

# **ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS IN DAVAO CITY: VALUE-BASED APPROACH TO THE HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE**

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## **Abstract**

For years, Davao City (and Mindanao in general) has been caught up in the myth that it is the Land of Promise. As such, it has suffered an identity crisis because of the flux of migrants and the clash of cultures caught up in the web of historical processes that emphasized change and progress. It is difficult to plot the historical trajectories of change without archaeological or architectural basis.

This research supports the assertion that it is more desirable to study Architecture within the context of the cultures that produced it. Specifically, it aims to identify and classify the architectural landmarks in Davao City through a Workshop conducted with the Davao Historical Institute.

The initial output of the research was to produce a compilation of architectural landmarks presented in a video documentary for the purpose of formal documentation and interpretation. The video documentary features the architectural landmarks as the outgrowth of the historic, symbolic, social, economic and aesthetic values of a place and its people. These are the values that associate or connect people with structures.

The identified and categorized landmarks are intended to instill knowledge and appreciation of architectural works as monuments the local community would take pride in not merely on the basis of its form and function, but on the basis of the values placed on these structures.

**Keywords:** aesthetic landmarks; architectural landmarks; Davao City; economic landmarks; historic landmarks; history of architecture; landmarks; social landmarks; symbolic landmarks; value-based approach

## Introduction

People attach themselves to places not merely on the basis of its functional or visual aspects. In any society, people create and establish associations with places as a result of their perceived notions of excellence. These places are valued primarily on rational or logical bases – that is, promoting the common products of the human inhabitants: arts, sciences, languages, politics, philosophy, and the like. The significance attached to these places also takes into consideration the “cultural development that seeks to encourage that which is the most excellent and the noblest of products, inventions and creations of humanness” (Malreux, as cited in Fernandez, 1995). Thus, places connoting a high level of self-expression, self-assessment, and self-reform are regarded as landmarks of value.

“Landmarks are monuments of Filipino creativity. It makes the Filipino understand himself a bit more and appreciate more fully the achievements of his forebears” (Laya, 2001). These sites become manifestations of the people’s proclivity to connect, to agree, to unite. As monuments of a people’s cultural heritage, landmarks are subjects worthy of investigation as they are conspicuous confirmations of a people’s common expectations. The making of such places are marked by “meanings that are consensually constructed and [by] common [experiences that] are remembered” (Pabalan, 2002). These places reflect cultural values “that are (collectively) considered important and ‘of value’ by a given group of people” (Fernandez, 1995). These places are not arbitrarily selected but are fundamentally a reflection of a people’s ideologies, political economies, power relations, and cultural characteristics.

This study looks into the question of what are considered landmarks in Davao City. Davao City is a cosmopolitan community that is known as a melting pot of various regional strains of the Filipino nation. As local historian Ernesto I. Corcino (1998) puts it:

Through the years, the Davaoeños have developed a new strain of citizenry that embodies the collective outlook and ideals of the Filipino race. Yet, despite the wide array of idiosyncrasies and traits, the people (coming from different regions in the country) have learned to adapt to changes and to co-exist peacefully.

One way to determine the “collective outlook and ideals” that have developed among the citizens of Davao City is by tracing of imprints of the city’s cultural heritage, particularly its architectural landmarks.

This interpretive-historical study thus seeks to identify and classify the architectural landmarks in Davao City through a workshop conducted with the Davao Historical Institute, a group composed of prominent names in the city’s social, political, economic, and cultural landscape. The workshop gathered recollective evidence that reflects the values representative of the city’s historical and cultural development. Through interviews with the informants and visits to historical sites, architectural and historical landmarks were identified, categorized, and interpreted as the outgrowth of the Social, Historic, Symbolic, Economic, and Aesthetic values of the place and its people (Sta.Maria, 2000).

The following architectural landmarks were identified and categorized by workshop participants. The categorization of these landmarks according to these values highlights one of the Filipino’s common traits – connectivity. Felipe M. de Leon, a renowned cultural scholar, contends that the Filipino needs to connect (1995). For one, the Filipino connects with spaces and places. The sense of connection is considered to be the Filipino’s response to an architectural structure’s social, historic, symbolic, economic or aesthetic significance. This response is considered a common perception among people in a locality. Thus the connection of people with others is likewise established in the process.

