

# The Ruin Problem: Negotiating Cultural Heritage in Macau

## O Problema das Ruínas: Negociação do Património Cultural em Macau

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### Abstract/ Resumo

Traditionally, ruins were perceived in China as undesirable architectural structures that could “only be meaningful in the present day when they are completely renovated” (Chen, 2016: 356). They were identified with chaos, disturbance, deficit and misfortune. The traditional, Chinese principles of wholeness, completeness, design balance and gestalt pursuit derive from the Taoist tradition. According to these conventions harmony and aesthetic appeal could have been valued over the authenticity and historical truth. Consequently, traditional Chinese stylistic restoration resorted to practices of rebuilding what had been previously demolished or lost. The article intends to consider Macau’s Portuguese, famous landmark – Ruins of St. Paul’s – as a space of negotiation between the “Western” and the Chinese attitudes toward the heritage preservation. By way of such analysis, the ultimate goal of the paper can be achieved – to reveal Macau’s complex urban identity as exhibited in its cultural heritage. Methods used in this study included surveying the common characteristics of Chinese traditional heritage preservation practices and comparing them against the Western traditions by means of comparative literature review and policy documents analysis. Additional methods combined reviewing sources, which reveal the social reception of Chinese heritage preservation practices, together with first-hand observations. The article’s conclusion affirms that St. Paul’s needs to be recognized as a place of manifestation of dissonant heritage restoration-related visions and an emblematic marker of Macau’s complex identity.

Tradicionalmente, as ruínas eram encaradas na China como estruturas arquitetónicas indesejáveis que “só poderiam ter significado nos dias atuais quando fossem completamente renovadas” (Chen, 2016: 356 - *tradução nossa*). Elas eram identificadas com caos, perturbação, défice e infortúnio. Os princípios chineses tradicionais de inteireza, completude, equilíbrio estético e busca *gestalt* derivam da tradição Taoista. Segundo essas referências, a harmonia e o apelo estético deveriam ser mais valorizados do que a autenticidade e a verdade histórica. Consequentemente, o tradicional modelo chinês de restauro recorreu a práticas de reconstrução do que havia sido demolido ou perdido anteriormente. O artigo toma o caso do famoso marco histórico-cultural português de Macau – as Ruínas de São Paulo - como exemplo de um espaço de negociação entre as atitudes "ocidental" e chinesa em matéria de preservação do património. Através dessa análise, o objetivo final do artigo pôde ser alcançado: revelar a identidade urbana complexa de Macau, com expressão no seu património cultural. Os métodos utilizados neste estudo incluíram o levantamento das práticas tradicionais de preservação do património chinês e a respetiva comparação com as tradições ocidentais, recorrendo à revisão da literatura e à análise de documentos de natureza política. Adicionalmente, recorreu-se ao levantamento de documentos diversos reveladores da receptividade social mantida no referente às práticas de preservação do património chinês, juntamente com observações em primeira mão. A conclusão a que se chegou é que as ruínas de São Paulo precisam ser reconhecidas

*Keywords:* Macau, Ruins of St. Paul's, heritage, urban identity

*JEL Code:* R14, R19, R58

das como um local de manifestação de visões dissonantes de restauro do património, e como marco emblemático da identidade complexa de Macau.

*Palavras-chave:* Macau, Ruínas de São Paulo, herança, identidade urbana

*Código JEL:* R14, R19, R58

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to probe Macau's identity by discussing Ruins of St. Paul's case study. The city's complex urban identity is mirrored by the heterogeneous status of its cultural heritage. The paper starts with a brief presentation of the amalgam Chinese and Portuguese urban fabric of Macau, to then introduce the Ruins of St. Paul's complex as a representation of that heterogeneous tradition. Here, historical contextualization of the case study is laid out. The following part of the article outlines the literature discussing the traditional, cultural perception of ruins in China and their contrasting receptions in the Western world. Subsequently, the discussion on the Chinese and "Western" heritage preservation practices and differing understanding of the concept of "authenticity" takes place. The following part of the article localizes these theoretical frameworks within the context of Macau while discussing several projects of heritage conservation in the former Portuguese colony. Ultimately, St. Paul's is acknowledged as a marker of such discordant heritage-related visions and a testament to Macau's unique urban identity.

