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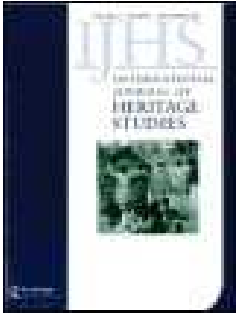
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Susan L. T. Ashley

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## Acts of heritage, acts of value: memorialising at the Chattri Indian Memorial, UK

Susan L. T. Ashley

Department of Arts, Northumbria University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK

### ABSTRACT

The Chattri Indian Memorial is a public site that hosts and embodies heritage in complex ways. Standing on the edge of Brighton, UK in a once-remote part of the Sussex Downs, the Memorial was built in 1921 to honour Indian soldiers who fought on the Western Front during the First World War. As both a sacred place and a space of socio-cultural heritagization processes, the monument is an enduring testament of past values of war heroism, but also more ephemeral practices of ritual. The article documents the heritage-making at work within memorialisation at the Chattri as a case study, examining how differing 'valuations' of a memorial site can be enacted through time, between material form and immaterial practices, and across cultures. The article theorises participants' current affective practices as conscious 'past presencing', and analyses how their conscious acts of heritage-making affectively enacted values of morality, community and belonging.

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### Introduction

This article examines how differing 'valuations' of a heritage site can be enacted through time, between material form and immaterial practices, and across cultures. Heritage is situated here as a cultural phenomenon, involving engagements with the past as a process of cultural or media production and as a social practice. 'Heritagization' is presented as a process of valuation that signifies aspects from the past as important: the making-valuable through conscious actions of things, places, activities, memories, ideas, or sensibilities that are attached to the past in some way. Particular emphasis is placed on two facets of heritagization in this article: how value is experienced and expressed through affective and embodied cultural acts, and, how people typically seen within Western countries as minority 'outsiders' define and value the past as an enactment within their own lives. These questions emerge from the critical heritage research tradition, which foregrounds heritage as a heterogeneous process that brings the perspectives of marginalised people and communities to the centre of debates about how heritage is defined and used (Smith 2012; Winter 2014).

To explore these ideas, the article draws on research into heritagization processes at a unique site near Brighton, UK called the Chattri Indian Memorial. While this historical place was originally associated with colonial memory and empire, grassroots activities at the Chattri led by local Indian residents have imbued the site with new meaning and value. The research asked, how have ideas about the value of this memorial changed, why was this monument and the new memorial activities on site

**CONTACT** Susan L. T. Ashley  susan.ashley@northumbria.ac.uk

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important to participants, how did they express its value to their lives, and in what ways did they consider this their heritage? Investigations focused specifically on ‘memorialization’ as both material and immaterial acts of heritagization that demonstrate how valuation of the past can emerge in different ways, by different peoples, in different periods.

The Chattri Memorial is a public monument built in 1921 on an isolated spot on the South Downs near Brighton to honour soldiers from undivided-India who fought on the Western Front during the First World War (Figure 1). During this war more than one million Indian army soldiers served alongside British troops, with over 140,000 Indian soldiers active in Europe (Corrigan 1999). Between 1914 and 1916, 4306 wounded Indians were hospitalised at the Royal Pavilion estate in the city of Brighton (Hyson and Lester 2012). Fifty-three Sikh and Hindu soldiers died there and their remains were cremated at the site of the monument, and 21 Muslim soldiers were buried at the Shah Jahan Mosque nearby. While the memorial is an enduring testament of past values of war heroism, it has also evolved as a space of ephemeral socio-cultural practices of ritual and pilgrimage, animated most years since 1951 with commemorative services each June followed by a tea and socialising attended by descendants, legionnaires, local residents, ethnic organisations, officials and other individuals.

The location, material monument, ritual ceremonies and informal activities at the Chattri Memorial were studied during five site visits from June 2013 to June 2014.<sup>1</sup> The research combined visual and textual examination of the tangible object and how it was emplaced in space (the monument), with ethnographic inspection of discourses and experiential encounters with the site (practices), and how participants interpreted both, aiming to assemble multiple cognitive and experiential types of knowledge (McIlvenny and Noy 2011). Memorialising was examined through the symbolic form and ritual practices but also through the affective and embodied human acts in relation to the physical monument. As suggested by Nora (1989), collective memory is attached to *lieux de mémoire* or symbolic elements of a landscape that remind a group of the past. He writes that ‘statues or monuments to the dead owe their meaning to their intrinsic existence’ as solid and monumental lieux that act as mnemonic markers. But Nora also notes other sites that are ‘ensembles’ constructed over time, thus ‘forever open to a full range of significations (1989, 23)’. This article offers an analysis of ‘value’ as signified both through the memorial as a symbolic lieu or material representation from a particular historical period, and through the embodied practices that marked the Chattri through felt experiences (Simon 2010). These attitudes and activities were explored as an ensemble of informal and affective meaning-making that constituted the nature of the heritage here. Assigning value through an embodied *making* of heritage was found to be an emotional and political process, as writers such as Smith and Campbell (2015) and Lynch (2014) have argued, which called on affective and cognitive responses in the assignment of value by research participants.



