

9 A 11 ABRIL | 2026

9 TO 11 APRIL | 2026

TURISMO E PATRIMÓNIO COLONIAL ENCONTRO DE CULTURAS

CONGRESSO INTERNACIONAL

<https://tourismheritage.wixsite.com/2026>

Keynotes

Mike Robinson
Nottingham Trent University - England

Juan Pérez
Universidad Las Palmas - Spain

Maria José de Freitas
ICOMOS ISCSBH - Portugal

ORGANIZAÇÃO

CHAM - Centro de Humanidades: Universidade NOVA Lisboa e Universidade dos Açores

ARTIS - Instituto de História de Arte, Universidade Lisboa

ISCE - Instituto Superior de Lisboa e Vale do Tejo



TOURISM AND COLONIAL HERITAGE THE REENCOUNTER OF CULTURES

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

<https://tourismheritage.wixsite.com/2026>

Keynotes

Mike Robinson
Nottingham Trent University - England

Juan Pérez
Universidad Las Palmas - Spain

Maria José de Freitas
ICOMOS ISCSBH - Portugal

ORGANIZATION

CHAM - Centro de Humanidades: Universidade NOVA Lisboa e Universidade dos Açores

ARTIS - Instituto de História de Arte, Universidade Lisboa

ISCE - Instituto Superior de Lisboa e Vale do Tejo



revistas.rcaap.pt/thij

Volume 26 | Número 2 | Julho 2026 [40ª edição]
Volume 26 | Number 2 | July 2026 [40th edition]
Volumen 26 | Numero 2 | Julio 2026 [40ª edición]

Special Edition

INTRODUCTION 2

Colonial Architecture and Tourism: Legacies, Cultural Intersections and Boundaries

Maria José de Freitas

President ICOMOS ISCSBH

15

Colonial architecture is one of the most visible, and most contested, legacies of the great empires. Today, many former colonies promote their colonial buildings as major tourist attractions, even though societies continue to debate their significance and impact.

Historic colonial cities typically present their architecture as iconic landmarks, creating a third space where negotiation occurs.

In this discussion, I will explore colonial design across the globe, focusing particularly on Southeast Asia and South America. I will compare three cities on different continents that were colonised at different times, in an attempt to identify common features that could facilitate a better cultural compromise between heritage and tourism.

When viewed through the lens of tourism, colonial architecture acts as a 'living archive' of power, adaptation, seriality, and cultural exchange. Rather than being merely a set of buildings, it is a stage where the past is continuously re-negotiated by local residents, governments and international visitors.

This evolving reality is characterised by ongoing negotiation and successive narratives that draw on the past while adapting it to form stories that connect communities, promote identity and continuity, and provide cultural encounters

that combine the vernacular with institutionalised heritage.

Key words: colonial architecture; cultural tourism; legacies; 3rd space; negotiation; global narratives.

1. Architecture as a Record of 'Third Space'

In post-colonial theory, the concept of the 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994) describes the zone where two cultures collide and produce something entirely new. Colonial architecture is a physical manifestation of this.

In this context concepts like Hybridity and Adaptation are common (Bhabha, 1994): Hybridity - when we see European styles (Neoclassical, Gothic, Baroque) modified to survive local climates or using local materials; Adaptation - which represents a 'cultural encounter' where the colonizer had to compromise with the environment and the expertise of local craftsmen, leading to unique aesthetics like Indo-Saracenic architecture in the UK-ruled India, the Mestizo style in Latin America and Brazil, or the Macanese architecture in Macau. As Bhabha mentions in his book *The location of Culture* (1994) when describing the concept of Third Space: 'The non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space

- a third space - where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences' (Bhabha, 1994, p.218).

In former colonial spaces the existence of a mixed community with elements belonging to different cultural universes has created a type of society that Stuart Hall, in his essay *The Multicultural Question*, calls 'ethnically or culturally mixed societies' (Hall, 2003, p. 55), allowing for what Aijaz Ahmad¹ (1995 cited by Hall, 2003, p. 74) refers to as the 'cross-fertilisation of cultures'.

