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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

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EDITORIAL

Cultural heritage is one of the defining references of contemporary life, while tourism represents a far-reaching phenomenon of the global society that the twenty-first century has inherited. Cultural motivation leads many tourists to travel to places once belonging to the former European colonial empires, with the aim of experiencing a transcultural heritage born of a hybrid legacy that takes on singular forms. It follows that heritage tourism associated with colonial legacies enables not only the enjoyment of leisure travel, but also a multi-secular historical understanding, whilst constituting a privileged means of dialogue and empowerment between visitors and hosts.

As tourism is a global phenomenon with a structural weight in the national GDPs of many countries, the balance between recreational travel and the safeguarding of a discursive resource – whose rereadings and reappropriations reflect prevailing political power – has proved fragile and volatile. Subject to strategies of transition, adaptation, maintenance and reformulation, colonial heritage constitutes a means of constructing culture and defining identities, a facilitator of tourism's integration into history – becoming part of it –, and a powerful instrument of multilateral cooperation and rapprochement between countries that share a temporarily common past.

This tension between memory and cultural attraction, between the weight of a frequently painful past and the economic and identity-forming potential of tourism, runs as a thread throughout the contributions gathered in this issue. Researchers from

different countries and disciplinary backgrounds – from architecture to anthropology, from postcolonial studies to tourism management – examine cases situated in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe, offering a necessarily plural and comparative overview of the ways in which different societies negotiate, appropriate and reinterpret their colonial past within the contemporary tourism context.

Juan Santana-Perez and Maria José de Freitas, guest authors of this thematic issue, address questions of considerable relevance within the heritage context. Whilst the former examines the challenges of sustainable tourism in the Macaronesian archipelagos, proposing strategies for the preservation of tangible and intangible heritage in light of UNESCO and Council of Europe guidelines, the latter, President of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Shared Built Heritage, analyses colonial architecture as a living archive of power and cultural exchange, comparing cities across different continents to identify points of convergence between colonial heritage and tourism.

In the European context, Maria João Castro provides a historical overview of Portuguese colonial tourism, from steam passenger liners to the contemporary repercussions of what has been termed memory tourism, highlighting the political intentions underlying the legitimisation of tourism in the colonies.

Cândida Cadavez analyses how the Estado Novo regime (1933-1974) instrumentalised colonial representations to construct its propaganda network, particularly within spaces of tourism and

leisure, drawing on Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities".

With regard to Asia, Amita Kanekar and Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos examine the touristic evolution of Hindu temples in Goa, marked by a unique fusion of architectural influences, analysing how Goa's integration into India has gradually transformed this transcultural heritage.

Thành Thúc examines the transformation of colonial-era buildings in Ho Chi Minh City, from symbols of French colonial domination to tourist attractions integrated into contemporary urban identity, arguing that their strategic commodification facilitates a narrative of historical continuity.

It is precisely this diversity of perspectives and geographies that lends this issue its thematic coherence and critical scope, inviting the reader to reflect upon the multiple meanings that colonial heritage may assume when placed in the service of - or in tension with - tourism.

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INTRODUCTION 1

Heritage and Sustainable Tourism in Macaronesia

Juan Manuel Santana-Pérez

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Within the Atlantic Ocean there exist multiple insular realities. Our spatial framework extends between 43° and 12° north latitude and between 25° and 13° west longitude. Macaronesia (a term derived from the Greek makáron, meaning “happy,” and nēsoi, meaning “islands,” coined by Webb in 1835) comprises the archipelagos of the Azores, Madeira, the Selvagens Islands, the Canary Islands, and Cape Verde.

There are coastal communities, such as the Macaronesian archipelagos, that annually receive almost nine times more tourists than their total resident population. However, this situation entails a serious risk: these communities may become victims of their own success. The current challenge lies in sustaining tourism activity in a way that ensures the preservation and dissemination of both tangible and intangible heritage. The Atlanticity of these islands constitutes one of their defining identity features, and heritage plays a decisive role in the process of constructing collective identities.

This study seeks to formulate a series of proposals, most of which are already reflected in UNESCO frameworks and in various guidelines issued by the Council of Europe, along with additional recommendations by international experts that should be taken into account by insular authorities.

The tangible dimension of heritage consists of artistic works and utilitarian structures. Other forms of heritage that also

require preservation include geographical and biological heritage.

The intangible dimension of heritage encompasses language, oral traditions, traditional knowledge, gastronomy, the skills necessary for the creation of material culture, systems of values, and performing arts—in short, everything that constitutes the culture of a people in the most anthropological sense of the term.

Macaronesian culture is a hybrid formed by multiple cultural traditions. On the one hand, behaviors and customs of indigenous groups have endured. To these must be added the cultural contributions of the Europeans who conquered the territory, predominantly Castilians. Finally, the cultural practices of various African ethnic groups brought as enslaved populations must also be considered, traces of which still survive in small communities, such as Moriscos and sub-Saharan groups.

The valorization and sustainable management of cultural heritage should serve as a means for the development of local societies.

An increasing number of tourists are no longer satisfied solely with sun-and-beach tourism, but instead seek to transform their journeys into intellectually enriching experiences. Consequently, the tourism market has responded to these demands by offering new destinations and experiential products.

Tourists’ changing demands range from recreational travel to the exploration and learning of traditions, culture, society, and the environment. However, intense tourist

flows cause significant damage—not only to the environment, potentially leading to its degradation, but also to local communities. Numerous attempts have been made to reduce or eliminate the negative impacts of tourism, giving rise to the concept of sustainable tourism, understood as tourism that does not harm the environment and improves quality of life. Sustainability encompasses environmental, social, and economic systems.

Table 1. Tourists Received in the Macaronesian Archipelagos (2024)

Archipelago	Tourists	Total Population
Azores	4,2 million	241718
Madeira	11,7 million	259440
Canary Islands	17,77 million	2258000
Cape Verde	1,2 million	528000

Source: Author's own elaboration based on official data.

Sustainable and responsible tourism increasingly act as allies in the valorization of local community traditions and their constituent elements¹, encompassing both tangible heritage and intangible aspects such as ideas, beliefs, and gastronomy.

We understand heritage as the collective set of works and values that belong to a community - and ultimately to humanity as a whole - whether material or immaterial, and which constitute assets that are difficult to replicate or reproduce. Heritage is

inseparably linked to a specific place and/or culture.

Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we transmit to future generations. Cultural and natural heritage constitute irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration². Heritage is the ensemble of human creations in which a community recognizes its specific values and with which it identifies³. The identification and definition of heritage therefore constitute a process related to the selection of values (Cracow Charter, 2000)⁴.

Concepts such as intangible heritage, mentalities, and culture have long been used by historiography to designate fields of study that are closely interrelated and often overlapping. It may therefore be more productive to refer instead to imaginary, figurative, ideological, and religious representations.

We face both the challenge and the opportunity of reconciling the conservation of tangible and intangible heritage with tourism. This requires careful reflection on the risks and opportunities of cultural tourism, particularly when intervening in economically and culturally sensitive spaces. Cultural heritage must be valorized and disseminated without distorting its meaning, while also meeting tourists' legitimate aspirations for access and enjoyment⁵.

¹ Naidea Nunes Nunes e Luísa Gouveia: "Património enogastronómico, turismo e sustentabilidade", *Isleña*, 75 (110-139), julho-dezembro 2024, p. 115.

² Conferencia General de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura –UNESCO– en su 32.^a reunión en octubre de 2003.

³ Daniel Palacios González: "Críticas interseccionales al patrimonio", *Huarte de San Juan. Geografía e Historia*, 32 (7-14) 2025, p. 7.

⁴ *Carta de Cracovia 2000. Principios para la conservación y*

restauración del patrimonio construido. Versión española del Instituto Español de Arquitectura (Universidad de Valladolid), Javier Rivera Blanco y Salvador Pérez Arroyo. Miembros del Comité Científico de la "Conferencia Internacional Cracovia 2000".

⁵ Josep Ballart Hernández: "Patrimonio cultural y turismo sostenible en el espacio iberoamericano: Reto y oportunidades del presente", *Diálogos. Revista del departamento de História e do Programa de Pós-Graduação em História*, v 9, n. 1, (11-21), 2005, p. 12.

Growing awareness of tourism's environmental impacts, within a more holistic vision of environmental conservation, has led to their incorporation into debates on heritage preservation.

Tourism transforms physical spaces, often beyond sustainable limits. The strongest asset of “new” cultural tourism lies in its contribution to tourism sustainability. Cultural tourism can enhance levels of protection and conservation of cultural heritage by facilitating access and understanding, promoting greater legibility and fostering social awareness. The State must effectively fulfill the role assigned to it by law.

True development can only be sustained through culture. In the Macaronesian archipelagos, this principle acquires the status of an identity emblem and offers an alternative to homogenizing models of postmodern thought. What we call progress is culturally conditioned. Applied to tourism sustainability, this implies accepting that tourism development is not synonymous with mere growth, and that culture must constitute the foundational element of any tourism-related activity. Tourism is a complex socio-cultural phenomenon, irreducible to economics alone, since it is fundamentally a cultural industry. The notion of cultural tourism is therefore essential for those concerned with heritage.

Since the 1960s, these islands have based much of their economic development

on tourism, often with limited planning and insufficient respect for ecological and historical heritage. Historians must urgently conduct research before material remains disappear, and are ethically bound to defend the conservation of both tangible and intangible heritage.

Scholars from the Canary Islands have been particularly active in this field. A key reference is PASOS. Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural, a quarterly journal founded in 2003, which by 2025 had reached its 23rd issue. Moreover, numerous studies confirm the exhaustion of the sun-and-beach tourism model and the inefficiency of current heritage conservation policies, revealing a growing gap between these two issues. Heritage is increasingly perceived as an economizable asset, raising unavoidable ethical concerns and controversy⁶.

In Madeira, the tourism development model presents weaknesses due to limited diversification, both in market segments and age groups. Its competitiveness is based on price stagnation, which contradicts its quality-oriented positioning⁷. Tourism has been used as a scenographic support for destination structuring, particularly along the Laurisilva Coast, where heritage activation has been promoted through political discourse by social agents supported by local, regional, and even national authorities, as well as by civil society as a whole⁸.

⁶ Iballe Jiménez Marrero: “Canarias turismo y patrimonio: plataforma cultural y tricontinental. Acciones conjuntas de conservación del patrimonio y un nuevo modelo de turismo cultural sostenible para Canarias”, *Vector Plus*, 36 (54-61) 2011, p. 55.

⁷ João Abel de Freitas: “A inovação no turismo”, *Isleña*, 47 (165-174), julho-dezembro 2010, p. 174.

⁸ Filipa Fernandes: “A Costa da Laurisilva: a produção de um destino turístico-cultural”, en Prats, Llorenç y Santana, Agustín (Eds): *Turismo y patrimonio, entramados narrativos*, (135-143), La Laguna (Tenerife): *Pasos. Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural* www.pasosonline.org. Colección PASOSeedita nº 5, 2011, p. 139.

The Azores likewise present a substantial body of research addressing the relationship between heritage and tourism. One of the most paradigmatic cases is the island of Pico, where the close interplay between nature and historical-artistic production has been largely articulated through tourism, strongly grounded in Mount Pico and the island's whaling past⁹. Similarly, Angra do Heroísmo (Terceira) has been the subject of international research linking the two core variables of this study, highlighting issues of tourist overcrowding during the summer months in this UNESCO World Heritage city¹⁰.

Cape Verde, for its part, combines a form of mass sun-and-beach tourism concentrated on certain islands - yielding limited benefits for the territory - with a modest inland tourism sector that possesses considerable heritage potential but suffers from scarce investment¹¹.

The expanding reach of globalization has generated significant risks associated with the homogenization of cultures and peoples, leading to the disappearance or discontinuity of traditions. There are few concrete plans for the conservation of intangible heritage, and investment is often lacking when such heritage conflicts with the economic interests tied to tangible assets. While the preservation and dissemination of intangible heritage are both necessary and timely, caution is

required to ensure that its economic exploitation is grounded in social and identity-based dimensions, rather than being reduced to the pursuit of profitability or transformed into a decontextualized product for tourist consumption¹².

This situation has opened a debate of clear scientific interest - though not without political implications - which has contributed to advancing knowledge in the field.

Although the association between tourism and culture may appear natural, it is not always perceived as such within dominant conceptions of tourism, which tend to emphasize leisure rather than culture. Tourism - and the ways in which it is understood - has evolved rapidly. The industry prioritizes growth and productivity, applying business criteria inspired by Fordist models. It shares product-development strategies common to other sectors of the capitalist system: product standardization, spatial concentration of destinations, homogenization, and the reduction of unit costs, among others.

Traditional culture constitutes one of the most valuable forms of intangible heritage - a treasure that must be protected. Cultural heritage is increasingly incorporated into public development strategies as a key asset for socio-economic development¹³. Heritage thus represents "the link between

⁹ María Constanza Ceruti: "Volcán Pico: patrimonio cultural insular y ascenso al monte más alto de las Azores", *Estudios del Patrimonio Cultural*, 19 (58-75), 2021.

¹⁰ Cristian David Ortiz García y Juan Manuel Parreño Castellano: "La turistización de la zona patrimonio mundial en Angra do Heroísmo (Azores, Portugal) como factor de desarrollo", en Gonzalo Andrés López y José Luis García Cuesta (eds.): *La ciudad "veinte-treinta". Miradas a los espacios urbanos del siglo XXI*, (451-462), Valladolid: Asociación Española de Geografía, 2024, pp. 458-460.

¹¹ Eduardo Manuel Cáceres Morales y Lucía Martínez Quintana: "Turismo en Cabo Verde: de la dicotomía a la integración",

Pasos. Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural 17, nº 3 www.pasosonline.org (490-507) 2019, p. 504.

¹² Celeste Jiménez de Madariaga: "El impacto del turismo en el patrimonio cultural inmaterial: espacios sociales y rituales", en José María Morillas Alcázar (ed.): *El observatorio en turismo patrimonial sostenible en Andalucía: análisis, diagnóstico, adecuación, innovación y transferencia*. (151-169), Madrid: Ramón Areces, 2023, p. 166.

¹³ Néstor García Canclini: "Los usos sociales del patrimonio cultural", en Aguilar Criado, Encarnación: *Patrimonio etnológico. Nuevas perspectivas de estudio*. Sevilla: Consejería de Cultura, Junta de Andalucía, 1999, pp. 16-33.

the preservation of the past for its intrinsic value and its use as a resource for modern communities as a commercial activity.”

Throughout insular history, heritage has played a crucial role, not least because these islands served as points of arrival for the first Europeans who settled and established the earliest permanent communities.

We understand that historical knowledge pursued solely as erudition has limited social usefulness and contributes little to social progress. Hence the importance of research on the past and the conservation of historical and cultural heritage as means of achieving a qualitative advance in understanding history. This principle constitutes the central aim guiding both our research and teaching, insofar as the former must inform and enrich the latter, avoiding the frequent disconnection between theory and practice.

In the Macaronesian islands, learning one’s own history becomes an urgent necessity for identifying collective identity. Cultural unity as a people offers a path toward overcoming long-standing divisions that have historically fragmented these societies. Communities that forget their past are predisposed to repeat the same mistakes; while historical knowledge does not guarantee correct choices, it does at least help identify unviable paths, thus contributing to greater equity and well-being.

The identity of a people is sustained through the preservation of historical memory, which endures over time through the tangible and intangible manifestations that have been passed down to us.

It is therefore necessary to maintain the aspiration of fully integrating the

ecological - heritage approach into development strategies, beyond the limited priority currently assigned to it in political agendas. An objective assessment shows that this approach has yet to become a decisive factor shaping everyday policy decisions - many of which seriously compromise natural and historical heritage in the present and for future generations. This challenge demands a commitment to solidarity not only with those closest to us, but also with future generations, who likewise have the right to inherit a livable world, as well as with the Global South. We cannot afford to squander resources and destroy the planet unilaterally.

Given the difficulties governments have faced in incorporating and implementing environmental principles in development planning, environmental degradation has prompted the emergence of social movements responding to the destruction of natural resources, the deterioration of physical and social environments, and deficiencies in public services, all of which negatively affect quality of life.

In recent years, growing concern for nature conservation has generated renewed momentum within the social sciences, making it necessary to refocus attention on the environment. A bilateral relationship is thus established - not only between humans and nature, but also regarding how nature shapes societies and influences social life and human interactions within specific ecological contexts.

An ecological perspective has become essential in contemporary definitions of History, which has evolved from the study of “man in the past” to the study of women and men situated in specific temporal and environmental contexts. Influenced by

feminist scholarship, twenty-first-century historiography must also incorporate the environments in which human activities unfold. This perspective enriches traditional analytical categories used to examine economic and social development. Sustained development of productive forces depends not only on capital productivity, labor, and scientific-technological progress. Just as theocentric worldviews were replaced by ethnocentric ones at the dawn of Modernity, we now stand on the threshold of a necessary transition toward perspectives that may be described as ecocentric.

The transversal nature of culture must be considered in all development initiatives from a triple perspective: as a factor of social cohesion, as a medium for dialogue among peoples, and as a generator of employment.

Cultural heritage has the specific objective of functioning as a driver of sustainable development for the communities that safeguard it. The Council of Europe has emphasized the need to take into account the specific nature and interests of cultural heritage when formulating economic policies¹⁴.

The central axis of action lies in the valorization and sustainable management of cultural heritage for socio-economic development. This is generally articulated through socio-economic development and social improvement plans based on the sustainable management of heritage assets. Such plans should not operate

independently, but rather be integrated into multi-sectoral and multi-project development programs. A notable example is the Cultural Heritage Program launched by AECID in the late 1980s, which contributed significantly to the recovery of the heritage of the former Ribeira Grande—today Cidade Velha - on the island of Santiago, Cape Verde¹⁵.

