

# Preserving and Promoting Colonial Architecture Heritage Conservation and the Challenge of Urban Development in Da Nang City

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## Article abstract

Da Nang's urban landscape reveals more than a half century of colonization and French presence on its territory. The buildings carry the imprint of the colonial experience, as they were once considered a symbol of domination, linking Da Nang to the global history of colonization. After years of independence and reconstruction, the public attitude towards French colonial heritage has changed. Despite its roots and historical origins, today, French colonial architecture is engrained into the collective understanding of Da Nang's urban landscape and has shaped the local visual identity of the urban space. More importantly perhaps, this architectural style contributes to the city's connection with cultural tourism, an important tool for economic development. As Da Nang is on a path of constant growth, this paper engages with issues around architectural preservation of built colonial heritage, in terms of both the values of preservation, and the challenges it presents for contemporary urban planning.



# Preserving and Promoting Colonial Architecture: Heritage Conservation and the Challenge of Urban Development in Da Nang City

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*Abstract:* Da Nang's urban landscape reveals more than a half century of colonization and French presence on its territory. The buildings carry the imprint of the colonial experience, as they were once considered a symbol of domination, linking Da Nang to the global history of colonization. After years of independence and reconstruction, the public attitude towards French colonial heritage has changed. Despite its roots and historical origins, today, French colonial architecture is engrained into the collective understanding of Da Nang's urban landscape and has shaped the local visual identity of the urban space. More importantly perhaps, this architectural style contributes to the city's connection with cultural tourism, an important tool for economic development. As Da Nang is on a path of constant growth, this paper engages with issues around architectural preservation of built colonial heritage, in terms of both the values of preservation, and the challenges it presents for contemporary urban planning.

*Keywords:* French colonial period, Da Nang city, colonial building, neoclassic, Art-Déco

*Résumé :* Le paysage urbain de Da Nang révèle plus d'un demi-siècle de colonisation et de présence française sur son territoire. Cette architecture coloniale, bien visible à Da Nang, illustre la place de cette ville dans l'histoire mondiale de la colonisation. Autrefois considéré comme un symbole de domination, des années d'indépendance et de reconstruction nationale, ont fait en sorte de changer les perceptions et les discours à l'égard de ce patrimoine colonial. Au fil du temps, l'architecture coloniale s'est ancrée dans les imaginaires, mais elle s'est ancrée aussi dans les modes de compréhension du paysage urbain et dans l'identité visuelle de la ville. De manière plus importante encore, ce style architectural est une ressource essentielle pour le développement du tourisme culturel et un outil indispensable pour le développement économique de la ville. Alors que la ville de Da Nang est en plein essor économique, cet article prend acte des enjeux et des défis qui émergent et qui s'imposent pour la préservation de ce patrimoine architectural.

*Mots clé :* Période coloniale française, ville de Da Nang, architecture coloniale, néoclassique, Art-Déco

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## Introduction

The presence of a significant number of buildings of French architecture in Da Nang reminds us that this place was once marked by the French colonial rule. Those buildings were once considered as a symbols of domination; they were made to give the new colonial conquest the allure and style of the metropolis (Lê Minh, 2018). These reminders of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century colonial experience still exist today, but they are approached with a very different eye (Groslier, 1961; Phan, 2005). Over the decades, Da Nang has developed tremendously and alongside traces of the colonial era stand buildings and monuments that speak to Vietnam's rise to independence, and its social and cultural development. The coexistence of pre and post-independence colonial architecture is a characteristic of many cities in Vietnam, and it is also quite noticeable in Da Nang. The colonial architecture coexists with modern architecture and creates a typical urban image that reveals Da Nang's true visual identity and culture. In fact, Da Nang is very fortunate to have retained these old architectural buildings and properties as they truly add to the city's aesthetic appeal; it is this juxtaposition between the new "modern Vietnamese" and the "old French" that creates a dramatic contrast. These are not only important to the resident of the city, but they are also important tools for local development as they offer extraordinary opportunities for cultural tourism (Zukin, 2012; Chong and Balansingam, 2019). It has been long argued that the local government should play a role in the process of identification, preservation and promotion of this architecture that now characterises the city's urban fabric. Cultivating a sensibility towards colonial heritage is particularly important in order to allow urban development and new construction mindful of the historical and aesthetic values of this former French colonial heritage (Henderson, 2001; Hsia, 2002; Cheer and Reeves, 2015).