Between 1557 and 1999 Macau was part of the Portuguese Empire and a significant outpost for Catholic missions in East Asia. After the 1999 handover, it was proclaimed China's Special Administrative Region (SAR). This plurality of influences, further reinforced through Macau's function as a center for trade, contributed to its distinctly amalgam nature. Between 1557 and 1987<sup>1</sup> Portuguese administration undertook the efforts to reaffirm the "Portugueseness" of that region, thus attempting the territorialization

of Macau (Morais, 2014). This was done vis-à-vis the persisting Chinese social values and against the backdrop of China, which continuously questioned the Portuguese "ownership" of the city. Macau was a non-settler Portuguese colony: by the second half of the nineteenth century about 34000 Chinese and 4000 Portuguese lived there (Hao, 2011). Just by observing these demographics one can anticipate immense impact of Chinese *modus operandi* on the Portuguese Macau and its urban morphology. Simultaneously, the Portuguese marked their presence through implementing their original form of urban planning in certain areas of town. Physical, physiognomical structures of the Historic Route of Macau reflect the Portuguese means of organic adaptation to the encountered hilly topography. Their settlements were not organized in consonance with a pre-designed rigorous plan, but conformed to the existing character of the land. The Portuguese *largos* (squares) and *travessas* (narrow alleys), accompany the Chinese, traditional architectural solutions (fig. 1). Chinese districts emerged mostly on flat land, close to water and followed the Feng Shui principles to bring good fortune to the residents (Tieben, 2009). The relationship between the Luso-Sino cultural worlds was a convoluted one. It was characterized by "you don't bother me, I don't bother you" attitude (Hao, 2011: 113) supported by the separation of social spaces on one hand and the blending of cultural influences on the other.

Such polysemous character is noticeable within the realm of Macau's heritage. Urban form has been the recipient and duplicator of the intricate Sino-Luso relations. The dual culture and the simultaneous mixing of Portuguese and Chinese elements in architectural styles are

<sup>1</sup> Paula Morais (2014) argues that the final twelve years before the handover were characterized by the principles of

detritorialization including efforts toward the erasure of distinct spatial characteristics and increased development and urbanization processes.

observable in the city's morphology. Contemporarily, Macau's most visited touristic site is the Ruins of St. Paul's (fig. 2 and 3). While this complex is an undeniable instance of Portuguese, mannerist style heritage, one can notice Chinese aesthetic and symbolic components on its remaining façade. The church of Madre de Deus and its adjacent St. Paul's College were built by 1640 on a hill in a prominent location. That reflected the Portuguese preference for elevating religious institutions for defense purposes and to mark their separation from the mundane existence (Baracho, 2001). St. Paul's College was a principal training institution for the Jesuits in East Asia. The complex burned down in 1595 and 1601 and was rebuilt in the successive years. In 1835 another fire that ignited in the building of the college reached the church and destroyed the complex. Thick walls, which partially survived the fire, were demolished a few years later to prevent their breaking down. In 1904 a charity program was initiated to rebuild the church, however, this idea never materialized (Botas, 2016). The buildings were not re-erected, and the complex remained in the state of ruin. The façade has since been bolstered with a steel construction on a concrete base to prevent it from collapsing.

The prominent façade, bits of outer walls, stone steps and the archeological remains of the college have been Macau's famous landmark. St. Paul's is an expression of the blending of cultural influences. The Portuguese adopted Chinese building practices, interweaving them with their original concepts. The church's walls were constructed using *chunambo* mixture of components – a practice widely popular in China. The condensed blend consisted of soil, rice straw, clay, river sand, crushed oyster shells and crumbled rocks. The remaining façade emblazons Western, Christian symbolism and iconography such as the representations of the saints, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and a variety of biblical themes. These are integrated with the East Asian carved motifs such as the Chinese peonies, lions, dragons and characters or Japanese chrysanthemums. The good-evil, life-death aesthetic dichotomy portrayed in the façade is mirrored by the Chinese binary nature of yin-yang philosophy. Traditionally, Western churches are expected to face west. South-facing St. Paul's abstained from that Western tradition to accommodate Chinese belief system (Tai, 2016).

