument in order to study some historical details.

Another interesting and most common phenomenon of normal Thais is what they believe of their past kings. As the kings of Chakri Dynasty are regarded as the great modernizer, nation builder and reformers, the people venerate and pay respect to their portraits and statue wherever they are consecrated. Among the most famous is the Chulalongkorn cult which is deep rooted in normal Thais that whenever they are in distress or they wish for something they ask secretly with the past King believing that he will fulfill their wishes and overcome them from distress. Mr. Oan interestingly said that once he desperately wished for a car and he wished before the statue of the King Chulalongkorn. To his surprise his father bought him a car and he was very thankful to the King Chulalongkorn. People like Mr. Oan often goes to such monumental sites to venerate King Chulalongkorn to ask for success and to give thank after achieving their goal. They usually offer candles, pink flowers and burn scented sticks. Some people offer

²⁸<http://www.thailandtraveltours.com/thailand-thai-kings-royal-regalia-thaikingsroyalregalia.htm>.

best wine that was King Chulalongkorn's favorite. These testify that people still believe in ancestor worship and spirit worship at present.

Ka Fai Wong's²⁹ vision on monuments is the power of the monument lies on 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. It is the memory or the story behind a monument that keeps the static object alive. Wong states that the statue of king Mongkut helped to contest the time-honored 'superstition' that image making of a living person, including photograph, portrait, and sculpture, was harmful to that individual. The royal support of the realistic art signified a new beginning of Thai politics. After the living power elite became more willing to use and even actively utilize their image for personal and political purposes. On the other hand, the superstitious belief that portraiture or photo taking would capture the soul of the person has positively impacted the status of the monumental art. The general masses are convinced that the spirit of the revered personality, or at least some fragments of his or her essence, inhabit the picture of sculpture. Likewise the art work becomes a spiritual representation of that person. At present the setting of a photograph or statue of a particular king or queen is at the center of worship and paying homage to such is customary in Thailand. Upon the establishment of the equestrian statue of King Chulalongkorn, Wong argues that under the heroic shadow of the equestrian monument, the stories of Rama V are passed on to the next generation, and the glory of modernized monarch somehow lives on in a mythical way.(Fig 217)

Maurizio Peleggi³⁰ states that visual representation of Rama V's effigy had circulated on coins and stamps since early in his reign. At the beginning of the 1900 illustrated post cards had further expanded the range of the visual representation. When larger than the life equestrian statue of King Chulalongkorn was unveiled on the 11th

²⁹ Wong, Ka F. *Vision of a Nation, Public Monuments in Twentieth Century Thailand* (White Lotus, Bangkok, 2006). p. 1

³⁰ Peleggi, Maurizio, *Lords of Things: The Fashioning of the Siamese Monarchy's Modern Image*, (University of Hawaii Press, USA, 2002). pp. 104-105

November 1908 to celebrate his 40th anniversary of his reign, the amusement among the people must have been considerable. In the Siamese tradition it was not customary to a king to ride a horse. He was usually seen riding on an elephant or carried on a palanquin. But statue with riding horse was entirely European. It was not only the fascination of the king or iconographic newness was not only reason that made the equestrian statue of Rama V. the most important was the statue was officially paid for by his subjects and the foreign residents in Siam as a token of gratitude.

According to Irene Stengs³¹, the promotion of the royal images reached its zenith with the unveiling of the equestrian statue of King Chulalongkorn in 1908, an event accompanied by the production equestrian statue stamps and equestrian statue medallions. He further states that the cult of Chulalongkorn and worship of the King draws upon Thai concept of Buddhist kingship and popular belief in the power of sacred images. The cult is shaped and carried by mass media promotion of the image of the King, commercial as well as governmental. Stengs gave many examples of the comprehension of the Royal cult; the cult which reached its height after 1980s. Apart from the statues of the King Chulalongkorn, visual representations of the king still can be seen on people's necklace pendants, pictures in the restaurants, shops as well as in the common people's houses. People believe that the spirit of the king bring good luck and prosperity in their life.

4.5 Sites of statues and monuments

In Thai society public monuments with bronze statues are very popular. Public monuments evoke the sense of place which has very influential aesthetic beauty and takes ones thought to the past history of the country. The place particular has its own identity and aura that no other ordinary place can get. Human beings have privileged access to states of mind, thought and feelings. Humans have insider's view of human facts.³²

³¹ Stengs, Irene, *Worshipping the Great Moderniser: King Chulalongkorn, Patron Saint of the Thai Middle Class*, (Nus Press, Singapore, 2009),pp13-91

³² Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2003). pp. 5-6.

