

Research on the current situation of Portuguese architecture in Mozambique Island

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ARTICLE INFO

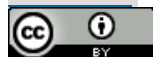
Keywords: Portuguese Colonial City, Portuguese Architecture, Mozambique Island.

Received : 3 October

Revised : 15 October

Accepted : 27 October

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ABSTRACT

This research mainly analyzes the Portuguese architecture of Mozambique Island through the investigation of historical data. At the same time, it summarizes the characteristics of Portuguese architecture and the problems faced by the architectural heritage of Mozambique Island. Finally hoping for some protection references.

INTRODUCTION

The Island of Mozambique (Portuguese: Ilha de Moçambique) lies off northern Mozambique, between the Mozambique Channel and Mossuril Bay, and is part of Nampula Province. Prior to 1898, it was the capital of colonial Portuguese East Africa. With its rich history and sandy beaches, the Island of Mozambique is a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of Mozambique's fastest-growing tourist destinations.



Figure 1. A map engraved by Pieter van den Keere in 1598 (Image source: Pieter van den Keere - Historiccities)

Pottery found on Mozambique Island indicates that the town was founded no later than the fourteenth century. According to tradition, the original Swahili population came from Kilwa. The town's rulers had links with the rulers of both Angoche and Quelimane by the fifteenth century. In 1514, Duarte Barbosa noted that the town had a Muslim population and that they spoke the same Swahili dialect as Angoche (Newitt, Malyn, 2004).

The name of the island is derived from Ali Musa Mbiki (Mussa Bin Bique), sultan of the island in the times of Vasco da Gama. This name was subsequently taken to the mainland country which is modern-day Mozambique, and the island was renamed Ilha de Moçambique (Island of Mozambique). The Portuguese established a port and naval base in 1507 and built the Chapel of Nossa Senhora de Baluarte in 1522, now considered the oldest European building in the Southern

Hemisphere. During the 16th century, the Fort São Sebastião was built, and the Portuguese settlement (now known as Stone Town) became the capital of Portuguese East Africa. The island also became an important missionary centre. It withstood Dutch attacks in 1607 and 1608 and remained a major post for the Portuguese on their trips to India. It saw the trading of slaves, spices, and gold (Patrick Lagès, 1997).



Figure 2. Geographical location (Image source: <https://www.africanworldheritagesites.org/>)

Apart from the ancient fortifications, only half of the town is stone-built. The hospital, a majestic neo-classical building constructed in 1877 by the Portuguese, with a garden decorated with ponds and fountains, was repainted white after the Mozambican Civil War. For many years, it was the biggest hospital south of the Sahara. With the opening of the Suez Canal, the island's fortunes waned. In 1898, the capital was moved to Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) on the mainland. By the middle of the 20th century, the new harbour of Nacala took most of the remaining business (Patrick Lagès, 1997).

METHODS

This paper analyzes and expands by examining historical archives.

Features of Portuguese architecture

While elements of Portuguese architecture go back to the days before the founding of Portugal in the 12th century, they continue to resonate today

not only in Portugal, but in other parts of the world as well (Eduardo Moerschbaecher, 2022).

The “Portuguese” style is however far from static and has changed innumerable times within history, with each ethnic group that lived in the Portuguese Empire implementing some of their own cultural and aesthetic adaptation across the different structures that were built – including ports, castles, shops, houses, squares, among others. As European architecture passed from the romantic to the contemporary style, certain elements remain “typically Portuguese”.

Tiles

Portuguese tiles, or “azulejos”, carry Moorish influence and are usually less thick and lighter than other tiles, with ceramic, glittering and impermeable features. Initially, they were very colorful. Then, with later Dutch influence, the monochromatic blue came to dominate. They are currently used not only for their aesthetic value, but also because they are easy to maintain and offer impermeable protection to outer facades (Eduardo Moerschbaecher, 2022).



Figure 3. Portuguese tiles (Image source: Eduardo Moerschbaecher)



Figure 4. Portuguese cobblestone (Image source: Eduardo Moerschbaecher)

Cobblestone

Portuguese cobblestone, or “calçadas”, is another common feature of Portuguese architecture. It represents floor covering used for paving of sidewalks, and sometimes used indoor with epoxy

varnish. These traditional Portuguese sidewalks are made of small irregular stone blocks, often in black and white tones creating mosaics and designs on the floor. Due to the abundance of raw material in the region, the most used colors are black, white and brown. This kind of pavement continues to gain worldwide popularity and is considered a form of artwork in the pedestrian zones of the cities. The sidewalks are also functional and often made up of easy to sourced raw materials(Eduardo Moerschbaecher,2022).

