

Study on the Conservation of the Historic Centre of Macao

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Abstract: Macao is the Special Administrative Region of China, which is a unique historic city meeting the west culture and the east culture. But, the conservation to the Historic Center of Macao still exist many problems. If the old city lost its characteristic, it will lose its soul and the development of Macao's tourism industry will be effected badly. Therefore, the conservation to the Historic Center of Macao plays a very important role in Macao. Based on the field investigation, this paper analyzes the problems existing in Macao's historic district, and puts forward corresponding countermeasures, hoping to play a positive role in promoting the protection of Macao's historic district.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, more and more international meeting holds in Macao. Macao has been an important gateway through which western civilization entered China. It also is a famous tourism city in China. Recent year, the tourism industry developed very fast. Especially after Macao returned to the mother land and "The Historic Centre of Macao" was listed on the World Heritage List, the amount of tourists raised sharply, which brought a great benefit for Macao. "The Historic Centre of Macao" is the product of over 400 years of cultural exchange between the western world and Chinese civilization.

"The Historic Centre of Macao" includes over 20 historic buildings and 7 squares. The 7 squares are Barra Square, Lilau Square, St. Augustine's Square, Senado Square, Cathedral Square, St. Dominic's Square, Company of Jesus Square and Camoes Square, which played a very important role to link these 20 buildings as a whole. Over history there are a great of constructions with European and Portuguese architectural characteristic were built in Macao. "The Historic Centre of Macao" was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2005, making it the 31st designated World Heritage site in China. Cultural heritage can be regard as the brand, characteristic, wealth for the city, and it also works as the solid foundation to build the modern characteristic society. Meanwhile, the tourism industry takes the important position in Macao's economy.

2. Problems in the Conservation of "The Historic Centre of Macao"

2.1 The Impact of Urban Development to Macao Historic Centre

The coordination between urban development and conservation of cultural heritage has become an important issue for many cities including Macao. Some issues show that Macao pursues only short-term benefits under the impact of economic globalization. This approach will bring many difficulties to the protection of cultural heritage. There possibly brought some problems between over-speedy city development and cultural heritage protection, and it will severely influence the sustainable development of Macao. For pursuing the modern live standard, many high-buildings were built near the cultural heritage. The Historic Centre of Macao was covered in "the cement forest", which make the old city gradually lose its soul. For instance, Guia Lighthouse is one of the landmarks of Macao. It located on the top of the highest hill-Guia Hill in Macao. So, for keeping the significance of the cultural heritage, the high of the buildings around the Guia Hill were limited. But, for pursuing some short-term benefit, many skyscrapers over the high limitation are planning to be built near the Guia Hill now. The high building will cover the light from the Guia Lighthouse, which will make Guia Lighthouse lose its function of navigation. Meanwhile, the whole view of

Guia Lighthouse will be destroyed by these modern high-buildings.

2.2 The Lack of the Vivid Image of Tourism

There are many resource advantages in the development of tourism industry. But the recognition of Macao is relatively low in the world especially regarding lacking of vivid image of tourism. The only tourism image of Macao is about gambling. In addition, with the gambling business developed in the neighbor regions and countries, Macao faces the intense competition with others in gambling business and gambling will not be the unique symbol of Macao any more. However, the cultural heritage as the root of Macao is not attached much importance by Macao government. Especially after “The Historic Centre of Macao” was listed on the World Heritage List, cultural tourism in Macao has gotten a rapidly development. Therefore, it is necessary to place more attention to the cultural heritage and promote the cultural heritage as the tourism image of Macao.

2.3 The Lack of the support from Macao Government

The government of a city takes a very important position in the city development. The decision, the plan, the management and the monitor of the government will give the fate of the city. However, there is not a master plan and city orientation on urban development in Macao. It seems that the government does not realize what the city development direction is. They built modern buildings and created artificial destinations instead of protecting the cultural heritage. For example, Macao government spent a plenty of money building the artificial destination-- Fishermen's Wharf. But, they provide little money in cultural heritage conservation. There are lots of buildings with important cultural value which need money to be conserved besides those on the list of world heritage. Especially some Chinese buildings, they are the important parts of Macao because Macao is a Chinese city after all, yet much of them are destroyed seriously. The government lack financial support to the conservation work of those Chinese buildings. What's more, Macao government still pays more attention to gambling than cultural heritage. The government ignored the cultural heritage education and instruction to residents and tourists. Most residents lived near by the cultural heritage and passed through the cultural heritage every day, but they even did not know those are cultural heritage, which will fully certify the weakness of residents' conservation awareness and the lack of promotion.

