

**From Discordance to Assemblages: Renegotiating French and Portuguese Colonial Identities through Indian Tourism and Heritage Sites**

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## **Title**

From Discordance to Assemblages: Re-Negotiating French and Portuguese Colonial Identities through Indian Tourism and Heritage Sites

## **Abstract**

This article examines two cities of discordant colonial heritages in India, Chandernagore a former French colony in West Bengal, and Panjim a former Portuguese territory in Goa, to demonstrate how these cities experience their colonial identities through heritage spaces. It explores the ways in which the museums and the public spaces of these cities use memory and materiality to perform discordant colonial past, which differ from the dominant narrative of the British Raj.

The article demonstrates that these cities exist as complex material and affective assemblage of multiple historical legacies. Conceptualising discordance as a framework to trace the unique ways in which the museums and public heritage sites of these two cities mobilise their French and Portuguese colonial heritage, the article shows how these discordant colonial cities distinguish themselves from the British Raj and its legacies. It demonstrates how the wider public spaces of heritage and cityscape are used as signages of French and Portuguese colonial past, while the state-run museums erase these competing narratives to appropriate a sense of national Indian identity. The article affirms these differences not in terms of a duality, but a continual process of convergence and divergence that are mutually constitutive of heritage practices in the cities.

**Keywords:** Discordance, heritage, Panjim, Chandernagore, assemblage

## **1. 1 Introduction**

While India's British colonial heritage has garnered academic attention at the intersections of museum studies and critical geographies of heritage, competing narratives of India's other European colonial heritages have only recently begun to be explored within scholarships of

heritage and built environment.<sup>1</sup> Sustained scholarly conversations between heritage studies and museum geographies have examined the importance of considering politics of materialities, negotiations of affective politics in public spaces that centre nation building practices, and countering colonial museum spaces in particular.<sup>2</sup> While narratives of colonial legacies within the context of the Indian subcontinent, have largely centred on the British Raj, there has been a significant gap in discussion of other European colonial trajectories in India such as the former French colonies of Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam in Puducherry, Chandernagore in West Bengal, and the former Portuguese territories of Goa, Daman and Diu. This absence is particularly noteworthy at the disciplinary intersections of critical geographies of heritage, museum studies and geographical research in general.

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<sup>1</sup> Poornima Sardana, 'Shifting Focus: From Problems to Potential. The Better News from Museums in India', *Вопросы музедологии* 11, no. 1 (2020): 4-14.

<https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/spbu27.2020.101>; Saugata Bhaduri, *Polycoloniality: European Transactions with Bengal from the 13th to the 19th Century* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021); Gita Sahgal, 'Hindutva Past and Present: From Secular Democracy to Hindu Rashtra', *Feminist Dissent* 5 (2020): 19-49; Sudeshna Guha, 'Decolonizing South Asia through Heritage-and Nation-Building', *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 16, no. 2 (2019): 31-45; Helle Jørgensen, 'Postcolonial Perspectives on Colonial Heritage Tourism: The Domestic Tourist Consumption of French Heritage in Puducherry, India', *Annals of Tourism Research* 77 (2019): 117-127; S. Mathur and K. Singh, eds. *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museum in South Asia* (London: Routledge, 2017); Jessica Louise Namakkal, 'Transgressing the Boundaries of the Nation: Decolonization, Migration, and Identity in France/India, 1910-1972' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Minnesota, 2013); S. Bhatti, *Translating Museums: A Counterhistory of South Asian Museology* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2012); G. Parasher, 'State-Building in a Transcultural Context: The Case of the French in India during the Early Eighteenth Century', in *Structures on the Move: Technologies of Governance in Transcultural Encounter*, ed. A. Flüchter and S. Fischer (Heidelberg: Springer, 2012), 243-249; J. Jain, 'Museum and Museum-Like Structures: The Politics of Exhibition and Nationalism in India', *Exhibitionist*, Spring (2011): 50-55. 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Laurajane Smith, *Emotional Heritage: Visitor Engagement at Museums and Heritage Sites* (London: Routledge, 2020); Laia Colomer-Solsona, 'Doing Things/Things Doing: Mobility, Things, Humans, Home, and the Affectivity of Migration', in *Heritage Discourses in Europe*, eds Laia Colomer and Anna Catalani (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 83-98; D.P. Tolia-Kelly, 'Affective Nationalisms and Race', *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 38, no. 4 (2020): 589-591. DOI: 10.1177/2399654420912445e; Emma Waterton and Jason Dittmer, 'The Museum as Assemblage: Bringing Forth Affect at the Australian War Memorial', *Museum Management and Curatorship* 29, no. 2 (2014): 122-139.

Focussing on the riverscapes of Chandernagore and Panjim this paper uses the material, affective and political attributes of heritage to explore how competing/discordant colonial narratives are instrumental in renegotiating local identities in these cities. Using these tensions between universalist and enduring claims to India's British colonial heritage and its other competing European counterparts, which emerge in the museums and the city's public heritage precincts, this paper explores Chandernagore and Panjim as city spatialities of discordance that emerge through the interplay of competing narratives and historical claims. This is done by showing how the wider public spaces of heritage and historical legacies of the cityscape are used and remembered as signages of French and Portuguese colonial past, while the museums continue to erase these competing narratives to reappropriate a sense of national Indian identity. It demonstrates the ways in which these two spaces are not necessarily in opposition to each-other culturally and politically but are continually converging and diverging with each-other's narratives. It is suggested that the convergences and divergences in their approach to remember their French and Portuguese coloniality is in fact co-constructive and constitutive of the cities' contemporary heritage practices. The convergence and divergence are noticeable through the interaction of affective and material politics of the authorised heritage discourse of the museum, the wider presence of French and Portuguese heritage through civic design and architecture in the city spaces and the rivers Mandovi and Hooghly.