When it comes to heritage, policies and programmes are fundamental in order to coordinate preservation efforts, and to achieve best results. At both the national and international levels there is a consensus that local governments play a key role in historic preservation, which raises the importance of local authorities in developing and managing programs that promote the preservation of historical, cultural, and architectural values. Developing a culture for historic preservation at the local level is a key factor of success. Knowingly, many academics and experts in local development and urbanism have promoted, over decades, tools and strategies in order to foster the required sensibility for urban heritage (Coulson and Leichenko, 2004). Where possible, measures have been implemented to target buildings with outstanding, typical, and/or unique values, resulting in official local classifications of monuments to preserve, and local bylaws (Rivero, 2019). This classification system that is common in many countries exists in a number of local and municipal governments in Vietnam, where lists of "relics and monuments" are put in place (Kinh, 2015). Moreover, what is at stake here is not only the preservation of monuments, but also guidelines for their proper renovation and re-adaptation, in order to be consistent with the architectural style. And even further, preservation ought not to be only mindful of restoration techniques but should also act as a benchmark for current construction projects to develop an aesthetically harmonious city.

Those suggestions have been specifically mentioned as authorities' rights and obligations in the sixteenth rule in *Law on Vietnam Cultural Heritage 2002* (Khai, 2002). Over decades,

Vietnam has created a system to cultivate a sensibility for historical preservation at the local level. While historical preservation may be consensually seen as an essential task and mandate for local governments, the nature of colonial heritage complicates the task of preservation. Colonial heritage can be a sensitive topic, as it still carries the scars of a difficult past. Colonial architecture is, in itself technically challenging, as it requires attention to minute historical and stylistic nuances details. Now, does Da Nang city government have a comprehensive plan for this type of colonial building? Sensitive issues aside, most of these buildings occupy important locations in the city and are facing a lot of pressure from urban redevelopment projects. There have been many conflicting opinions whether these buildings should be preserved or destroyed.

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the reflections on the cultural, historical and artistic roles of colonial architecture. Specifically, this paper seeks to demonstrate how this type of historical construction and architecture has shaped the development of Da Nang in terms of its urban development, and its more contemporary architectural style. In addition, we argue that colonial heritage influenced the development of local “indigenous” styles of architecture. Finally, this paper wants to advance the discussion on colonial heritage, both in terms of the strategies required to ensure new constructions mesh well with the historical landscape, but also, in terms of understanding how colonial heritage can be a tool for local tourism and economic growth.

In order to do so, in this paper, we engage with a sample of ten typical colonial structures built in Da Nang city. These buildings have been selected for this study because they are prominent examples from Da Nang’s historic landscape and are visual landmarks that maintain their relevance in contemporary times. The ten works were chosen based on the following criteria: their ability to survive through time, their existence in a completely different and heterogeneous urban space, and their potential for intercultural exchanges. These criteria also serve to compare these buildings in terms of their potential for sustainability, an evocation of Da Nang’s unique characteristics, and benefits to local development projects.

## **Urban development in Da Nang during the French colonial period**

Da Nang was the first place to mark the process of Vietnam’s conquest by colonial France, as it was a key strategic foothold in the Indochinese peninsula. In September 1858, the French army in China sent a military expedition team to Vietnam, bombing Da Nang’s port (Papin, 2010). While the French later exerted direct rule in southern parts of Vietnam (Cochinchina), and in northern Vietnam (Tonkin), for central Vietnam (Annam) where Da Nang is the chief city, the French ruled through a protectorate headed by Dong Khan, a local emperor who collaborated with them. On October 3, 1888, the Governor-General of Indochina (inclusive of Annam) defined the first boundary of the French concession in Da Nang, a territory spanning the Da Nang estuary area along the left bank of the Han River covering approximately 10,000 ha. Recent research by Minh (2007), suggests that these colonial boundaries ranged from the river mouth all the way to the current petrochemical district of Area V, inclusive of the surrounding Ong Ich Khiem street. According to Minh (2007), the decree establishing the city of Da Nang on the 24th of May 1889, by the Governor of Indochina, constitutes a turning point in urban development in central Vietnam. Nonetheless, it should be remembered that urban development in central Vietnam

took place much later, perhaps, than that of cities in Conchinchia and Tonkin. Da Nang was the earliest modern city born in central Vietnam, until 1929, when the cities of Quy Nhon, Hue and Vinh were developed under European-style urban planning.

With the establishment of the first concession, construction works began to spring up. The first embankment was built to transport goods from the bay to the port. The first road built on the banks of the Han River was Quai Courbet. In the early twentieth century, with the rapid development of the city, further changes were made in the concession area. In the early 1900s, Annam Emperor Thanh Thai decided to expand the concession area to four times from the original size. It is then expanded to the East which crossed the right bank of the Han River to occupy the entire Tien Sa peninsula. Besides, it also expanded to the west and northwest toward Hai Van pass and the south extended to Hoa Vang province.

On the basis of the defined territories, the city planning, and its design were conducted following a typical western model. According to Dat (1974), public and commercial works were initially built on Bach Dang Street. These include: the Quai Courbet, the Doctrine Building (City Hall), the Tax Audit Company (1907), Steel Wire House (1907-1908), the Tax Collective Operator (1907), the Department of Taxation, the Public Administration of Central Vietnam (1907), and the Da Nang Chamber of Commerce (1903). In fact, from 1888 to 1920, street networks, and a good number of commercial, public, and religious buildings were built following the French architectural practices, who, at the time, privileged the classical or neoclassical styles for public buildings. A French style was noticeable in architecture, and this style also had “spatial privilege” in the development of the new city. New colonial constructions occupied favorable positions. Buildings were placed in prominent locations (see Figure 1), in streets such as: Bach Dang, Tran Phu (rue du musée), Phan Chau Trinh, or on Le Loi (formerly Marc Pourpe).

