

“The interaction of History, Tourism and Economy: A reflection on the relationship between heritage and land use in Macao”

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## **Preface**

Since Macau’s return to China on December 20<sup>th</sup> 1999, lottery tourism has become a leading industry. With opening of the right of gambling in 2002, Macau has become, in just a short period of ten years, the world No. 1 city of gambling, playing a pivotal role. At present, Macau has a total of 36,000 people engaging in lottery, accounting for over 10% of its employed population. At the same time, its lottery income also exceeds 100 billion. Accordingly, Macau’s GDP growth rate reached about 35%.<sup>1</sup> Urbanization, driven by rapid lottery industrial economic development, increased quite a number of huge gambling structures. What then are the impacts that these changes bring to this small city that is embedded with profound historical and cultural details?

On July 15<sup>th</sup> 2005, 25 old buildings and the Square-Spaces were listed in The Catalogue of World Culture Heritage by UNESCO, becoming therefore “The Historic Centre of Macau”. These cultural relic buildings of Macau are mainly concentrated on the old city zone at the south of The Ruins of St. Paul, i.e., the famous City of Name of God/ Cidade do Nome de Deus in history.<sup>2</sup> From the superficial point of view, these old buildings and the Square-Spaces are not mutually exclusive from the gambling houses of the reclamation area concentrated in New Port and Cotai etc. In fact, to certain extent, the present new city construction has already generated impact on the existing cultural landscape.

## **Caring and Understanding of the Macau Government**

Actually, the former Macau Portuguese government was already paying attention to caring of cultural relics. Aside from renovation of western buildings, such as a great number of churches and government offices etc., the former Macau Portuguese government also rebuilt the Macau A-MA Temple for four times, spending more than 2 million. After the return of Macau to China, the Bureau of Culture of Macau has become more active in renovating quite a number of Chinese style temples. <sup>3</sup>Since 2004, the Bureau of Culture renovated The Ruins of St. Paul in a grand scale to stabilize the ground structure and to protect its appearance, investing more than 30 million. <sup>4</sup> In fact, what could have left more deep impression on tourists might be the beautification projects in the Dangzi (Taipa) Old City Area along Rua do Cunha (Guan Ye Street), which includes reconstruction of the old island municipal building into the Museum of Taipa & Coloane History, relaying of pitching along Calçada do Quartel, Carlos da Maia Street, and Supico Rua do etc., installing also with featured street lamp, thereby creating an island atmosphere with a sense of history.

One of the methods that the Bureau of Culture of Macau promotes its care for cultural relics is through promotion and publicity, by which we can also understand some of the concepts of government institutions towards cultural relic buildings of different period. For instance, in the desktop calendar “Historical Architect of Macau 2004”, specially printed in the end of 2003, 12 old buildings were selected to match the 12 months of 2004. Old buildings, listed by the Macau SAR Government, include Gao’s Family Mansion (Casa de Gao Kau) of the **Gao Kening Family**, Tang’s Family Mansion of the Tang’s Family, Tashi Art Museum, **Student Aid Building**, the No. 64<sup>th</sup> Pawnshop of The October Fifth Street (Rua De Cinco de Outubro Portuguese), Office Building of the Monetary Authority of Macau (Autoridade Monetária de Macau) that once served as Convent of the Sisters of the Precious Blood, the Luk Kwok Hotel, the baroque style Calçada Da Igreja De St. Lazaro, the Chinese style architecture of Fuk Wing Lane No. 5 – No. 23, Lingnan Middle School Building, and the Portuguese style residence of Travessa da Paixão (Love Lane) No. 5 – No. 11 with its neo-classical architectural style etc.<sup>5</sup> A careful mutual reference of these buildings with the old constructions listed in the Catalogue of the World Culture Heritage 2005, one will discover that, except the Lou Kau Mansion, other constructions are not exactly the same.

Notwithstanding, before China applied for “The Historic Centre of Macau” (Le centre historique de Macau) as world cultural heritage from the United Nations in 2005, private individuals already expressed their opinions to the following engineering projects proposed during construction of The Museum of Macau (Museu de Macau): city wall relics of the Ming Dynasty of the Macau Mountain Fortress be dismantled; green windows of the shop front along the Rua da Felicidade be transformed to red door and red window; tiles on the rooftop of Sam Po Temple of Taipa be changed to glass etc. They further pointed out and expressed regret that, in the list for protection of Law on Protection of Cultural Relics, architectures, such as site of The Big Drug Bureau of the Chinese Medicine and the Western Medicine founded by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, Ye Ting’s Former Residence, Hong-Chan-Kuan-Mio Charity Association (Associação de Piedade e de Beneficência “Hong-Chan-Kuan-Mio”), and Land Pagode Sam Cai Vu Cun, Macau (Guandimiao) of Longtian Village etc. were not included. <sup>6</sup>