## 2. LITERATURE AND METHODS

The subsequent part of this study adopts comparative literature review approach. Through this method, Chinese and Western stances and perception of ruins and cultural heritage authenticity can be compared and contrasted. In the next step, literature and online sources revealing Chinese heritage preservation attitudes are discussed, together with the analysis of heritage policy documents and personal observations in the context of Macau.

Of particular interest is the fact that St. Paul's came to emblemize the city, despite the highly ambivalent status of ruins in Chinese culture. As demonstrated above, St. Paul's is a testament to the Portuguese architectural trends, however, it also exhibits intrinsically Chinese aesthetics. This is one of the many instances of Macau-specific negotiations between the Western architectural trends and the Chinese vernacular approaches to cultural heritage. As such, St. Paul's symbolic connotations have to be consulted vis-à-vis these two socio-cultural contexts. In traditional Chinese interpretations ruins represent deficit, lack and are seen as aesthetic violations. Wu Hung, author of a book entitled "A Story of Ruins: Presence and Absence in Chinese Art and Visual Culture", conducted a survey on the depictions of ruins in Chinese art and architecture. Among a wide range of examples of Chinese paintings from the fifth century BC to the nineteenth century AD he came across only six portrayals of damaged buildings. Looking at pre-twentieth century Chinese architecture, Hung did not encounter any instances of intentional preservation of the incomplete or ravaged characteristics of a building (Hung, 2012). A tendency to abstain from visual representations of deficit is also visible in the realm of traditional Chinese poetry. Whenever the lyricist referred in a poem to "broken roofs" or "ruined entrenchment" of buildings (Hung, 2012: 13), the painting accompanying the text depicted these edifices as unimpaired and complete. This reaffirms the traditional Chinese notion that only metaphorical, figurative readings of ruins are encouraged, not their literal, mimetic representations.

Abundance is one of primary Chinese principles. The semantic denotation of a ruined building with its characteristics of deficiency and absence epitomizes the exact opposite of the abundance axiom. Shiqiao Li argues that the cultural importance of the abundance concept is

linguistically validated: “(Chinese) encyclopedia is described as a book of 100 subjects (*baike*), diversity of views as those of 100 families (*baijia*), antiquity as 1000 years old (*qiangu*), and years of longevity as 10000 years (*wanshou*)” (Li, 2014: 10). The author argues that the functionality and representation of Hong Kong as a city of billion things is yet another confirmation of the abundance scheme’s presence. The Chinese have traditionally valued completeness and balance. According to this framework, separate elements should exhibit harmony and fullness of their components. Each color or sound, Li asserts, in itself represents its own whole, integral and unabridged quality. This perception is contrasted with the Western principle of proportion. In order to achieve the “golden mean”, Western art allowed for the mixing of different elements (colors, sights, sounds etc.) thus watering down and diluting their individual properties. This practice aimed at achieving the perfect proportion, rather than exhibiting the intrinsic fullness of individual components. Chinese perceive such blending of individual components as a practice, which weakens each element’s intrinsic quality and negates its fullness, completeness.

As fragmented and fractured structures, ruins do not only contradict the fullness principle but also represent chaos – one of Chinese anxieties. The Taoist tradition values harmony, prudence and fears pandemonium and disarray. Contrary to that, many Western philosophies see danger and disorder as developmental forces. Classical Greeks perceived instability, war and danger as inescapable, but also formative and momentous (Li, 2014). Such notion of war and danger materialized in the Greek fascination with ruins, which were perceived as aesthetic forces. For the Chinese, ruins perpetuate their chaos anxiety, therefore they are not desirable aesthetic objects. The acceptance of chaos, dramatic, dark forces and pursuit of the uncanny inspired European fetishization of ruins, which culminated in the Romanticism era. Fractured physical constructs were tokens and amplifications of the underlying mental forces. European “intellectual fascination with dereliction” (Garret, 2011: 378) illustrates the fact that ruins in the West have not been mere visual constructs. They should be considered as “places of play, promise, activism, unregulated participation, unexpected memory” and opportunities for “encounters with the uncanny and the sensual” (Garret, 2011: 379).

