
TRACING THE URBAN CULTURAL LANDSCAPE STRUCTURE OF MANILA SACRED SPACE: *A Case Study of Malate Church Grounds*

(Thesis Paper in Master of Tropical Landscape Architecture)

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Abstract

Church grounds are essential urban components of Manila. They contain heritage values shaped by various changes in the socio-cultural strata and spatial structure. The paper focuses on Malate Church Grounds with the objective of identifying its urban cultural landscape thru its existing physical and tangible constructs. It utilizes the urban cultural landscape framework to show the relationship of people to the urban spaces that forms the identity of Manila.

From the urban cultural framework, the stratum of structure is identified thru the patterns seen in user movement, physical dimensions, landscape components and features, as well as urban linkages. These patterns are analyzed based on cartographic data, systematic observation, respondent interviews and statistical and literature content analysis. This study illustrates how the urban cultural landscape structure of Malate Church Grounds serves as a useful tool in evaluating the adaptation of Manila urban spaces to the changing demographics, land use, and urban spatial functions.

Key Words: Urban Cultural Landscape, Church Grounds, Manila, urban spaces

I. Introduction and Background Data

The microcosm of the urban cultural landscape of Manila is best seen in the physical traces existing in important urban components – the church grounds. In the old district of Malate, the church grounds act as an important element influencing the urban structure – from the adaptation of the district to urban trends with it being the center of development during the Spanish colonial period to its present amalgamation into the mixed use character of Manila’s key districts. Church grounds are essential components that showcase the urban cultural landscape and present the interaction of human to its natural and built environment.

Initially part of the tools used to strengthen the practice of what is known as Filipino Catholicism and an instrument for Philippine town planning (Jose, 1992), these church grounds spaces eventually became the site for Manila town activities. Such is the case for the Malate Church Grounds, also known as the church grounds of the Our Lady of the Remedies Parish.

At present, the Malate Church Grounds serve as a thematic tour destination visited for its historic connection. What also sets it as a Manila destination is its proximity to the Manila Bay known to be the perfect place to view the “sunset” while in the Philippines. This has shown the phenomenon of change from the religious connection to a more secular physical structure and usage. Although initially known to be a setting for Catholic faith veneration, the Malate Church Grounds is now more popularly known as the tourist place, the site for a parking space, the background of the Rajah Sulayman Park, and the landmark for commercial establishments currently proliferating the Malate.

A. Research Problem

The alteration and change of the urban structure has shown the phenomena of change present at Manila church grounds today. The inherent amalgamation of urban spatial functions and processes is tantamount to ambiguity as influences in its tangible urban cultural landscape constructs manifest in the physical structure thus altering the physical framework of the sacred space. The reciprocal phenomena posit a possible change in the urban cultural framework that is present in the current context of the Malate Church Grounds. The goal of the study, therefore, is to identify and analyze the tangible urban development patterns that shall characterize the tangible aspects of the Malate Church Grounds’ urban cultural landscape.

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This paper is part of her graduate thesis presented and submitted in 2012 entitled, “*Sanctuario Sanctificado: Defining the Urban Cultural Landscape Character of Selected Manila Church Grounds*”.

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B. Objectives

1. Identify the Malate Church Grounds' urban patterns thru the existing physical, social, and tangible factors.
2. Analyze the urban morphology affecting the present state of Malate Church Grounds thru the regional structure of Manila.
3. Analyze and survey the physical patterns present at the Malate Church Grounds.

C. Scope and Limitation

The study is site specific to the Malate Church Grounds. The selected site dimension and extents are based on the claim that the boundaries of the church grounds are initially set by the existing fence around it. For this study, the selected area assessed was the site within the established perimeter fence with a corresponding analysis of the adjacent streets to show the existing relationship of the church grounds to the nearby urban components.

The study covered the identification of tangible urban cultural landscape components present inside the boundaries of the Malate Church Grounds. This included those seen or visualized in its physical aspect. The intangible urban cultural landscape constructs was only briefly discussed as reference and thru its close connection to the physical aspects but is therefore suggested for further analysis.

The time frame for survey analysis was done during the peak and off peak hours of the church. The time was established according to the initial data gathered, field survey, and survey pretest that was made during the inventory and site documentation stages.

D. Theoretical Framework

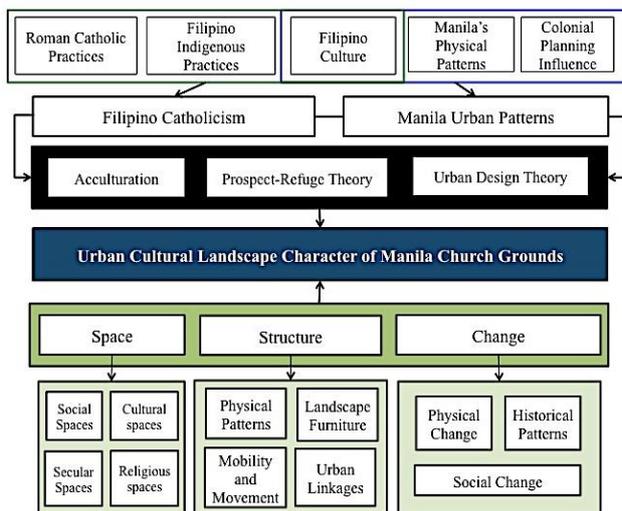


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework.
Source: Sanctuario Sanctificado: Defining the Urban Cultural Landscape Character of Selected Manila Church Grounds, 2012

The study drew upon the theories identified from the wider study on Manila church grounds, showing the church grounds connection to the existing urban cultural

landscape constructs brought by the existing Filipino Catholic practices and urban patterns of Manila as seen in this diagram.

The study delved on the three theories of acculturation, prospect refuge, and urban design seen to intertwine in the amalgamation of urban cultural landscape constructs. The theories set by other scholars served as a guide in data analysis and identification of urban cultural landscape constructs.

As seen in the diagram, the church grounds' location at the center of the framework identified it as the core of the research process. In the case of the Malate Church Grounds, the recognized urban dimensions of space, structure, and change provided the physical framework and identified the character of Malate Church Grounds today. For this case study, the strata of structure were emphasized thru the analysis of urban development patterns, landscape components, and urban linkages.

