

## FROM A MILITARY FRONT TO A COLD WAR HERITAGE SITE

### *A study of the prospect of Matsu Archipelago as sustainable tourism islands*

**Chao-Ching Fu**

*Department of Architecture, National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan*  
*ccfu@mail.ncku.edu.tw*

**Abstract.** The Matsu archipelago, located in the northwest of Taiwan Strait and composed of 36 islands, is geographically closed to the Chinese Mainland and had been functioned as the military front by the Nationalist Government in Taiwan against Chinese Communism since 1949. The role of the islands as a stronghold along the Pacific Ocean against Communism during the Cold War was reassured by the U.S. Government. For decades, the islands were not easily accessible for the ordinary people from Taiwan for the purpose of tourism. The function of the military front was lifted on the midnight of 13th May, 1994 and a new role is envisioned for both domestic and foreign tourists. In fact, Matsu had never received the attack of the war although it was treated as the military front. All military facilities were set up for the purpose of defense and had become a part of people's life. When more and more military forces are withdrawn from the islands, the decreasing population and drop in business with the military led the island search for a new drive for the local economy. Since then, tourism has been treated as the most prospective direction for the development. World highest density military facilities such as the underground tunnels have formed a special cultural landscape and contained unique attractions for cultural tourism. Furthermore, the vernacular architecture in Matsu is idiosyncratic in spatial layout, built form and construction system. In 1999, Matsu was designated as a national scenic area. In 2009, the military cultural landscape of Matsu was chosen by the government in Taiwan as a potential World Heritage site. This paper will be a research into how the islands of Matsu archipelago can be developed from a military front to a Cold War heritage site and argue that the cultural landscape of Matsu should be preserved as a peace memorial heritage and sustainable sources for cultural tourism.

### 1. Introduction

The Matsu archipelago, located in the northwest of Taiwan Strait and composed of 36 islands, is geographically closed to the Chinese Mainland and had been functioned as the military front by the Nationalist Government in Taiwan against Chinese Communism since 1949. According to the archaeological evidence, the earliest immigrants from Chinese mainland arrived in the Yuan Dynasty. Most inhabitants on Matsu came from Changle County on the Chinese mainland. In contrast to Taiwan and Penghu, the Matsu Islands were not ceded to the Japan via the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki. Neither were they occupied by Japan as in the case of Kinmen during World War II. When World War II ended, the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers gave the Nationalist Government of the Republic of China to accept the surrender and the administer Taiwan. In 1949, Nationalist Government retreated to Taiwan after suffering a series of defeats on the Chinese mainland. Matsu started to be governed by the Nationalist Government.

In the early stage when the Nationalist Government governed Taiwan, threats from Communist China still existed. The Central Intelligence Agency of US even made a report to US

president that "the fall of Taiwan before the end of 1950 still seems the most likely course of future development."\* On 05 January 1950 President Harry Truman announced that "the United States will not involve in the dispute of Taiwan Strait", which meant America would not intervene if the Chinese communists were to attack Taiwan. However, the Korean War broke out on 25 June 1950, US support for Taiwan became a firm policy. President Truman reacted by declaring the "neutralization of the Straits of Formosa" on June 27. The Seventh Fleet was sent into the Straits under orders to prevent any attack on the island. From that point on, Taiwan was placed under US military protection. With the support of the US, President Chiang Kai-shek of the Nationalist Government ordered to fortify Kinmen (Quemoy) and Matsu as bases for his re-conquest of China. Large numbers of Nationalist troops moved to the islands, and both times the US responded with military support.

In the 1950s' international tense, Matsu became one of the focuses of the First Taiwan Strait Crisis (11 August 1954 - 01