Paul Zucker (1961: 119) observes several viewpoints illustrating the Western “pleasure of ruins” phenomenon. Between the eighteenth and nineteenth century the ruins were seen as carriers and generators of unsettling Romantic mood. In other periods ruins were perceived as documents of past, physical and authentic proofs of the former times. The latter perception of ruins demonstrates the importance of authenticity in the Western approach to cultural heritage. Li (2014) describes Western urban form as resembling an archive city. Western cityscape, therefore, displays instances of preserved architectural structures under their original conditions and locations. Controlled alterations might be allowed under specific circumstances, however, the fear of losing this archive is one of Western anxieties.

In China, the traditionally valued construction material has been timber. The specificity of that material includes its vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters thus implying its transient and ephemeral nature. Hung (2012) observes that many of the Chinese timber structures have been rebuilt, time and again. During most renovation or reconstruction works, the re-erecting of buildings or reviving their elements focused on reconstructing the original complete and unabridged form. Frequently, such practices would allow for the inclusion of counterfeit or unoriginal decorative elements in order to reinforce the notion of the building’s former splendor. We can observe a clear mismatch with the Western practices of maintaining cultural heritage’s authenticity and representing historical truth. Li (2014) points out that the very perception of authenticity differs in China. In the West, preserving the original conditions and material is an essential requirement while safeguarding the authentic character of the building. In China, however, the preservation of sites is important, not their original material or location. Shiqiao Li (2014) described this Chinese phenomenon as “memory without location”. Under this convention, spatial or temporal relocations of buildings are allowed. New, “improved” versions of architectural structures appertain to the Chinese collective memory of the past. This memory, unlike in the West, is not based on the material authenticity of historic buildings but rather on reviving their grandeur in the present. The author then proceeds with expounding that Chinese cities are perceived as texts, which can be revived through newer

editions.

The practice of replacing old architectural structures with their newer versions and in different locations is visible in the reconstructions of Central Pier in Hong Kong and Yellow Crane Tower in Wuhan. The New Central Pier was rebuilt with new materials and in a different location in 2006. The Yellow Crane Tower burned down in 1884 and was rebuilt in 1985 with different materials. The structural component of the building was also affected – the tower's newer version has more stories than the original one (Li, 2014). If we look at recent renovation works on the China's Great Wall, a similar trend can be observed. Western media have described a recent attempt to restore a disintegrating part of the wall as "the worst repair job ever" (Hervieux, 2016). After the renovation procedure, that less touristic part of the Great Wall resembles a "smooth gray concrete" or "a road" (Hervieux, 2016). Western social media have widely condemned this attempt with comments such as: "Glad Venus de Milo is not in China, or someone would get her a new arm" (Westcott & Wang, 2016). In 2006 regimentations were implemented, according to which a more careful management of touristic sites should have been carried out. The restoration of that structure took place in 2014 and in spite of these regulations. These tendencies were further ignited by a gossip that in 1931 Chinese government considered transforming China's Great Wall into a highway (Campbell, 2016). Traditionally, the Chinese perceived urban morphology as proper, only once it becomes the "right text" (Li, 2014: 173). Such notion culturally justifies similar renovation ideas. Western understanding of "relics as texts" (Li, 2014: 175) materializes in their fetishization of ruins. Contrary, the Chinese "text as relic" concept suggested that fragments of past are historical misrepresentations and need to be fixed through holistic approaches (Li, 2014).