### **Impact of Economic Development on Cultural Relic Buildings**

It should be said that the impact of opening of right of gambling on the society and economy of Macau is no less than the political return of Macau to China at all. This is more obvious, especially in terms of urban landscape, when garden city permeated with style of Southern European small towns is transformed to an international gambling city of concrete jungle. Excessive attention to the casino economy is also one of the main reasons that cultural relic caring cannot attract due attention from the public, albeit indirectly. The newly developed Taipa-Coloane reclamation area is one of the key towns of newly emerging casinos with American capital, and Rua do Cunha in the nearby is scenic spot for cuisines and specialties or local snacks. Of which, Casas Museu da Taipa (The Taipa Houses-Museum), branded as one of the eight scenic spots of Macau by the local Chinese community, were five old housing buildings built in 1920s as residence of Portuguese government officials, and were later reconstructed to museums, such as “Home of Portuguese in Macau”, “Home of Portuguese Region” and “Island Home” etc. In those years, as these buildings faced the water course between Taipa and Coloane, the coastal corridor was therefore named Avenida da Praia. From April to June each year, water lily blossoms in full bloom, and at twilight, swarms of aigrettes return and perch on the mangrove nearby. But now, because of land reclamation for construction of casinos, this water course in front of these museums has already become a pond.<sup>7</sup>

It has been so for quite some time that because of economic reasons Macau's government altered the purpose or functions of these cultural relic buildings. For instance, Fortaleza de São Tiago da Barra, built in 1629, was reconstructed to a hotel as early as in 1981. And public attention to the Golden Road also resulted in the following consequence: the low-lying areas, where quite a number of featured old constructions concentrate, such as Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, Estrada do Repouso, Rua da Barca, Rotunda de Carlos da Maia, and Estrada de Adolfo Loureiro etc., are bothered by waterlogging problems for many years, and yet still could not attract due public attention<sup>8</sup>.

The new casinos excessively concentrated on the new port and the Taipa-Coloane area, also caused unbalanced urban development of Macau. In fact, in sites of the old city area of the inner port, such as hotel, tea house and temples that tourists to Macau would certainly visit in the past, have been preserved and, with their historical and cultural values, they actually need to be tapped and restored to rejuvenate their past splendor.<sup>9</sup> The sacrificial altars to the god of land, scattered in the big and small old streets of Macau, are the focus of belief of folk religions and also collective memory of the landmark between different communities in the past. Yet, they exist in silence amidst the onrush of lottery economic development, and have gradually been marginalized as no one would care about and pay attention to them.<sup>10</sup>

Statistical data show that, although the number of tourists in Macau doubled in 2005, the average stay of tourist in Macau was still 1.2 days only. Of the 18 million tourists, more than half do not have overnight stay in Macau.<sup>11</sup> Quite a number of them are gamblers and business tourists, and ordinary tourists know very little of these scenic spots because they do not have time to ponder upon them carefully in details, for instance, some small temples with long local history, Sha Lei Tau God of Earth Temple, The Moon-in-Water Palace (Shui Yue Palace), and the Temple of Guanyu in Taipa, Tianhou (Heaven Queen) Palace, Tin Hau Temple in Coloane etc. Therefore, these scenic spots need more studies and research.

Fireworks, burning incense, shipbuilding and match are the four major industries of Macau in the past. However, these ancient sites have not yet caught enough attention and protection. For instance, the site of Fabrica de Panchoes lec Long Da Taipa, currently the most scaled firework factory in South China, is the most striking example. Nowadays, tourist or visitors interested in knowing these economic types could find out a little about it only by a visit to the museum.<sup>12</sup>

### **Importance of the Buffer Area**

To better protect the scenic spots of world cultural heritage and balance surrounding urban development, Macau SAR Government has defined buffer areas in the surroundings of the historical sites in Macau to maintain their styles and features. These cultural relic buildings are landmarks of daily life of Macau, and they are therefore good examples to dissolve in their daily living. Notwithstanding, Macao SAR Government has taken the Guia lighthouse, largo do Senado (Senado Square), A-Ma Temple, and vicinities of the old town of Taipa as key heritage protection zones, and construction in Mount Fortress and The Ruins of St. Paul has also been set with height restrictions of 47m for upper limit. But in fact, the scenic view of this area is now being surrounded by new residential housings and newly constructed huge casinos in the nearby places.<sup>13</sup> St. Dominic's Church is located at the most bustling district of Macau, and its scenes are exactly the same as that painted by George Chinney in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But now, its architectural style of classic elegance and solemnity shines upon and forms strong contrast to the storefronts and dining rooms, reconstructed from buildings of the 1920s, along the Senado Square of the most busy central road. On the other hand, Dom-Pedro-V-Theatre, located at Gangding or hill top, Sir Robert Ho Tung Library, and Igreja de São Agostinho, are perfect match for the return of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and also a piece of pure land under the rapid urbanization. Macau has always been branded as a tourist city, aside from gambling, tourists can actually feel and experience the diversified features of Macau in daily living.<sup>14</sup>