Perched on the banks of river Hooghly, Chandernagore, a relatively small city about 30 miles from Calcutta (Kolkata) in West Bengal, serves as a reminder of the region's French colonial past. Designed around the *Strand* which is a kilometre and half long stretch of boardwalk along the Hooghly River, the city of Chandernagore affirms its French colonial identity through the French museum, known as the *Institut de Chandernagor* or Dupleix Palace built in 1812, and other adjacent architectural remnants of the French rule that comprise the city's architecture. Duplessis, who is the first known French entrepreneur to come to Bengal in 1673, as a part of

a temporary team, built a warehouse and stayed up at Chandernagore until 1676. He built this warehouse on a piece of land given to him in 1674, by Ibrahim Khan, a nawab of Bengal. Present day Chandernagore was formally established as a French colony in Bengal, comprising the three villages of Borokishanpur on the northern end of present day Chandernagore, Gondalpara at the southern end, and Khalisani at the west.<sup>3</sup>

Chandernagore rose to its height of prosperity under the French colonial period with Joseph François Dupleix, who was the governor from 1731 to 1741. Soon the Anglo-French war broke out and the British captured Chandernagore on 24 March 1757, but by the 1763 Treaty of Paris, Chandernagore was returned to the French on 25 June 1765, which, barring occasional periods of British control over Chandernagore, they administered till 2 May 1950. At this time, through a referendum, an overwhelming majority of Chandernagorians decided to join the Union of India.<sup>4</sup> Today, the French colonial heritage of Chandernagore is formally present through a museum, a cultural centre, the Chandernagore church and a tourist precinct adjacent to these two buildings, known as the *Strand*. The official website of the Chandernagore Municipal Corporation provides no information on the touristic value of the region. In contrast, the popular tourism websites that cover places of interest in and around the area, focus on this precinct as the only site where the heritage of the French colonial historical past can be revisited. However, an exploration into the city of Chandernagore, beyond the museum precinct and the *Strand* reveals a plethora of buildings, monuments and other public spaces that remains as a testament of the French colonial heritage of this city. A tension is evident between the public architectural city spaces of the city and the formally constructed heritage space comprising of the museum, the church, the cultural centre, and the Strand. These spaces do not

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<sup>3</sup> Bhaduri, *Polycoloniality*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

act in opposition to each other, but their existence converge and diverge within the context of documenting French coloniality in the city.

The second site on which this article focuses on is the city of Panjim, a similarly sized city to Chandernagore of 114,000 people, and which is the capital of the contemporary Indian state of Goa. Like Chandernagore, Panjim stretches along the deep navigable Mandovi river that has long been at the centre of its success. The territory of Goa was governed by the Portuguese from 1510 until 1961, when it was incorporated into independent India. Panjim became the capital of Portugal's *Estado da India* in the mid-nineteenth century, after the previous capital was deemed too susceptible to disease. Controlling the strategic crossing over the Mandovi River, the city was rapidly expanded as the principal site of civil government. It was also the location at which the final Portuguese Governor-General signed the surrender to India in December 1961.

Today, the city of Panjim is simultaneously a touristic, administrative, and commercial centre for the state. Its historic centre remains, focussed along the colonial heritage that lines the Mandovi River. The former governors' palace, statues, fountains, and Portuguese architecture line the busy riverscape. Tourists walk the narrow streets, pausing in bars and cafes that occupy heritage buildings, before talking tours of the 'Portuguese Quarter'. Many enjoy the sense of glamour, gambling on the many casino ships moored in the river or partaking of Portuguese cuisine in the restaurants. Others simply walk the promenade under the glittering lights that hang between lamp posts that stretch along the city's river front. Like Chandernagore, the museum (located symbolically in the 'Old Secretariat Building' of the Portuguese era) tells a different narrative to the bustling cultural tourism along the river. Its stark displays reaffirm a space that has always been India, even when occupied by European colonisers.<sup>5</sup> The claim is

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<sup>5</sup> P. Gupta, 'The Disquieting of History: Portuguese (De)Colonization and Goan Migration in the Indian Ocean', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 44, no. 1 (2009): 19-47.

not directly in opposition to the heritage precinct outside, but a different historical narrative nonetheless emerges within its walls.

India's colonial history is primarily dominated by the legacies of British Raj and this is often reflected in the ways that spaces of heritage are archived and documented in the subcontinent. In fact, as Bhaduri notes,<sup>6</sup> contrary to popular belief, Bengal was introduced to coloniality not solely because of the British Raj but equally through its geographical, socio-political, and economic relation with non-British European colonisers such as the French, Portuguese, Dutch, Dutch, Swedes and the Greeks. Goa too was the site of contestation between Portuguese, Dutch, and the English. Yet, 'colonial encounters are often seen as "mono national", with the colonial history of a particular colonised nation being primarily ascribed to a single master colonising nation, for example, the United Kingdom for South Asia, and especially for Bengal'.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, recent practices of heritage conservation have witnessed what Herzfeld describes as 'an increasingly homogenous set of cultural, moral, aesthetic, and political values' that universalise colonial history in the subcontinent.<sup>8</sup> Within the context of Indian cities and public sites of heritage, this has become particularly limiting in so far as, the preservation and acknowledgement of the nation's interaction with other European colonialities are concerned.

Like many other nations emerging from and negotiating with their colonial past, post-Independence governments' nation-building practices have been deeply entangled with the acquisition of heritage buildings, development of national museums and public spaces of heritage. Even though these are developed in public spaces, they adopt the museum model whereby these spaces use the 'aura of depth and legitimacy with regard to history and tradition

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<sup>6</sup> Bhaduri, *Polycoloniality*, 195.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Herzfeld, *The Body Impolitic: Artisans and Artifice in the Global Hierarchy of Value* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 24.

but also enjoys a certain secular claim'.<sup>9</sup> However, this claim to secularism is only acknowledged in so much as they are appropriated by Hindu/Nationalist agendas. Thus, India's spaces of heritage, both museums and public sites, can seem to be trapped in the tension between being a carrier of British colonial history and a torchbearer of its postcolonial cultural identity.

India's politics of heritagisation post-independence were to create an enduring narrative of the Indian civilisation that, as Mathur and Singh note, was achieved through 'systemic appropriations, and erasures of various regional and temporal phenomena'.<sup>10</sup> The centring of an 'Anglocentric historiography and common-sense' and a creation of a coloniser/colonised duo is seen as an irreconcilable binary, with each conceived of as the very "other" of the other, promoting a hostile and rather Manichean model of coloniality'.<sup>11</sup> In addition, this duality often aids in contributing to a uniform, homogenising narrative of nation building, that fosters the creation of an idea of unified India, devoid of its complex colonial history. As a result of this, heritage spaces of Indian cities that have a colonial history different to the British, have often experienced a sense of unease, discomfort, and what we term as 'discordance' with their own historical trajectory. It is within these complexities and tensions, which characterise India's heritage sites, that the article is situated.