2. Tourism and the 'Nostalgic Trap'

For tourism, colonial architecture is a double-edged sword. It provides a 'unique selling point' for cities, but it also risks romanticizing a painful history.

We can recognise that there is the appeal of authenticity and modern travelers often seek authentic experiences. Historic colonial districts - like the Old Town of Galle in Sri Lanka or Cartagena in Colombia - offer a tangible sense of place that modern skyscrapers cannot provide, similar situation happens in the city of Macau [fig.01].

At the same time there is a certain colonial nostalgia and tourism often packages these sites as 'charming' or 'elegant', focusing on the aesthetic beauty while glossing over the forced labor or inequality that built them in the past. This can create a sanitized version of history for the consumption of visitors of former colonial powers.

Many post-colonial nations have reclaimed the heritage or classified buildings for their own identity. What was once a Governor's Palace might now be a public museum or a government office, shifting the 'encounter' from one of submission to one of national pride and modern utility. This is a situation sometimes difficult to control. Heritage sites, particularly historic city centres, are overwhelmed by successive waves of tourists, which causes them to lose their authenticity (Freitas, 2024).

3. How Colonial Architecture Represent Cultural Encounters

It is important to emphasise how architecture and tourism can interact, creating joint synergies, and here it is worth noting that this interaction can be forged on three levels:

1. The material encounter: Including the physical blending of styles (e.g., European facades with local woodcarvings, as we can see in Macau - China, or in Ouro Preto - Brazil) showing how cultures influenced each other's craftsmanship.
2. The narrative encounter: Depends a lot on the narrative that is created: whether it is a symbol of 'modernisation' or whether it represents 'resistance', and this will influence how visitors perceive or view the monument.
3. The social encounter: The interaction between the local community living in these 'heritage zones' and the tourists

¹ Cross-fertilisation of cultures has been endemic to all population movements... and all such movements in history have involved travel, contact, transmutation, hybridisation of ideas,

values and behavioural norms (Ahmad, 1995 quoted by Hall, 2003, p. 74).

visiting them. This can lead to either community empowerment through jobs or displacement due to gentrification.

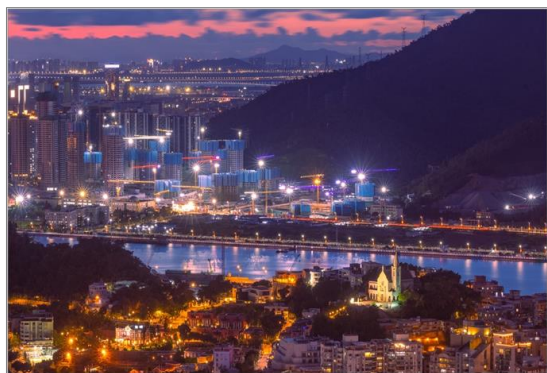


Figure 01. Macau (with the Penha Church) and the Pearl River Delta mega-region.
Source: Chan (2021)

4. Colonial Architecture as a Dynamic Site of Memories

Colonial architecture is not a static relic; it is a dynamic site of memories (Smith, 2006). In tourism, it serves as a bridge where visitors ‘encounter’ the complexities of global history. When managed well, it can foster deep cross-cultural understanding; when managed poorly, it can reinforce old hierarchies.

In Southeast Asia and Brazil, colonial architecture serves as a vivid map of encounters - not just between the colonizer and the colonized, but also between global aesthetics and local realities like climate, materials, know-how and spirituality.

In this context architecture and urban planning represent a dialogue where European designers, engineers, projectists, artists and artyzans had to learn from indigenous wisdom to survive climate changes like the heat, the humidity, the monsoon rains and other challenges.

