

# The Convergence of Chinese and Portuguese Architectural Styles in the Context of Macau World Heritage

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**Abstract:** The "Historic Centre of Macau" Successfully inscribed on the World Heritage List for its rich architectural types and well-preserved building forms, the historical buildings in the Macao World Heritage Site vary in style, and the unique urban imagery of Chinese buildings, Portuguese houses, and buildings of intermingled Chinese and Portuguese styles are analyzed for their historical background and stylistic characteristics, which are conducive to the conservation of Macao's architectural heritage and can clearly demonstrate the record of the complementary and diverse coexistence of Chinese and Portuguese cultural exchanges for over 400 years.

**Keywords:** World Heritage; Historic Architecture; Portuguese Culture; Stylistic Convergence; Macau

## 1. Background

Macau was recorded as belonging to Panyu County of Nanhai Prefecture as early as the Qin Dynasty, and has been an important part of our territory since ancient times. Officials and soldiers of the Southern Song Dynasty and their families moved here in the late Song and early Yuan dynasties, and as one of the most important trading ports in the Far East at one time, it has a long history of cultural exchange between East and West. Since the mid-16th century, when the Portuguese were granted the right of permanent residence in Macau by the Ming court, Portuguese architecture and culture took root here, creating the conditions for Sino-Portuguese cultural interchange. The Historic Centre of Macau, with its rich variety of historical buildings. In 2005, the 'Historic Center of Macau' was inscribed on the UNESCO world heritage list. <sup>[1]</sup> The study of Macau's architectural heritage is not only a way to deeply explore its value, but also a way to bring sustainable development to Macau's tourism industry.

## 2. History of Macau Architecture

People have settled here since the end of the Song Dynasty. At that time, the inhabitants mainly relied on farming and fishing to maintain their livelihood, and gradually two small settlements were formed in the north and southwest of the peninsula.

The maritime history of Portugal was made possible by the great discoveries of navigation that began in the fifteenth century. Chinese history books record that Portuguese trader came to Macau in 1553 and asked the authorities to allow them to dry their cargos here.<sup>[2]</sup> Beginning in 1557, the Portuguese received permission from the Ming government to begin building a church-centered settlement on the island. These early Portuguese living quarters are also part of the present Macau World Heritage Historic District.

From the end of the sixteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth century, the Portuguese took advantage of Macau's excellent geographical location to develop it into the most important port city in the Far East, providing an important economic basis for the city's development, and it was at this time that the Historic Centre of Macau's World Heritage took shape, with the construction of the famous St. Paul's College belonging to "St. Paul's". Before the three fires, St. Paul's College was the largest religious college in Asia, a large public complex of buildings including churches, classrooms, hospitals, dormitories, libraries, where the talents of the East and West were gathered, known as the "Jerusalem" of the East.

From the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the development

of religious architecture in Macau went through a low period. However, with the opening of the Guangzhou trading port, a large number of foreigners lived in Macau and built garden residences. These Portuguese house buildings were concentrated in the area of present-day Macau's Nam Van, distinguishing them from the Chinese cavalcade, bamboo houses, and Chinese garden residences around the inner harbor.

By the mid-nineteenth century to the colonial era, Macau architecture saw another great development under the Australian and Portuguese governments. Portuguese architects brought colorful styles to Macau and built a large number of urban buildings, such as the "White House" on East Lookout Mountain, the Army Club, the Gang di Theatre, the Earl Yan Hospital, etc. The Chinese built some late Qing Dynasty style Chinese residences on Fulong New Street, which was also a time when Chinese and Portuguese cultures intertwined in architecture.

### 3. Typical Chinese architecture in Macau

Traditional Chinese architecture is built of brick, wood and stone. The Lin Fung Temple is located in the north of Wang Xia Shan, on Tidu Avenue in the Hua Di Ma Tang District, and was built in 1592. The Lin Fung Temple is an early traditional temple type building in Macau. The building has a strict symmetrical layout and many Lingnan architectural details can be seen on the front façade of the building. The stone lions look at each other, the gray plastic mural, the stone pillar shrimp public beam, the frontal square with red background and gold edge hooked flowers, and the gray plastic Bogu ridge. After entering the gate, you can see the wooden structure with raised beam, separated by a lane, and the pavilion in the first courtyard of the sky steps is also known as the worship pavilion or the four corners pavilion.