The article is divided into four sections. The article begins by exploring Chandernagore and Panjim as cities of discordant colonialities. Next, the notion of discordance is used as a lens to trace the unique ways in which the museums and the public heritage sites of these two cities mobilise their French and Portuguese colonial heritage in present times, in contradistinction to the British Raj. This is done by showing how the wider public spaces of heritage and historical

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<sup>9</sup> Jain, 'Museum and Museum-Like Structures': 54.

<sup>10</sup> Mathur and Singh, *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying*, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Saugata. *Polycoloniality*, 111.



legacies of the cityscape are continually used and remembered as signages of French and Portuguese colonial past, while the museums continue to erase these competing narratives to articulate a sense of national Indian identity. Third, the authors analyse these differences not in terms of a duality, but a continual process of convergence and divergence between their individual trajectories of performing their colonial heritage. It is suggested that the value of this examination lies in providing a template for rethinking the ways in which we might understand heritage in Indian cities of non-British European colonial past.

## 1.2 Methodology

Emerging research at the intersections of critical heritage studies and social and cultural geographies have shown sustained interest in affective encounters, embodiment, practice, and performance.<sup>12</sup> This research is situated within the ambit of these works, and an ‘auto-ethnographic sensibilities’ approach is used,<sup>13</sup> observing the ways in which visitors interact with the displayed materials in the museums. This has been coupled with walking in the public spaces of heritage as a methodological tool.<sup>14</sup> In examining the ways in which city spaces of Chandernagore and Panjim, mobilise discordant or competing narratives of colonialities, the article suggests that museum and public heritage sites are interacting with each other. The conditions of these negotiations are often multiple and complex. In this context, Laurajane

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<sup>12</sup> Shanti Sumartojo, ‘Sensory Impact: Memory, Affect and Sensory Ethnography at Official Memory Sites’, in *Doing Memory Research: New Methods and Approaches*, eds Danielle Drozdewski and Carolyn Birdsall (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019): 21-37; Sarah de Nardi, ‘Community Memory Mapping as a Visual Ethnography of Post-War Northeast England’, in *Doing Memory Research*, 191-209; Jason Dittmer and Emma Waterton, “‘You’ll go home with bruises’”: Affect, Embodiment and Heritage On Board HMS Belfast’, *Area* 51, no. 4 (2019): 706-718.

DOI:10.1111/area.12513; Divya P Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton, and Steve Watson, ‘Introduction: Heritage, affect and emotion’, *Heritage, Affect and Emotion*, ed Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (London: Routledge, 2016), 19-29; Laurajane Smith, ‘Visitor Emotion, Affect and Registers of Engagement at Museums and Heritage Sites’, *Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage* 14, no. 2 (2014): 125-132. DOI: 10.6092/issn.1973-9494/5447.

<sup>13</sup> Dittmer and Waterton, “‘You’ll go home with bruises’”.

<sup>14</sup> Diti Bhattacharya and Kaya Barry, ‘On Orientations and Adjustments: An Exploration of Walking, Wandering and Wayfinding in Brisbane–Meanjin, Australia’, *Australian Geographer* 52, no. 3 (2021): 257-272.

Smith makes a useful argument in noting that heritage is an embodied process of experiencing and performing the remembered past in the present.<sup>15</sup> She further notes, ‘heritage is something vital and alive. It is a moment of action and not something frozen in material form’.<sup>16</sup> In this sense, the urban space and the intangibility of heritage as an experience rather than the materiality of it, became an important factor for the authors in designing the research methods. The museums in Chandernagore and Panjim, and the urban structures that commemorate French and Portuguese heritage in these cities, are in continuous conversation with each other. It is through these conversations/negotiations that the moments of convergence and divergences occur. If heritage is a process,<sup>17</sup> then it is ‘performed’<sup>18</sup> or unfolded through two different trajectories: performance ‘as the art of producing the now’<sup>19</sup> and performance as ‘a sense of occasion’<sup>20</sup>. Both Chandernagore and Panjim remember their colonial pasts, which are discordant to the dominant discourse of colonialism, by braiding in these two different kinds of performances heritage in complex ways.

Approaching the authors’ understanding of the various French and Portuguese colonial heritage spaces as encounters, negotiations, performance, and re-enactments, the article focusses on research methods that centre the examination of this article as open, exploratory and as a process. The extended ethnographic fieldwork and observation in the two heritage precincts, over a period of several decades (most recently in 2020) have been conducted both as researchers and as tourists with a personal connection to these spaces.

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<sup>15</sup> Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006), 44.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>17</sup> Duncan Grewcock. ‘Performing Heritage (Studies) at the Lord Mayor’s Show’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20, no. 7-8 (2014): 760-781. DOI: 10.1080/13527258.2013.807434.

<sup>18</sup> Smith, *Uses of Heritage*; Smith, ‘Visitor Emotion, Affect and Registers of Engagement at Museums and Heritage Sites: 99.

<sup>19</sup> Nigel Thrift, ‘Non-Representational Theory’, in *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (London: Routledge, 2000), 29.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 46.

Diti , born in Calcutta, about thirty kilometres south from Chandernagore has made multiple personal visits to the city of Chandernagore. It is during one of these visits that the discordance of presentation of colonial history became apparent. Calcutta/Kolkata's geographical proximity to Chandernagore, its convergent and divergent historical trajectory with Chandernagore, and the sustained intersections with museology will be discussed in detail in the next section. From these points, it is important to note that Diti 's repeated visits to Chandernagore from Kolkata both as a tourist and as a researcher for this project has been central to the ways in which we have collected data for this study.

Robert was born in the north of England, but is married to a Goan, and has made many visits to the territory over more than twenty years. As a British citizen, he has reflected upon and discussed that country's colonial occupation of India with locals across the country. He has frequently been struck by the different attitude to colonial legacy in Goa, with regards to both British and Portuguese coloniality in the subcontinent. Visiting as tourist, family member, and researcher, he has enjoyed long collaborative discussions and enduring relationships across the state.