All in all, before the twentieth century China did not associate ruins with potentially aesthetic or desired objects. This tradition is mirrored by the Chinese heritage preservation trends. Contemporarily, we can observe efforts to alter Chinese heritage maintenance legislation so as to resemble certain Western concepts. The writing of "The Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China" was a milestone in the process of integrating traditional Chinese approaches based on intervention philosophy with the Western and Eurocentric standards (Agnew

& Demas, 2002). In 2009 the revised version of "The China Principles" included the requirement for maintaining authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage. For the first time in China "The Principles..." announced the need for the preservation of the original condition of sites and minimal alterations to their historic state. Simultaneously, the traditional perception of ruins in China has been slowly changing. Wu Hung (2012) discusses the twentieth-century practices of European ruin representations in China. At that time Chinese art "ceased to be a self-contained cultural system and was brought into a global circulation of images, mediums and visual technology" (Hung, 2012: 95). After the Cultural Revolution poets centered around the Jintian magazine and artists of the Stars group declared ruins as their tool of creative expression. Towards the end of the twentieth century avant-garde artists used ruin imagery to challenge urban development trends (Hung, 2012). Within the realm of architecture, there are several examples of bridging Chinese vernacular approaches with the internationally recognized Western standards. Ernst Boersmann (1873-1949), Osvald Siren (1879-1966) and Ito Chuta (1867-1954) were among those whose works in China represent such efforts. Western educated Chinese scholars and architects: Liang Sicheng (1901-72), Lin Huiyin (1904-55), and Liu Dunzhen (1897-1968) advocated similar approaches (Li, 2014).

That being said, all these efforts were particular either among avant-garde, non-mainstream groups or architects not particularly large in numbers. Xi Chen (2016: 354) asserts: "the intrinsic cultural character of China continues to shape its heritage conservation activities". The centuries of Chinese philosophy toward heritage preservation did not cease to exist immediately. Shiqiao Li (2014) also argues that the traditional Chinese debates centred around the desire for abundance and completeness and the persistent chaos anxiety could not have been erased promptly. He perceives the Western narrative of scarcity and the Eurocentric notion of authenticity as artificial constructs within the Chinese mindset. The authenticity principle, which was stressed in the Venice Charter, remains a questionable concept within the Chinese cityscape.

Guo Zhan, Vice Chairman of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, brings to our attention the practical implementation of "The China Principles". Zhan participated in the

review of restoration works in Beijing's Forbidden City. During the review meeting, the Vice Chairman expressed his doubts regarding the reasonableness of this project. He questioned the logic and righteousness of recreating the former grandeur of the site. His doubts were rejected by a person in charge and laughed-off by his peers. Guo Zhan recalls: "They told me that under no circumstances would they agree to the principle of minimum intervention. Moreover, they emphasized that the Forbidden City should be restored to its most majestic historical state." (Zhan, 2014: 33). Zhan associates the difficulties of applying "The China Principles" throughout Chinese territories with linguistic differences. The term "authenticity" through a polysemous reading of Chinese characters can allow a different than English understanding of this word. The "yuanzhenxing (原真性) of historical sites" (Zhan, 2014: 33) could come to represent the authentic condition of a particular site OR the time when it was at its most splendid state. These gaps in meaning add another layer to the Western-Chinese debate on heritage preservation. Zhan wonders if according to the ambiguous translation of the term authenticity "original or proper mean the condition of a historical site when it was created or looked the best, or its overall condition during the course of history?" (Zhan, 2014: 33). Such inconclusive interpretation of the term might justify the fact that "although the China Principles had been established as an important document and cited by many people, a large number of Chinese conservation specialists did not fully comprehend the concepts and principles within it." (Zhan, 2014: 33).