## Social Landmarks

Landmarks identified as possessing social significance are places used for public utility. People will stick to their place as long as they still have their social relations to speak of – social relations are their wealth (Alegre, 1998). These places are considered relevant in social interaction whereby social and institutional privileges, political opportunities, and religious rights, are exercised and celebrated.

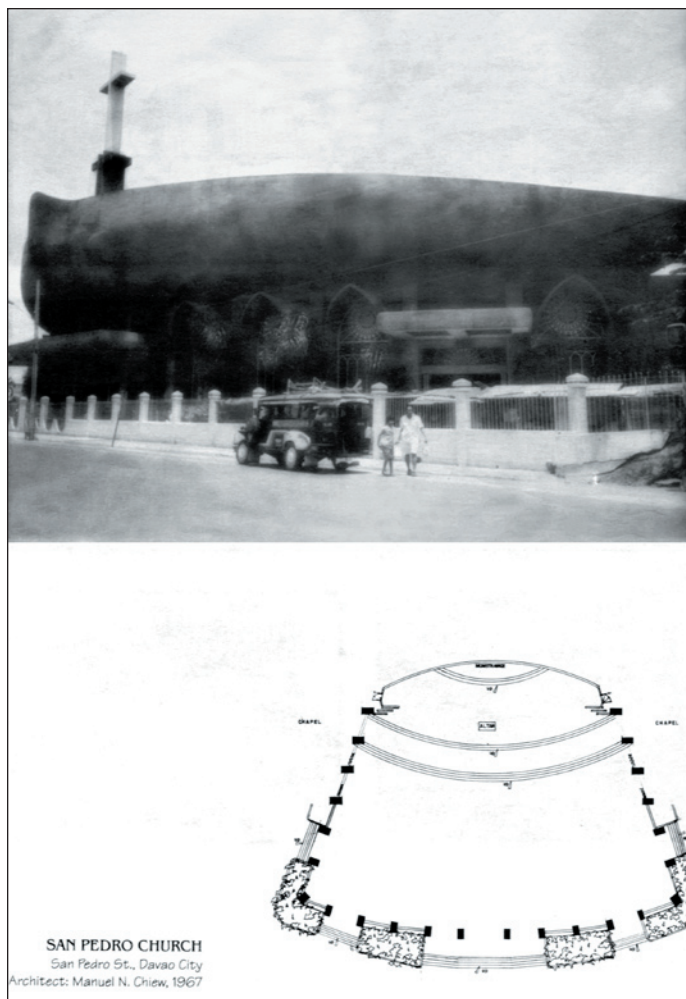
The presence of churches in Davao reflects the Davaoños devotion to the Christian faith: the Sta. Ana Parish Church, constructed in 1949 is notable for its intricate concrete perforations; the United Church of Christ in the Philippines is the oldest standing Protestant Church that has undergone improvements and additions since the time it was built.

Prominent among these places of worship is the San Pedro Cathedral, located in the heart of the city, which was first built using nipa and bamboo in 1848. It was rebuilt in wood in the mid1900s by the late Arch. Ramon Basa (Figure 1a), until it was finally remodelled in concrete in 1964 by Arch. Manuel Chiew (Figure 1b). From the time it was built up to the present, people would flock to this place especially on Sundays to hear mass and then spend time with their family afterwards. It was regarded with much reverence brought about by the memories of times spent with family and friends.



*Figure 1a.*

San Pedro Cathedral, San Pedro St. cor. Claveria St., 1950s  
(Photo courtesy of E. Corcino)



*Figure 1b.*  
San Pedro Cathedral, San Pedro St. cor. Claveria St.  
Since 1964 up to present.  
(Photo courtesy of Michael Angelo Dakudao)

The reconstruction of the church also brought about a design that is reflective of the convergence desired by Davaoeños if not by all Christians and Muslims. The roofline was designed to look like the prow of a *vinta* gliding on water, carrying a cross at its helm. The *vinta* representing Muslim

Mindanao and the cross representing Christianity – united in spite of their differences – points toward the glory of the Supreme Being (Chiew, personal interview, 2002).