Frames

Cantarias” (another Arabic word) are very visible in Portuguese architecture. In the past, these were made of stones of the region and involved detailed work of craftsmanship. Particularly in the south of the country, more precisely in the Algarve region and in Andalusia, residential, commercial and small farm architecture continue to rely on cantarias inspired by the architectural legacy left by the Moors(Eduardo Moerschbaecher,2022).



Figure 5. Frames (Image source: Eduardo Moerschbaecher)

Parapet wall

The architectural term “platibanda” is used to describe the upper decorative band. This traditional element of the Algarvian architecture is of decorative character and “crowns” the facade, hiding the roofs behind it. The lavish use of this decorative element symbolized the financial power of its property owner, a symbol for wealth that would often be used in multiple colours(Eduardo Moerschbaecher,2022).

Chimneys

The distinctive Portuguese chimneys are visible for anyone who has visited Algarve in particular. In the old days, chimneys symbolized the personality and wealth of the owner of the house.

All chimneys were distinct from each other, with the more detailed and expansive ones carrying the highest status symbol (Eduardo Moerschbaecher, 2022).



Figure 6. Chimneys (Image source: Eduardo Moerschbaecher)

Terraces

Known as “açoteias”, terraces carry Moorish influence as well and in the past served to observe the sea and the boats that arrived. Currently, many residents use this space to dry fruit and fish as well as a space to rest during hot summer evenings(Eduardo Moerschbaecher,2022).

Materials

Stone, clay, lime and wood were the elements that appeared the most in the construction of historic traditional Portuguese architecture and this materials continue to be popular. Lime, mainly, was one of the predominant material as it was easy to find in the region and continues to form the base for beautiful white facades.

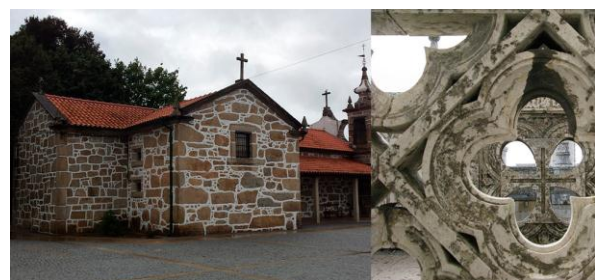


Figure 7. Materials (Image source: Eduardo Moerschbaecher)

While Portuguese architecture today is associated with famous Portuguese architects and their work around the world, anyone can get inspired by these elements to create a unique space with Portuguese charm. Tiles, side walks, bright colors and stone material can add a trendy,

traditional character to any home(Eduardo Moerschbaecher,2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The capital of Mozambique is a good example. Maputo is situated on a large natural bay on the Indian Ocean, near where the rivers Tembe, Mbuluzi, Matola and Infulene converge. The city consists of seven administrative divisions, which are each subdivided into quarters or bairros. The city is surrounded by Maputo Province, but is administered as a self-contained, separate province since 1998. Maputo City is the geographically smallest and most densely populated province in Mozambique.

Once, this was Portugal's transit trade port to India. People completed the transshipment and trade of spices, ivory and black slaves here. It can be said that Mozambique witnessed the creation of Portugal's sea route from the West to the Indian subcontinent and even the whole of Asia. Based on the active trade, from the 16th to 19th centuries, Portuguese and Arabs built a large number of stone buildings here, including government institutions, schools, hotels and restaurants. The colorful buildings and churches come from the Portuguese's tribute to their hometown. Rainwater harvesting systems on the roofs, garden buildings, mosques, with traces of the Arabs. The carvings on the porch and the delicate and exquisite architectural decorations were brought from India across the ocean.

