

Title:

Industrial heritage under the semi-colonial framework

Abstract:

Almost all industrial legacies are based on backgrounds and frameworks from Western industrial history, with colonialism as the mechanism supporting capitalism. Therefore, colonization was a key factor in affecting significant colonies' social, economic, and political transformation structures. Industrial buildings were also considered to be the result of the industrial revolution and colonialism and were often criticized as a modernization movement within the context of Westernization under postcolonial value. However, while the entire world was experiencing colonization, Siam or Thailand was one of the few countries that had not been colonized despite encountering unfair treaties and territorial threats from superpowers. The postcolonial ideology is therefore not as widespread among Thai academics and people as in the Thai mainstream history, which always emphasizes the none-colony concept under the civilization strategy of King Rama V. However, few scholars have challenged the country's main historiography by presenting a broader aspect of semi-colonialism rather than adhering to the term "none-colony".

This study aims to explore the uniqueness of the Industrial heritage under a semi-colonial framework in Thailand through the lens of syncretism, which involves assimilating different cultures, including Western, Chinese, and Thai, at various levels of semi-colonial value. The analysis focuses on the two groups with direct and indirect semi-colonial consequences in the major commercial cities and local respectively through space, architectural appearance, construction and community relationship. In the semi-colonial condition, the Western had no absolute power to dominate Siam's whole structure; therefore, their influences and economic networks were not as profound as those of other formal colonies. However, during the semi-colonial period, the free trade treaty between the West and Siam was an essential factor that ultimately benefited Chinese immigrants to become a greater player in Siam's industrial part than Western nations. However, it cannot be denied that superpowers' influence still resulted in the westernization process forming Siam to Thai modernity, including industrial building, similar to the transformation in other colonial neighbours.