We can see many examples that show this encounter, some of them still survive today, representing a cultural adaptation that has become unique in itself and therefore deserves to be highlighted.:

- The ‘Shophouse’ (Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Macau) [fig.02]: Represents a perfect cultural encounter. It combines Chinese courtyard concepts, European Neoclassical facades (columns and pediments), and local ‘five-foot ways’ (covered walkways for shade and rain protection) (Aranha, 2013; Freitas, 2024).
- Indo-Saracenic & Tropical Baroque (Philippines, Myanmar): In the Philippines, the *Bahay na Bato* (House of Stone) emerged. It combined Spanish stone foundations (to survive earthquakes) with traditional Malay wooden upper floors and *Capiz* (shell windows) for ventilation.



Figure 02. Shophouses in Macau. Inner Harbour in 1990.

Source: Loureiro (1995)

5. Tourism Impact

In contemporary society, tourism has been shown to reveal a social and economic dynamism that motivates individuals to seek out new experiences

and cultural attractions. A significant number of academics have undertaken the study of the role and impact of tourism in the narratives that are being constructed, and in the manner in which the historical product is sold to make it more attractive. In this context classified areas by UNESCO could be determinant (Cross, 2009; Yang, Xue & Jones, 2019).

Let us examine this in specific situations located on different continents, where cities were formerly colonised, and in some cases, their architecture is designated as World Heritage Sites. Cities like Hanoi, Luang Prabang, or Macau, show that tourism has turned 'Colonial Chic' into a luxury brand. Ancient French villas are now boutique hotels (e.g., Sofitel Legend Metropole), where the encounter is marketed as a romantic blend of old and new.

In Brazil, the encounter was shaped by the 'Gold Rush' and the blending of Portuguese, African, and Indigenous influences. A closer look at the city of Ouro Preto in Minas Gerais, Brazil, reveals this situation: this UNESCO city is a prime example of the 'Brazilian Baroque'. As Portuguese architects were not always present, local artists such as Aleijadinho developed a style that was more curved, organic and expressive than anything seen in Europe.

Other cities like Macau [fig.03] and Hong Kong, located in the Southeast coast of China, both former colonies, show a different situation, in fact in Macau, after visiting and playing at the Casinos, the chinese tourists make a tour in the hold city

center visiting the classified area, UNESCO site, making pictures and buying *recuerdos*. Despite everything, this is a city where traces of history still persist and are visible, they are part of humanity's heritage.

In Hong Kong a strong city with a thriving economy that has managed to establish a position in the economic and business world, the traces of colonial architecture are still present but they do not arouse the interest that survives in Macau.

In both cities colonial architecture serves as a profound record of two very different 'encounters'. While both are Pearl River Delta neighbors, their architectural DNA reflects the divergent colonial philosophies of Portugal and Great Britain.

6. The Possible Representations

6.1 Macau: the 'mediterranean-chinese' fusion

Macau represents the first and longest encounter between Europe and China (1557-1999). Its architecture is characterized by a 'seamless' integration of styles, an innovative mestizo architecture (Marreiros, 1999), often referred to as Macanese²:

² We can speak of a *macanese* architecture still on display in the historic centre of Macao and along the city's main arteries (Costa, 1997). The construction of 'false facades' from the 19th century onwards, in which neoclassical models were juxtaposed with

existing buildings (Marreiros, 1999; Freitas, 2015), reinforced the symbiotic culture of the city in a form of connection that Wong Shiu Kwan calls 'transculturations' (Kwan, 1998, p. 9 -75), where representations interpenetrate one another.



Figure 03. Current view of Leal Senado Square in Macau. UNESCO World Heritage Site, 2005.

Source: Freitas (2022)

- The Porous Boundary: In Macau, Chinese and Portuguese buildings literally lean against one another. You'll find the Na Tcha Temple (Chinese) built right next to the Ruins of St. Paul's (Portuguese). This represents a historical encounter based on coexistence rather than strict segregation.
- Architectural Hybridity: The Mandarin's House: is a traditional Chinese residential compound that incorporates Western elements like arched windows and Occidental-style wooden ceilings.
- Senado Square: A classic Mediterranean plaza paved with *calçada* (Portuguese cobblestones) surrounded by buildings that housed both Chinese merchants and Portuguese officials.
- Tourism Narrative: Macau's Historic Centre is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The encounter here is framed as a cultural marriage between Oriental and Occidental cultures (Freitas, 2024). Tourism focuses on the

romance of the past—cobblestone streets, pastel-colored churches, and Macanese cuisine (the world's first 'fusion' food).