Thus, the process of forming Da Nang’s urban structure during the French colonial period follows similar patterns witnessed in other French colonial cities in Vietnam: the erection of administrative buildings, the creation of public monuments to mark boundaries and shape the geography of the concession area, and a road system engineered for economic development. The development was also very mindful of the future expansion of the concession area. Again, from a stylistic and aesthetic perspective, the French colonial authorities privileged a neoclassical style of architecture. Public monuments designed in the neoclassical style were seen to express a sense of power, grandeur and evoke the allure of empire.

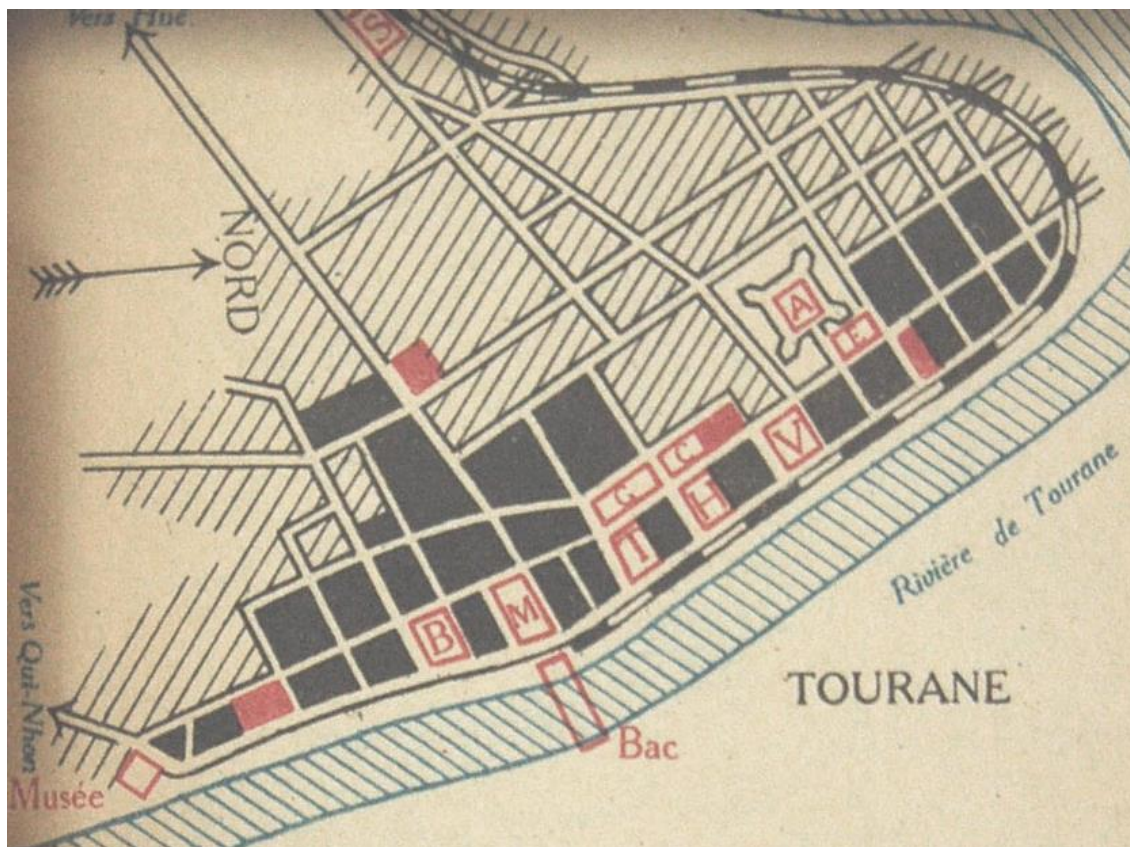


Figure 1: Da Nang city map in 1909<sup>1</sup>

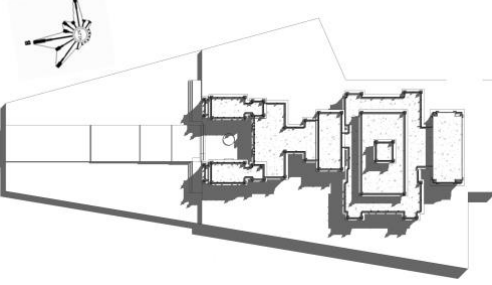

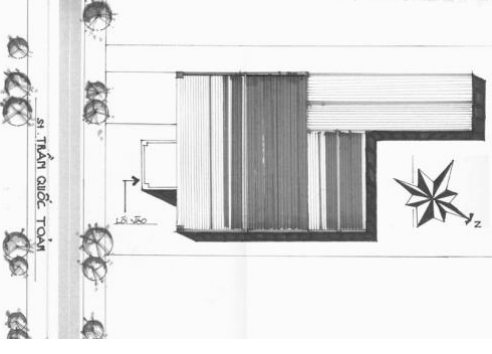

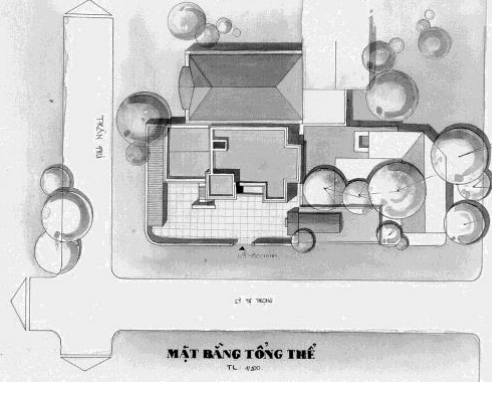

### **French colonial architecture in Da Nang: Ten important traces**

Conducting historical work on architecture and urban landscape can prove to be challenging at times. In the case of Da Nang, as it is the case with many other colonial cities, archival material is spread globally. Important information is dispersed in foreign architecture offices in the former colonial metropolis, some essential local archives are also dispersed across a maze of public archives of the colonial era that can often only be accessed abroad. Nonetheless, while some information may still be missing, or could never be recovered, fieldwork conducted by Son in 2013 was able to gather