

**THE WORKS OF TEN REMARKABLE ITALIAN'S IN BANGKOK'S
HISTORY 1890'S TO 1970'S-
FOUR ARTISTS, THREE ARCHITECTS, TWO SCULPTORS AND
ONE RENAISSANCE MAN:
A SOURCE FOR CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL TOURISM.**

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Abstract: *In exploring Bangkok and in particular the Rattanakosin and Dusit areas one discovers a remarkable number of buildings and monuments of Italianate architectural design. A more detailed inspection reveals that most of those buildings also feature imported Italian marble on door and window frames floors and staircases. Inspection of those buildings reveals very beautiful interior paintings on walls and ceilings.*

Keywords: *Italian influence on Siamese architecture, King Chulalongkorn European visits,*

Introduction

Walking around Bangkok, particularly in the areas of Rajdamnern, Dusit, Charoen Krung, Sathorn and Suriwongse roads, we find many beautiful and stately buildings and monuments dating from the late 1890's to early 1970's. Many of those buildings and monuments have Italian influences in both their design, construction materials and associated artistry.

My preliminary research revealed that many of those works were designed and construction supervised and decorated by several teams of Italian architects, engineers, sculptors and artists invited to Siam initially during the reign of King Mongkut and later carried forward on a larger scale by King Chulalongkorn (following his first visit to Europe in 1897).

Additional research revealed that many of the Italian architects, sculptors and artists came from the Royal Albertina Academy in Turin, Italy which retains to this day, its reputation for producing high quality architects, engineers, sculptors and artists.

Competing European countries, seeking to colonize countries within South-East Asia, impelled King Chulalongkorn to make Bangkok a city with distinctive architecture, to rival those which he saw in Europe during his first visit in 1897. This he believed, would allay the colonial powers from seeking to colonize Thailand in order to develop it.

In the 1800's and 1900's Bangkok was a much smaller city, comprising what we call today Rattanakosin. Inhabitants traversed the city in small boats, plying a series of klongs excavated by corvee labour. There were no roads until King Chulalongkorn ordered Rajdamnoen and Charoen Krung Roads to be cut.

In addition, sanitary conditions were poor and many people died of malaria, cholera, typhoid, typhus or bubonic plague at a relatively young age(Bradley, 1981). With this picture clearly in mind then, one can begin to appreciate the difficulty with which the process of modernization began. Technology and equipment, to carry out building and construction work was primitive, compared to contemporary systems and equipment, never-the-less the creating of roads, bridges, buildings and monuments was executed with remarkable speed and without sacrificing quality. This was made possible because of excellent planning and execution, performed by a large work-force "press-ganged," into

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working long hours, over a seven-day work-week.

Major developmental and architectural works, were most often supervised by Thai ministers, who were often related to the monarchy and assisted by Italian, German and British architects, engineers, sculptors and artists who collaborated on larger projects. This study concentrates on the works of Italian architects, engineers, sculptors and artists employed during the reigns of King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn.

Interesting explanations of the influence of the west on Thai architecture can be found in Sthapitanonda and Mertens (2005), pp. 222-225. The influence of Italy on Thai architecture can be found in Anon 1, 2015, pp. 20-31, Fasoli and Filippi, 2014 (due to the threat of colonization by British and French prior to World War 1 (1914-1918) and its' cessation. Lack of interest in colonization after World War 1 ended, because the heavy military spending by the colonial powers impoverished them. This too coincided with Thailand's heavy spending on rapidly establishing a modern form of government and the trappings of developed western nations e.g. roads, bridges a large bureaucratic government and buildings, railways, electrical and clean drinking-water systems, palaces for an extended royal family.

Most of this western influenced work began during the reign of King Mongkut and continued under the reign of King Chulalongkorn. Work was carried out on a large scale and to tight time frames to allay colonization by foreigners. Aasen (1998). makes the point that where-as Chinese and Moorish art and architecture took many hundreds of years to influence Thai artistry and architecture, the western influence took less than 100 years. (Aasen 1998, p.198, Fasoli and Filippi, 2014).

Following that adoption of western architectural and artistic influences prior to World War 1, a looming economic crisis in the world, (brought on by the cost of the war) meant that fiscal restraint became

necessary and so foreign Architects, artists and painters largely left Thailand and returned home.