Different narratives and approaches lead to different perceptions of how to 'view heritage' (Rossa and Ribeiro, 2015) in Macau, the Ruins of St. Paul's [fig.04] and the Taipa Houses Museum [fig.05] represent two completely different types of cultural encounters: one is a grand, high-stakes collision of global religions, while the other is an intimate, domestic portrait of a unique ethnic identity.

- Cross-cultural influences: Ruins of St. Paul - The current façade of Mater Dei Church - Ruins of St. Paul - was added in 1620 and completed in 1640 (Macao World Heritage, 2005), to a design by the Italian friar architect Carlo Spínola, whose face (Couceiro, 1994) is believed to be carved on the side of the façade as a signature. The granite stone was carved by Japanese refugees who had fled horrific persecution in Japan, they worked together with local people. If we look closely at the stone carvings, we will see Japanese chrysanthemums mixed with European angels. The façade includes a 'stone sermon' sculpted to teach Catholicism to the population, in which a hybrid graphic language was used that still celebrates cultural miscegenation today (Macao World Heritage, 2005). In 1835, a violent fire destroyed the old Mater Dei Church and the adjacent St Paul's College. Nowadays, only the façade

remains, symbolising the ongoing cultural diversity and encounters that attract tourists, academics and religious people from around the world. It is a place for celebration (Freitas, 2024).

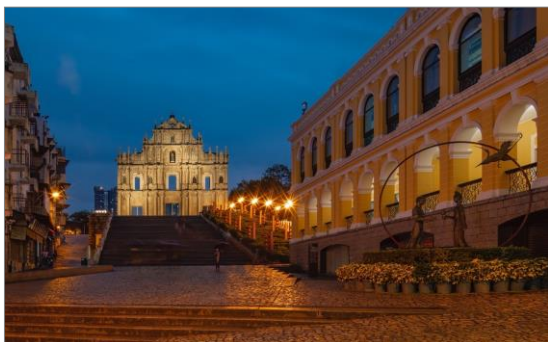


Figure 04. Façade of Mater Dei Church, with sculpture by Lagoa Henriques in the foreground on the right.

Source: Chan (2020)

One of the most famous ‘encounters’ carved on the wall is the Virgin Mary stepping on a seven-headed hydra. Next to it, Chinese characters read: ‘The Holy Mother tramples the heads of the dragon’. In the West, the dragon was a symbol of the devil; in China, it was a symbol of imperial power. This architectural detail represents the friction and translation errors that occurred when Western religion tried to ‘fit’ into an Asian context.

Today, tourism has added a new layer. We can use VR headsets at the site to walk through the church as it looked before the 1835 fire. This creates a technological encounter where modern visitors meet the 17th-century Jesuit world in a digital ‘Third Space’.

- Alternative scenarios: The Taipa House Museum - Conversely, within the ambit of experiences available to visitors, there are

alternative scenarios that can be encountered with varying degrees of engagement. In this case, it is not the monumentality that attracts visitors, but rather the opportunity to immerse themselves in the way of life of populations in more remote times. In this particular instance, a visit to the Taipa House Museums in Macau offers a unique experience and provides insight into the history and cultural heritage of the Macanese population. This location has become a popular destination, attracting a significant number of visitors.

If St. Paul’s is about the ‘Big History’ of empires, the Taipa Houses are about ‘Small History’ - the everyday lives of the Macanese people (the mixed community of Portuguese, Chinese, Malay, and Indian descent).

