

SAFEGUARDING MACAU'S BUILT HERITAGE BEFORE AND AFTER THE HANDOVER

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ABSTRACT

Since its foundation, the city of Macau has experienced a cultural mix that has had an impact on its architecture and urbanism, shaping the ideologies of the time, especially the spread of Christianity and the city's military protection. This article seeks to show how the classification of heritage during the Portuguese administration was pioneering and crucial to the inclusion of Macau's historic centre on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2005. As a methodology we will look at how the city of Macau was formed, the outcome of centuries of negotiation, and how this negotiation increasingly influenced architecture and urbanism between the 16th and 20th centuries. The legacy of centuries of cultural coexistence is now valued by the people of Macau, who see themselves in it and are committed to its defence. Since the transfer of sovereignty, the local government, in line with the central government, has promoted the protection of heritage through concrete actions, including the drafting of appropriate legislation and the dynamisation of actions to boost the existing heritage, combining it with the development of the city.

KEYWORDS

Miscegenation | Classified heritage | Hybrid architecture | Urban identity

INTRODUCTION

Part of the maritime expansion of the Portuguese, Macau emerged as the ideal place to establish a trading post on the route to Japan. From 1554 onwards, according to contemporary sources cited by Pedro Dias, the settlement grew in importance (Dias, 2005). From 1557 onwards, the Mandarins recognised the definitive establishment of the Portuguese (Boxer, 1991).

The city of Macau has always presented a cultural mix reflected in its architecture and urbanism and this visible expression of the cultural encounter is echoed in the existing monuments and fortifications, with particular emphasis on the Historic Centre, namely in the area included on the UNESCO list, which begins in the temple of A Ma [fig.01], or Barra Temple, near the place where the Portuguese arrived in the 16th century.



Fig. 01- A-Ma Temple (source: Exhibition Catalogue, 2012)



Fig. 02. Staircase and façade of the Church of Mater Dei (source: author, 2022)

The classified area extends along a winding route, dotted by churches and forts that are now recognised as heritage sites, where the Ruins of St Paul are particularly notable, including the remnants of the renowned Church of Mater Dei [fig.02], which was destroyed by a devastating fire in 1835. The route continues to Guia Hill, which includes a classified complex that is also on the UNESCO List (UNESCO, 2005) and contains the first lighthouse built on the southeast coast of China, the Guia Lighthouse, along with the fortress of the same name and the Guia Chapel [fig.05]. This architectural ensemble is safeguarded by the Chinese population, who cherish it and strive to protect it from the pressures of urbanisation in the surrounding area, challenging and urging the administration to take action, as evidenced by various events that are partly recounted here, with repeated indications from UNESCO to the local government to give this matter due consideration.



Fig. 05. Guia Lighthouse and Chapel of Our Lady of Guia (source: author, 2022)

THE RISE OF MACAU

Macau eventually became a permanent port because it offered more advantages than disadvantages to China from a strategic point of view (Barreto, 1998). In the eyes of the Chinese, the maritime power of the Portuguese was strong enough to arouse interest and weak enough to be controlled at the political-military level.

From its origins until the 19th century, the city of Macau developed spontaneously and organically [fig.03], based on Chinese settlements in the area known as the Chinese Bazaar and Portuguese settlements located in the so-called Christian City where the most important elements of the urban structure were the open spaces adjacent to churches and public buildings (Calado et al., 1998; Freitas, 2015).