That period, also coincided with transition from Absolute Monarchy up to and including the reign of King Chulalongkorn, to that of Constitutional Monarchy beginning with the early reign of King Prajadhipok. Readers unfamiliar with those details are referred to a summary in Anon.1 pp.29-31.

Let us now turn to some details of the key players involved in designing supervising and decorating many of these Italian inspired works in Bangkok.

Ten Remarkable Italians in the creation of Architecture, Engineering and Artistry in Bangkok during the late 1800's and early 1900's.

The architects and artisans mentioned here are not arranged in birth or alphabetical order.

Corrado Feroci (aka Silpa Bhirasri) (1892-1962) - sculptor and teacher

Born in Turin Italy, Feroci was a remarkable man, who "lived his dream" of creating beautiful sculptures with a passion and who taught others to develop and apply their own artistic skills. Feroci came to Thailand in 1923 at age 31, in answer to a request from Rama VI (King Chulalongkorn) to the Italian Government for a Royal Sculptor. He worked in the Fine Arts Department from 1923 to 1962. Feroci's major works in Thailand and the years of completion according to academic sources were:

King Rama I The Great, monument (1929-1932); Ward, 2015, p.50 in collaboration with Prince Narisara Nuvadtovongs.

Founding The School of Fine Arts (1934) - where he acted as instructor-sculptor and administrator.

Statue of King Rama VI (1941), de Lazzara Piazzardi *et al.*, 2014. p.195, Ward, 2015, p.151

Statues King Taksin The Great (1950-51); (Aasen, 1998, p. 142; de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al.*, 1996, 2014, p. 193)

The Victory Monument (Anusawaree Chaisamoraphum), (1941) (Ward, 2015, p. 115; de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al*, year, p.194)

The reliefs around the base of the four sail-shaped wings, comprising The Democracy Monument (Anusawari Prachathipathai) (1939), (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al*., 2014, pp. 190-191)

The Walking Buddha image Nakorn Pathom, 1957-1982, de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al*, (2014), p.2

Quite apart from Ferrocchi's's sculpted works, he was a much loved teacher and wrote many books to guide his students. Some of which were:

Theory of Color (1943);

Theory of Composition (1944);

An Aid to Art and an English-Siamese Glossary (1942-44).

In addition he penned many articles some of which were:

Art (1956);

Is Art Necessary? (1959);

Culture and Art, (1953);

Contemporary Art in Thailand (1959);

Extremities, (1 Nude Art or Obscenity, (1961).

A comprehensive listing of Ferrocchi's work is also provided in an academic paper by Damrong Wong-Uparaj at conference held in Bangkok in 1997, commemorating the centenary of King Chulalongkorn's first visit to Europe. Wong-Uparaj's paper takes the form of an extensive catalogue under the headings: Works of Art; The School of Fine Arts and The University of Fine Arts; Dissemination of Art; Conservation of Art; History of Art; Theory of Art; Teaching; Art Criticism; Philosophy of Art. (Wong-Uparaj, 1997, pp.1-6).

Ferrocchi changed his name in 1944, to the Thai name i.e. Silpa Bhirasri and became a Thai Citizen to avoid arrest by the occupying Japanese army during World War II.

During one of my many walks around Bangkok I have visited the tranquil and serene Silpakorn University, named in

Ferrocchi's honor. In the courtyard, near the front gate, is a statue of Silpa sculptured by one of his students' - Sanan Silakorn in 1972 – completed two years after Silpa Bhirasri, passed away. (Ward, 2014 p.280). Today faculty and students sit in the shady and leafy courtyard chatting and placing floral tributes at his stature before class.

An imaginative person, (whose identity is unknown to me), had placed a life-sized photograph of Silpa Bhirasri looking out of a window, within a window pane in such a way, that when looking up and seeing this photograph, we have the distinct impression that Silpa is looking and smiling at us.

Silpakorn University is the site of The Silpa Bhirasri museum, containing his memorabilia. Nearby is a mould-shop containing the tools and patterns of Silpa Bhirasri's craft.

Silpa Bhirasri, spent so much of his life in Thailand, that his Italian marriage broke down. He divorced his Italian wife, amicably in 1949 and some ten years later, in 1959, he married a Thai lady (Khun Malini).

