New Worlds: Frontiers, Inclusion, Utopias

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European Architecture in Southeast Asia during the 18th Century: Between Tradition and Hybridization

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European architecture in Africa, America, and Asia during the eighteenth century is a field that has been addressed from different perspectives in the last decades.[1] The traditional starting point is the national perspective.[2] Therefore, the building history of the Philippines is to be understood as part of its Spanish heritage, for example.[3] More recently, some scholars, especially in the Asian field, have considered this phenomenon as part of the study of cultural encounter.[4] A good example of this is the Tamil-French architecture in Pondicherry,[5] or even the alleyway houses of Shanghai.[6] In the last decades, the transnational approach has created a new scenario that has not yet been applied to building history in the colonies. Only one old contribution can be considered as a first attempt in this vein.[7] This paper tries to identify some social contexts in Maritime Asia during the eighteenth century.[8] From this point in time, the consequent building phenomenon will be demonstrated. Lastly, the paper will link this perspective with the current postcolonial discourse, underlining both the problem of heritage enhancement and new buildings.

Unlike the American context, European expansion in Asia is linked with many national factors. Apart from the Portuguese, Dutch, and Spanish presences, the eighteenth century in Asia is characterized by the arrivals of the English, French, Swedish, and Danish contingents. These aside, the Asian powers,

1 Leonard Blussé and Kees Zandvliet, *The Dutch Encounter with Asia. 1600–1950* (Amsterdam, Rijkmuseum: 2002); Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Art of Colonial Latin America* (London: Phaidon, 2005); and Leonard Blussé, *Visible cities. Canton, Nagasaki, and Batavia and the Coming of the Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

2 Elder Carita, *Palaces of Goa: Models and Types of Indo-Portuguese Civil Architecture* (London: Cartago, 1999).

3 María Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo Spínola, *Arquitectura española en Filipinas, 1565–1800* (Seville: EEHA, 1959).

4 Ulbe Bosma and Remco Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies. A history of Creolisation and Empire. 1500–1920* (Singapore, NUS Press, 2008).

5 Jean Marie Lafont, *Chita: Cities and Monuments of Eighteenth-Century India from French Archives* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001).

6 Gregory Bracken, *The Shanghai Alleyway House* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

7 Sten Nilsson, *European Architecture in India 1750–1850* (London, Faber and Faber: 1968).

8 François Gipoloux, *La Méditerranée asiatique. Villes portuaires et réseaux marchands en Chine, au Japon et en Asie du Sud-Est, XVIe–XXIe siècle* (Paris: CNRS, 2009); J. E. Wills Jr., ed., *China and Maritime Europe, 1500–1800. Trade, Settlement, Diplomacy, and Missions* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011).

such as the Chinese, Japanese, Mughal, and other sultanates, remained active in the region. Even Armenians maintained a key role in the time. Apart from this complexity, the continuous wars and commercial struggles constantly changed the Maritime Asian context. For these reasons, the cultural milieu of the period is hardly clear to define, let alone its consequences in architecture.

Contexts in Maritime Asia

The most common social context in Maritime Asia is the long coexistence within cities. In them, we can often find several cultures living together during some centuries. Typically, a European power held the government over an Asian territory thanks to a limited population in that place. Although control of the various cities changed throughout the century, the Western leadership rarely passed to Asian hands. In this case, the two cultures kept their own cities but had a constant relationship. A good example of this was Macao, a Portuguese settlement surrounded by the Chinese empire for centuries. Although the connection between them was clear, both tried to keep their own image. Another type of coexistence was that of neighborhoods. One example of this situation was Manila, governed by Spaniards from 1571 but inhabited mainly by Filipino and Chinese populations. The former, as they did in Spanish and Portuguese America, tended to accept Western customs. The Chinese population, often changing their residence every year, seemed to preserve a particular culture.[9] Perhaps this was why the city created a particular quarter for the Chinese community, allowing a long coexistence that led to a fruitful cultural exchange. A third possibility was the short, yet fruitful, coexistence of traditions. The best example of this was Beijing, where Europeans had a difficult history during the seventeenth century.[10] Throughout the eighteenth century, Western missionaries were able to work in the Chinese court as builders and scientists. This short and belated experience, compared with the previously situation already pointed out, resulted in different expressions of culture and architecture.

