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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL EDUCATION VIII

PROCEEDING BOOK

23-24 NOV 2020
THE EFFECT OF BRICK-MAKING INDUSTRY IN KUALA LUMPUR
FROM 1880 - 1929

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ABSTRACT

Kuala Lumpur grew rapidly after King Abdullah managed to open a mining area in Ampang. The choice of Kuala Lumpur as the capital of Selangor to replace Klang has made Kuala Lumpur an economic focus area. Since Kuala Lumpur offers a wide range of economic activities, it has changed its pattern. Although the British economic policy at that time was more focused on mining activities, it did not mean that other industrial activities did not exist in Kuala Lumpur. In fact, the brick industry has become one of the important economic activities in Kuala Lumpur. Therefore, this paper will discuss the brick industry as one of the supporting economic activities in Kuala Lumpur. The scope of the discussion is limited to the development and impact of the brick industry in Kuala Lumpur between 1880 to 1929. This study will use a historical approach that focuses on library and archival research using primary and secondary sources.

Keywords: Development, Effects, Industry, Bricks, Economy

INTRODUCTION

The Sultan Abdul Samad building is the evidence of how the brick industry activities also play a significant role in Kuala Lumpur. Although the activities of the brick industry are not as great as the mining activities, the activities of the brick industry have changed the face of Kuala Lumpur from a swampy small village to a magnificent city equipped with various infrastructure. The activity of the brick industry began in Kuala Lumpur when the tragedy of
IMPACT OF BRICK INDUSTRY ACTIVITIES

The main effect of the rapid activity of the brick industry has transformed Kuala Lumpur from a swampy area into a modern city equipped with buildings and infrastructure made of bricks. In this context, activities of the brick industry have brought great changes to Kuala Lumpur as many major buildings in the city center have been built using bricks (Shapiza Sharif & Arba’iyah Mohd Noor, 2017). As soon as there was building materials directive notice by the British government dated 15 September 1884, the ‘nipah’ leaf roof building and roof were seen to have been replaced with bricks (Proclamation, 1884). This scenario illustrates that the owners of business premises and houses in Kuala Lumpur have begun to be sensitive to the use of non-combustible building materials, namely bricks (Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, 1995).

The construction of the iconic building using bricks is a clear proof of the transformation of the rapid development of the brick industry in Kuala Lumpur when the Selangor Club was completed in 1890, the Chartered Bank Building was successfully built in 1891, the Victoria Institution was founded in 1894 and St Mary was completed in 1895. In fact, the trend of building iconic buildings using brick building materials can also be seen with the establishment of the Government Secretary building in 1896, the construction of the Post Office building in 1901 and the Municipal Council building in 1904 (Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, 1995). This shows that bricks were very much needed in the construction of buildings to change the pattern of Kuala Lumpur at that time (Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, 1995).

Other effects of the brick industry activities in Kuala Lumpur can be seen not only in terms of attractive and unique building design, but also shows the orderly urban planning. Urban planning has a close relationship with the uniqueness of physical architecture that aims to beautify the city. For example, architect A. C. Norman has applied the features of Classic Renaissance and Mahometan Style in the design of the Sultan Abdul Samad Building (Gullick, 1992). The inspiration of A. C. Norman has shown that this British administrative building was in a class of its own at the time (Gullick, 1992). Meanwhile, in 1922, the Tudor Style design was chosen during the Selangor Club upgrade process (Tate, 1987).

After 1917, the process of urbanization in Kuala Lumpur was no longer focused on physical construction. This is because the cost of importing cement which was one of the main materials in construction increased after the First World War (Gullick, 2000). Therefore, the focus of development at that time was more on beautifying the interior and exterior of the existing buildings in Kuala Lumpur. This can be seen through the installation of 24 lights in the building that has a clock tower to decorate and illuminate the Kuala Lumpur area at night (Annual Report Sanitary Board Kuala Lumpur 1918). By 1929, a Colesium Theater made of new bricks had been completed (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik A Rahman & N A Halim, 1995). By the end of 1929, Kuala Lumpur had changed its pattern and design as almost all the landmark buildings in the city used bricks as the main material.
At that time, housing was an important aspect that needed to be considered due to the increase of population in the urban area. Therefore, changes can be seen when the houses of the people in Kuala Lumpur were built using bricks. In 1884 there were only four houses made of stone and thatched roofs in the city area (Gullick, 1933). Significant changes can be seen when a total of 218 residential residents used bricks in 1885 (Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, 1995). By 1887, the number of houses made of bricks had increased to 518 in the city of Kuala Lumpur. This development reflects a more orderly, organized and safer development pattern to occupy.