Long tradition of Chinese vernacular practices might also justify recent controversial renovation works of Angkor Wat, in which China was engaged. The Khmer complex was added to the List of World Heritage in Danger. After UNESCO launched Angkor Wat's conservation strategy, Chinese government became involved in the restoration of Chau Say Tevoda and Ta Keo temples. This was China's first international heritage conservation project. Critics state that during the Chau Say Tevoda renovation, the Chinese team practiced intervention philosophy and did not carry out proper contextual research on the site (Ning, 2014).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Naturally, such Western-Chinese negotiations are conspicuously manifested in Macau's cityscape. The Ruins of St. Paul's stand as a testament to the Western mimetic tradition, the Euro-centric perception of authenticity and the – feared by the Chinese – inevitability of danger and chaos. At the same time, we must remember about the plans to rebuild the St. Paul's complex to recover its former splendor. These attempts were clear markers of the Chinese impact on Macau's architectural legacy. Of particular significance is the fact that Chinese residents and tourists do not refer to St. Paul's as "the ruins". They call it "the gate" ("paifang"). The façade indeed resembles a gateway, which is a traditional Chinese arch-like structure. Such semantic representation of St. Paul's as Chinese popular architecture symbolically erases its damaged, fractured and incomplete association<sup>2</sup>. Phenomenologically, the Chinese do not experience the ruins while visiting St. Paul's – they cross a symbolic gateway to the city instead (Wieczorek, 2019). At the same time, the site's historic transformations and its Portuguese / English name cannot be forgotten. This adds to the complexity of St. Paul's phenomenon.

The in-betweenness of St. Paul's is determined through its participation in Western-Chinese debate on heritage preservation. Its liminality is further reinforced through the presence of Chinese elements in the remaining façade. This ambiguous nature of St. Paul's confirms Macau's intrinsic "indetermination of place" (Morais, 2014: 158). Paradoxical and liminal character of Macau's representative symbol makes it a place of a simultaneous contestation and affirmation; of mediation between authenticity and alteration. It is not a mere facsimile of Chinese or Western paradigms. It is a space where both are in dialogue and in opposition – it is indeed a space of negotiation.

The ideas of rebuilding St. Paul's did not materialize, however, there are other renovation projects in Macau, which visibly portray the Western-Chinese heritage management tensions. In the last few decades, Macau became subject to Chinese development pressures. The pro-growth planning is conspicuously manifested in Macau's casinos districts. The city's historic architectural legacy was not spared from these development schemes. On the one

<sup>2</sup> Many thanks to Lui Tam for her insights on that topic.

hand, there have been legislative efforts to institutionalize heritage preservation in Macau. The first extensive legislation for the preservation of cultural heritage was Decree Law no. 34/76/M executed in 1976. It enumerated the list of buildings and sites under protection and called a committee responsible for the defense of cultural heritage. More recently, article 125 of chapter VI in the Basic Law of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR, 2007) was formulated. The article states that the government should be directly involved in and responsible for protecting the integrity of cultural heritage. On the other hand, the city's official vision statements prioritize the development schemes and growth of tourism, while the heritage protection is not included as one of the first concerns in the list of city planning guidelines. These inconsistencies are visible in a few widely discussed urban projects.

One of the most controversial debates around such projects included the restoration plan of Guia Hill. The executive-led project from 2006 proposed building of multiple, close to 100-meters tall towers in proximity to the Guia Hill (Wan, Pinheiro, & Koreanga, 2007). The historic Guia complex includes a seventeenth-century chapel adjacent to the first modern lighthouse in Chinese territories (fig. 4 and 5). Residents and Guia Lighthouse Protection Concern Group objected to the proposed developments by bringing them to the attention of international entities. They continuously expressed concerns that the modern complex would obstruct the view from the UNESCO-classified historic hill. Due to these interventions and the warning letter from UNESCO, the construction of the towers did not come to fruition. This is one of the many instances of Western-driven efforts to respect the historic sites' authenticity facing the Chinese schemes of alternating the cultural heritage's original state. The façadism trend is yet another exemplification of such tensions. Mariana Pereira and Gabriel Caballero (2016) discussed Macau's participation in the creation of stage-set urban landscapes. They argue that in contemporary Macau "many buildings have been demolished while building façades have been retained as empty shells of their previous forms" (Pereira & Caballero, 2016: 2). Historic looking façades of Macau's casinos respond to the Chinese pro-growth pressures on the one hand and support presenting buildings in their most glamorous state, on the other. The latter trend mirrors the