Mosques are common in most areas in Davao as Muslim communities comprise a large portion of the city's populace. The mosques located along Bankerohan Bridge, Quimpo Boulevard, and Boulevard Trading are vital representations of the Islamic dimension of Davao's urban landscape.

Another social landmark is the park that lent a bustling atmosphere to San Pedro Street. Even in the early years of the city, this place was frequented by people since it was home to a skating rink and was a favorite playground for children, a promenade for adults, and a waiting area for private buses that would ferry Davao's residents throughout Mindanao. But perhaps what roused such life into this area was the commanding presence of the City Hall. The structure, which predates the founding of the city, first took form in 1927 through the enterprise of Architect Valencia and Engineer Santiago Artiaga, and through the initiative of the Davao Jaycees (Figure 2).



*Figure 2.*  
Davao City Hall, San Pedro Street, 1937  
(Photo courtesy of E. Corcino)

The Davao City Hall is the administrative office of the local authorities, and stands as their symbol of power. In consonance with the mass production scheme of the Americans, the Davao City Hall follows the neoclassic style of other government buildings built during the American colonial period. The common use of a portico on a raised platform is a style followed by government buildings in different nations worldwide whose people aspired for democracy.

As with most town centers patterned after the Spanish town plazas, most of the important sociocivic institutions were located in the surrounding areas of the City Hall. Beside the Davao City Hall is the area where stood the Municipal Hall of Davao, and where now stands the Sangguniang Panlungsod Building.

The Osmeña Park, built in honor of former President Sergio Osmena, provides a green environment to the fast-growing urban landscape. Across the historical park along Magallanes Street is the former Court of First Instance which is now the Disaster Coordinating Center. The Philippine Constabulary Barracks is another structure notable for its social contribution as the city's central jailhouse. In front of this building was the first Provincial Capitol which was eventually transferred to San Pedro Street. These old structures have indeed survived through the decades. Though they may not attract the same public attention as before, they will be remembered for their primary social significance for generations to come.

Social functions in the early 1900s were held in the Puericulture Center located near the junction of Claveria and Magallanes Streets. The Puericulture Center was first established in 1917 by the Davao Women's Club, called, the Club de Mojerres then. Today, the site serves almost the same function with the establishment of the Center for Children and Women's Concerns. But the inadvertent decline of social activities has resulted in the seeming lack of public interest and signification.

The Davao Mental Hospital, located at the corners of J.P. Laurel and Villa Abrille Streets, must have suffered the same plight such that it has become one of the most important yet most unappreciated structures today. Unknown to many, this was the same structure that housed the first Davao Public Hospital which served the community before the War.

Educational institutions flourished during the latter part of the Spanish era and were the site for Spanish authorities as well as religious leaders to promote Catholicism. But with the entry of the Americans, schools became much liberated, upholding not just religious principles but enhancing practical subjects like reading, writing and arithmetic (Dabbay, 1998). The Kapitan Tomas Monteverde Elementary School, formerly the Davao Central School, is the oldest primary school in Davao City. The Davao Central High School, then called the Davao Chinese School, was the first Chinese secondary school. St. Peter's Auditorium, located beside the San Pedro Cathedral, was the former site of the first secondary and tertiary school, the Immaculate Conception College, established in 1907.