When these five mint-green houses were built in 1921, they sat directly on the shoreline. Colonial officials could sit on their verandas and look at the river estuary. Today, because of massive land reclamation, they look out over a wetland and a skyline of billion-dollar casinos. The architecture now represents a visual encounter between old world leisure times and new world hyper-capitalism of the Casino Complex.

At the same time the set of houses represent a ‘Macanese Living Museum’: one of the houses is preserved exactly as it would have been in the early 20th century. Here, the encounter is found in the furniture: Portuguese furniture and religious icons, Chinese porcelain, English clocks, sitting on the same table. It shows

that for the Macanese, culture wasn't a choice between East and West - it was a natural, domestic blend of both.



Figure 05. Actual view of the Taipa Houses Museum. Classified site, Law 11/2013, Macau.
Source: Freitas (2022)

The venue hosts the annual Lusophone Festival and every year, the space between these houses hosts a massive festival celebrating Portuguese-speaking cultures from Brazil to Angola or Goa. Tourism here transforms a static colonial site into a living bridge, where the architecture becomes a backdrop for global music, food, and dance.

Curiously, both places: St. Paul's Ruins and Taipa house Museum, were built during a period of colonisation and religious or administrative affirmation. However, over time and through tourism, they have become symbols of inclusion, with Macau celebrating its mixed heritage.

6.2. Ouro Preto: another cultural encounter

The 'cultural encounter' in Brazil is perhaps more intense in Ouro Preto [fig.06] than anywhere else, because it was born from a literal 'gold fever'. Unlike the

coastal cities, Ouro Preto (formerly *Vila Rica*, 1711) was carved into steep, jagged mountains, where the encounter between Portuguese wealth and African labor created a unique, dramatic aesthetic known as *Barroco Mineiro* (Mineiro Baroque).

The most significant 'encounter' in Brazilian art is embodied in one man: Antonio Francisco Lisboa, known as *Aleijadinho* (the Little Cripple)³. Because of his African descent, he was technically barred from certain guilds, yet he became the most famous artist in Brazilian history. At the same time in his sculptures he used local *pedra-sabão* (soapstone). This material choice was a cultural adaptation; it allowed for softer, more expressive curves that better represented the Brazilian emotion - more organic and less rigid than the European originals.

In his masterpiece, the Twelve Prophets in nearby Congonhas, many scholars believe he modeled the faces of biblical figures after local rebels (the *Inconfidentes*) who were fighting for independence from Portugal.

Modern tourism in Ouro Preto presents its own type of encounters reflecting what we can call the UNESCO Paradox: Ouro Preto was the first Brazilian city to become a UNESCO World Heritage site (1980). To maintain its 'authentic' look, modern residents often face strict rules about how they can paint their houses or what windows they can use.

³ In a way we can say that *Aleijadinho* embodies a mixed identity: the son of a Portuguese architect and an enslaved

African woman, he was the ultimate product of the colonial encounter.



Figure 06. Museu da Inconfidência, city of Ouro Preto, Brazil.

Source: Freitas (2022)

The encounter here is between the tourist seeking a 1700s ‘museum’ and the local student population (Ouro Preto is a major university town) that seek authenticity outside the tourist circuits and want to preserve the old mines and gold extraction sites and caves, along with the small primitive chapels on the hillsides as their true heritage, which is now threatened by attempts linked to new mining operations. A situation verified personally during the ICOMOS General Assembly in 2024, held in Ouro Preto, and subsequently denounced by students and academics at various meetings recently organised.

6.3. Hong Kong: the ‘functional-global’ encounter

Being more recent the colonial architecture of the city of Hong Kong (1841-1997) reflects the British focus on trade, administration, and law. The encounter here was more formal and structured.



Figure 07. Tai Kwun Central Police Station and Victoria Prison, a cultural hub in Hong Kong.