The impact of these brick industry activities has led to the policy of requiring houses to be built using bricks. By the 1920s, the British government was more assertive in making decisions related to building materials in Kuala Lumpur. This was in line with the ability of factories to supply bricks. The development has led to the demolition of existing roof houses. Demolition was not considered an outrage since a unanimous decision has been reached. In the case of Chinese Kwan Tung Cemetery Grounds residence, the decision to demolish his roof house received three votes compared to one vote against. With the advantage of two votes means the roof house must be demolished without any compromise (Sanitary Board Kuala Lumpur – Minutes of Meetings, 1927).

The use of brick materials was not limited to the construction of buildings in the city of Kuala Lumpur. On the other hand, the use of bricks as the basic material was widely used in the construction of infrastructure in the city. The use of bricks shows a building structure that was stronger, structured and lasts longer. Among the planned infrastructure development that requires bricks was the construction of a sewer by the Selangor Government Railway (Tender commercial with brick, limestone and wood supplies, 1883) and the construction of a new prison (Proposal to supply all timber, bricks and tiles, 1884).

Significant implications of brick industry activities have created employment opportunities in the manufacturing sector. In the context of the rapid economic development of Kuala Lumpur, employment is no longer limited to the first sector category. The brick industry was not a trivial matter as this activity requires a large supply of bricks. Therefore, large-scale labor supply was important to mobilize brick production activities. The locals started working in the brick factory. This can clearly be seen when the residents of Kampung Bahru, in Kuala Lumpur work as laborers in a brick factory (Suleiman & Lokman Mohd.Zen, 1999). The activities of the brick industry have created other new job opportunities such as the Inspector of Road and Building (Post of Inspector of Road and Building, 1898).

The brick industry has also expanded other support services such as building insurance. With the availability of building insurance support services has become an important aspect in the brick industry.
an insurance policy has not only been able to reduce the cost of loss on the part of owners, but has also been able to accelerate the process of economic development in Kuala Lumpur.

Another important effect of the brick industry activities that have brought great changes to the city of Kuala Lumpur at that time was in terms of infrastructure. Complete infrastructure encourages other economic activities to be more effective in Kuala Lumpur. An interesting thing about the development of the brick industry is that the infrastructure of the mining area has improved. For example, roads made of bricks have increased the business of transporting tin. This was evident when the road was built in 1889 which connected Kuala Lumpur with the mining area around Kuala Lumpur. In fact, in 1901, the road was successfully built along about 1,000 km (Katiman Rostam, 1995).

The subsequent impact of the brick industry activities has further accelerated the development of economic in Kuala Lumpur. This means that economic growth is not just concentrated around the east bank of the Klang River. In this case before the presence of the British, the area that has potential to be developed productively and not only targeted around three main roads for economic focus such as at Cross Street, Market Street and High Street. Even the expansion of economic development can be seen through the approval of land near Jalan Batu and Sungai Gombak for construction of brick factories. In addition, 15 acres of land have been approved to European investor companies for the purpose of brick production (Applies for 5 more acres of land adjoining is former grant of 10 acres for Brick Making Works, 1883).

The further effect of the brick industry activities was the increase the value of real estate in Kuala Lumpur. Prices of houses and premises made of bricks are rising. This scenario has pleased the owners of fixed assets in the city as they are able to make homes and rooms as their source of income. The value of land increases as property prices increase. For example, the value of land in Ampang was only $2,000 for 43 acres in 1894. But by 1914, the value per acre land in Ampang was offered at a price of $4,500 (Robson, 2007).

CONCLUSION

Overall, it was found that the wildfire incident was the main trigger to the brick industry activities in Kuala Lumpur. Unsustainable construction structures and natural disasters such as floods that can affect the stability of construction structures in Kuala Lumpur require immediate action from the British. Therefore, the British began to provide a solution that was seen as very important, namely to change the use of better quality building materials to build buildings and various other forms of infrastructure. Even the activities of the brick industry
have succeeded in transforming the face of Kuala Lumpur from a small village into a magnificent city.

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