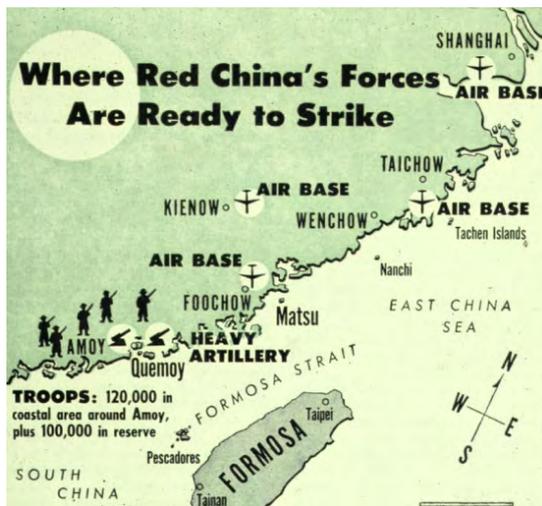


Figure 1 : The strategic location of Matsu during the Taiwan Strait Crisis

May 1955) and the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis (23 August 1958 - January 1959) In both crisis, guns and cannons from the Chinese Mainland had been blasting Kinmen and Matsu for weeks. Consequently, the Nationalist Government in Taiwan began to reinforce Matsu as a military stronghold even the crisis had already ended. Various types of military facilities were intensively constructed in order to prevent the invasion of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Beginning from 1956, a special administration system was set up. Both military and civil affairs were integrated by War Zone Administration Committee. The daily life of Matsu's inhabitants started to be confined due to military considerations.

The role of the islands as a stronghold along the Pacific Ocean against Communism during the Cold War was reassured by the U.S. Government. During the 1960 US presidential election debates, both candidates, Richard Nixon and John F. Kenney, pledged to use U.S. forces if necessary to protect the Taiwan from invasion by the Communist China, which the U.S. did not at that time recognize as a legitimate government. Vice President Nixon stressed that, since Quemoy and Matsu were in the "area of freedom," they should not be surrendered to the Communists as a matter of "principle." The role of the islands as a stronghold along the Pacific Ocean against Communism during the Cold War was reassured by the U.S. Government. (Figure 1)

Recognizing the international trends and considering the political development in Taiwan, the martial law, enacted since 1949, was lifted on July 15, 1987 followed by the termination of the "Temporary Provisions effective during the Period of Communist Rebellion" on April 30, 1991. However, martial law remained in Kinmen and Matsu until November 7, 1992 when a new county magistrate inaugurated. When the entry

and exit control was finally lifted, on May 11, 1994, a new role is envisioned for both domestic and foreign tourists. Highest density military facilities such as the underground tunnels have formed a special cultural landscape and contained unique attractions for cultural tourism. Furthermore, the vernacular architecture in Matsu is idiosyncratic in spatial layout, built form and construction system. In 1999, Matsu was designated as a national scenic area. In 2009, the military cultural landscape of Matsu was chosen by the government in Taiwan as a World Heritage potential site. This paper will be a research into how the islands of Matsu archipelago can be developed from a military front to a Cold War heritage site and argue that the cultural landscape of Matsu should be preserved as a peace memorial heritage and sustainable sources for cultural tourism.

## 2. Transforming from Military Front to Place of Tourist Attractions

After Matsu archipelago's function as a military front was lifted, War Zone Administration Committee of Matsu finally came to an end and Matsu is back to the operation of the county administration. In fact, Matsu had never received the attack of the war although it was treated as the military front. All military facilities were set up for the purpose of defence and had become a part of people's life. When more and more military forces are withdrawn from the islands, the decreasing population and drop in business with the military led the island search for a new drive for the local economy. Since then, tourism has been treated as the most prospective direction for the development.

Military facilities in Matsu are unique as described by many visitors. The uniqueness is presented in their variety of functions, incomparable scales and difficulty in constructions which can be well-explained by some examples. Beihai Tunnel (North Sea Tunnel) project started in 1968 to construct tunnels in Nangan, Beigan, Cicyu and Dongyin to anchor small landing crafts. Beihai Tunnel in Nangan is located near the Renai Village and runs from the Tieban Coast deep into the heart of the hills. The space of the tunnel, dug through the interior of the granite hills, is shaped like a Chinese character *jing* (well). It is 18 meters in height and 10 meters in width. The total walk trail is 700 meters and it takes 30 minutes to walk, which is only possible when the tide is low. The difficulty of the construction was overcome by thousands of soldiers (two divisions, three infantry battalions, one combat engineer battalion, and one dump truck company) in 820 working days. They could use nothing more than simple hand tools to complete the mission. Many of the soldiers sacrificed during the construction. The tunnel connects to the ocean, and was capable to accommodate around 100 small landing crafts safe from bad weather and the eyes of the enemy.