Robert's research for this article emerged from dozens of visits to the colonial centre of Panjim, generally with Goan friends and family members. These varied in time of the day and season of the year, and date from the late 1990s to early 2020. Most visits were everyday trips for shopping and walks, as well as occasional visits to see friends at work in the heritage precinct and social visits in general. He has visited a range of museums on each visit, enjoying the connections between museum practices in Goa and his broader research into museum cultures of Latin America.

The article draws particular attention to the narrative strategies within the museums and heritage precincts in the two cities. In addition, it analyses artefacts, tourist ephemera, and the broader heritage precincts to explore exhibitions' relationship to narratives of Indian

independence and decolonisation. Both authors have visited each of the sites over a period of several decades, noting their gradual evolution and consolidation as part of new investments in the two regions' tourist infrastructure. As with many such institutions in India, taking photographs within the museum spaces of both Panjim and Chandernagore was restricted. As a result, the fieldwork primarily relied on individual fieldnotes and observational research for a documentation of the internal exhibition spaces of the museums. The photographs provided in the article are those of the external public heritage precincts in which the two museums are located. Operating within these limitations, if they can at all be considered so, the article has prioritised the affective capabilities of heritage research methodologies. The fieldwork exploration can be understood in two different sections.

The first section is focussed on reflections on an affective engagement with the politics of display in the museum. In examining pain in the British Museum through a postcolonial lens, Tolia-Kelly argues for the importance of valuing affective politics in heritage spaces.<sup>21</sup> In this paper, our focus is on the ways in which the authors' individual immersive walk-throughs in the museum spaces and public spaces, encountering the display of objects, served as a catalyst to think of the French and Portuguese colonies as discordances. Both Diti and B, made notes of their affective registers through their experiences. In addition, they have also made notes on their observations of the responses of other visitors to the displayed objects in museum, well within, of course, ethical the limitations of conducting observational research.

The second part of the research methodology employed in this project can be considered as a combination of accidental ethnography,<sup>22</sup> and of duo-ethnography.<sup>23</sup> Lee Ann Fujii in

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<sup>21</sup> Tolia-Kelly, *Affective Nationalisms and Race*.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher N.Poulos, 'Writing a Bridge to Possibility', *International Review of Qualitative Research* 7, no. 3 (2014): 342-358. DOI: 10.1525/irqr.2014.7.3.275; Joseph Levitan, Davin Carr-Chellman, and Alison Carr-Chellman. 'Accidental Ethnography: A Method for Practitioner-based Education Research', *Action Research* 18, no. 30 (2020): 336-352. DOI: 10.1177/1476750317709078.

<sup>23</sup> Rina Zazkis and Boris Koichu, 'A Fictional Dialogue on Infinitude of Primes: Introducing Virtual Duoethnography', *Educational Studies in Mathematics* 88, no. 2 (2015): 163-181.

developing the concept of accidental ethnography demonstrated the ways in which field researchers can use this methodology to form and create newer understanding between a researcher and their position with the social context of the research space, both geographical and metaphorically.<sup>24</sup> As Poulos notes, accidental ethnography as a research method enables ‘sudden (re)negotiation of the initial terms of engagement and paying greater attention to the unplanned or accidental moments that take place beyond pre-planned fieldwork’.<sup>25</sup> This method proved to be particularly useful in the methodological thinking in relation to this article. As already mentioned earlier both Diti and Robert have visited these cities and their museums in both personal and professional capacities. Yet, as the contexts for visits have been different each time, so has the affective value of the experience. It was only after visiting these two cities individually on personal tours, that they chanced upon the convergences and divergences in their experiences of Chandernagore and Panjim – as cities of dissonant colonialities, which eventually lead to the inception of this project.

Over time, the repeated visits to the respective museums and city spaces, created a sense of what Peake calls ‘relational connectedness’,<sup>26</sup> between the individual and collective visits of the authors, visits for research and visits for personal purposes. Thus, the auto-ethnographic sensibilities that situate the research within emerge from these multiple visits. As the authors progressed the research process, their collective writing sessions also brought forward the ‘affective value’ of experience the French and Portuguese museum spaces as a site of discordance and discomfort in their negotiation between these discordant colonial histories and their British colonial counterparts. They employed a duo-ethnographic writing both as a

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<sup>24</sup> Lee Ann Fujii, ‘Five Stories of Accidental Ethnography: Turning Unplanned Moments in the Field into Data’, *Qualitative Research* 15, no. 4 (2015): 525.

<sup>25</sup> Christopher N. Poulos, ‘Spirited Accidents: An Autoethnography of Possibility’, *Qualitative Inquiry* 16, no. 1 (2010): 52. DOI: 10.1177/1077800409350063.

<sup>26</sup> L. Peake, ‘In, Out and Unspeakably About: Taking Social Geography Beyond an Anglo-American Positionality’, *Social and Cultural Geography*, 12, no. 7 (2011): 770. DOI:10.1080/14649365.2011.610245.

research methodology and a writing process for this paper as a follow up of the ‘accidental ethnographic’ reflections. Duo-ethnography is a form of auto-ethnographic process that involves the construction of narrative,<sup>27</sup> where two ethnographers share their personal histories and perspectives.<sup>28</sup> The research context from individual perspective is communicated through a dialogue, where the differences and commonalities of their research experiences emerge. The next two sections use the reflections from individual fieldwork and duo-ethnographic writing process, in analysing Chandernagore and Panjim as cities of fluidity and mobilities.

### **1.3 Chandernagore and Panjim: cities of fluidity/mobilities**

In this section the authors define discordance as a lens to trace the unique ways in which the museums and the public heritage sites of these two cities mobilise their French and Portuguese colonial heritage in present times, while negotiating with heritage of the British Raj. We situate our understanding of discordance at the intersections of critical heritage studies and non-representational theory. However, this is not the only trajectory of discordance that is at play in Chandernagore and Panjim. Post-independence from their respective colonial powers, these cities have also created newer identities for themselves. For example, Chandernagore is known for its French colonial heritage past, but primarily within the limits of the Authorised Heritage Discourse, presented through the local museum and the Chandernagore City Council website. Outside of such representations, Chandernagore has developed newer cultural and social identities that form integral aspects of the heritage of the city.

