

Carta Patrimónios



Coimbra, May 16, 2025



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As announced in the previous Carta Patrimónios, in September 2025 the 7th edition of the PhD programme in Heritages of Portuguese Influence offered by the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research at the University of Coimbra will begin.

Therefore, Carta Patrimónios#12 is dedicated to reporting on some of the activities involving the programme and the Chair, with the opening text reflecting on the expression that gives them their name.

Heritage(s) of Portuguese Influence: an open an open concept, an open debate

In 2010, we launched a project at the University of Coimbra dedicated to **researching the cultural heritage of non-Portuguese communities, or those located outside of Portugal, who, in different ways, have established – or continue to establish – relationships with Portuguese culture.** These multiple and dynamic interactions not only make a decisive contribution to defining, understanding and transforming Portuguese culture itself, but also play a part in building a global community marked by this common denominator.

Naturally, from the beginning, the question of what to designate the project arose – a debate which, although it led to an operational formulation, remains open. This openness results both from the dynamic nature of the project itself, which has been transformed by the integration of new researchers, and from the involvement of the communities that constitute its object of study. The aim is to find an expression that not only reflects the conceptual starting point, but is also broad and flexible enough to cover diverse cases, from contexts of former colonial domination to contemporary migratory phenomena. In short, we don't intend to restrict the analysis to cultural expressions resulting exclusively from interactions marked by historically unequal power relations, but rather to consider the range of situations in which significant cultural contacts take place.

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It should be clarified from the beginning that we do not intend to study the so-called 'Portuguese heritage' outside of Portugal, since in its strict sense it is extraordinarily limited. Expressions often used, such as 'heritage of Portuguese origin' or 'heritage of Portuguese matrix', tend to produce similar misconceptions - or, worse still, by encompassing assets that unequivocally belong to other communities, they inadvertently suggest a logic of undue appropriation or extension of Portuguese cultural sovereignty, precisely the kind of perspective that this project aims to avoid. The most recurrent alternative - 'colonial heritage' - also raises a number of problems. On the one hand, it restricts the scope of the analysis to a specific chronological universe, centred on the colonial era, leaving out later dynamics, including processes of cultural re-elaboration in contemporary times. On the other hand, it encloses the cases studied in an explanatory matrix that, although dominant, is not exclusive. Cultural heritage is, by definition, a construction of the present: it results from current practices, representations and current recognitions, even when it refers to legacies from the past. Cultural expressions that no longer exist or are no longer recognised as heritage by the communities of origin themselves cannot, strictly speaking, be considered cultural heritage by those communities - even though they may continue to be so for others, which, however, lack sovereignty over the material assets in question.

This inevitably raises the question of designation: to be truly comprehensive, the expression adopted must be able to accommodate the diversity of cases and forms of recognition - what is heritage for some and not for others - while respecting the autonomy of each group in defining what it considers significant and worthy of preservation. In other words, it must recognise and value the 'difference' of others. We can find no more appropriate way of expressing this plurality than through the intentional use of the term **heritage(s) in the plural** - a formulation that, in 2010, was still a neologism, especially when used in other languages, but which has now become common and recognised in various academic and institutional contexts.

The semantic tension and obvious ethical discomfort that results from using the expressions 'Portuguese heritage' or even 'Portuguese patrimonies' to refer to cultural manifestations that are under the guardianship of others - and which those others may or may not recognise as heritage, or to which they may attribute cultural meanings other than those that may originally have been conferred on them - clearly reveal the illegitimacy of any claim to unilateral appropriation. This appropriation, even if symbolic, ignores the complexity of the historical and cultural processes involved, obscuring the multiplicity of agents, contributions and meanings. It overlooks, among other important aspects, unequal power relations and multifaceted forms of violence.

As the first result of this debate, we have adopted - with conviction, but without closure - the expression **Heritages of Portuguese influence**. This formulation not only allows us to reflect the **plurality of cases and contexts** to which we are referring, but also implicitly includes the importance of the contributions of other cultures in the genesis, development and appropriation of the cultural expressions being analysed. We are talking here about an influence among others; an influence that does not claim exclusivity or hierarchy, nor authentic origin; an influence that admits reciprocity, displacement and re-signification; and an influence that only materialises in long-term historical processes.