2.4 The Ignoring for Old Private Building

Macao is lacking homologous policy and law. A lot of private buildings which have historical and cultural value were subjected to the breakages to different degree. In terms of Macao's democratic system, the owners can rebuild the buildings from the external appearance and inner part, so the original style and value of the building was totally changed. Moreover, along with the social development, many residents move into new areas or move overseas because of pursuing the life of high quality, which leads to a good deal of building being empty, nobody wants to have the responsibility to manage it. This situation greatly influenced the whole programming of the entire city.

2.5 The impact of Carrying Capacity to Cultural Heritage Site

Macao is a small city. According to the present authority statistics, the population of Macao is 663,400; the area of Macao is only 32.8 square kilometers (including Macao peninsular, Taipa and Coloane). The great mass of resident lives in Macao peninsular where the historical center locates. The population density is 66,000 people per square kilometer. Besides, the fast developing tourism industry brings 31 million floating people a year. The number of tourists increased rapidly from 25 million in 2010 to 31.9 million in 2017. The large number of floating people and tourists makes a big pressure to the cultural heritage conservation work.

3. Suggestions

3.1 Find the balance between urban development and heritage conservation

The vital problem should be solved urgently for Macao is finding the balance between urban development and heritage conservation. Of course, the residents should improve their life standard and catch up with the development step of the economic globalization, but the methods to solve this problem are diversity. We can find a way benefited both the two sides. For example, we can enhance the resident's life standard and life circumstances by improving the public facilities and the style of architecture. It is not necessary to build high-buildings to show the modern society. The feelings of modern society can be showed in the cultural atmosphere. There also are many successful examples on balancing cultural heritage conservation and urban development all over the world. For instance, Lijiang and Pingyao ancient city in Yun Nan and Shanxi province in China, both are the most complete and elegant ancient cities by the scientific urban development plan and proper policies regarding conservation work. In addition, the zoning development model can be implemented in Macao. The gambling business can be considered to move to the other two islands, which can effectively protect the historic centre of Macao.

3.2. Redacting a master plan on urban development

The problem of lacking a master plan on urban development has been mentioned above. For solving this issue, the most important thing must be done is collecting the information and suggestions from all kinds of aspects. By enhancing more academic researches within this field, the reasonable master plan can be made. At the same time, the perfect strategy on protection objects and protection measures also can be gotten by this way. That will give a firm basis to looking for the balance between heritage conservation and urban development in Macao.

3.3 Strengthen the support of government

The support of government for heritage conservation is important and necessary. The supports can be divided into three following aspects:

3.3.1 Finance

Although the Historic Centre of Macao has attracted a large number of tourists from all over the world and brought a great benefit for Macao government, the fund for conservation of heritage sites is not enough. Therefore, some measures should be taken. Firstly, the government should be aware of the significant of protecting cultural heritage and then give enough attention to cultural heritage conservation. Secondly, the government should appropriate more funds for cultural heritage conservation. Finally, the government had better establish a cultural heritage conservation committee in order to control the conservation fund in reason.

3.3.2 Policy

It is important to draw up a more reasonable preservation policy and take corresponding management measures, especially constituting the policy and law about the private buildings. For instance, if the individual owner can not follow the standard that specify rules of building law made by the government to properly manage and preserve their buildings with historical and cultural values, the government has right to carry on disposal. For matching the around environmental, this kind of old Chinese houses can be used as tea house or cafe with Chinese style. Tourists can feel the atmosphere of ancient Chinese Town. What's more, the management to heritage sites plays an important role. For instance, distributing tourists group by road sign to lighten carrying capacity; monitoring the protective situation of private house; dealing with the routine of cultural heritage sites and so on.

3.3.3 Education

Raising preserving awareness of locals and tourists is useful for protecting the heritage sites. In

terms of locals, the government should set up the preserving awareness when they are children. That is to say the government has to pay much attention to the education system in order to let the youth to know the significant of cultural heritage conservation. For the tourists, the government can guide them by certain guidance and instruction such as brochures and interpretations. In addition, the government can encourage more locals to take part in the program of the heritage conservation in order to enhance the local participation.

Macao is a unique city and has rich cultural heritage resources. As long as the resources can be protected and managed reasonably, Macao will develop faster and faster.

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