II. Research Methodology

The operational, applied model for this study was based on the analysis method introduced by Patricia O'Donnell. The model suggested a possible process and feature of the urban cultural landscape of place (O'Donnell, 2008) that primarily dealt with the communication of cultural values and urban forms to form a tangible and intangible structure of a place. For this study, the character-defining features of Malate are used for mapping the physical and tangible structure of the place.

The study used descriptive research processes to gather patterns and important information of the Our Lady of Remedies Parish (Malate Catholic Church) at 2000 M.H. Del Pilar St., Malate, Manila. The descriptive research processes included the following: Analytical method that was applied in the form of qualitative and quantitative analysis of facts gathered from books, published journals, articles, and field investigation. Also, field observations of user movement and physical patterns were conducted. Observations were important factors in tracing and mapping the urban cultural landscape framework of the Malate Church Grounds.

The proponent used methodological triangulation (Godfrey) by combining several methods – interviews, researcher observations, physical evidence, and statistical findings. The method used was a valuable tool in analyzing the accurate expressions of deviation and correlation of the church grounds urban cultural patterns. This ensured more valid findings. Also, data triangulation was used with the different variables of time, dimension, and demography forming the model of the urban cultural landscape.

Site assessment of church grounds was done during off-peak and peak church hours. The period for field observation was assumed to provide a possible change in the temporal standpoint. This included the following peak hours when mass is held inside the church (first and last mass) and off peak hours said to occur during the afternoon.

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The respondents included different user groups: the church and local government officials, the secular and religious users, and adjacent communities. The frequency of church grounds usage and the patterns of change and manifestation in the urban cultural landscape were determined thru the proponent's field observation and survey.

Scheduled visits were done on a weekday and a weekend with an emphasis on Sunday. Sunday data was collected since this was the observed day of influx of visitors to the church grounds as yielded by the Sacrament of the Eucharist commonly called the Sunday Mass.

The user data for the Malate Church Grounds were gathered during the following dates: 4th of May, 2012 for the weekday user data; 13th of May, 2012 for the Saturday user data; and 20th of May, 2012 for the Sunday user data. Based on the ocular visits, factor-defining urban cultural landscape elements were seen to be relevant and were assessed by the researcher during the peak hours of 6am to 7am, 6pm to 7pm, and the off-peak hours of 2pm to 3pm.

With the research limited to the time frame being studied, historical data gathered from desk research served also as important indicators. Historical data in the forms of cartographic sketches and written documents were used in data triangulation.

Books, journals, reports, and documents were studied to understand and discover the existing provisions that may help define the Malate Church Grounds of today. Published books, map adapted from the original street map, and online articles were studied to help validate the current phenomena of change in the physical dimension and form of the church grounds and in the analysis of the urban patters.

Photos gathered during field observation and additional field documents prepared by the proponent were used for the inventory of the current character and structure of Malate Church Grounds.

III. Findings and Analysis

A. The Historical Beginnings of Malate Church Grounds

The Malate Church Grounds is one of the early church sites affiliated with the Archdiocese of Manila. It is one of the first few church grounds established outside Intramuros at the center of new districts. Established in 1588, the site serves as an important component of the town center of Malate during the Spanish colonial period. Seen inside its periphery are the friar building of the Augustinian order, the church edifice, and a nearby convent. Outside the church grounds is an adjacent open space termed the plaza and a frontage facing the Manila Bay.

The church edifice within the church grounds has undergone several reconstructions after being hit by natural disasters such as earthquake and destructions caused by war. It is currently part of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines' List of Historic

Sites and Structures installed with Historical Markers. It is categorized as a house of worship. To date, the church building is undergoing restorative work.

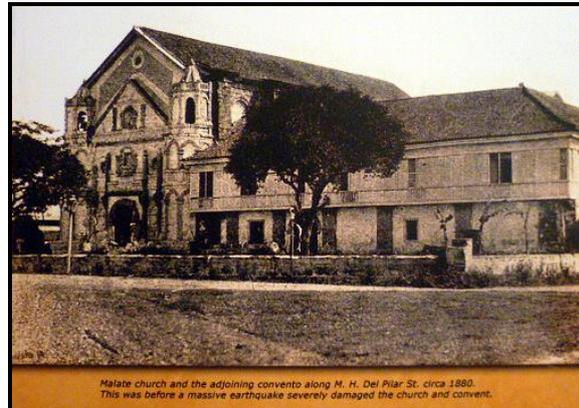


Figure 2. View of the Malate Church and convent along M.H. Del Pilar Street circa 1880.

Source: *Malate church collection information material, adapted from Sanctuario Sanctificado: Defining the Urban Cultural Landscape Character of Selected Manila Church Grounds, 2012*

For this study, the Malate Church Grounds' physical dimension is approximately 6,900 square meters. A total of 2,500 square meters of the total size is allotted for the church building, the adoration chapel, administrative office and the Remedios Jubilee Mission Center. The rest are open spaces with the majority being paved for parking purposes.

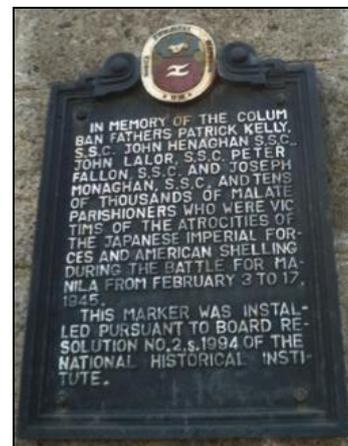


Figure 3. Existing Marker installed at the Malate Church.

B. Malate Church Grounds and the Urban Development Patterns as seen in Archival Sources

The prevailing pattern, as seen in cartographic sketches of Old Manila, is the church illustration marking the center of new towns built outside Intramuros during the 16th century. The pattern is emphasized in the map below where most of the new towns are marked with the symbolic building with a cross, deduced to be the church building.