9 Leonard Blussé, *Strange Companies. Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Dordrecth, Foris, 1986).

10 Elisabetta Corsi, *La fábrica de las ilusiones: los jesuitas y la difusión de la perspective lineal en China (1698–1766)* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 2004).

Building Encounters: Patterns and Their Contexts

The study of architecture in this Maritime Asia context shows a limited number of patterns related to building encounters. Although the development of each is different, the basis is common, allowing us to make comparisons. This paper tries to place such architectural observations into six categories.

"Pure" European Architecture in Asia

The most obvious category is the direct construction of European architectonical models in these territories. In this case, there is no adaptation to local needs, and regional particularities are not taken into account. In these cases, the governments try to maintain original traditions without the influence of local "barbarism" or technological backwardness.[11] They are examples of the power *representatio* of the empire and, thus, this category of architecture is apparent in representative buildings such as government palaces and fortifications. Any of these projects can be easily identified in the archival sources because of their inherent obstacles: the construction of European structures in Asia usually encountered problems of material supply, specialized manpower, and, later, of livability. Rarely was any adaptation made to these showcase buildings, which shows a deep effort to retain the original European "perfection." As part of this group, two different examples may be differentiated. On the one hand, we see fortifications and other engineering work.[12] For European military engineers, local custom had nothing to contribute to the Western tradition. For this reason, these building processes show the training of local populations and the search for adequate local materials to directly transfer the European models to Asian settlements. Something similar can be said about hydraulic works. On the other hand, the representative buildings tried to retain the original models as part of a superiority discourse: the image of the empire should be the same in all its territories, just like its law or religion.

Examples of this phenomenon can be easily found in many of the cities of Maritime Asia. Perhaps Batavia, the former name

11 Borma and Raben, *Being "Dutch."*

12 M. Lobato, *Fortificaçoes Portuguesas e Espanholas na Indonesia Oriental,* (Lisbon, Prefacio: 2009).

for what is currently Jakarta, is one of the clearest examples. An analysis of the images of this city in 1740 during the Chinese massacre unveils a Dutch city. The civil architecture features high gabled roofs, typical of the Northern Europe context, and without any function in Indonesia. Something similar can be said about canals. These form part of Dutch self-awareness, yet were ill-advised in the Philippines; they became the main reason for the unhealthiness of Batavia and its frequent malaria epidemics during the eighteenth century. The Dutch image was maintained even when it affected the local livability. When it comes to fortification, the examples are clearer. The eighteenth century in Asia was characterized by continuous wars, particularly during the Seven Years War. This necessitated the repeated building and rebuilding of fortification systems.[13] For example, Pondicherry, currently Puducherry, was attacked by the British in 1748, 1754, 1760–1761, 1778, and 1793, forcing numerous reconstructions.[14] Fortunately, Lafont studied these works from archival sources. All of them show the efforts of the military engineers to follow the French tradition controlled from Paris, through which adaptations were minimized.

Adaptation of European Models to Local Contexts

As has been shown, the direct transfer of European models to Asia was extremely difficult; thus, adaptation was more usual. In these cases, the architects tried "to build a Western project that avoided the aforementioned obstacles. This is clearly different from an architecture created from two different traditions blending. In the cities with a long-time history of coexistence, this kind of project was more common in the seventeenth century, a moment when the Eastern and Western traditions had not yet been deeply interrelated. These adaptations can be found in civil architecture, mainly houses. For example, the housing model that arrived in the Philippines in the sixteenth century was closely linked with the Caribbean and Mexican experience, due to the Manila Galleon. Manila, though not the rest of the archipelago, offered a climatological context close to these territories. Nonetheless, some particularities such as the area's earthquakes, rare in Cuba, promoted the adaptation of housing designs.