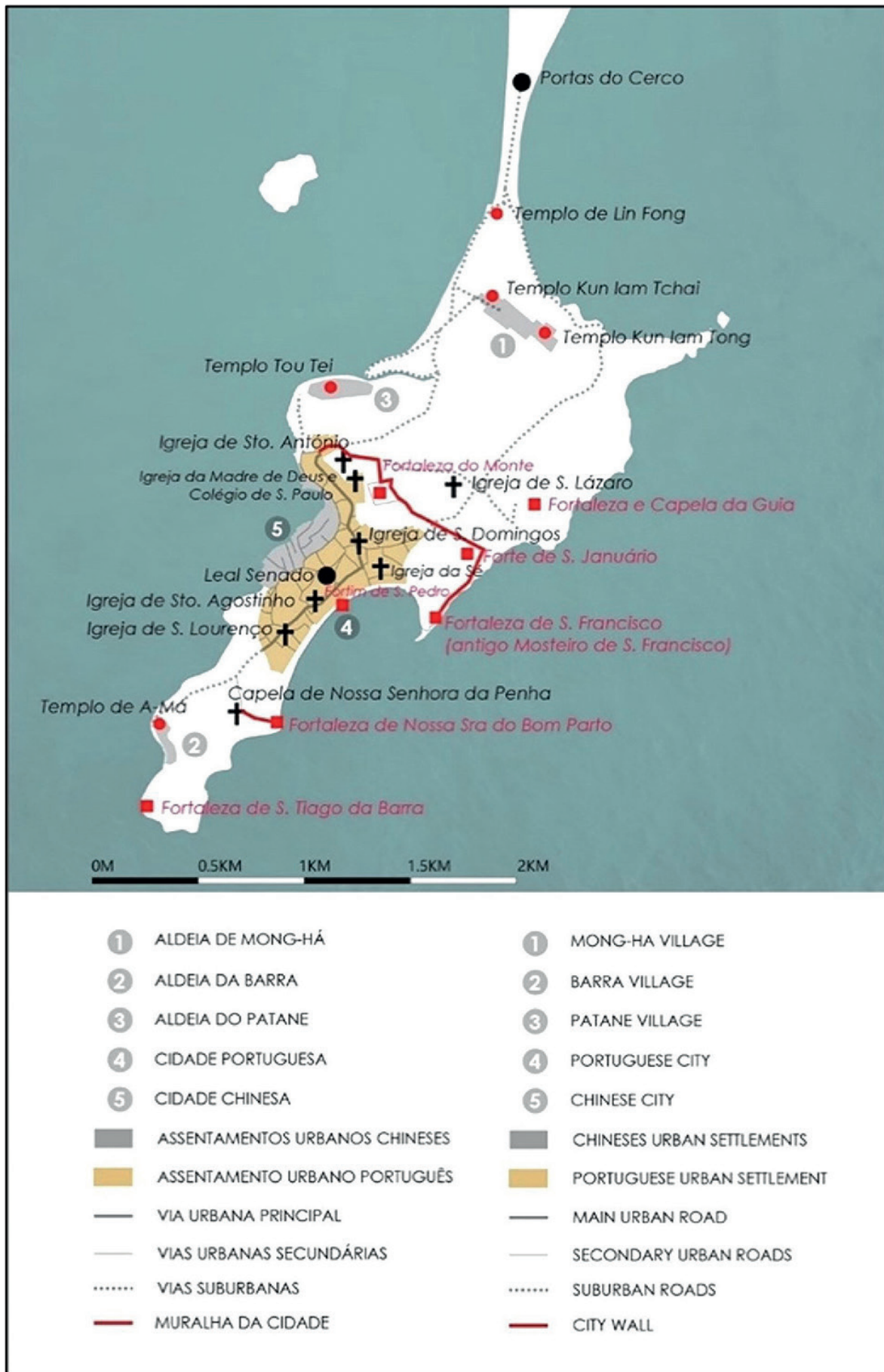


Fig. 03. Schematic representation of the territory, including the walls, forts, fortresses, churches and Chinese temples existing in the 17th century (source: author, 2022)

Macau was considered by the Chinese as a foreign neighbourhood, a *fangfang* (Jin and Wu, 2007; Sit, 2013), permitted by the Chinese under the spirit of the policy of affection, which generated significant monetary value for both the Chinese and Portuguese through the taxes levied on goods, which were subject to ongoing negotiation (Cheong, 1997).

From the 17th century onwards, especially after the Dutch invasion in 1622, the construction of walls restored some regularity to the urban layout and, as the historian Ana Maria Amaro points out, the urban design can be said to have been based on the model of medieval European cities (Amaro, 1998). Sit emphasises that it is a subtype of the late medieval city that emerged in Renaissance Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries [fig.04] (Sit, 2013).

The structuring elements of the urban fabric include the churches and their adjacent squares, the forts and fortresses (Tieben, 2009), as well as the administrative buildings, notably the Leal Senado building – the administrative headquarters of the Macau territory – and the Misericórdia, both of which converge in the Senado Square.

Following the tradition of Portuguese cities, these institutions were designed as impressive monuments and placed on the highest points of Macau's peninsula. In contrast, the Chinese temples were built on lower grounds near the water, shielded by the hills from typhoons. Over the centuries, both the Chinese and especially Portuguese institutions have embodied the religious and political order of the enclave (Tieben, 2009).

At the end of the 19th century, following the expansionist movement associated with global imperialism and a focus on Southeast Asia, marked by the creation of Hong Kong in 1842 (Freitas, 2021), and the opening of Chinese ports to international trade (Darwin, 2015), the Portuguese Governor Ferreira do Amaral and others adopted the approach that allowed the city to expand northwards, beyond the limits of the Christian City walls,



Fig. 04. Plan of Macau, 17th century, drawn from the "Resende model", including 9 captions in Manchu referring to Macau's main strategic points (source: Oliveira, 2006)

guided by urban planning and architectural styles that brought modernity to the city, including among others the improvement of the harbour and the construction of the Guia Lighthouse [fig.05], already mentioned.

Following this transformation, the development that took place in the 20th century changed the physiognomy of the city, which developed at the expense of landfills and high-rise buildings, with the emergence of the first “skyscrapers”, transforming the urban skyline and giving the city a sense of renewal (Calado et al, 1985). Using new concrete technologies, the skyscrapers created an urban silhouette that was more visible along the new avenues and the entire coastline from Barra-Penha to Guia going as far as Areia Preta.

LEGISLATION PUBLISHED DURING THE PORTUGUESE ADMINISTRATION

Decree-Law No. 34/76/M of 7 August

The Portuguese administration soon became aware of the importance of defending the material cultural heritage of the city of Macau as a way of preserving its identity, in the face of the exponential population growth and urban development that had taken place especially since the 1970s. In this context, Decree-Law 34/76/M of 7 August 1976 was published to protect the existing heritage, reflecting the fundamental reasons behind its necessity:

“The city of Macau, the meeting point of two civilisations and cultures, possesses characteristics that, despite its progress and the constant need to adapt to modern life, must be preserved in order to maintain the character that distinguishes it from the populations of the region where it is located. Certain types of architecture, urban ensembles and landscape profiles should not be allowed to vanish or be altered without running the risk of transforming a city of historical interest, shaped by different urban concepts over four centuries of Portuguese administration, into an uncharacteristic urban agglomeration, with the same types of buildings reaching for height due to a lack of surface space, and that repeat, throughout the rapidly growing world, the same uniformity of lines that, at different latitudes and in different countries, makes one city indistinguishable from many others (...)”

(Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 1976)

This decree establishes the categories of Sites, Ensembles and Buildings to be preserved, detailed in a list included within its text. It should be emphasised that this list also encompasses “sites of landscape interest, including green areas, clusters of trees or individual trees of particularly noteworthy size” (Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 1976).

Article 10 of this Decree-Law also advocated the existence of a buffer zone around each building of historical interest.

The decree-law also established the creation of a “Commission for the Defence of Macau's Urban, Landscape and Cultural Heritage”, tasked with classifying the sites, ensembles and buildings listed, as well as keeping a record of them. This committee also had an advisory role, and, among other things, it had to be heard and give its opinion on urban plans and works that might affect the properties to be preserved, accompany archaeological, historical or ethnographic works, and collaborate with the Tourism Bureau in publicising existing values.

Decree-Law No. 43/82/M of 4 September

In September 1982, Decree-Law No. 43/82/M of 4 September (Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 1982) established the Macau Cultural Affairs Bureau with the following functions:

- a) To assist the Territorial Government in formulating and implementing cultural and scientific research policies;
- b) To promote the preservation of the values of Portuguese culture in the Territory and their dissemination in neighbouring geographical areas;
- c) To promote the spread of the Portuguese language and the study of Portuguese history and its relations with the peoples of the Far East;
- d) To encourage and support artistic and cultural events related to the Luso-Chinese intercultural experience;
- e) To contribute actively to the preservation of the cultural heritage of the territory;
- f) To promote training and retraining activities for researchers and various cultural agents;
- g) To promote and support cultural exchange activities (Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 1982).

One of the particularly important services in the field of cultural heritage was the Department of Cultural Heritage, tasked with “researching, preserving, animating, developing and disseminating the values of the Territory's cultural heritage, namely historical, architectural, landscape, artistic and other aspects” (Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 1982). This department was complemented by the Commission for the Defence of the Architectural, Landscape and Cultural Heritage, a technical and advisory body governed by its own statute.