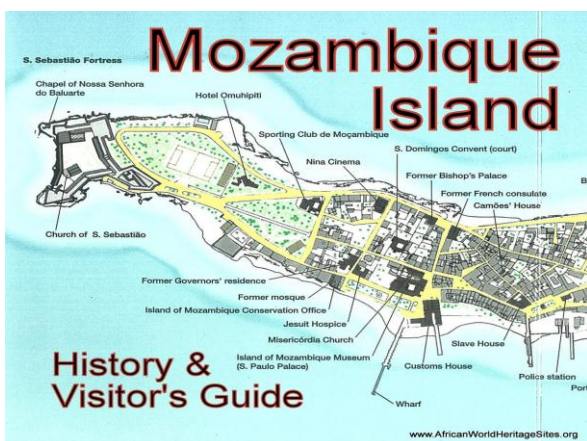


Figure 8. Mozambique Island Official Visitor Guide & History (Image source: <https://www.africanworldheritagesites.org/assets/images/Guide.Island%20of%20Mozambique.p2-001.jpg>)

Maputo has a number of landmarks, including Independence Square, City Hall, Maputo Fortress, the central market, Tunduru Gardens, and Maputo Railway Station. Maputo is known as an aesthetically attractive, if dilapidated, city. With wide avenues lined by jacaranda and acacia trees, it has earned the nicknames City of Acacias and the Pearl of the Indian Ocean(Ventures Africa,2014). The city is known for its distinct, eclectic architecture, with Portuguese colonial Neoclassical and Manueline styles alongside modern art deco, bauhaus, tropical modernism and Brutalist buildings.

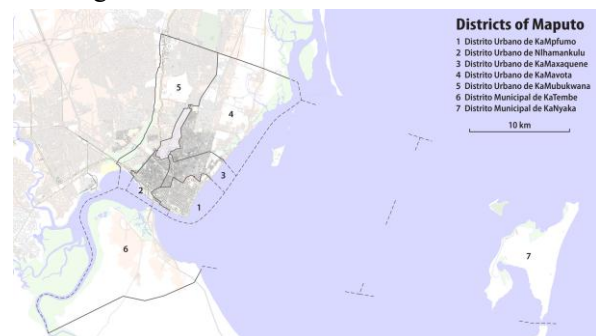


Figure 9. Districts of Maputo (Image source: Maximilian Dörrbecker)



Figure 10. The Hotel Polana (Image source: F Mira)



Figure 11. Municipal Market of Maputo (Image source: lucianf)



Figure 12. The Maputo Railway Station, an example of colonial architecture (Image source: Maurits & Marjol)



Figure 13. Mansion prepared for demolition Av. Kim Il Sung (Image source: AP1MZ)



Figure 14. Mansion prepared for demolition Av. Mao Tse Tung (Image source: AP1MZ)

Compared to other famous resort islands, Mozambique island, which was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1991, may have a problem: too few tourists. Other popular holiday islands attract a large number of tourists, because of their beautiful scenery. While making a lot of

money, some of them start to suffer from environmental problems caused by too many tourists. Mozambique faces the exact opposite problem. There are not many tourists here, tourism revenue accounts for a small proportion, and the government is poor. Without funds to invest in the maintenance of the world's material cultural heritage, it seems that it will disappear from people's sight in the foreseeable future.



Figure 15. Other Portuguese architecture



Figure 16. Other Portuguese architecture



Figure 17. Other Portuguese architecture

Another reason is the inconvenience of transportation, which makes it extremely difficult to reach Mozambique Island. In general, it takes three days to start from the capital, Maputo, by car. If you choose a plane, the cost of going to and from the capital is expensive. These costs are enough to fly between China and East Africa, and you only fly to

Nampula, which is more than 100 kilometers away from Mozambique Island. After that, you have to take a 3-hour flight minibus. The island of Mozambique is connected to the mainland by a 3.5-kilometer bridge that imposes strict weight limits on passing cars.



Figure 18. Mozambique, 2014, (Image source: DigitalGlobe, Google)

When Mozambique became independent in 1975, the Portuguese left and their abandoned houses were taken over by the locals. The global recession of the late 1980s and 1990s affected Mozambique's economy, and a tornado disaster in 1994 devastated the already precarious island. After the European colonists evacuated, the houses they left were taken over by the locals, but they were not well maintained. Even the originally indestructible stone city is rapidly corroded and damaged over time. The roofs and floors of the Middle Ages have often collapsed, the walls are sloping, and many houses can no longer be occupied, so they appear depressed and dilapidated. Most are dilapidated and crumbling. In impoverished Mozambique, investing a lot of money in the maintenance of the island's historic buildings may seem like an unbearable task.

CONCLUSION

Through a comparative study, it is found that the buildings of Mozambique Island show a remarkable Portuguese architectural style. The preserved buildings are not only the heritage of Mozambique, but also the heritage of the whole world. For this beautiful island in the Indian Ocean, the current situation can be improved in several ways: applying more funds from international organizations or non-profit organizations; improving transportation and enhancing the reception capacity of tourism and vacations; and cooperating with enterprises for conservation development.

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