It is called by some scholars an incomparable piece of military installation in the world. A giant screen wall

with four Chinese characters *quifu shengong* (ghost's axes and god's skill) was erected in front of present entrance to emphasize the superlative craftsmanship and constructional achievement. A group of statues of soldiers digging the tunnel was erected in 1990 to commemorate the achievement of the construction (Figure 2-3)

In addition to Nangan's Beihai Tunnel, there are two tunnels with the same name built at the same time respectively in Beigan and Dongyin. The construction of Beihai Tunnel in Beigan, also called Wusha Tunnel, or Wusha Beihai Tunnel, was started in 1968. The length of the tunnel is 550 meters and the width 9 to 15 meters. Although the scale of it is smaller than its Nangan's counterpart, Beigan's Beihai Tunnel was also dug laboriously out of the solid granite by soldiers using only simple tools. More than 100 soldiers lost their lives. The work continued for almost three years. The loss of soldiers' lives was associated with the

long-told legends about ghosts in the area, making many people afraid of the tunnel, and leading to its long years of abandonment. Dongyin is Taiwan's northernmost territory and is rich in natural beauty, such as spectacular coastal rock formations and cliffs. Similarly, Dongyin's Beihai Tunnel that was built for the same purpose with the size measuring 193 meters long, 10 meters wide, and 12 meters high. (Figure 3) Andong Tunnel in Dongyin is also a remarkable military achievement. The tunnel cuts directly through to Erchong Mountain, site of Matsu's military headquarter. From the entrance, the tunnel slopes downward at a 30-degree angle along 464 steps that run 641 meters. The tunnel, functioned as a temporary war preparation assembly place, was constructed in the 1970s by the soldiers with hand tools. All kinds of spaces needed for war operation, including arsenal, military barracks, a meeting hall, and a pigsty, are provided inside the tunnel. As a result, the spatial layout of the tunnel is much complicated than that of



Figure 2: Water trail of Beihai Tunnel in Nangan

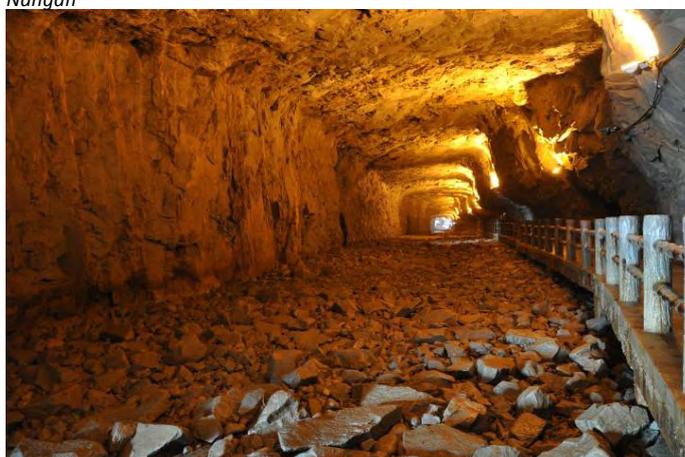


Figure 3: Water trail of Beihai Tunnel in Beigan





Figure 6: Cinbi Settlement, Beigan



Figure 7: Dapu Settlement, Juguan

Although the beauty and uniqueness of Matsu's house are highly appreciated, however, one should not conclude that traditional settlements are unrelated to any military function. In fact, during the military administration period, every village in Matsu was functioned like a combat village. Every resident was assigned a certain mission and military as well as political signs, slogans and murals were erected throughout all villages. It is the war zone installation and atmosphere which made the settlement in Matsu different from Mintung architecture in other areas. (Figure 8-9)



