Preservation of Traditional Buildings with Heritage Value in Asian Cities with Colonial Background – Shanghai, Guangzhou & Hong Kong cases

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The Physical region of East Asia as seen from Google

Area with strong colonial background since mid 19th Century
The Territory of China in Qing Dynasty (1644 – 1911)
Traditional European Architecture had marked a deep footprint to a number of Asian cities during the 19th Century as the pace of colonial expansion intensified.

Cities such as Tianjin, Qingdao, Dalian, Shanghai, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur or Singapore, still have a significant amount of traditional buildings remained inside the cities under an acceptable condition.
Example of buildings with strong colonial taste in Tianjin, China
Example of buildings with strong colonial taste in Qingdao, China
Example of buildings with strong colonial taste in Xiamen, China
Example of buildings with strong colonial taste in Xiamen, China
Example of buildings with strong colonial taste in Guangzhou, China
An overview of Singapore inside the old city along Singapore River
Buildings with strong colonial taste
Example of buildings with strong colonial taste in Singapore
Buildings with colonial and local-mixed style in Singapore
Buildings with colonial and local-mixed style in Kuala Lumpur
Milestone of the colonial influence in China

1. 1840-42, the Opium War resulted to the signing of the Nanjing Treaty, 5 ports in China opened to western countries as free port. Hong Kong was ceded to the British.

2. Treaty of Beijing signed after the lost of war between British and French in 1858, result to the draining in of western merchandise goods that broke China’s economical systems in the decades to come.

3. Features of these Treaties signed with western powers:
   a) Free access to trade and right to waive from local taxes
   b) Free from import control and the related taxes
   c) Occupying or obtaining the right to use part of the land property in China
   d) obtaining of special diplomatic and jurisdiction privileges
   e) The same privileges apply to other countries signing similar treaties in future.
Shanghai

General condition since 2000

(to be exact, what it is referring to is 2005 and there after. Talking something 5 years ago in China is in fact very out-dated)
Shanghai city in 2006
The Bund – the bank along Huang Po River where western powers first set their feet into China in the turn of 20th Century
Western architecture at the Bund
Buildings with strong colonial taste in Shanghai
Streetscape of Shanghai showing rows of buildings with heritage value
Architectural details of buildings
Detached houses with garden
Detached houses with garden
Remaining locations in the city centre with large amount of traditional houses as seen in 2005
Remaining locations in the city centre with large amount of traditional houses as seen in 2006
The process of redevelopment
The process of redevelopment
The process of redevelopment
The process of redevelopment
The process of redevelopment
The process of redevelopment
Merging the old with the new
Merging the old with the new
New development with improved living environment
New development with improved living environment
Is this kind of building worth retaining?

Exterior view of the building
Is this kind of building worth retaining?
Guangzhou (Canton)
Modern Guangzhou
Panoramic view showing the city condition in 2004
City condition near the bank of Pearl River
Examples of buildings with strong colonial taste
Shamian, a small sandy island on the bank of Pearl River, was handed to the British and French in mid 19th Century forming a base to develop their influence in Guangzhou.
Shamian viewed from an elevated position
Buildings in Shamian
Buildings in Shamian
Western architecture in various locations within the old city districts
Western architecture in various locations within the old city districts
Western architecture in various locations within the old city districts
Buildings with mixed-architectural style in various locations within the old city districts
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Buildings with mixed-architectural style in various locations within the old city districts.
Buildings with mixed-architectural style in various locations within the old city districts.
Condition of the city in reality for common people
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Portion of the old district being cleared for the construction of subway and redevelopment
Large areas in the old city inside downtown being knocked-down for redevelopment
Count down for change
Traditional buildings before and after the renovation – any value-adding to the heritage quality?
Strategic renovation work carried out street-by-street since late 1990s’, mainly for the façade only.
Renovated/Re-decorated old buildings on the sides of the “Pedestrian Streets” – any resemblance of the past?
Widening of a roadway by the removal of the front row of old houses on the side of the road
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The finding of an ancient walkway in the busy town centre
Hong Kong
Hong Kong at the turn of the 19th/20th Century
Hong Kong just before the WW II
Hong Kong Central District in early 1930s’
Hong Kong Central District in early 1970s’ and early 2000s’
Hong Kong in early 2000s’

Area first developed in 1845 - 1860

Area being developed after 1860

Original coast line before 1900

Victoria Harbour

Hong Kong in early 2000s’
Examples of some existing buildings located in the downtown areas with strong colonial taste
The previous French Commission Building as seen in early 1900s and 2000s
Examples of some existing buildings located in the downtown areas with mixed architectural style
Examples of some existing buildings located in the downtown areas with mixed architectural style
Recent renewal project with limited preservation to remaining heritage building
Building with old façade remained and new RC structure built on top
Example of building being renovated
The development in the name of urban renewal, city regeneration or else ..
Areas first developed in 1880s. At present, not a single building remained.

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Preservation of heritage building?
What will be the next – Wanchai District on the Hong Kong Island side
Streets in Hong Kong with a lapse of 70 years

Hong Kong streetscape in 1900s. This kind of houses at present is less than 1% being remained anywhere inside Hong Kong.

The past of the city is gone forever.
Streets as seen in Guangzhou and Shanghai in early 2000s’
How can we evaluate progress?

What will be the next?

Can western experience in preserving the city heritage applied to these cities?

Any model answer?
Further reference:

This Powerpoint was prepared for a presentation in the International Association of Housing Science (IAHS) World Congress held in September 2006 in Naples, Italy. For more detail, please refer to the paper under the same title published in the proceedings of the Congress.

Note: the paper can be made accessible using http://personal.cityu.edu.hk/~bswmwong/pp/cc&fwfront.html