Decree-Law No. 56/84/M, of 30 June

With the publication of Decree-Law no. 56/84/M, of 30 June, the powers and duties of the Commission were transferred to this body and, consequently, the previous law was revoked (Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 1984).

Decree-Law No. 83/92/M of 31 December

In 1992, Decree-Law No. 83/92/M of 31 December (Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 1992) established the category of “Building of Architectural Interest”, which applies to the basic regime of restrictions on the use, enjoyment and availability of the cultural, monumental and historical heritage “with the necessary adaptations” (Preamble to Decree-Law No. 83/92/M). This decree also includes three plans of the territory (Macau Peninsula and the islands of Taipa and Coloane), which spatially represent the heritage listed in the categories of Monument, Building of Architectural Interest, Classified Complex, Classified Site and Buffer Zone (Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 1992).

I am enclosing Annexes I to V to Decree-Law No. 83/92/M of 31 December, in accordance with point 2 of Article 117 of Law No. 11/2013, listing the classified monuments, buildings of architectural interest, classified sets and classified sites:

ANNEX I – List of classified monuments

- MACAU CITY

Church of St Augustine;
 Church of St Anthony and churchyard;
 Church of St Dominic;
 Church of St Lazarus and churchyard;
 Church of St Lourenço and churchyard;
 Cathedral Church;
 St Joseph's Seminary Church, churchyard
 and staircase;
 Ruins of St Paul's (former Church of Mater Dei),
 churchyard and staircase;
 Mong-Há Fortress;
 Fortress of Our Lady of Good Delivery;
 Fortress of Our Lady of Guia and Lighthouse;
 Fortress of Our Lady of Monte;
 Fortress of St James of Barra;
 Fortress of D. Maria II;
 Wall and Fortress of St Francis;
 Gate of the Siege;
 Government Palace;
 Leal Senado building;
 Santa Casa da Misericórdia building;
 Barra Temple;
 Temple of the Bazaar;
 Temple of Kun lam Tchai;
 Temple of Kun lam Tong;
 Lin Fong Temple;
 Na Tcha Temple, on the Walk of Truths;
 Na Tcha Temple, near the Ruins of St Paul's;
 Pao Kong Temple;

Lin Kai Temple;
 Lou Pan Si Fu Temple;
 Tin Hau Temple;
 Sam Kai Vui Kun Temple;
 T'ou Tei Temple;
 Section of the Ancient Defence Walls;
 Camões Cave;
 Coat of Arms Stone, near the Lin Fong Temple;
 Coat of Arms Stone, near the stairs to the Mong-Há
 Social Centre.

- TAIPA ISLAND

Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel;
 Temple of Kun lam;
 Small Temple of Kun lam;
 I Leng Temple;
 Pak Tai Temple;
 Tin Hao Temple;
 Sam Po Temple;
 Kuan Tai Temple (from Cheoc Ka);
 Taipa Fortress, near the pier.

- COLOANE ISLAND

Church of St Francis Xavier;
 Temple of Tam Kong;
 Temple of Tin Hao;
 Kun lam Temple (of Ká-Hó);
 Sam Seng Kong Temple;
 Tai Wong Temple (of Hac-Sá);
 Kun lam Temple (Coloane).

ANNEX II – List of classified buildings of architectural interest

- MACAU CITY

Santa Sancha Palace;
 Chapel of Our Lady of Penha and Episcopal Residence;
 St Joseph's Seminary building;
 Camões Cave Garden House;
 Sir Robert Ho Tung Library Building;
 Military Club Building;
 Port Captaincy Building;
 Fire Brigade Building;
 Post Office Building;
 Red Market Building;
 Lou Lim Ioc Pavilion;
 BNU Headquarters Building;
 Pedro Nolasco da Silva Official Primary School Building;
 Leng Nam School Building, on Estrada dos Parses;
 Pui Tou School Building, at 107, Rua da Praia Grande;
 Pui Cheng School Building (Lou Lim Ioc Palace);
 Ricci School Building, on Rua da Praia Grande do Bom Parto;
 D. Pedro V Theatre building;
 S. Rafael Hospital building and garden;
 Bela Vista Hotel building;
 Precious Blood Convent building;
 Caixa Escolar building;
 Farmácia Chinesa, at 146, Rua de Cinco de Outubro;

Corner building between Praça de Ponte e Horta and Rua das Lorchas;
 Court building;
 Lok Kok Restaurant, at 159 Rua de Cinco de Outubro;
 Casa do "Mandarim", in Travessa de António da Silva;
 House at 1, 3 and 5, Largo da Sé;
 House at 7, Travessa da Sé;
 House at 4, Estrada do Engenheiro Trigo;
 House at 83, Rua da Praia Grande;
 House at 29, Rua do Campo;
 House at 4 and 6, Largo da Companhia de Jesus;
 House at 26 and 28, Rua de Pedro Nolasco da Silva;
 Casa Jardines;
 House at 6, Avenida da República;
 Torre de Prestamista, at 64, Rua de Cinco de Outubro;
 Torre de Prestamista, at 6, Rua de S. Domingos;
 Torre de Prestamista, in Rua de Camilo Pessanha;
 Torre de Prestamista, at 3, Travessa das Virtudes;
 Building at 14 and 16, Avenida de Horta e Costa.

- TAIPA ISLAND

Building of the Câmara das Ilhas;
 Torre Prestamista, at 1, Travessa da Felicidade.

- COLOANE ISLAND

Public Library building.

ANNEX III – List of classified sets

• MACAU CITY

Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro/Largo do Leal Senado/Largo de S. Domingos;
 S. Lázaro neighbourhood;
 Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida, from the building at the corner with Estrada do Cemitério to no. 95-G;
 Largo and Beco do Lilau;
 St Augustine's Square;
 Travessa de S. Paulo;

Travessa da Paixão;
 Rua and Beco da Felicidade.

• TAIPA ISLAND

Largo do Carmo/Avenida da Praia;
 Largo de Camões/Rua dos Negociantes.

• COLOANE ISLAND

Largo Eduardo Marques/Rua dos Negociantes/
 Largo do Presidente Ramalho Eanes.