Source: Freitas (2020)

The British architecture in HK was often designed to project power and we can see several examples:

- The Court of Final Appeal (Old Supreme Court): A Neoclassical masterpiece with Ionic columns that represented the ‘Rule of Law’, a key pillar of the British-HK encounter.
- *Tai Kwun*: Once the Central Police Station and Victoria Prison [fig.07], it has been revitalized into a cultural hub. It represents the encounter of justice and control, now reclaimed as a space for public art.
- The *Tong Lau* (Shophouse): While the British built grand stone offices, the local Chinese built *Tong Laus*. These were 3–4 story buildings with ground-floor shops and upper-floor balconies. They used European classical motifs (like pediments) but maintained Chinese living patterns, representing the everyday encounter of the working class.

Despite much heritage having been destroyed, in the cases that remain it is possible to recognise that there is a tourist narrative and that many of the old colonial

buildings are being restored to new life and not just preserved. There we can find a Tourism Narrative and the encounter is marketed as ‘East meets West’ efficiency, where the colonial past provides the ‘cool’ backdrop for a modern, global financial city.

7. Monumental vs Vernacular

Beyond the grand facades of the Big Station in Hong Kong or the St. Paul’s Ruins in Macau, the real ‘encounters’ are tucked away in the smaller details and the stories of the people who lived inside these walls.

Today, the encounter happens through Adaptive Reuse. When you have a cocktail in a former prison cell in Hong Kong or buy a souvenir in an old Grandmother’s House in Macau, you are participating in the newest chapter of these buildings.

The colonial power is gone, but the architecture remains as a ‘stage’ for modern global culture.



Figure 08. Hidden street, city of Ouro Preto, Brazil.

Source: Freitas (2022)

The central debate in modern heritage

management actually is: The Monument vs. The Neighborhood which brings us to different ways of looking at built heritage and its classification, as we can see in Ouro Preto [fig.08].

Both the UNESCO-fied sites and the hidden vernacular spaces promote cultural encounters, but they do so in entirely different languages which can be summarised as follows:

7.1 UNESCO sites: encounters with ‘the universal’

UNESCO status promotes an encounter based on shared human history. It tells the visitor, ‘This place is so important that it belongs to the whole world, not just Brazil or Macau’.

- How it promotes encounters: It creates a ‘Global Stage’. When a tourist from Germany visits the Ruins of St. Paul’s, the encounter is mediated by international standards of history and art. The dialogue is about Greatness—the skill of the Japanese carvers, the ambition of the Jesuits, or in Ouro Preto the genius of Aleijadinho.
- The Tourism Experience: It is ‘High-Resolution’ tourism. It attracts people who want to learn about the turning points of civilization.
- The Risk: It can become a Spectacle Encounter. If the site is too polished, the tourist encounters an *object*, not a *culture*. The local people might feel like they are just extras in a movie.

7.2. Vernacular situations: encounters with ‘the intimate’

The ‘simple’ or vernacular Heritage -

the back alleys of Macau, the student *Repúblicas* of Ouro Preto, or the wet markets of Hong Kong - promotes an encounter based on Human Connection.

- How it promotes encounters: It removes the pedestal. When a tourist eats a Macanese egg tart in a tiny, crowded shop (the hidden experience) rather than at a grand hotel, the encounter is with Daily Life.
- The 'Slow Tourism' Appeal: Modern travelers are increasingly looking for 'The Real'. They want to see how a house is built to withstand a tropical storm (vernacular wisdom) rather than just looking at a gold-plated altar.
- Authenticity: Vernacular spaces are unscripted. The encounter isn't a lecture; it's a conversation.

7.3. Which is 'more interesting' to attract tourists?

The most successful cultural tourism today uses a Hybrid Strategy.

- The intersection

Several key scholars who study how architecture, tourism, and colonial history intersect often focus on the friction between 'official' heritage (UNESCO) and 'living' heritage (the vernacular), such as Nezar AlSayyad: the specialist on *Hybrid Urbanism* who focuses specifically on how tourism 'manufactures' heritage, or Homi K. Bhabha who in the *The Theory of 'Third Space'* explores how colonized people didn't just copy European architecture, they transformed it, he describes how cultures aren't static but are constantly remade, using tradition not as a pure past, but as a strategic tool (a 'pastness') to authorize

present identities, often through translation and hybridity in an in-between space, challenging fixed, unitary notions of culture. It's about the productive instability where meaning is negotiated, creating cultural difference rather than just diversity, highlighting how the present reinterprets the past for new formations.

