

Myth as the Catalyst of a Cultural Heritage-Building Process: The Case of Goa

ABSTRACT: In the 1530s, Goa, conquered in 1510, became the center of the Portuguese Estado da Índia. It was an unprecedented situation, which made planning impossible. A century later, Goa's unexpected urban expansion revealed the site's adverse conditions, causing its residents and public servants to gradually begin abandoning the city. At the same time, however, Goa's Catholic institutions were engaged in an intense enterprise of building and reconstruction, which led them to resist any call to change or relocation until their expulsion from the Portuguese Empire in 1834. The continuing decay of Goa's urban fabric was finally acknowledged by the Portuguese Crown in 1843 with the move of the capital to Panjim. All the while, the magnetic attraction of St. Francis Xavier's relics continued to be capitalized on by the Catholic elites, reinforcing the myth of the "Golden Goa" and "Rome of the East." Forced integration of Goa into the Republic of India in 1961 did not interrupt the process of heritage building. In 1986, as a result of a formal proposal by India's central government, the "churches and convents of Goa" were added to UNESCO's World Heritage List. Goa's landscape is a dramatic expression of this immaterial process of cultural-heritage construction.

KEYWORDS: myth of St. Francis Xavier, Goa, cultural heritage, Portuguese Estado da Índia, capital city

RESUMO: Na década de 1530 Goa, conquistada em 1510, transformou-se no centro do Estado da Índia Portuguesa. Era uma situação inusitada e por isso impossível de planejar. Um século depois, a sua inesperada explosão urbana revelou as condições adversas do local, levando a que os habitantes e funcionários públicos lentamente a fossem abandonando. Porém, as instituições católicas estavam então no auge de uma enorme campanha de construções e renovações, o que as levou a resistir a qualquer ímpeto de abandono ou mudança até serem expulsas de todo o universo português em 1834. A urbanidade de Goa foi assim agonizando, até que em 1843 a Coroa o reconheceu e investiu em Panjim como nova capital. No meio de tudo isso, o magnete constituído pelos restos mortais de São Francisco Xavier, foi sendo desenvolvido pela elites católicas do território, que

com isso reforçaram o mito da *Goa Dourada e Roma do Oriente*. A integração forçada na República da Índia em 1961 não interrompeu esse processo de patrimonialização, e em 1986, necessariamente sob proposta do Governo da República, as Igrejas de Conventos de Goa foram inscritos na Lista do Património Mundial da UNESCO. A paisagem de Goa é uma dramática expressão desse constructo imaterial de património cultural.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: mito de São Francisco Xavier, Goa, património cultural, Estado da Índia Portuguesa, cidade capital

Introduction

Goa is the unimposing name of the smallest state in India, with one of the highest per capita levels of income and standards of living in the country. These are three of the many measurable attributes that characterize the state's development, including in the postcolonial era. In stark contrast to these objective facts is the particular historical path Goa has forged, which has made its name a myth, a mantra even, and which goes far beyond its territorial, statistical, and administrative dimensions. The reasons for this are many, from the great variety of territories and forms of presence and governance over which it presided as the capital of the Portuguese Estado da Índia (State of India) to the influence of the Goan diaspora caused by the city's decline. In the center of the vortex of the state of Goa is the eponymous city, which today, like Velha Goa (Old Goa), is an oasis of coconut trees threatened by unpleasant new urban development. From this landscape emerge a number of whitewashed churches and convents, a pale reflection of the fleeting urban settlement that was once the seat of the first and longest-lasting European colonial presence in Asia. As one of the leading centers for Catholic worship, Goa nevertheless endures as a capital city of sorts, with the tomb of St. Francis Xavier, the "Apostle of the East," acting as a magnet for the faithful.¹ In an interpretation as immediate and generalized as it is simplistic, it can be said that Goa's urban development arose in parallel to that of its State (of Portuguese India) in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, an authentic golden century or age. It was an unlikely state, as it was discontinuous and took on distinct forms and expressions, which spread throughout the Indian Ocean and a small part of the Pacific. It was the century of mythical "Golden Goa" or "Rome of the East." When this state came to have jurisdiction over little more than the territory that would become the present-day state of Goa in the



Fig. 1. The view of Goa from the Lady of the Mount Hill, 2017.

Republic of India, Panjim, eight kilometers down the Mandovi River, emerged as the new center of power.

This emergence was not merely a change of the capital's location but also a paradigm shift in the relationship between the capital and the territory, and it occurred over centuries rather than decades, with a mixture of pain and non-conformity. The administrative act in which this change was embodied in 1843 was in itself significant: it created a new administrative unit, Nova Goa (New Goa), which joined the old capital to Panjim (on the insistence of its residents, Panjim ended up being the effective center) and to what lay in between, Panelim and Ribandar, always along the south riverbank of the Mandovi. Goa became Velha Goa since it now included Nova Goa, a name that, in a kind of official euphemism, was no more than the last of the reluctant gestures with which the Portuguese authorities always faced the decadence of the city. In other words, its status was transformed definitively from an administrative capital city into a myth. Paradoxically, Nova Goa no longer exists today while Velha Goa does, and therefore from now on I will be referring to the latter simply as Goa.