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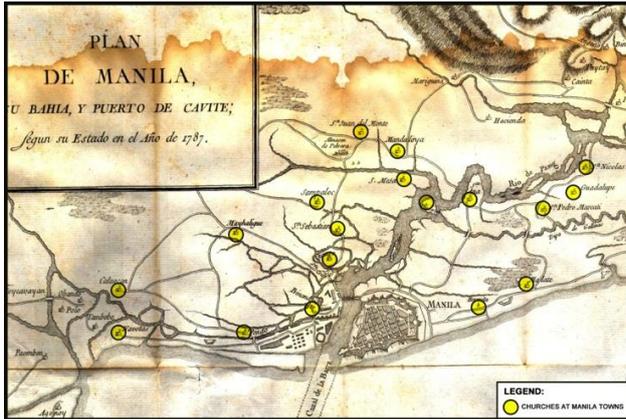


Figure 4. Map showing the church grounds as an important urban component.
Source: Adapted from the *Plan de Manila su Bahía Y Puerto de Cavite, 1787*



Figure 5. Map showing the church building as a marker of the town of Malate.
Source: *Plan de Manila su Bahía Y Puerto de Cavite, 1787*

Malate Church Grounds is emphasized through a building structure recognized in this map. Following this pattern of development, the church ground acts as the core where all development followed.

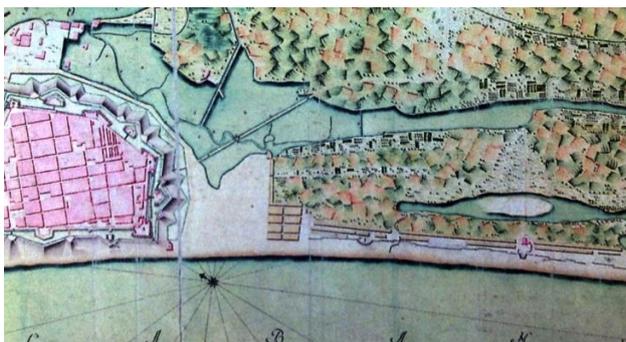


Figure 6. Map showing the linear town growth.
Source: Map drawn by Bernardo de Larse, 1802 from the book, *Manila 1571-1898 The Western Orient*

Noticeable is the linear town development of Malate as water bodies bound both its Eastern and western portions. During the 1800's the town grew with the church grounds still being the center of the town.

The linear development slowly connected Malate to the nearby towns. In the year 1819, the church grounds were enclosed with a fence.

Eventually, road networks connected the town of Malate to the eastern portion. This initiated outskirts development connecting the church grounds to other towns.

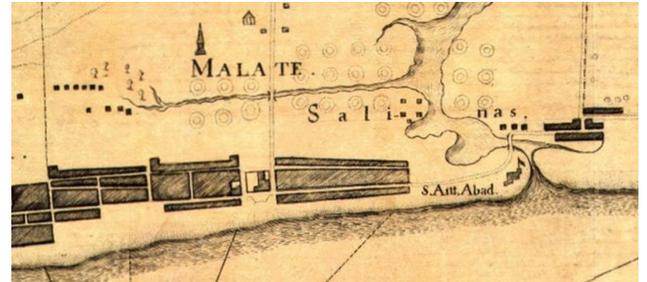


Figure 7. Map showing Malate Church Ground and the boundaries set by the perimeter fence.
Source: 1819 *Plano de la Ciudad de Manila de las Filipinas Siendo su Situacion Geografica en lala* from the collection of the Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University

Maps drawn after the Spanish colonial period show a gridiron-planned development. What is evident in these more current cartographic maps is how church grounds blend homogeneously to the landscape and are rendered using a similar color to the rest of the town development. Also seen are road networks that dominate the urban landscape and a noticeable hierarchy of transportation routes.

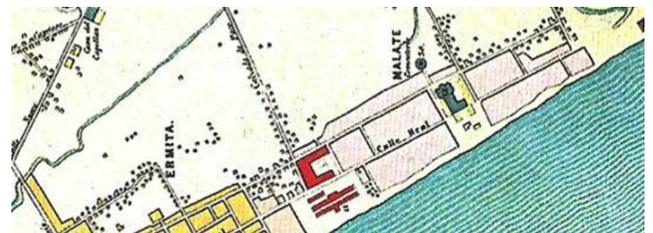


Figure 8. Map showing road networks at the eastern portion.
Source: *Manila Sus Arrabeles 19th century* from the book, *Manila 1571-1898 The Western Orient*

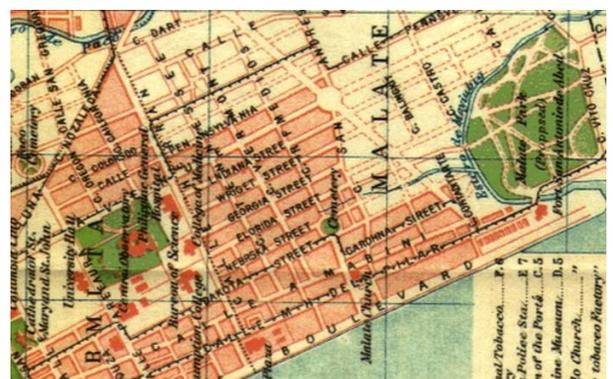


Figure 9. Map of Manila, 1920; Original Scale 1-30,000.
Source: *Manila map*, <http://philippinemaps.ph/Philippines - Maps/Manila-1920-1.JPG>