There are multiple ways to foster human development through the valorization and sustainable management of cultural heritage, including:

- Cultural Identity and Diversity: Cultural heritage plays a decisive role in structuring communities, promoting social cohesion, and reinforcing a sense of belonging. Defending cultural identity and diversity has become an increasingly pressing challenge in the face of the homogenizing risks inherent in globalization.
- Economic Activity, Investment, and Employment Generation: Cultural heritage also represents a potential source of economic activity and income. In some cases, it constitutes a primary driver of economic development. Sustainable heritage management can generate multiple economic benefits, including commercialization, job creation in services and products linked to heritage assets, as well as activities related to preservation, maintenance, and restoration¹⁶.

¹⁴ Consejo de Europa. Serie Tratados del Consejo de Europa nº 199. Convenio marco del Consejo de Europa. Sobre el valor del patrimonio cultural para la sociedad. Faro 27 de octubre de 2005. Art. 10. b).

¹⁵ *Programa para la Recuperación del Patrimonio Histórico Arquitectónico y para el Desarrollo Turístico y Agrícola de Cidade-Velha, en la República de Cabo Verde*. Madrid:

Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación. 2004, 47 pp.

¹⁶ *Estrategias de Cultura y Desarrollo de la Cooperación Española*. Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y Cooperación. 2007, 65 pp. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.coo-peracionespanola.es/wp-content/uploads/documentos/cultura_y_desarrollo.pdf](https://www.coo-peracionespanola.es/wp-content/uploads/documentos/cultura_y_desarrollo.pdf)

Recent decades have witnessed renewed scholarly interest in a series of historical themes prioritized by historians and heritage specialists, which may be summarized as follows:

- 1) *The World of Beliefs*: From elite ecclesiastical hierarchies to lived religion, popular beliefs, superstition, magical practices, purgatory, saints' cults, confraternities, relics, agony, and confession.
- 2) *Death*: Long neglected by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historiography, yet a core element of intangible heritage.
- 3) *Sex and Love*: Love practices, sexual stereotypes, and sexist archetypes.
- 4) *Childhood and Education*: Literacy, public instruction, gender differences, teacher training, curricula, schools, and iconography.
- 5) *The "Others"*: Moriscos, Roma communities, Jews, foreigners, Indigenous peoples, and Black populations.
- 6) *Instruments of Dissemination*: Books and readers, the social use of writing, the press, propaganda, public relations, satire, and pamphlets.
- 7) *The World of the Poor*: Social perceptions of poverty, ways of life, social danger, mechanisms of repression, hospitals, hospices, foundling homes, and institutions for marginalized women.

Cultural industries currently constitute a rapidly expanding fourth sector, driven by the development of information and communication technologies and tourism,

and represent a promising field for future growth.

Heritage is at risk depending on its management and the regulation of tourist flows. The challenge is not limited to conservation alone, but also to interpretation and understanding, which often fail to take into account the specific characteristics of tourist audiences¹⁷.

Post-Fordist tourism has revived the notion of cultural tourism as one of the possibilities of contemporary tourism, linked to new leisure opportunities offered by post-industrial society. Contemporary tourism appears to be in a constant state of transformation, as demand is heterogeneous and the social role of leisure continues to evolve. Post-industrial or postmodern leisure once again becomes a source of personal enrichment and self-cultivation.

Tourism can only be transformed into a sustainable activity through greater training, education, clearer recognition of rights, increased participation, enhanced dialogue, and a more equitable distribution of competencies among administrative levels. Sustainability can only be effectively implemented through the leadership of UNESCO, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the private sector, supported by internationally binding regulations and the promotion of ethical codes and best practices.

The tourism of the future must be built upon the principle that "there is no aesthetics without ethics," with the aim of preserving cultural landscapes and cultural

¹⁷ Llorenç Prats y Agustín Santana: "Turismo, identidad y patrimonio, las reglas del juego", en Prats, Llorenç y Santana, Agustín (Eds): *Turismo y patrimonio, entramados narrativos*, (1-

10), La Laguna (Tenerife): *Pasos. Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural* www.pasosonline.org. Colección PASOSEdita nº 5, 2011, p. 3.

heritage, and ultimately ensuring tourism sustainability.

The management of tourism resources - particularly cultural heritage - must be brought closer to local territories and their communities. One of the key factors for achieving balanced social and economic tourism development lies in promoting the creation of cultural products and services for direct commercialization.

For all these reasons, institutions must be urged, within the scope of their competencies, to intervene with the aim of preserving these areas, promoting initiatives that safeguard historical values, and fostering the protection and restoration

of material assets that bear witness to the past.

INTRODUCTION 2

Colonial Architecture and Tourism: Legacies, Cultural Intersections and Boundaries

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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 Ahmad¹⁸ (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

¹⁸ 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.

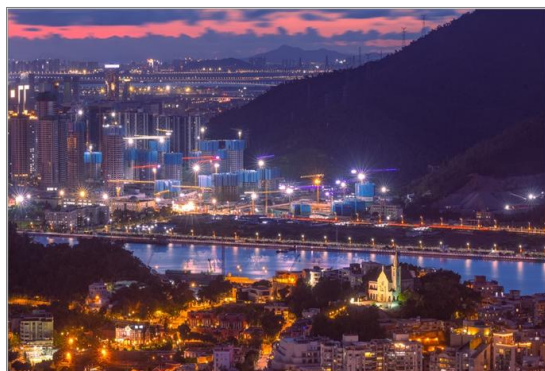


Figure 01. Macau (with the Penha Church) and the Pearl River Delta mega-region.
Source: Chan (2021)

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 exemples 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 Macanese¹⁹:

¹⁹ 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)²⁰. 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.

²⁰ 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’.

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APPROACHES TO A HISTORY OF PORTUGUESE COLONIAL TOURIST TRAVEL

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Abstract

The main destination of Portuguese colonial tourism was Africa, although it also extended to Portuguese India, Macau and Timor, albeit on a smaller scale. This began with steam passenger liners, a product of the Industrial Revolution and the colonial transport of choice during the 19th century. This article intends to give an historic glance of a journey that shows the political intentions in legitimize a tourism in colonies that reflects a targeted action whose repercussions still are visible today in the Memory Tourism.

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Keywords

Colonial tourism, Portuguese Empire, Heritage, Memory tourism

1. Introduction

“Portugal does not end at the Algarve;
When travelling by sea, after many days
Portuguese land can still be found
From Africa to Oceania.”

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Preamble to the Itinerary of the 1st Holiday Cruise to the Colonies

The approach to a history of Portuguese colonial tourist travel necessarily derives from a multiseular evolutionary process inherited from the *Mare Liberum* of the post-Iberian expansion. This was established on the basis of geopolitical dynamics realised through a set of maritime routes that provided an ocean network operating at a global scale between the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century.

The Portuguese presence in Africa had been felt since the 15th/16th century, but this did not lead to effective occupation and colonisation until the mid-20th century. In fact, it was in the 19th century - the “Age of Empire” (Hobsbawm, 1990) - that European hegemonic policies were refocused, largely as a result of the directives issued at the Berlin Conference (1884-5), which had the direct consequence of establishing rules for colonising and governing African territories, particularly the principle of “effective” occupation as a criterion for granting colonial rights. This first demand for colonial travel resulted in a large number of European adventurers, missionaries and diplomats setting off for the interior of the African continent, supported by newly-created organisations such as Geographical Societies, which played a leading role in sponsoring and promoting expeditions, the results of which would be widely exhibited and publicised at the major universal and world expositions. This greatly contributed to the establishment of regular oceanic routes to ensure the movement of settlers to the overseas provinces as well as their return journey to the metropolis. This ascendancy provided a considerable impetus to shipping which, in the mid-1900s, changed from sails to steam (largely due to technological advances resulting from the Industrial Revolution) and saw the creation of the first transatlantic shipping companies.

A second and no less important contribution was that of the great 19th and 20th century European expositions, whether they were entitled universal, world, international or colonial. They made a major contribution to the growth of colonial travel, as they were genuine showcases of these colonial possessions. They began by exhibiting goods and

ethnographic objects, but quickly moved on to include pavilions reproducing local architecture and even villages, incorporating locals, in what constituted actual human zoos. It should be noted that, from the 18th century onwards, progress was seen as a universal force that governments used for their national benefit, and these expositions became veritable places for the creation and dissemination of these representations. What is more, these expositions embodied 19th century ideas about education through recreation, as these places were the best way of “observing” the world, as they brought together the best of each nation (and its colonies). Visiting them was the closest one could get to travelling around the world. The inaugural exposition in London in 1851 included a small exhibit on colonial India. The next event (in Paris, in 1855) even included a colonial section, and at the third (in 1862, also in the French capital) Portugal showcased products from its overseas provinces for the first time. Colonial pavilions appeared at the 1878 exposition and, the year after the Berlin Conference, in 1886, London went ahead with the *Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, with its focus on each colony of the British Empire. In 1889, it was the turn of Paris to mount the first colonial exposition in French history. To highlight this perspective, extensive representations of the overseas territories were set up, with the aim of reproducing in miniature all the resources of the empire, a veritable *tableaux vivant*, with Portugal involved through a colonial section organised by Andrade Corvo and with its items being supplied by the Lisbon Geographical Society. However, it was the 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris that, in taking stock of a century, enshrined overseas empires within a panoramic ecstasy: the *Tour du Monde*, a huge pavilion where visitors travelled around the world, evoking and simulating colonial realities as different as a Chinese pagoda or an Indian temple. Forming part of the foreign landscape brought to these international events was the human portrayal: exotic, it made the picture presented come alive. The genealogy of such expositions is indeed essential to understanding how the desire of metropolitans to set forth spread, giving rise to the development of transport, which in the case of the colonies was synonymous with oceanic navigation.

A third element stimulating the move to the colonies came from the need for raw materials to feed the voracious appetite of the Industrial Revolution back on the Old Continent. This search for untapped resources, which were later to be transformed into consumables in the metropolitan markets, led to the relocation of a sizeable number of investors and administrators and their families. As a result of this massive displacement, the need arose to create infrastructures to receive the new population. Consequently,

technicians from different specialities were called upon to set up and provide resources in these overseas lands, thereby replicating a metropolitan experience within them.

Settled in housing estates (or rural units) served by roads, bridges, railways and with the support of a set of basic services that reproduced models from the capital of the Empire, the new settlers adapted to the *Modus vivendi* of the tropics, and such settlement became permanent. This in turn led to a fourth aspect: travelling for leisure and recreation to neighbouring latitudes.

Strictly speaking, it cannot be said that the four elements listed formed part of colonial tourist travel, but they lay at its genesis, i.e. it was political interests (effective occupation of the colonial land), economic interests (exhibits at world fairs and the need for colonial raw materials to feed the post-Industrial Revolution economy), social interests (the transmigration of settlers and families) and cultural interests (visiting the surrounding areas) that lay at the origin of colonial tourist travel. But in order for this scenario to materialise, a fundamental aspect of colonial travel had to be developed, that is, transport.

2. Corpus

The main destination of Portuguese colonial tourism was Africa, although it also extended to Portuguese India, Macau and Timor, albeit on a smaller scale. This began with steam passenger liners, a product of the Industrial Revolution and the colonial transport of choice during the 19th century. In 1880, the first national maritime company was created, called the *Empresa Nacional de Navegação a Vapor para a África Portuguesa* (National Steam Navigation Company for Portuguese Africa - ENN), calling at ports located in Portuguese West Africa. In the meantime, its competitor the *Mala Real Portuguesa* (Portuguese Royal Baggage - MRP) emerged, focusing on regular connections to East Africa (Mozambique) and India. The year 1889 saw the appearance of the *Companhia de Vapores África Occidental Portuguesa* (Portuguese West Africa Steam Company), which was short-lived. At the beginning of the 20th century, more precisely in 1903, and following the bankruptcy of MRP (in 1893), ENN began to provide regular services to East Africa, increasing its fleet. In 1917, the magazine *Revista de Turismo* stated that “the government of our land has never paid heed to the important maritime problem, always forgetting that it is the greatest factor in developing the colonies”, adding that: “The African colonies may be lacking in shipping routes (...) but for India, Macau and Timor there are none at all”

(Revista de Turismo, 1917, p.113). Perhaps to fill this gap, in 1918 ENN was succeeded by the *Companhia Nacional de Navegação* (National Navigation Company – CNN), which not only provided routes to West and East Africa, but also to India, Macau and Timor, which lasted until 1985, the year in which the company was dissolved (Castro, 2020, p.144). However, that would be in the 1950s: until then, the First Republic, in its dizzying succession of national governments, impeded the establishment of an ongoing policy for the colonial merchant navy, although the Colonial Navy²¹ was created in 1912 under the responsibility of the Ministry for the Colonies, which would be abolished in 1926.²²

Meanwhile, in 1920, there was an unsuccessful attempt to draw up the first programme linking the merchant navy to the colonies (Imprensa Nacional, 1940, pp.27-28)²³ and, in 1934 - already during the *Estado Novo* period - the government appointed a commission that made little progress. It would be necessary to wait until 1952 for the inauguration of the regular maritime route between Lisbon and Macau, with a stopover in Portuguese India, at a time when the first airports were being built in the capitals of Portuguese Africa²⁴, which would eventually take precedence over the liners, leading to their slow extinction in the 1980s. Meanwhile, in 1922, the *Companhia Colonial de Navegação* (Colonial Navigation Company - CCN) appeared in Angola, a consortium that would ensure maritime transport between Portugal and its African colonies and, later, transatlantic routes (such as Brazil). Passenger liners such as the *Pátria*, *Império*, *Vera Cruz*, *Santa Maria* (propelled by steam turbines) and the *Uíge* (powered by a diesel engine) implemented the idea of colonial routes, although most of this traffic did not fall under the heading of tourism, and as such it is necessary to understand the mobility of the empire that gave rise to it.

Over the course of a century (from the end of the 19th century until the fall of the Portuguese empire, 1974-5), colonial travel from the “Motherland” to African and Asian geographical areas followed along with the imperial policy advocated by successive governments. In the middle of the 19th century, the Portuguese state took the first individual steps to create agricultural colonies in Angola, which led it to transport several hundred settlers free of charge. At the end of the 19th century, in 1896, passage to Portuguese Africa was made free of charge in order to encourage individuals living in the metropolis to take the initiative to migrate and, in 1907, they were even abolished, to facilitate movement

²¹ Law of 10 July.

²² Dec. No. 12,694 of 19 November.

²³ The deputy Velhinho Correia is credited with the earliest programme for a maritime link to the colonies in a report published in the Official Gazette *Diário do Governo*, 2nd series, on 7 November, which was never debated in the Chamber of Deputies.

²⁴ The first flights to the colonies took place in 1922 (Brazil), 1924 (Macau), 1925 (Africa), 1930 (Goa) and 1934 (Timor).

within the empire. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the 20th century, the white population in the African colonies was relatively small and formed a total of just over ten thousand (Castelo, 2009, p.18) and it is possible to understand this, as, at the time, Africa was not attractive to potential migrants who saw it as a land of convicts and exiles, which was inhospitable, full of dangers and deadly diseases. In the 1920s, the military occupation finalised, expansion of the civil administration and then the Colonial Act (1930) reinforced the migration of qualified civil servants and technicians. But it would be at the end of the Second World War that Portuguese migration (to Angola and Mozambique) peaked, thanks to the economic progress brought about by the rise in the price of colonial commodities through a development model that directly benefited the metropolitan economy. The heyday of this was between the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s and it was during these years that colonial tourism reached its peak in terms of transcontinental travel. This colonial migration was important in that it was from there that the first leisure trips within and outside the colonies took place, in a movement that was never structural but rather residual, with this largely being due to the delay in creating a policy for colonial tourism.

2.1 Colonial Tourism Policy

The creation of the General Agency for the Colonies (*Agência Geral das Colónias* - AGC) in 1924 gave rise to the colonial advertising which publicised the overseas territories in order to encourage colonial travel. The following year, Portugal joined the International Union of Official Travel Organisations (IUOTO), a consultative body of the UN with the aim of increasing and enhancing the free movement of people and establishing a common position among its members on all issues relating to international tourism.²⁵ However, imperial tourism would only gain autonomous importance in 1953, with the creation of the *Agência Geral do Ultramar* (General Overseas Agency) through Decree-Law No 38,300 of 15 June 1951, which replaced the AGC (Decree No 9,944 of 29 July 1924). The structure was defined on the basis of Regional Committees, particularly the African Committee, which was split into another, AFTOUR (grouping countries south of the equator with common characteristics) and which included Angola and Mozambique. Another such committee was PATA (Pacific Area Travel Association), which included Macau. These

²⁵ In 1925, tourism leaders from various European countries decided to create the International Union of Official Tourism Publicity Organisations, of which Portugal was a founder. After the Second World War, it was renamed the International Union of Official Tourism Organisations (IUOTO) and would later become the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

bodies were prolific in organising a concerted, targeted and effective advertising programme, which included organising talks, producing films and posters, and promoting publications, maps and travel guides. Legally, the genesis of this demand dates back to 1934, the year following the legitimisation of the *Estado Novo* (with the 1933 Constitution), when the government of António Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970) made sure to operationalise colonial tourism through the enactment of Decree-Law No 23,445, of 5 January. This established the first embryonic organisations in the provinces to promote tourism - the *Casas da Metrópole* (Metropolis Houses).²⁶ The brainchild of José Pedro Alvares, president of the Portuguese Industrial Association, the Metropolis Houses were intended to create highlights in the colonies of goods and products from the European continent, along with an information and publicity section.

The next step towards the institutionalisation of colonial tourism took place in 1959, with the creation of the Information and Tourism Centres (*Centros de Informação e Turismo* - CIT)²⁷ in the overseas provinces, which had its beginnings with the Colonial Showcase Fairs (*Feiras de Amostras Coloniais*) that had sprung up in the 1930s in the African provinces. Co-ordinated by the General Agency for the Colonies (AGC), although under the supervision of the provincial governments, they provided the necessary guidance. At the same time, the legal diploma that created Information and Tourism Centres in the provinces of Angola, Mozambique and India (No 42,194 of 27 March 1959) determined the dissolution of the *Casas da Metrópole* in Luanda and Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) and regulated the transfer of their assets and the assignment of their staff. The same legal diploma instructed the Minister for Overseas Territories to set up similar organisations in the remaining provinces of Cabo Verde, Guinea, São Tomé and Príncipe, Timor and Macau, the latter of which was created the following year, in 1960.²⁸ The growing importance of tourism in the colonial context explains the constitution and evolution of these (and other) bodies attached to the central government, but it is interesting to see how these lines of action took shape and were experienced in practice by travellers and/or tourists.