These are the main reasons why Goa has always seemed to be the most particular and extreme case among the former capital cities of the Portuguese Empire.³ Its urban fabric contains various eras and places that represent critical points in the history of the empire and the State of India. On the other hand, Goa was always, among the various Portuguese areas of influence, the place that contained the most significant cultural, ethnic, and religious variety, density, and complexity. This diversity of contexts and contents has also caused most of the elements of Goa's urban development to disappear, so that their symbolic aspects became tangled up, only helping to develop the myth. In my study of

Goa, I have separated the stages of this process as follows: a) Portuguese establishment and rise; b) decline and creation of the myth; c) the ephemeral shift to Mormugao; d) conflict between the Pombaline Enlightenment reformism (so-called Restoration of the Estado da Índia) and the pragmatism of the residents, which ended imposing Panjim as the new center; e) Liberal era's resolution, with the euphemism of Nova Goa, which confirmed and accommodated Panjim; and f) turning Goa into cultural heritage.

In short, an exploration of the urban trends and expressions of the capital cities of Goa during Portuguese rule over the territory implies studying the hesitations between three different sites, two of which need to be observed in much greater detail, over the period of 450 years. This text will focus mainly on Goa, and therefore on stages a, b, and f. My aim is to produce a summary of the expressions, evolution, and ruptures in the urban development of Goa's capital, in contrast to the myth that surrounds it. I do not present any new facts, but I do offer an interpretation of the phenomenon over a long span of time, giving relevance to the process and its meanings, to the building of this heritage asset. The long process of turning Goa into cultural heritage is a *sui generis* affair that became crucial not only in itself but also to Goa's survival as a mythical capital city, one of a number of such sites in South Asia.³

The Push for a Capital City

Along the west coast of South India, Goa offers one of the most privileged gates to the Decan. The two basins of the rivers Mandovi and Zuari converge in an almost shared bar, separated only by the island of Tiswadi. Before that point on the seashore, the rivers communicate by a system of channels that are now becoming silted, likely due to climate change.

The hesitation about the island of Tiswadi as the right place for a capital city was a permanent, even chronic, element in the decision-making process around the location of Goa's capital. Before the late-seventeenth-century attempt to move the capital to Mormugao (a small peninsula on the opposite bank of the Zuari), and its effective relocation to Panjim in the nineteenth century (on the south bank of the Mandovi, near its mouth), this hesitation accompanied the settling on the site of Goa; firstly, by the shifting of locales occupied by the previous rulers, which I will address further on; and, secondly, in the framework of the initial strategic definitions of the Portuguese presence in Asia, as I will now summarize.



Fig. 2. Goa and Tiswadi Island's geographic shape and defensive system (in Rossa and Mendirata, "A cerca adormecida," 2012).

Cochin, whose authorization for the establishment of a Portuguese city was given by the local sovereign in 1503, only five years after the arrival of the Portuguese ships in the Indian Ocean, was almost a natural choice for the settling of the main Portuguese base. Even so, the decision was not immediate. It should be noted, for example, that in 1506 the king wrote to the Viceroy Francisco de Almeida, ordering him to decide on that "main base" and suggesting its location in Sri Lanka, as the island was "at the center of all the fortresses and things we own there" (Santos 1999, 90; my translation). Even before being seized in 1510 from the Sultanate of Bijapur, under the command of Afonso de Albuquerque, Goa emerged as a possibility in that discussion. The strategic context that influenced the decision and subsequent military actions led by that eminent Portuguese viceroy (1509–15) is well known, basically consisting in the opportunity to control Indian Ocean routes and trade by taking possession of the main ports of Goa, Ormuz, and Malacca, along with a few of secondary importance.^s

But Albuquerque's strategy was questioned after his death, and the vagueness of Goa's rise as the Portuguese center in Asia is as complicated as it is well known. For example, one of its usually referenced highlights is the conflict

between Governors Pedro de Mascarenhas and Lopo Vaz de Sampaio in the 1520s about the location of the central base, which ended with the arrival of Nuno da Cunha in 1529 with orders to shift the capital away from Cochin. Goa was then assumed to be the capital city of a state for which territory was sought not only around it but, more successfully, in what became the *Província do Norte* (Northern Province).

As early as 1530, Goa and its viceroy (at times only governor) received the respective functions and attributes (*regalia*) from the central government thus far established in Cochin, and later other symbols and the ceremonial court, hitherto the exclusive prerogative of the monarch in Lisbon. It was necessary to legitimize as a (vice)royal sovereign someone who was not the king. These decisions have to be read in the context of the strategic rearrangement of the entire Portuguese expansion, with its emphasis on North Africa/Morocco and especially on America. It is only from there that the beginning of the colonization of Brazil was considered. This rearrangement occurred under the apparent intensification of religious proselytizing provoked by the Reformation (1517) and the inevitable Catholic reaction, the Counter-Reformation (1545).

Location and a Glance at the Urban Landscape

At around 20 hectares, Goa Bijapuri was small, around two-thirds the size of other Portuguese cities in Hindustan, except Cochin, which was well above the average. It was also a young, disordered, and sparsely populated city. The houses were constructed poorly, as were government buildings, to which I will return. With regard to urban structures in general (as distinct from the architecture), in 1617, Silva y Figueroa put it plainly in one of his *Comentários*: “the city is all disorganized, scattered and spaced out, especially at its extremities, with many palms and other trees between the buildings; most streets are very crooked, without any policy or design, so that except for the few that are included within its old walls, the rest give more the impression of large overcrowded houses among trees than that of an ordered city” ([1617] 1903–5, 121; my translation).

