

The Comparative Analysis of the Styles of Christian Churches in Modern Mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong

Xinyu Li^{1,2}, Jian Tang^{1,2*}

¹Guangdong Engineering Technology Research Center for Green Building Materials and Fabricated Architecture, Maoming, China
²Key Laboratory of Disaster Forecast and Control in Engineering (Jinan University), MOE of China

Abstract: Chinese Christian (Catholic) architecture is not only an important type of religious architecture, but also an important witness of cultural exchanges between China and the West. This article comprehensively summarizes the architectural styles of Christian (Catholic) churches in modern mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong, and compares the differences in the main styles of their churches horizontally. Based on the data results, a comprehensive analysis of various factors such as age, region, religion, and society is carried out to further explore the reasons for the differences in the architectural styles of Christian churches in the three regions, and discover the historical and religious significance of the Christian churches in modern China.

1 Introduction

Historically, Christianity (Catholicism) has been introduced to China three times, among which the third mission began in the 16th century (late Ming Dynasty), first in Shangchuan Island, Guangdong Province, and then into the mainland through Macau. Large-scale preaching was mainly after the Opium War in the middle of the 19th century, with the help of a series of unequal treaties to establish churches. Most of the existing churches in Mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong were brought by the third Christian (Catholic) entering China. Chinese Christian architecture is not only an important type of Western religious architecture in the Far East, but also an important witness of cultural exchanges between China and the West. It is gradually being paid attention to by international and modern Chinese architecture researchers.

However, due to the lack of documentation and the non-extensive nature of Christian missionary groups in China, modern Chinese Christian church architecture is in urgent need of research and conservation. Relevant studies are mostly on single or region-specific church architecture, such as “The Religious Architecture of Macau” (Liu Xianjue, 2002)¹, “Modern Church Architecture in Lingnan” (Dong Li, 2005)², etc. There is very little review of the overall specific styles of churches in Mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong, such as “Neoclassicism in China and the West” (Gotina, 2005)³. “A Study of Modern Chinese Christian Church Architecture” (Xu Min, 2010)⁴ compares the evolution of the architectural styles of Christian churches in modern China, but does not further explore the differences between the styles of churches in the mainland, Macau and Hong Kong. Judging from the data collected so far,

based on the research of single church architecture, there is no research to comprehensively sort out the architectural styles of Christian churches in the three regions and further analyze the differences between them.

2 Research purpose and Method

Based on the architectural research of individual churches, this article comprehensively summarizes the styles of Christian churches in mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong, and further systematically explores the differences in the styles of Christian churches in the three regions.

The research method is divided into three steps: First, use the method of literature investigation and field research to collect representative church examples that have been preserved and have historical value during the spread of Christianity in modern China. Then apply statistical methods to investigate and compare the existing architectural styles of churches in Mainland China and Macau and Hong Kong. Finally, explore the reasons for the differences in church architectural styles.

3 Statistics on the Styles of Modern Christian Churches in Mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong

(1) Mainland China (Table 1): Christian churches in mainland China are mostly Gothic II (12 seats) and Eclectic (8 seats), with Gothic II as the main style, accounting for more than half. The remaining small parts are neoclassical (3 seats). Renaissance and Baroque styles

* Corresponding author: tangjian1117@aliyun.com

Table 1. Christian Churches in Mainland China (in order of construction)

	Name	Year of construction	Denomina-tion	Existing architectural style
1	Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Beijing	First built in 1605, rebuilt in 1902	Catholicism	Eclecticism (with baroque elements)
2	St. Joseph's Church, Beijing	First built in 1655, rebuilt in 1904	Catholicism	Neoclassicism
3	St. Francis Cathedral, Xi'an	First built in 1716-1727, rebuilt in 1765-1785	Catholicism	Eclecticism
4	St. Francis Xavier Church, Shanghai	Built in 1847	Catholicism	Eclecticism (with baroque elements)
5	Sacred Heart Cathedral, Guangzhou	Built in 1861	Catholicism	Gothic II
6	Shamian Christian Church, Guangzhou	Built in 1864, renovated in 1931	Christianity	Eclecticism
7	Holy Trinity Cathedral, Shanghai	Built in 1866	Christianity	Gothic II
8	Église Notre-Dame des Victoires (French), Tianjin	First built in 1869, rebuilt in 1903	Catholicism	Gothic II
9	Asbury Church, Beijing	First built in 1870, rebuilt in 1909	Christianity	Eclecticism
10	Sheshan Basilica, Shanghai	First built in 1871, rebuilt in 1925	Catholicism	Gothic II
11	Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral, Shenyang	First built in 1876, rebuilt in 1912	Catholicism	Gothic II
12	East Soochow Methodist Church, Suzhou	First built in 1881, rebuilt in 1915	Christianity	Eclecticism
13	Church of the Saviour, Beijing	Built in 1888, renovated in 1985	Catholicism	Gothic II
14	Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel, Shamian Island, Guangzhou	Built in 1889	Catholicism	Gothic II
15	Sacred Heart Cathedral, Jinan	Built in 1901	Catholicism	Gothic II
16	St. Victor Cathedral, Zhanjiang	Built in 1902	Catholicism	Gothic II
17	Sanyi International Church, Kunming	First built in 1903, rebuilt in 2003	Christianity	Gothic II
18	St. Ignatius Cathedral, Shanghai	Built in 1906	Catholicism	Gothic II
19	St. Joseph Cathedral, Tianjin	Built in 1916, renovated in 1979	Catholicism	Neoclassicism
20	Community Church, Shanghai	Built in 1923	Christianity	Eclecticism
21	St. Michael's Cathedral, Qingdao	Built in 1932	Catholicism	Gothic II
22	Mochou Road Church, Nanjing	Built in 1936	Christianity	Eclecticism
23	St. Paul's Church, Qingdao	Built in 1938	Christianity	Neoclassicism