²⁶ Set up by Decree-Law No 23,445 of 5 January 1934.

²⁷ Decree-Law No. 42,194 of 27 March 1959 created Information and Tourism Centres in the provinces of Angola, Mozambique and India and determined the extinction of the Metropolis Houses in Luanda and Lourenço Marques, providing for the transfer of their assets and the re-assignment of their staff.

²⁸ Order No 18,111 of 7 December 1960.

2.2 African Practices and the Imagination

The first characteristic of note is the fact that Portuguese colonial travel was not accompanied by a systematic ongoing record - in other words, by a fruitful travel literature - as was the case with English (mainly to India) or French travellers (to Indochina). In order to bridge this gap, it was necessary in this paper to resort mainly to the indirect discourse which was produced, since this is what has helped to provide a clearer perspective of the beginnings of Luso-African-Asian recreational circulation.

The first major point to emphasise is that the main destination of the colonial travel movement was Africa. The justification for this was based not only on the fact that this was the continent closest to the capital of the Empire, but it was also where the national government's greatest economic and geostrategic interests were concentrated. The exploitation of raw materials and the establishment of a colonial administration on a par with other European administrations led the Portuguese Republic to prioritise its possessions in Africa to the detriment of the more distant and also less economically rich territories (such as India, Macau and Timor). That is why most of the testimonies focus on Africa, a mythical exotic place eternally fuelling the Lusitanian imagination.

Although it is only possible to speak of a Portuguese colonial tourism movement from the mid-1920s onwards - as will be seen below - the fact is that the conditions for this had been underway since the late 1800s. That was when the pioneer Francisco José de Lacerda e Almeida (1753-1798), one of the greatest explorer travellers, partially demarcated the limits of Brazil's borders (at the time a colony integrated within the national empire). Later, in 1797, he was commissioned to make the first crossing between Mozambique and Angola. Other explorers would follow in his footsteps in the 1900s, such as Alexandre de Serpa Pinto (1846-1900), Hermenegildo Capelo (1841-1917) and Roberto Ivens (1850-1898), who, in the 1870s and 1880s, dedicated themselves to mapping part of the Portuguese territory in Africa. Despite not having been written from a tourist perspective, it was the knowledge of these (and other) explorers that led to a gradual discovery of the geography, definition and implementation of structures and facilities (road and railway networks, bridges, harbours, civil architecture), as well as the ongoing construction of an imperial subjectivity that would offer a ludic experience of the Portuguese territories in Africa. In the first decade of the 20th century, the scientific mission of the Azorean naturalist Francisco Afonso Chaves (1857-1926) to East Africa, through his Logbook (*Agenda de*

Bordo) as well as his stereoscopic photographic work, described a certain “spirit of the times” in the Mozambican colony. However, it was necessary to wait for the Travel Diaries (*Diário de Viagens*) of António Jervis Pinto Basto (1862-1946) (Basto, 1910-1) – naval officer and aide-de-camp to King Carlos I (1863-1908) and King Manuel II (1839-1932). In them, the commander describes - and paints through many watercolours - the circumnavigation voyage undertaken during the two-year period of 1910-11, which passed through the Portuguese colonies of Africa, India, Macau and the coast of Timor, explaining points of interest, particular features of the navigation and coastlines, as well as mentioning some of the accommodation available for visitors.²⁹ In the following decade - 1910/1920 - Aristides de Sousa Mendes (1885-1954), consul-general for Zanzibar (1911-1918), provided a preliminary perspective on recreational enjoyment of the island which, although at the time a British protectorate, had been part of the Portuguese empire for almost 200 years (1503-1698). In practice, the island was an important trading post in the Indian Ocean, where the Portuguese community was made up mainly of merchants who traded in spices. During the years the family stayed in Zanzibar, they toured not only the capital, Stone Town, but also around the island on “long walks along the northern beaches” (Mendes, 2017, p.68).

It only became truly possible to talk about the beginning of testimonies with a character, that if not touristic, were at least playful and recreational, in the 1920s. Armando Augusto Gonçalves de Moraes e Castro and António Pereira Cardoso - both colonial officials - published “A journey through the Portuguese colonies” (*Uma viagem através das colónias portuguesas*) in 1926. An epistolary novella, it was intended to be the first “guide to the overseas domains” (Castro, 1926, p.13) as it covered Cabo Verde, Guinea, São Tomé, Angola, Mozambique, India, Macau and Timor, with the ultimate aim of entering the Colonial Literature Competition³⁰ organised for the first time that year by the General Agency for the Colonies. In this work, the preface by Ernesto de Vasconcelos (1852-1930) states that the authors had published a first edition of *Portuguese Colonies (Colónias Portuguesas)* in 1898, a book that “the press said little or almost nothing about, because the colonies were not yet of great interest (...) while the same did not happen in England where the *Times* filled a column with flattering appreciation for the work which, fortunately, is now in its third edition” (Castro, 1926, p.11). In 1925, the year before the

²⁹ His training with the Spanish watercolour painter Enrique Casanova (1850-1913), master painter to King Luís I (1838-1889) and King Carlos I, was reflected in the quality of his illustrations, which were exhaustively descriptive and showed great technical mastery.

³⁰ Order No 4,565, of 12 January 1926.

national publication of Castro e Cardoso, the journalist and writer Julião Quintinha (1886-1968) had left for Africa, embarking on a journey that would last more than two years – and which would provide him with copy for five works, published between 1929 and 1933, all of which were submitted to the Colonial Literature Competition. In them, the author corroborated the idea that Mozambique’s capital could offer the most suitable conditions for tourism, in writing: “Life in Lourenço Marques is like that of the best colonial cities (...) where there is no shortage of English people, Germans, Italians, Russians, Dutch, Greeks, Swiss, French, Hungarians, Chinese (...), as well as people from the Transvaal, millionaires from the mines who reside luxuriously in Polama, and old *Boers* who set up camp on the beach (...) all enamoured by the scenery offered by the beautiful Portuguese beach on the Indian Ocean (...), the bazaars that ruin the *touriste* (...) and the picturesque places in the surrounding area that issue an invitation for a pleasant stroll” (Quintinha, 1929).

Still during the 1920s and related to Mozambique, ten Descriptive Photographic Albums of the Mozambican Colony (*Álbuns fotográficos e descritivos da Colónia de Moçambique*) by José dos Santos Rufino from 1929 provided a rare example of the promotion of an overseas destination that went far beyond simple imperial propaganda. The albums show images of a colony certainly on the rise and a point of passage for foreign visitors, particularly Americans on their way to the Transvaal (Rufino, 1929a, p.86).

In one of the *Albums* (Vol. 3), the author mentions Polana beach and the hotel of the same name, stating that it was frequented all year round not only by settlers but also “by tourists from the South African Union” (Rufino, 1929b) and was served by a tram line direct from the city, which always stayed close to the seafront, making it a pleasant holiday resort. “In Lourenço Marques, the habit of ‘getting some fresh air’ dates back to the country or sea excursions widespread in Europe since the 19th century. The Lisbon bourgeoisie’s preference for places like Sintra or Estoril served as a model for the ‘invention’ of Polana beach and other seaside resorts in Mozambique” (Correia, 2019, p.6). This means that colonial excursions had taken on new features, both in terms of preserving and reproducing symbolic resources, as well as social distinctions based on the metropolitan paradigm. But it should not be thought that this practice was something characteristic of this part of so-called Portuguese East Africa: this was just something that was found on the beaches neighbouring Durban or the more distant South African Cape Town and was mimicked there. The visual narrative of the ten *Albums* leaves no room for doubt: Lourenço Marques

- the pole of attraction - and the main provinces were prepared to welcome foreign and metropolitan tourists who arrived there. The photographs of maritime pleasure trips show how much the ideal of being able to go for a dip in the ocean reproduced the metropolitan imaginary, but it did not stop there: there were images of tropical landscapes alongside others that showed the process of modernisation underway. One important aspect was that the *Albums* were published in three languages (Portuguese, English and French), showing a clear concern to reach a target audience not only made up of Portuguese, but also of neighbouring South Africans, Rhodesians and Europeans. The Europeanised habits and customs of frequenting rest and recreation resorts replicated in Mozambique were reserved exclusively for the settlers and the beach was both a therapeutic and recreational social space. The presence of “boys”³¹ on the beach was recorded in the photos and corresponded to socially marginalised individuals, as they were not there to bathe, relax or “take in the air”, but as servants. The normative mechanisms of colonialism prevented the “assimilated” and the indigenous from enjoying these. Perhaps the photographer framed the *boys* to portray a multiracial society in the tropics, but the fact was that they were forbidden from enjoying the tourist facilities of the white elite. Their presence should not be seen as proof of racial democracy, but as an example of the hierarchy of races within the colonial order. Those young men were tolerated because they were needed to look after the guests and visitors at the Hotel Polana. We should not forget that black wage earners were in practice almost slaves – they earned extraordinarily little (Cleveland, 2023) - they entered through different doors than whites, and could not frequent the places where they worked as customers. As a result, and like other records, José dos Santos Rufino’s photo albums repeat clichés that reflect a conservative view of colonial society, albeit disguised by a certain modernity, both in the structures they reproduced and in the very medium in which they were shown, namely photography, an objective capturing of an external reality that was considered truly modern.

With the legitimisation of the *Estado Novo* in 1933 through the referendum on the revised Constitution, colonial tourism became a resource which local government would prioritise, and in this way imperialism was covered with a pleasant veneer to dilute the perverse effects of Portuguese hegemony. In those years, Mozambique became a destination of choice due to the growing (and significant) number of visitors from South

³¹ Employees of the families of the colonists who spent the summer by the seaside.

Africa as well as travellers from the Americas. In addition, the Portuguese settlers were seeking to experience “Europe in Africa”, which meant that Mozambique offered a set of tourist facilities that were remarkably similar to those they were used to on the Old Continent, with the difference being its exotic scenery and the more permissive habits for holidaymakers.

This focus on promoting the European market and bringing it closer to/reproducing its existing leisure infrastructures was the opposite of what, at the same time, many European colonisers were promoting in their cross-border campaigns. Their appeal lay in pitching a visit to the “Real Africa”, that of hunting and indigenous encampments, the savannah and the wild spirit of the pristine continent, with Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) being a case in point. This does not mean that the Portuguese administrators did not publicise hunting in its colonies, as can be seen in issues of the magazine *Portugal Colonial*,³² but it primarily shows a focus on a more restrained attitude, reflecting the country of “gentle habits” governed by Salazar. This differentiated advertising positioning seduced a large number of Western travellers (Europeans and Americans) who, while wanting to set foot in Africa, still wished to feel at home. In other words, they wanted to travel and experience the exoticism of Africa without giving up the comfort they were used to. And this conciliation was possible - and successful - in the Mozambican colony, but it was not the only example.

The existence of holiday cruises to the colonies in the 1930s shows the institutional will of the *Estado Novo* to promote colonial travel. In 1935, the 1st Holiday Cruise to the Colonies was organised, at the initiative of the magazine Portuguese Word (*Mundo Português*). Salazar’s government understood the nationalist scope of this venture and gave it its full support and protection, and patriotic Portuguese rushed to sign up as passengers in a kind of “delegation from the motherland to the distant sons and daughters of the fatherland” (*Mundo Português*, 1935). In practice, the aim was to make the students and teachers who embarked on this journey aware of Portugal’s greatness in the world through a journey displaying national and international sovereignty. Its precise purpose was to raise funds and enhance cultural subordination. It would achieve this by reiterating the defence of its colonial policies as a driving force behind the mobilisation of the Portuguese to emigrate and settle in African territories. The journey included the colonies of Cabo Verde, Guinea, São Tomé and Príncipe and Angola, and was undertaken with the cooperation of

³² Issues 52 and 54, 1935.

the local authorities (cardigos, 1936). Still in 1935, a Hunting Excursion to Angola took place, also organised by the General Agency for the Colonies (AGC), the “first major international hunt aiming to publicise tourism”, as mentioned in the magazine *Portugal Colonial* issues 52 and 54, the latter of which read: “International tourism, having exhausted all the thrills offered by the old world, is beginning to seek out Africa (...) and there are already thousands of tourists who every year seek out Africa and Asia and organise many hunts there”, further on concluding: “Some tourists provide an impetus to others. And while one may come back disappointed from a tourist trip in Europe, one certainly will not come back disappointed from a hunting trip to Africa (...) and the Portuguese colonies - at least in Angola and Guinea - are not as expensive in terms of time and money as many assume” (Galvão, 1935). These trips were encouraged by the Portuguese shipping companies themselves, which reduced prices for those looking for this type of activity for two or three months of the year, helping to “form a tourist chain that would grow in strength”.

Two years later, in 1937, the 1st Students' Holiday Cruise from the Colonies to the Metropolis took place, which was also an initiative of the *Mundo Português* magazine. This time, some of the students, children of settlers from Angola and Mozambique, were given the opportunity to visit the Historical Exhibition of Occupation in Lisbon and then travelled from the north to the south of the country (Roteiro, 1937). The aim of both activities was to embody the collective imagination of both the colony and the mother country, which was largely achieved. At the turn of the decade, in 1940, and on the occasion of the Centenary Commemorations of the founding of the Portuguese nation in 1140 and the restoration of independence in 1640, the *Cruzeiro dos Velhos Colonos de África* (Cruise for the Old Settlers of Africa), promoted by the Minister for the Colonies Francisco Vieira de Machado (1898-1972), provided an opportunity to “bring back to the metropolis a few hundred former empire employees” from Cabo Verde, Angola and Mozambique (Cunha, 1940, 335). The travellers visited various places in Portugal (such as the monastery at Batalha, Alcobaça, Coimbra, Aveiro, Espinho, Porto, Guimarães, Braga, Curia, Fátima and Sintra) on a tourist excursion to further emphasise the greatness of the country, according to the nationalist criteria advocated by the *Estado Novo*.

In 1941, the Brazilian Arnon de Mello published *África: viagem ao Império Portuguez e à União Sul-Africana* (Africa: a journey to the Portuguese Empire and the South African Union), a volume in which he underlined that “at night, everyone has fun in the dancing

halls and in the casino” (Mello, 1941, p.137). Earlier, in 1932, an article published in the magazine *Portugal Colonial* entitled Lourenço Marques "the Blue Coast of Southern Africa" mentioned that the capital of the colony of Mozambique offered “tourism in the noble and heightened sense of the term” (Aguar, 1932, pp.28-30).

In 1952, Lourenço Marques hosted the *Fourth International Congress of African Tourism* (Boletim Geral Ultramar, 1952) which showed the emergence of colonial tourism as part of the political propaganda of the Portuguese government. At this meeting, Marcelo Caetano (1906-1980), chairperson of the Portuguese delegation and formerly Minister for the Colonies (1944-47), stated the following about colonial tourism: “A country should not only make it easier for those who visit it to contemplate its natural beauty, admire its constructive endeavours and enjoy the comfort of its hospitality, but also understand the way its inhabitants live, the character of its society and even the particular features of its government and administration” (Boletim Geral Ultramar, 1952, p.84). This quote shows the awareness that colonial tourism facilitated the creation of a positive image for overseas possessions, thereby justifying, to those who endeavoured to do so, the maintenance of the empire at a time when the other European hegemonic powers were ceding their colonies to new independencies. This was the recognition that “colonial tourism had significance as a diplomatic tool” (Cleveland, 2023, p.23). Some have considered this to be “prestigious imperialism”, characterised more by historical traditions than by obtaining foreign exchange (Andrade, 2004, pp.960-1).

The *Anuário do Turismo do Ultramar (Overseas Tourism Yearbook)* which was published during 1959-60, offers some clues about the structuring of overseas tourism, although limiting its focus to the 1950s. In it, José de Freitas begins by stating that “writing about tourism in the Portuguese Overseas Territories was difficult, not because of a lack of reasons to do so, but because of the abundance and diversity of material” (Andrade, 1959, p.1). The reality was that it was indeed not easy, but for another reason, namely the absence of an effective and well-structured policy capable of spreading colonial ideology among the population in the metropolis. As well as this aspect there was also the lack of tourist facilities in the colonies of the empire: only in Mozambique (Lourenço Marques and Beira) and Macau was it possible to find accommodation at an international level. This did not encourage foreigners to experience the Portuguese colonies and the Portuguese themselves tended to avoid leaving their comfort zone. Meanwhile, legislation was passed on natural heritage, the greatest attraction at the time as far as the African provinces were concerned.

The *Yearbook* provided information on regular shipping lines, aviation, places to visit and tourism support centres: in the province of Portuguese India, casinos, libraries, palaces, galleries, viewpoints, temples and waterfalls were listed, while in Macau and Timor the list was more modest. However, this praise for the overseas tourist attractions concealed the structural weaknesses of a government that did not take care to implement a comprehensive tourism campaign, limiting itself to merely providing notes on a scenario that was constantly being formed.

In 1966, the Minister for Overseas Territories, Joaquim da Silva Cunha (1920-2014), warned that it was necessary to “complete the inventory of the tourist assets of all the provinces by drawing up their respective charts, as a starting point to design a general plan regarding tourism policy in the overseas territories” (Cunha, 1966, p.14). The idea was to bring the metropolitan and provincial services together in order to organise a concerted policy for mutual tourist publicity that would maximise both destinations. A boost was given to colonial architectural projects for tourism purposes and the restructuring of road and rail networks in an initiative coordinated by the Overseas Colonial Urbanisation Office (*Gabinete de urbanização Colonial do Ultramar*), which was set up in 1944.³³ Alongside this, the General Agency for the Colonies (AGC) tried to organise a range of colonial tourism advertising which, among numerous activities, included the publication of brochures, guides and posters highlighting the tourist qualities of the colonies. However, these activities would cease upon the outbreak of the colonial war, thus rendering null and void the implementation of an anachronistic programme that was out of step with the world’s geopolitical reality.

