

(Un)loved Modern

Australia ICOMOS Annual Conference, 7-10 July 2009, Sydney, Australia

Theme: Re-thinking colonial heritage

Walk to Global Vision:
Post-colonial Interpretation of
World Heritage Monuments in Macau

Macau is a place of East meets West for over 400 years at the Pearl River Delta along the south-east coast of China. It was a colony of Portugal before it was handover to the Chinese Government to become a Special Administrative Region of China in 1999. Sharp changes occurs during the handover year when Macau stepped out from its long colonial history to a new post-colonial era. Handover is a remarkable moment in Macau history which brings significant transformation to its social, economic and environmental setting. The change in governance management practice and social values can also be reviewed in Macau's interpretation of heritage monuments during this post-colonial period. The conservation priority and interpretation to heritage monuments transforms at the same time.

This paper will illustrate the recent two World Heritage Award submissions during colonial period before 1999 and the post-colonial period after 1999. The difference of cultural emphasis in the World Heritage Award submissions will be analysed to explain the value and interpretation changes of Macau's heritage across the handover period. With the support of the Chinese Central Government by selecting "The Historic Centre of Macao" as the sole national bid to be assessed by the World Heritage Committee, Macau was granted the World Heritage Award in 2005 by UNESCO¹. In the UNESCO presentation award ceremony, Macau's heritage zone was highlighted as the product of cultural exchange between the western world and the Chinese civilization.

In re-thinking the colonial heritage during the handover period of Macau, the colonial heritage is not limited to the identity of representing past colony history but the new definition with global vision which promotes the harmony of both colonial history and post-colonial development. Macau's unique conservation example in successful rethinking the colonial heritage for transformation through input of global vision enlightens all other colonial heritage conservation projects in the world.

¹ Macau Heritage Net, 2006. Cultural Affairs Bureau of Macau Government.

Author Name: Mok Keng Kio
Address: Avenida Do Dr. Rodrigo Rodrigues,
No. 138 Edf. Highfield Court, 18-Andar-A, Macau
Email: mokada@netvigator.com
Telephone: (853) 66586212
Fax: (853) 28786795

Curriculum Vitae

Mok Keng Kio was trained in architecture and graduated from the architectural conservation master programme of The University of Hong Kong. She has solid public administration experience in both Hong Kong and Macau. She is now a Senior Technical Officer of the Macau Special Administrative Region of China. Apart from participating actively in international academic conservation conferences, she also contributes to conservation projects of heritage churches. Her research focuses on cultural landscape, heritage management, religious architecture and historic gardens with special interest in the urban heritage of Macau.

WALK TO GLOBAL VISION:

POST-COLONIAL INTERPRETATION OF WORLD HERITAGE MONUMENTS IN MACAU

Mok Keng Kio

Macau Special Administrative Region of China

MACAU – A COLONY WITH EAST AND WEST CULTURE

Macau is a place of East meets West for over 400 years at the Pearl River Delta along the south-east coast of China. It was a colony of Portugal before it was handover to the Chinese Government to become a Special Administrative Region of China in 1999. At present, the population of Macau is 549,200 people. This small coastal city with an area of 29.2 square kilometres now records an over 30 million annual visitor count² by its highly dense population. According to OECD statistics, Macau is ranked the second most compact city on world.

In 18th century, the seashore of Macau was a beautiful cultural landscape for reception of the trading fleets of Sea Silk Road to the first entrance of China. The population of Macau composed of a mixture of races with Chinese, Portuguese and other western nationalities for over four centuries.

MACAU – AFTER HANDOVER

Macau was handed over to China from the Portuguese colonial government in 1999. The Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government was established on the handover day. As agreed in the Joint Declaration signed by the Chinese government and the Portuguese government, Chinese and Portuguese were the official languages of Macau to manifest the “One Country, Two Systems” policy. Chief government officers are composed of local Chinese lived in Macau. There has been rapid development to Macau’s economic, social and environmental setting since handover.

² Macao Statistical Publications, 2008. Statistics and Census Service of Macau Government.

Economy improves gradually under the new governance with continuous surplus budget since 1999. The economy of Macau becomes more diversified as foreign investment increases sharply since the liberalization of gaming licence in 2000. The GDP increased from US\$6.05 billion in 1999 to US\$19.48 billion³ in 2007 with an increase of 222%. In 2007, Macau yielded US\$10.7 billion⁴ in its total gaming revenue. This made Macau become the city with highest gaming return in the world.

The environment of Macau is transformed by the new casino icons rapidly developed in recent years. Many international entertainment facilities like hotels and casinos are built to attract tourists. New infrastructures like roads, bridges and transportation facilities such as piers and immigration buildings are constructed to support the growth of the city.

The social setting become more internationalised as the number of tourists and overseas professional workers grows with the economic expansion. After China had adopted the "Free Travel Policy" in 2003, the annual visitor count climbed to a breaking record of over 30 million at present.