To conclude this biography, it is appropriate to mention that each year on September 15th Silpa's birthday is celebrated as Silpa Bhirasri Day – a great tribute to a very talented sculptor, artist and teacher.

Mario Tomagno (1877-1941) - Siamese Chief Architect.

Also born in Turin Italy, Tomagno, after graduating from the Royal Albertina Academy in 1895, taught there for five years before travelling to Siam, where he was employed by the Royal Siamese Government on a 25-year contract. His major commissions for Thailand were: Wat Benjamabophit Dusitvanaram (designed under Prince Narisara Nuvativongs - King Chulalongkorn's half-brother; and where King Chulalongkorn's ashes are interred. (1899)

Nongkhran Samoson Hall in Suan Sunanda Palace - now part of Suan Dusit Rajapat Institute (1911); Siam Pavilion at the Turin 1911, International World's Fair; Tomagno, Elena (1996) pp. 1-11.

All of the above except where otherwise noted are sourced from:

A mansion at Suan Kularb Palace -1912, (Suksri and Freeman, 1996); Santa Cruz Church - reconstruction -1916, (King, 2011, p. 26); The Belgian Ambassador's Residence, 1917, (Anon 1. p. 236); Phra Tamnak, Mekhala Ruchi 1919-1920 Located at Phyathai Palace served as King Vajiravudh's study. (Anon 1, 2015, p.207); Tomagno, Elena, 1996, pp. 1-11

Therawat Sapharom Throne Hall in Phyathai Palace -1922, (Ward, 2015, p.113; Suksri and Freeman, 1996, pp. 300-302). The throne hall is now part of the palace located within the grounds of Pramongkut Klao Military hospital complex after having earlier been The Phyathai Hotel, The Phyathai Radio Station. Phyathai Palace has subsequently been regularly refurbished and redecorated over the last decade. The most recent refurbishment involved upgrading the Roman Garden at the rear of the Palace in late 2015 and early 2016. Many of the original palace buildings were demolished except for the Throne Hall, (previously regarded as the back of the complex) is now the front-most building remaining from the original palace complex.

Tomagno collaborated many times with another remarkable Italian architect in Siam at that time, namely Annibale Rigotti.

Tomagno's major collaborative works with Annibale Rigotti were:

Makkhawan Rangsan Bridge 1899; (Tomagno, Elena, 1996, p.3

The Oriental Hotel, 1876;

Note this has been credited instead to Mr. Stephan Cardu, in 1885 by Anon 1, 2015, p 223.

The First Office of The Siam Commercial Bank -1908; (Ward, 2015, pp. 225-226; de Lazzara and Piazzardi, *et al.*, 1996, p. 218, Anon 1, 2015, p130.

Phitsanaluk Mansion (now the official residence of the Thai Prime Minister), 1926, (Ward. 2015. p.97); Anon 1, 2015, pp.98-99, Aasen1998, p. 197)

Bang Khun Phrom Palace -1906, formerly the residence of Prince Paribatra Sukhumband and now the headquarters of The Bank of Thailand; (Piazzardi *et al.*, 1996, 2014; Anon 1,20115, pp. 52-53)

Suan Khularb Residential Hall and Abhisek Dusit Throne Hall in Dusit Palace -1912, Anon 1, 2015, p.112

Neilson-Hays Library, 1920-1922, (Ward, 2015, pp. 155-156; Anon. 1 2015, p.232

Santa Cruz Church reconstruction -1916, (Ward, 2015, pp. 217-218); Anon 1, 2015, p. 154.

Tomagno married an Italian woman in Thailand and returned to Italy at the end of his 25- year contract. There is no doubt that his legacy remains with us, through his many beautiful and remarkable buildings both in Bangkok and in Italy. His major contributions were:

Amporn Sathan Royal Villa -1902;

Ananta Samakhon Throne Hall - 1908; (Aasen, 1998, p.197)

Royal Turf Club -1921;

Mrigadayavan Palace -1923, Tomagno, Elena, 1997, p1-11

Phan Fa Bridge -1906 - in collaboration with Carlo Allegri.