As a complementary influence, the presidential trips to the colonies should also be mentioned. Although these trips were not for entertainment or tourism, but for propaganda purposes, the visits by the Head of State were essential in promoting overseas geographical areas. In 1938, the Head of State Óscar Carmona (1869-1951) undertook his first colonial trip to the provinces of São Tomé and Príncipe and Angola, which resulted in the work by Fernando de Pamplona (1909-1989) *Ao Sol do Império* (Under the Empire’s Sun),³⁴ a title with a clear tourist connotation. The following year, in 1939, Carmona would visit Cabo Verde and Mozambique.³⁵ During the Second World War, presidential trips were

³³ Decree-Law No 34,173 of 6 December 1944.

³⁴ Available online at: <http://memoria-africa.ua.pt/Library/ShowImage.aspx?q=BGC/BGC-N163&p=246>

³⁵ Photographic albums of presidential trips (1939-40). Available online at: <http://memoria-africa.ua.pt/Library/VisitasPresidenciais.aspx>

interrupted and resumed in the 1950s. In 1954, Craveiro Lopes (1894-1964) travelled to the provinces of São Tomé and Príncipe and Angola; in 1955 he travelled to Guinea and Cabo Verde and, in 1956, to Mozambique. In the 1960s, it was Américo Thomaz's (1894-1987) turn to visit Angola and São Tomé and Príncipe in 1963, Mozambique and Príncipe Island in 1964, Guinea and Cabo Verde in 1968, and finally São Tomé in 1970. As for Marcelo Caetano, in 1969 he would travel to Guinea, Angola and Mozambique. António José de Almeida (1866-1929) travelled to the former colony of Brazil in 1922, and was followed by Craveiro Lopes in 1957, Marcelo Caetano in 1969 and Américo Thomaz in 1972.³⁶ These were the highlights of a propaganda policy focused on reaffirming Portugal's sovereignty and legitimising the empire in the post-World War II period. What makes these trips relevant to the analysis undertaken throughout this paper is the fact that their wide dissemination in the press encouraged some individuals in the metropolis to include the geographical areas of the empire within their leisure excursions. This was the case of Francisco Carvalho who, travelling by plane, toured Mozambique, a "tourist poster (...) offering all the services and facilities to receive tourists" (Carvalho, 1954, p.12). As part of a line of ongoing activity, in the 1960s "Mozambique became the biggest tourist destination in southern Africa" (Cleveland, 2023, p.2), which should not imply that other areas were not also successful, as indeed was the case with Angola.

During the colonial times, the tourist potential of the largest colony on the West African coast was acknowledged, but its development did not take place due to the lack of attention given to the sector and, as early as the 1960s, the colonial war definitively prevented any more permanent tourist development, having in fact diminished whatever there was. The 1959-60 *Overseas Tourism Yearbook* mentions the various tourist resorts in the main cities such as Luanda, Sá da Bandeira, Moçâmedes, Malange, Lobito and Benguela, drawing attention to hunting tourism and sports fishing and even suggesting excursions by bus, car or train. There were more than seventy accommodation units, including hotels, pensions, inns and guesthouses, as well as cinemas, theatres, nightclubs, dancing halls and cabarets, and amenities. In 1972, Angola offered fifty-seven hotel units, with Luanda, Huambo, Lubango and Lobito offering 54.4% out of a total of almost 4 000 beds.³⁷ The war closed down some of the tourist facilities. The same *Yearbook* also highlighted this

³⁶ Also worth mentioning are the trips made by the Colonial Ministers Bacelar Bebião (1894-1967), Armindo Monteiro (1896-1955), Vieira Machado, Marcello Caetano, Sarmiento Rodrigues, Raul Ventura (1919-1999) and Adriano Moreira (1922-2022) who, as part of a policy of continuity, interspersed occasional trips to the far reaches of the Portuguese empire with the Heads of State.

³⁷ Data from the General Consulate of Angola. Available online at: <http://www.consuladogeralangola-porto.pt/pt/informacao-geral>

accommodation and their daily rates, as well as the historical and natural heritage of Cabo Verde, Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe.

As far as Cabo Verde was concerned, *Arquipélago* - a weekly newspaper run by the Centre for Information and Tourism (CIT) - provided a reliable source of information on local colonial tourism. Published between 1962 and 1974, it was promoted by Adriano Moreira, then Minister for the Overseas Territories, during his visit to the province. Many of its articles were devoted to extolling the qualities of Cabo Verde for tourism, such as the ability of tourism to attract capital, boost employment and raise people's standard of living. Seeking to deconstruct the image of aridity associated with the islands, the texts extolled their diverse landscape, sport fishing and spearfishing (Rovisco, 2019, p.556). Connections to the outside world by sea were provided by Guinea-Bissau vessels that left Lisbon twice a month, arriving in Cabo Verde about a week later. From 1964 onwards, the Portuguese airline TAP made a weekly stopover in the archipelago and despite its limitations (the terrible state of the roads, the poor supply of water and electricity and the lack of accommodation units), foreign tourists began to arrive in Cabo Verde, starting with cruise ships that called at the ports of Mindelo and Praia. However, there were "almost no mentions of Portuguese tourists, and their absence is lamented and a warning of the need to create a national chain [of tourism]" (Rovisco, 2019, p.557), which came to fruition in 1966, with the arrival of the cruise organised by the F.N.A.T.³⁸ in S. Vicente which was bound for Luanda. The following year, 1967, the die had already been cast and the islands had been chosen to host a major project to turn Cabo Verde into an alternative destination to the Canaries, and as such the Ministry for the Overseas Territories sent a delegation from the General Agency for the Colonies (AGC) to assess Cabo Verde's tourism conditions. The tourist offer, despite its growth, continued to provide an obstacle to the real development of the archipelago as a sun and beach destination with paradisiacal attributes. "Cabo Verde, more than in any other African colony, had its promotion adapted to narratives denying the war and praising one of the main ingredients of Luso-tropicalism, namely the mixing of different races in the Portuguese overseas territories" (Rovisco, 2019, p.567).

As for Guinea-Bissau, the scenario would be different. With a prominent position as an international stopover for the passenger liners that served Angola and Mozambique, the

³⁸ The National Foundation for Joy at Work (*Fundação Nacional para a Alegria no Trabalho*), set up in 1935 by Decree-Law 25 495 of 13 June.

fact that it was surrounded by French and British colonies and in an area where there was a notable US diplomatic presence, made it a nerve centre for colonial administration. Perhaps that is why Gilberto Freyre's (1900-1987) visit to Guinea in 1951, at the invitation of the Portuguese Minister for the Overseas Territories, Sarmento Rodrigues, was of a "dual nature - official and tourist" (Massa, 1998, p.229), and would in fact begin in Guinea, putting it on the colonial tourism map. This trip was to become a milestone in the country's policy for its overseas territories, as it was during that trip that Freyre put forward his quasi-theory of Luso-tropicalism,³⁹ which was soon used by the regime in its propaganda and foreign policy. Indeed, the international situation demanded this, as there was a need to affirm national unity in the face of external pressures in favour of self-determination for the colonies. Nevertheless, colonial tourists rarely headed for Guinea-Bissau, perhaps because this province of the Portuguese empire was "a model of colonialism but without colonisation" (George, 2023), having been the first on the African continent to gain independence. At most, the stopovers made by the passenger liners that travelled to Africa gave passengers a glimpse of a coastline dotted with islands containing unusually rich natural heritage.

As for the São Tomé and Príncipe archipelago, it was the world's largest cocoa producer before the First World War, and received a state visit from Crown Prince Luís Filipe (1887-1908) in 1907, in what was the first and only trip to the colonies by a Portuguese monarch. The tour made its first stop in São Tomé, a place where external criticism had been running high, due to the British accusations of slavery on its agricultural plantations.

Three decades later, the presidential trips of 1938 and 1939 also included the archipelago, but data is scarce on metropolitan travellers following in their wake. It is known that between the 1940s and 1970s, potential businesspeople and family members of plantation owners⁴⁰ from São Tomé visited the islands, but little is known about their stays. Through literature and indirect sources, it can be understood that more than "the high mortality due to its deadly climate, it was the economic and political circumstances that determined a low level presence of Europeans" (Nascimento, 2000, p.381). Julião

³⁹ Freyre's Luso-tropicalist theory was created around Portugal's relationship with its tropical colonies and was initially formulated on the basis of the particular characteristics of the Portuguese colonisation of Brazil. In general terms, it affirmed that the Portuguese were able to adapt to the tropics and that their ability to relate to local cultural and ethnic groups was manifested through a mixing of races, based on Portugal being formed from the Portuguese people coming into contact with Moors and Jews in the Iberian Peninsula during its first centuries of nationhood.

⁴⁰ Estates producing cocoa and coffee for export dictated how the physical and human landscape was structured and utilised, which was greatly marked by this extensive agricultural production. The characteristics of the buildings and land use were colonial in style, with these forming micro-cities with a range of facilities, infrastructures and forms of housing depending on their economic importance.

Quintinha, on his trip to the island in the 1920s, stated that life took place around the administrator's house, which was unmistakably grand and had an adjoining garden where visitors could stroll and socialise (Quintinha, 1929, p.21). On a rural scale, the “*roça*”, properties with plantations/agricultural estates, reproduced the social form of life at the heart of the empire, despite being confined to home life, as entertainments outside their walls were practically non-existent. There was the General Carmona sports park (inaugurated on the occasion of the visit of that president in 1939), sporadic parties at the Government Palace, the Império cinema, the Sarmento Rodrigues Stadium, and the Radio Aero Club with a ballroom (all built in the 1950s and 1960s). In the final phase of colonialism, “the administrator of the *roça* would organise celebrations at his house, accompanied by music played by Angolan musicians” (Bialoborska, 2020), in an attempt to entertain guests on an island where recreation was not widespread.

2.3 Beyond the African Continent

However, the tour of the empire was not limited to Africa. Of course, the further the distance on any colonial journey, the less frequent the routes and the number of passengers, and this is understandable, as travelling a greater distance meant spending more time and money, two factors that were crucial to the choice of destination for settlers living at the centre of the empire.

In 1935, the magazine *Portugal Colonial* (Santos, 1935, p.11) reported on the Lisbon-Timor-Lisbon air route with stopovers in India and Macau, noting that travelling to the empire in the east meant taking regular foreign routes due to the lack of such routes from Portuguese shipping companies. This aspect would present an obstacle to transporting those from the metropolis to India, Macau and Timor, but it would not be the only one, as the chronic lack of investment and publicity meant there was little traffic to the Portuguese Asiatic-Oceanic territories.

The first colony to gain independence from the Portuguese empire was that of Goa, in India, in 1961. It was in Portugal's “Pearl of the Orient” (along with Daman and Diu) that Gilberto Freyre “drew up and developed the concept of luso-tropicalism” (Avelar, 2012, p.249) in 1951, a decade before Goa's emancipation from the Portuguese empire. For Freyre, Goa encapsulated the example of a Luso-tropical civilisation based on Catholicism

and the mixing of races into a romantic vision of Portuguese colonialism, of interest to Salazar's imperial ideology.

In 1952, on the occasion of the inauguration of the regular maritime route between Lisbon and Macau, the Minister for the Overseas Territories, Sarmiento Rodrigues (1899-1979) made a stopover in Mormugão (Oliveira, 1953, p.12), where a technical committee - including Baltazar de Castro (1891-1967), inspector of National Buildings and Monuments, and six other specialised workers who had accompanied him - had arrived with the mission of continuing the restoration work on monuments in India. 1952 was also the year of the commemorations of the fourth centenary of the death of St Francis Xavier (1506-1552), which formed the pretext for inaugurating the Mandovi hotel, the best hotel ever built in Goa until then. In 1959, the Lisbon government set up the Indian Information and Tourism Centre (CIT) (note 8), which drew up a detailed plan, aiming to “beautify” some of the beaches (Breda, 2010, p.31), but the constraints resulting from the closure of the border between India and Goa the following year limited (and then rendered void) any tourist influx.

With regard to Macau, in 1919, the Tourism Commission⁴¹ was set up, serving as the embryo for the colony's tourism services, and in 1931, the Tourism Agency.⁴² However, the First Development Plan for the Portuguese colonies (1953-1958) did not make any progress in the area of tourism, although there were some signs of change in Portuguese tourism management, such as the Tourism Statute (1952), the approval of the Hotel Law (1954) and the organisation of travel, gambling, rent-a-car and camping agencies (1956). The eleven thousand kilometre distance from the decision-making centre in the metropolis had a noticeable effect and it was not until 1962 that there was an observable shift towards tourism, when an exclusive gaming concession contract was signed between the Portuguese government and the Tourism and Entertainment Company of Macau (*Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau* - STDM), an action that would lead to considerable development for Macau (Piçarra, 2017, p.74).

As for Timor - the most distant province of the Portuguese empire - it was also the most forgotten. The few travellers to the territory found an island where the Portuguese administration's governance model did not disturb the customs and habits of the traditional society, and where the necessary infrastructure to welcome visitors was lacking. In an

⁴¹ Provincial Order No 40 of 27 February.

⁴² Official Bulletin No 19 of 9 May.

attempt to attract potential tourists, the General Agency for the Colonies (AGC) produced two small volumes: one entitled *Timor*, in 1950, and another, entitled *Timor, a small monograph*, in 1965. The year before (1964), *Tourism: A Guide to Continental Portugal, the Islands and Overseas Territories* (*Turismo: guia de Portugal Continental, Insular e Ultramarino*) had been published by the *Empresa Nacional de Publicidade*, the first guide to include this territory. In 1961, Miguel Spiguel's film *Tourist Notes for Timor* (*Apontamentos turísticos de Timor*), also sponsored by the General Agency for the Colonies (AGC), was released, featuring items on the modernisation of Dili, artisanal fishing, the beauty of the area, buffalo rearing, traditional dances and cockfights, the Maubara horsemen, the peaks of Ramelau, hunting scenes and the decorations of traditional houses (Piçarra, 2017, p.134). In 1966, it was the turn of the Minister for Overseas Territories, Joaquim da Silva e Cunha, to state that "only recently had the respective (tourist) services been set up in Timor" (Cunha, 1966, p.13) and in 1971, in one of the reports on the CIT director's visit to the province, three of its tourist attractions were mentioned: fishing, hunting and its natural beauty (Oliveira, 2013, p.28). However, the lack of tourist infrastructures made it impossible to travel to Timor for leisure, a reality that would continue until 1975, when independence was proclaimed.

In a summary made by the Minister for Overseas Territories, Joaquim da Silva e Cunha, at the closing session of the 2nd National Tourism Congress in Lourenço Marques in 1966, it was felt that there were a shortage of resources to achieve coordination between the General Agency for the Colonies (AGC) and the Information and Tourism Centres (CIT) due to the "priority nature of expenditure on the defence, security and peace of the territories (...) which, even so, cannot serve as an excuse for inertia" (Cunha, 1966, p.13). An inventory of the tourist assets of the overseas provinces had yet to be finalised (and was in progress), which was the starting point for drawing up a general plan for the tourism policy for the overseas territories. This was not limited to infrastructures and operating methods, but also dealt with vocational training, complementary mechanisms (communications, access routes, development of cultural and sports programmes) and coordinated promotion. Given this, there continued to be Development Plans, but tourism was only introduced in the Interim Plan (1965-1967) in a chapter that recognised it as "a valuable operational instrument (...) for internal financial stability and the external solvency of the Portuguese currency" (Pina, 1988, p.169). In the next edition - relating to the 3rd Development Plan (1968-73) tourism would be considered a "strategic sector for economic

growth” (Pina, 1988, p.169). It was finally beginning to be realised that tourism had a significant value in the balance of foreign payments and could be a source of foreign currency (as a part of colonial tourism) at a time when a European elite was starting to abandon leisure travel to the colonies of the last existing empire, Portugal, due to the colonial war.

At the same time, and on a domestic level, marketing for travel to the colonies was largely conducted through national expositions in the main cities of the imperial centre which - like their European counterparts - included extensive representations of overseas territories. This was the case with the First Portuguese Colonial Exposition held in Porto (1934) or the Great Exposition of the Portuguese World in Lisbon (1940), to name the most significant. These highlighted the best of each colony in a parade of imperial power, seducing a settler from the mother country to set foot in the areas beyond the sea, and inviting them to set off on a journey.

3. Conclusion

In the period ranging from the mid-1920s to the loss of the empire in 1974-75, Portuguese colonial tourism was organised, developed and then done away with, having become a considerable source of foreign currency for Portugal. Throughout this time – of around half a century – travellers (both Portuguese and foreign) and tourism employees from the Portuguese colonies reinforced, albeit from different perspectives, stereotypes of an “exotic” Africa (Cleveland, 2021), experiencing and perpetuating an ideology that was already extinct in the rest of the European hegemonic colonial world. This anachronism provided tourist travel to the Portuguese empire with its own specific features at various levels:

- Social: Accompanying the growing flow of tourists (national or foreign) to the colonies under the national flag, some of the natives took advantage of employment opportunities in tourism to obtain social mobility in colonial Africa, shaping interracial interactions and power relations to different degrees and types.
- Economic: Investments made in tourist structures and amenities were rarely amortised, largely due to the absence of a long-term strategy for overseas tourism, which was more concerned with the anachronistic legitimisation of the empire than with its enjoyment and profitability.