traditional Chinese principle of abundance. Façadism as a highly controversial approach in architecture is based on the idea of erecting a new façade, which resembles an old, historic building (Richards, 1994). Such efforts are also visible in Macau's Fisherman's Wharf. In these cases, we can observe deauthenticated replicas of dated buildings deprived of meaning. Aside from these instances, Macau has also welcomed façade retention fashion. Such efforts to retain a building's original façade while raising a new structure behind it can be detected in the Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU) building. As a direct response to Chinese development pressures, the modern edifice was erected in front of the historic urban fabric (Pereira & Caballero, 2016).

Such adaptive reuses and aesthetic clashes are noticeable in the city's historic center. In July 2005 this part of town with its twenty-two monuments and eight squares was inscribed on the list of the UNESCO World Heritage sites. According to the Cultural Affairs Bureau the inscription was granted based on the fact that the historic center "bears a unique testimony to the first and longest-lasting encounter between the West and China" (Cultural Affairs Bureau, 2006). In the document issued by UNESCO (2005), one can read "Macao represents an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble that illustrates the development of the encounter between the Western and Chinese civilisations over some four and half centuries, represented in the historical route, with a series of urban spaces and architectural ensembles, that links the ancient Chinese port with the Portuguese city." It is the city's unique identity that contributed to recognizing Macau's historic center as having an outstanding universal value. The combination of Portuguese architecture and urban planning solutions with local environment and application of practices connected to, among others, Feng Shui principles are the core components of this particular, recognized by UNESCO urban identity. One conspicuous example of such coexistence is the Cathedral Square in which Portuguese urban planning is harmoniously intertwined with the said Feng Shui directives.

The inconsistent application of heritage protection policies and lack of clear city vision prompted UNESCO to issue successive warnings to Macau's officials. The international entity expressed their concern with Macau's conservation areas and the state of its urban fabric

(Morais, 2014) One of the alarming issues pertain to the lack of visual relationship between historically significant sites and their adjacent neighborhoods. St. Paul's Ruins are surrounded by plenty of modern residential and commercial buildings, which invalidate the authentic character of the site. It has been stated that these incompatible environments "create a strong feeling of disharmony to both residents and tourists" (Wan, Pinheiro, & Koreanga, 2007: 22). Safeguarding the historic urban fabric versus the construction of high-rises in its vicinity is yet another representation of the cultural negotiations between authenticity and alteration.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The unique status of Macau compels us to look at the city's cultural artifacts as an area of negotiation between spatial discourses. The inconsistent application of heritage preservation approaches, the coexistence of intrusive development projects, façadism fashion, neglected architectural structures and authentic documents of the past are markers of Macau's amalgam and heterogeneous identity. The politics of heritage preservation can help decipher social production of urban morphology. In this research, the city's identity was probed through the reading of Macau's cultural heritage.

The article looked at the negotiation between discrepant Chinese and Western approaches to heritage preservation. Ruins of St. Paul's have officiated as the city's representative symbol. Their convoluted status was tested against Chinese and Euro-centric perception of ruins. The Western notion of ruination as a desired quality was contrasted with the Chinese traditional

practices of the avoidance of ruined structures and their representations. In Macau, Chinese "rebuilding policies" are negotiated against the Western protocols of authenticity. St. Paul's complex with its conflicted cultural affiliation has been a pertinent mirror of Macau's influences and transformations.