Culture is uniquely developed in human beings. It strongly influences human behaviors and values. Tuan differentiated space and place as ‘space’ is more abstract than ‘place’. He further states that,

“ The ideas “space” and “place” require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.”

The places created for the visibility purpose catches our attention. If we look at a panoramic scene our eyes pause at points of interest. Each pause is time enough to create an image of place and looms large momentarily in our view. It is not possible to look at a scene in general; our eyes keep searching for points of rest. The landmark on the horizon may be prominent that it compels attention.³³ Likewise sculptural art have the power to create a sense of place by their own physical presence. A single inanimate object placed on an important place can draw attention of the world. The human being can command a world because he has feelings and intentions. The art objects mean to do so because its form symbolic to human feeling. Art is created with inner aesthetics of human being. A piece of sculpture appears to incarnate personhood and be the center of its own world. Although a statue is an object in our perceptual field, it seems to create its own world. Objects that are held in awe by one group can easily be overlooked by another. Different culture affects perception on things.³⁴ A particular landscape which is natural or manmade, persist as places through the certain span of time, outliving the patronage of particular culture. Any large objects in the landscape creates its own world, which may expand or contract with the passing concerns of the people, but which does not completely lose its identity.

Heritage Monuments can transcend the value of a particular history and culture. Here any monuments made of bronze which testify its past history is regarded as heritage

³³ Ibid, p 161

³⁴ Ibid, p. 162



which is the asset and identity of the people and nation. The equestrian statue is the heritage of the Thai people's legacy and history of the King which testifies the great monarch's modernization, social reforms and royal power. The place around the statue becomes the place of the people in every Tuesday. The sense of place on the particular Tuesday and Chulalongkorn day is very different than other days. On those particular days people gather around and offer garlands, drinks, flowers and wreaths by the official and private organizations. The place transcends the aura of its sacredness and purity in people's heart.

Likewise this is the sense of place or the heritage which was manufactured to draw attention of foreign and domestic tourism. The viewing of heritage sights by domestic tourists is a key aspect in the formation and maintenance of a national identity, when nationalism is understood as an imagined community. Tourist sites may function as places presenting the defining characteristics of nationhood and displaying historical evidence of its existence. Heritage sites, representing a nation's past are an important element in the construction of a national identity. A shared identity is a goal of countries comprised of many immigrant cultures. Both public and private monumental sights may be official governmental- sponsored construction with such clear aims, but may also be privately- established enterprises that play on tourists' own national feelings. With the recreational purpose or with the national feeling among the people such heritage sites created by the government or private, ends up with the potential of tourism development of the particular site. These kind of heritage sites with the monuments of the past Kings and hero personnel helps to imprint the spiritual as well as the glory of its history in the people's mind.

4.6 Sculptor's comprehension on the bronze monumental sculptures

One of the greatest wonders of nature is that every living creature, be it us, Homo sapiens, animals or birds pride in our individual work and effort. For example, an alpha male lion is proud of his territory and his pride and will guard it even if his life is threatened, a bird will be proud of its efforts to build a nest hidden away from its enemies

so that its eggs and chicks will be safe. Similarly for us humans, we also pride in our individual work and effort to complete a task or a job that we love.

In this context, *“Art is the product or process of deliberately arranging symbolic elements in a way that influences and affects the senses, emotions, and/or intellect.”*³⁵ As an artist, one of the main motives for making art is so that people are able to understand, appreciate, value and cherish the message or his/her skills portrayed in the art. If the artist is successful in achieving this aim it will be with a sense of pride that he/she can thereon feel or say that he/she made that art and people appreciate/like it.

The sculptors in the foundry of the Department of Fine Arts create and make sculptures so that people appreciate the work they have undertaken to create a particular statue. Even though this work is a source of their livelihood, it is also their passion. There are those who have recently joined the foundry of the Fine Arts Department and also those who have been working within the department over a number of years. Most of the sculptures received their training when they were in schools, colleges and universities. However there are those have also received training from their family members, who are also artists in their own way, and also from experience and teachings within the foundry from senior sculptors themselves.