- Cultural: Instrumentalised by the authorities as an identity journey under the same banner, colonial tourist travel offered a set of local cultural exhibition devices such as museums, with their collections displaying local artefacts, popular activities (craft markets) and codified activities (staging of indigenous dances, the theatricalisation of legends), in addition to the hybrid natural and built heritage that could be used for tourism, such as dams, waterfalls, river trips, visits to indigenous villages, among many other aspects particular to each colony, such as hot springs or caves. Among the latter was the case of Khodwze or Chimbarata (Mozambique), where tourist excursions were organised from the town of Inhamitanga during the colonial period.
- Recreational: Colonial tourism was essentially structured around nature activities (safaris, beaches, hunting and fishing) and the appropriation of space was created in the image of places of leisure in the metropolis (such as Estoril, Figueira da Foz or Granja) albeit set in a tropical environment and exotic atmosphere. Like their counterparts built in other parts of the imperial world of Old Europe, they were originally intended to serve Portuguese colonisation and were exclusive to it.

In any event, in the history of contemporary Portuguese colonial tourist travel, the overseas territories were points of attraction for an experience that, in certain aspects and in certain places, was ahead of metropolitan society. This can be explained by the fact that, far from the imperial capital, the control and surveillance of those in charge was looser and the pace of life was more “relaxed”. Furthermore, the indigenous population did the domestic work, so the settlers had more free time to mingle outside their domestic space, which gave considerable prominence to socialising and leisure time. Through spending less time in homemaking (because they had their chores done by the locals), they spent more time socialising outside, in clubs and on outdoor terraces. Under the auspices of the tropical climate, relationships were, if not less hierarchical, at least more informal or flexible in terms of codes of conduct. This scenario proved attractive for tourists, a magnet that in those days was only accessible to a social stratum made up of settlers, a few of those who were “assimilated”⁴³ and foreigners.

In 1974-75, the empire returned to the Lisbon docks and with this, the end of Portuguese colonial tourism occurred, at a time when mass tourism was beginning to spread throughout

⁴³ Status of indigenous people who had attained a level of “civilisation”, in legal terms, which theoretically qualified them for full rights as Portuguese citizens.

the western world. In the meantime, most of the Portuguese moved away from the former overseas territories due to subsequent civil wars, internal power struggles or simply bad memories of the colonial war, preferring other destinations. It is only in recent years that there has been a consistent and continuous revival of interest in these destinations, largely due to the rediscovery of a shared history and, above all, an emerging heritage, which is often recovered, reconverted and reassessed.

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GOAN HINDU TEMPLES AND TOURISM: FROM EXOTIC UNIQUENESS TO DEVIANT FOREIGNNESS

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Abstract

Several Hindu temples in Goa have a distinct architecture that strongly distinguishes them from other Hindu temples in India (and around the world). The result of a long cultural fusion, they feature influences from Goan Catholic churches built under Portuguese rule, Maratha Hindu temples, and the architecture of the Bijapur Sultanate, giving them a unique character. In the final period of Portuguese administration in Goa, attempts were made to publicise this transcultural heritage through a number of tourist brochures, emphasizing its particular exoticism. However, after Goa's integration into India, although religious tourism - and specifically Hindu temple tourism - has grown manyfold, its effect on this unique temple architecture has, interestingly, not been positive at all. Many of these unusual temples have undergone profound changes that have distorted, or completely obliterated, their architectural essence, bringing them closer to the more traditional Hindu religious architecture in India. The aim of this essay is to analyse how evolving tourism practises in Goa has impacted these temples from the mid-20th century to the present day.

Keywords

Goan Hindu temples, Tourism, Identity, Cultural hybridization, Heritage threats

1. Preamble

In the centuries following the arrival of the Portuguese in South Asia in the early 16th century, Goa saw many visitors, including rulers, royal officials, diplomats, merchants, soldiers, missionaries, pilgrims, mercenaries, spies, and slaves. The rise of Romanticism in the nineteenth century, however, began to bring a different kind of traveller to Goa - mainly British, coming from the neighbouring British Raj - who, unlike their predecessors, came for pure personal enjoyment, especially the pleasure of discovering new cultures. This was a form of travel that had long existed in Europe, mainly through the Grand Tour - which would, in fact, give rise to the word “tourism”.

These visitors were mainly looking for what could be considered “exotic within the exotic”, that is, ancient European (Portuguese) heritage in an Eastern (Goan or Indian) context. This Portuguese heritage was considered a reminder of the golden age of a great empire that had since collapsed: a historical lesson exemplifying a failed colonial empire as opposed to the then-flourishing British colonial empire, as it was generally considered by 19th-century British historiography (Vicente, 2013, pp.275-278). This is why it attracted the Romantics with their passion for “ruinism”, a state of decay generated by the inexorable passage of time, which in turn generated contradictory feelings of admiration, attraction, impotence, and anguish.

Another phenomenon also began to emerge in Goa in the nineteenth century, which would be later termed religious tourism, viz. pilgrimages to the Basilica of Bom Jesus in the old Cidade de Goa (today’s Old Goa) to venerate the tomb of the “Apostle of the East”, St. Francis Xavier (Kandolkar, 2025; Gupta, 2014). This tourism would have been encouraged by the Portuguese colonial administration as a symbol of a Catholic Portuguese India, different from British India, creating a sense of common identity among Catholics from various Asian regions under a moribund Portuguese Padroado Real⁴⁴.

It was only in the mid-twentieth century that the Portuguese dictatorial regime of Estado Novo initiated a formal tourism policy for Portuguese India. This was largely due to the end of British rule over India, with the consequent claims by the Indian Union on the territories under Portuguese administration. Combining practices of ideological

⁴⁴ The focus on religious tourism could be seen in the numerous tourist itineraries that were published periodically as part of the Xaverian celebration, namely by Filipe Neri Xavier (1859), Viriato de Albuquerque (1878, 1890) and Francisco Xavier da Costa (1922, 1931, 1952). See also: Gupta, 2014. See also: Souza, 2008.

exploitation of Portuguese cultural heritage, with the promotion of domestic tourism⁴⁵ through the *Política do Espírito* (Policy of the Spirit) which had been in place in Portugal for about a decade and a half, the *Estado Novo* regime extended these practices to the territory of Goa, with the aim of promoting the expansion of domestic tourism to the Portuguese overseas provinces (Santos, 2025), as they were now called. The first non-religious cultural tourist guides relating to Goa date from this period, and it is in these that Goan Hindu temples appear explicitly for the first time.

2. The Rise of a Unique Hindu Temple Architecture Parallels the Rise and (Slow) Development of Tourism in Colonial Goa

In the second half of the 18th century, Portugal acquired new territories in Goa, known as the New Conquests - as opposed to the Old Conquests acquired during the first half of the 16th century. Unlike the Old Conquests, which were mostly Catholic, these new territories, which tripled the area of Goa, were predominantly non-Catholic or Gentile areas, in which Portugal accepted freedom of worship and the continuation of traditional “customs and usages”. The nineteenth century that followed turned out to be a transforming time for the Hindu castes of Goa, especially the dominant castes among them, thanks to these new liberal policies of the Goa government. The Brahmin Hindu castes of the Old Conquests had actually played a prominent role in the Goan establishment, as political collaborators, traders, interpreters, and scribes, right from the conquest of Goa by Albuquerque. Now, with the expansion of Goa, and the need for bureaucrats, scribes, and other administrative categories to deal with the vast new territories and their peoples, there were new opportunities for both these Old Conquest communities and the dominant Hindu castes of the New Conquests. The result was a rise of wealth and power, which was reflected in the expansion and rebuilding of Hindu temples in the New Conquests, and also the building of new Hindu temples in the Old.

Following increasing complaints, over the nineteenth century, about irregularities in the functioning of these religious institutions, the government began to intervene, introducing various regulations and policies, which culminated in the *Regulamento das Mazanias* in 1886 (revised in 1933, 1949, and 1951)⁴⁶. Under this law, every temple was required to

⁴⁵ On tourism during the *Estado Novo* regime, see: Cadavez, 2011; Aguiar, 2008; Ferro, 1949.

⁴⁶ On the complaints, disputes, and government interventions in Goan temples over the nineteenth century, see: Parobo, 2024 and 2020.

register all information about it with the government, including ownership, properties, religious practises, employees, and so on. It was at this time that the *mazan*, a term which earlier meant persons prominently associated with the temple, was registered as the owners; and it was found that these registered *mazan* were almost always the dominant castes of the village or even the region. The most striking example of this dominance is the wide prevalence of the various Brahmin castes - who united at the end of the 19th century under the name Gaud Saraswat Brahmin (GSB) - not only in the *mazania* list of many temples, but also monopolising the list of the biggest temples. It is surely no coincidence that these were the same communities who played a central role in preparing the temple documents. And also that this same period of the end of the nineteenth century sees the renovation and rebuilding of a great number of temples across Goa (Kanekar 2022).

In his work *A Índia Portuguesa* (1886), António Lopes Mendes published, for the first time, images of Goan Hindu temples having an unusual architectural character and form, compared to Hindu religious architecture in British India. He described this strangeness mostly as smallness, simplicity, and less and different ornamentation, without identifying what he saw, as later scholars would: a basilican (or Latin Cross) floor plan; a dome (European or Bijapuri in origin) over the sanctum sanctorum; the prevalence of typically European pilasters, balustrades, and other ornamental elements; Bijapuri-style arches, domes, finials, and other forms; Mughal gatehouses; lamptowers that resembled Bijapuri minarets; the use of ceramic tiles and lime plaster; and so on⁴⁷. This typical Goan architectural style applied to Hindu temples seems to have developed mainly during this period of the second half of the 19th century, although the process of hybridisation probably began much earlier (Kanekar, 2022).

A few years later, the Goan photography studio Souza & Paul began a series of photographs of Goa, which included architecture (churches, temples, fortifications, houses), landscapes, engineering works, festivities, etc. It is interesting to find many more Hindu temples displaying the typical Goan architecture in these postcards than in Lopes Mendes, proving that the new architecture was spreading at the time (Kanekar, 2022). Many of these photographs were later used in photo albums and illustrated tourist postcards (Figure 1). This is probably the first entry of these temples into the world of tourism.

⁴⁷ For detailed descriptions of the architecture of the Goan temple, including the sources of the forms and elements, see: Pereira, 2005 and 1995; Kowal, 2001; Michell, 2015.



Figure 1. Nagesh temple at Bandora, postcard with a photograph taken by Souza & Paul studio
Source: Collection of Mário and Alice Chicó, held at the Archives of Macao - Cultural Affairs Bureau

3. Tourism and Temples under the Estado Novo Regime, and the Ideological Instrumentalization of Cultural Heritage

The independence of the Indian Union in 1947 triggered a series of actions by the Portuguese dictatorial regime, with a view to justifying the continued Portuguese presence in the territories of the Estado da Índia (Goa, Damão and Diu). These actions aimed to show that these territories were culturally and religiously closer to Portugal than to the Indian Union, and that they therefore constituted overseas provinces rather than colonies; their inhabitants were therefore Portuguese citizens – something that had not happened with the British Raj or the Établissements Français dans l'Inde. The adoption by the Estado Novo of the concept of “Lusotropicalism”, developed by Gilberto Freyre, stimulated the sending of missions to India during the 1950s, with the aim of studying the culture and art of the Estado da Índia, as well as restoring the main monuments of Old Goa, the original Portuguese imperial capital in the East (Santos, 2020).

The “discovery” of the Goan Hindu temple coincided precisely with the beginning of Carlos de Azevedo's artistic studies in 1951, during the study mission to Portuguese India led by Mário Chicó (Figure 2). For the first time, the Hindu temples of Goa were studied somewhat systematically; the study was presented in a short chapter of the book *A Arte de Goa, Damão e Diu* (The Art of Goa, Damão and Diu), entitled “Arte Indiana” (Indian Art). Carlos de Azevedo notes that these temples, built in the 18th and 19th centuries, displayed a range of different influences that were assimilated, thus deserving a special status in the history of artistic relations between the West and Eastern cultures. This architectural

syncretism was, moreover, described quite consistently by Carlos Azevedo, who thus reinforced the unique character of Goan Hindu temples (Azevedo, 1970).

The year after Mário Chicó's mission, a celebration of the "4th Centenary of the Death of Saint Francis Xavier" took place in Goa in 1952, which the regime immediately took advantage of for an international ideological campaign, with a view to showing the Lusitanian nature of Portuguese India, as opposed to the "other India". It was also in this year that Goa's first large and modern hotel, the Hotel Mandovi, located in Panjim, the new capital of the Estado da Índia, was inaugurated. While the Portuguese dictatorial regime's commitment to the development of religious tourism to sites of Catholic importance was already abundantly clear, the launch of a strategy to develop a wider cultural tourism to this territory was something unprecedented. This strategy sought to attract Portuguese tourists who could learn about the "glorious Portuguese history in the East" and, at the same time, bring new sources of income to the territory, which at that time had its land borders blocked by the Indian Union.

1952 was therefore the year in which the first cultural tourist guidebook on Portuguese India - *India Portuguesa* - was published, containing useful information on history, transport, hotels, monuments to visit, cultural traditions, cuisine, climate, etc., accompanied by some photographs. Although the ideological intention to focus mainly on monuments clearly linked to the Portuguese presence in the territory (churches and fortifications) is clear, some Goan Hindu temples that could be visited are nevertheless mentioned briefly. Three years later, in 1955, a special issue of *Panorama* magazine was published, dedicated precisely to the Estado da Índia. This magazine, published by the National Secretariat for Information, Popular Culture and Tourism, was dedicated to Portuguese cultural tourism, contributing to the increase of tourism in accordance with the Política do Espírito. The focus of this *Panorama's* special issue was once again on heritage directly related to the Portuguese, with Hindu temples receiving only a very brief mention.

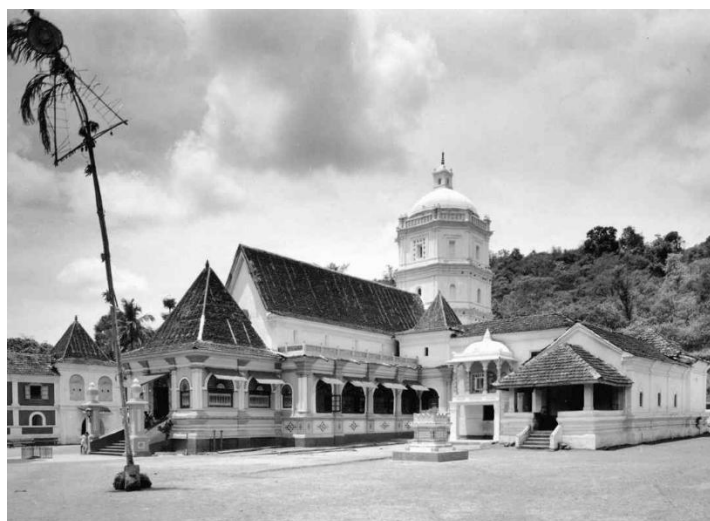


Figure 2. Shantadurga temple at Queula, photograph taken by the study mission led by Mário Chicó
Source: Collection of Mário and Alice Chicó, held at the Mário Soares and Maria Barroso Foundation

Goan Hindu temples were more substantially represented in 1956 by Swiss journalist Emile Marini who, at the invitation of the Portuguese regime, visited Goa and published the book *Goa, tal como a vi* (Goa as I saw it). This book, published in several languages, was essentially propaganda in favour of the intentions of the Estado Novo, although it could reach a more international tourist audience. The presence of many Goan Hindu temples in Emile Marini's work, and presented in more detail, points to a greater willingness on the part of the Portuguese administration to include non-Catholic elements as part of Goan identity, something that would become even more pronounced a few years later.

The arrival of Governor-General Manuel Vassalo e Silva in the Estado da Índia in 1958 undoubtedly marked a turning point in Portuguese administration, albeit a brief one thanks to the events of 1961. Manuel Vassalo e Silva took a series of measures to develop the Goan economy, improve local living conditions, and promote Portuguese-origin heritage, with particular emphasis on the plan to turn Old Goa into a kind of city-museum, which, in addition to illustrating the former greatness of the Portuguese presence in the East, would attract crowds of (religious and cultural) tourists who would thus help to develop the local economy. The governor-general seems to have also sought to integrate the Hindu heritage as part of Goan cultural identity, noting the Portuguese influence that had shaped it over time.

This Goan Hindu heritage was, moreover, the focus of special attention from entities seeking to develop the tourism industry in the Estado da Índia. In the first year of Manuel Vassalo e Silva's government, a tourist guide to Goa's Hindu heritage was published,

entitled *Arte Indu em Goa - Sri Manguexa e outros templos de Pondá* (Hindu Art in Goa - Sri Manguexa and other temples of Ponda) and published by the Information Section of the Central Department of Statistics and Information (Secção de Informação da Repartição Central de Estatística e Informação), in Goa – and not in Lisbon, as previous publications had been. The tourist booklet, entirely dedicated to the Hindu temples of Goa, was probably written by a Goan employee of the Portuguese local administration with some knowledge of Goa's Hindu community, as it succinctly but rigorously addresses aspects of the architecture, history, worship, traditions and Hindu communities of Goa (Figure 3).

The fact that this guidebook is bilingual (Portuguese and English) seems to demonstrate that, rather than only attracting Portuguese tourists – by, for example, likening the Goan town of Ponda to Sintra in Portugal – the intention was broader, to promote tourism within Goa itself and possibly within the Indian Union, in the event of a cessation of hostilities with Portugal. The descriptions and photographs of Goa's Hindu temples clearly show the differences between them and Hindu temples in other parts of India, many of which are truly magnificent. The tourist guidebook therefore seems to reinforce the focus on a potential local and regional audience rather than an international one: tourists from other parts of the world would certainly want to visit and discover the great Hindu religious complexes of South Asia, heritage sites considered exotic and non-existent in their own countries; however, for local visitors and those from neighbouring India, the relatively much smaller Hindu temples of Goa would be considered exotic precisely due to their difference from the former, including the uniqueness of their cultural hybridisation and, in particular, their accommodation of European forms and aesthetics.