## **Historical Landmarks**

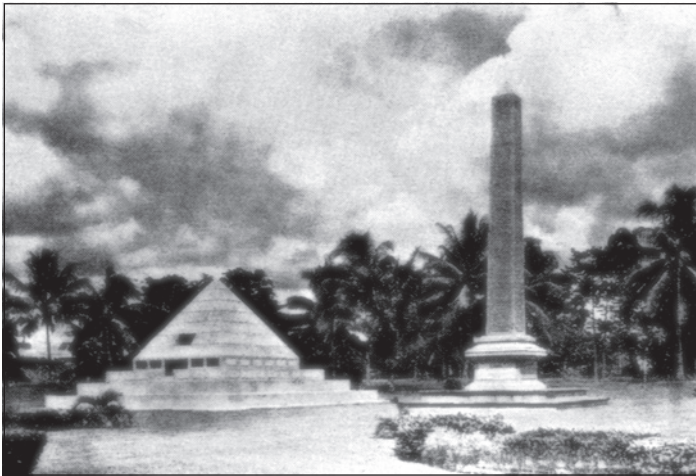
Landmarks identified as possessing historical value are places where historic events took place. These structures represent eras or civilizations long gone (Sta. Maria, 1998). People's attachment to such places is a result of the history attached to it. They are not impersonal places (Alegre, 1998). These places are valued not just as material evidences of the stories that shaped the history of its people but as sacred shrines to a people's collective memory.

In the early 1900s, Mintal was the center of trade and business. The district was an established Japanese settlement for Japanese expatriates working for the Ohta Development Corp. and the Furukawa Plantation Co. However, whatever progress the local and foreign migrants made in this "Little Tokyo" was destroyed during the war.



The only remnants include the Obelisk built in 1926 in honor of Kyosaburo Ohta with the inscriptions, “KS Ohta, who believed in Davao and helped it grow.” Beside the Obelisk is the base of the Japanese pyramidal structure honoring the memories of the directors of Ohta’s plantation company (Figure 3). This area used to be a part of a 10 thousand hectare abaca plantation, and included an advanced irrigation canal system. Today, this irrigation canal is being utilized by the National Power Corporation.

The Obelisk, the Japanese Pyramid, and the irrigation canal are located on the grounds of the Mintal Public Elementary School, the former site of one of the biggest Japanese Primary Schools built in Davao in 1924.



*Figure 3.*

Ohta Monument with Japanese Pyramidal Structure,

Bgy. Mintal, 1924

*(Photo courtesy of E. Corcino)*

Further north of Mintal is the Japanese Cemetery where the remains of some Japanese migrants lie. Around the center of the cemetery are smaller graves. In the late '80s, these graves

disappeared one after the other as treasure hunting became rampant [Bargamento, personal interview, 2002]. Thinking that gold was hidden in these precious remnants, one tomb after another was desecrated, making the cemetery a site known for looting. Even the Obelisk did not escape this heinous act.

The ancestral homes of Davao residents are remembered not just for its material value but also because these houses are repositories of the people's memories. As one workshop participant explains:

... when you tell them that this building belong to your great grandparents, it doesn't have a material value but a sentimental value... all the dances, fabulous dinners and lunches, recipes, the good food that they used to serve. It gives you a different feeling when you step in an old house versus walking in a modern house... (Zaragosa, personal interview, 2003)

The memory of Dr. Santiago Dakudao Sr. lives on among the old-timers of Davao for his being one of the key pioneers in the city. A physician of the Ohta Development Company's Mintal Hospital since 1922, he was deeply respected by all, particularly the Japanese migrants. His house is among the remnants of the old Japanese settlement in Tugbok District. Partly hidden by a canopy of branches, the Dakudao Ancestral Home is shrouded by ghost stories and mysterious apparitions. Many died in this house which was destroyed by a bomb during the war. But the house and its memories lives on. Arch. Michaelangelo Ebro Dakudao, a third generation descendant of Santiago Sr, restored what has remained of the house. The mansion was converted into a mausoleum.

Carmen Dakudao-Locsin, one of Dr. Dakudao's children, is determined to keep his memory alive by maintaining the place in deference to her parents' wishes. In 1946, a replica of the Dakudao Ancestral Home was also built in downtown Davao. Eventually this replica was known as the site of the first ballet dance school in Davao City. The house has the same frontage

as the house in Mintal. Designed by Arch. Ramon Basa, who is credited for many of Davao's architectural sites, this house has become a legacy that will stand out for generations to come.