ANNEX IV – List of classified sites

• MACAU CITY

Campo Coronel Mesquita;
 Barra Hill;
 Penha Hill;
 Guia Hill;
 D. Maria II Hill;
 Mong-Há Hill;
 Green Island Hill;
 Lou Lim Ioc Garden;
 Camões's Cave Garden;
 Russian Mountain's Garden;
 St Francis's Garden;
 Vitória's Garden;
 Vasco da Gama's Garden;
 Marginal, from the Macau-Taipa Bridge to the Fortress of St James of Barra;

Route between Rua Central/Rua de S. Lourenço/
 Rua do Padre António/Rua da Barra/
 Calçada da Barra;
 Ponte and Horta Square;
 Parses Cemetery;
 Sun Yat Sen Municipal Park.

• TAIPA ISLAND

Municipal Garden.

• COLOANE ISLAND

Avenida de Cinco de Outubro;
 Coloane Island above level 80.

The aforementioned law also includes Annex V, which contains three maps showing the listed heritage assets, their location and respective buffer area, constituting a careful safeguarding measure that was later included in UNESCO's classification of the Historic Centre.

ANNEX V – Maps [fig.06,07,08]

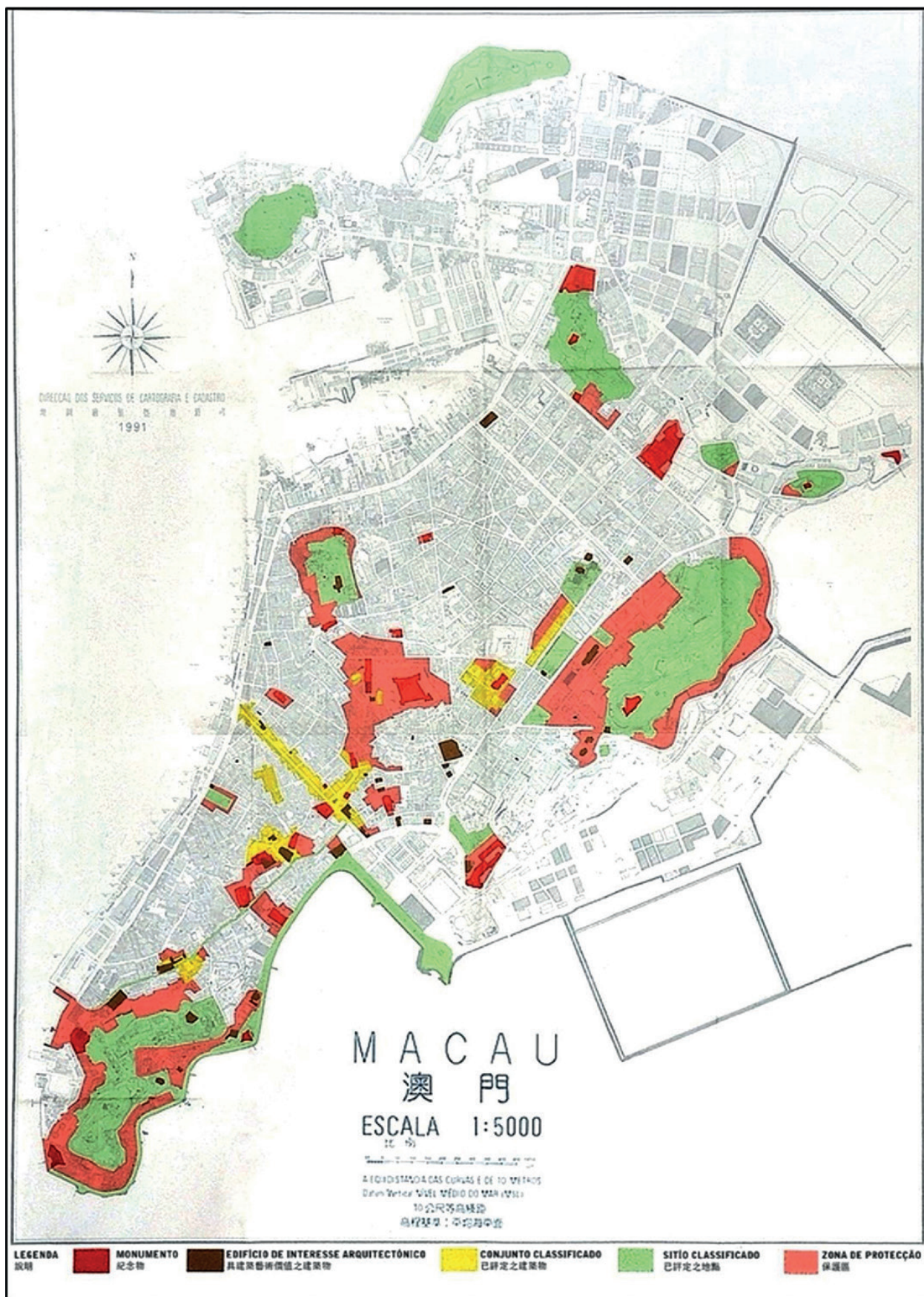


Fig. 06- Macau Peninsula, Annex V, DL no. 83/92/M, of 31 December (source: Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 1992)