The appreciation of Goan Hindu temples by the Portuguese administration under the governance of Manuel Vassalo e Silva does not seem to have sparked the same interest in Lisbon. In 1960, the year in which the “5th Centenary of the Death of Prince Henry the Navigator” was celebrated, together with the 450th anniversary of the Portuguese conquest of Goa by Afonso de Albuquerque, the regime took advantage of these celebrations to once again exploit them ideologically. The festivities continued to be opportunities to invest in the tourism industry, so it is not surprising that a new tourist guide entitled *Goa* was published in Lisbon that same year. The contents of this booklet were very similar to those published eight years earlier; however, in the more recent guidebook, in addition to guesthouses, there were now two hotels (the aforementioned Hotel Mandovi and the Hotel Zuari located in Vasco da Gama) - evidence of a continued commitment to the development

of the tourism industry. However, although the booklet's cover depicts a Hindu *khambo* (lamptower), it does not contain any further references to Goan Hindu heritage.

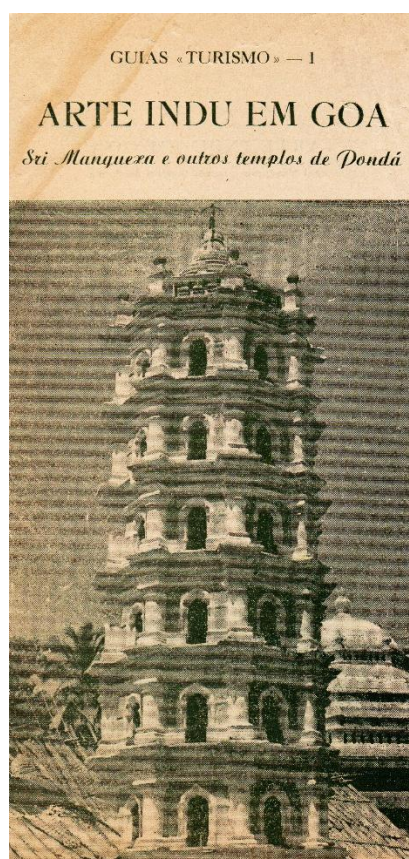


Figure 3. Front cover of the tourist guide *Arte Indu em Goa - Sri Manguexa e outros templos de Pondá*, 1958

Source: Author's private collection

4. The Post-Colonial Period and the Indianisation of Goan Hindu Temples

In December 1961, Goa, Damão, and Diu were annexed by India following Operation Vijay, thus ending more than four and a half centuries of Portuguese presence in Goa. The decades since then have seen a strange contradiction in the situation of Goa's Hindu temples. Most of the old foundations still stand today and attract increasing numbers of visitors and devotees - and also funds - thanks not least to their inclusion in government-organised tourism circuits especially under recent governments of the Hindu-revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and to the resultant growth in overt Hindu religiosity. But this very enthusiasm has become a threat to their original architecture, which is fast disappearing and being replaced by forms from various parts of India.

This replacement actually began even before 1961, but in small and hardly noticeable steps. The process has been aided by the fact that most Goan temples are legally held to be private property, owned by their respective *mazan* groups. Another problem is that very few of the temples are protected under heritage laws, even today, though most are over a century old. There are cases where such protection was enacted in the 1960s, but the temple trusts were able to get it removed, as at the prominent Mangueshi temple at Priol. Although the shrines saw renovation all through the 20th century, distinct differences can be seen in intensity, ambition, and inspiration at different times. For example, in the period around the 1950s, reinforced cement concrete (RCC) construction starts to be seen, especially for new halls and dormitories, and also for renovations of old temple buildings, like the additions of RCC window eaves.

Just before this, however, the first small moves away from the Goan temple vocabulary can also be seen, in the reconstruction of the Vithal temple at Sanquelim⁴⁸ (Figure 4) and the building of a new hall for the Ramnath temple in Bandora. In both cases the new architecture - inspired by Mughal forms - seems to be looking at India for inspiration, and deliberately leaving out any touch of Europe. Ideas of Indian nationalism had entered Goa by then, and the dominant castes were increasingly swayed, both Hindu and Catholic. It thus may be no coincidence that these two temples that first reject Goan temple forms for Indian ones are both owned by dominant castes. They chose Indian forms, but Indian in the Indo-Saracenic sense, i.e. belonging to the South Asian Islamicate, an architecture embraced as “native” by the British Raj for about a century. There is a third temple, the new Maruti of Panjim, founded in the 1950s by a Bahujan community (and since reconstructed), which seems also to have opted for similar forms at the time. Although we only have these three examples of this trend for now, this is still significant given the post-1961 developments. Thus, where the Goan temple incorporated ideas from both the Islamicate (like the Bijapur Sultanate and the Mughals) and the European Baroque, the latter is now erased. Following the integration of Goa with India in 1961, Islamic inspiration also disappears; the enthusiasm for all things Indian (or rather, South Asian) is replaced by that for only Hindu India (Kanekar 2018).

⁴⁸ This fact was mentioned by Carlos de Azevedo during his participation in the study mission of the monuments of Goa, Damão and Diu in 1951, led by Mário Chicó: in his private diary, Carlos de Azevedo notes that the temple of Sanquelim was visited but was overlooked, as it had recently been rebuilt in reinforced concrete.



Figure 4. Rebuilt Vithal temple of Sanquelim

Source: Photograph by the author

There were two distinct phases in the renovation and rebuilding of old temples after 1961: the first from the mid-1960s to the 1980s, and the second beginning from the 1990s (Kaneekar, 2018). The first period saw the partial or complete rebuilding of some temples, and the introduction of ancient Indian forms like the Latina⁴⁹ tower - the curved tower over the temple sanctum, commonly found in north and central India - and the tiered Tamil Dravida tower of south India, both perhaps for the first time in Goa, and in RCC. This stylistic transformation was mainly seen in the rebuilding (and expansion) of smaller temples, and in new temples, big and small. Examples of prominent old temples being so transformed are few; they include the Damodar temple of Zamboulim which was completely rebuilt in 1970, and Panjim's Mahalaxmi temple, similarly rebuilt in 1983 (Figures 5 and 6).



Figure 5. Mahalaxmi temple in Panaji, before renovation, photograph taken by Emile Marini (1957)

Source: Collection of Emile Marini, held at the Overseas Historical Archive, Lisbon



Figure 6. Mahalaxmi temple in Panaji, after rebuilding in 1983

Source: Photograph by the author

⁴⁹ One of the Nagara types of temple architecture.

Things had changed dramatically by the late 1990s, with renovation and rebuilding now almost all-prevalent, and expansive in both quality and quantity. It is no coincidence that this is the period of the rise of the BJP to power, and also the rise of mass Indian tourism in Goa. In a recent survey of pre-1961 temples across Goa⁵⁰, out of a total of 248 old foundations, nearly half were found to be completely rebuilt - many in the last two decades - while another one-third are substantially altered. And many of the relatively unchanged ones have plans for rebuilding⁵¹. This is because, under the BJP, Hindu tourism is being aggressively encouraged - in a clear attempt to counter the image of Goa as a land of Catholic pilgrimage. Although the BJP claims that it is trying to encourage all spiritual tourism, and develop a new image of Goa as a religious site, their actual efforts belie these statements. An example is the new title Dakshin Kashi - “southern Kashi”, a reference to Kashi (Varanasi) city on the river Ganga, a very sacred location for Hindus -, bestowed by them on Goa 2-3 years ago. Another is the very recent inauguration, in November 2025, of a colossal statue of the Hindu deity Ram at the Partali Matha in Canacona, Goa, by the Prime Minister of the Indian union.

The biggest effort, however, can be seen in the “beautification” - including enlargement, renovation, and rebuilding - of temple complexes for the benefit of tourist visitors. The result is not just widespread destruction of the old architecture, but also a greater consciousness of image-creation. Now, it is temple as spectacle, or “Indianisation” along with monumentality and showiness. Expansion is on a gigantic scale, along with the use of expensive contemporary materials, the application of copper sheeting to roofs, and silver and gold leaf to pinnacles and internal walls, besides expensive granites and marbles. The look is varied, from Malabar-style pitched roof compositions to Nagara⁵² and Karnata Dravida⁵³ ones. However, the rise of mass Indian tourism in Goa in the same period, and the successful packaging of Goa as a European holiday paradise for Indians, has seen a new popularity for so-called “Indo-Portuguese” architecture. The result is the development of the Goan temple into an Indian extravaganza but with a recovery of some typical Goan architectural elements like tiled roofs, *balcões*⁵⁴, and the grand manorial composition, along with the introduction of new faux-Goan ones like exposed laterite (Figures 7 and 8). Domes are often included, but usually not Goan ones.

⁵⁰ The survey was based on the temples listed in the inventory of main village temples across Goa by Rui Gomes Pereira (1978).

⁵¹ Work in progress, developed by one of the authors.

⁵² The typical South Asian temple architecture that developed mostly in the north, west, central, and east.

⁵³ The typical South Asian temple architecture that developed in and around the Karnataka region of the south.

⁵⁴ The *balcão* is a typical entrance porch of large Goan houses.



Figure 7. Kapileshwar of Queula, Ponda, original architecture

Source: “Goa An Encounter”, in MARG (1983)

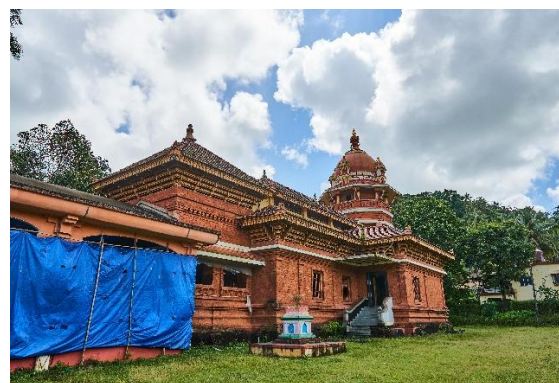


Figure 8. Kapileshwar after rebuilding

Source: Photograph by the author

For example, the rebuilding of the Shantadurga Ballikarin in Balli saw a relatively simple and semi-vernacular Goan temple, with a timber pitched roof, being replaced by a monumental and domed mix of the Buddhist chaitya and the Tamil Dravida⁵⁵ temple, with railings apparently inspired by the Sanchi stupa, and a barrel vault over the hall, along with horseshoe arches and Tamil cornices. The aim, as explained by a member of the temple committee, was to be “different” and thus attract more tourists. Another example, of even more dramatic change, is the Saptakoteswar in Fatorpa, formerly a tiny hut-like shrine and now a huge one built in exposed granite, reminiscent of the archaic Karnata Dravida tradition. The Shantadurga Cuncolcarin of Fatorpa, formerly a typical domed Goan temple of medium size, is meanwhile now a sprawling, multi-domed, and monumental extravaganza, which seems to draw inspiration from Hindu temples everywhere on the subcontinent but Goa (Figures 9, 10 and 11).



Figure 9. Shantadurga Cuncolcarin at Fatorpa, before rebuilding, photo in an outdoor

Source: Photograph by the author



Figure 10. New temple of Shantadurga Cuncolcarin at Fatorpa

Source: Photograph by the author

⁵⁵ The typical South Asian temple architecture that developed in the Tamil region of the south.



Figure 11. Kapileshwar after rebuilding
Source: Photograph by the author

5. The Contemporary Brahminical Discourse against the Deviant Foreignness of the Goan Temple

The fact that Goan Brahmanical temples are being rebuilt since 1961, and in a recognizably Indian avatar, is not really surprising, given the deep connection between Indian nationalism and Brahmanical Hinduism. As G. Aloysius has pointed out, Indian nationalism is not political nationalism but cultural nationalism, i.e. less about political rights than the celebration of culture and traditions, and specifically the culture and traditions of the dominant castes, i.e. Brahmins (Aloysius, 1997). Another relevant aspect of Indian nationalism is that it always harks to a mythical Hindu “golden age” before the arrivals of Islam and the Europeans. What this means is that to be a true Indian nationalist is to be Hindu and Brahmanical, while Islam, Christianity and Europeanness are all correspondingly un-Indian.

In this situation, Brahmanical temples become symbols of nationalism, especially in Goa where the stories of temple-breaking and “flight of the deities” under Portuguese have been repeated ad nauseum ever since Goa joined India, and are now a vital part of tourism

information packages, even though historical proof of such events does not always exist. But for Hindu temples to be celebrated as nationalist symbols, these have to be temples that “look Hindu”, not “like churches” and certainly not displaying “Muslim domes”, as some visitors and even locals now complain. Enlarging and rebuilding them to look like ancient Hindu shrines from the subcontinent is a political and nationalist statement about Goa being Indian. And erasing the proof of Goa’s heterogenous past, like its multi-referenced architecture which is reminiscent of both churches and the Islamic world, is thus nothing less than an effort to Indianise Goa and the Goan Hindu as well. This deliberate erasure of historical architecture is nothing less than a rewriting of Goan Hindu history, to create a new Hindu identity that fits better into India. There are various theories of how Goa – whose people were famously called “ajeeb” (strange) by Nehru in 1963 - could and did integrate with India. Some say it was through the highlighting of a common culture (Newman, 1999), others that it was only via mass tourism (Trichur, 2013). One could argue, however, that it was also through the reinvention of the Goan Hindus, in an image and identity acceptable to the post-1961 Indian context, a reinvention which necessarily involves their temples as well (Kanekar, 2022).

Thus, the rebuilding of Goan temples, which begins even before 1961, coinciding with the spread of Indian nationalism in Goa, but really takes off with the adoption of archaic Indian forms after 1961. With the rise of Hindutva politics⁵⁶ in India from the late 1980s, this celebration of Brahmanical-Hinduism-as-nationalism is more blatant. In the midst of all of this rampant architectural renovation, it is noteworthy that the control, social usage of, and access to, these temples remain unchanged, i.e. all of this continues to be Brahmanical, i.e. caste-based, patriarchal, hierarchical, and discriminatory. There is no contradiction here, though, for the renovations themselves are not just completely archaic in inspiration, but driven by Brahmanical goals (Kanekar, 2021).

6. Final Notes

Goan temples were perhaps the last area of built heritage to become a tourist attraction in Goa. As far as it is known, one owes António Lopes Mendes for the first known representations of the unique Hindu temple type that developed in Goa from the 18th

⁵⁶ Hindutva is the word used by the BJP and its affiliated organisations to describe their Hindu-centric politics and policies.

century onwards. This detailed documentation - which was just a part of his huge documentation of the region - seemed, however, to have no cultural repercussions on Goa, Portugal or any other places. The sparse tourist focus at the time centred mainly on the Catholic religious issues linked to St. Francis Xavier, although interest in monuments of Portuguese origin in Portuguese India was gradually beginning to grow, especially those in Old Goa, symbolically associated with the mythical Golden Goa and the golden age of the Portuguese colonial empire in the East. The Souza & Paul photographic studio of Goa, which photographed several Goan temples at the end of the nineteenth century, saw some of these photos later sold as illustrated tourist postcards to Goan families or occasional foreign visitors – perhaps the first, albeit minor, tourist interest in these buildings.

Until the independence of the Indian Union, the tourism industry was almost non-existent in the Estado da Índia, with the exception of religious pilgrimages to the tomb of St. Francis Xavier. It was precisely India's demands to integrate the territories then under Portuguese administration that triggered a series of actions aimed at boosting the economy of the Estado da Índia, improving local living conditions, and stimulating a sense of belonging to a more global Lusitanised world. In the process, cultural tourism began to gain momentum, although it continued to focus mainly on Catholic heritage.

Nevertheless, on the eve of the end of the Estado da Índia, there was a revaluation and celebration of Goa's Hindu heritage, apparently aimed at a potential local and regional tourist audience. The sudden championing of this transcultural heritage – developed by neither the Portuguese authorities nor the Goan Catholics, but very aligned with the architectural production by them - certainly had political motives, as it showed that even Goa's eminently Hindu heritage was very different from that of the Indian Union, due to the accommodation of European forms and aesthetics influenced by the strong Portuguese presence. This unique cultural heritage was now seen as a source of exotic attraction for potential visitors, even though the cultural tourism industry had not really developed in Goa during the colonial period.

The unique character of Goan temple architecture continued to be recognized in the years after 1961, but no longer as something to be celebrated. Instead, with Indian nationalism aligned with Brahmanical Hindusim, this heterogeneously-influenced architecture seems to have become an embarrassment for the dominant Hindu castes who were trying to reinvent themselves as ideal Indian citizens. Their temples began to be rebuilt even before 1961, and more rapidly after 1961, adopting archaic Hindu temple

forms from outside Goa. This rebuilding accelerated with the rise of the BJP and their Hindu-revivalist agenda in the 1990s, which is the same time as the rise of Indian mass tourism in Goa. The old temples were now under enormous pressure to transform themselves into tourist magnets - becoming larger, grander, and extravagantly “Indian”, by incorporating ideas from all kinds of Brahmanical Hindu sources outside Goa. However, the selling of Goa to tourists as a Portuguese or European territory now also required the so-called Indo-Portuguese touch, hence the rise of faux-Goan architecture, with elements like domes, *balcões*, and pilasters as part of the mix.

Thus, the integration of Goans into India after 1961, and the development of tourism in the years following, including the transformation of the latter into an aggressive and dominant industry in the region (and the world) by the early 21st century, has not proved beneficial for the temple heritage of Goa. Although Goan temples today receive enormous numbers of visitors as compared to even a couple of decades ago, and are also generously funded, their distinctive and irreplaceable architectural heritage is being wiped out at a furious pace. What is further remarkable is that, while this unique built heritage is seen as dispensable in the cause of nationalistic identity-creation and jingoistic tourism, the truly outdated and deplorable casteist and patriarchal practices that mark the functioning of the temples show no signs of dying out.