Ercole Manfredi (1883-1973), - Architect, Painter, Sculptor (Renaissance man)

Manfredi was born in Turin and like Mario Tomagno, graduated from the Albertina Academy of Fine Arts in Turin. Manfredi first worked for Turin's Public and Municipal Works Department, where he supervised construction and patented an earthquake engineering system. Manfredi also won numerous prizes and awards before responding to a request for an

architect from the Government of Siam (Bressan, 1997, p.1)

Manfredi arrived in Siam on December 1st, 1909 (Bressan, 1997, p.3) aged 27 and made significant progress through the court of King Vajiravudh. (Rama VI). He was appointed to a position in The Ministry of The Royal Household, where he worked closely with King Vajiravudh and Prince Narisara Nuvadtovongs. He was appointed Chief Architect and Third Minister in 1917 and First Court Officer in 1921. During this period, he received many illustrious royal decorations in appreciation for his architectural and artistic works in Thailand.

In 1925 the country was undergoing political change. Absolute monarchy was abolished in 1925 and Siam became Thailand in 1932. With this change there were fewer employment opportunities for foreigners.

During that time Manfredi worked privately as an architect, cooperating with Christiani and Neilson (Siam) Ltd from 1934-1936 and with The Empresitor Company from 1937-38 and from 1939, Manfredi taught architecture at Chulalongkorn University until 1948.

On November 29, 1943 Ercole Manfredi, became a Thai citizen taking the name of Ekarit Munfendee. In addition to his Thai decorations (now Munfendee) received many decorations and honors during his lifetime from France and Cambodia.

After a period with The Signaling Division of The Royal Thai Navy (1944-1950), Munfendee retired from public life.

Munfendee was fluent in spoken and written Thai and mingled easily with and dressed and ate like a Thai. (Bressan, 1997, p.3)

During his time in Thailand, Munfendee married a Thai woman, (Ms. Thongmuen in 1913) and enjoyed a happy married life, fathering two daughters. Munfendee, devoted himself to his work and his family and to humanitarian activities through The Thai Red Cross Society, of which became a life-member (Bressan 1997, p.3).

Munfendee dreamt of building his own boat and ultimately realized his dream, occasionally boating down the Chaophraya River in his boat "Mammino" and across the Gulf of Siam to Pattaya. (de Lazzara, Piazzardi, *et al*, 2014; Bressan, 1997, p. 9) Munfendee contributed significantly to Bangkok's architecture and also produced works of painting and sculpture, including the beautiful white Carrera Marble guardian lions and the wrought iron gates at the entrance to the principal building and the Rama V Commemorative Bridge both located at Wat Benjamabophit and the wrought iron gates at the entrance to Chitralada Palace; Borom Phiman Grand Palace 1903; The Cha Am Summer Palace, (1923); Baan Nonthee (Baan Pibultham) 1913 This three-storey building was added to an existing single-storey building and Munfendee was the architect and artist in charge. The building is currently occupied by the National Energy Office (Anon 1 pp. 171-172) and features many beautiful interior works of art and decorative features.

Unfortunately, Munfendee did not keep records of his works and his employment by the government, meant that many of his designs were not attributed to him. However, there is clear evidence that he worked with Corrido Feroci and Annabale Rigotti to complete Villa Nora Singh (originally designed as a home for General Chao Phraya Ram Rakhop, a senior military officer, was then used as Government House and later became the official residence of the Prime minister) (King, 2011). Originally designed by Annibale Rigotti, construction had already commenced, however, Rigotti, returned to Italy upon the death of King Vajiravudh in 1925. Munfendee replaced Rigotti at that point. (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al*, 2014, Bressan, 1997, p.5)

Buildings upon which Munfendee contributed were:

Anantasamakhom Throne Hall - The dome and some interior decorations;

Chulalongkorn University – Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, Faculty of Chemistry and Physics; Faculty of Fine Arts; Cha-Am Summer Palace; Sarapatum Palace; Pra Sarot Ratana Phinam, (since destroyed); Residence of Princess Chula Chakrabongse, Silpakorn University, Borompimarn Palace, (some interior parts) Chitralada Palace bridge and guard house; Villa Norasing and Villa Pitsanaluk, Asawin Villa;

Munfendee, also contributed to architectural works in Turin but these were less numerous than those in Bangkok and are not be detailed here.