Macau is one of the Asia heritage cities with early commitment to heritage conservation. Macau started to develop the legal framework of heritage conservation since 1970s after the publication of Venice Charter. There were two major revisions in the conservation legislation in 1980s⁵ and 1990s⁶ respectively to enlarge the protection authority of government and incentive benefit to private heritage owners. The heritage listed in the revised law extended from single heritage building to garden and heritage zone. The scale and concept of heritage protection continued to advance along with the development of ICOMOS charters to address not only individual monument but also cultural landscape as a whole. The Cultural Affairs Bureau of Macau Government has launched a comprehensive consultation recently to improve the conservation legal framework with more refined cultural landscape consideration and latest conservation practice. All citizens and professionals are invited to present their opinion to contribute to their cultural heritage in this participatory consultation process.

³ Macao Statistical Publications, 2007. Statistics and Census Service of Macau Government.

⁴ Statistical information, 2007. Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau.

⁵ Decree 56/84/M, 1984. The Government is concerned to preserve and revive the historic, cultural and architectural heritage of the Territory. An important step towards this end was the creation of the Cultural Institute of Macau which, combining as it does the sectors of cultural heritage, cultural activities and training and research, will seek to coordinate activities in the cultural field. (Macau Heritage Kit)

⁶ Decree 83/92/M, 1992. The preservation of Macau's monumental, architectonic, urban and cultural heritage is based on the defence of its historic and cultural values, which is, still today, a unique witness, amongst the regions of Southeast Asia and the World. (Macau Heritage Kit)

CONSERVATION PRIORITY AND HERITAGE INTERPRETATION OF MACAU

Sharp changes occurs during the handover year when Macau stepped out from its long colonial history to a new post-colonial era. Handover is a remarkable moment in Macau history which brings significant transformation to its social, economic and environmental setting. The change in governance management practice and social values can also be reviewed in Macau's interpretation of heritage monuments during this post-colonial period. The conservation priority and interpretation to heritage monuments transforms at the same time.

This paper will illustrate the recent two World Heritage Award⁷ submissions during colonial period before 1999 and the post-colonial period after 1999. The difference of cultural emphasis in the World Heritage Award submissions will be analysed to explain the value and interpretation changes of Macau's heritage across the handover period.

COLONIAL INTERPRETATION OF UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SUBMISSION

The first submission of the Historic Centre of Macau to UNESCO for the World Heritage Award was prepared in 1987 when Macau was colonized by Portuguese Government. The city of the Holy Name of God of Macau was regarded as the only living testimony of the oldest European presence in China.

The historical achievement of Portuguese in Macau is emphasized in this submission. Different historical stages of the trading development between Portuguese and China, provision of diplomatic and cultural platform, and the regional exchange brought by this platform are marked in the urban structures and architecture of Macau.

The Historic Centre of Macau selected for the World Heritage Award is the most important historic and monumental area of Macau. The union of the traditional Portuguese City with the Chinese Baazar displayed the conviviality of two cultural expressions. Apart from civic buildings in European style, many religious monuments like convents of Franciscan and Dominican, a new cathedral and the great church of the Jesuits, namely the Ruin of St. Paul are nominated as key icons which formed the Historic Centre of Macau. Among all these built heritages, the Ruin of St. Paul is addressed as the most significant monument. Its outstanding architectural decorative façade with oriental images on Western baroque elements is an exotic original synthesis where East and West harmonized.

⁷ World Heritage is the designation for places on earth that are of outstanding universal value to humanity and as such, have according to the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage been inscribed on the World Heritage List by the World Heritage Committee to be protected for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.

POST-COLONIAL AWARD OF UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE

In 2003 during the fourth year Macau was returned to China, Macau⁸ submitted the UNESCO World Heritage Award application. With the support of the Chinese Central Government by selecting “The Historic Centre of Macau” as the sole national bid to be assessed by the World Heritage Committee, Macau was granted the World Heritage Award in 2005 by UNESCO⁹. In the UNESCO presentation award ceremony, Macau’s heritage zone was highlighted as the product of cultural exchange between the western world and the Chinese civilization.

There are 22 monuments¹⁰ in this World Heritage Award submission. In the proposed monument list, the Chinese temples and traditional Chinese vernacular houses , namely A-Ma Temple, Mandarin’s House, Sam Kai Vui Kun (Kuan Tai Temple), Lou Kau Mansion and Na Tcha Temple are included. These five Chinese heritage icons are essential representatives of Macau’s Chinese cultural origin in the World Heritage zone. The traditional temples display how local Macau people perform religious worship in their daily life while the traditional vernacular houses recall the daily living of typical Chinese family in Macau.