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FROM SYMBOL OF DOMINATION TO TOURIST ATTRACTION: THE REAPPROPRIATION OF COLONIAL HERITAGE IN HO CHI MINH CITY

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Abstract

Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), formerly Saigon, boasts a rich colonial architectural heritage that has transitioned from symbols of French domination to key tourist attractions, driving economic growth. Amid a 15.7% surge in international visitors in early 2025, this heritage, encompassing buildings like the Notre-Dame Cathedral and Central Post Office, distinguishes HCMC from other Vietnamese sites focused on natural or ancient wonders. Colonial heritage is often labeled “dissonant”, evoking tensions between pride in architectural value and memories of exploitation, yet in HCMC, it faces little contestation. Rooted in French colonial urban planning from the late 19th century, these structures blend European and local elements, adapted to tropical conditions. Post-independence, Vietnam’s heritage policies, influenced by colonial-era frameworks like the 1900 decree, evolved through laws such as the 2001 Cultural Heritage Act, prioritizing preservation alongside development. In HCMC, urban plans since 1997 have inventoried and classified over 1,200 villas, enforcing protections against demolition. Adaptive reuse has been pivotal: public buildings retain functions or become museums, while private ones transform into cafés and shops, balancing sustainability with economic viability. Tourism amplifies this, integrating sites into circuits with modern amenities like illuminated facades and info plaques, appealing to global visitors without erasing historical complexities. Ultimately, this reappropriation reflects reconciliation, where aesthetic and functional values eclipse painful symbolism, fostering cultural dialogue and prosperity in a dynamic urban context.

Keywords

Colonial heritage, Tourism valorization, Adaptive reuse, Dissonant heritage

1. Introduction

Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), formerly known as Saigon, stands out for its vibrant economic dynamism and its unique cultural heritage, notably marked by a well-preserved colonial architecture. In recent years, the city has experienced a significant revival of tourism, with a 15.7% increase in the number of international visitors during the first two months of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024, reaching a total of 1.044 million arrivals. Tourism revenue generated in HCMC now accounts for 24% of the national total, highlighting the city's pivotal role in Vietnam's tourism economy⁵⁷.

While other regions of the country, such as Hanoi with its centuries-old history and culture, Ha Long Bay with its UNESCO-listed natural heritage, Hue with its historical monuments, and Hoi An with its ancient houses, are primarily associated with spectacular landscapes or historical treasures, HCMC distinguishes itself through its vibrant energy and its diverse gastronomy. However, it is above all the colonial heritage of the city that commands attention. The colonial buildings of HCMC represent a complex form of heritage, reflecting not only the colonial legacy but also the profound cultural, social, and political transformations that have shaped the city. Far from being a dissonant element that would provoke contestation, this heritage has been integrated into the dynamics of economic development, notably through its valorization within the framework of tourism.

Colonial heritage refers to the collection of buildings and infrastructures constructed during the colonial era, a period characterized by the domination of European powers over various regions of the world up until the twentieth century. These structures - encompassing military facilities, residences, leisure spaces, as well as administrative, academic, and religious buildings - serve as material witnesses to the colonial period and embody significant architectural value (Boutabba et al., 2014; Ben Hamouche, 2020). This type of heritage is acknowledged as multifaceted and sensitive, often referred to by various terms such as “shared heritage”, “overseas heritage” or “nineteenth–twentieth century heritage” (Roosmalen, 2013, p.2). Its controversial nature stems from its association with a painful history of domination and exploitation. The term “colonial” itself often evokes a sense of shame, prompting calls for its erasure or re-signification to preserve the value of this architectural legacy (Roosmalen, 2003, p.123).

⁵⁷ <https://lecourrier.vn>

In heritage studies, colonial heritage is frequently described as “dissonant heritage” (Young, 2001; Adas, 2004; Linehan et al., 2020; Kisić, 2013; Roosmalen, 2013), raising persistent controversies regarding its recognition, management, and heritage-making processes. The concept of dissonant heritage, introduced by Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996), posits that all heritage inherently contains dissonance, arising from discordances among groups involved in its creation, interpretation, and use. The diversity of meanings attributed to heritage, varying across social groups, historical periods, and contexts, produces tensions that complicate both its management and its commercialization.

Particularly, colonial heritage, shaped by a legacy of domination and exploitation, generates contradictory narratives between the descendants of the colonized populations and the former colonizers (Quijano, 2007; Hitchcock et al., 2010; Mignolo, 2016). Colonial buildings elicit divergent perceptions: for some, they symbolize historical pride and contributions to urban development, whereas for others, they evoke memories of suffering and the suppression of indigenous cultures. This divergence exemplifies the inherently dissonant nature of heritage, where the same material reality is subject to opposing interpretations (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996). The valorization of colonial structures can sometimes reinforce imperial nostalgia, diminishing the negative aspects of colonization in favor of celebrating architectural achievements.

Consequently, the valorization of colonial heritage emerges as a complex and ambivalent process. On the one hand, it acknowledges colonial buildings as witnesses to a complex historical trajectory; on the other, it tends to transform them into objects of tourist consumption. The promotion of colonial heritage thus raises several issues, including the emergence of local and global tensions related to social justice and decolonization (Gaussens, 2024).

Moreover, the significance and perspectives surrounding colonial heritage are highly context-dependent, influenced by climatic, economic, and social factors. In pluralistic societies, this heritage - laden with historical memories - often sparks conflicts of interpretation and use (Olsen & Timothy, 2002; Smith, 2006). These issues become particularly acute when heritage is transformed into tourist products, as the pursuit of authenticity and legitimacy can provoke passionate debates and contestations.

2. Colonial Buildings in HCMC: A Case Study

In order to better understand the particular dynamics surrounding colonial heritage in HCMC, it is necessary to examine the historical context of its formation and subsequent evolution. This approach allows us to situate the city's colonial buildings within broader processes of heritage construction, urban development, and tourism commodification.

Formerly known as Saigon, HCMC is distinguished by a rich colonial heritage that bears witness to its past under French rule. Motivated by the economic potential of the region, the French administration sought to transform Saigon into a Westernized metropolis, expanding its perimeter, annexing Cho Lon, and initiating the construction of numerous colonial buildings (Nguyễn Thị Hậu, 2012, p.72). A major policy of public works, extending into the 1930s, aimed to establish modern infrastructures and monumental buildings that served both the functional needs and the symbolic representation of colonial power. Iconic structures illustrate a fusion of European and Vietnamese architectural elements, adapted to tropical conditions (Lê et al., 2021; Truong & On, 2024). Residential and commercial districts, planned to accommodate diverse communities, reflected the colonial strategy of urban organization. Architectural styles, often characterized by neo-baroque features with ornate balustrades and friezes, exemplified the pedagogical and ideological intentions of the colonizers (Verney, 2017, p.159). The use of modern materials such as steel further underscored the narrative of French technological superiority and the aesthetic ambition of harmonizing Indochinese cultures.

Today, the colonial heritage of HCMC stands as a living testimony to the city's complex history, marked by colonial domination and profound urban and societal transformations. However, the touristic exploitation of this heritage raises significant questions regarding its dissonant or contested nature. Is colonial heritage in HCMC truly contested? How are such contestations manifested within local practices? These questions are particularly pertinent in light of the specific history and evolution of the concept of heritage in Vietnam, the policies of heritage management and urban planning, the functional uses assigned to colonial buildings, and the growing tourism sector that increasingly commodifies these historic structures. Through this structured approach, the article aims to shed light on the complex and ambivalent relationship between colonial heritage and economic development in HCMC.

3. Early Development of the Heritage Concept under French Colonial Rule

The concept of heritage in Vietnam, referred to as “di sản”, underwent a significant evolution under French colonial influence. Originally associated with the idea of “family inheritance”, “di sản” progressively expanded to embody the notion of “transmission between generations”, eventually acquiring a broader collective and national dimension (Nguyễn Tùng & Krowolski, 2015, p.142). The introduction of this concept by the French colonizers gradually familiarized a segment of the Vietnamese population with the principles of architectural preservation, although the selection of what was deemed worthy of conservation was primarily oriented toward French-built structures.

In constructing buildings that they considered to possess aesthetic, administrative, or symbolic value, the French effectively introduced the idea that certain structures merited preservation. This approach laid the foundation for heritage management practices in Vietnam and facilitated the conservation of numerous historical monuments. Early heritage policies, such as the decree of March 9, 1900, were implemented under colonial administration, drawing inspiration from metropolitan France’s conservation practices (Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient, 1907, p.463). The French School of the Far East⁵⁸ played a pivotal role in this process by establishing rigorous and well-documented restoration methods.

However, this patrimonial dynamic was also embedded within a broader logic of cultural domination. The monuments selected for preservation were those deemed remarkable according to Western aesthetic and historical standards, often at the expense of other forms of heritage deeply rooted in indigenous Vietnamese culture (Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient, 1908, pp.284-287). The patrimonialization undertaken by the French thus served to legitimize colonial rule and to reinterpret local history through a lens favorable to colonial administration.

Following independence, Vietnam’s heritage priorities shifted, but efforts to preserve historical monuments were renewed, notably with the 1984 decree and the adoption of the Law on Cultural Heritage in 2001 (Lask & Herold, 2004, p.402). These initiatives sought to balance the goals of conservation and economic development by integrating heritage protection into broader tourism and development strategies.

⁵⁸ École française d’Extrême-Orient.

Therefore, French colonial influence left a lasting imprint on Vietnam's heritage management framework, shaping how Vietnamese society perceives and values its cultural inheritance. This early consciousness and institutionalization of heritage, rooted in the colonial period, partially explain why colonial heritage in Vietnam is not broadly perceived as dissonant or contested by the local population.

4. Heritage Management and Urban Planning Policies in HCMC

Building on the early introduction of the heritage concept during the colonial period, the management of cultural heritage in contemporary Vietnam is now structured within a coherent legislative framework. The Cultural Heritage Law No. 28/2001/QH10, amended in 2009, defines the responsibilities of various stakeholders, ensuring a hierarchized and consistent management system. The central government holds a leading role, while the Ministry of Culture and Information is responsible for implementing heritage policies. At the local level, People's Committees are tasked with the concrete management of heritage assets (Article 55). Furthermore, the National Council for Cultural Heritage ensures an objective evaluation process and validates classification proposals for the most significant cultural properties (Article 56).

In HCMC, specific initiatives have been undertaken to safeguard colonial heritage. In 1997, the Master Plan for Districts 1 and 3 was revised, identifying 46 heritage sites to be studied for preservation purposes (Nguyễn Cẩm Dương Ly, 2013, pp.147-148). Although conservation and restoration works fall under the authority of the HCMC People's Committee, significant efforts have been made to renovate colonial villa neighborhoods while retaining their residential functions.

The Detailed Master Plan for the city center further reinforced this approach. It outlined three main axes of action for the redevelopment of Saigon's historic district: the preservation of typical buildings and ensembles, the renovation of social and technical infrastructures, and the development of high-rise buildings (Nguyễn Cẩm Dương Ly, 2013, p.157). Notably, the plan emphasized the protection of selected elements of the traditional Vietnamese built environment.

By 2015, responding to growing concerns about the demolition of colonial villas to make way for modern high-rise developments, the HCMC municipality implemented regulations requiring that any project involving the alteration or dismantling of historic

buildings undergo prior examination by the relevant department and approval by the city's People's Committee. An initiative titled "Inventory and Classification of Ancient Villas" was subsequently launched, focusing on structures primarily built during the French colonial era. This project, supervised by the Department of Planning and Architecture (DPA) in collaboration with French experts from PADDI, aimed to establish a comprehensive database of pre-1975 buildings and to develop appropriate protection measures.

The resulting inventory identified 1,227 villas, predominantly located in central districts. Among these, 446 villas retained their original conditions and were classified into three categories following Decree No. 99/2015/ND-CP. Villas classified as Category 1 (16 villas) are recognized as historical and cultural heritage assets and must be preserved in their original state. Category 2 villas (49 villas) possess significant architectural, historical, and cultural value and may undergo interior renovations and landscape improvements, provided their façades remain intact.

Overall, the heritage management and urban planning policies implemented in HCMC illustrate a clear intent to preserve colonial-era architecture, integrating these historical structures into the fabric of the modern city. Local and international initiatives reflect a growing awareness of the importance of safeguarding these architectural witnesses to the city's complex past.

5. The Uses of Colonial Buildings in HCMC

Beyond heritage management and urban planning policies, the absence of contestation regarding colonial heritage is also evident in the ways colonial buildings are currently reused and revalorized in HCMC.

Colonial buildings are frequently rehabilitated within urban development and tourism promotion projects, where their preservation is justified by their historical significance and their contribution to economic growth. The heritageization of these buildings involves a symbolic recontextualization. Initially subjected to a process of decontextualization, these structures are subsequently reinterpreted as shared memory sites and economic resources, rather than as enduring symbols of colonial domination (François et al., 2006; Frigolé, 2010). Their intrinsic value extends beyond their status as relics of cultural heritage; it lies

in their historical functions and the new roles attributed to them, thus avoiding their demolition (Da Costa, 2015, p.120).

A key approach in this transformation is adaptive reuse, which involves modifying existing structures for new purposes while preserving their historical authenticity and architectural value (Arfa et al., 2022). This strategy enhances the longevity of heritage buildings by revitalizing them for economically viable uses, while maintaining their original construction, façades, and ornamental features (Ardiyanto et al., 2019, p.192). Adaptive reuse is recognized as the only conservation strategy that simultaneously addresses the three main pillars of sustainable development: environmental, economic, and social concerns (Ardiyanto et al., 2019, p.192). International charters, such as the Burra Charter of ICOMOS, advocate adaptive reuse as a conservation strategy that balances heritage values with functional demands for the future (Arfa et al., 2022, p.149). In this sense, colonial buildings are adapted to meet contemporary needs, requiring changes in space use while balancing residential and commercial activities (Ardiyanto et al., 2019, p.193).

In HCMC, many colonial buildings have been reappropriated and valorized. Their undeniable architectural qualities - marked by appreciated styles and techniques - play a crucial role in their acceptance, independently of their colonial origin. Restoration efforts are central to the heritageization process. Landmark structures such as Bến Thành Market and the Notre-Dame Cathedral of Saigon have benefited from ambitious restoration plans aimed at preserving their structural and aesthetic integrity. Other important buildings, including the Central Post Office, Marie Curie High School, and the People's Court, have also undergone restoration projects to ensure their longevity (Nguyễn Cẩm Dương Ly, 2013, pp.147-148). These initiatives reflect a determined effort to preserve colonial heritage despite financial and management challenges.

The current uses of colonial buildings vary according to ownership type. Public buildings, such as the Notre-Dame Cathedral and the Central Post Office, generally retain their original functions after undergoing periodic repairs. Educational institutions like Marie Curie High School experience significant renovations while maintaining their educational purpose. Some public buildings, such as Nha Rong Wharf, have been repurposed into museums or cultural sites (Nguyễn Cẩm Dương Ly, 2013, pp.438-439). In contrast, privately owned colonial villas are often transformed into service or commercial

spaces, including cafés, restaurants, and shops. This adaptive reuse enables the preservation of their architectural heritage while aligning with contemporary economic needs.

The diversity of uses for colonial buildings illustrates a form of selective patrimonialization shaped by economic, political, and urban planning considerations. Tourism plays a vital role in this dynamic, promoting the conservation of certain structures due to their symbolic and economic value. For example, Chinese-style shop houses from the 1920s located at 29 Tôn Thất Thiệp Street have been transformed into commercial spaces while preserving their colonial architectural style. This rehabilitation combines respect for heritage with functional adaptation, allowing these buildings to become emblematic landmarks of the Old Market (Chợ Cũ) area (Nguyễn Cẩm Dương Ly, 2013, pp.438-439).

Colonial buildings in HCMC, though bearing the marks of a painful past, are now reappropriated and valorized without significant contestation. They are part of a broader dynamic of reconciliation with the past and contribute actively to the city's economic development. This acceptance reflects an evolving heritage consciousness and a commitment to preserving a rich architectural legacy, regardless of its colonial origins.

6. Colonial Heritage Tourism in HCMC

Beyond their adaptive reuse and restoration, the absence of contestation toward colonial buildings in HCMC is also evident through their increasing integration into the city's tourism strategies.

HCMC actively capitalizes on its colonial heritage to strengthen its touristic appeal. Compared to other Vietnamese cities such as Hanoi, Huế, or Hội An, HCMC does not possess an ancient historical legacy like Hanoi nor breathtaking natural landscapes like Ninh Binh. Instead, its urban history, more recent and deeply marked by 19th-century French colonization, has left a distinctive imprint on the city's architectural landscape. The European-style buildings, characterized by their unique visual and historical contrast with the local environment, have become major points of interest for tourists. For many visitors, particularly those from France, these remnants of a former colony offer a familiar entry point into the exploration of Vietnamese culture and history.

Emblematic colonial-era structures such as the Notre-Dame Cathedral, the Central Post Office, the City Hall, and the Municipal Opera House are now systematically incorporated

into tourist circuits, establishing themselves as key attractions. Tourism promotion materials frequently highlight both the city's modern dynamism and its colonial past. Tours typically include visits to colonial buildings, museums related to the Vietnam War, and historic districts that have preserved architectural elements from the colonial period. This strategic presentation of the colonial legacy caters not only to Western tourists' desire for historical authenticity but also to a broader international audience seeking to understand Vietnam's complex cultural evolution.

The integration of colonial heritage into the tourism economy reflects a broader patrimonialization process wherein these structures serve a dual function. On the one hand, they continue to fulfill their original roles - such as religious, postal, or administrative services - and, on the other hand, they act as powerful tourist attractions. Iconic sites like Bến Thành Market, the Central Post Office, and the Notre-Dame Cathedral of Saigon exemplify this duality, symbolizing both the architectural influence of French colonization and Vietnam's cultural resilience. Through tourism, colonial heritage not only generates significant economic benefits but also contributes to its own preservation and valorization, creating a virtuous circle where cultural conservation supports economic development.

The city's Department of Tourism actively enhances visitor access and engagement with colonial heritage through the use of information technologies and infrastructure improvements. Bus lines, including sightseeing double-decker buses, serve the main tourist sites, facilitating convenient movement for visitors. Inside colonial monuments, explanatory plaques provide historical and architectural information, and multilingual brochures are widely distributed. Furthermore, major colonial buildings, such as the HCMC People's Committee and the Municipal Opera House, are illuminated at night by a lighting system provided by a company from Lyon, enhancing their visual appeal and extending their touristic life into the evening hours.