Goa is well-known for its Portuguese colonial past, creating a rich colonial legacy of forts as well as churches, several of which comprise a UNESCO World Heritage site. Panjim is far less famous as a space for colonial heritage. Its so-called ‘Portuguese Quarter’ was only recently

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<sup>27</sup> Zazkis and Koichu, ‘A Fictional Dialogue on Infinitude of Primes’.

<sup>28</sup> Sally Denshire, ‘On Auto-Ethnography’, *Current Sociology* 62, no. 6 (2014): 831-850. DOI: 10.1177/0011392114533339.

conceptualised as a coherent precinct, seeking to increase tourist interest and footfall that otherwise focuses on the casino ships moored in the middle of the river. The museum was first established in the late 1970s, finally inaugurated in the 1990s, but was only moved to the former Portuguese palace in central Panjim in 2018. Long-established as a commercial and administrative centre, new identities are emerging from the city's complex heritage and contemporary tourism. At the centre of these expressions is the city's fraught history as capital of Portuguese India.

Curved around both cities are two rivers that have played significant roles in trade, commerce, and urban development in their colonial and post-colonial eras. Thus, the Hooghly River in Chandernagore and Mandovi River in Panjim render these cities a unique character of fluidity – they perform as cities of coming and going; of mobilities and immobilities.<sup>29</sup> They are sites of historical connectivity as well as contemporary trade. Just as ships from Europe moored in the deep-sea harbour, so cargoes of manganese and iron ore continue to ply the Mandovi River today. Similarly, the Hooghly River became the primary incentive for multiple colonialities along the coastline of Bengal. In exploring Chandernagore and Panjim, we examine the ways in which a sense of discordance become evident in mediating non-British colonial heritage in these cities. Before the authors reflect on the observations from their research methodology, here they would like to define their understanding of what discordance entails as a heritage experience (both in museums and public space).

The authors arrived at their sense of the word discordance during a collective reflection and writing process, and it primarily emerged from a feeling of uneasiness. This uneasiness developed when their affective knowledge about a heritage space, informed through lived experiences and complex entanglement with materialities of heritage spaces, came into conflict

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<sup>29</sup> Peter Adey, 'If Mobility is Everything then it is Nothing: Towards a Relational Politics of (Im)Mobilities', *Mobilities* 1, no. 1 (2006): 75-94.

with the propagated authorised heritage discourse of a heritage space. Smith suggests that an authorised heritage discourse works to ‘construct a sense of what heritage is – and is not’.<sup>30</sup> In naturalising a range of assumptions about the nature and meaning of heritage, it creates an authorised trajectory that is characterised by absences of presences.<sup>31</sup> In practice, the authors’ contact with the authorised heritage discourse often comes through the formal mode of communicating heritage. Often, an expectation of what one might experience in a museum, or a public space of heritage is pre-determined through a construction narrative. An interest in non-representational theory and its intersection with critical geographies of heritage, alongside the significance of affect in understanding embodied encounters of heritage, have demonstrated the importance of paying attention to experiences of emotion and *feeling* in these spaces.<sup>32</sup> As Voutsinas notes, ‘[i]n affective heritage, the impetus is for visitors to feel meaning as it is produced through embodied encounters with and within memorial spaces’.<sup>33</sup> The article therefore situates an understanding of discordance within these conceptual dimensions of encountering and experiencing heritage.

It is suggested that discordance is a moment in the embodied process of encountering heritage spaces during which one pays active attention to the divergences and convergences, between their personal experience of the space, local informalized versions of heritage and the authorised representations of heritage. The affective dimensions of experiencing spaces of heritage by paying attention to the moments of discordance can produce an infinite number of

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<sup>30</sup> Smith, ‘Visitor Emotion, Affect and Registers of Engagement at Museums and Heritage Sites’: 166.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*: 166.

<sup>32</sup> Emma Waterton, ‘A More-than-Representational Understanding of Heritage? The ‘Past’ and the Politics of Affect’, *Geography Compass* 8, no. 11 (2014): 823-833. DOI:10.1111/gec3.12182; Andreas Huyssen, ‘Monument and Memory in a Postmodern Age’, *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 6, no. 2 (1993): 249; Mike Crang and Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, ‘Nation, Race, and Affect: Senses and Sensibilities at National Heritage Sites’, *Environment and Planning A* 42, no. 10 (2010): 2315-2331. DOI:10.1068/a4346.

<sup>33</sup> J.Micieli-Voutsinas, ‘An Absent Presence: Affective Heritage at the National September 11th Memorial and Museum’, *Emotion, Space and Society* 24 (2017): 94. DOI: 10.1016/j.emospa.2016.09.005.



trajectories. An attention to these, opens different possibilities of knowing and experiencing heritage.<sup>34</sup> Further, within the context of heritage studies and museology in the Indian sub-continent, it is particularly useful to centre critical reflections on the ways in which the authors have understood discordance. Existing literature on Indian museology and heritage have repeatedly demonstrated the intentional orchestration of post-Independent India's identity as enduring, universal, unified and nationalist.<sup>35</sup> This is not only factually incorrect but in no way reflects the diverse and complex fabric of India's heritage, especially in terms of its colonial history. In this context, the authors believe that an attentiveness to the discordant feelings, and affective encounters with the material presence of heritage space in the two cities in question here, creates possibilities of countering the authorised trajectories of heritage propagated through state and federal powers. In the rest of this section, the authors use three sites of analysis to demonstrate the convergences and divergences of Chandernagore and Panjim's colonial history, through the lens of discordance.

a) The first point of focus are the museums in Chandernagore and Panjim. The formal spaces of heritage in these two cities are comprised of the local museums - the *Institut de Chandernagore*, managed by the Archaeological Survey of India, and the State Museum of Goa owned and managed by the Department of Museums of the State Government of Goa. Initial observations revealed that the museums in these two cities are assigned primary and significant stakeholder roles within the context of heritage tourism. This is evident through the ways in which the historical legacy of French coloniality is 'institutionalised and embedded' in the primary modes of communication and documents related to the museum and the city council.<sup>36</sup> For example, the official website of the Municipal Corporation of Chandernagore

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<sup>34</sup> Waterton, 'A More-than-Representational Understanding of Heritage?'

