

PEOPLE

Sugar Production Chimney: A Pillar of Support on Campus



Completed on March 19, 1931, the chimney of the boiler room is nearly 20m in height and 6.188m in diameter.

Quietly overshadowing several lecture halls and the Administration Building not far from Roosevelt Road, stands a nearly 20-meter-high chimney covered with verdant vines. This industrial structure, which appears out of place on campus, is the boiler room and chimney of the fermentation lab built in the era of Taihoku Imperial University, NTU's institutional predecessor.

Taihoku Imperial University, which later became National Taiwan University, was founded in 1928 by the Japanese colonial government, and the construction of the fermentation laboratory was completed three years later. The lab belonged to the Department of Agrochemical Chemistry, which boasted advanced sugar production equipment and technology at the time.

To support Imperial Japan's Southern Expansion Doctrine, the Departments of Sugar Chemistry and Zymurgy were established to help develop local agriculture. Professor Eiziro Hamaguti, Head of the Sugar Chemistry Department, significantly improved sugar production technology in Taiwan with his research. Between 1938 and 1939, the Taiwanese sugar industry reached its peak production record of 1,418,731 tons of sugar.

Since sugar production is driven by a vast amount of steam power, the 62 centimeter-thick red brick walls of the colossal boiler were designed to store massive thermal energy. The room belonged to the Department of Zymurgy, overseen by Professor Tamezi Baba, who used the stored heat to carry out fermentation experiments. Baba extracted "Clostridium toanum Baba" from bagasse, a discovery that led to the production of a fuel that relieved Taiwan's energy crisis during WWII when the Allies blockaded Imperial Japan's oil imports.



The boiler's 62 cm thick, red brick walls and 42 by 37 cm front gate.

The thriving sugar industry constructed numerous towering sugarcane factory chimneys that reached into Taiwan's sky during Japanese rule. Unfortunately, these very chimneys became the targets of the U.S. bombers. Most of the chimneys were destroyed by airstrikes, and now only 6 of the chimneys remain standing today, all in southern Taiwan. This makes our chimney, which has stood on the NTU campus for nearly a century, especially precious. It is not only the sole industrial chimney standing on the campus of any university in Taiwan, but it also bears historical value for having survived several eras, including the period of Japanese occupation, the peak of the local sugar industry, the Second World War, and the rechristening of Taihoku Imperial University as National Taiwan University.

Now, the chimney has taken on a new life as the new site of the Center for Student Well-being, the Disability Support Services Office, and the Student Safety Center with the strong support of President Chung-Ming Kuan.

Shih-Pe Wang, Vice President for Student Affairs, stated at the opening ceremony: "The Center for Student Well-being marks an important milestone of our work on campus. I hope this space can be transformed into a hub for departments and people to work together and support their peers. This boiler room is not just a valuable historical asset but serves to warm the hearts of people and the community of NTU."



President Chung-Ming Kuan inspecting the results of the remodeling construction.

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