

WG 5 – Heritage at Risk

Daman, India

The Catholic community of Daman, in India, is trying to prevent the demolition of a historical chapel, used in local cult for more than 400 years. The chapel – *Capela de Nossa Senhora das Angústias* – is planned for demolition by the local provincial administrator, who wants to enlarge the football field where the chapel is located. This case is part of a larger concerning trend of demolishing historical catholic sites in Daman, perhaps given the diminishing of the local catholic community, composed of several hundred active members. We urge the international communities working with heritage to voice their concerns for this situation.



Exterior of Catholic Church *Capela de Nossa Senhora das Angústias*.
Source © Alfa / LUSA.

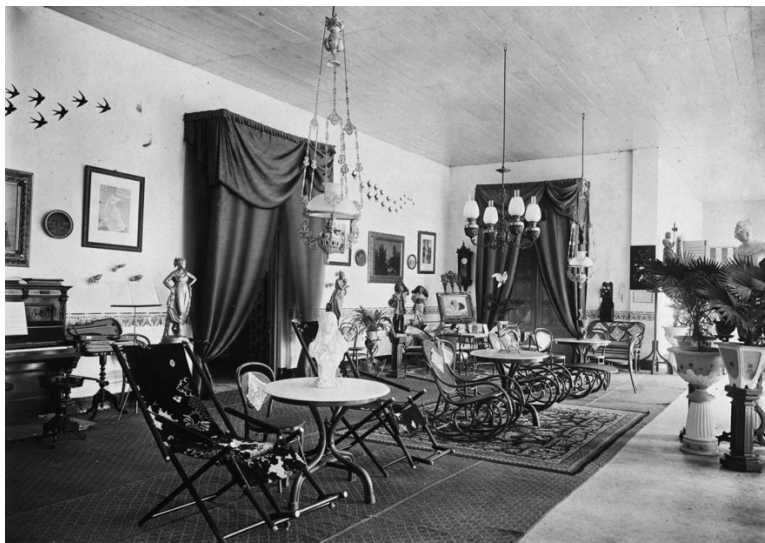


Interior of Catholic Church *Capela de Nossa Senhora das Angústias*.
Source © LUSA.

Historic Interiors

Apart from the issues already addressed in this working group and presented in previous newsletters, we bring to your attention another important proposal made by Esther de Haan: to create an inventory of remaining historic interiors of shared built residential houses. Per interior, those in the project would collect some photos and a short interview with current inhabitants/users and gather the main historic facts on the built environment of the place. Those who are interested are welcome to email us!

Some of the questions guiding this project are: What interior building features can still be discerned in SBH historic interiors? What former and recent living culture can be 'read' from these features; how do current residents live in these houses?



Interior of house for Belgian company directors in Congo, around 1930.
Source: Unknown.

Macau Special Administrative Region, China

The Unsettling fate of a 400-year-old city wall

Hoi Ian Lei

The landslide on June 9th at a private construction site near the Estrada De S. Francisco, causing the collapse of part of the quadricentennial Macau city wall (near Estrada De S. Francisco). Authorities later announced that they would demolish part of the remaining wall on the grounds of public safety and emergency.

The old city wall (near Estrada De. S. Francisco), joint with other two sections (the one near Estrada Do Visconde and the other one near the Chapel of our Lady), was enlisted as classified immovable property in 2016 as "The Sections of City Old Wall", and protected by Heritage Legislation (Lei 11/2013 - Lei De Salvaguarda do Patrimonio Cultural) since then.



Partial demolition of the old city wall.

Source: A. Lui, 2022.

The city wall (Near Estrada De. S. Francisco) is not only the largest surviving section and the best preserved, but also will be the first heritage site to be demolished on the grounds of public safety since the heritage legislation passed. The original size of the city wall (near Estrada De. S. Francisco) is 3 meters wide, 50 meters in length and over 10 meters in height. After the landslide approximately 18 meters of it has collapsed.