<sup>35</sup> Robert Mason and Diti Bhattacharya, 'Discordant Colonialism: Museums and the Emergence of Indian Independence in the Former Territories of French and Portuguese India', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 27, no. 12 (2021): 1296-1309. DOI: 10.1080/13527258.2021.1969983; Mathur and Singh, *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying*.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, 'Visitor Emotion, Affect and Registers of Engagement at Museums and Heritage Sites:127.

briefly outlines a short chronological history of the French colonial rule, in the ‘About us’ section. There is no reference to the official, unofficial, and everyday spaces of heritage and tourism of the city in this section or elsewhere on the official website. Within the museum space of *Institute de Chandernagore*, the material objects displaying the French colonial past creates a sense of occasion.

A sensation of discordance is created in this process of creating a sense of occasion within the material space of the museum. This occasion is an overpowering focus on creating a sense of revisiting of memories,<sup>37</sup> that is interweaved with colonial ‘fond sentimentalities.’<sup>38</sup> The elaborate display of the French cutlery, coins, tapestry, arms and ammunition, chandelier, and furniture signals towards invitation to revive colonial grandeur without any engagement with the socio-political implications of French coloniality. In contrast, the public spaces of French colonial heritage, such as the *Strand*, the Promenade and the private buildings that bear architectural remnants of the French colonial past, ‘produce a sense of now’ while flirting with the past.<sup>39</sup>

This is particularly true in the case of Chandanangore, in contrast to other French colonies, because the designs of private heritage buildings in city have over time created a unique melange of French and Bengali architecture.

In Panjim too, the museum is presented as the main encounter with the city’s colonial past. While there is an unofficial tour of the quarter, the city’s website is clear that the museum exists ‘to create awareness among people and educate the masses’ of ‘the various aspects of the Goan

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<sup>37</sup> David Bissell, ‘How Environments Speak: Everyday Mobilities, Impersonal Speech and the Geographies of Commentary’, *Social & Cultural Geography* 16, no. 2: 146-164. DOI: 10.1080/14649365.2014.958520.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph M. Cheer and Keir J. Reeves, ‘Colonial Heritage and Tourism: Ethnic Landscape Perspectives’, *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 10, no. 2: 155. DOI: 10.1080/1743873X.2014.985224.

<sup>39</sup> R. Bandyopadhyay and G. Dann, “‘Yearning for the British Raj’: The Touristic Consumption of Colonial Nostalgia in India’, *Tourism Culture & Communication* 18, no. 3 (2018): 171.

Culture, traditions and society'.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the focus is on the museums as the primary representation of coloniality in the cities, regardless of how reductive and limited in its imagination this is.<sup>41</sup> Both Authors A and B experienced the divergent presentation of discordant colonialities through their individual embodied experiences in the museums. It was upon collective reflections, however, that their experience of affective discordance rendered through the authorised heritage discourse of the museums converged.

The material arrangement of objects and artefacts in the Chandernagore museum is primarily focussed on the creation of two narratives. First is a detailed presentation of material objects, especially crockery, cutlery, tapestry, and furniture, sub-categorised into the French East India company, the French furniture gallery, the Dupleix Gallery, the French administration gallery, and the freedom of Chandernagore gallery. These objects are personal belongings of the various governor generals who ruled over the region. There is an occasional presence of a military cannon. The description underneath the cannon, documents its significance in the first of the Carnatic Wars or the Anglo-French War of 1746-48. Organised over three different rooms, these galleries are primarily focussed on documenting the presence of the French as the colonial power in the city of Chandernagore. It is where, as a visitor experience, the first affective feeling of discordance is registered. Upon Diti 's multiple visits to the museum on both personal trips and as a part of fieldtrips for this project, the material presence and the social, historical, and cultural absence of the French colonial legacy becomes apparent. The presence of these material objects is made known to the visitors, and the politics of their arrangement and representation focuses on the historical and cultural value in relation to the French period of coloniality in Chandernagore. In the section where the history of the Carnatic

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<sup>40</sup> *About Us: Goa State Museum*, <https://goamuseum.gov.in/about-us/>

<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth Edwards and Matt Mead, 'Absent Histories and Absent Images: Photographs, Museums, and the Colonial Past', *Museum and Society* 11, no. 1: 19-38.

War is briefly documented, Chandernagore's 1756 role in the Carnatic War is not brought into context. As a result of these detached representations, there is little to no engagement with the historical, political context of these collections.

The rest of the museum focuses on India's Freedom movement, literature with a specific focus on the poetry of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, European painting, terracotta and handicrafts, coins and ivory artworks and handicraft collection. The trajectory of these sets of material collection has no direct link with the French colonial legacy of Chandernagore. The narrative created through this arrangement of material objects, remains an important and permanent element in museums of discordant colonialities, in so far as a unifying and universal sense of India's colonial past is brought to the forefront. Thus, British colonial history that has more relevance in relation to the city of Calcutta, finds a place in a museum dedicated to documenting the French colonial history of Chandernagore. The mediation between French and British colonialities in Chandernagore remain in the fringes, and for the museum to remain 'national',<sup>42</sup> it acquires symbolic depth, through a shallow engagement with its complex colonial history.

The Goa State Museum similarly seeks to manage the complexities of multiple narratives. The building is staffed largely by police personnel with very few docents, and the museum narratives rely on a mix of short textual panels and the objects themselves. The museum setting is also powerful, given it is a former colonial palace, with sweeping stone stairs, white-washed walls, and Mediterranean wall paintings. The exhibition space is divided into three sections, the largest titled 'Goan Culture and Expression through the Ages' followed by a second 'Portuguese Phase'. The first room contains a range of temple artefacts, musical instruments, and a large sample of stone carving of deities, all affirming the territory's enduring Hindu identity. The Portuguese section is smaller, and similarly to Chandernagore is a mixture of

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<sup>42</sup> Mathur and Singh, *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying*, 46.

colonial administrative items such as antique chairs and desks, interspersed with wooden Catholic statues and iconography.