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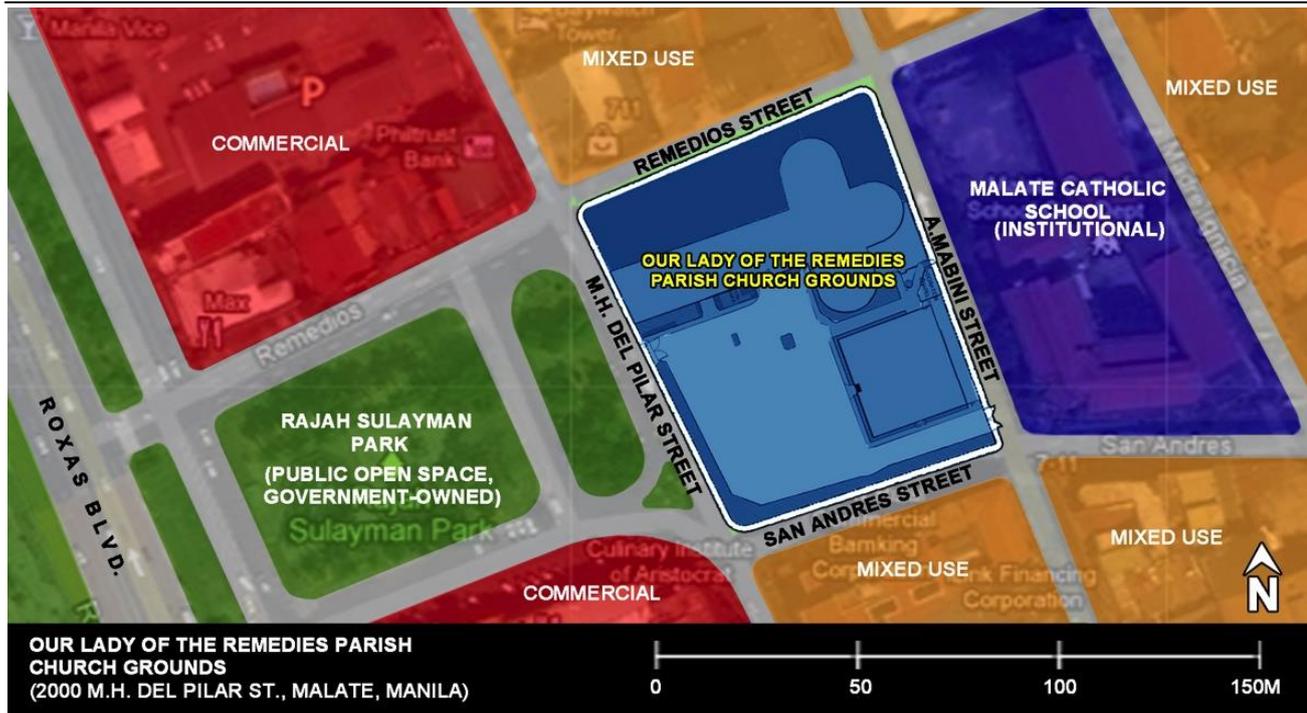


Figure 10. Current Land Use Map of the Malate Church Ground.
Source: Adapted from the MCLUPZO, 2005-2012

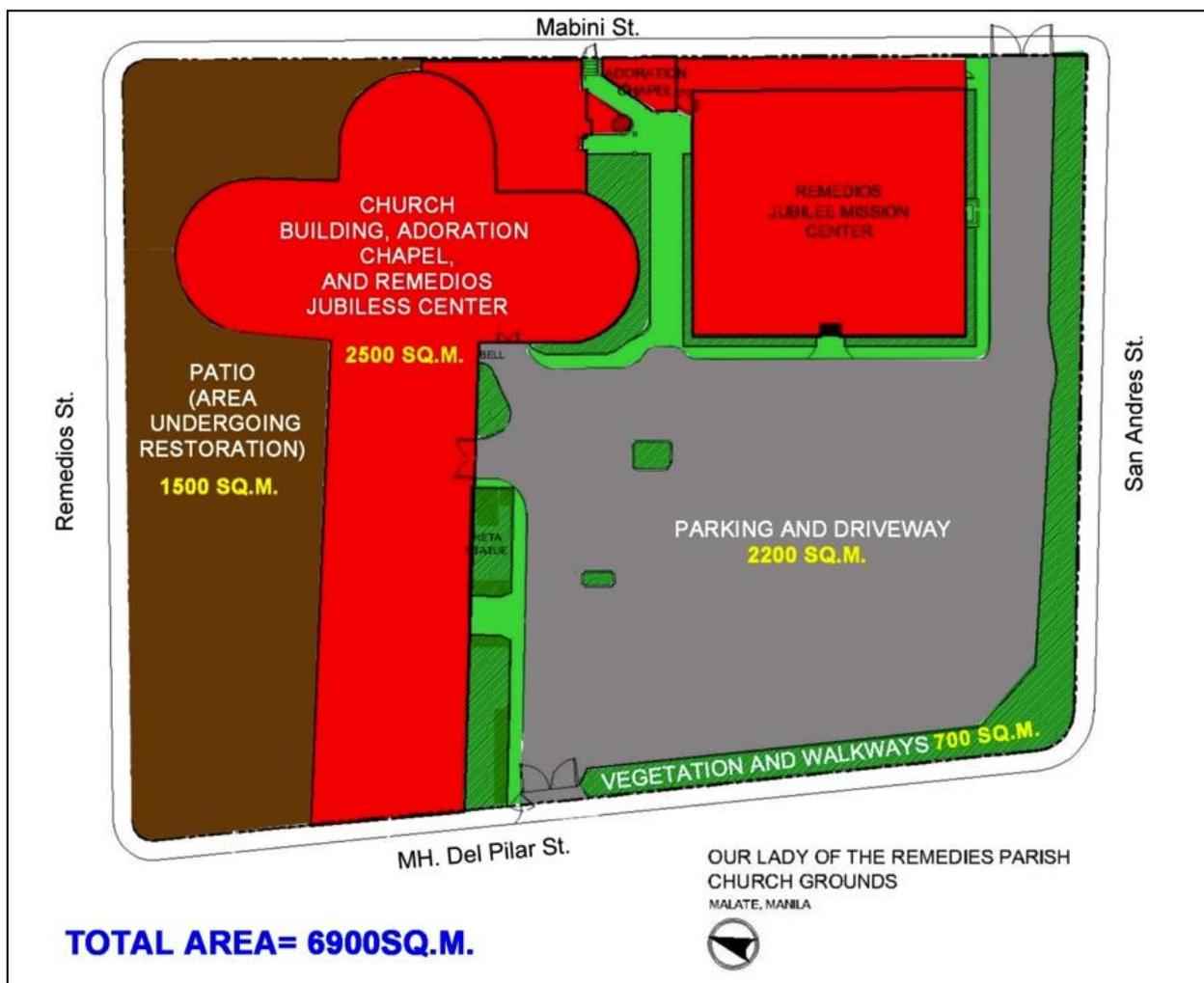


Figure 11. Physical Dimension and estimated total area of Malate Church Grounds.
Source: Sanctuario Sanctificado: Defining the Urban Cultural Landscape Character of Selected Manila Church Grounds, 2012

At present, an emerging mixture of land-use surrounds the Malate Church Grounds. As an offshoot of the initial layout set by the Laws of the Indies that was the prevailing urban plan during the Spanish period, the current urban component is surrounded by mixed-used, open spaces, residential, commercial, and institutional spaces.