The survey suggests that all of the workers, artists and sculptors in the foundry are genuinely happy when they create sculptures and also with a feeling of personal value. This way they are able to make sculptures to perfection. They put in extra efforts especially when they make statues of past Kings mainly due to the reason that they worship these statues, as the majority of other Thai nationals who also worship the statues of past Kings; for example the statue of King Rama IV which was completed recently and put in front of the palace of King Rama IV and open to the general public.

The survey also shows that there are certain issues within the foundry that needs to be addressed. For example, some of the sculptors are somewhat unhappy with the Govt. system, and also that they are temporary staff and could be laid off at any time. The

³⁵ Wikipedia - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art>

uncertainty of not having a permanent job and the possibility of not receiving pension once they retire is also a main reason for their concern with the current govt. system. There are issues of low resources and technology which slows their work and could have made the process a bit simpler and faster. Therefore, although investment in technology and resources would increase the cost initially, it will surely improve the time taken to complete a project and also decrease the cost in due course of time.

However one of the main issues is that there are a lot of time constraints. The sculptors are not able to complete a particular project in time and sometimes are required to overlap the work of making two – three different statues at a time. This certainly puts unnecessary pressure onto the workers and can also hinder quality. The management should clearly pay heed to this issue and to minimize such risks, there has to be proper supervision from the senior sculptors, investment in technology could also speed up the processes involved and new employees could also be hired to handle the extra work involved.

Similarly, there are also concerns of the atmosphere and environment that these sculptors and artists are required to work. As the foundry is in a big warehouse-type hall, some of the employees feel that sometimes there is not enough space to do their work and also if there were several parts and sections, there would be some privacy to their work and perhaps they would be able to focus more on the task at hand.

Another important part more seriously to be taken as concern is the health and safety of the employees. During the observation very little concern was showed for the safety and health of the members of the foundry. They were neither seen wearing mask during the finishing process of the bronze or wearing boots while pouring molten bronze into the mould. The temporary scaffolds used while molding colossal clay statues seems very dangerous. So the authorities have to take keen interest in the safety of the workers. Likewise almost all the employee's complaint was the problem of birds in the foundry. Large families of birds are living inside the foundry and usually roam around freely under

the ceilings. Droppings of the birds are everywhere in the foundry which may cause real health hazard to the employees.

One other important observation from the survey is that majority of the sculptors want to preserve the skills they possess. The average age of employees in the foundry is 39 – 40 and it is a good belief that they want to teach their children the art of making sculptures and of bronze casting. Some also suggests the possibility to open a sculpture school for financially less able children so that the next generation wouldn't lose the concept, value and skills required of making statues and also the traditional method of bronze casting.

However, some also suggests that in this dynamic world where technology plays a pivotal role in every aspect of our daily life and also where children these days mostly dwell in such technology driven activities, the prospect of them having interests in art of making statues and bronze castings perhaps may not appeal much. This definitely is cause of concern and the employees of the Fine Arts department and the Government of Thailand should take heed and act responsibly so as to preserve the art, knowledge and skills required to make bronze statues in Thailand.

4.7 Recommendations

Outdoor bronze sculpture and ornamentation represent a significant part of our artistic and cultural heritage: bronze monuments number in hundreds in this country alone. Increasing pollution in environment, especially acid rain, and salty climate has been linked to disfiguring corrosion of bronzes globally, posing a serious threat to their aesthetic aspect and ultimate existence. In order to minimize the effects of outdoor atmospheric pollution on objects, it is necessary to use protective coatings.³⁶ However, coatings in current use are often inadequate in their protective function.

³⁶ Andrew Lins and Tracy Power, "The Corrosion of Bronze Monuments in Polluted Urban Sites: A Report on the Stability of Copper Mineral Species at Different pH Levels," *Ancient and Historic Metals*, ed. D. A. Scott et al. (Getty Conservation Institute, 1994), pp. 119-151; T.E. Graedel, "The Corrosivity of the Atmosphere: Past, Present, and Future," *Dialogue/89 – The Conservation of Bronze Sculpture in the Outdoor Environment*, ed. T. D. Weisser (NACE, 1992), pp. 13-32; Arthur Beale, "Conservation of Outdoor Sculpture: An Overview," *id.*, pp. 3-12; Luc Robbiola and Christian Fiaud, "New Model of Outdoor Bronze Corrosion and Its Implications for