most of the critical information required in order to present a robust overview of the historical background of Da Nang's most important and stylistically influential colonial building. Table 1 indicates the list and general information about the buildings we have analysed for this research. Table 2 provides additional information, and presents visual components including plans, aerial views, drawings, and images of architectural models of these buildings. These come from our personal archives and data collection.

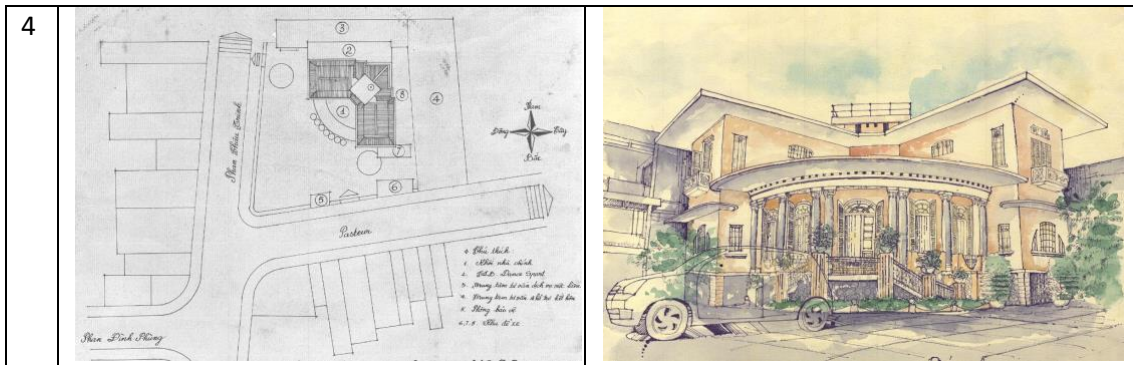
**Table 1: 10 typical colonial architectural works in Da Nang city**

Number	Name	Year	Address	Condition	Style	Note
1	Museum of Champa Culture	1915	2 2/9 Street	Normal	Champa - French Classical	
2	Representative Office of Ministry of Information and Communications in Da Nang City	1899-1905	42 Tran Quoc Toan Street	Normal	Neoclassical & Asian	
3	Ship Supply Joint Stock Company	1906	34 Bach Dang Street	D grade	Neoclassical	Destroyed
4	Da Nang Women's Union	1920	01 Pasteur Street	Normal	Art-Déco	
5	Da Nang Farmers Association	1907	16 Hoang Hoa Tham Street	D grade	Neoclassical & Asian	
6	Dong Duong Restaurant	Not found	18 Tran Phu Street	Normal	Neoclassical	
7	Department of Justice of Da Nang City	1893	16 Bach Dang Street	Remodeled	Neoclassical	Destroyed
8	Court of Appeal Da Nang City	1906	32 Bach Dang Street	Remodeled	Neoclassical & Asian	Destroyed
9	Da Nang Fatherland Front Committee	Not found	70 Bach Dang Street	Remodeled	Neoclassical	Destroyed
10	Da Nang People's Committee	1900	42 Bach Dang Street	Normal	Neoclassical	