13 Pedro Luengo, "Military Engineering in Eighteenth-Century Havana and Manila: The Experience of the Seven Years history." *War in History,* 24(1), 2017, pp. 4-27.

14 Lafont, *Chita*.

Something similar happened with convents. The organization of these structures was fixed by the religious order and allowed little space for adaptation. In addition, these orders tried to maintain their image throughout their construction projects all over the world, in a similar way to the image control of the empires. This preference could have easily led the orders to build European models without remarkable adaptation. However, on the contrary, the missionaries—especially the Jesuits—usually kept their overall image while still incorporating local contributions. This scenario can be easily found in America and Asia during the seventeenth century, but it is even clearer during the next century. Examples include the Nantang Church in Beijing (南堂) and the San José Church of Macao.[15] European models are clearly used, and in some cases are explicitly pointed out in the archival sources, but they are adapted to the local needs.

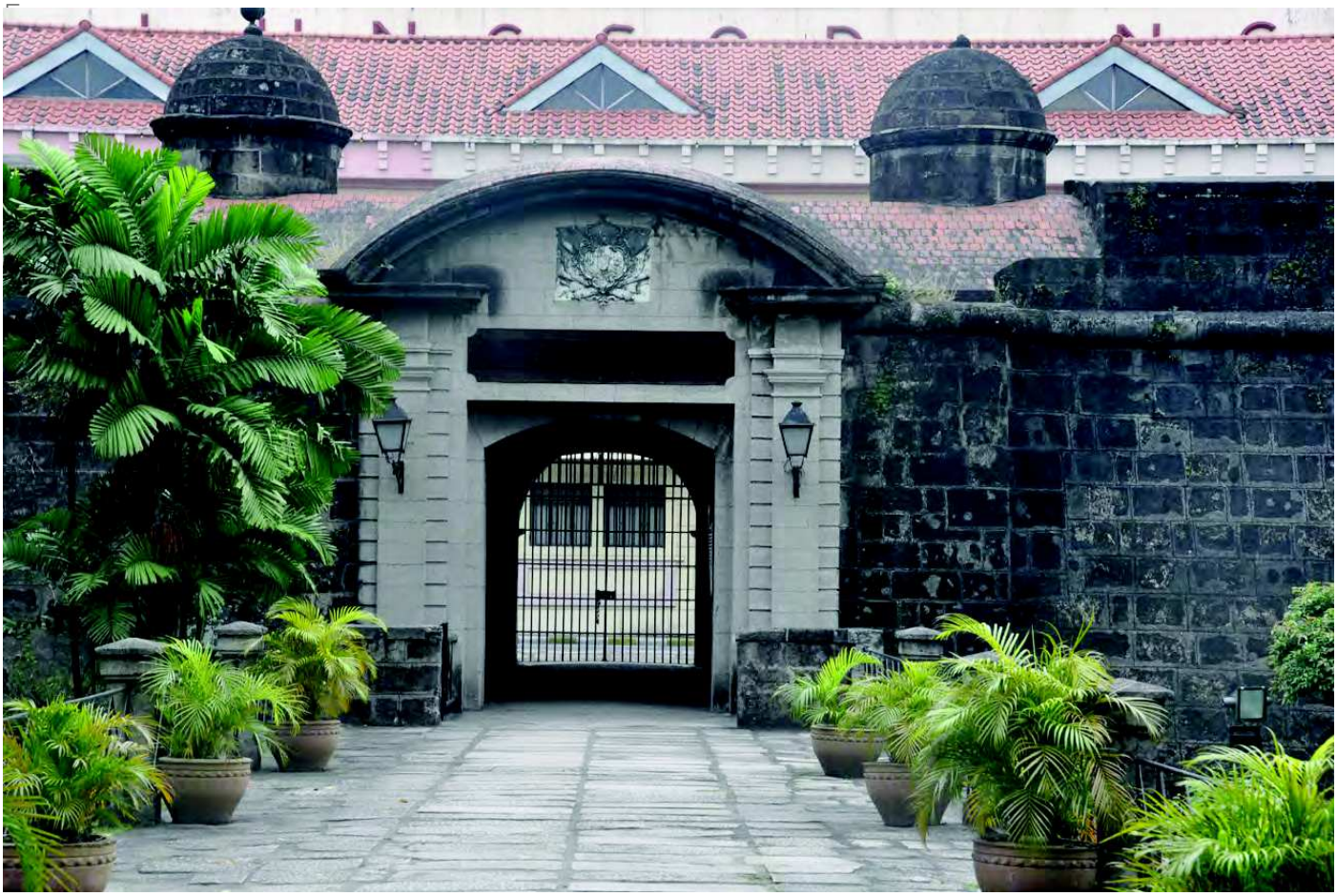
It is true that this phenomenon shows the open-mindedness of local architects and engineers, taking into account the Asian role in such building projects. Thus, these examples can be analyzed as part of the global cultural transfer between West and East. However, they also insist on the importance of the European context over the local traditions. In the end, the adaptation of a Western model does not show a dialogue between cultures, but the imposition of one of them upon the rest in a slightly more subtle way. Perhaps for this reason, these kinds of solutions tended to disappear in cities with a long coexistence experience.