Coating technologies currently used have been borrowed from traditional and industrial applications without accompanying research into adapting and optimizing materials and methods for conservation applications. These applications are generally distinguished from industrial applications by aesthetic considerations, and perhaps more importantly by physical and chemical differences. While industrial coatings are designed for fresh or prepared metal surfaces, or stripped/blasted bare metal, surfaces of artworks and historical objects generally cannot be prepared in this fashion without unacceptable damage. Thus conservation applications typically require coatings to be applied onto, corroded, and contaminated surfaces, which must retain their detail. Aesthetic criteria remain controversial, so that approaches to the appearance of outdoor bronzes after cleaning and coating continue to vary widely around the world.

Traditional coatings that continue to be popular for use on outdoor bronzes include: drying oils, such as lemon oil, paraffin oil, linseed oil and castor oil; and beeswax mixtures; and commercial paste waxes. These types of coating treatments greatly darken existing patinas and require frequent maintenance. Cellulose nitrate, which has poor outdoor durability, and Inctalac, an acrylic lacquer coating, are the most widely used modern coating materials on outdoor bronzes. Problems associated with Inctalac in normal application include insufficient thickness and physical defects such as orange peel, both of which appear to compromise the coating's effectiveness.

Since outdoor bronze sculpture may spend decades or centuries outdoors, exposed to pollution and extreme weather conditions, the concerned authorities have to develop a coating system to resist corrosion on outdoor bronze sculpture. The modern electrochemical testing methods can be used for corrosion protective coatings and improve protective coatings. A goal has to be made to develop a more effective treatment to prevent as much as possible the corrosion process on bronze sculpture and ornamentation. Bronze, an alloy of mostly copper and tin, is often used in outdoor sculpture. These sculptures must survive in an environment of pollutants, acid rain and varying temperatures. New coating system can be developed to protect sculptures from

sometimes hostile environment. Recently discovered fluorocarbon- acrylic blend had the potential to be an excellent coating agent and another is benzotriazole (BTA) when used as coating found to produce significant protection when used along with a topcoat on bronze objects.

In the foundry of Salaya the researcher encountered a couple of bronze sculptures brought from outside for the repair or conservation. (Fig. 222,223) The sculptures were in very bad condition of corrosion and because of that some pieces were deteriorated and started to chipping off from its place. Therefore such bronze sculptures must be consolidated with chemical conservation according to above mentioned recommendations and while doing so the conservation process can be conducted in situ or taken away to the foundry according to the convenience of the conservators.

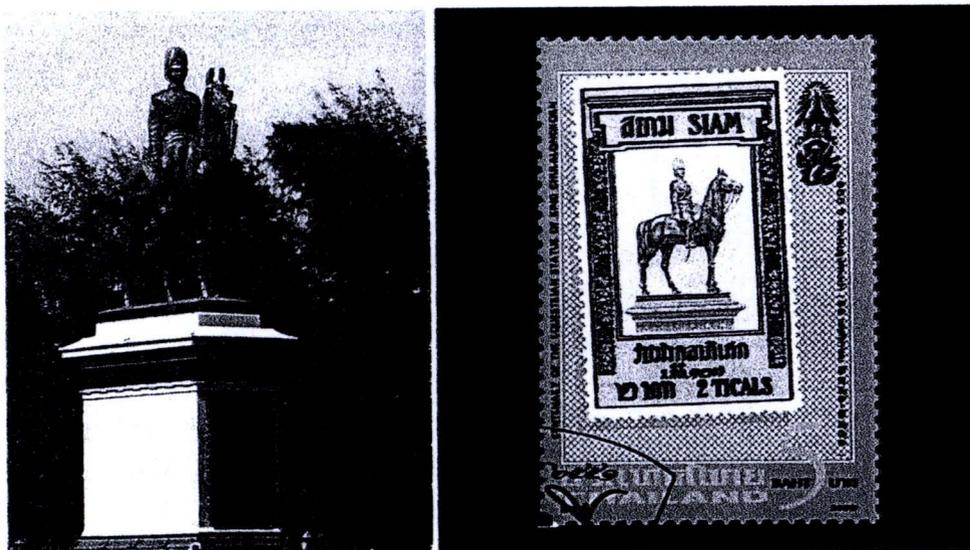


Figure 217 The equestrian statue of the King Chulalongkorn and stamp with the same picture.