Over the past decade, quite a number of newly constructed hotels and entertainment centers in Macau used extensively reflective mirror glass as external wall building materials. Coupled with long-term lighting of advertisement signboards on top of casinos or gambling sites, these buildings have brought light pollution and the "urban heat island" phenomena to Macau. Some newly built casinos or gambling structures along the coastal area are higher than the inland old buildings, and this has transformed the micro-climate of Macau, the "land of typhoon" (Em terra de tufões).

The reason may very likely be that, centralized development of the Macau Island, coupled with small urban layout designed four centuries ago, was not able to fully match with the development requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Features of Cultural Relics of Macau**

Macau preserved many western churches, Chinese style temples, European classic architectures and ancient Chinese big houses with historical significance. These are exactly the unique urban cultural landscape of Macau, and they endow this city with architectural cultural relic advantages. Therefore, soon after the return of Macau to China, private individuals were already proposing that, by way of reconstruction of the old city zones and development of new urban areas, Macau should build its own cultural features and self-identity.<sup>15</sup> Viewed from the historical and art value point of view, as far as the individual structure of Macau is concerned, they may not be able to compare with the cultural relics of some provinces and cities in the mainland, but, as a whole, the historic center of Macau reflects a cultural landscape of long-term harmony and co-existence of different nationalities, religions, and cultures in such a tiny area. <sup>16</sup>

Macau still has its Casa de Lou Kau, with cage door and skylights, characterized by Lingnan (south of the five ridges, or south China) features and styles; with old temples, such as the A-Ma Temple, Mount Lotus Temple, and Puji Buddhist Temple etc., finely decorated with eave ridge ceramics, clay sculpture and wall paintings; and also the Garden Lou Lira Lok (Gardim Lou Lim Lok), integrating the gardening features of the south of Yangtze River and of Lingnan (South China). These precious and valuable scenic views of South China become especially estimable at a time when Xiguan Mansion (Sai Kwan Tai Uk) in Guangzhou (Canton) is recently cleared or dismantled for development and the colonial architectures of Hong Kong are gradually disappearing. Aside from world-class cultural heritage, the popular Macau life style and interests are also memorable for tourists. The well-known tea houses that were opened for business more than half century ago, such as Luk Kwok, Long Wa, Yuanlai, Delai, and Guannan etc., make tourists recall and cherish the old-style tea houses of Hong Kong and Guangzhou (Canton) that could hardly be picked up again nowadays.<sup>17</sup> All these constitute the remaining collections of the fine culture of South China. In fact, it has been a common occurrence that, over the past four centuries, old buildings in Macau are renovated and purposes or functions altered for many times. The most famous example should certainly be, first of all, the Edifício do Instituto para os Assuntos Cívicos e Municipais, or the Leal Senado Building, that could be listed in The Catalogue of World Heritage. The original site of this building was Leal Senado, built in the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which was already known in the “Brief Record of Macau”, composed and edited by Yin Guangren and Zhang Rulin of the Emperor Qianlong Period of the Qing Dynasty. Originally, this building was a Chinese style courtyard of brick and stone structure, with fencing wall built. In 1784, it was rebuilt, and a 2-storied baroque style new building constructed. In 1876, it was renovated, and the structure, then destroyed by typhoon, was altered to neo-classic style. The present appearance of this building is of the architectural style of neo-classicism after heavy repair in 1904.<sup>18</sup> It is obvious therefore that, under certain circumstances, location of the cultural relic buildings may share an equal value as its external appearance in terms of significance of the history of urban development when compared to whether it still maintains its original

appearance. Other buildings with history less than one century also constitute important elements of Macau with antique flavors, including the old structures at both sides of the Largo do Senado within the existing old quarters, No. 5-11 of the Travessa da Paixão, and area in the Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida, where quite a number of architectural complex locate. It is clear therefore that, the value of preservation of some old buildings with an appearance of nearly only one century, should not be ignored either. In the urban development of Macau, there is no lack of success cases of different regional functional transformation. For instance, Rua da Felicidade, once site for firecrackers in the end of the Qing Dynasty and at the beginning of Republic of China, has, after the war, gradually become street for local snacks that Hong Kong tourists would certainly visit before their return to Hong Kong. Moreover, the romantic sentiments created in the movie “2046” and “Isabella”, and also SanVa Hotel, has become the targets of cultural tourists for search of remotes and visit of scenic spots. Largo do Senado, or Senado Square was once reconstructed for many times from 1940s to 1960s: from the original traffic intersection to the site for erection of the bronze statue of Nicolau Vincente de Mesquita of the former Portuguese colonial government, and was eventually rebuilt into the routine landmark Largo do Senado of the Macau people after the “Motim 1-2-3”, or the 1-2-3 incident in 1966 to 1967. This pedestrian-exclusive area, repaved with beautiful limestone, truly witnessed numerous significant political upheavals and social changes, but I wonder how many tourists may pay attention to and savor these historical events while shopping?