Table 2. Christian Churches in Macau (in order of construction)

	Name	Year of construction	Denomina-tion	Existing architectural styles
1	St. Lazarus' Church, Macau	First built in 1557, rebuilt in 1896	Catholicism	Eclecticism (Baroque and neoclassical mix)
2	St. Lawrence's Church, Macau	First built in 1558, renovated in 1844	Catholicism	Eclecticism (Gothic II and Baroque mix)
3	Igreja de Santo António (Portuguese), Macau	First built in 1558-1560, rebuilt in 1930	Catholicism	Neoclassicism
4	Igreja de Santo Agostinho (Portuguese), Macau	First built in 1587, rebuilt in 1874	Catholicism	Neoclassicism
5	St. Dominic's Church, Macau	First built in 1588, rebuilt in 1721 and 1828	Catholicism	Baroque
6	Ruins of Saint Paul's, Macau	First built in 1602, then rebuilt several times	Catholicism	Baroque
7	Capela de Nossa Senhora da Guia (Portuguese), Macau	First built before 1622, rebuilt in 1864.	Catholicism	Renaissance
8	Our Lady of Penha Chapel, Macau	First built in 1622, rebuilt in 1837 and 1935	Catholicism	Neoclassicism
9	Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady, Macau	First built in 1622, rebuilt in 1849 and 1937.	Catholicism	Neoclassicism
10	St. Joseph's Seminary and Church, Macau	Built in 1728	Catholicism	Baroque
11	Protestant Chapel, Macau	First built in 1821, rebuilt in 1921	Christianity	Neoclassicism
12	St. Michael, the Archangel, Macau	First built in 1873, then rebuilt many times	Catholicism	Gothic II
13	Our Lady of Carmel Church, Macau	First built in 1885, renovated in 1985	Catholicism	Neoclassicism

Table 3. Christian Churches in Hong Kong (in order of construction)

	Name	Year of construction	Denomina-tion	Existing architectural styles
1	Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Hong Kong	First built in 1842, rebuilt in 1888	Catholicism	Gothic II
2	St John's Cathedral, Hong Kong	First built in 1847, renovated in 1865	Christianity	Gothic II
3	Béthanie, Hong Kong	First built in 1875, then remodeled several times	Catholicism	Gothic II
4	Rosary Church, Hong Kong	First built in 1901, renovated in 1990	Catholicism	Neoclassicism
5	Chinese Rhenish Church, Hong Kong	First built in 1914	Christianity	Neoclassicism
6	Shing Kwong Church, Hong Kong	First built in 1890, rebuilt in 1926	Christianity	Neoclassicism
7	St. Margaret's Church, Hong Kong	Built in 1923	Catholicism	Neoclassicism
8	The Church of Christ in China Hop Yat Church, Hong Kong	Built in 1924	Christianity	Gothic II
9	Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong Kau Yan Church, Hong Kong	First built in 1852, rebuilt in 1931	Christianity	Neoclassicism

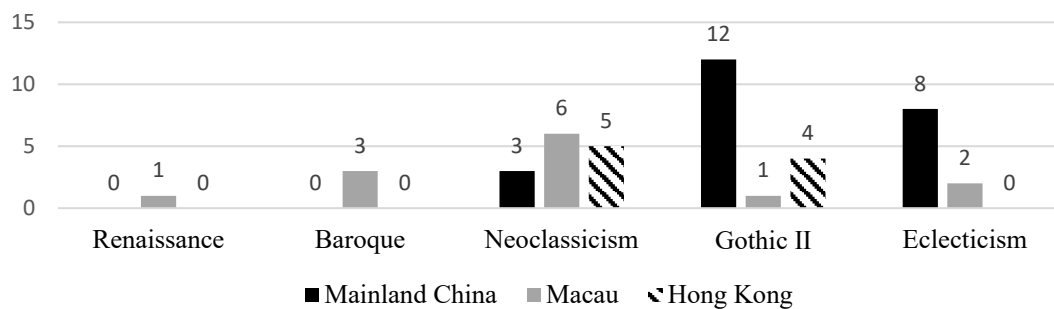


Figure 1. Statistics on the styles of Christian churches in Mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong

are not seen in the existing churches. (Although Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Beijing and St. Francis Xavier Church in Shanghai have Baroque elements, the existing architectural styles are eclectic.)