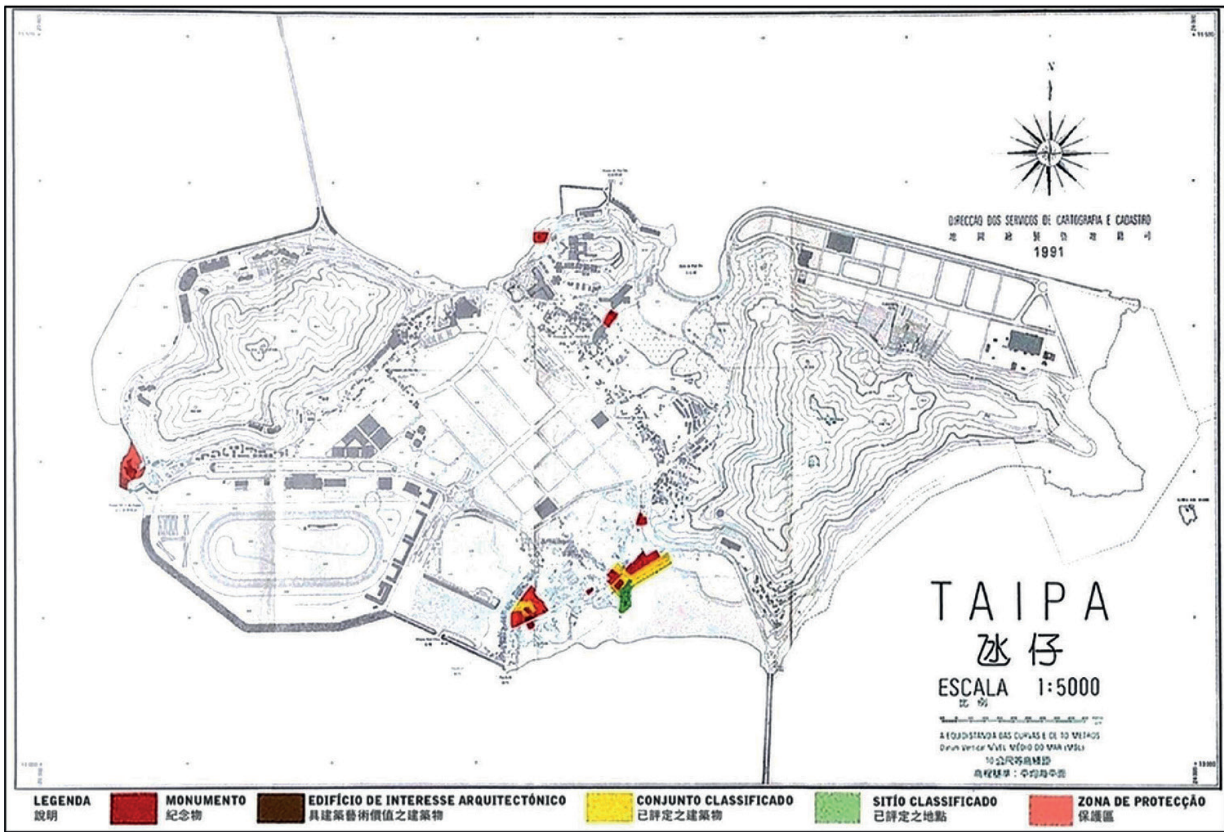


Fig. 07: Taipa Island, Annex V, DL no. 83/92/M, of 31 December (source: Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 1992)

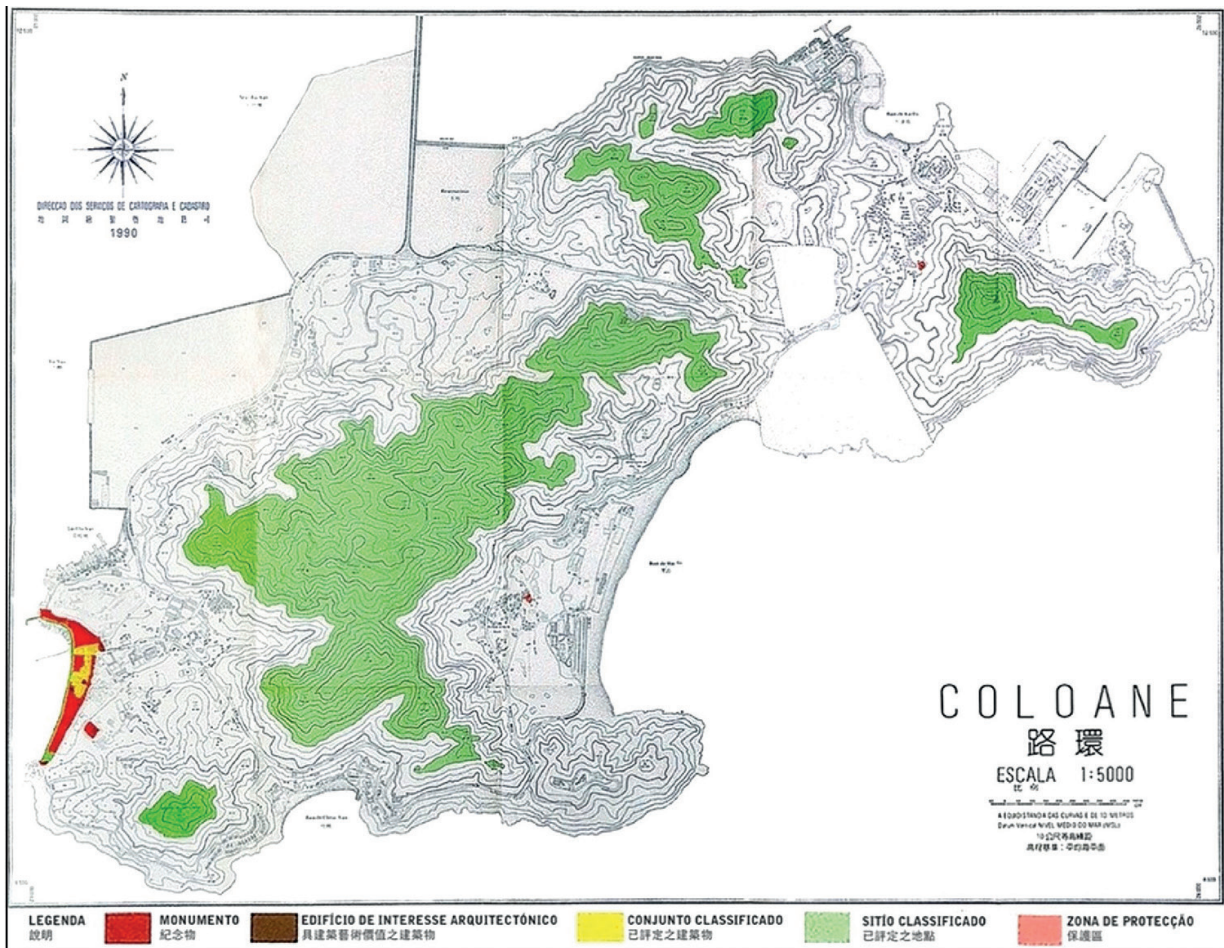


Fig. 08: Coloane Island, Annex V, DL no. 83/92/M, of 31 December (source: Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 1992)

The outstanding efforts by the Portuguese authorities at the end of the 20th century, through the enactment of appropriate legislation, have ensured the protected heritage, a legacy of the long-standing, peaceful coexistence between the two civilisations, that has reached the present day in good conservation condition, and has become a reference value considered in the formulation of the World Heritage nomination. This application was formalised by the central government after the transfer of sovereignty and was recognised in 2005.

INCLUSION ON THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST

The importance of the existing heritage, which reveals a mixed culture, was recognised by UNESCO, and the Historic Centre of Macau was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2005.