But perhaps a more imposing and most prominent structure built before the war was the Tionko ancestral house at the corner of Tionko Avenue and Quirino Street. This house was an inheritance from Vicenta Tionko, daughter of Maria Suazo Monteverde and Tomas Monteverde, former mayor of Dumangas, Iloilo and former municipal president of Davao. Carmen Tionko-Gahol recalled:

During the Japanese time, we stayed here in this house. But (one day) we were asked to leave in 24 hours. I was about nine years old then. The general of Mindanao and Sulu was going to stay here. That is why we had to leave. [During the] Japanese time, I remember, my sisters would hide underneath the house. We feared the Japanese. (Tionko-Gahol, personal interview, 2003)

But after the war, this house was remembered as a place full of friendly spirits and for how the Tionko's would open their house to people. Whenever parties were held, the family would bid everyone to come since there were not that many people in Davao at that time.

When the Japanese General Harada realized that the area near the Tionko residence had become a target for bombing by the Americans, the General decided to transfer to Pedro Lat's residence along Legaspi Street. The house was equipped with an air raid shelter. Lat recalled:

During the war, the Commanding General of the Japanese Imperial Army sequestered this house and used it as his headquarters. We were kicked out of the house. But when the Americas fought the Japanese, during the liberation of Davao, Col. Clifford who was the commanding officer of the 24th division used this as his headquarters. (Lat, personal interview, 2002)

Built in the 1930s, the house was designed in the Spanish Colonial Style with its deep windows, ornate grill works, stone walls, and wood carvings. Before it was renovated in concrete, the house was mostly built of wood that had been aged for several years. Today, the same wood is used to enhance their entrance patio, the living areas, and their traditional staircase.

Another ancestral house belonged to Engr. Alfonso Oboza (Figure 4). Oboza was the District Engineer of Zamboanga and Basilan in 1937, the same year when Davao was declared a city. His biggest contribution to the progress of Davao was the construction of the Davao-Cotabato Road. During the War, his house, located on Rizal Street was used as a counter-intelligence command center because this was where suspected Japanese collaborators were interrogated. Important political personalities were housed in this structure as well. Noel Oboza, the only son of Engr. Alfonso Oboza, recalled

[The time when] President Roxas was being hunted by the Japanese. But his friend, a Japanese colonel, helped him. Jimbo brought Roxas here and hid him because Jimbo knew Roxas was a good man.

When C.M. Recto ran for president, he stayed in this house. During the war, the Americans stayed here also. This is a house that is historic in many ways. (Oboza, personal interview, 2002)

The Oboza ancestral house was built in 1949. Like most Filipino houses built in the Spanish tradition, the ground floor was utilized as storage space. The entrance stairs leads to a veranda on the second floor which opens to the living areas. The windows are adorned with iron grillwork and decorative wood corbels.



*Figure 4.*  
Oboza Residence, Rizal Street, 1949  
(Photo courtesy of Michael Angelo Dakudao)

The Habana residence almost has the same architectural features as that of the Oboza residence. On the ground floor of the two-storey house is a multipurpose area normally used to store goods and lumber. Upstairs is a vast living area with four large bedrooms. The sala is embellished with *voladas*, arches and latticeworks. Windows were designed to allow free air passage with the use of *ventanillas* and sliding doors beneath.

But beyond the beauty and the harmony of these architectural elements is the sense of rootedness that this ancestral house embodies and that makes it worthy to be called a historic landmark.

...Because I was borne in it, that thing of root, the feeling of belonging which everyone should have. I've lived all over the world and I'm surprised that I even come here. I come back here because I feel I'm rooted here. I feel more comfortable to get old here. This is my birthplace and I'm part of it. (Habana, personal interview, 2003)

## Symbolic Landmarks

Landmarks identified as possessing symbolic value are places typically associated with an important leader or prominent personality. Places of symbolic meaning are sites or structures intended to be the visual symbols that promote certain values and ideologies. They are signifiers of people's struggles and triumphs, and are the articulation of a moment in history and the expression of the people's aspirations (Pabalan, 2002). Recognizing objects or places as symbolic means employing "a broader aesthetics in which the work is situated within the coordinates of society and history in a dynamic relation of engagement" (Guillermo, as cited in Pabalan, 2002).