Works of art also attributed to Munfendee are:

Designs for Boromphiman Mansion interior decorations; Portraits on ivory of H.M. King Vajiravudh; A water color of Anantasamakhom Thrones hall exhibited at Sukhothai Palace;

Other contributions:

Archeological work at Lopburi; A mechanical system to lower the coffin of widow of King Rama V; Theatrical costumes.

Munfendee and his Thai wife (Mrs. Thongmuen) - who died six years after him, are interred in the Christian cemetery in Bang Pong, Ratchaburi province. The above list of Munfendee's architectural, artistic and other works are testified by Bressan, (1997, pp. 7-9).

Annibale Rigotti (1870-1968) Architect, teacher, designer, and urban Planner

Born in Turin, like his compatriots (Tomagno and Manfredi) he graduated in architecture from the Albertina Academy of Fine Arts in 1890. After working in Turkey and Bulgaria on several architectural projects, he returned to Italy and married Ms. Maria Calvi in December 1890. He produced numerous architectural works and also became the editor of *L'artista moderna*, in 1902.

Rigotti travelled to Siam in 1907 at age 37, where he collaborated with architect, Mario Tomagno and engineer, Carlo

Allegrì in the design of the Ananata Samakom Throne Hall. (Aasen, 1998, p. 191). Rigotti returned to Italy in 1909 (due to ill health) before the hall's completion, but continued to act as coordinator for the delivery of materials and supplies (Suksri and Freeman, 1996, pp. 80-82).

Rigotti returned to Siam in 1923 and stayed until 1926. During which time, he designed Villa Nora Singh (1923-1925) and redesigned the gardens of Saranrom Palace (1923-1925) - which are now Saranrom Park. (Suksri and Freeman, 1996, pp 123-177). During that time Rigotti served as Chief Architect of the Siamese Public Works Department.

Rigotti's major contributions include:

- Giaccone house, Turin -1890–1893; with Raimondo d'Aronco and Riccardo Brayda;
- Konya Railway Station, Turkey -1893–96;
- Municipal theatres in Varna and Sitov, Bulgaria -1893–96;
- Elementary school at Sommariva del Bosco, Cuneo -1897;
- Cagliari town hall -1897;
- Palazzina Vitale, Turin, -1898
- "Oil and wine" Pavilion and Banfi Pavilion at the Prima Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte Decorativa Moderna -1902;
- Villa Falcioni, Domodossola, -1902–1904;
- Toesca house, Turin -1903;
- Cogne Railway Station, Aosta, 1904;
- Palazzina Baravalle, Turin -1906;
- Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall, Bangkok, Thailand, 1908–1915; - collaboration (Suksri and Freeman, 1996, pp.221-222, Aasen p.197)
- Siam pavilion at the 1911 Turin International - with Mario Tamagno;
- Layout of Piazza d'Armi, Turin (1912; urban planning, - with Raimondo d'Aronco;

- Development plan for Mondovì, Cuneo (1915).
- Villa Norasingh, Bangkok - 1923–1925; collaboration;
- Siam Commercial Bank, Bangkok - 1916–1926;
- Circolo degli Artisti, Turin, 1915;
- Fabbrica Italiana Tubi Metallici factory, Turin -1937–1938 - with Giorgio Rigotti;
- Palazzo a Vela, Turin 1961, with Giorgio Rigotti;
- Villa Pitsanaluk, 1925, with Mario Tomagno
- Office of The East Asiatic Company circa 1900* (Anon 1, 2015, p.228)

*Note the date by the above source is probably incorrect as Rigotti had not yet arrived in Thailand

Carlo Allegri (1862-1938) Engineer and Architect (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al*, 2014, pp 32; Aasen, 1998, p.198)

Allegri arrived in Siam in 1890, to undertake work for a mining survey in Chantaburi province. After fulfilling that obligation, he was appointed as Chief Engineer of The Ministry of Public Works in 1893 - a position he retained until 1916. Allegri's contributions in Thailand are: Fa Li La Bridge (1905) de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al* 2014, p. 44; Royal Mint (now The National Gallery) de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al* 2014, pp. 56-57; Neo-classic gate at Wat Thepsirin 1894 de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al* 2014, p. 55; Red Cross Hospital, 1900 (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al* 2014, p. 58); Paruksawan Villa and Palace (now both buildings have been joined to form The Bangkok Police Museum), 1903-1905, (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al* 2014, p. 58; Suksri and Freeman, 1996, pp. 272-277); Pi Pob Li La Bridge, 1904, now considerably widened and with new railings is very different from the original bridge. (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al* 2014, pp. 59,60,61);