In short, we trust in the precision and fluency of words to contribute to the deconstruction of prejudices - often naturalised - which, if not properly questioned, obscure the complexity of the past and compromise the possibility of a critical, plural and ethically informed reading of what has been thought of as an asset.

Latest news

Between May 5 and 9, 2025, students and faculty from the PhD in Heritages of Portuguese Influence and UNESCO Chair Patrimónios carried out an academic mission to the University of Cambridge, as part of a joint program of activities.

In close collaboration with the Cambridge Heritage Research Centre (CHRC), the PhD students had the opportunity to present and discuss their research projects at the Cambridge-Coimbra Workshop and at the CHRC Annual Symposium, this year under the theme, *'Pathways of Afterlives: Tracing, Uncovering, and Researching Legacies of the Past'*. In both cases, in addition to the presentation of ongoing research, with diverse contributions from several national academies, fundamental conceptual and methodological issues were discussed. Among the topics addressed, the heuristic value of the concepts of "heritage" and "legacies" stood out, as well as the challenges and methodological proposals that have marked research in these areas. The programme also included visits to various facilities and collections at the University of Cambridge, with a special emphasis on the *African Legacies in Cambridge Museums* tour, promoted by the *Uncomfortable Cambridge* project, which proposes a critical reading of museum institutions, aiming at their historical contextualisation and their informed "decolonisation", and a visit to the Duckworth Laboratory, one of the largest repositories of biological anthropology collections in the world.



"The research mission offered rich engagement with experts and researchers, expanding our investigative approaches. It also provided a valuable opportunity for the DPIT, UC team to bond, exchange ideas, and strengthen collaboration" (Erica Mello)

"This workshop contributed to a reconsideration and deepening of my understanding of the sources that underpin my research" (Nadia Ochoa Rodrigues)

"Sharing my research with colleagues, academics, and researchers from various institutions fostered a constructive debate, the contributions of which will certainly be integrated into the development of my doctoral thesis." (Giovanna Imbernon)

"Attending the 25th Annual Cambridge Heritage Symposium meant getting in touch with different approaches for the study of heritage, while also sharing the perspectives developed in our research, for which we have received some important contributions." (Raul Maravalbas)

"The mission will certainly bear fruit. And the intellectual stimuli will be reflected in the research." (Hugo Lopes)





PHD IN HERITAGES OF PORTUGUESE INFLUENCE

University of Coimbra/iiiUC

The 2nd Phase of applications for the 7th edition of the PhD in Heritage of Portuguese Influence, offered by the Institute of Interdisciplinary Research of the University of Coimbra (iiiUC), will be open in June.

All individuals who hold a master's degree or legal equivalent may apply for the program; and holders of a bachelor's degree in any discipline in the Arts (including Architecture), Social Sciences and Humanities, with particularly relevant academic or scientific curricula that are recognized by iiiUC as attesting to the skills required to undertake this cycle of studies.

Among several documents, candidates must submit a letter of motivation with a synoptic presentation of the research project they intend to pursue within the scope of the course. Letters of recommendation are not required.

Coordination:

Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo

Applications:

<https://apps.uc.pt/courses/EN/course/10461>

7th EDITION
Call for applications
2025/2026

Application deadlines:

2nd call: 2nd June to 15th July 2025

3rd call: 1st to 12th September 2025

Supplemental application call:

21st to 28th October 2025

Areas of expertise:

Architecture and Urbanism

Construction, Technology and Rehabilitation

Geography, Territory and Landscape

History

History of Art

Next Events

_May 23, 2025 - Defense of the PhD in Heritage of Portuguese Influence by André Caiado, with the thesis entitled "The monumentalization and musealization of the Portuguese Colonial War" | José Anastácio da Cunha Room

_June 2, 2025 - Conferences Through Goan Lenses: "Religious processes and a regional tradition in Goa" (Parag Parobo, Goa University) & "Goa's Bom Jesus as Visual Culture: A Monument's Journey from Colonial Icon to Postcolonial Identity" (Vishvesh Kandolkar, Goa College of Architecture) | AUC

_June 5 and 6, 2025 - International Conference "Through a Goan Lens: Multidisciplinary Approaches" | Fundação Oriente, Lisbon

Text and organisation: Walter Rossa, Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, Marcela Santana. English version: Erica Mello