Figure 8: Military slogan on the wall of Matsu's houses



Figure 9: Military slogan at the entrance to Matsu's settlement

When sea traffic became frequent in the 19th century, the construction of lighthouses at strategic location was a necessity. During the war time, the lighthouses functioned as a guarding post for the defence. Two lighthouses in Matsu are masterpieces in terms of its construction and the setting. Dongyong Lighthouse, stands on the flank of Shiwei Mountain, is one of Dongyin's major landmarks. It was called "Dongyin villa" by local people because of its dream-like beauty, Designed by an English engineer, the lighthouse was constructed in 1877 and its accompanying buildings are in 18th-century English architectural style. On the cliff below the lighthouse are two fog cannon; but now, a single foghorn fulfills their function of helping ships navigate. The white-colour of the lighthouse is a strong contrast to the deep-blue sea below the cliff. Juguang's Dongquan Lighthouse, also called Dongju Lighthouse, was built in 1872 to guide ships to Fuzhou in the late Qing Dynasty. The structure of the lighthouse is made of granite; its height is 19.5 meters and its light-beam, diffracted through a crystal lens, can be seen 16.7 nautical miles (about 31 kilometres) away. In order to protect people and their kerosene lanterns from strong wind, a unique feature is a low, 30-meter windbreak wall that connects it with its office structure. (Figure 10)

Temples are also a special building type in Matsu. Many of them are equipped with a "Feng For Shan Chiang" which literally means "fire-sealing walls". The forms of the walls are exaggerated and looked like burning fire. Functionally speaking, such walls can prevent the spread of the fire. The Tieban Queen of Heaven Temple is said to have been built by a great pirate seeking the blessings of the gods during the Jiaqing reign (1796-1820). It was repaired and renovated several time. The main

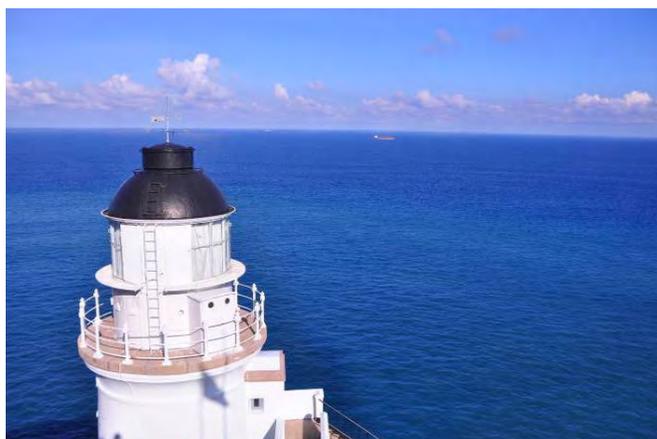


Figure 10: Dongyong Lighthouse in Dongyin

façade originally had a wooden screen-wall. However, it was changed to brick to avoid deterioration caused by weathering. The main deities worshipped in the temple are the Queen of Heaven (Matsu, Goddess of the Sea). The images and the altar are skilfully carved, and the two outside altars are of the rare “temple within a temple” type.

### 3. Strategy towards Sustainable Development

In order that Matsu’s heritage will be sustainably developed in the future, appropriate strategy should be applied. The following are three important ones.

#### 3.1 Strategy One: Experiencing Heterogeneous Settings

The first strategy is to transform Matsu’s military facilities as well as other unique heritages into settings for experiencing heterogeneous spaces. A heterogeneous space is a place or setting consisting of a diverse range of different architecture and elements. Basically, a heterogeneous space is where complex and multiple social and technological conditions are overlaid and are to be contrasted with highly centralized and ordered spaced. With the influences by globalization and the web culture, heterogeneous spaces, with their emphasis on differentiation, have become attractive destination of tourists. For many tourists, the impressions of military facilities are always ‘hostile’, ‘horrible’, ‘bloody’ etc. The re-structuring the settings and reusing facilities so that this military heritage will become ‘hospitable’, ‘enjoyable’, ‘friendly’ and ‘peaceful’ is an important strategy.

According to current tourist trends, tourist prefer the ‘otherness’ of destination, peoples and activities because they offer an illusion or fantasy of others that is different from daily life. Matsu can become an ideal site for special-oriented camps as well as causal tourists since a variety of military facilities such as slogans, watch-post, battleships, military barracks, cannons, tunnels and unique Mintung settlements can create a totally new experience for tourists and educated

them the importance of peace.