On June 17, the Cultural Institute (IC), Directorate of Public Works Services (DSOP) and Directorate of Land Services and Urban Construction (DSSCU) released a joint statement explaining that there are 10 meters of the wall at risk of collapse, with tilts and fractures that could impact the remaining sections, which is relatively stable. “The authorities therefore decided to demolish it urgently (...) due to its instability.” said in the statement. It means, only 22 meters of the city wall (near Estrada De. S. Francisco) will "survive" after the landslide and the demolition. The plan was presented during an emergency meeting at the Cultural Heritage Council the day before the joint-statement was released. According to the official press, the board did not present any objection to the demolition plan, due to the urgency and the public safety.

For more information [click here](#)

TEXT to be included in [click here](#)

It's the first time for a declared monument to be demolished on the grounds of public safety since the heritage legislation passed. According to the official report "1st Proposed Group for Classification of Real Estate in Macau – Public Consultation", the Cultural Institute described the status of the conservation of the city wall (near Estrada De. S. Francisco) as being in "good condition", as well as the section of the old city wall is among the first group of declared monuments since the heritage law passed.

Early in March 2016, independent media "All About Macau" revealed that the construction of "Edifício de doenças transmissíveis is crucial and might involve leveling the hillside near Jardim de S. Francisco". The project was controversial since it involved excavating the hillside in the city center, as well as the site's proximity to a declared monument. However, Alexis Tam, the then chief of Social Affairs and Culture, refused to pass this controversial project to the Urban Planning Council for review, citing the fact the project preceded the Urban Planning Law. Furthermore, this project skipped the environment impact review altogether. At the time, "All About Macau" quoted several cultural conservation activists: "With an empty land on one side of the old city wall, and with the construction of "Edifício de doenças transmissíveis" on the other side, the surrounding foundation would become fragile if there is further excavation in the future.

Billy Au early in 2016, and many locals, as well as the heritage preservation activist voice out against any construction near the old city wall, especially the transparency of the project is low, for example, the public had no idea about the distance between the old city wall and the building.

"There have been fractures in the wall for a long time" said André Lui, architect du Patrimoine in France and member of ICOMOS CHINA comments on the afore mentioned fissures. "As you can see in the image, there is a vertical line of Filler of Chinese Ancient Blue Brick, proving that the wall must have been repaired in the past. The presence of roots in the fissure, along with the supporting structure of the wall, suggests that this fracture has been around for a long time. "The reason why the wall is leaning may be related to the landslide a few days ago, another possibility is that the wall has been leaning even before the landslide. I don't have any information whether the fractures are widening or not at the moment. "

André Lui lists several reasons why he is against the decision to demolishing the old city wall. First, according to the first point of Article 32 of Law No. 11/2013 on Heritage Protection law, "the demolition of classified immovable property or in the process of being classified is prohibited". The second point states that "the demolition of buildings of architectural interest or immovable property integrated into sets or sites is approved by order of the Chief Executive, preceded by a mandatory and binding opinion from the IC and consultation of the Cultural Heritage Council". "From a legal perspective, it is prohibited to demolish declared monuments. And actually, there is an alternative plan other than demolition of the remaining wall."

"With the new technology, we can rebuild the old city wall using the ancient method" however, Andre still insists that the authorities should try their best to preserve the original structure, because the pursuit of the authenticity of the heritage is the golden principle of heritage preservation at an international standard "to preserve the authenticity of the heritage is based on the perseverance of modern preservation work from western cultural perspective" it's the perseverance that draw a fine line between the heritage preservation

and construction work. It's the perseverance we should insist and voice out because we knew the historic message can only delivered by the original structure of the heritage, and nothing else.

André Lui said that before the enforcement of the consolidation plan, it is important to set up a precautionary area to prevent damage to the surrounding communities.

With the fracture in the remaining old city wall, which is leaning, in theory, emergency reinforcement structures should be considered as a temporary solution on the other side. if the remaining old city wall continue to lean, this structure can be used to alleviate some of the weight causing the tilt, along with installing other equipment to monitor cracks and displacements, correcting, reinforcing, and restoring the wall after its foundations are stabilized.