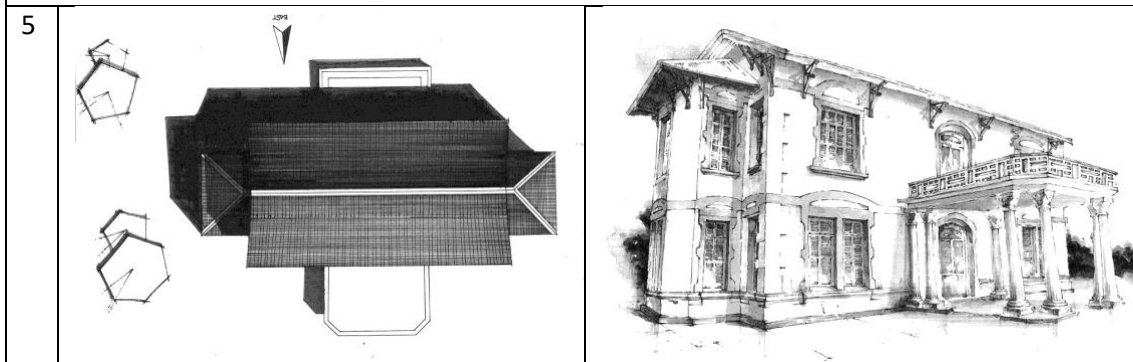
**Table 2: Identification of French colonial architecture in Da Nang**

<p>1</p>		
<p>Museum of Champa Culture (1915-1919): 2 2/9 Street                  Architectural style: Champa - French Classical</p>		
<p>2</p>		
<p>Representative Office of Ministry of Information and Communications in Da Nang City (1899-1905): 42 Tran Quoc Toan Street                  Architectural style: Neoclassical &amp; Asian</p>		
<p>3</p>		
<p>Ship Supply Joint Stock Company (1896-1906): 34 Bach Dang Street                  Architectural style: Neoclassical</p>		

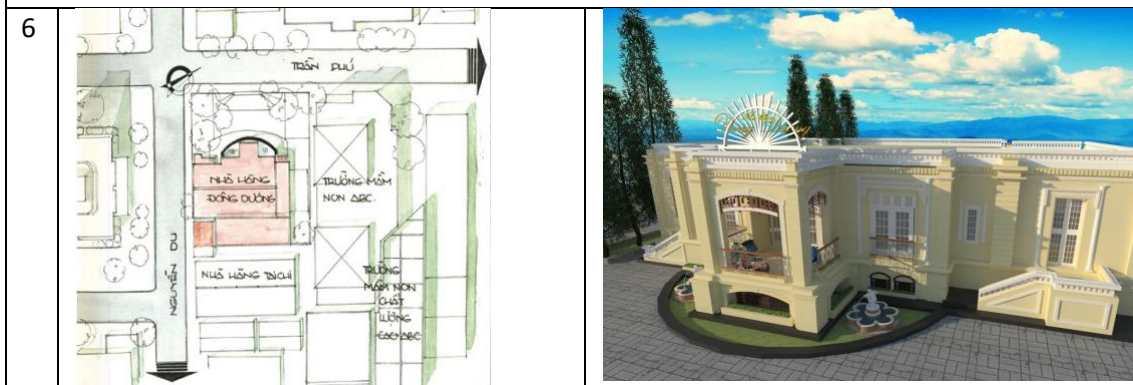




Da Nang Women's Union (1915): 01 Pasteur Street  
 Architectural style: Art-Déco





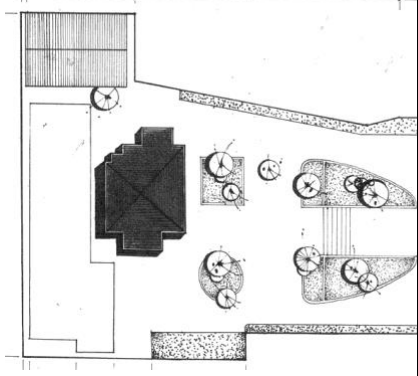

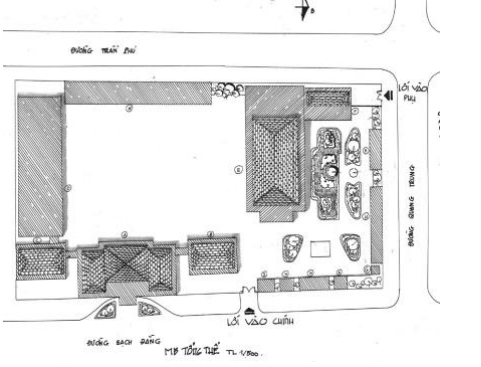
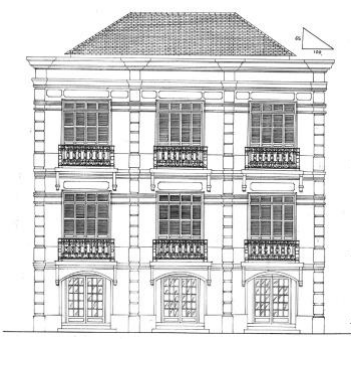
Da Nang Farmers Association (1907) 01 Pasteur Street  
 Architectural style: Neoclassical & Asian