Moreover, equal emphases are put on the newly listed Chinese architecture with the European heritage to highlight the harmony of East and West cultures. For instance, the Na Tcha Temple next to the Ruins of St. Paul’s is an outstanding example to illustrate the harmony of both cultures. The two heritage monuments are very close in their physical distance. Although they are originated from two very different religions of different cultures, their architectural design indicates respect to each other. They show respect to their neighbour’s physical setting while maintaining their uniqueness. All along, both heritage monuments are popular worship places in their own religion with equal cultural attractiveness to visitors. They have been a friendly neighbour to each other for over 100 years to witness the cultural harmony of Macau.

⁸ In the submission of World Heritage Award, Macau is regarded as a lucrative port of strategic importance in the development of international trade, was under Portuguese administration from the mid 16th century until 1999, when it came under Chinese sovereignty. With its historic street, residential, religious and public Portuguese and Chinese buildings, the historic centre of Macao provides a unique testimony to the meeting of aesthetic, cultural, architectural and technological influences from East and West. The site also contains a fortress and a lighthouse, which is the oldest in China. The site bears testimony to one of the earliest and longest-lasting encounters between China and the West based on the vibrancy of international trade.

⁹ Macau Heritage Net, 2006. Cultural Affairs Bureau of Macau Government.

¹⁰ A-Ma Temple, Barra Square, Moorish Barracks, Mandarin’s House, Lilau Square, St. Lawrence’s Church, St. Joseph’s Seminary and Church, St. Augustine’s Square, Dom Pedro V Theatre, Sir Robert Ho Tung Library, St. Augustine’s Church, “Leal Senado” Building, Sam Kai Vui Kun (Kuan Tai Temple), Senado Square, Holy House of Mercy, Cathedral Square, Cathedral, Lou Kau Mansion, St. Dominic’s Church, St. Dominic’s Square, Company of Jesus Square, Ruins of St. Paul’s, Na Tcha Temple, Section of the Old City Walls, Mount Fortress, St. Anthony’s Church, Casa Garden, Protestant Cemetery, Guia Fortress

RE-THINKING COLONIAL HERITAGE WITH GLOBAL VISION

In re-thinking the colonial heritage during the handover age of Macau, the colonial heritage is not limited to the identity of representing past colony history but the new definition with global vision which promotes harmony of both colonial history and post-colonial development.

The successful inscription on the World Heritage List in 2005 featured not just the achievement brought by colonial government in historical, social, economical, religious and cultural aspects. The key message illustrated by the Historic Centre of Macau is the harmony of East and West. The universal value represented by the built heritage and cultural landscape included in the World Heritage zone places equal emphasis on both cultures.

The directive recognition highlighted in the World Heritage Award has laid a solid foundation in both the tangible and intangible cultural setting of Macau for future sustainable growth of this cultural harmony. On one hand, genuine input from local Macau citizen with participation of overseas experts and visitors can be easily guaranteed by the intangible recognition given by this UNESCO World Heritage Award. On the other hand, international support and global attention for the benefit of Macau's future development is further secured by this inscription of World Heritage List.

The new post-colonial interpretation of Macau's traditional Chinese heritage and colonial European heritage forms a vision statement for future transformation of Macau. It is a proactive achievement for the young Macau Special Administrative Government of China to form this global vision so boldly and authentically with the whole world as witness right after the post-colonial period. The new Macau government and all Macau citizens are responsible for maintaining and generating the authenticity of their heritage which processes universal value with world recognition in future.

The re-think of colonial heritage is not limited to the colonial history in the past. The colonial heritage can find new identity regarding the latest post-colonial development for the benefit of present and future generation. It can be interpreted proactively with local heritage long inherited in the same city context as illustrated in the case study of Macau. Macau's unique conservation example in successful rethinking the colonial heritage for transformation through input of global vision enlightens all other colonial heritage conservation projects in the world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Australia ICOMOS. 2000. *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, Australia: Australia ICOMOS Incorporated.

Clayton, Cathryn Hope. 2002. "Discourse on the City: Identity Formation and Urban Change in Contemporary Macao," in *Review of Culture* International Edition 3, July 2002, pp. 58-81, Macau: Cultural Affairs Bureau.

Maria Calado, 1985. *Macau: Memorial City on the Estuary of the River of Pearls*, Macau: Government of Macau.

Mok, Keng Kio. 2007. *Garden and City: Conservation of Urban Cultural Landscape through Partnership, A Case Study of Macau's Historic Garden, San Francisco Garden*. Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong.

Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) of Macau Special Administrative Government. 2007. *Macao Statistical Publications*, Macau: Statistics and Census Service.

UNESCO. 2005. *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, Paris: UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

Internet Resource

Macau Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (<http://www.dicj.gov.mo>)

Macau Government Printing Bureau, "*Macau Official Gazette*" (<http://en.io.gov.mo>)

Macau Heritage Kits (<http://www.macauheritage.net/mwhinfo05/indexE.asp>)

Macau Heritage Net (<http://www.macauheritage.net>)

Macau Special Administrative Region Government Website (<http://www.gov.mo>)

Macau Statistics and Census Bureau (<http://www.dsec.gov.mo>)