C. The Physical Dimension of the Malate Church Grounds

The perimeter fence sets the current physical dimension of the Malate Church Grounds. It is equivalent to the assumed property of the Church and everything inside the fence is set to be part of the Our Lady of the Remedies Parish.

The proponent was able to determine a common set of areas seen inside most of the Manila Church Grounds—a church building, a flexible open space (used for parking, vendor space, and other communal activities) and garden or green spaces. In the case of Malate, a parish building different from the main church building is also seen inside the perimeter fence.

The prevailing pattern shows a dominant size of the building footprint inside the Malate Church Grounds. The church building is considered the main component. This structure is connected to the church administrative office, the nearby plaza, gates connecting to the commercial spaces, and the parking areas inside the periphery.

Land Use	Occupied Land Area	
	In sq.m.	% Shares
Building footprint	2500	36
Parking and Driveway (Open Area)	2200	32
Green Spaces and other Open spaces (Garden, Vegetation, Patio)	2200	32
Vendor Spaces	-	-
TOTAL	6,900	100

Table 1. Spatial Allocation of Malate Church Grounds.
Source: Sanctuario Sanctificado: Defining the Urban Cultural Landscape Character of Selected Manila Church Grounds, 2012

What is also common is the lush vegetation at the Malate Church Grounds. Large trees seen at old photos of the church grounds are still seen within the perimeter and more vegetation act as buffers from the noise coming from the adjacent streets. With the church grounds being at the heart of the town, busy and noisy streets are the norm and this creates an auditory problem especially during the solemn activities of the Church. What is seen to be helpful in the physical pattern of the church grounds spaces is the location of these green spaces along the perimeter fence or near the church building, masking and changing the ambience of the said space to accommodate a more serene feel at these open spaces.

At the side of the church building is a big open area to accommodate possible spillover from church mass and other related activities. These areas are also flexible areas for various activities of both religious and secular nature.

D. The Landscape Components of the Malate Church Grounds

As part of the landscape, the Malate Church Grounds boast of general landscape components. The site analysis of several church grounds has resulted in a list of common landscape features and components present in similar development. For the purpose of this study, the landscape components are categorized into the following: three-dimensional sculptures and lighting, two-dimensional wall scriptures, and sensory water features. Added components, which were already discussed, are garden areas and vegetation.

Minimal three-dimensional sculptures and two-dimensional wall scriptures are seen at the Malate Church Grounds. With the minimal outdoor space, most of the scriptures and sculptures are housed inside the building.



Figure 12. The “Pietà” Sculpture near the entrance of Malate Church.



Figure 13. The View of the Church façade, the lampposts, and the perimeter fence of the Malate Church Grounds.

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Only a sculpture of the Pieta is seen near the church building entrance. This directly connects to historical Malate serving as a commemorative mark for the people of Malate who died during the Second World War.

Three-dimensional representations of the Mother Mary in the form of the Pieta also act as offertory spaces, prayer areas, and thus serve as a reminder of the importance of the mother image in the Filipino catholic practice.

At night, the Malate Church Grounds blends with the lively commercial joints with its very well-lit perimeter. Floodlights and lampposts help highlight the church at night and during the evening celebration of sacraments. This also secures users from outdoor threats and the building from possible vandalism.

E. User Activities, Movement Patterns and Its Effect to the Physical Structure of the Malate Church Grounds

The researcher simultaneously did observations of several church grounds and identified a trend of church grounds user movement. The user circulation system has influenced the physical components and form of the Malate Church Grounds. The following graphs and maps were generated based from the procedure and time frame stated in the methodology.

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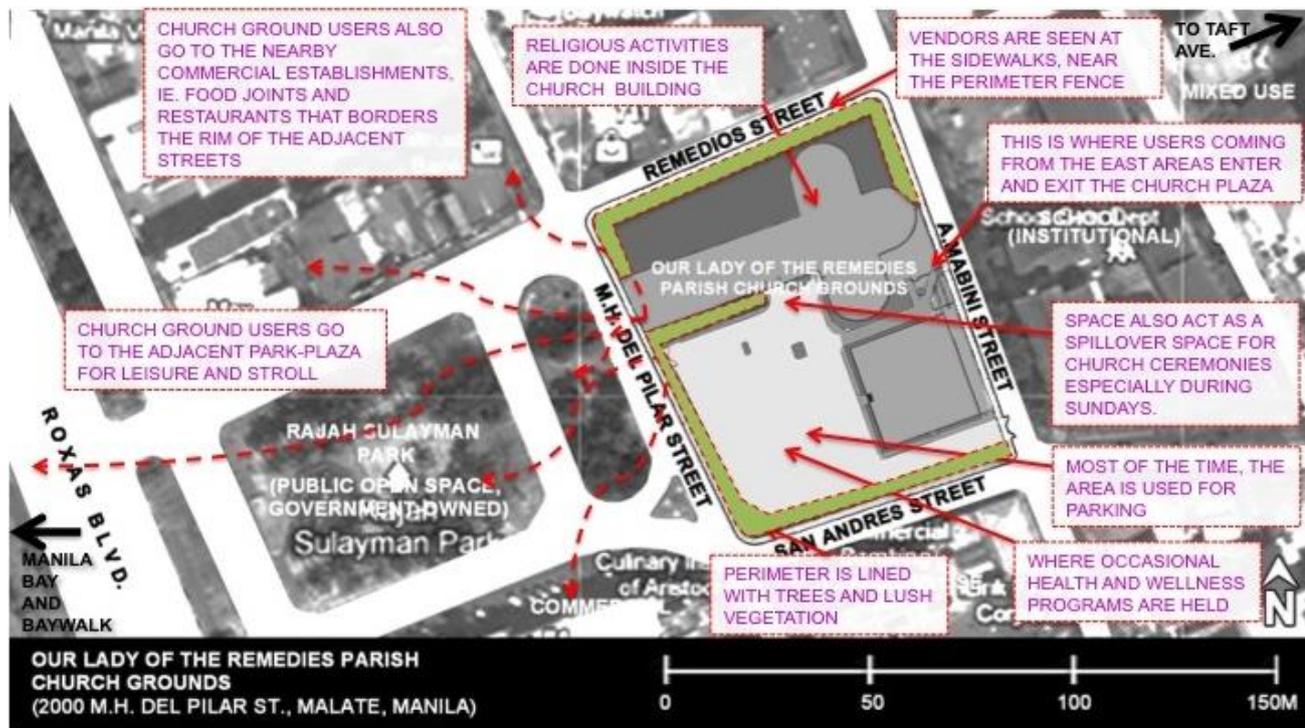