Dong Duong Street (Not found) 18 Tran Phu Street  
 Architectural style: Neoclassical



Department of Justice of Da Nang City (1893) 16 Bach Dang Street

<p>Architectural style: Neoclassical</p>	
<p>8</p> 	
<p>Court of Appeal Da Nang City (Not found) 32 Bach Dang Street Architectural style: Neoclassical &amp; Asian</p>	
<p>9</p> 	
<p>Da Nang Fatherland Front Committee (189170 Bach Dang Street) Architectural style: Neoclassical</p>	
<p>1 0</p> 	
<p>Da Nang People's Committee (Building C) (1900) 42 Bach Dang Street Architectural style: Neoclassical</p>	

Based on the architectural style identification table of the works (Table 2), we made a review summary (Table 3) of the main stylistic characteristic of French colonial architecture in Da Nang.

**Table 3: Brief remarks on the style of French colonial buildings in Da Nang.**

Architectural Style	Name	Identification characteristics	Note
Neoclassical	Ship Supply Joint Stock Company	Classic arch, Lock arch; Decorative ledge.	The buildings serving the colonial government apparatus were built in the style of archetypal neoclassical architecture from the French to demonstrate the authority of the colonial Government.
	Da Nang Farmers Association	Doric column; arch door; consol.	
	Dong Duong Restaurant	Column pedestal; arch door	
	Court of Appeal Da Nang City	Ionic column; arch door	
	Da Nang Fatherland Front Committee	Doric column; arch door; Decorative edges only.	
	Da Nang People's Committee	Decorative burrs; arch door; decorative edges only; balcony.	
Neoclassical & Asian	Museum of Champa Culture	Classic column system; decorative edges only; Cham motifs on the top of the Classic column.	There have been major changes in design ideas which the French want to create works that are not too opposed to indigenous culture. This is a strategic assimilation policy of colonial government.
	Representative Office of Ministry of Information and Communications in Da Nang City	Decorative burrs; arch; lotus motifs on pillars (Asia).	
	City Cultural Center	Classic window systems; Classic arch; Asian double column system;	
Art-Déco	Da Nang Women's Union (used to be French villa)	Vertical layout; decorative motifs in the skirtings and the balcony.	Regarding the type of architecture of villas, the French still prefer to use the Art-Déco architectural style not only reflecting the French architecture, but also keeping the local architecture style

Building on our historical work and observations, it has become clear that most of the French colonial architecture in Da Nang was built during the period from 1900 to 1920. In other words, while there have been buildings constructed after these two decades, the most

important cluster of colonial architecture spans over two decades of local constructions. This is a relatively short period compared to the implementation of the construction of the colonial government in other cities in Vietnam (Saigon, Hanoi, Haiphong, etc.). Therefore, there are two critical outcomes. The first speaks to the urbanization process that took place in Da Nang. The fact that most of the essential public and commercial buildings critical to servicing a region were built in two decades suggests an urbanization process that was relatively smooth compared with other major cities of the Indochinese peninsula. This could be explained, perhaps, by the efficiency of local planning strategies and by the absence of major obstacles or by the fact that Da Nang may not have had to adapt to changing economic or political conditions because its planning and design was consistent with the position the city came to hold within the structures of French colonialism at the time. The latter has to do with the homogeneity of these buildings and the overall urban landscape. Because these were built in a relatively short period of time, the urban visual culture, or the architectural fabric of Da Nang had a visual cohesion for a long time. As a result, the value and the life span of these buildings has been 100 long-standing years because they were built during a relatively homogeneous period.

There are some important and noticeable differences between Da Nang and other cities that were developed and urbanized during the colonial era. In Hanoi, for instance, the capital of French colonial Indochina, the political process and military process that lead to colonial development was far more complex. The fact that Hanoi was acquired through important military operations, rather than by political and diplomatic ones, may serve to explain some of the differences between Hanoi and Da Nang's development.

The development of Hanoi followed different stages. The precolonial period (1873-1895) was characterized by simple structures most of which had military purposes. This period of construction was immediately followed by a period (1895-1920) where administrative and commercial buildings flourished that followed classical codes of architecture. Once again, in Hanoi, government buildings followed the classical style. Following the 1920s, new ideas emerged as to what was an ideal approach to architecture for Indochina and what seemed appropriate. Therefore, between 1920 and 1945, a third wave of architectural style emerged, based on a hybridization of European and Asian influences. A distinct style was imagined by visiting and local architects in order to fit the "indigenous" context (Son, 2013). By contrast, the development of Da Nang's historical buildings did not follow a similar trajectory to that of Hanoi, for instance. While the French colonial style did significantly influence the urban and visual culture of Da Nang (as presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3), the construction has been concentrated in a very short period of time. Although the number of heritage buildings built in Da Nang is more modest by comparison to Hanoi or to other cities in the south, each building possesses essential and unique characteristics. Moreover, the fact that these were developed in a single era, their relationship to the city's visual identity has had a long-lasting effect in the decades that followed.