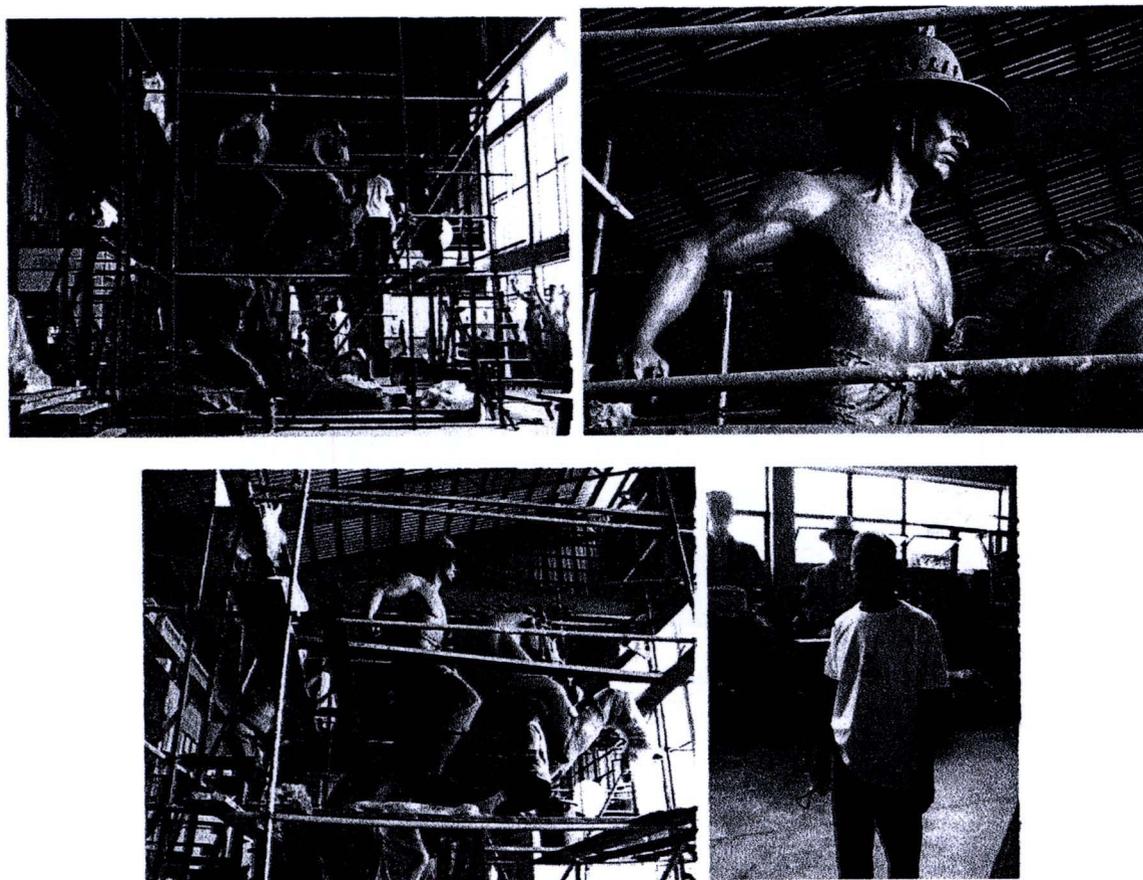


Figure 218 Clay Statue of The King Naresuan and the sculptor Paradron Cherdchoo.

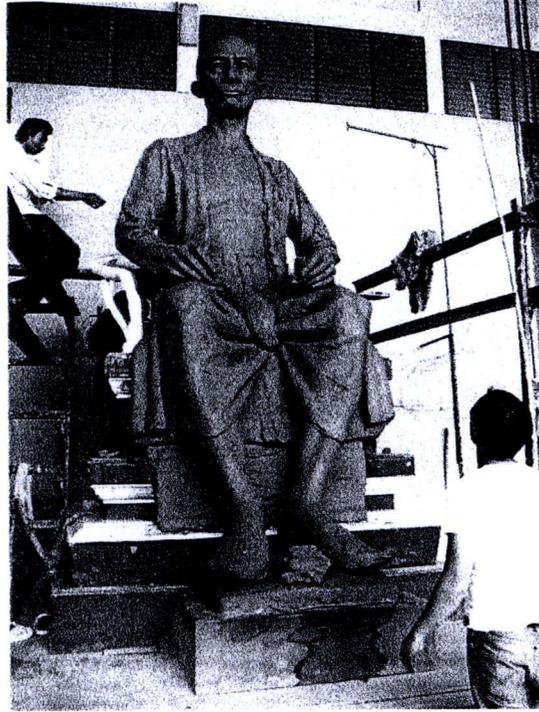


Figure 219 Statue of King Mongkut to be establish in the King Mongkut Memorial Park in Phetchburi