Until its capture from the Hindus of Vijayanagar by the Muslims of the Bahmani Sultanate in 1469, the capital of the territory was a city on the south side of the island, on the north bank of the Zuari, a place known as Goa Velha.⁴ The Muslims moved the capital to the opposite extreme of the island, on the south bank of the Mandovi. Shortly afterward, the potentate fragmented into several sultanates, one of which, Bijapur (today Vijayapur), continued to rule

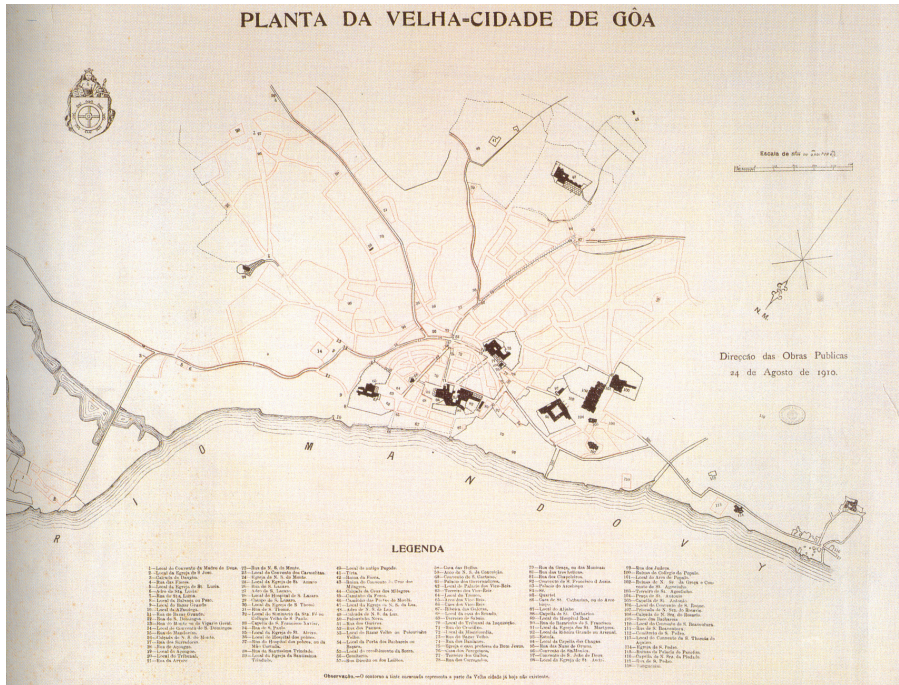


Fig. 3. *Planta da Velha-Cidade de Gôa* (Plan of the Old City of Goa).
Goa: Direcção das Obras Públicas, 14 August 1910, lithograph.

over Goa. Only four decades before the conquest under the command of Afonso de Albuquerque, the territory got a new capital city, “which was entirely walled, with large slabs on the outside, and a large moat full of water” (Correia [1560] 1975, 2:60), with its center marked by an imposing square with a mosque and a palace, and a castle controlling the primary access to the city and the port area. It was Bijapur’s second city and the commercial port connecting it to the outside world, and until the sultanate’s total absorption by the Mughal Empire in 1686, there were repeated attempts to recapture it. Hence the constant need for defense, which led not only to the construction of an 18.5 km peripheral wall, enclosing 1,933 hectares (Rossa and Mendiratta 2012), but also to the rise of a complementary defensive system, whose most significant remnants are the forts such as the Aguada and Reis Magos, as well as what little is left of Rachol’s perimeter and the impressive Colvale-Tivim wall.⁵

The choice of location for a small Bijapur port city in the late 1460s is understandable, but its adoption as the center of Portuguese operations in Asia some

six decades later can only be explained by its convenience. However, there was no idea yet of what these operations would become, nor their scale, and the choice violated the most elementary principles of location then habitually followed overseas by the Portuguese, who sought sites surrounded by the sea (islands, peninsulas), well defended from the preferably narrow landside, and with a good port and health conditions. But those factors were considered when choosing a site to establish a settlement, sometimes near and under the authority of preexisting cities, such as Cochin and Chaul. In Goa, the occupation occurred through conquest, which made a city and its territory available, without prior knowledge of its pernicious potential for health problems, its sturdy defense, the silting up of the river, or the impossible navigation of its mouth during the monsoon season. As the future demonstrated, the Zuari River option, as that previous to the Bahamani Sultanate conquest, would not have produced these problems.

There are numerous documents, reports, and accounts providing evidence of how poor the choice of Goa's location was, such as Silva y Figueroa's straightforward commentary in 1617: "time and experience have clearly shown how bad their [the Muslims'] choice was in leaving the gentle and healthy location of Goa Velha" ([1617] 1903–5, 122; my translation). In the late sixteenth century, six decades after the decision to make Goa the Portuguese base in Asia, it was already clear that it would not be sustainable as the capital city of the Estado da India, even as it was being transformed precisely then into a large construction site, with the almost simultaneous building of several religious complexes.

Structure and Form

It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the establishment of Goa's new society under Portuguese rule and its progression during the so-called Classical Age,⁶ or its urban development during the same period, which has been well documented in numerous studies, including some old engravings and more recent reconstitution drawings, especially relevant to the understanding of Goa's complex orography and organic urbanistic pattern (both impossible to describe here).⁷ I will only draw attention to some less-understood aspects, particularly the linkage between the cities of Goa and Lisbon, expressed by the adage "Quem viu Goa escusa de ver Lisboa" ("He who has seen Goa need not see Lisbon") and by a forced vision of each city's seven hills, likening them to Rome. The rationale for this linkage was essentially political and ideological, boiling down to the fact that it was necessary to delegate real power and dignity to the role played by the



Fig. 4. Archbishop's Palace, 2017; Model of the Viceroy's Palace, Fundação Oriente Museum, Lisbon.

governors or viceroys and to make the city rhetorically worthy of its status as a Portuguese political, religious, and (essentially) trading capital city in Asia. And, to be clear, like Lisbon and contrary to what is commonly asserted, except for its churches Goa was not a city of monumental or even high-quality architecture. The same applies to its town planning and infrastructure (Rossa 2018).