Wat Rachabophit Funerary Monument, (n.d.), (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al*, 2014, pp. 62,64,65); Siam Commercial Bank 1906, (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al*, 2014, pp. 66, 67); Roman Rostrum at Fa Li La Bridge (1905), (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al* 2014, p. 55) The chalet at Suan Kularb Palace (1900), Ward, 2015, p103

Vittorio Novi (1866-1955) Sculptor (Del Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al*. 2014, pp. 224-229)

Novi came to Siam in 1910 at 44 years of age (rather older than his Italian compatriots), at the request of King Chulalongkorn.

His creative works within the Thailand include:

Sculptures at the Mahadthaiuthit Bridge, (1914) (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al*. 2014, pp. 224, 226,232,233,234) Ward, 2015, p. 90.

Sculptures at the Anantasamakhom Throne Hall (De Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al* 2014, pp.226, 230.;

A sculpture at The Ministry of Trade circa 1906;

A Luneta at Hua Lomphong railway station, 1910-1912, (King, 2011, p. 27); Decorative work at Villa Abhisek, 1906-1915, (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al*. 2014 p.229; Ward, 2015, p. 103);

Stucco work at Chulalongkorn University, (1919), de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al*, 2014, p.231)

Details of Novi's works whilst in Thailand are unfortunately not as well recorded as others in this series, possibly because he was part of a team and his works were decorative sculptures, rather than the large structures of which they were a part. There is no doubt however, that they are remarkable works of art and of enduring beauty. It is hoped that other researchers can investigate and catalogue Novi, works both in Thailand and elsewhere, to help us better understand and appreciate Novi's works.

Galileo Chini (1873-1956). Artist

Born of Tuscan heritage in Florence, Chini came to Siam to fulfil the post of court painter in 1911 (Anonymous 4, p.4). The work he produced during his three year posting included paintings, ceramics, large-scale posters, opera sets and most notably, the ceiling decoration and other works within the Anantasamakhom Throne Hall (1913) in collaboration with Carlo Rigoli (1911-1913) and his two Italian pupils Giovanni Sguanci and Carlo Rigoli. (Suksri and Freeman, 1996, pp. 221-222)

The architectural works were carried out with the support of Italian architectural assistants Salvatore, Tavella, Rigazzi and Quadrelli. (Anonymous 4, p. 6)

Many of Chini's works, along with a brief history of his time in Siam are detailed in a small vividly colored booklet entitled *Galileo Chini and The Colors of Asia*.

Carlo Rigoli (1883-1962) Artist

Born in Florence, Tuscany and destined, according to tradition for a life in the priesthood. However, breaking with tradition, Rigoli literally "breathed art from his infancy", and where he was surrounded by churches dating from the 9th to 11th centuries and which were filled with paintings, statues and frescos. Later, under the tutelage of Galileo Chini, he was invited to accompany him to Siam in 1910; a journey which influenced them both for the remainder of their lives. Rigoli and Chini, were commissioned to complete frescoes in *art nouvo* style at Bankumprom Palace, then home of Prince Paribatra Sukhumband and now home of the Bank of Thailand's museum. Rigoli also produced a beautiful lunette and a lovely staircase within the building and a series of beautiful, angelic frescoes, within Ban Phi Boon Tham. (de Lazzara, Piazzardi, 2014, pp.172,173).

Beyond official duties, Rigoli produced many beautiful water-colour paintings of the Siamese Royal family members,

including King Chulalongkorn, Queen Saovabha and many ordinary citizens going about their daily lives, during the period 1915 to 1925. (de Lazzara, Piazzardi, 2014, pp. 162-163)

During his contractual obligations Rigoli formed a friendship with Prince Narisaranuwattiwong (or Prince Naris - short form) son of Rama IV (King Mongkut) who was himself, knowledgeable of and skillful in painting, sculpture, architecture and music.

We are informed that it was Prince Naris, who introduced Siamese myth and fable to Rigoli, who amongst his other works applied that knowledge in producing the frescoes within Wat Rachatiwas in collaboration with Prince Naris.