Figure 14. Map of the Malate Church grounds showing the user activities, movement and other church ground features.
Source: *Sanctuario Sanctificado: Defining the Urban Cultural Landscape Character of Selected Manila Church Grounds*, 2012

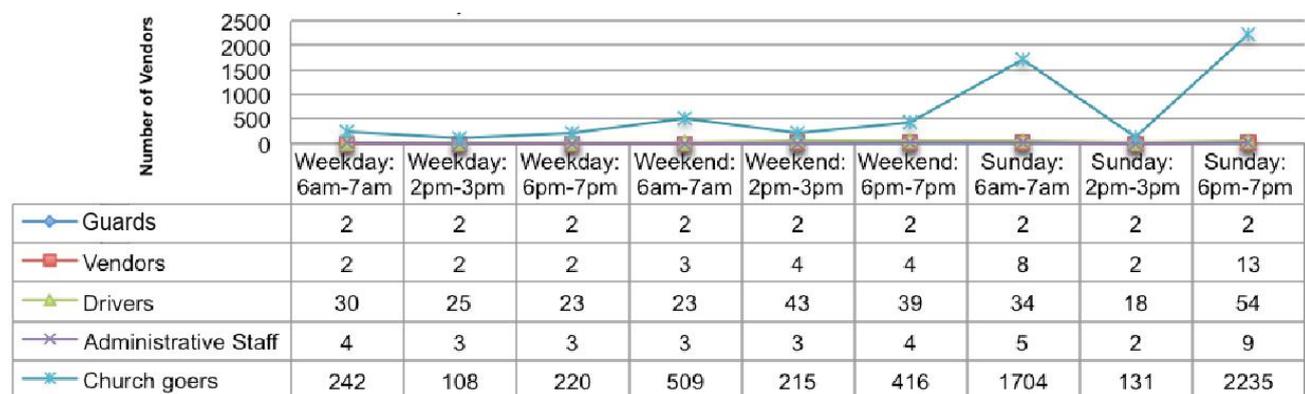


Figure 15. Number of Users According to Purpose of Visit at the Church Grounds (Malate Church Grounds).

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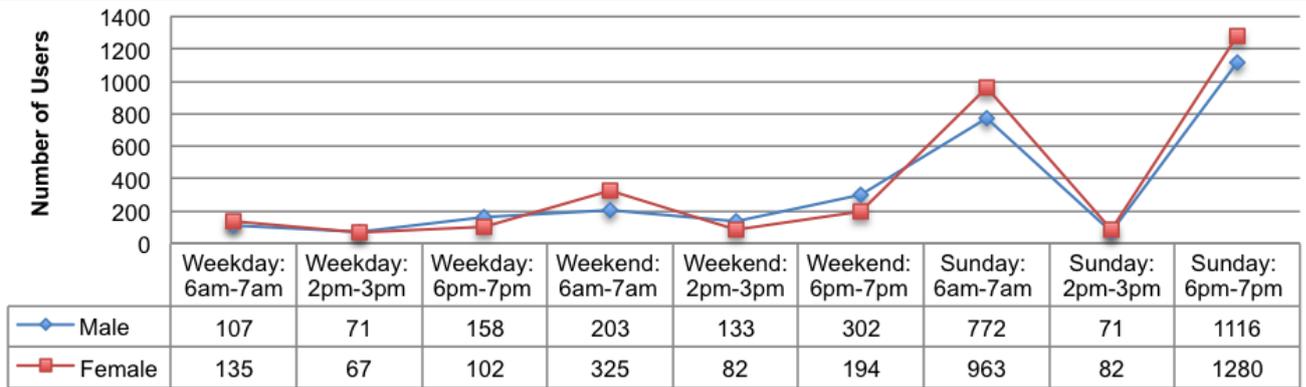


Figure 16. Number of Users According to Gender (Malate Church Grounds).