### **Colonial architecture and urbanization: Building on the case of Da Nang**

Colonial architecture presents a number of challenges for contemporary urban development, some of which are commonly faced by other major cities dealing with historic preservation and

commercial/economic development. For instance, some North American cities, like Seattle, struggle to find an equilibrium between the old and the new. Keeping historic heritage alive, while also making sure a city can grow, requires a delicate balance, a balance that is often only achieved through careful planning. According to Ngo Viet Nam Son (2010), one of the biggest challenges for Da Nang is to build a sustainable foundation for modern architectural identity, where a harmonious layout is achieved by intentionally arranging old and new buildings in relation to each other. Whether in Vietnam or other post-colonial spaces, many have expressed that contemporary urban development in former colonial territories has been hectic, due to pressures for expansion along with increasing land values in places where colonial built-heritage stands have proven to be challenging for urban conservation. In this category, Hong Kong would be a good case in point. For Da Nang, there is still an interesting margin to manoeuvre with, and the 2020 decade is pivotal for the city to engage with harmonious development. In local planning culture, historic preservation should not be seen as an impediment to development, but rather as a tool to work with, a partner in urban development.

Despite the potential for tourism and local economic development, it is not uncommon to hear unfavourable public discourse around historic preservation, seeing it as a force that may alter rapid urban growth, or trigger unwanted administrative hurdles. Da Nang is not different from other cities in that regard. Again, colonial heritage tends to occupy valuable and strategic land as modern cities often developed geographically in surrounding areas and sprawled. There is, at times, a lot of enthusiasm for new buildings and new development projects that seek these very important or strategic urban locations where colonial heritage is located. In recent years, we have witnessed perspectives that were favourable to some demolitions on the basis that these were necessary tools for urban development, and that these may bring construction works and architecture that are more suitable to modern comfort. In other words, Da Nang is also traversed by different public discourses that tend to favour either “history and urban identity” or narratives of “economic growth”. The demolition of a 100-year-old French architectural building is known by many as the Da Nang Fatherland Front Committee building (Lam, 2016). According to Lam’s study (2016), this old building faced serious structural degradation over the years, requiring it either be demolished or remodelled. This building clearly belonged to Da Nang’s history and its cultural heritage, but this argument seemed not to have been the most determinant one, and it was decided the building should be destroyed. But a question remains: should historic preservation and economic development be at odds with one another? In recent years, an approach more favourable to preservation has been developed in the city and is being increasingly adopted by Da Nang’s Construction Department (Son, 2019). In addition, according to Son (2019), the Da Nang Association of Architects is collaborating more and more with local authorities and formulating strategies conducive to preservation. Such strategies include public spaces, promotion, and the valuation of the local, built environment.

Another challenge of colonial heritage preservation stems from a misunderstanding or a widely held misconception about built heritage itself. Is the preservation of colonial heritage a form of nostalgia? To this question, we argue that it is not and should not be. Colonialism’s imprint on the urban landscape of Vietnam is indisputable, just as it has marked the visual culture of many other countries in Asia. This fact is simply a part of history. But in postcolonial Vietnam, a structure that once stood as a symbol of foreign domination is neutralized by the

country's successful independence from colonial forces. Furthermore, through time, as a building's function evolves, a space that served oppression in the past, can be renewed to serve a more positive purpose. For example, the Doctrine Building (City Hall) which was once housed the highest agency of the colonial regime in Da Nang, now used as a workplace for the City People's Committee. While the function has changed, the form – the building – remains and has gained new and positive significance for the city. Hence, the value of keeping colonial heritage in place is not for nostalgic reasons. Instead, it can be a resource for memory, in terms of understanding the long history of Vietnam's postcolonial resistance and its independence; it is also a resource for cultural tourism, which is an important tool for economic development in many parts of Asia; it can bring to light unique architectural characteristics that have tremendous pedagogical value for architectural studies in Vietnam. Perhaps it should also be argued, that while these buildings have colonial origins, they are part of Vietnam's architectural history, and in some ways, they link Vietnam to the history of world architecture. While these buildings may carry the imprints of colonialism, they also, on the other hand, fostered a distinctive architectural voice to emerge, with a new generation of architects, who developed a style and aesthetic in dialogue, rather than in opposition to the existing architecture.

The preservation of colonial heritage remains contentious and difficult, but there are also international standards that provide clarity for reasonable preservation strategies. UNESCO's position has been widely favourable for an approach to historic preservation that builds on sustainability principles. Building on the UNESCO's guidelines, a good first step towards a well-structured and functioning preservation culture begins with the development of a rational conservation system. In order to achieve this, local authorities must conduct a survey that inventories all sites and provides vital information about the statues of these sites. In terms of approaching the process more methodically, external audits, using experts, and whenever necessary bringing in outside consultants to have an additional and fresh look at the sites are all typically seen as good practices. Once this initial survey is established, preservation is carried through a management system that includes norms for heritage protection as well as activities that help better understand and promote heritage value of a colonial building. Communication activities are key to ensuring preservation efforts are understood; they are also key to developing a new public, a new audience who can understand the value of this type of heritage. Without a proper communication strategy, and without educational activities, preservation may not be as widely shared and understood by the general public. If today, in Da Nang, there are a number of colonial heritage sites at risk, it is exactly because there has been no strong ownership and no stakeholders taking ownership of preservation initiatives. Once a key stakeholder takes charge and ownership, becoming the representative of this type of heritage, it is easier to make integrated development plans that are mindful of historic preservation and pressing issues in economic and urban development.