The truth is that, in Goa, the adaptation of the preexisting city undertaken by the Portuguese displaced the palatine function of the central square. Here, the parish was first established and later the cathedral, Archbishop's Palace, the Inquisition (1560), and the council chamber, while the old castle was renovated in 1554 as the Viceroy's Palace, which dominated a square that on its north side opened toward the Mandovi River and served as the focal point for a series of functions, spaces, and buildings along the riverfront. This arrangement also occurred in Lisbon and, with compelling similarity, in other capital cities of the empire, particularly in Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, a little later in Luanda, and later still in one Enlightenment project for Panjim.⁸ An urban riverside settlement with a riverine square mediating the relationship between the city, the palace, and the water, and used for ceremonies and festivals to celebrate kings, viceroys or governors, was one of the most important constants in the capital cities of the first Portuguese Empire. Among them, Goa is the only case that did not include any building that functioned as the palatine chapel.

Except for the first to arrive, the Franciscans, all Catholic orders and congregations established themselves beyond the perimeter of the Islamic city. Like the Franciscans, the Jesuits built their church over a mosque, but like the other religious orders they helped to encourage urban expansion beyond the original city wall. Within the walls, these processes of adaptation were slow and stretched over time, and they generally respected the street layout and structure of existing

public spaces. In fact, and almost invariably, the destruction brought about by the conquest and adaptations led by Afonso de Albuquerque affected individual buildings, not the urban structure. On the other hand, renovations and, even more so, the creation of monuments resulted from a series of modifications that were never part of an overall or even partial plan. Significant examples include the two versions of the Franciscan monastery (the original Manueline and the surviving one);⁹ the beginning, in 1562, of the slow construction of the imposing cathedral on the early parish church; and the transformation of two doors in the old Islamic wall, which practically merges into the Arches of Our Lady of Conception and the Viceroy's Arch, the memorial marking the centenary of Vasco da Gama's first voyage, which opened the sea route to India (Moreira 1987).

Together with the Archbishop's Palace, these arches are notably the only surviving examples of civil or even military architecture. I suspect the reason for this is not so much the systematic, and for some uncontrolled, dismantling of civic buildings to use their materials for houses in Panjim, but the fact that they were of little relevance in architectural, monumental, and construction terms. If this is not the case, why are there no decorative features among the reused materials in the houses of Panjim? Why do their descriptions say little about them apart from their size? If we examine drawings from the surveys of the most relevant buildings in Goa that were carried out in the 1770s—the Viceroy's Palace, built inside the former Islamic castle, and the Palace of the Inquisition, the 1554 adaptation of the former Viceroy's Palace, which in the early decades was within the old sultan's palace—and the model of the former based on these drawings, we can see that the buildings were much more modest than contemporary and later narratives made them out to be. Indeed, the Archbishop's Palace is an excellent example of this. There are no written records or plans to allow us to judge the architectural quality of other buildings, such as the notorious hospital or customs house, which seem to have been of even lower value as monuments, although they were large in scale.

As in Lisbon, rather than systematic organization of new urban dwellings or their renovation, it was the gradual standardization of current architecture, now totally disappeared, that gave Goa the urban unity described by some travelers, along with its monumental religious buildings and, in particular, the cosmopolitan bustle that perhaps corresponds to what we may glimpse today if we half-close our eyes in the more authentic Indian bazaars. As I observed elsewhere:

The city continued to change, crystallizing a synthesis of the cultures present into everyday architecture. According to descriptions and iconography, the typical house had two floors, and a yard was built of mortar, covered with a tiled roof, and often painted with water-based paints in tones of red and white. The fronts had windows protected by railings and jalousies;¹⁰ polished oyster shells (*carepas*) fulfilled the role of glass. (Rossa 1997, 46)

The famous Rua dos Leilões (Auctions Street), which linked the main squares of the city, corresponds precisely to this description. Some of these elements, such as tiles and the lime required for mortar, were introduced by the Portuguese, while the bright colors and *carepas* were not, and *muxarabi* was common from the Iberian Peninsula to Southeast Asia. Otherwise, regarding architecture and urbanism, the descriptions are laconic, and the design elements are unknown or even nonexistent. On civil architecture, therefore, nothing relevant can be added here.

Decay

The plans for the attempted Pombaline “Restoration of the State of India” from 1774 to 1777,¹¹ approximately halfway between Albuquerque’s conquest and the present day, show how remarkably swift the decline of the “civil city” was. Residents, including the holders of the highest offices of the Crown and even archbishops themselves, had settled along the road that followed the south bank of the river to Ribandar. Except for Rua dos Leilões, the port, and Army and Navy facilities, only religious buildings were depicted in the plans. The Arsenal would only be removed in 1856, thirteen years after the official designation of Panjim as the new capital city.

The large influx of people who quickly settled in Goa in the mid-sixteenth century led to an explosive growth of the city, which was unregulated and lacked accompanying infrastructure. The location, besides being unbearably hot, proved unhealthy. The situation was not helped by a lake of stagnant water inside the walls (to the southeast), no collection system for the sewage, which was dumped everywhere, and the inevitable contamination of water from the wells, the only source available for consumption.¹² For its part, the Mandovi was not navigable during the monsoon and silted up with the increasing drafts of the boats, making navigation difficult.