Two landmarks earlier described were identified as symbolic. The reconstructed San Pedro Cathedral with its roofline evocative of the unity of Muslims and Christians is one. Another is the Ohta Monument in honor of Kyosaburo Ohta that stands as a reminder of the Japanese presence in Davao City and how they paved the way towards economic advancement.

The Golden Kris Monument marks the site of the encounter of the retreating Filipino soldiers against the Japanese. The Peace Shrine Memorial or the Monument of Eternal Peace (Figure 5) was constructed to pay homage to the soldiers who comprised the Yamada Butai under Col. Yamada, commander of the Japanese Imperial Army during the American Liberation of Davao.

At the heart of the Poblacion area is the Freedom Park, formerly called Clifford Park, in honor of Lt. Col. Thomas Clifford of the United States 24th Division. His troops were the first to liberate Davao City from the Japanese Imperial Forces.

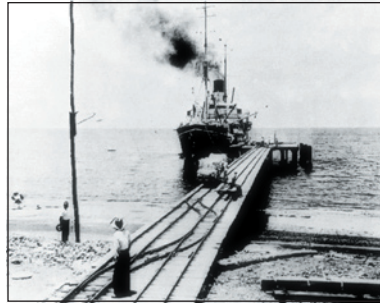


*Figure 5.*  
Peace Shrine Memorial,  
Catulanan Pequeño, since 1975.

## **Economic Landmarks**

Landmarks identified as possessing economic value are places where the geography is strategic for economic and commercial activities (Corcino, personal interview, 2002). Since the beginning of civilization, man's shelter was built in accordance with his means of subsistence. The people's livelihood, level of affordability, as well as socioeconomic status, are factors that dictated architecture (Dakudao 1997). But certain places and structures apparently become centers of the region's trade and industry. These centers stand as symbols of its economic status and technological advancement.

With the growing transport demands for abaca, copra and other products for export, the Davao Planter's Association, organized by the Americans, contributed funds for the construction of the Sta. Ana Wharf in 1909. Similarly, a shipping port was constructed along the Talomo Beach in the '20s to cater to trade activities in the South particularly the Ohta and Furukawa plantations in Mintal and Daliao, Toril (Figure 6).



*Figure 6.*

Talomo Shipping Port, Bo. Talomo, 1920's  
(Photo courtesy of E. Corcino)

Though shipping activities diminished later with the construction of a bigger wharf in Sasa, the Sta. Ana Wharf today still serves as seaport usually for passenger ships and boats.

The economic boom necessitated modernized means of transportation. The Davao Domestic Airport, built in the '70s paved the way for a faster and easier way of transporting goods and passengers. It marked a turning point in Davao City's economic progress. Inspired by the traditional Filipino style, the building made use of indigenous materials such as wood, capiz shells and other native ornaments. The roof followed the profile of an ethnic house with its dramatic concave ridge. Ventilation was emphasized with large openings and high ceilings especially on the second floor.

Aside from these public infrastructures, other architectural sites were identified as economic landmarks. With the opening of Davao City to international trade, outside investors believed in the future of the so-called "Promised Land." Hotels, office buildings, malls and other highrise structures dominated the Davao City skyline.

With the rise of foreign and local entrepreneurship, several shops, hotels and restaurants were established in the city. These include the Awad Building, the Osaka Bazaar and the Antwell Building. After the War, more business entrepreneurs started investing in the city. The Men Seng



Hotel, a Chinese-owned restaurant located on San Pedro Street, was then the tallest modern building and first high-class hotel built by the late Arch. Ramon Basa, Sr. (Basa, personal interview, 2003).

Despite the modern progress of the city, it is worth mentioning that there were still *lumad* or indigenous peoples who pioneered settlements in Davao. One such settlement is the mini-forest within the Boulevard Area which is occupied mostly by the Maranao. Though they have occupied these lands for a number of decades, the Maranao in this area are still considered squatters. Transferring to another settlement is not an option for them, perhaps because here in this blighted, and flood-prone slum area is where they find their means of livelihood as well as the sense of community – the sense of belongingness.

