

BANGKOK, . . . OR SHOULDN'T WE SAY, "KRUNTHEP"?

Bangkok then as today, was/is a great city, you might even say, "a world class city." True, 50 years ago it had not been westernized or internationalized with tall buildings and an urban rail mass transit system. Even as much as today's Bangkok is marked by its tall buildings and modern conveniences,, then the largest buildings were rather uninspiring government ministries or any of the magnificent temples. That aspect of Bangkok remains if now somewhat overshadowed to the casual tourist or business-person.

Bangkok's famous floating market and Sundays only flower market remain but the Thieves Market (Asia's answer to Chicago's own Maxwell Street market and its "thieves"?) along then seedy New Road (the only street in Bangkok 50 years ago with a trolley) is gone. I suppose also gone are the bus conductors who with a sharp plunge of one very long and often quite dirty finger nail severed each ticket from the roll the bus company handed them. Also surely gone are the "canals" that were little more than open sewers. Remember, but do not mourn the lost Bangkok of a half century ago. Fifty years from now today's glitter will largely be gone. A city's greatness is in always changing and growing, and preserving enough of its past to remind its people things were not always as they now are, nor shall they ever be.