At the end of the century, the inhabitants began to look for places more favored by sea breezes. The viceroys themselves had modifications made to their residence

at what became known as the Idalcao Palace in Panjim, and soon they built the palace at Panelim that later became the Gunpowder House and Military Hospital, of which there is no trace today. The construction, in 1633, of the 3,150-meter causeway named Conde de Linhares Bridge, connecting Goa and Panjim, further accelerated this process. Only periods of insecurity in the face of external attacks mobilized the return of the Goans from the first diaspora to the city, even though the large peripheral wall and steps continued to be maintained and reinforced.

Between the 1670s and the first decade of the eighteenth century (in fact, significantly, during the entire regency and reign of King Pedro II), the capital was moved to Mormugao while building work was carried out (Rivara 1866–67; Martins 1910). At the time, various forces conspired to prevent the success of the enterprise, demonstrating, once again, the proverbial hesitation about the Portuguese strategic options in Asia. In this case, however, the decisive factor was no longer a hesitant approach by the powers in Lisbon but the disobedience of distant subjects in Goa, so that the next initiative, the Restoration of the State of India planned and promulgated by the Marquis of Pombal between 1774 and 1777, also failed to move forward (Barbuda 1841).

As I have already noted, progress in the first decades of the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean was unprecedented, and thus total experimentation was the rule. There was, therefore, no expectation of planning for what could not be known or foreseen, namely the capital city of an unlikely state, the continental seat of a religious creed of enormous proselytizing potential. Despite all this, and primarily as a European colonial capital functioning as the center of a field of intensive intercultural relations, Goa for nearly a century represented the phenomenon of a capital city that was absolutely new, fascinating, but ultimately unsustainable. Indeed, in another form, it has remained so to this day.

The Rise of the Myth

Instead of a process of civil decay, the commitment to Catholic evangelizing that underlay the Portuguese patronage system in the East played a decisive role in monumentalizing Goa and, concomitantly, in constructing the myth of “Golden Goa” or “Rome of the East,” as well as in maintaining it over time.¹³ Of course, the repression and proselytism within the Counter-Reformation played a part. To give some idea of the powerful escalation of this phenomenon, it is noteworthy how, in four decades, the Padroado made Goa into the “New Rome” of the Counter-Reformation: diocese in 1533/34; metropolitan archbishopric in 1557



Fig. 5. Goa cathedral's crossing vault, 2013.



Fig. 6. St. Francis Xavier's casket at the Bom Jesus Church in Goa, 2017

(ruling over the bishoprics of Cochin and Malacca immediately, and later on those of Macau, Funai, Cranganore, Meliapor, Nanking, Peking, Mozambique, and Daman); Inquisition in 1560; Primate of the East in 1572. Already famous for its monumentality, but undergoing the process of its civil decline, Goa was crowned the Catholic magnet of Asia with the beatification of St. Francis Xavier (1506–1552) in 1619 and his subsequent canonization in 1622. Francis Xavier was a Navarrese Jesuit saint who worked hard within the Portuguese *Padroado* long before the Iberian Union (1580–1640).

In contrast to everything else (integration of the Iberian empires, the shift of the Portuguese Empire's focus toward Brazil, sanitary problems, decay, and depopulation), as a Catholic capital Goa grew precipitously. All the religious orders sought to have a house in the city. In addition to the new buildings, among those erected since 1510 only the Church of the *Priorado do Rosário* and the Chapel of Santa Catarina were not replaced by more imposing structures. This resulted in a landscape-urbanistic free-for-all, along Baroque lines, in the capital city of the *Estado da Índia*. As in the European territory, but here with features and dimensions never reached elsewhere in the Portuguese Empire, the increase in the scale and splendor of religious architecture was understood as an essential element in the fight against heresy, as associated with Hindu and Muslim architecture of significant impact and quality. However, while the capital city of the *Estado da Índia* had disappeared, the capital of the Portuguese Patronage, with its tomb of the Apostle of the East, had not. Francis Xavier canonized Goa.

The creation of Nova Goa in 1843, which entailed recognizing Panjim as the colony's capital, was simultaneously a recognition of the end of Goa's urbanity. This shift had already been foreseen a few years earlier, when in 1834 one of the most far-reaching measures was taken by the new liberal regime: the abolition of religious orders. For Goa, this was decisive because it deprived it of its purpose and of its remaining residents. In other words, the post-ancien régime liberal background against which both events took place was only the most immediate factor in the structural paradigm change that unleashed the building of heritage in what remained of the city, its myth enshrined in Catholicism. The city's gradual abandonment by civilians from the second quarter of the seventeenth century onward was followed by the legally authorized and systematic dismantling of Goa that began in the mid-nineteenth century. What also followed was the ruin of much of what remains, except for some churches and a few convents, which are now the material core of Goa's World Heritage listed assets.