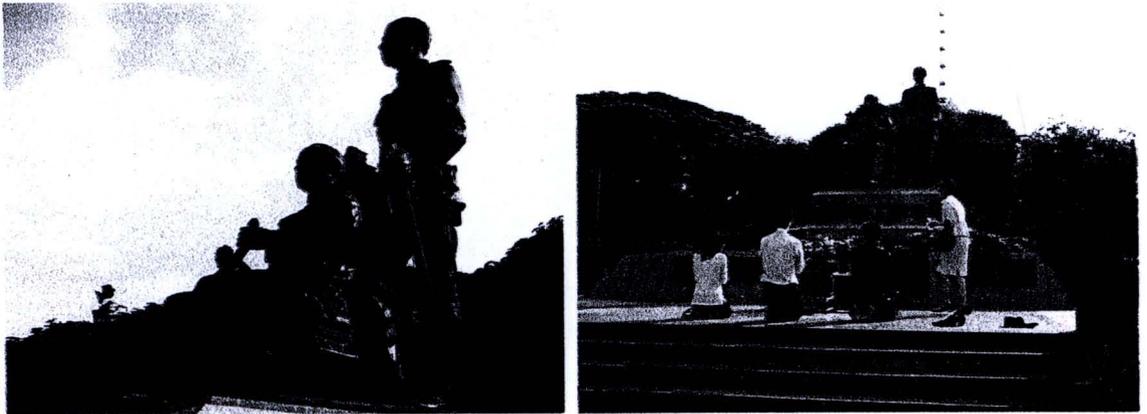


Figure220 Statue of King Chulalongkorn and King Vajiravyudh in the premises of Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.



Figure 221 The photograph of King Mongkut dreamt by Mr Oan. Photographed by Francis Chit. Photograph provided by Mr. Oan.



Figure 222 Bronze sculpture brought from its original place for chemical conservation.

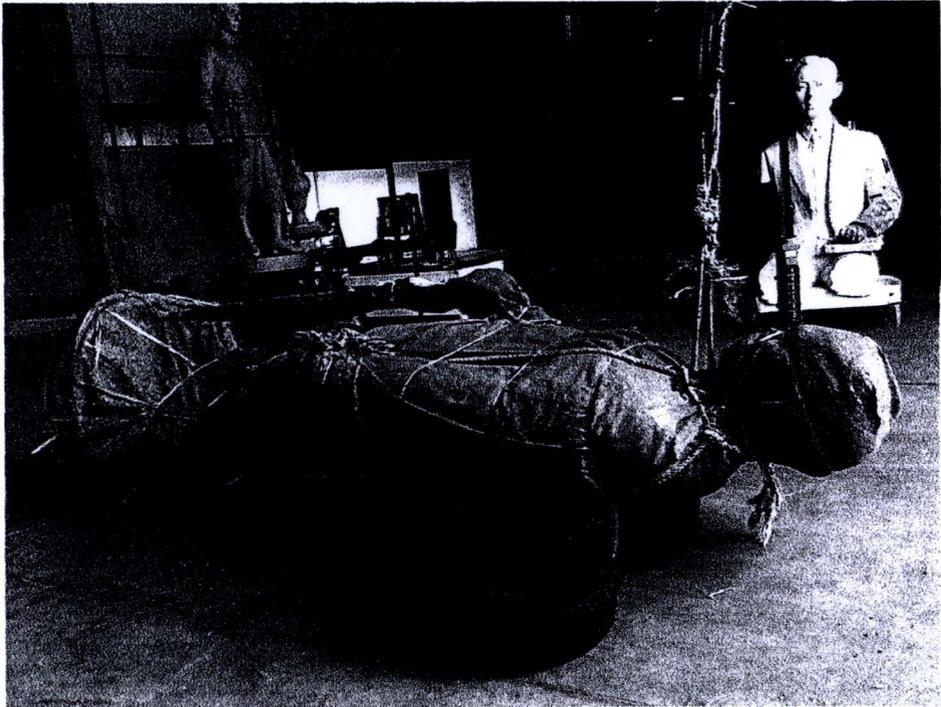


Figure 223 Bronze sculpture brought for chemical conservation.