In the short-term, we can identify two particular benefits stemming from the preservation of colonial heritage in Da Nang. The first has to do with local and regional tourism. Colonial heritage can help shape and reshape some strategic developments in our tourist industry. Da Nang should not be seen too restrictively as a "sea, sun and fun" tourist destination, which is where colonial heritage is a good resource for attracting visitors drawn in by cultural tourism, and who seek touristic offerings with greater education value. Colonial heritage brings diversity

to promoting the destination. Some travellers are not necessarily aware of Vietnam's history, and therefore, this conjures intriguing questions to visitors who may seek more information and plan their visit in a way that may help satisfy their curiosity. In addition, although "sea, sun and fun" tourism is great, and essential for the development of Da Nang, in an era of rapid climate change, as well as during the off-season when beach activities are less attractive, colonial heritage offers additional resources for tourism. Diversifying the nature of activities that can be done ensures Da Nang remains an option for many potential visitors. Colonial heritage can be more valuable in Da Nang if it is fully included in the local and regional tourist ecosystem. Currently, colonial heritage in Da Nang is not only under-preserved, it is also under-exploited. There are, however, positive signs that things are shaping up. According to An (2019), the renovation of Da Nang People's Committee building and the discussions around the Da Nang Museum to be completed in 2022, are evidence of the importance of retaining, remodelling, and adapting old colonial building for the city's tourist development.

The second short-term key benefit has to do with the educational value of colonial heritage. It has been argued that Da Nang is developing at a very fast pace, and that its appearance is changing perhaps too rapidly. With a numerous new construction projects, and an abundance of commercial development, Da Nang is on a trajectory of urban development similar to that of many developing cities; it is also regrettably facing the risk of losing distinctive artistic, architectural and cultural characteristics. What is at stake now is the fact that Da Nang may well be losing vital elements of its visual cultural that gave it a distinctive identity (Zukin, 1998). There are key lessons to be learned from the experiences in other cities in order to ensure the loss of architectural appeal is not irremediable. Protecting the memory of the old city is also important for local residents and schoolchildren who look to their local resources to better understand their history. Once again, while there are timid responses, a number of efforts have been put in place. In 2018, a team building activity called "A journey with history" revolved around outdoor activities, and local citizens were able to access guided tours and were presented with the history of a number of colonial sites (Mai, 2018). Building on this example, we can see how colonial heritage can simultaneously be a tool for both formal and informal education, bringing together local residents in a creative activity that also serves to strengthen the bonds amongst local residents and therefore, sustain the local fabric and sense of place.

## **Conclusion**

Nowadays, Da Nang is one of the three most important cities in Vietnam after Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh. Da Nang has many advantages, including its own international seaport, an airport, a beautiful coastline and a clean urban environment. As we discussed in this paper, Da Nang does not have much to envy of other cities; it has already a fantastic cultural infrastructure, and incredible resources for cultural tourism. However, in future years, Da Nang needs to carefully consider a number of elements in order to retain its many unique cultural resources, in terms of its distinctive features that give a unique sense of place and local identity. Planning and international cooperation may be the key initiatives that need addressing in the short run in order to preserve colonial heritage. While this article pointed to challenges and work that still needs to be done, there are signs of change in Da Nang. In 2019, both the Da Nang local

authorities and the Vietnamese government released new policies to strengthen the preservation of local heritage. Speculation of public land, which has pressured many colonial buildings, is now constrained by a framework established to punish abusive development of public property. Hence, the demolition of old colonial architecture now benefits from a stronger protective legislation. This and many other initiatives taken at the local level seem to indicate that Da Nang is taking small steps that will make a huge difference for historic preservation and cultural tourism.

Building on the case of Da Nang, this paper discussed the importance of colonial heritage for local development. The experience of Da Nang is important but not unique. Many cities in Vietnam, Asia, and throughout the world are looking for similar strategies to better preserve their local heritage. Beyond the arguments around the importance of aesthetic and historical values of colonial heritage and architecture, this paper also demonstrated how this category of heritage elicits ambivalent reactions. As discussed in this paper, the preservation of colonial heritage generates a number of unique challenges. Developing awareness and local tools to better govern this type of heritage is key for its preservation and sustainability.

<sup>1</sup>Source: <http://belleindochine.free.fr/images/Plan/1909/Tourane1909.JPG>

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