Also Dean MacCannell (1999) on his book *Search for Authenticity* explains why we are attracted to hidden or vernacular spaces. He believes modern tourists suffer from a lack of authenticity in their own lives, so they travel to find 'real' life in other places (like the hills of Ouro Preto or the alleys of Macau).

While Tim Winter (2012) when talking about Macau and Hong Kong discusses how the 'colonial chic' is used to attract tourists and this can sanitize the history of suffering that those buildings represent.

Laurajane Smith's (2006) work on Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) provides a powerful critique that sits right alongside Bhabha's theories. Smith discusses how being "classified" can actually disempower locals by making them feel like their own daily habits are wrong if they don't fit the expert's image.

- The best experience

If a city only focuses on its UNESCO 'proud' status, it becomes a Museum City (beautiful but dead). If it only focuses on the 'simple/hidden' vernacular, it might struggle to attract international funding and visibility.

The best experiences happen when the UNESCO status provides the *context* and the vernacular heritage provides the *content*. Tourists are attracted to the

‘Grand Story’, but they love the ‘Small Secret’.

Heritage is a process of negotiation (Smith, 2006). When we talk about ‘shared heritage’ in places like Macau or Ouro Preto, Bhabha would argue that the significance of these sites is never fixed; it is constantly being ‘re-negotiated’ between the ghost of the colonizer, the pride of the local, and the tourist appreciation.

By looking at Macau, Hong Kong, and Ouro Preto through the lenses of Homi Bhabha and Laurajane Smith, we can see that the ‘encounter’ isn’t a one-time event in the past. It is an ongoing, living process.

Here is how this specific points connect back to the central theme:

- The Physical Encounter (Hybridity): We’ve seen how architecture is the ‘Third Space’ where cultures collided. It’s not just a European building in a foreign land; it’s a new creation - like the Indo-Saracenic style, the Bahay na Bato - that wouldn’t exist without that specific encounter.
- The Identity Encounter (Miscegenation): We explored how people like the Macanese or Afro-Brazilians are the human version of this hybridity. Their relationship with the classified heritage is a negotiation between being the ‘owners’ of the stone and being ‘unhomely’ within a colonial history.
- The Power Encounter (Authorized Heritage Discourse): Following Smith, we’ve discussed how the encounter is often controlled by official experts (AHD). Tourism can either reinforce a sanitized,

colonial version of history or it can open a window into the hidden vernacular stories that reveal the true, complex nature of the meeting between cultures.

Quoting Martin Heidegger, Bhabha (1994, p.1) once said that ‘the boundary is where things begin’. For the Macanese and the people of Ouro Preto, they live on that boundary. They don’t ‘possess’ the architecture in a legal sense; they possess it by being the only ones who can truly translate its secrets.



Figure 09. Tap Seac Square, home to Macau Cultural Institute, Public Library, Historical Archive and Art Gallery. Classified Site, Law 11/2013, Macau.
Source: Freitas (2022)

While Bhabha focuses on the internal psychological state of hybridity (the ‘Third Space’), Smith(2006) focuses on the external power structures that decide what counts as real heritage. She argues that the AHD (Authorized Heritage Discourse) - the official voice of experts and organizations like UNESCO - often prioritizes the aesthetic and the material (the stones) over the social and the lived situations.

Built in the early 20th century to house families, the Tap Seac villas [fig.09] are now home to the Macau Cultural Institute,

Public Library, Historical Archive and Art Gallery. They are an example of good practice in that they maintain their appearance while telling the story of the city and promoting cultural tourism.

8. Conclusions

The primary conclusion is that heritage in places like Macau or Ouro Preto is not a static object to be looked at; it is a performance.

