

Geography Project: Survey on the Culture of Macau in the View of Foreigners SUMMARIZED RESULTS

In a geography project with a first year class in Contemporary China Studies we were looking into the relationship of Macau as a geographical place and the concept of culture: Is there any particular “Macau culture”? How important is culture for Macau – especially in its perception by foreigners? What cultural traits, what images represent “Macau” in the eyes of foreigners? Do they see any cultural changes since the handover in 1999?

As foreigners in this study we regarded all non-Chinese. We conducted 119 interviews with foreigners at selected locations within Macau on Sat., 5.5.2001. The majority of the respondents were visitors (72%) who stayed in Macau for a short time, mostly as tourists. 28% of them were considered residents by us, if they stayed or intended to stay more than one month. Slightly more than half of these residents were non-Chinese born in Macau.



Table 1. Number of respondents by location.

location	visitor	resident	total
A Hotel Lisboa	14	11	25
B Leal Senado	27	7	34
C St. Paul	27	0	27
D A Ma temple	14	3	17
U university	4	10	14
X others	0	2	2
total	86	33	119

Table 2. Reasons for coming/moving to Macau.

	A	B	C	D	U	X	total
tourist	12	26	25	10	2	0	75
born here	7	2	0	4	3	1	17
business/work	3	3	2	0	0	1	9
relatives/friends	1	1	0	3	3	0	8
study*	1	1	0	0	6	0	8
live here*	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
casino*	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	25	34	27	17	14	2	119

*not in the original list

The number of landmarks, which leave an impression on people and which are in one way or another symbols of Macau to them is quite limited. More than half of the respondents (54% of all, 57% of the visitors) named the ruins of St. Paul as most impressive, followed by the A-Ma Temple, Square of Leal Senado and Hotel Lisboa. Other architectural landmarks were more known by the residents than by visitors. The new Macau Tower, a very outstanding landmark, failed to impress the respondents (so far). Macau is obviously more represented by historical buildings than by modern ones.

Table 3. Which sightseeing spot left the deepest impression on you?

	visitors	residents	total	% residents
Ruins of St. Paul	49	15	64	23
A-Ma Temple	9	3	12	25
Square of Leal Senado	8	2	10	20
Hotel Lisboa	5	1	6	17
Lighthouse	3	3	6	50
Penha Hill	1	3	4	75
Bridges	1	2	3	67
The new tower	0	1	1	100
Statues	0	0	0	-
Casinos*	3	1	4	25
Museums*	2	0	2	0
Parks*	1	0	1	0
Building in Taipa*	0	1	1	100
none*	4	1	5	20
total	86	33	119	28

* not in the original list

When ranked on a scale from 1 to 4, with 4 the highest mark, Macau has scored much better in terms of culture than in other aspects. Life-style, which can also be regarded as an aspect of culture, was also rated highly. Regarding other aspects the respondents were more critical. Still, except for economy and administration which found little praise, the positive ratings exceeded the negative ones. Generally visitors were more positive than residents. As Macau seems so strongly related to culture, it is interesting to see, what people associate with the culture of Macau.



Table 4. Impression of Macau in different aspects.

issue	points				no comment	average number of points		
	1	2	3	4		total	visitors	residents
culture	5	21	32	42	19	3,11	3,25	2,81
life style	2	19	59	25	14	3,02	3,11	2,82
environment	5	31	43	25	15	2,85	2,96	2,61
public transport	10	22	27	26	34	2,81	2,87	2,71
city planning	8	32	38	15	26	2,65	2,77	2,39
economy	13	40	18	6	42	2,22	2,49	1,84
administration	15	18	17	3	66	2,15	2,47	1,74

Surprisingly, in terms of cultural traits such as architecture, religion and even language the respondents still see Macau as a more Portuguese than Chinese place. Here the perception does clearly not match the reality, let alone the self-image of its residents. Against this backdrop city-marketing can choose to either cater the obvious demand for a Portuguese place in the East by playing to this prevailing image or set out to correct this image by promoting its Chinese side.

Table 5. Which of the following items do you identify with the culture of Macau?

	visitors		residents		total
Portuguese architecture	62	72 %	22	67 %	84
Portuguese language	51	59 %	18	55 %	69
Cantonese language	36	42 %	24	73 %	60
Macau cuisine	42	49 %	16	48 %	58
Catholic religion	36	42 %	12	36 %	48
monuments	33	38 %	9	27 %	42
Chinese architecture	21	24 %	15	45 %	36
museums	21	24 %	12	36 %	33
many cultural activities	17	20 %	14	42 %	31
Buddhism/Taoism	18	21 %	10	30 %	28
Chinese opera	2	2 %	7	21 %	9
special dresses/costumes	2	2 %	4	12 %	6
Macau music	2	2 %	3	9 %	5

The last question (“Do you see any cultural changes since the handover of Macau?”) did not yield any noteworthy results. Partly because only 28 visitors and 25 residents have been here before the handover, and partly because the students did not always make clear enough that we were asking about *cultural* instead of general changes.



The interviews were conducted by 16 undergraduate students of Contemporary China Studies at University of Macau, all of them Macau-Chinese. The project was part of their class Introduction to Geography, taught by Dr. Werner Breitung (breitung@hotmail.com). The photographs were taken during the field-work.