Several authors have analysed the unique case of Macau, which is regarded as the last bastion of a colonial power that was never fully exercised, having survived through continuous negotiations between the governments involved, with effects that are still evident in urban, architectural and social terms (Cross, 2009; Tieben, 2009; Morais, 2013).

Macau's contextual indetermination and urbanism provided the territory with a distinctive spatial setting that was inscribed on the UNESCO World heritage list in 2005. Macau holds a unique position in the history of Eastern and Western foreign relations and stands out among cases of European colonial powers: an ambiguous, marginal, and complex spatial setting that played a significant role in both the Portuguese and Chinese empires (Morais, 2013: 146)

In the field of tangible heritage, the areas of urban planning and architecture stand out, the fruit of almost five centuries of coexistence that has created a city open to cultural dialogue. In 2005, the Historic Centre of Macau was inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria ii), iii), iv) and vi), which refer to cultural mixing and are set out below:

- Criterion (ii): The strategic location of Macau on the Chinese territory, and the special relationship established between the Chinese and Portuguese authorities favoured an important interchange of human values in the various fields of culture, sciences, technology, art and architecture over several centuries.
- Criterion (iii): Macau bears a unique testimony to the first and longest-lasting encounter between the West and China. From the 16th to the 20th centuries, it was the focal point for traders and missionaries, and the different fields of learning. The impact of this encounter can be traced in the fusion of different cultures that characterise the historical core zone of Macau.
- Criterion (iv): Macau 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.
- Criterion (vi): Macau has been associated with the exchange of a variety of cultural, spiritual, scientific and technical influences between the Western and Chinese civilisations. These ideas directly motivated the introduction of crucial changes in China, ultimately ending the era of imperial feudal system and establishing the modern republic (UNESCO, 2019).

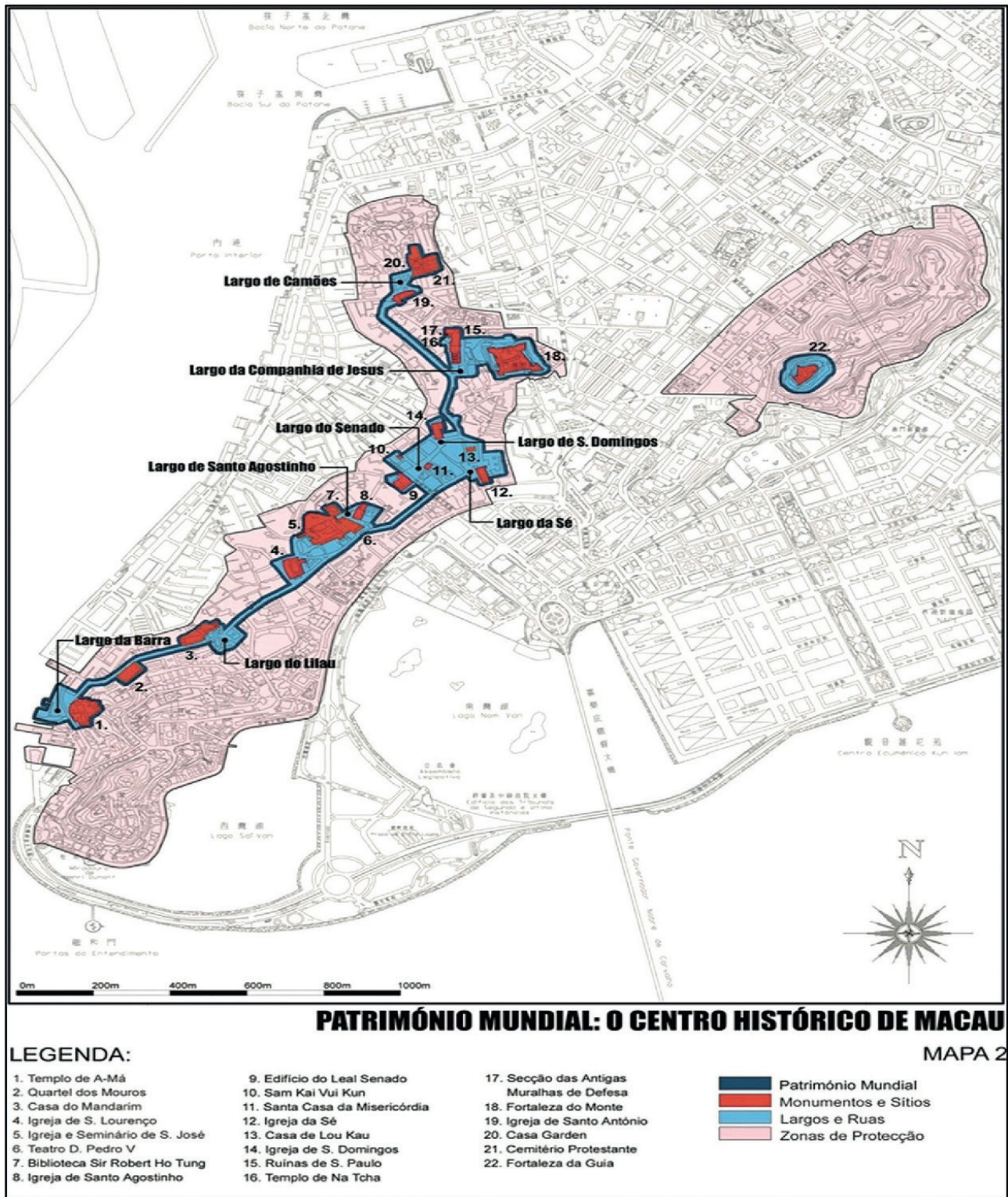


Fig. 09. Map “World Heritage: Macau Historic Centre” (source: courtesy of the Instituto Cultural de Macau)

Covering an area of approximately 1.23 km², the classified zone consists of two parts: the first, the “core area”, includes monuments, sites, squares and streets, and the second, the “buffer zone”, corresponds to the surrounding conservation area [fig.09]. More specifically:

1. The first – “Core Area” – comprehends eight squares and twenty-two monuments (notably the Leal Senado building, the square bearing the same name, the emblematic ruins of St. Paul s, the Sé Church, among other churches and residences of Portuguese influence), as well as the squares and streets that connect these spaces.

2. The second – “buffer zone” – still preserves unique characteristics, namely the original urban structure and configuration, as well as the spatial organisation, forming a built ensemble of historical and cultural value, which protects the listed buildings located within it.