Adaptation of Local Models to European Needs

A good solution for the local obstacles to building would be the adaptation of local architecture to European needs. This, however, requires a wide building tradition that was not common in many countries in Southeast Asia at that time. Only Japan and China could offer such prospects, since the Filipino and Malay cultures had no structures that could be used as palaces or churches without significant transformations.[16] Nonetheless,

15 Pedro Luengo, "Identidad y globalización en las fachadas jesuitas de Pekín en el siglo XVIII," in M. Isabel Alvaro and Javier Ibañez (coord.). *La Compañía de Jesús y las artes. Nuevas perspectivas de investigación* (Zaragoza, MINECO-Universidad de Zaragoza: 2014).

16 Fernando Zialcita, *Authentic though Not Exotic: Essays on Filipino Identity* (Quezon City, Ateneo University Press, 2005).



1. Philippines. Manila. Intramuros. Puerta Real (Royal Gate), 2009. Photo by the author.

during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Western missionaries made efforts to adapt local structures to their needs. The best example is the Beijing Jesuit College, founded in an urban Chinese palace. Although the traditional functions of some spaces were changed, the building kept its original features. This kind of adaptation has been described in the Jesuit presence in Japan before de Sakoku, known thanks to some *namban* screens.[17] Unfortunately no plans or long reports on the topic have survived. During the eighteenth century, this kind of adaptation was not common.

Adaptation of Foreign Models Thanks to Coexistence

The previous example could lead us to think that the European presence in Maritime Asia was too concerned with maintaining its own culture to reuse local structures. Although this can be said reasonably about the European presence, something similar can be pointed out regarding local nations. In contrast with the Americas, in Southeast Asia, many countries resisted European control. From the Bulungan or Johor Sultanates to

17 Sophia Diniz, "Jesuit Buildings in China and Japan: A Comparative Study," *Bulletin of Portuguese/Japanese Studies*, 3 (2001): 107–128.