This systematic promotion of colonial heritage suggests a process of cultural integration and reconciliation. Although these sites bear the memory of a painful colonial past, their current reappropriation and valorization occur without significant contestation. Rather than erasing or marginalizing this legacy, the city embraces it as an integral part of its historical narrative and economic future. Thus, the touristic development of colonial buildings in HCMC exemplifies a pragmatic and forward-looking approach to heritage, wherein dissonant historical memories are transformed into assets for cultural dialogue and economic prosperity.

7. Conclusion

The promotion of colonial buildings as tourist attractions in HCMC ultimately reflects a complex dynamic in which their current use value has come to outweigh their initial symbolic charge. Following independence, the culture of conservation - while potentially redirected - integrated colonial structures not as persistent symbols of oppression, but rather as historical witnesses to a bygone era. Over time, the aesthetic qualities and urban integration of these buildings have gradually eclipsed their negative connotations, allowing them to be admired for their beauty and contribution to the city's urban fabric.

Through this process, authorities in HCMC have effectively instrumentalized colonial heritage, transforming it into a consumable and accessible resource. The shift from intrinsic historical value to a primarily economic and touristic value highlights the pragmatism underpinning heritage management in the city. Formerly evocative of colonial domination and suffering, these buildings are now increasingly perceived as valuable assets that contribute to the city's cultural richness and economic growth.

Many colonial structures have been repurposed for functions beneficial to independent Vietnam - such as public administration, museums, universities, and hospitals - thus "neutralizing" their original symbolic load and embedding them into the daily lives and needs of the population. Their continued use and visibility have redefined their meaning within the collective memory, making them familiar components of the contemporary urban landscape and attenuating feelings of historical dissonance among newer generations.

Tourism has played a pivotal role in this revaluation. By integrating colonial heritage into broader narratives that encompass pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial histories, tourism in HCMC has reframed these structures as part of a complex and multifaceted historical continuum. Rather than remaining isolated as painful reminders of domination, colonial buildings are now understood as contributing to the shaping of modern-day Saigon, thus offering a more nuanced interpretation of the city's past.

Finally, the undeniable economic benefits derived from cultural tourism reinforce this shift. The valorization of colonial heritage - despite inevitable debates - appears to be a pragmatic strategy aimed at attracting visitors and stimulating local economic development. In this light, the absence of widespread contestation regarding colonial buildings in HCMC emerges as a sign of reconciliation with a difficult past, wherein the

functional and economic potential of these sites prevails over their once divisive symbolism. Hence, the touristic exploitation of colonial architecture illustrates a successful transformation where heritage is appropriated, repurposed, and recontextualized to serve contemporary cultural and economic objectives.

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COLONIAL HERITAGE ON DISPLAY: TOURISM, LEISURE AND THE MAKING OF *ESTADO NOVO* IDEOLOGY

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Abstract

As with similar political paradigms in the early twentieth century, the Portuguese *Estado Novo* - an autocratic regime in force between 1933 and 1974 - grounded its legitimacy, as well as that of its leadership, particularly António de Oliveira Salazar, in the existence of a transcontinental empire. This empire, articulated through cultural heritage and symbolic representations, was mobilised to project notions of national authenticity and historical continuity. Within this framework, this chapter examines how colonial cultural heritage was instrumentalised by propaganda agencies led by António Ferro as a means of indoctrinating the population in contexts associated with tourism and leisure - that is, in spaces where the exercise of power was not overtly anticipated. The First Portuguese Colonial Exhibition (Oporto, 1934) and the Exhibition of the Portuguese World (Lisbon, 1940) are analysed as case studies to demonstrate how colonial heritage functioned as a vehicle for disseminating and legitimising the ideology of Salazar.

Keywords

Colonial heritage, Tourism, Leisure, Propaganda, Estado Novo

1. Cultural Heritage, Autocracies and Legitimations

Cultural heritage constitutes a key resource in the construction of collective identities and memories and thus serves as a powerful instrument for the validation and dissemination of “imagined communities”, as conceptualised by Benedict Anderson (2006). This tends to occur in tourist and political narratives, particularly within autocratic contexts. Building on this premise, this article reflects on the ways in which the Portuguese *Estado Novo* - an autocratic regime established under António de Oliveira Salazar and in force between 1933 and 1974 - mobilised representations of colonial heritage to construct and consolidate its propaganda apparatus, with particular emphasis on spaces of tourism and leisure during the regime’s first decade.

As Santos Silva (2024, p.10) observes, the foundations of any political regime are closely tied to the ways in which the nation is defined, how national identity is constructed, and which historical narratives are mobilised. Similarly, Anderson (1983, p.181) argues that monumental heritage - often intertwined with tourism - enabled the state to present itself as the guardian of both local and generalised traditions. Elements such as legends, castles, cultural landscapes, and gastronomy are mobilised to convey ostensibly unquestionable narratives which are, on the one hand, presumed to be intrinsically known by all members of a given community, and, on the other, presented as emblematic ‘postcards’ for external audiences.

As mentioned before, the notion of “imagined communities”, as conceptualised by Anderson (1983), encapsulates a model of community frequently celebrated in both political and tourist discourses. Within this framework, heritage functions as a cohesive force, binding individuals who are presumed to share common traditions and comparable understandings of the past and the present in ways that distinguish them from outsiders. In this sense, heritage appears to offer both community members and visitors an experience of authenticity, intended “to evoke an emotional response that serves to elicit empathy and moral engagement with the historical events and actors portrayed” (Falcucci, 2021, p.115), thereby reinforcing and validating collective identities.

Autocratic political regimes, even more so than democratic systems, have historically regarded both tangible and intangible heritage as particularly effective instruments for legitimising constructed notions of identity, as well as the authority of regimes and their leaders. In the early decades of the twentieth century, regimes such as Fascist Italy,

Francoist Spain, and the Portuguese *Estado Novo* under Salazar invested heavily not only in the preservation of inherited heritage, but also in the production of new tangible heritage and the revival of intangible practices. The former functioned as a means of validation, while the latter operated as a vehicle for the projection of future national memory. This was a period in which heritage frequently served to delineate and exclude, rather than to unite - an understanding later challenged by the principles articulated in the Council of Europe's Faro Convention (2005).

Moreover, given the relatively low levels of literacy in the early twentieth century, the immediacy and perceived authenticity of heritage rendered it a particularly effective medium for ideological transmission. Cultural artefacts, as Anderson (1983) suggests, carry a strong emotional legitimacy, enabling heritage not only to represent identities but actively to construct them (Falcucci, 2021). In this sense, heritage functioned simultaneously as a medium of education, persuasion, and ideological conditioning.

2. The Portuguese *Estado Novo*: Propaganda, Empire and the “Politics of the Spirit”

Two illustrative examples - though not directly related to colonial heritage - demonstrate how the *Estado Novo* mobilised cultural narratives to legitimise authority and reinforce national identity.

In December 1932, the nation was presented with what was framed as compelling evidence of its historical continuity when the director of the National Museum of Ancient Art, José de Figueiredo, published a newspaper article suggesting that a likeness of António de Oliveira Salazar could be identified in the fifteenth-century *Saint Vincent Panels*, attributed to Nuno Gonçalves. This interpretation was received as a form of prefiguration, particularly as the depicted figure appeared to be associated with financial affairs, mirroring Salazar's own background.

A few years later, in 1938, the regime launched a national competition aimed at identifying the “most Portuguese village”, defined as the settlement least influenced by external elements. In practice, this criterion corresponded to conditions of relative isolation and economic deprivation. Participating villages were encouraged to showcase both their tangible and intangible heritage in order to demonstrate an essentialised form of “Portugueseness”, embedded in their cultural expressions and everyday practices.

These are clear examples of propaganda which illustrate how it intends to “indoctrinate audiences, to persuade them to act in certain ways, to adopt behaviours that would then spread generally through proselytising and imitation” (Serra et alia, 2024, p.281). In the aforementioned cases, images, cultural heritage and ways of living were used to provide credibility and to convince viewers of an unquestionable version of history.

Still on this same issue, Pierre Bourdieu (1989) tells us that we just need

to know how to uncover [power] where it is least visible, where it is most completely ignored and therefore recognised: symbolic power is, in effect, that invisible power which can only be exercised with the complicity of those who do not wish to know that they are subject to it, or even that they themselves exercise it (pp.7-8).

Ideological propaganda is most potent when conveyed subtly and without overt commitment, in settings where its presence is least expected - such as environments associated with tourism and leisure, which are expected to be relaxed, informal, and removed from centres of power.

A central tenet of *Estado Novo* was grounded in the belief in an empire whose geography was intended to convey the vastness of a renewed “Portugueseness”, as illustrated by the following map, entitled “Portugal is not a small country”, produced by Henrique Galvão for the First Portuguese Colonial Exhibition with the intention of illustrating how vast the whole Portuguese nation was as a result of the colonial territories, dramatically based in European grounds.

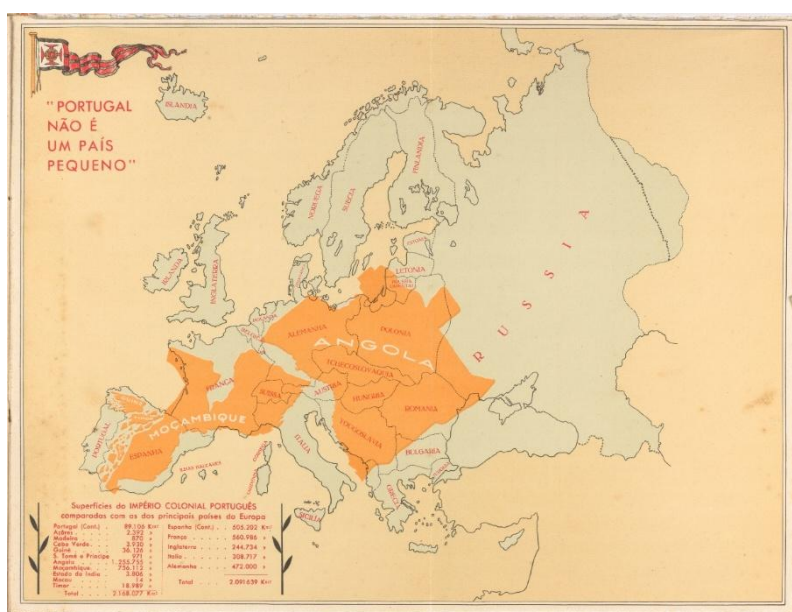


Figure 1. “Portugal Não É Um País Pequeno”.

Source: Cornell University Library. Persuasive Cartography: The PJ Mode Collection. ID Number: 1237.01. File Name: PJM_1237_01.jpg

Actually, maps were presented as self-evident representations of this enormity, capable of communicating such a message even to those unable to read, thereby reinforcing how authoritarian states acknowledged empires as exhibits of glory, pride and responsibility (Santos Silva, 2024).

Alongside developments in the Portuguese metropolis, a substantial programme of architectural restoration was undertaken, which included a “systematic survey and listing of colonial cultural heritage assets” (Jerónimo & Rossa, 2022, p.14). Santos Silva argues that “national cultural heritage was thus constituted as a canon elaborated by state agencies (...) in accordance with the political principles and needs of the dictatorship” (Santos Silva, 2024, p.10). The principal figure behind the propaganda apparatus of the *Estado Novo* during the first sixteen years of the regime was António Ferro, who headed both the National Agency for Propaganda (SPN) and the National Agency for Information, Popular Culture and Tourism (SNI). These agencies implemented a wide range of initiatives aimed at constructing and disseminating a new image of the nation, in which empire and heritage played central roles.

In November 1932, Ferro published an article in which he elaborated on the importance of culture in general, and of heritage in particular - the so-called “Politics of the Spirit”. Referring to countries such as Italy, Germany, England, or France, Ferro emphasised the importance of attending to what he termed “the issues of the spirit”: the various forms of

artistic expression, which should not be regarded as a “mere dessert of social life”. Cultural development, he argued, was as vital as science or industry, insofar as it enhanced both domestic cohesion and international prestige. The “Politics of the Spirit” would become a key reference point and justification for the initiatives developed by both propaganda agencies, also encompassing colonial cultural representations and heritage.

3. The First Portuguese Colonial Exhibition (1934)

As per Falcucci, “the materiality of the Empire was exhibited in a plurality of spaces, promoting a more decentralised gaze” (Falcucci, 2021, p.116), resulting, in the case of the Portuguese *Estado Novo*, in a form of ideological indoctrination disguised as tourism or leisure, as illustrated in the examples that follow.



Figure 2. The cover of the catalogue of the First Portuguese Colonial Exhibition.
Source: Hemeroteca Digital⁵⁹

The first one is the First Portuguese Colonial Exhibition, held in Oporto in 1934. Henrique Galvão, a former supporter of Salazar who later became one of the most prominent opponents of the Portuguese *Estado Novo*, was an experienced military officer involved in several initiatives related to the colonies, and served as the technical director

⁵⁹ Available at https://hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt/RaridadesBibliograficas/OlImperioPortugues/OlImperioPortugues_item1/index.html

of this event, which drew on similar events previously organised in Marseille (1922), Antwerp (1930), and Paris (1931) and for which he projected the abovementioned map “Portugal Não É Um País Pequeno”.

The exhibition was presented as the “first major act of colonial propaganda in the metropolis”, intended to raise awareness of the geographical and spiritual significance of the colonies, as Galvão stated in the official exhibition catalogue. It received extensive press coverage and at the opening ceremony Salazar reinforced the idea that the event constituted a tribute to both past and present colonisers.

Within the exhibition grounds, visitors had the opportunity to explore inhabited indigenous villages representing the ambiances in the various Portuguese colonies, as well as replicas of colonial monuments. The official catalogue provided comprehensive information about the colonies located in Africa, Macau and India⁶⁰ through narratives that could readily be interpreted as forms of tourist promotion, highlighting heritage and so-called traditional local representations in the colonies.

As noted, the narratives on display combined propaganda with forms of tourist storytelling, through the exhibition of both tangible and intangible heritage, including crafts, gastronomy, and traditions. This event constituted a significant official attempt to inscribe a colonial history - constructed through narratives, images, and memories - into the national identity based on a carefully prepared itinerary for the visit.⁶¹

4. The Exhibition of the Portuguese World (1940)

A comparable initiative took place a few years later at the *Exhibition of the Portuguese World* in 1940, arguably the most iconic representation of the Double Centenary, which evoked both the foundation of the nation (1140) and the restoration of independence from Spain (1640). The exhibition was held in Belém, a highly symbolic area that includes the Belém Tower and the Jerónimos Monastery, in close proximity to the Colonial Garden. Paris had been invaded by the Nazis only a few days earlier, which heightened the importance of these commemorations as a propagandistic tool that, among other aims, “staged the Portuguese nation as historically destined for imperial greatness” (Sapega, 2008, p.3).

⁶⁰ Available at https://hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt/RaridadesBibliograficas/OlImperioPortugues/OlImperioPortugues_item1/P1.html

⁶¹ Available at https://hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt/RaridadesBibliograficas/OlImperioPortugues/OlImperioPortugues_item1/P428.html



Figure 3. Exposição do Mundo Português.

Source: Biblioteca Nacional Digital⁶²

This map shows, at its centre, the Empire Square, a designation that remains in use today. Number 7 corresponds to the Colonial Section, which showcased the cultures and traditions of the various peoples that constituted the vast Portuguese Empire, from Africa to Timor. The displays included replicas of African huts, colourful Indian settings, and bustling streets representing Macau. The Colonial Section also featured monuments dedicated to the empire, a colonial restaurant, and a broadcasting station that played so-called exotic music.

As noted by Sapega, “the events surrounding the *duplo centenário* sought to extend the boundaries of the populace’s imagination to include the residents of Portugal’s African and Asian colonies” (Sapega, 2008, p.23). This exhibition, in particular, highlighted the perceived greatness and diversity of Portugal under the leadership of Salazar, encompassing not only the European mainland but also a so-called empire that projected a Portuguese essence across other continents.

As in the First Portuguese Colonial Exhibition, individuals from the colonies were brought to the metropolis to lead ostensibly “normal” lives and to be observed by visitors attending the Exhibition of the Portuguese World. In this way, they served “as the living proof that the Portuguese constituted a universal race that was historically destined to carry out overseas expansion” (Sapega, 2008, pp.26-27). One may therefore concur with Sapega that “the colonial section [was] conceived as much to provide visitors with an entertaining

⁶² Guia oficial/Exposição do Mundo Português. -: s.n.], 1940. - [1] mapa desdob.: il.; 22. Available at <https://permalinkbnd.bnportugal.gov.pt/records/item/14434-guia-oficial>

spectacle as to contribute to their educational or moral enlightenment” (Sapega, 2008, p.40), or spiritual development, as Ferro would put it, at a time when “it became necessary to show the empire to the Portuguese public and to legitimate it” (Castro, 2017, p.175).

5. End of Tour

In both cases - the First Portuguese Colonial Exhibition and the Exhibition of the Portuguese World - there was no explicit intention for these to function as tourist or leisure events. Nevertheless, the populace was encouraged to visit them, which they did in large numbers. Besides, the event of Lisbon, in particular, resulted in a significant development of tourist infrastructures, including improvements to the public transport network as well as the building of monuments or lodging structures that still exist and used by the tourist sector nowadays.

Colonial heritage was mobilised to naturalise the political structures and ideology of *Estado Novo*, including within tourism and leisure settings where propaganda mechanisms might be considered less prevalent. Within the framework of the Politics of the Spirit, both propaganda agencies, headed by Ferro, promoted encounters between different cultural heritages - namely the colonial and the Portuguese - in order to emphasise the perceived vastness of Portugal and to illustrate a notion of Portugueseness composed of diverse peoples and cultures. In this sense, Sapega’s assertion that “colonial heritage helped redefine the Portuguese collective identity” (Sapega, 2008, p.3) is particularly valid, as visual and experiential forms of representation are due to reinforce what is seen as self-evident and unquestionable. Or as Castro argued, “in the case of Portugal there was a sacralisation of the empire capable of firmly seeding within the minds of the Portuguese people an ancestral, and therefore legitimate, idea of ownership” (Castro, 2017, p.166).

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