In this context, it is worth highlighting the changes that have taken place as a result of the designation of the Historic Centre as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2005, as well as the implications of the application of the Macao SAR's heritage legislation (Património Cultural de Macau, 2019).

Following the inscription of the Historic Centre of Macau as a World Heritage Site, the Macau Government adopted measures to conserve the listed heritage in the Historic Centre and in the designated buffer zones.

INVOLVEMENT OF THE MACAU PEOPLE

The people of Macau have responded positively to the inscription of their historic centre on the UNESCO World Heritage List, closely following the government's initiatives without compromise. For example, in 2007, for the first time, a group of local academics and researchers organised an action to report to UNESCO some ambiguous situations concerning potential attacks on classified heritage.

This was the case of the Guia Lighthouse, which was reported to the World Heritage Centre in 2007 (UNESCO, 2019), prompting an immediate reaction from this body, with the local government responding appropriately and minimising the negative impact on the property.

The issue was that a proposed building at the base of Guia Hill, estimated to be 135 metres tall, would obstruct the view of the Guia Lighthouse, a listed monument located 100 metres above sea level:

(...) In a letter dated 19 September 2007, the Director of the World Heritage Centre requested the State Party to “consider this expression of concern and take urgent measures to address the pressing issue so as to protect the property and if necessary, prevent any irreversible damage affecting the property”. The World Heritage Centre further requested the State Party to submit any relevant information regarding the state of conservation and development pressures facing this property.

(...) On 11 March 2008, the World Heritage Centre received a letter from the Deputy Secretary-General of the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, enclosing a report prepared by the Director of Cultural Affairs Bureau of Macau SAR Government.

(...) The report reaffirmed the Macau SAR Government's commitment to protecting the values of the property and fulfilling its obligations under the World Heritage Convention. It confirmed that the development projects in question are situated in two specific areas outside the buffer zone and comply with the legislation that was in effect at the time the property was inscribed. (UNESCO, 2019)

Additionally, the Macau Government was asked to report on the progress of the measures taken by 2009. This situation led to the publication of Chief Executive Order 83/2008 of 16 April 2008, restricting the height of buildings in the vicinity of the Guia Lighthouse (Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 2008).

JOINT UNESCO/ICOMOS MISSION IN 2009

In 2009, the World Heritage Committee, noting the negative impact of urban development on the buffer zones, namely the Guia Lighthouse and the Fortress of Monte, recommended that the Macau Government host a joint UNESCO/ICOMOS monitoring mission to verify whether the measures in place were sufficient to ensure the long-term protection of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the heritage properties (Decision 32 COM 7B.68) (UNESCO, 2019).

A joint UNESCO/ICOMOS mission visited Macau from 18 to 24 January 2009. This mission confirmed the existence of problems to the south of the Guia Lighthouse, in areas not covered by Chief Executive Order 83/2008. Some inaccuracies were also noted regarding the heritage management and conservation system, indicating that the existing system was inadequate.

According to the members of this mission, this posed a risk to the heritage and could obscure the perception of its values, including the idea of what Macau represents: a port city fostering trade along maritime routes.

The study aimed at identifying universal values could, in the medium term, lead to the implementation of a comprehensive plan to protect the significance of the heritage, using the concept of HUL Historic Urban Landscape (Decision 33 COM 7B.67) (UNESCO, 2019).

According to international charters and conventions, from the Venice Charter (1964) to the World Heritage Convention (1972), Cultural Heritage Management (CHM), as a process for managing heritage in a sustainable way, is an important tool that includes heritage resources as capital of primary importance (Cross, 2009).

Considering the lack of explanations and the findings of the visit by UNESCO/ICOMOS experts in 2009, the World Heritage Committee in 2011 urged the Macau Government to respond fully and expeditiously to the nomination (Decision 35 COM 7B.64) (UNESCO, 2019).

In January 2013, the Government of MSAR submitted a report to UNESCO on the state of conservation of the listed properties. This report summarised the existing situation and anticipated strategic guidelines for the protection of the cultural heritage, setting out the legal instruments for this purpose, planning and future procedures.

The report welcomed Ordinance 83/2008, which regulates the height of buildings in the vicinity of the Guia Lighthouse and noted the extension of some buffer zones to the east and west of the Macau peninsula, with the aim of protecting listed properties from property speculation.

It also stated that the Heritage Protection Law, which had already been approved by the Legislative Assembly, would be published in August 2013. The list of universal values of classified objects – OUV – was submitted for evaluation in 2013.

While noting the progress made, the World Heritage Committee recommended that the Strategic Management Plan be finalised expeditiously to avoid potential threats to the listed properties (Decision 37 COM 7B.59) (UNESCO, 2019).

Faced with the delay in finalising the Management Plan in 2017, the World Heritage Committee reaffirmed its concern about the potential negative impacts on the protected areas that would affect the visual integrity of the listed properties and the inadequacy of the existing management. In short, it criticised the lack of a CHM as recommended.

In March 2017, the Macau SAR Government submitted a report (UNESCO, 2019) on the state of conservation of the properties, also stating that the Cultural Heritage Protection Law, Law No. 11/2013, had already been in force since March 2014

The draft for the conservation and management plan would be submitted for public consultation in 2017. The master plan for the city would be formulated with a holistic vision, in close articulation with the heritage conservation and management plan.

The listed measures were accepted. However, issues relating to heights of buildings were again of concern and continued to pose a threat, now in parallel with the emerging issue of new landfill sites under construction.

Noting that the management plan requested in 2015 had still not been submitted, the World Heritage Committee urged the local government to complete the plan urgently so that it could be submitted to UNESCO experts before being put into practice. It was also recommended that more information be provided on the detailed plans for the new dams under construction.

Finally, it was explicitly requested that a heritage impact assessment be carried out for major projects (Decision 41 COM 7B.87) (UNESCO, 2019).

LEGISLATION PUBLISHED AFTER THE TRANSFER OF SOVEREIGNTY

Law No. 11/2013 on Cultural Heritage Preservation

Law No. 11/2013, known as the “Cultural Heritage Preservation Law”, which was approved on 13 August 2013 and entered into force on 1 March 2014, establishes the system for safeguarding the cultural heritage of the Macau Special Administrative Region. Article 2, on the “Concept of Cultural Heritage”, states that all objects of relevant cultural interest are part of this heritage and must therefore be protected. By highlighting cultural values related to history, archaeology, palaeontology, art, linguistics, ethnography and other fields of knowledge, these properties must reflect “values of memory, antiquity, authenticity, originality, rarity, uniqueness or exemplarity” (Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 2013). Since the Macau SAR is obliged to ensure the transmission of Macau's cultural heritage, as stated in Article 4, cultural heritage must be protected and cherished as “an essential instrument for the realisation of human dignity and the object of fundamental rights”. The same article also states that it is the duty of the Macao SAR Government to promote the knowledge, study, protection and enhancement of cultural heritage.