2. Philippines. Vigan. Archbishop's Palace, 2009. Photo by the author.

the Chinese empire, none of the local countries showed a consistent interest in adapting Western models, although there were some exceptions.[18] This can be easily explained through the building of houses or palaces. The European models did not offer any advantage to these societies. The only possibility of cross-pollination would be the intention of overseas Chinese of the eighteenth century to build a structure drawing from both traditions. This would be a theoretical prelude

18 Pedro Luengo, "Villas de recreo en los puertos europeos de Asia a mediados del siglo XVIII," *Laboratorio de Arte*, 24 (2012): 377–391.

to the Kaiping Diaolou (开平碉楼) phenomenon, more common during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In contrast, the traditional fortifications of Southeast Asia were clearly a step backward when compared with Western fortifications. This would explain the quick expansion of these new techniques in the Asian world, especially in those territories not under European control. Surprisingly, none of these cities were fortified in the eighteenth century following the Vauban system. Only in late nineteenth-century Japan was a star fortification built in Goryokaku (Hakodate, Hokkaido). Even when European gunnery was common in Maritime Asia, the local kingdoms renounced these fortification systems, relying instead on their traditional walled cities.

Creation of Hybrids from Long Experience Processes

The cases previously shown point out some of the possibilities of cultural encounters that retained the original traditions to varying degrees. However, neither in Asia nor in the Americas were these the most frequent cases. The coexistence of two or more cultures, even when one is hegemonic, usually generated new solutions. Obviously, such solutions are based on different aspects of the previous traditions, but the resulting formula is original. From this perspective, most structures cannot be explained as marginal in a global empire, but as part of the building history of a community. This process was developed during the seventeenth century, and then the solutions were spread all over Maritime Asia throughout the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, many of these new traditions were no longer part of a singular community, but part of a common basis that could be found along the Indian and Pacific oceans. This was the usual situation in Southeast Asia during the eighteenth century. Thus, the building history of Goa, Manila, Batavia, or even Beijing seems today to be fragmented. Due to the complexity of the proposal, several examples will be given.

Octagonal Shape in Maritime Asia

Recent studies have tried to explain the Filipino interest in octagonally shaped buildings in the eighteenth century.[19] Sur-

19 Javier Galván Guijo, "The Octagonal Shape in Fil-Hispanic Architecture," in Javier Galván Guijo, ed., *Endangered. Fil-hispanic architecture*, 13–28 (Manila, Instituto Cervantes: 2005); Pedro Luengo, *Intramuros. Arquitectura en Manila, 1739–1762,* (Madrid, FUESP:

prisingly, such shapes were not to be found in large quantities in the previous centuries. Different scholars have considered this to be a Chinese contribution to the archipelago, clearly visible in the relationship between pagodas and Christian bell towers in the Philippines. From this perspective, we may observe that Macao had the same circumstances but did not develop such a solution. Recent studies have pointed out the New Mexican role, linking this phenomenon with the towers of the Basilica of Guadalupe.[20] However, this would explain the problem with towers alone, and not with entire buildings. When the Chinese architect Antonio Mazo and the Spanish architect Lucas de Jesús María projected Manila's *Alcaicería de San Fernando,* they had just arrived in the city. They had to plan a structure with two functions: it had to act as both housing and a market for the Chinese community of Manila. On the one hand, Jesús María was thinking in terms of a Spanish *plaza* with houses around it, adapted to Chinese needs. On the other hand, Mazo planned a building similar to a *Fujian Tulou,* a community house with a big open space in the middle, adapted to Spanish needs. The archival sources show the discussions between them throughout the process. The final result was a hybrid, one that did not completely fulfill the needs of either the Westerners or the Easterners. It should be noted, however, that in contrast with other contemporary building attempts, this was a private initiative that depended on the acceptance of its users. About a decade later, the *Alcaicería* was burned and a new project had to be built.

The Bahay-na-bato

The *Alcaicería* cannot be considered as a project resulting from a long history of coexistence. Although the Chinese and Spaniards shared Manila with the Filipino population, neither Mazo nor Jesús María had any experience of building houses with these particularities. A good example of a result of a long cultural encounter can be found in what are currently known as *bahay-na-bato.* Today, these structures are considered to be "traditional Filipino houses."[21] The term *bahay-na-bato* refers

2012); Pedro Luengo, *Manila, Plaza fuerte (1762–1788). Ingenieros militares entre Asia, América y Europa.* (Madrid, CSIC, 2013).