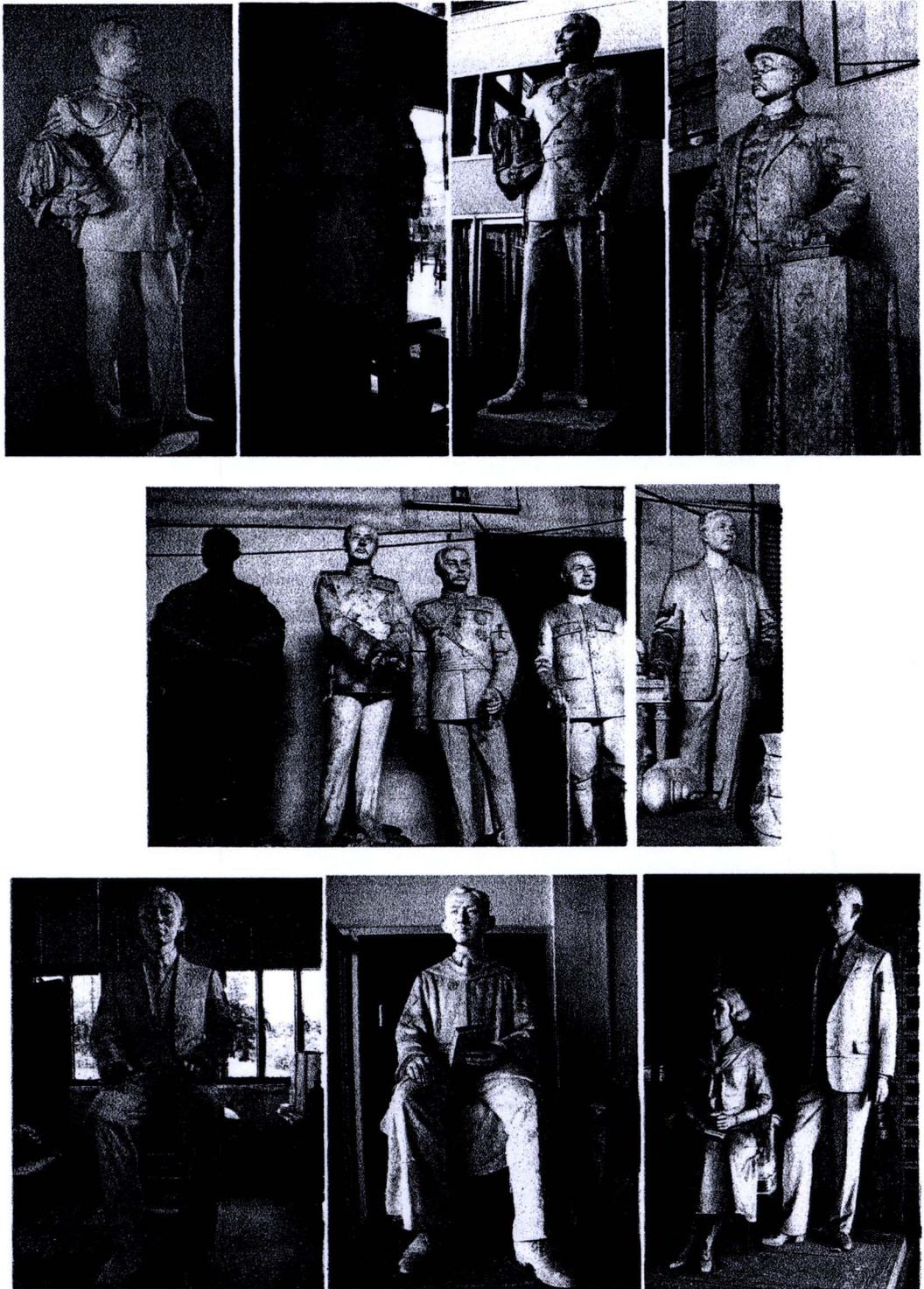


Figure 224 a Plaster Models at the foundry of Salaya.



Figure 224b Plaster Models at the foundry of Salaya.