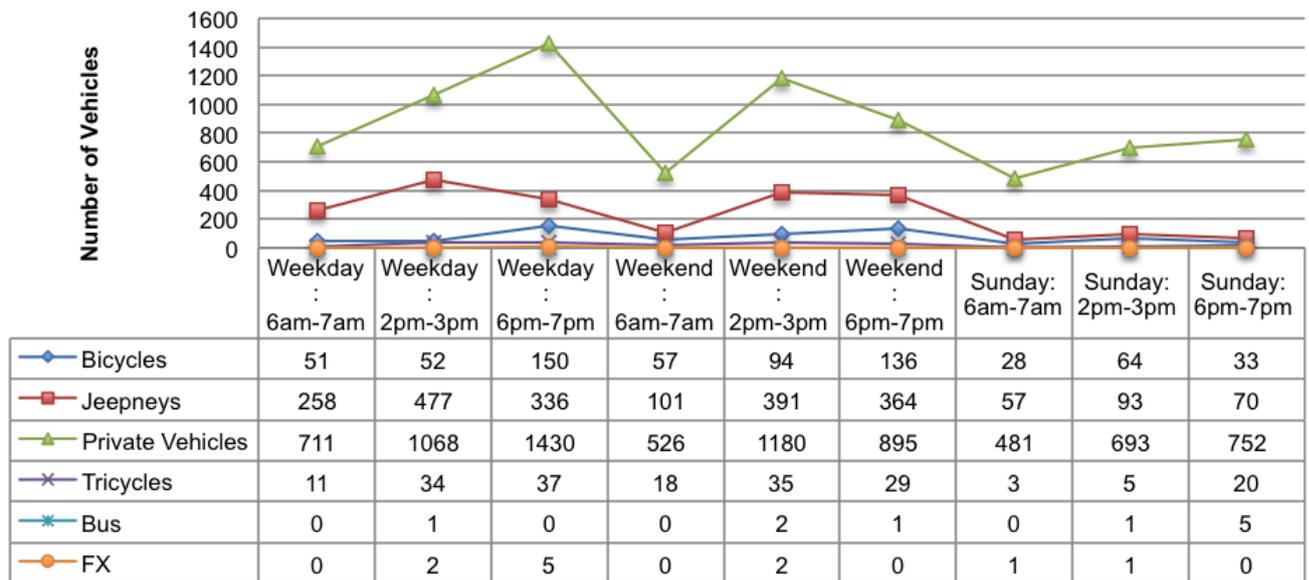


Figure 17. Number of Vehicles Traversing Adjacent Streets of the Church Grounds According to Type (Malate Church Grounds).

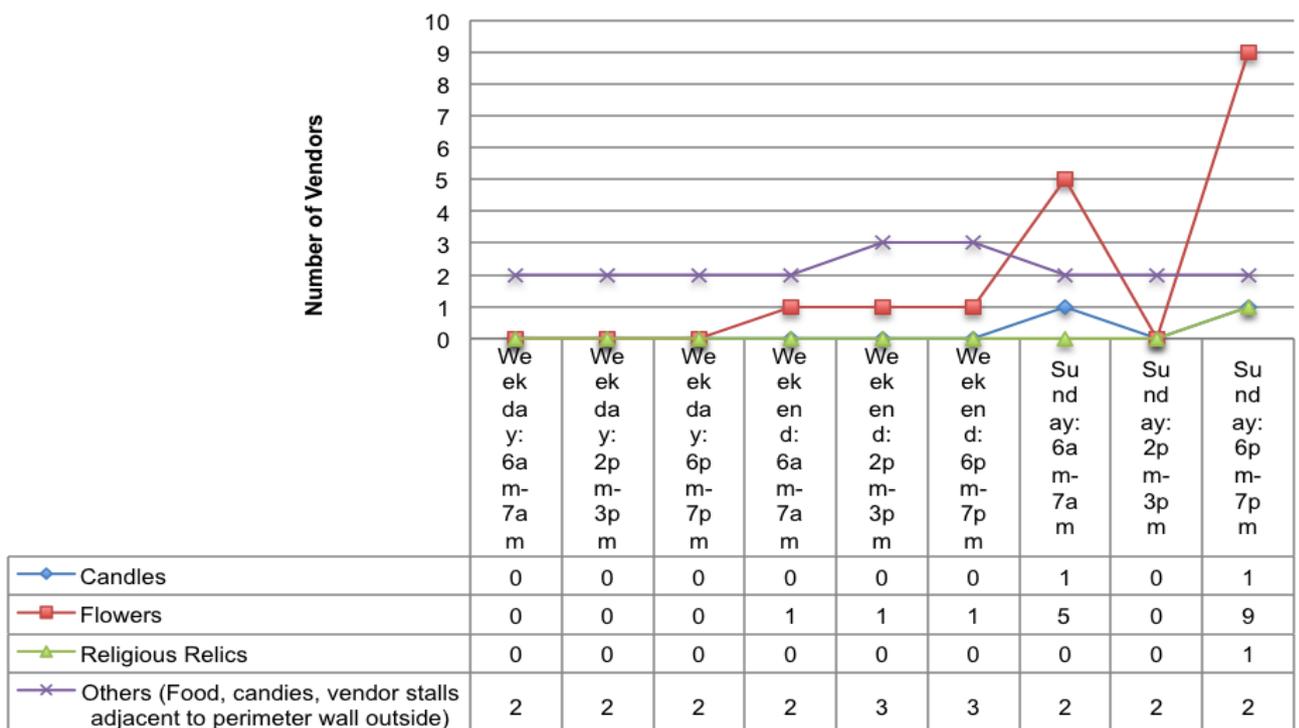


Figure 18. Number of Vendors inside the Perimeter Fence of the Malate Church Grounds.

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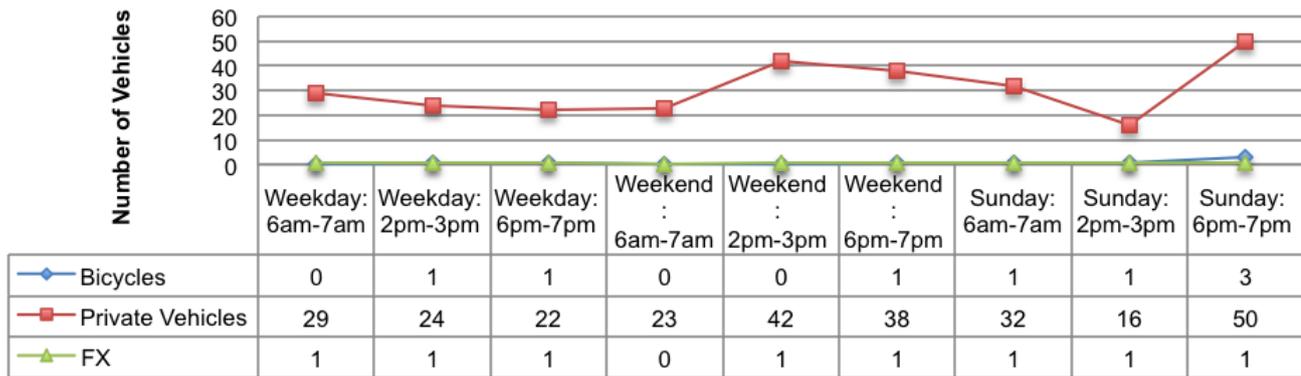


Figure 19. Number of Vehicles Using the Church Grounds for Parking (Malate Church Grounds).