20 Luengo, *Manila, Plaza fuerte*.

21 Fernando Zialcita, *Philippine Ancestral Houses (1810–1930)* (Quezon City: 1980).

to certain large houses built of wood and stone. The façades are reminiscent of the solutions of Spanish houses in the Caribbean and the oldest examples in the South of Spain and the Canary Islands. As such, the *bahay-na-bato* usually has a flown balcony closed by a continuous wooden and shell jalousie. Although other Spanish sources can be found for this solution, it is clear that the use of shell is part of an Asian tradition that will be addressed later. Apart from the façade, the inner structure of the house is an evolution of the pre-Hispanic *bahay-na-kubo.* The *nipa* palm gable roof is supported by large wood pillars. This solution, a Filipino practice adapted to Spanish needs, can be also found in churches and other buildings.

Shell windows

One of the most remarkable features of the *bahay-na-bato* is the use of shell windows. It is true that the concrete use of this solution in such balconies is originally from the Philippines, where it is known as *capiz*, but the origin is again far from the archipelago. The use of shells in windows has been found in Portuguese Goa in the late sixteenth century, when the Spaniards had just arrived on the islands.[22] When considering the feature as an Indian particularity, especially with its name of *carepa,* it has to be said that this element did not exist before the European arrival. Thus, it is the result of a first cultural encounter, in this case between Portuguese and Hindu traditions. Its arrival in Manila could be explained by the Union of the Iberian Crowns (1580–1640), but this cannot be the reason for its diffusion in China and even in Japan in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thus, the use of shell windows is not the adaptation of a culture to the local context, but the result of a long coexistence of two or more cultures. Their quality promoted the diffusion of the technique throughout the Maritime China, with some exceptions such as Dutch Indonesia.

Houses for Overseas Chinese in Manila and Their Consequences

The concrete example of the shell windows can be used in other, more complex cases. One such case is that of the houses built by local governments for the overseas Chinese population. I

22 Carita, *Palaces of Goa*; Luengo, *Intramuros*.

have previously mentioned the *Alcaicería* of Manila, but it is not the only example. A second project was built in this city during the eighteenth century, called the *Alcaicería de San José.* Apart from these examples, other cities such as Batavia and Malacca also developed remarkable Chinese quarters in this period.[23] The region's Chinese population used to move their residences between all these cities, because a sense of familiarity could be found amongst them. Unfortunately, however, it is only the Manila case that is widely known, thanks to recent studies.

San José de Mabolo was another private initiative that received public support. In contrast to San Fernando, it was built inside the walled city. In the center of the quarter a fountain was set, organizing the elongated plots of houses. Every house had a small façade to the street, where there was a shop, and a little backyard to be used as store. Upstairs was the house. This plan, which was significantly different from the first *Alcaicería*, was designed by the Spanish governor to demonstrate the advantages of a new utopian city. The Chinese population preferred living in this new quarter and abandoned the suburbs. The model of San José cannot be found in later initiatives in the Philippines, but is clearly linked with future solutions in Singapore, where these houses are known as *shop houses.* The early shop houses in Southeast Asia were built in the late eighteenth century, but unfortunately, few studies have gone into detail on the topic.

Although the similarities between these structures in various locales are clear, the urban development of the quarter in each is absolutely different. The shop houses in Maritime Asia were usually organized along long five-foot ways. In Manila, they generate a more complex space where the gradation between the public and the private space can be found. The church and the public fountain were planned for the main axes. From here, secondary blind alleys started. It is clear that privacy was organized in a similar way to that found in the nineteenth-century alleyway houses in Shanghai.[24]

From this data, the consideration of these buildings, both shop houses and alleyway houses, as vernacular should be revised. Although their development in the nineteenth century can be

23 Blussé, *Strange Companies*.

24 Bracken, *Shanghai Alleyway House*.

understood as a local phenomenon, the basis is part of the globalization process of the Martime Asia during the eighteenth century. In this same line, we can consider the possibility that Manila was the origin of these hybrids. It is true that the long coexistence experience of Spaniards in the Philippines was a promising context for the progress of hybrids. In contrast, these hybrids were developed as a common result of all these territories and not as a local consequence.