### **Aesthetic Landmarks**

Landmarks identified as possessing aesthetic value are places distinct for its aesthetic appearance, balanced with spatial features that articulate one's culture, beliefs and aspirations. In such places, the people's romantic sensibilities are articulated in the sense that

architecture should basically meet certain conditions of aesthetics, like, elements of design – harmony, balance, and rhythm which must all be in place. These are used to articulate our culture. What is our culture? We are a culture that is very social. We have spaces for interaction. If for example, the home has insufficient space for interaction, we carry our interaction outdoors. (Turalba, personal interview, 2002)

The Brokenshire Memorial Hospital, considered as a fundamental example of an aesthetic landmark in Davao City was founded in 1908. It was then called the Davao Missions Hospital, and was originally located along Magallanes Street (Figure7).

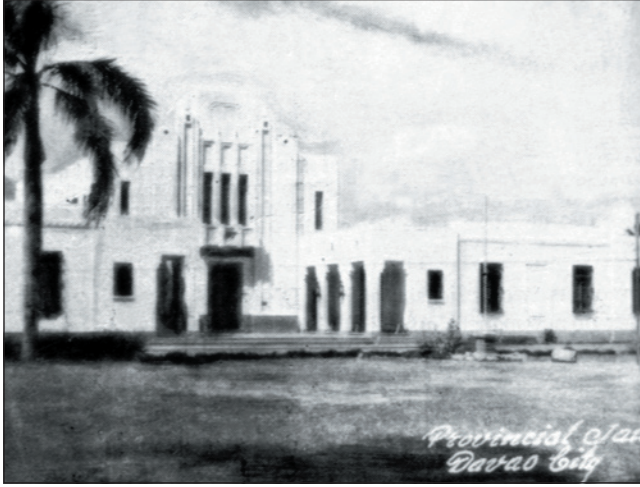


*Figure 7*

Brokenshire Memorial Hospital, Magallanes Street  
(Founded in 1908 and reconstructed in 1964 at Madapo Hills)  
(Photo Courtesy of E. Corcino)

The hospital was relocated to Madapo Hills and constructed in 1964. Its name pays tribute to the American missionary-doctor, Dr Herbert Brokenshire, who served the hospital before the war. This hospital stood out from the others, being one that is community-centered. It offered health services for Muslims and indigenous communities. It engaged in livelihood and medical missions in wartorn areas like Cotabato (de la Cruz, personal interview, 2002). Hence, its vision as a community-centered hospital was reflected in its architecture. Natural elements were incorporated into the building through natural ventilation, and provision of interior gardens, natural colors and good views.

Another landmark valued for its aesthetic significance is the Central Bank of the Philippines. This was the site of the former Provincial Court and Jail House (Figure 8a). Reconstruction started in 1980 under the leadership of then Governor Jaime Laya.



*Figure 8a.*

Former Provincial Court and Jail House,  
now site of the Central Bank of the Philippines Davao.  
Quirino Avenue, 1960's

As locals recall, much thought was given to the design and construction of the building:

Gov. Laya was a very artistic governor. He wanted this building to showcase Mindanao's local products and materials. So we used the molave wood for decorative panelling. The walls on the sides were made of live river stone, cut to pieces to make it quarry stone finish. The stone facings came from Toril, a live stone. We had to burn it first to soften the stone, then cut to pieces using diamond-tip grinders, tailored cut to size. It was really laborious. Studies were made on the Manobo, hence, the style is really more of a Muslim motif, including the design of the fabric on the ceiling.

Central Bank is built on a wide block enclosed by four streets within which is a massive building. When you go to Davao, and you see Central Bank, you would regard it as landmark, a [significant] part of Davao culture. (de los Santos, personal interview, 2003)



*Figure 8b.*  
Central Bank of the Philippines Davao.  
(Former site of the first Provincial Court and Jail House)  
Quirino Avenue, since 1980.