*Figure 1: Lian Feng Temple.*

On the wall between the two halls there is an exquisite gray mural of a living dragon and tiger, carved with mineral pigments, gray water and lime mortar, with the image of a dragon playing in the water. There are also a large number of frescoes and inscriptions in the hall, all of which have historical reference value.

### 4. Typical Portuguese architecture in Macau



*Figure 2: Green House.*

As the colonial government of Australia and Portugal gradually established a model of colonial rule and implemented a large-scale land expansion policy such as: reclamation, construction of houses, urban improvement and development, so in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century there was a large number of Portuguese style buildings, also known as Portuguese houses which is only in the Portuguese mainland and its colonies such as: White House, Happy Palace, Army Club, Green House, etc. The house at No. 2 Avenida Nova, designed by Portuguese architect Carlos in 1919, is also known as the "Green House" because of the extensive green paint on its facade.

The facade of the building has a clear regional color, the base of the building is made of jute stone, and the raised base is decorated by several arched windows on the surface, and there are several convex windows on the first floor facade of the building, the roof is a red four-pitch tile roof decorated with simple white geometric lines, and the end of the ridge and the chimney roof have curved gables, although some people regard this as a Chinese style influence. However, according to the research, this is in fact a "national revival" modern style the movement of the casa Portuguesa had difficulty overcoming the heroic image of the nation that the Manueline architectural style still represented.<sup>[3]</sup>

## 5. A combination of Chinese and Portuguese styles

Because of nearly 400 years of exchange, Macau has a unique blend of Chinese and Portuguese cultures in the world. The Yu Garden now also known as Lou Lim Jor Park, is filled with a combination of Chinese and Portuguese architectural features. In the late nineteenth century, the Lo family purchased a plot of land near Long Tian Village and built the only private garden in the south of Macau, with materials such as Taihu stones brought from the mainland to Macau, and hired garden architect Liu-Liu Ji or GuangQian Liu to design it. In the early twentieth century, the park was used as a place where Sun Yat-sen stayed in Macau and held many meetings with Chinese and Portuguese celebrities.



*Figure 3: Lou Lim Jor Park.*

The building's interior and exterior colors are based on those of Portuguese houses. The roof is flat with Chinese eaves, the walls are decorated with white lines, and the columns are a combination of Corinthian columns and mixed columns commonly used in Portuguese houses.

## 6. Reasons

The soil of Macau has given birth to this particular blend of Chinese and Portuguese styles of architecture for several reasons: location, colonization, and construction methods.

### 6.1. Geography

Macau is located in the southwest region of the Pearl River Delta and has a subtropical monsoon climate, while Portugal has a Mediterranean climate. Both have a hot summer and mild winter climate, but the difference is that Macau has hot and rainy summers, so the Portuguese have left the arcades, balconies and shutters of Portuguese houses on the buildings, but in order to adapt to the humid and rainy climate they have also learned the construction features of Chinese houses, such as placing the living place on the second floor and using a lot of bricks or adobe to build houses to adapt to the local climate of Macau.

## **6.2. Colonization**

The planning of urban construction by the Australian and Portuguese governments and the preservation of historical buildings by the MSAR government after the reunification have contributed to the development of architecture in Macau. Chinese and Portuguese life intermingled, with Chinese houses learning the decorations of Portuguese architecture, while Portuguese began to flourish in the land, often referred to as native Portuguese, and their lifestyles became more and more localized, moving closer to that of the Chinese.

## **6.3. Construction**

Construction method Although a large number of Portuguese architects designed buildings in Macau, it was difficult to transport local materials or craftsmen to Macau, so local workers and materials in Macau were able to greatly reduce the cost of construction, and it was in this process that the most direct exchange between Chinese houses and Portuguese houses and other Western-style buildings took place, showing Chinese construction to the Portuguese on the one hand, and introducing Portuguese style into Chinese architecture on the other.

## **7. Conclusion**

Macau's World Heritage Site is its unique city card, with its history, uniqueness and non-territoriality, all of which give Macau a unique urban imagery and form the "spirit" of the city. [4] As students studying in Macau, from the perspective of architectural heritage conservation and cultural knowledge transmission, they should study the style, history and art of this kind of architectural heritage and promote it, so as to raise the public's attention and protection of architectural heritage, and join the practice of architectural heritage conservation and revival in Macau.

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