The Cultural Heritage Council was established as an advisory body to the Macau SAR Government to provide advice on the protection of cultural heritage.

Article 51 also established the obligation to draw up a Plan for the Protection and Management of the Historic Centre of Macau, to be implemented by the IC – Instituto Cultural in cooperation with other public departments, namely DSSCU – Direcção do Serviços de Solos e Construção Urbana and the IAM – Instituto para os Assuntos Municipais.



Fig. 10- Historic Centre of Macau - Praça do Leal Senado and Largo da Sé (source: Chan Hin lo, 2018)

Macau Historic Centre - Strategic Management Plan

The Historic Centre of Macau refers to an architectural ensemble made up of monuments, buildings of architectural interest, sites and their respective conservation areas, as mentioned above. This ensemble was regarded as being of exceptional value on the basis of criteria relating to cultural diversity and was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2005.

Pursuant to Law No.11/2013, the Historic Centre [fig.10] must be the subject of a strategic management plan in order to preserve the Universal Values (UV) that characterise it. The Historic Centre comprehends a total area of 1.23 km². The classified area is 0.16 km² and the buffer areas are approximately 1.07 km².

The classified area is made up of 8 squares and 22 properties, namely:

Squares:

Pagode da Barra Square
Lilau Square
St Augustine Square
Senado Square
Sé Square

Buildings:

Temple of A-Ma
Moorish Barracks Building
Mandarin's House
Church of St Lawrence
St Joseph's Seminary and Church
D. Pedro V Theatre
Sir Robert Ho Tung Library
St Augustine's Church

Loyal Senate Building
Sam Kai Vui Kun Temple
Holy House of Mercy Building
Cathedral Church
Lou Kau House
Church of St Dominic
Ruins of St Paul's
Temple of Na Tcha
Section of the Old Defence Walls
Monte Fortress
Church of St Anthony
Casa Garden
Protestant Cemetery
Fortress of Nossa Senhora da Guia
and Guia Lighthouse

In view of the urban pressures to which the city centre has recently been subjected, most of which have occurred since the transfer of sovereignty and because of the liberalisation of gaming, the need to implement the measures recommended in Law No. 11/2013 on the Plan for the Protection and Management of the Historic Centre of Macau is becoming increasingly urgent. Moreover, this plan must be integrated with the Master Plan for the City, as both serve as a key instrument for urban management.

The Plan for the Protection and Management of the Historic Centre was subject to public consultation between January and March 2018. The text proposed for public consultation in March 2018 mentioned:

“The inscribed property includes various listed buildings and public spaces that provide a clear understanding of the structure of the old port city. With its historical streets, residential, religious and public buildings of Portuguese and Chinese origin, the Historic Centre of Macau provides a unique testimony of the encounter between Eastern and Western influences at the aesthetic, cultural, religious, architectural and technological levels, bearing witness to the first and most enduring encounter between China and the West, fostered by dynamic international trade”

(Instituto Cultural de Macau, 2018).

The recommendations in the Strategic Management Plan ensure the sustainability of local communities, fostering harmony among citizens of different nationalities, while preserving the architectural and urban environment that defines the city's historic centre and other areas significant to its multicultural character.

Among the measures included in the plan is the introduction of the concept of visual corridors, which is considered relevant to the existing urban structure:

“(…) [it] reflects an important port of international trade in the history of cultural exchange between China and the West. In which the visual connections between the important geographical high points of the city's historic centre and the maritime surroundings (…) constitute the main element reflecting the outstanding universal value, and therefore measures should be taken to ensure its continuity”

(Instituto Cultural de Macau, 2018).

Later, the concept of urban landscape merged with the concept of HUL - Historic Urban Landscape, as it introduced a broader view of heritage that also included cultural, social and economic values and the way of life of the inhabitants, connecting different urban environments in a more comprehensive vision (Bandarin and Van Oers, 2012). In this sense, historic courtyards, traditional streets and typical alleyways are listed, the experience of which is to be preserved in line with UNESCO recommendations and to foster a greater sense of belonging among citizens (Instituto Cultural de Macau, 2018).

Measures to protect the urban morphology and restrictions on its transformation are also set out, with particular emphasis on the streets, courtyards and alleys mentioned above. In the case of classified areas, it is emphasised that environmental features such as topography, green spaces and their ratio, population density and land use must be preserved and highlighted. Particular attention should be paid to the height and volume of new buildings in transition zones and areas covered by visual corridors.

Finally, the text submitted for consultation addresses the criteria for restoring listed properties, emphasising the use of international standards; the Athens Charter (1931), Venice Charter (1964), Burra Charter (1979) and Washington Charter (1987) are explicitly referred to on page 126 of the consultation document.

Following additional revisions, the Regulations of the Plan for the Safeguarding and Management of the Historic Centre of Macau were approved and published on 15 January 2024 to come into force on 1 June 2024 (Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 2024). The plan features 11 visual corridors, streets and squares, each with its own characteristics, serving as evidence of cultural integration.

CONCLUSION

In light of the analysis carried out and presented here, we believe that it was the measures taken by the Portuguese administration in the period leading up to the transfer of sovereignty that allowed the historical legacy to reach the dawn of the 21st century in a condition suitable for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2005.

Based on the existing historical heritage, the result of over four centuries of cultural coexistence, the Chinese Government led a recognised and valued application. Essential to this process was the support of the population, as they defended the heritage they had inherited and worked tirelessly for its enhancement and preservation, fostering a sense of belonging [fig. 11].



Fig. 11 - Ruins of St Paul's, façade of the old Church of Mater Dei (source: Chan Hin lo, 2016)

Recent situations such as the new gaming contracts in Macau in 2023, which placed greater emphasis from 2024 onwards on CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility (Moreira and Li, 2022) have demonstrated how the fusion between the preservation of the historical heritage, the will of local government and the intervention of the population have been instrumental in safeguarding the existing buildings and integrating them into the development of the city.

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