Creation of Hybrids from Short Experience Processes

It has been shown how the long coexistence of several cultures can lead to the development of new building models, here considered as hybrids. In these cases, the creation process can be found over the span of decades in several territories. It is not the result of the cooperation between two architects, as in the *Alcaicería de San Fernando*, but the evolution of several generations of builders. For these reasons, those territories where the coexistence between East and West offers a different and shorter experience produced other kinds of hybrids. In the last few decades, the European structures built in Beijing during the eighteenth century have received much attention. In addition to the Jesuit churches, mainly Beitang (北堂) and Nantang (南堂), the most remarkable works are the Xiyanglou (西洋楼) in the Yuanming Yuan (圆明园). All these projects were developed in half a century by a small number of European builders. Due to continuous persecution, the missionaries had to overcome many obstacles during the seventeenth century in China.[25] Under Chinese Imperial control, in fact, their presence was merely anecdotal. Thus, the coexistence of West and East could not be as fruitful in China as it was in Indonesia or the Philippines at the same moment in time.

Thus, some of the hybrid solutions that are being studied in Beijing should be considered in light of the studies in other neighboring territories. Apart from the direct connections between the imperial circles in Beijing and the European courts, it is possible that solutions developed in works in Goa, Pondicherry, Batavia, or Manila could be known in China. An example of this might be the garden designs. Some parts of the Yuanming Yuan (圆明园) are based in European treatises that were sent directly

25 Corsi, *La fábrica de las ilusiones*.

from Rome. But the same solutions were being implemented in the villas built in Maritime Asia by local merchants and bureaucrats.[26] Although the Jesuits of Beijing were likely to have used their experience in Maritime Asia when building, they also contributed to hybrid projects. In these cases, they simply tried to adapt West traditions to China. The solutions are not the result of long hybridization processes, but of a single project. Thanks to the letters of Moggi, explaining the building plans of Nantang, it is clear how they tried to preserve the European image with selected adaptations to local taste.[27] In sum, although the Jesuit buildings in Beijing can be considered remarkable examples of globalization, they are not as illustrative as other structures built in cities such as Manila or Batavia.

Consequences for This Heritage Today

As has been shown, the sparse research conducted heretofore on the topic has led to incorrect interpretations of built heritage in Southeast Asia, hindering the field's enhancement. Some of the best examples of globalized heritage are considered as vernacular solutions. One of these cases is the shop houses, or even the alleyway houses. In some countries, these same examples are easily incorporated into a nationalist discourse. The *bahay-na-bato* is underlined as the Filipino contribution to the history of architecture, ignoring the diverse origins of many of the structure's elements. At the same time, other kinds of heritage are understood as part of the postcolonial discourse, in which the colonial powers imposed their traditions on local societies. Churches, as part of an outer religion, are not explained as key points within adaptation processes or even examples of cultural dialogue, but as examples of oppression and exploitation. Meanwhile, some countries in Southeast Asia follow these erroneous interpretations of their own heritage; Yuanming Yuan is being considered as the key to a globalization process, when in fact, it is merely a part of it.

Apart from problems with heritage enhancement and its consequences for tourism and social self-awareness, these problems must also be considered in relation to contemporary architecture. The Chinese world is interested in Western

26 Luengo, "Villas de recreo."

27 Corsi, *La fábrica de las ilusiones*.

architecture—perhaps globalized or international architecture—and continues to try to incorporate the Eastern taste into it. Again, the traditional source is not the long coexistence experiences that have been underlined by historians, but the juxtaposition of East and West. It seems that architecture has to show that both traditions are there, instead of creating a new solution from them. Thus, a deeper knowledge of historical processes will help us to improve the consideration of heritage and to promote new, globalized solutions.

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