The final room is small but is also the narrative culmination of the museum. The room titled 'Goa's Freedom Struggle' has very little accompanying textual panels and is simply affirmed as 'a photo exhibition'. A series of photographs show the main historical protagonists from the Indian and Portuguese forces in the 1960s, although there are no images of combat or Portuguese and Indian troops. As noted in the small hand-out that is affixed to the wall, 'this exhibition, through small in scale, intends to be a mirror of Goan Society and Culture [sic.] as a part of our national heritage.' The contestability and multiple possibilities of that nation and that heritage are left deliberately unarticulated.

b) Following the analysis of French and Portuguese museums, the authors reflect on the wider public space of heritage of the two cities. The surrounding area in Chandernagore, which is about a kilometre long around the museum is identified as the Strand. Walking along the Strand, and tracing pathways next to the Hooghly River, the entire street seems always to be busy. It is where the tourists come first when they visit Chandernagore. It is also where the locals come for their morning or evening walk. Apart from the museum this precinct hosts the Chandernagore church, the Chandernagore school and government college, a polytechnic institute, and a river walkway by the Strand that is punctuated by band stands and park benches. Each of these buildings bear remnants of French architecture. It is this region that qualifies as the official French heritage precinct within official and popular tourism discourses of Chandernagore.

Within Panjim, the Goa State Museum is centrally located in the colonial quarter. The museum itself abuts the river walkway, flanked by a famous statue to an eighteenth century Goan monk somewhat incongruously famous for hypnosis. Surrounding the museum is the so-called Latin or Portuguese Quarter. In the words of the private heritage tour that guides tourists on walks

through its winding streets, people ‘witness the Portuguese past that survived the onslaught of development in the twenty first century. The houses are dressed yellow, green and blue, balconies fronted by wrought iron railings and tiled roofs transporting you to another era’.<sup>43</sup> The quarter changes from the mix of open-air market, shop fronts, government buildings, and perambulating tourists in the evening. As fairy lights and floodlighting illuminate the heritage buildings, the roads grow busy with taxis and private vehicles taking tourists to the half a dozen large casino ships moored mid-river on the Mandovi. Floating restaurants similarly lure visitors to the river for traditional Goan cuisine, overlooking the heritage precinct.

The wider public spaces of heritage and historical legacies of the cityscape are continually used, remembered as signages of French and Portuguese colonial past, while the museums seek to suggest a unitary sense of national Indian identity at odds with their surrounding locals. For example, the ‘Heritage and People of Chandernagore Project’ led by architect and urban heritage conservationist Aishwariya Tipnis, uses digital technology and open GIS mapping system to trace the various French heritage buildings and initiate their restoration process through crowd sourcing content from the local community.<sup>44</sup> Similarly Immersive Trails, a privately own heritage walk company, has organised multiple heritage walks that focus on Jagadhatri Puja a local religious festival in Chandernagore that is celebrated every year for five days.<sup>45</sup> This is particularly significant in terms of trying to think of what constitutes the heritage of cities like Chandernagore and Panjim. Revisiting the previous discussion on the convergences and divergences of the heritage of these cities, it is important to note here that heritage for these cities not only constitutes the French and Portuguese colonial history, the

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<sup>43</sup> *Fontainhas Heritage Walk*, <https://www.makemytrip.com/activities/india/fontainhas-heritage-walk-go-go-details.html>.

<sup>44</sup> *Heritage and People of Chandernagore Project*, <http://www.aishwaryatipnisarchitects.com/heritagepeopleofchandernagore-fa73dbc9-a186-11e5-9d24-3417ebe479a0.html>.

<sup>45</sup> *Immersive Trails*, <https://www.immersivetrails.com>.

overlaps of British coloniality, but also local everyday heritage that enmeshed with the identity of these sites of European coloniality.

Similar efforts lead us to think of discordant colonial heritage spaces as a materialised social memory, and the ways in which it is different in the case of the museums as opposed to the other public spaces of the city. The museums and the wider city spaces are not in opposition to each other and function as an assemblage, because they live through multiple narratives of the past to make sense of their present. The civic design and other public spaces of heritage live in the present by actively engaging the past. However, these engagement efforts often originate and are initiated by the community of locals and general heritage enthusiasts and practitioners. In many ways, the discordance experiences in the authorised heritage narratives of enduring nationalist colonial past of India, is challenged by efforts from within the local community.

c) In similar ways to the museum and the wider public spaces of heritage in these cities, Chandernagore and Panjim's discordant colonial history is entwined with its riverscape. The Hooghly River along which Chandernagore is located, played a significant role in the invasion and establishment of both the French and British colonial legacies in the city. Using the complex and elaborate tributary river system of the South Asian subcontinent as a conduit, multiple European settler colonial groups such as French, Portuguese and Dutch made inroads into multiple cities in India.

The French colonial history of Chandernagore is entwined with the Hooghly River as it is this river that served as an artery of the European colonies in Bengal. It is the depth of connectivity of this river, that facilitated trade and other economic and industrial inroads into the city. Geographically, the river, the walkway along it, and the governor's house containing the museum, and the promenade in front of it - all of this along the waterfront of river Hooghly - are reminiscent of French civic design, of which the riverscape forms an integral part. In many ways, the Hooghly River, and its relationship with the complex heritage of the city aid in

rethinking and addressing the issue of discordance in these two cities. The rivers remain entwined into the complex, transient and layered heritage of these cities. This also aids in reimagining the cities' complex colonial pasts, by stepping outside of the 'bounded and landed national narratives to embrace the inherent mobility and mutability' these cities.<sup>46</sup> In present times, the segment of Hooghly River that flows along Chandernagore, removes itself from the British colonial nostalgia and becomes emblematic of its French colonial past. This is particularly evident in the ways in which local tourism uses the river in celebrating and mediating its French past. For example, the name *Strand* given to the walkway along the river is heavily inspired by French civic structure. The use of streetlamps, inspired by the candelabra shape are planted at regular intervals in this walkway. Similarly, the recent establishment of a French inspired restaurant provided by the river cruise, has chosen to call itself the French Riviera - the cruise provides a slow river trip along Chandernagore, reminiscent of the city's French colonial past. In this instance, the river does act as reminder of the past but also as a nurturer of the discordant identity of the present. The river tells the story of French colonial trade relationship, their colonial advent and settlement, imperial desires, the complex interaction between the British colonial legacy and the French colonial legacy, that characterise Chandernagore.

