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JULIA JANE DAVIES : INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE BUILDINGS AND SITES IN THAILAND
FROM THE 1850'S - 1950'S. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE ARCHITECTURE, COMMUNITIES AND
NARRATIVES. INDEPENDENT STUDY ADVISOR : PROFESSOR WILLIAM R. CHAPMAN Ph.D.
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Industrial heritage is a global phenomenon yet barely noticed or recognised within Thailand. The signing of The Bowring Treaty with the United Kingdom in 1855 signified an opening of international trade with the rest of the world. The rice, teak and tin industry were the primary exportable commodities which saw Thailand utilise a new mode and method of production. Thailand was still a predominantly agrarian society, however the changes brought about by the influx of new technologies such as steam power saw a new socio-economic strata developing across Thailand, predominantly in Bangkok. Foreigners were brought into Thailand as advisors within governmental departments, they were designing buildings across the capital and they were also the managers of large scale export companies. It was shortly after this foreign influx that roads were built, colonial mansion houses erected and new services such as hotels and department stores became available. These were all to become a familiar part of the urban landscape. The Chinese community was noticeably increasing, and this consequently had a profound effect on the country. The Chinese culture appeared in a variety of forms. New building types, such as the shophouse which became a popular and functional addition to Thai towns and cities. The Chinese also became closely assimilated into the Thai community through industrial links and connections furthermore through inter marriage. The Chinese were at the heart of the rice and tin industry, whilst the foreigners dominated the teak industry and other commercial activities.

The legacy of the new economies and industries from the 1850's onwards can be seen scattered throughout Thailand. Often, not obvious or visible, they include warehouse buildings, sawmills, rice mills, shophouses and other buildings which have an association, connection or relationship with industry. It is not only buildings which are valuable, but other aspects such as the printing industry, which are significant in representing new technologies, processes and communication.

A lack of awareness or appreciation for these industrial sites has led to their demise, and they are often neglected, abandoned or demolished.

A study of industrial heritage at a global level helps to gain a perspective and understanding of Thailand's position at a regional, national and local level.

The Thai heritage policy is examined to see how industrial heritage fits within a Thai heritage aesthetic. It offers some suggestions as to why industrial heritage should be more inclusive, specifically offering social and economic benefits for the community. Industrial tourism offers an alternative form of cultural tourism, whilst some sites have the potential for adaptive re-use into new functions. Areas which have been de-industrialised can use industrial heritage to stimulate regional or local revitalisation.

There have been several sites across Thailand identified as having industrial heritage significance, which represents a beginning process for the recording and documentation of these valuable places which reflect the modernisation of Siam and the emergence and development of modern architecture in Thailand.

Acknowledgements

My interest for industrial spaces grew when I was an architectural student living in London in the early 1990's. The warehouses spaces we occupied provided space and excellent daylight at an affordable cost. The thrill of living in a building which had offered so much flexibility and potential has never left me.

When I moved to Bangkok I naturally began to seek out similar spaces, and the fascination for these types of industrial spaces began once again. Looking at these spaces from a different perspective of being potential heritage conservation as sites began when I started the program at Silpakorn University. It was indeed a difficult task in writing an acknowledgement, with so many people to which this would not have been possible without.

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