Therefore, when the Macau SAR government rebuilt the Mercado Municipal de S. Lourenco in 2004, which started using after project completion in 1954, and planned to clear or dismantle “The Blue House” (Macau Social Affairs Bureau) for development since 2006, which was built in 1930s, they also triggered subsequently waves of discussions of the local society of Macau. It is obvious therefore that, although the population living in Macau for more than three generations is few, their consciousness for attention and caring of old buildings in Macau has already started to germinate.<sup>19</sup>

### **Opening up of Cultural Relic Buildings**

Of the buildings listed in “The Historic Centre of Macau” by the United Nations in 2005, there are still some that have not yet fully opened for public visit, for instance, the administrative building that the former Macau-Portuguese government once planned, with a budget of 30 million, to reconstruct its Casa do Mandarim to museum and the Department of Culture. However, due to property right dispute, government could not repair it as soon as possible. After 2005, Casa do Mandarim was listed in the Catalogue of World Cultural Heritage. Therefore, during renovation and repair, they should, all the more, meet the relevant standards. For this reason, Casa do Mandarim, which started repairing in 2006, is still not yet open for public visit.<sup>20</sup>

Likewise, it is also during performance period that Dome Pedro V Theatre opens to tourists. Moreover, other buildings of historical sites with perfect preservation, such as The House of Gao’s Family, are not even open to the public because they are private properties. Therefore, there are opinions believing that Macau can hardly attract tourists to extend their stay for impression in Macau because of its little land resources and scarcity of scenic spots for tourism, except gamblers.<sup>21</sup> As a matter of fact, in a

one-day travel arrangement, this may make the journey of travel to Macau urgent. Accordingly, historic sites in the mind of the tourists will forever be concentrated on the areas of The Ruins of St. Paul, and consequently there always the feeling of insufficiency. Some museums with rich cultural relics and exquisite designs can be relatively hard to attract one-day tour travelers because they are far from the casino or gambling center in the downtown area, for instance, fire museum and Som de um Seculo - Museu de Antiquidades Electronicas e Fonografos. However, in some circumstances, Macau Wine Museum and Museu do Grande Premio at the far opposite of the casino of the new port, could also attract only tourists who take keen interest in Macau and the Portuguese culture. Similarly, in a worse scenario, Macau Kiang Wu Hospital Museum, that boasts a great deal of important historical cultural relics and valuable forest of steles, is open to the public only 3 hours from 15:00 p.m. – 19:00 p.m. every Saturday.

### **Postscript:**

In retrospect, over the past decade, all sorts of cultural conflicts, triggered between cultural relic protection and caring and urbanization brought about by the lottery industry in Macau, are mainly centered on visual disharmony. In fact, all newly constructed casinos or gambling centers are concentrated in the sea area, and they have not brought about geographical location and spatial head-on conflict with existing architectures of the century cultural heritage. But then, what's more important is that, all these newly constructed casinos are huge structures and they shines with splendor day and night in the coastal areas near the wharf, which not only endows the early modern European continental mini city with picturesque landscape, but also brings about extremely large visual contrast in generation gap. We wonder that, one hundred years later, will these casinos also become landmark architectures with rich historical significance? For Macau that has always been relying on tourism and lottery industry to drive its economic development, to plan more effectively functions of different regions of the historical central area and protect cultural relics and tourism resources so as to attract more and more tourists from different countries for sightseeing and consumption in Macau will be a new direction of another decade in the future that needs better planning.<sup>22</sup> With successive provision of lottery and entertainment services to tourists in regions such as Singapore etc., can Macau's tourism still maintain its competitive advantage if continually relying on lottery and entertainment?<sup>23</sup> Aside from its exhibition industry, cultural tourism of Macau will be one of the way outs that provide industrial diversification. Since the Ming Dynasty, Macau has been the window and bridge of cultural and economic exchange between the east and the west, and the keynote of its cultural landscape has been co-existence of the east and the west, overflowing with nostalgic atmosphere and exotic sentiments. However, excessive commercialization of cultural relic buildings will eventually impair the value of the architecture itself, and distort the original cultural connotation. Aside from emphasis of cultural relic buildings, other forms of cultural heritage should also be stressed and developed. Just as Henrique Miguel Rodrigues de Senna Fernandes has pointed out that, government should also support Patua to become intangible cultural heritage, and this suggestion is extremely far-sighted.<sup>24</sup>

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