Another architectural development that stands out as a result of the use of aesthetic elements is the Waterfront, formerly the Davao Insular Hotel. This hotel was built in the 1960s. It was the first imposing building on the north side of the Poblacion and the closest to Samal island. This place embodies a people's sociocultural identity, providing a beautiful and emotional experience in that it was designed to spontaneously blend the natural environment with the built environment. Porches lining each floor of each building and traversing from one building to another, created congenial transition spaces, thereby eliminating the terseness of boundaries between exteriors and interiors. Spaces were also enriched by adaptations of the indigenous motifs of the Manobo, Maranao, Bagobo, and T'boli, in the design of the mouldings, fabric ceilings, panellings, paintings, and other ornamentations.



*Figure 9.*  
Davao Insular Hotel,  
now Waterfront Hotel, since 1960s.  
Lanang, Davao City

In defining aesthetic landmarks, craftsmanship is brought to the fore. As Ramon Zaragosa puts it, we recognize the beauty of the architecture. You and I know what is aesthetically beautiful. Most of them were done in such great work of artistry: the craftsmanship, the planning, the choice of building material and the workmanship. It's very difficult to miss it. If you see the old photographs, every room was studied for its aesthetic purpose aside from its use. Everything was grand, everything was decadently luxurious. (Zaragosa, personal interview, 2003)

## **Conclusion**

In studying the artifacts of a certain culture, approaches based upon stylistic systems of classification are essentially static descriptions and fail to account for changes in art forms (Kubler as cited by Abel, 1997). Landmarks as cultural artifacts must not be comprehended on the basis of explicit rules or theoretical formulations. These icons of signification essentially must not

rely on stylistic, formalistic, or chronological approaches to architectural historiography that ultimately promotes global theoretical frameworks. Rather, these landmarks assume a “local character based on [the] summative or combinatorial character of the inhabitant’s basis of self-definition which is layered with an amalgamation of cultural geography, urban form and architecture” (Lico, 2002).

Like all other cities in the world, Davao City has undergone a process of both creation and destruction. This is because in the building of nations, social institutions must undergo changes due to some triggering mechanisms that take place usually in unguarded moments or in sudden bursts of creativity. The rapid growth of population, for example, compels city leaders to make adjustments in the physical development of the city. In lieu of these changes, the identified and categorized landmarks of Davao City can be considered parts of a series of common artifacts – linked through the values that define their associations. These art objects, in all their varieties and idiosyncrasies, are produced in response to similar problems which arise out of prevailing cultural and social conditions.

Landmarks, as structures, have evolved in time. It is not surprising that the interminable evolutionary process has exposed the city’s landmarks to both conservative and radical physical changes particularly in terms of location, style, ornamentation, as well as construction innovation. The physical aspect of landmarks is indeed capricious. Hence, since cultural development is not fixed, so is architecture not meant to be petrified. As Cabalfin (2002) maintains, “we cannot freeze architecture in time, but view architecture as a continuum – a continuous process of transformation and encounter.”

However, what is constant is the values of people, their expectations, their aspirations on places and spaces. In the end, what becomes more essential is not the determination of forms and styles that will suit the inhabitants’ needs and qualities. As Cabalfin concludes, instead of knowing the form

and characteristics of a distinct Filipino architecture, it is more reasonable to discover the kind of architecture that is relevant to its people. To be more precise, instead of asking "what is Filipino architecture (or Davao Architecture)?" we ought to ask, "what is the kind of architecture that is significant or valuable to the local citizenry?"

As for the existing architectural landmarks, we do not need to destroy the past to make a better or modern future. Signification of landmarks through preservation is "a special devotion that can be done with proper training, proper planning and a good patriotic Filipino" (Zaragosa, personal interview, 2003). If efforts are not made to preserve the architectural footprints which are primary evidences of specific cultures, this city shall forever suffer from identity crisis. If the values imprinted on these architectural landmarks are dismissed as unimportant, so would the love and pride for this city diminish. **B**



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