In Panjim too, the Portuguese presence was anchored by the Mandovi River. Its bridge was the final site of symbolic resistance by the colonial forces to the Indian army. Throughout Goa's Portuguese period, the river has been a site of fortification and contestation. In the eighteenth century, when local forces sought to eject the Portuguese from their former capital, the islands of the river provided a means to access the heart of Portuguese India. Throughout the wars with

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<sup>46</sup> Claire Sutherland, 'All at Sea? Using Seaborne Mobilities to Decolonialise National Narratives in Maritime Museums', *Mobilities* 17, no. 3 (2022): 393. DOI: 10.1080/17450101.2021.1945422



locals, Indian, and Dutch forces, the Portuguese maintained trade and military contact through the deep-sea waters of the Mandovi. The river's unique harbour capacity for the western coast of India has made it central to regional trade for centuries, and it continues in the contemporary period. Indeed, the arrival of a Portuguese historic tall ship to the river's mouth in 2010, intended as a good-will gesture, led to police holding back both protesters and supporters on the dockside. Its heritage, as a symbol site of connectivity and contestation, remains central to Panjim and its surrounds.

In stark contrast to these river cities' efforts to hold on to their parallel colonial identities through civic design and protection of heritage sites, the museums demonstrate a material and historical absence of these French and Portuguese colonial narratives. The role of rivers in the colonial cityscapes of Chandanangar and Panjim establishes their heritage precincts as places of transience and emergence.

#### **1.4 Rethinking Panjim and Chandernagore as assemblages of multiple historical legacies**

Following our examination of the three major points of convergence and divergences through what we have approached as discordance, we demonstrate the ways in which these presences and absences occur in the heritage spaces of Chandernagore and Panjim, and how they are co-constructive and constitutive of historical narrative in the cities. We analyse these differences not in terms of a duality, but an ongoing process mediation and negotiation for their trajectories of performing their discordant colonial heritage. In other words, the historical legacy of Chandernagore and Panjim are always more than one or two narratives. We use assemblage thinking to see how the re-imaginings of the heritage of these two cities can be useful in challenging the narratives of universality, endurance, and state sponsored nationalism.

Materiality, affect and assemblage thinking have been gaining sustained interest in addressing current debates with heritage. In this context, the ways in which Harrison addresses assemblage

as a meshwork is particularly useful in our work. He advocates for a rethinking of pasts as networks of things and people that ‘are involved in complex, interconnected webs of relationships across time and space’.<sup>47</sup> In discussing heritage assemblage, Dittmer and Waterton similarly note that ‘indeed, it is the coming together of things, bodies and discourses as an assemblage that activates somatic markers and other latent capacities, causing unexpected outcomes’.<sup>48</sup> Moving beyond the politics of representation, we think of this meshwork as a process of commonworlding of emotional and material interactions with competing and simultaneously existing colonial legacies. We use the approach of meshwork to trace the simultaneous negotiations and re-visiting of multiple trajectories of colonial memory. The article’s purpose is to acknowledge the tensions between the formal and informal spaces of heritage and the tensions that exist between them, informed through materiality and affective encounter. It is this possibility of causing unexpected outcomes that makes our idea of discordance central to approaching complex colonial heritage.

The affective registers created by the dialogue between the museums, the public spaces, and the river, in Chandernagore and Panjim respectively, is in fact by default a multiplicity of duration of different kinds of colonial memory. This liberates the space from the sense of representation that comes with a linear and static approach to understanding heritage. This multiple, reworking and rebuilding of experiential knowledge and information seeks a form of expression that is itself liminal and in flux. Assemblages are characterised by their heterogeneity, and complexity which is underlined by the unpredictability of events on the street corner. Assemblages are changed continuously through the affects they produce, there is no end, no conclusion. The authors suggest that this is a particularly useful approach in understanding the colonial historical legacies of Panjim and Chandernagore.

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<sup>47</sup>Harrison, Rodney, Sarah Byrne, and Anne Clarke. *Reassembling the collection: ethnographic museums and indigenous agency*. SAR Press, 2013.

<sup>48</sup> Dittmer and Waterton, “‘You’ll go home with bruises’”.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

Panjim and Chandernagore's efforts to emphasise their colonial identities through civic design and protection of heritage sites are co-constructive and constitutive with the existence of the museums in the same cities. Each portray historical narratives of the cities' colonial legacies that jostle and emerge from this networked tension. The museums construct and demonstrate a material and historical absence of these very French and Portuguese colonial narratives to which the public spaces of Chandernagore and Panjim adhere. Consequently, these cities exist as complex historical material and affective assemblages of multiple historical legacies. By centring attention on the everyday local heritage of these cities, the article highlights the affective resonances of discordance experienced by encountering the material arrangement of objects in the museum. By revisiting the importance of multiple narratives of heritage, the article argues for a more open complex unbounded and networked approach to colonial heritage understandings.

Amidst the tensions between the authorised heritage discourse of the museums and the discordant colonial heritage of the public spaces of Chandernagore and Panjim, the Hooghly and Mandovi rivers render a sense of fluidity and of coming and going. Characteristic of the rivers, both physically and metaphorically amid the stories of colonial presence, the process of remembering and renegotiating affective heritage is transient and fluid. It is this fluidity that provides a unique sense of relevance to the French and Portuguese heritage of these two cities, beyond the museum and the public space, yet in conversation with them. In this sense, the controlled material arrangement of objects and artefacts in the museum, the material presence of discordant heritage in the public space in the form of architecture and civic design, and the fluid materiality of the rivers are emblematic of an assemblage of multiple legacies of heritage. To experience French colonial heritage in Chandernagore or Portuguese heritage in Panjim is not to explore these spaces in isolation, but to make sense of its affective relationality. The

colonial heritage of these two cities is not linear, hence an acknowledgement of the affective discordances that the historical convergences and divergences these spaces of heritage produce might allow for a deeper understanding and meaningful engagement with cities that have multiple colonial legacies.