Evident is the more prominent entry gateway to what is considered as the more prominent node – the entry point beside the Church façade. This area serves as a welcoming portion of the church grounds where the view of the church façade happens to greet its users and where most of the landscape sculptures are located. In some cases, the idea of church facade is to daunt the user, to make them feel "small" vis-a-vis the omniscience of god, and in some cases to inspire awe. For the vendors, the entry point marks a strategic location for selling and putting up their movable stalls. The possible anticipation of users to the change of movement pace from the church ground may prolong the time to sell the merchandise.

The next node is formed at the access to the church building. This is observed to be the secondary node. The researcher probes upon the possibility of the influx of people during the celebration of the Sacrament of the Eucharist as an enticement for users to assemble near this area. Spillover happens at these access points and signals a large number of people who cluster near these doors to be able to listen to the mass. In some cases, the nodes act as a gray area where people can socialize without causing disruption to the solemn sacramental ceremony. In these nodes, churchgoers achieve two objectives: social connection and participation at the religious congregation. It is in this node that a flexible open space is located.

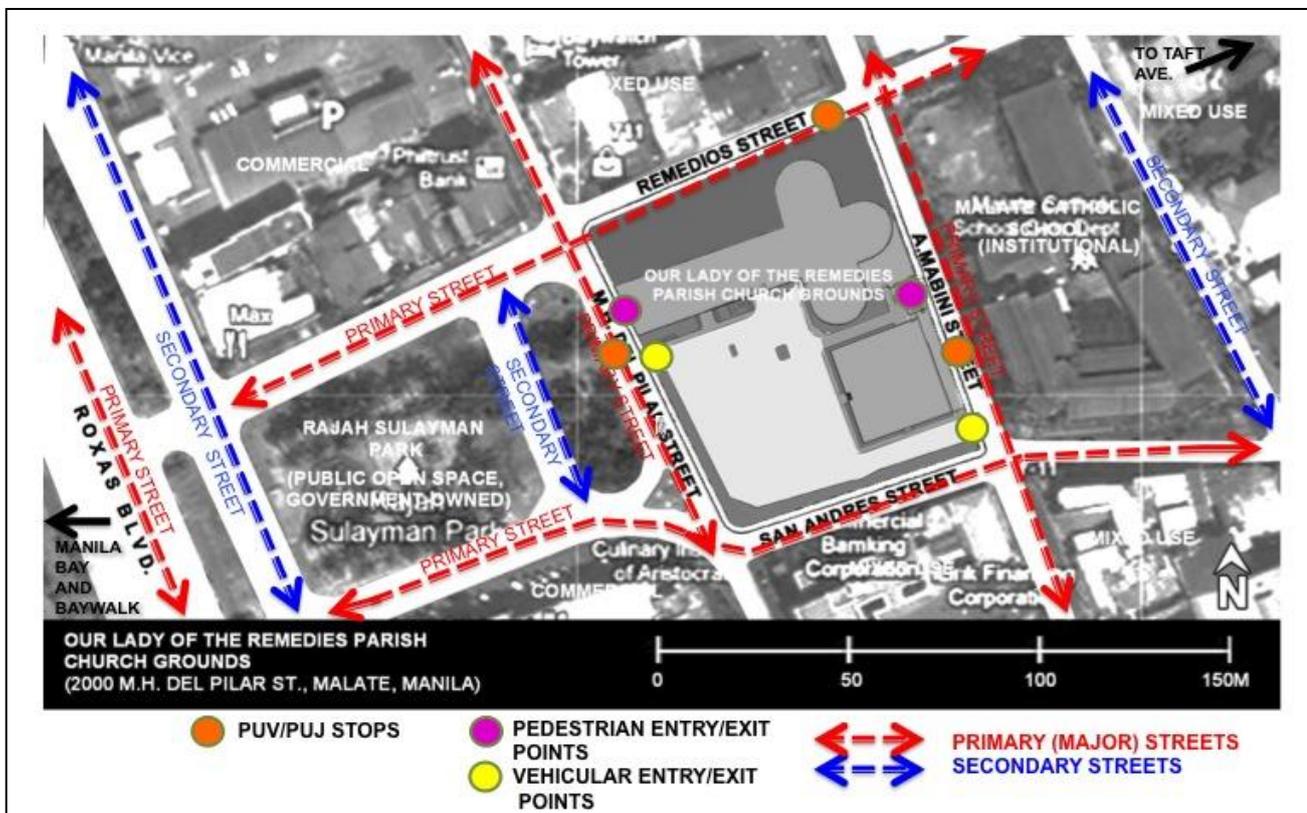


Figure 20. The "Pieta" Sculpture near the entrance of Malate Church. Current Map of the road networks along the periphery of the Malate Church grounds.

Source: Sanctuario Sanctificado: Defining the Urban Cultural Landscape Character of Selected Manila Church Grounds, 2012

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Figures 21 to 24. General User circulation paths at Malate Church grounds (upper left); Identified User nodes at Malate Church grounds (lower left); General User Entry and Exit Points at Malate Church Grounds (upper right); and Identified Landmarks at Malate Church grounds (lower right).

Source: *Sanctuario Sanctificado: Defining the Urban Cultural Landscape Character of Selected Manila Church Grounds, 2012*

For some, the movement pattern continues to the plaza as they observe communal leisure and play in the form of stroll and family interaction. In Malate, the nearby Rajah Sulayman Park is connected from the frontage to serve this purpose.

The exit points serve a similar function as that of the entry point, forming a cohesive component with similar function to the church grounds. These points act as a space connecting the church ground to what goes beyond it. This is where church grounds form a linkage to urban form and development of the Manila town.

IV. Synthesis and Conclusion

The Malate Church Grounds show a tangible pattern that adapts to the urban trends but continue to be intact in its interior physical structure and form. Although the current urban development trends altered most of the nearby land use and spatial allocation, the Malate Church Grounds continues to showcase the components of the religious space with a current accommodation of what is known as a "flexible open space". This flexible open space serves as transition points for the accommodation of the more secular spatial use –from the parking lots of more current modes of transportation to the spaces for vendor and commercial use.

The result is an urban cultural landscape framework that is adaptive and adheres to the needs of the current users. The translated maps and urban environment have shown a possible basis for further assessment of the intangible components of Malate Church Grounds and, thus, create a potential basis for a set of rules and guidelines to conserve the heritage values of sacred spaces similar to the Malate Church Grounds.

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