The systematic creation of the concept of cultural heritage and its public awareness were the fruit of the Industrial Age. The process gathered momentum at the end of the nineteenth century and was consolidated as a discipline and a cause around which social forces could be mobilized throughout the next century. Goa is an excellent example to follow along this path, but that is not within my scope in this essay. There are, however, a few facts that I need to introduce for a basic understanding of Goa's development as a heritage asset. They are listed here selectively and in chronological order:¹⁴

- 1859 The first exhibition of the century, of the relics of St. Francis Xavier on the anniversary of his death (December 3), led to the repair of some buildings but also to demolition of ruins. This practice would be repeated often.
- 1892 Among the rubble produced by the 1859 crumbling of the church of Nossa Senhora da Serra, the empty original sarcophagus of Afonso de Albuquerque was discovered.
- 1895 The discovery of Albuquerque's sarcophagus eventually led to the creation of the Permanent Commission of Archaeology and, in 1896, of the Royal Museum of Portuguese India.
- 1910 The first scientific cartographic survey of Goa, one of the heritage initiatives generated by cyclical public exhibitions of St. Francis Xavier's relics.
- 1930s Beginning of the inventory and classification of Goa's cultural heritage.
- 1947 Following the end of the Second World War, the independence of India triggered Portuguese reformism in the colonies. Scientific missions were promoted, including a 1951 project focused on history and art, led by Mário Tavares Chicó, and reports and books about the so-called Indo-Portuguese art, architecture, and urbanism were published.
- 1950 Abolition of the Permanent Commission of Archaeology and arrival of Baltazar de Castro, an experienced architect from the Portuguese General Directorate of National Buildings and Monuments (Direcção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais, DGEMN).
- 1952 Under Castro's supervision and in the framework of the fourth centenary of the death of St. Francis Xavier, a few far-reaching restoration works were inaugurated, namely on the Viceroy's Arch, the Chapel of Santa Catarina, and the Church of Bom Jesus.¹⁵

1960 In the context of *Comemorações Henriquinas* (celebrations of the fifth centenary of the death of Henry the Navigator), a plan for the “Reintegration of the City of Velha Goa in its Historical, Archaeological, Monastic, and Religious Setting” was launched.

It has become clear by this point that the great *worker* behind the development of Goa’s cultural heritage and its recognition is St. Francis Xavier himself.

The “Reintegration of the City of Velha Goa” plan was drawn up in 1959 by a commission presided over by Ismael Gracias, who stated in his presentation that the idea was to reestablish the Old City of Goa as a “beacon of Portuguese spirituality.”¹⁶ This phrase is the cornerstone, almost an ideological summary, of the whole process. Still, Gracias’s pompous statement had surely been inspired by the Portuguese governor’s dispatch, which envisioned “Old Goa, the dead city, revived; not resurrected but reborn, transformed into a monastic city, spiritual city, silent but filled with life, in homage and respect to its glorious legacy of which we should be proud.”¹⁷ There is no doubt that this sequence of events and statements adds up to a clear example of what today we identify as a “heritage-building process,” implemented by Goa’s Catholic elites with the support of Portuguese colonial administration.

The Myth as World Heritage

Work on the “reintegration” project had barely begun when, in December 1961, Goa ceased to be a Portuguese colony. The project was, however, resumed shortly afterward, under the direction of the Republic of India’s central authorities and according to the Gracias plan. The new urban design ignored the urban structure and memory of the obliterated city, opening up entirely novel spatial relationships, particularly the new central promenade. Thus, a renewed body, a new asset, emerged, supporting what in 1986 was inscribed by UNESCO in the World Heritage List under the designation “Churches and Convents of Goa.”¹⁸ It was the recognition, at the highest national and international levels, of Goa’s myth; at the same time, it spelled out a declaration, both implicit and unconscious, that the urbanism of the capital city of Goa was irrelevant in its overall quality, sealing its effective loss of urbanistic value.

The UNESCO declaration refers directly to seven churches and convents, excluding any other assets, except for “the tomb of the apostle of India and Japan [that] symbolizes an event of the universal significance of the influence



Fig. 7. Goa World Heritage promenade. Courtesy of Tripraja (<https://tripraja.com>).

of the Catholic religion in the Asian world in the modern period.” Clearly, the declaration values the spiritual presence of the saint over Goa’s material assets. Complementing this statement, the argument foregrounding the spread of Catholicism in Asia is reinforced in other parts of the declaration, e.g., “The monuments of Goa, ‘Rome of the Orient,’ exerted great influence from the 16th to the 18th century on the development of architecture, sculpture and painting . . . throughout the countries of Asia where Catholic missions were established.” These monuments are also said to be “an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble which illustrates the work of missionaries in Asia.” This wording had necessarily come out from the proposal submitted to UNESCO by the Republic of India’s government.¹⁹

A year later, in 1987, Goa became the twenty-fifth state of the Republic of India.²⁰ Its World Heritage listing cannot have been unrelated to that milestone advance in administrative autonomy. In the 1980s the world was changing

swiftly, and India was becoming more actively involved in the process of economic globalization. In this context, Goa had enormous potential, ranging from mineral resources to tourism. It was also the right place to substantiate the rhetoric of multiethnic, multiracial, and multireligious coexistence that had nourished India's politics from independence till the end of the second millennium. The recognition of Goa's Catholic centrality within Asia and, implicitly, of its relevance as the only non-British ex-colonial enclave, factored in this trend.²¹ A breeze of reconciliation blows from this 1980s action of India's central administration.

A visit to Goa today makes it easy to realize how these stated expectations were in the end set aside, to the point that everything intended to be safeguarded is now at risk. The territory's coastal strip is a site of frenetic commercial, industrial, and leisure activity, where intense real-estate development brings with it the usual problems. A significant part of this business frenzy is carried out by outside investors and migrant workers from poorer Indian states, who cannot be expected to recognize the value of Goan cultural heritage (Waterson and Smith 2010), especially insofar as much of it is directly identified with a religion other than Hinduism (today Goa is twenty-five percent Catholic and sixty-six percent Hindu).²² Gentrification has walked hand in hand with harm to cultural assets and landscape disruption.