#### 3.2 Strategy Two: Cooperation between Public Sections and Local Residents

Although local residents made profits from selling foods and goods to army and associated staffs during the military occupation period, the tension between local residents and army exist because private lands were claimed for military use and local activities were restricted. However, when the future of Matsu archipelago is planned as a sustainable tourist attraction, the ‘tension’ must transform into ‘cooperation.’ The success and sustainability of tourist development must depend on a close cooperation between public sections and local people. The attitudes of governments at different levels are crucial. Matsu National Scenic Area was supported by central government and formally established in 1999 followed by the founding of Matsu Beigan War Peace Memorial Park. The central government of Taiwan also started to promote the participation in World Heritage from 2002. In 2010, Matsu Military Cultural Landscapes becomes a World heritage Potential Sit. In respond to the recognition of the 1999 International Charter on Cultural Tourism that the relationship between heritage places and tourism is dynamic and may involve conflicting values and should be managed in a sustainable way for present and future generation, local leaders from different community are trained and educated with heritage knowledge with an expectation that they might played an important role in the tourist development.

#### 3.3 Military Heritage as core of the Diversity of Matsu’s Cultural Landscapes

In 1992 the World Heritage Convention became the first international legal instrument to recognize and protect cultural landscapes. The Committee at its 16th session adopted guidelines concerning their inclusion in the World Heritage List. The Committee acknowledged that cultural landscapes represent the

"combined works of nature and of man" designated in Article 1 of the Convention. They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal\*\*.

Theoretically and practically, the term "cultural landscape" embraces a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment. Cultural landscapes often reflect specific techniques of sustainable land-use, considering the characteristics and limits of the natural environment they are established in, and a specific spiritual relation to nature. All types of military heritages, purposely built by Taiwanese Government in the Cold War period, are the result of heavy interaction between soldiers and Matsu's nature land. All of these components mentioned in section 2 should be integrated to form the diversity of Matsu's cultural landscapes with the military heritage as its core. By their nature, military heritages in Matsu are place-specific and new strategies have been developed in Matsu since its military heritages were promoted to Taiwan's World Heritage Potential Site List. To place Matsu's military heritages (as important cultural landscapes) in the context of post-war global Cold War history will create a sustainable future for cultural tourism.

#### 4. Conclusion

In response to cultural and sustainable issues of the 21st century, heritage in Matsu should be developed along new directions and new strategies. The adaptive

reuse of military heritage should be considered as mechanism for enhancing the tourist economic in the 21st Century Taiwan. Historic settlement should also be under regeneration. Many of these examples have become the focus of the cultural tourism and consequently promote the identity of the local inhabitants and the islands. In the first issue of Lonely Planet's Chinese edition journal published in September 2011, Matsu was selected as the best tourist attraction and first destination of Taiwan. The fact illustrates the significance of Matsu and its potentials. In addition to its role as the main attraction for the cultural tourists, the military cultural landscapes, especially the underground tunnels, should be preserved as an evidence of the post-war cold war and should be appreciated as part of a peace memorial heritage. In fact, after the Matsu National Scenic Area Administration was established, it took over several military heritages, renovated its interior facilities and neighbouring environment, Beihai tunnel is an example now open to the public and is a must-see for any visitor to the Matsu islands. Canoeing and listening to the concert in the tunnel has gained popularity in recent years, offering travellers the opportunity of an unforgettable experience. Another must-see is Antung Tunnel and its bird-watching tour when around April every year black-tailed gulls, black-napped terns, and other protected birds fly in from Japan to nest and reproduce around the mouth of the tunnel. Furthermore, houses in various settlements are renovated as hostel and highly welcomed by tourists. With the idea to preserve Matsu's cultural landscape as a whole, Matsu has now paved a road towards a sustainable future.

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\* Cited in Hicky, Dennis Van Vranken, 1994, p.18. Original document see "Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs to the Secretary of State, April 17, 1950," in US Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States: 1950, Vol.6. Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office 1976, p.330.

\*\* For the development and definition of the cultural landscape, refer to the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guideline. Cultural landscapes fall into three main categories, namely: The most easily identifiable is the clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man. This embraces garden and parkland landscapes constructed for aesthetic reasons which are often (but not always) associated with religious or other monumental buildings and ensembles. The second category is the organically evolved landscape. This results from an initial social, economic, administrative, and/or religious imperative and has developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment. Such landscapes reflect that process of evolution in their form and component features. The final category is the associative cultural landscape. The inclusion of such landscapes on the World Heritage List is justifiable by virtue of the powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element rather than material cultural evidence, which may be insignificant or even absent.

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