- Following Laurajane Smith, we conclude that the ‘encounter’ happens every time a local resident hangs laundry on a colonial balcony or a tourist chooses a ‘hidden’ alleyway over a grand cathedral.
- Significance is not ‘built-in’ to the stone; it is negotiated daily through use, memory, and even subversion.

The second conclusion is that the most authentic ‘cultural encounter’ for a tourist is not finding a pure piece of Portugal in Brazil or a pure piece of Britain in Hong Kong.

- Instead, it is the discovery of the Third Space—that hybrid zone the Bhabha describes.
- The conclusion is that hybridity (Macanese identity or the Brazilian *Mulato* aesthetic) is the actual owner of these sites. The architecture is merely the shell; the hybrid culture is the pearl.

The third conclusion is that The Tension Between ‘AHD’ and the ‘Vernacular’ is Productive and the trigger for cultural encounters.

There is a permanent, healthy tension between the Authorized Heritage

Discourse (UNESCO/Experts) and the Vernacular (The People).

- The Official story provides the protection and the global ‘brand’ that attracts tourism.
- The Hidden story provides the soul and the lived experience that makes the tourist stay.

A city that is *only* a UNESCO monument becomes a cemetery; a city that is *only* vernacular might lose its historical protection.

The most successful cultural tourism today uses an Hybrid Strategy: the UNESCO status acts as the ‘Hook’, but the vernacular heritage acts as the ‘Heart’.

References

- Alsayyad, N. (2001). *Hybrid urbanism: On the identity discourse and the built environment*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Aranha, J. (2013). *The Southeast Asian shophouse as a model for sustainable urban environments*. WIT Press. <https://www.witpress.com/elibrary/dne-volumes/8/4/766>
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.
- Couceiro, G. (1994). *A Igreja do Colégio da Madre de Deus (ou de São Paulo) em Macau, 1601–1640*. <http://www.icm.gov.mo/rc/viewer/30030/1919>
- Cross, H. (2009). Emerging issues for cultural tourism in Macau. *Journal of Current Affairs*, 38(1), 73–99.
- Fok, K. C. (1978). *The Macao formula: A study of Chinese management of westerners from the mid-sixteenth century to the Opium War period* [Doctoral

- dissertation, University of Hawaii]. University of Hawaii.
- Freitas, M. J. (2024). *Macau and the quest for a new identity: Multiculturalism as predicate for the city's (re)construction* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Coimbra).
<https://estudogeral.uc.pt/handle/10316/115484>
- Hall, S. (2003). A questão multicultural. In *Da diáspora: Identidades e mediações culturais*. Editora UFMG.
- Kwan, W. S. (1998). Uma mistura de influências portuguesas e chinesas no património de Macau. *Revista de Cultura*, 35/36(2), 9–75.
- Loureiro, J. (1995). *Postais antigos: Macau* (3.^a ed.). Maisimagem Comunicação Global.
- MacCannell, D. (1999). *The tourist: A new theory of the leisure class*. University of California Press.
- Marreiros, C. (1999). O modelo-mãe: A arquitectura mestiça macaense das falsas fachadas. *Revista de Cultura*, 38/39(2), 173–191.
- Rossa, W., & Ribeiro, M. C. (2015). *Patrimónios de influência portuguesa: Modos de olhar*. Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra.
- Smith, L. (2006). *Uses of heritage*. Routledge.
- UNESCO. (2005). *World Heritage Convention: Nomination of "Historic Monuments of Macao (China)" on the World Heritage List*.
<https://whc.unesco.org/uploads/nominations/1110.pdf>
- Winter, T., & Daly, P. (Eds.). (2012). *Routledge handbook of heritage in Asia*. Routledge.
- Yang, Y., Xue, L., & Jones, T. E. (2019). Tourism-enhancing effect of World Heritage Sites: Panacea or placebo? A meta-analysis. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 75, 29–41.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2018.12.007>