Let us examine just three clear indicators specifically regarding the World Heritage-listed site: the abandoned old capital city precinct is being urbanized; the new route of the Panjim-Belgão highway (National Highway 4), passes only 175 meters away from the Basilica of Bom Jesus; the last "state of conservation report" submitted to UNESCO dates from 1999, and no management plan or equivalent currently exists.²³ It seems that, with the comfort assured by the notoriously mild UNESCO management practices, the World Heritage List recognition has been taken for granted. On a broader scale, Goa's balance of economic, social, ethnic, and religious forces is now very different than in the past, and the scope of Indian administration's practice of tolerance has narrowed considerably in recent years.

The process of the international recognition of Goa's cultural relevance is a good example of how borderline boundary facts can be transformed into pivotal aspirational realities by using cultural heritage as a tool. The monumentality of Goa's remains is far more potent now than what the city had ever been in the past. Therefore, in terms of cultural heritage, the "Churches and Convents of Goa" are a construction, the result of a pact between Goan Catholic elites and

the Republic of India.²⁴ But pacts are not immortal, even when negotiated over the remains of a saint. Today, the construct of Goa's cultural heritage inscribed in the World Heritage List should be recognized as being under threat. As in many other cases and contexts, it could be discussed whether the relevant concept is *contested heritage*, *heritage in conflict*, *heritage at risk*, or any other keyword that scholars invent and debate at random, but that matters little. It will be more important to bring up to date the awareness of the significance of its value for the communities of Goa and India, as well as for others, namely Catholics in Asia and worldwide. What is at stake, again, is the question of what is or what will be understood by "world heritage" and how to engage with the sovereign powers that hold control over heritage assets.

Myths gain a hold and thrive when they are preferable to and seem more powerful than the reality we are familiar with. They go up in smoke when what is revealed again transcends them; they are confirmed when disfigured. The myth of Goa has hidden and will continue to hide the perception that history has produced for many of its essential dimensions, undoubtedly because the reality that is being historicized is no more interesting than that narrated by the myth. That is an unconscious collective option that should not hinder the development of knowledge, because it is the only way to offer the opportunity to choose between myth and reality while also taking into account the endless seductive nuances between the two. I also prefer the urban myth of "Golden Goa" to what I have described as the real Goa.

NOTES

1. The presence of St. Francis Xavier, through his tomb in Goa, is a crucial issue in this text. For a comprehensive discussion, see Pamila Gupta, *The Relic State*. I draw on Gupta's work throughout the essay without citing it directly in every instance.

2. Among the vast bibliography on the subject, three studies stand out as genuinely essential and complementary—Dias, *De Goa a Pangim* (2005); Faria, *Architecture Coloniale Portugaise à Goa* (2014); and Santos, "*Goa é a chave de toda a Índia*" (1999)—although travel literature, editions of primary sources, and other research publications are equally important. As was customary in Portuguese culture at the time when Goa was an authentic city, in terms of reconstructing urban morphology and its development, cartography, illumination, paintings, and engravings are of minimal use, having led to misconceptions. The first accurate designs dated from the attempted Pombaline reconstruction of the 1770s (see note 13). For a comprehensive commented list of those texts, image sources, and contexts, see Rossa, "A capitalidade de Goa" (2020).

3. Beginning with the “seven cities of Delhi”; among the vast bibliography on the subject, the classic study by Gordon Risley Hearn, *The Seven Cities of Delhi* (1906), remains as the main reference.

4. The change of word order from Goa Velha to Velha Goa produces a subtle semantic effect in Portuguese that has no correspondence in English. While the meaning of “velha” in Goa Velha suggests something disposable, in Velha Goa the adjective connotes deference and respect.

5. Nuno Lopes’s *The Heritage of Defence* (forthcoming), with its survey and systematization of available evidence, is a precious and revealing source of data on the fortification of Goa’s territory.

6. On this subject see, among others, Lopes, *Goa setecentista, tradição e modernidade* (1999); Xavier, *A invenção de Goa* (2008); and Carreira, *Globalising Goa* (2014).

7. For example, this and the previous sections draw on the following in-depth urbanistic studies: Rossa, *Indo-Portuguese Cities*, (1997, 40–53, 92–111); Rossa, “Goa” (2010).

8. José de Moraes Antas Machado, “Projecto para a nova Cidade de Gôa se erigir no sítio de Pangim, que por ordem do Ill.mo e Ex.mo Sñr. D. Jozé Pedro da Camara Governador, e Cappitão General da Índia fêz e desenhou [...] em Março de 1776”, man., Goa, Gabinete de Estudos Arqueológicos da Engenharia Militar, 1236/2A-24A-III, dim. (mm) 1175x671.

9. The so-called Manueline “style” consists of a mainly decorative late medieval/Gothic architectural repertoire, assembled and used by the Portuguese in the late fifteenth and the first decades of the sixteenth century. It is widely referred to as a style, which it is not, even for those who still use the concept.

