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
Krong, 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.

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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 Krong 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