(2) Macau (Table 2): The existing Christian churches in Macau are mainly Baroque (3 seats) and Neoclassical (6 seats), and it is the only region in China where Renaissance and Baroque churches are extant. Most of the extant churches are Neoclassical, with very few Gothic II churches (1 seat).

(3) Hong Kong (Table 3): Christian churches in Hong Kong are Neoclassical (5 seats) and Gothic II (4 seats).

4 Data Analysis

Based on the results of the above data, there are significant differences in the architectural styles of modern Christian churches in Mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong.

(1) In the third Christian (Catholic) mission, Macau was earlier than Mainland China and Hong Kong and was the “City of the Holy name of God”. Therefore, there were Baroque churches that were prevalent in the West earlier in the history. There were even Renaissance churches in the 17th century that has been preserved to this day.

From 1557 to 1562, barbarian merchants landed in

and settled buildings in Macau. Before Matteo Ricci came to China, this place had always been the only stronghold of the Jesuit mission in China, and it is also the main base and channel for Catholicism to infiltrate China. At the same time, Europe had gone through the Renaissance to the late Baroque, and capitalism had emerged. The architectural styles of Macau churches were affected by this, and most of them adopted the Baroque style prevailing in the West at that time or even the earlier Renaissance style, which have been preserved to this day.

After the Opium War in 1840, with the help of a series of unequal treaties, churches of various denominations began to build churches in mainland China and Hong Kong on a large scale. At this time, neoclassicism and Gothic II were prevalent in the West, and then eclecticism appeared. What is interesting was that most churches built in mainland China adopted the Gothic II style, while the churches built in Hong Kong mostly adopted the Neoclassical style, followed by the Gothic II.

(2) Macau is the “City of the Holy name of God” and a colony, and Hong Kong is also a colony. However, the mainland of China is a semi-colonial place where the so-called “pagans” are located, and the more Gothic II style churches are notable features.

Portugal had landed and settled in Macau as early as

1557, and Hong Kong was occupied by the British in 1841. Hong Kong and Macau had become leaseholds of Western powers. In Western culture, although Baroque architecture is vigorous, it is still a horizontal composition. Neoclassical architecture emphasizes the unique order and human dignity more. In Macau and Hong Kong, more baroque and neoclassical church buildings were built to demonstrate the humanity of Christianity and attract more believers with gentleness.

In the vertical system of Gothic and Gothic II church buildings, the towering towers and pointed arches are metaphors for the ascension to God. The murals and statues inside the building, together with the exterior image of the building, create a pious and mysterious religious atmosphere. Therefore, compared with other styles of architecture, Gothic or Gothic II church mission is a clearer display of “theocracy” rather than “human rights”. After the Opium War, mainland China was still semi-colonial, and people were still fighting against imperialism. The spread of Christianity was not progressing smoothly. It can be seen from Table 1 that there are obviously more Gothic II churches in the interior than other styles, which better fit the missionary purpose of highlighting the sacredness and sublime of Christianity and allowing devout believers to perceive the majestic existence of God.

5 Conclusion

The existing Christian churches in Mainland China are mainly in the Gothic II style; the existing Christian churches in Macau are mostly Baroque and neoclassical styles; the Hong Kong Christian churches are in neoclassical and Gothic II styles. The main reasons for the differences in church styles between the Mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong are as follows:

(1) In the third Christian (Catholic) mission, Macau was earlier than Mainland China and Hong Kong and was the “City of the Holy name of God”. Therefore, there were Baroque churches that were prevalent in the West earlier in the history. There were even Renaissance churches in the 17th century that has been preserved to this day. In Western culture, although Baroque architecture is vigorous, it is still a horizontal composition. Neoclassical architecture emphasizes the unique order and human dignity more. Especially, neoclassicism is associated with the “human rights” of the emerging bourgeoisie.

(2) There are significantly more vertical Gothic II churches in mainland China than in Macau and Hong Kong. The missionaries chose a different missionary

approach. A large number of Gothic II churches built in mainland China better fit the missionary purpose of highlighting the sacredness and sublime of Christianity and allowing devout believers to perceive the majestic existence of God.

It is true that Christian churches of various styles invaded China along with the imperialist ships and guns, but they gradually incorporated the connotation of Chinese traditional culture, completing the infusion and interpretation of the local architectural language in the Chinese background. This stone-made “historical book” has left a brilliant stroke in the history of Chinese architecture and is worthy of further in-depth research.

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