10. The upper-story balconies, completely enclosed by jalousies, were described as built in *muxarabi* manner.

11. Joze de Moraes d’Antas Machado, *Projecto para a nova Cidade de Gôa por...*, *Sargento Mor de Infantaria com exercício de engenheiro*, man., Goa, (w/d), Gabinete de Estudos Arqueológicos da Engenharia Militar 1241/2A-24A-III, dim. (mm) 1605x695; Joze de Moraes d’Antas Machado, *Projecto da Cidade de Gôa por...* *Sargento Mor de Infantaria com exercício de Engenheiro*, em 1775, man., Goa, 1775, Gabinete de Estudos Arqueológicos da Engenharia Militar 1237/2A-24A-III, dim. (mm) 1467x470; João António Aguiar Sarmento, *P. Príncipe pella Fê P. Pátria Projecto para a nova Cidade de Goa feito por ordem do Ilustrissimo, e Excellentissimo Senhor Dom Joze Pedro da Camera Governador e Capitão General da India – Por ... Capitão de Infantaria cõ exercício de Engenheiro em MDCCLXXVII. Janeiro de 1777.*, man., Goa, 1777, Gabinete de Estudos Arqueológicos da Engenharia Militar 1240/2A-24A-III, dim. (mm) 1702x424.

12. Alberto Correia’s *La Vieille Goa* (1931) is a shocking study of the mortality caused by frequent epidemics of cholera and smallpox, which killed many viceroys, inquisitors, archbishops, and other high officials and nobles.

13. The Portuguese *Padroado* (Patronage) consisted of a series of exclusive privileges, rights, and duties that had been gradually granted by popes to Portuguese monarchs

through a series of bulls and papal letters, the first of which was *Inter Caetera* (1456). Because they were absorbed with simmering problems in Europe, the popes delegated to Portugal the patronage of the Roman Catholic missions in the vast overseas regions the Portuguese dominated. When that delegation started in the fifteenth century, no one could have had the slightest idea of the scale the Padroado would reach. Irrespective of their nationality, priests who worked in these territories were sustained by the Crown and owed obedience to the king of Portugal, like the Navarrese Francis Xavier. For various reasons, its most relevant expression was achieved precisely in Asia, with Goa at the forefront. For a comprehensive and updated view, see Xavier and Olival, “O padroado da coroa de Portugal: Fundamentos e práticas” (2018) and Paiva, “Uma religião para o mundo: Padroado régio e uma diocese pluricontinental” (2020).

14. For more information, see Santos and Mendiratta, “‘Visiono Velha Goa, a cidade morta, reanimar-se’” (2012) and Santos, “Reinstalling the Old City of Goa as an Eternal Light of Portuguese Spirituality” (2018).

15. Commemoration of the anniversary of St. Francis Xavier’s death made the December 3 the annual climax of his and Asia’s Catholic faith’s cult. Round anniversaries, in 1952 (the 400th) and 2002 (the 450th), were of course most intensely celebrated. See Gupta, “The corporeal and the carnivalesque” (2017).

16. *Gracias, Goa, fanal da espiritualidade portuguesa* (1960). In translating this title, I opted for “beacon” instead of “lighthouse,” a more direct translation of the Portuguese word “fanal” (an old and very seldom used form of “farol”).

17. Dispatch dated 19 May 1959, in *Boletim Oficial do Governo do Estado da Índia* 22, II série, 29 May.

18. The proposal was part of India’s first set of submissions, together with Ajanta Caves, Ellora Caves, Agra Fort, and Taj Mahal. All were accepted for listing by the World Heritage Committee Ordinary Session in 1983, except Goa, on which the decision was deferred due to the lack of some information. Between 1983 and 1986, two other Indian assets were listed (the Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram and the Sun Temple in Konârak). In the end, Goa turned out to be the seventh Indian site included, ahead of other well-known jewels. Despite the delay in the proposal’s acceptance, it seems clear that Goa’s listing it has been a Union Government priority.

19. The inclusion in UNESCO’s World Heritage List requires an application with a proposal dossier, presented by a state institution. Excerpts quoted in this paragraph were the respective justifications for the use of the sixth, second, and fourth criteria of the *World Heritage Convention* and its *Operative Guidelines* (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2019, 5).

20. From its annexation in 1961 until 1987, Goa was, together with Daman and Diu, a territory of the state of India, administered directly by the central government.

21. There are many official statements to this effect, but I like to quote Vinay Sheel Oberoi, India’s ambassador at UNESCO 37th session of the World Heritage Committee (Phnom Penh,

22 June 2013), who stated (while commenting on the candidacy of the University of Coimbra to the World Heritage List): “I think you have to be Indian, and not necessarily from Goa, to understand the significance of this. . . . Over almost five hundred years there has been this interface. . . . You must remember [Goa] was an enclave, the only non-English speaking enclave with any significance in India. The French and the Danes didn’t really develop that, but it was here [Goa] that it has been established, it was here that this link has been sustained.” <https://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/37COM/records/?day=2013-06-22#t2jmdjT97SIEo> (2:06.50)

22. Even within Hinduism, problems are arising. Like Catholic churches, Hindu temples in Goa had a specific architectural expression that emerged throughout the seventeenth century, but in recent years they have been systematically reformed or substituted with solutions similar to those in surrounding states. See Kanekar, “The Politics of Renovation” (2017); Kowal, “The Hindu Temples of Seventeenth and Eighteenth century Goa” (2001); and Gupta, “Indo-European Temples of Goa” (1991–92).

23. UNESCO’s general *Operational Guidelines* establish the requirement, but the “Protection and management requirements” clause of the site-specific document (UNESCO World Heritage Committee, “Goa” [2019]) makes clear the weakness of the asset-management system.

24. Over the last decades, debates on cultural heritage have underlined its “ephemeral” character, dependent on its recognition as heritage. Among many worthy contributions to this discussion, see in particular Smith, *The Uses of Heritage* (2006) and Harvey, “Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents” (2001).

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