Sadly, upon returning home to his native Florence, we are informed that Rigoli was largely ignored by the artistic community. Their interest in the orient had by that time faded. Fortunately, Rigoli was looked after by his family until his demise in 1962. (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al.* 2014, p. 162)

For interested readers and researchers this writer recently visited the Wat Rachatiwas and found the frescoes which Rigoli created with Prince Naris, remain as beautiful today, as when they were painted in 1923. It is amazing how Rigoli and Prince Naris were able to formulate their paints and apply them in such a way, as to adhere so firmly to the stucco and not to fade under the influence of the underlying building materials and Thailand's hot and humid climate. This is indeed a testament to artistic ingenuity and excellence.

Works by Rigoli with a similar mythological theme, are also evident within Ban Phi Boon Tham at Borom Phiman Palace where beautiful frescoes were commissioned in 1917

Cesare Ferro (1880-1934) Artist i.e. painter and engraver (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al.* 2014, pp 68; Milone, 1997, pp. 1-3)

Ferro arrived in Bangkok in 1904, aged 24. As he spoke French, English and his own

Piedmontese Italian dialect, we are informed that he was able to navigate the streets of Bangkok and communicate easily with those he met. (de Lazzara, Piazzardi, *et al.*, 2014, p. 74)

Ferro was requested to decorate the interior of The Amphornsathan Throne Hall in the style of a European mansion. (Aasen, 1998, p.194).

Ferro's principal work, was to decorate the 40 rooms of Villa Ambara within a three-year time frame. A work which he completed within the tight time frame, with the help of two of his best students from Turin. (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al.*, 2014, pp. 76-78).

Returning to Turin after completing that work, he served as a lieutenant of Genio Zappatori in World War 1 (1914-1918) and he married Andreina Gritti in 1920 (Milone, 1997, p 1-3)

Shortly after completing his military service, Ferro's received a request from The Siamese Government to decorate Villa Norasingh. He worked with colleagues Rigotti and Manfredi on this major work. (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al.*, 2014, pp.79-89).

In addition, Ferro produced a series of commemorative Jubilee postage stamps (Piazzardi *et al.*, 2014, p. 89) and a commemorative coin in 1906. (de Lazzara, Piazzardi *et al.*, 2014, p. 81) both in honor of King Chulalongkorn.

Upon returning to his native Turin, Ferro ultimately became president of his *Alma Mater*- The Royal Albertini Institute, where he welcomed Prince Damrong Rajanuparb, (Brother of King Chulalongkorn) in 1932 and with words of great affection, he expressed his deep love for Siam and the Siamese people.

Ferro's works are on permanent display at Galleria Civica di Arte Moderna, Contemporanea, (Torino); Duomo di San Giovanni (Torino); Galleria Sabauda (Torino); Quirinale (Roma); Cicolo degli Artisti (Torino); Istituto Pro-Pueritia (Torino); Cassa di Risparmio (Torino); In the self-portrait gallery of Circiolodegli

Artisti de Torino signed by the artist.

Other paintings may be found in private collections in Saint Petersburg, Buenos Aires and in Italy in the Municipio of Imeriain private chapels at the cemetery of Neive (Torino) and in the family chapel at Usseglio (Torino). More than 100 works from Siam. (Milone, 1997, pp.1-3)

Ferro's life was cut short, by a tragic automobile accident in Turin in 1934. A great loss to us all; but what a magnificent legacy he has left us.

For readers who have not yet visited these beautiful buildings, bridges, monuments, sculptures and Italianate inspired works of art, I encourage you to do so.

It is amazing how much Ferro accomplished in his life time as an artist, a soldier and an administrator.

Alfredo Rigazzi - Artist.

I have been unable to find biographical details of Rigazzi as of this writing, however, my research is continuing. I believe that it important to include what details we have here in order to encourage others to also search and find details of this very talented artist.

Completed works in Thailand:

Wat Rachatiwat, 1910 Rigazzi completed the interior murals to sketches provided by Prince Narisara Nuvadtovongs, (Ward, 2015, pp.71-73),

Hua Lamphong Station 1910-1916, decorative features (Ward, 2015, pp.241-241)

The Chapel of Saint Joseph Convent School, 1907, (Anon 1, p. 238)

Hua Hin Railway Hotel, 1923,

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