Heritage as a cultural phenomenon evokes cultural values and meanings. It can be looked at as an intrinsic element of the production of urban space mirrored by social forces, which have been shaping Macau over the centuries. Paula Morais (2014: 158) states that Macau is "an extremely complex entity to classify by one single perspective or discipline". St. Paul's is a place experienced differently by diverse groups of visitors. For the Chinese it might be perceived as a *paifang* gateway to the city. For the Portuguese it could be a nostalgic reminder of the era of former colonial expansion. For some Western tourists St. Paul's might reinforce the Western world's fascination with ruined architectural structures. The building is dramatic, striking in its incompleteness (Wieczorek, 2019). Seemingly, it challenges Chinese cultural frameworks, yet it is rooted in what Macau in fact is. The ambiguous status of St. Paul's Ruins as a symbol of a partially Chinese city reinforces its complex nature. The traditionally contested ruins reassure Macau's status as a place of difference. Representing the place with a cultural indicator of misery and chaos is unimaginable in the Chinese context. However, Macau "needed" such an uncomfortable marker to confirm its conflicted and convoluted nature. Heritage became a carrier of this ambivalence and cross-cultural liminality.

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ANEXOS

Figure 1: Coexistence of Portuguese *largos* (squares) and Chinese residential architecture.



Photograph by the author, 2018

Figure 2: Ruins of St. Paul's – the remaining façade.



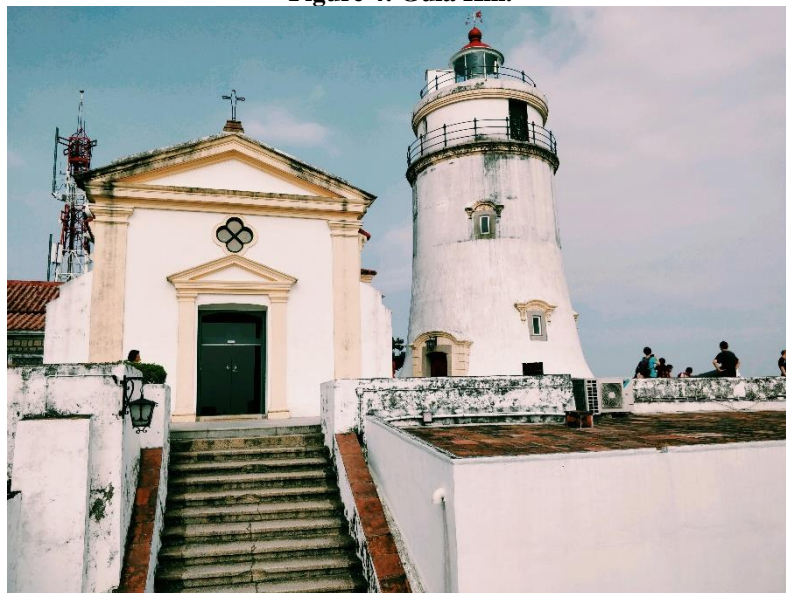
Photograph by the author, 2018

**Figure 3: Ruins of St. Paul's – view from the back.**



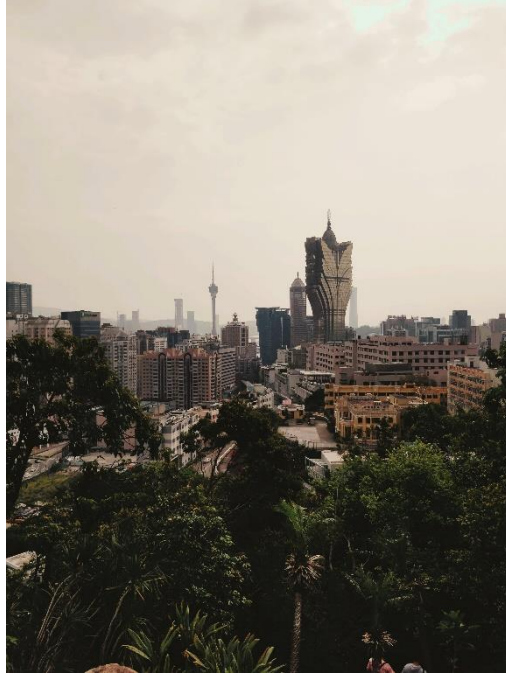
Photograph by the author, 2018

**Figure 4: Guia Hill.**



Photograph by the author, 2018.

**Figure 5: View from the Guia Hill.**



Photograph by the author, 2018.