Figure 1. Chattri Indian Memorial site north of Brighton on the Sussex Downs. Source: Photo by author.

An essential factor in the Chattri research was the memorial's character as a historical site 'outside' of mainstream ideas about heritage. The monument's remote location, its design, its history and its connoted meanings situated the site as singular, marginal and not quite British in significance (Littler 2005). In line with its critical heritage perspective, the research sought to make this site central, not marginal, to understanding what constitutes cultural and heritage value, and insert new knowledge about the complexity of race and heritage in the UK. Such an emphasis emerges from the increased focus within heritage studies on community or 'from below' engagements with heritage (e.g. Gentry 2013; Robertson 2012; Waterton and Smith 2010), which were spurred by Smith's foundational critique of 'authorized heritage discourses' that ascribe top-down meaning and value to heritage resources (2006). The Chattri research is also situated within the accumulating scholarship that specifically addresses the place of minority cultures within national narratives about heritage (e.g. Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge 2007; Crang and Tolia-Kelly 2010; Littler 2005), and the politics of race that some writers argue still underscores the production of heritage meanings and significations in the UK (Dwyer and Bressey 2009; Naidoo 2008, 2011). The aim was to build on and contribute to the small body of literature that takes the points of view of deterritorialised and racialised people themselves in expressing the evolving nature of their identities, heritage and senses of belonging (e.g. Buciek and Juul 2008; Fortier 2000; Hall 1990). The research focused on 'outsider' perspectives about the physical resource and heritage experiences, foregrounding the ways in which these members of non-Western communities interpreted the value of the monument and comprehended their own acts of memorialising there. Their heritagization activities were explored as interactive and participatory 'enaction' (Stewart, Gapenne, and Di Paolo 2007) and as social, cultural and symbolic 'claim-making' (Isin 2008) that asserted and validated belonging within UK society.

This article explores and analyses these acts of heritagization in two sections. The first sets the context of war memorialising as a material form of heritage valuation in the UK. The section details the historical events that resulted in the building of the Chattri monument and the sequence of memorialising activities at the site. The second section analyses the present-day embodied practices at the Chattri by those who attended the memorial event. It demonstrates how their memorialising relied on acts of heritage-making that translated emotional resonance into affective consciousness to assert ideas of value.

### War memorialising and the Chattri

At its heart, the Chattri Memorial is a war monument. War memorials are a noticeable part of public space in the UK, marking history with monumental presence in towns and villages across the country, and acting as spaces for remembrance ceremonies. With the anniversary of WWI in 2014, war memorials have become a focus for UK government and popular interest, and recent research has inspected their significance from historical, social, cultural, architectural and political perspectives (e.g. King 2014; Low, Oliver, and Rhodes 2013; Mycock 2014). This form of memorialising is an inherent part of the 'affective infrastructure' that shapes national memory and national heritage (Crang and Tolia-Kelly 2010). Monuments work materially, spatially and visually to define a particular social and ethical order, and these values are legitimised and normalised as part of the collective memory and heritage of the nation (Abousnougou and Machin 2011; Winter and Sivan 2000). The Great War was a catastrophic event in the lives of Britons, and the process of denoting its magnitude invoked a highly organised state response (Wilson 2013). Public monuments and formalised remembrance ceremonies became state-generated means to re-focus popular sentiments about the war around the value of ultimate sacrifice (Bonney 2013). Such memorials also addressed future audiences, seeking to 'colonize' an imagined future with heroic values current of the time (Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge 2007, 3) through continual re-enactments of the desired messages, like the annual services in the UK.

While the monuments and their rituals mobilise and manage collective emotions to ensure that members of society will continue to remember and value, *lest we forget*, (Oushakine 2013), a range of studies demonstrate how meanings about monuments can change over time. Authors in *War and*

*Cultural Heritage* (Sørensen and Rose 2015), for example, employ case study ‘biographies’ to trace these changes, while researchers on battlefield tourism demonstrate how new ways of mourning become important as new generations of visitors with no direct connection with the dead engage with these sites (Iles 2012; Winter 2011). Few of these works, however, study war memorialising from the perspectives of minority cultures, although histories of British colonial troops in WWI have been written (e.g. Corrigan 1999; Omissi 2012; Singh 2014).

The Chattri monument shares some of these connotations of memorialising – symbolic and evocative in a material, public manner – but also diverges in important ways. The Chattri Memorial was not part of the broader programme of Great War monument construction across Britain, but instead had more colonial intent. Hyson and Lester (2012, 19) argue that this monument was a material gesture to re-focus popular *Indian* sentiments about the war, aimed at maintaining Britain’s imperial presence in India. The British government at the time was keen to portray a good image in its handling of colonial soldiers and those who died. Hyson and Lester write that ‘a particular value was placed on the bodies of these men: ... their sacrifice was especially significant in an order of imperial power jeopardised during the war’ (Hyson and Lester 2012, 21). The government sanctioned cremation on a burning *ghat* north of Brighton and their ashes were scattered in the sea to accommodate the practices of the Hindu and Sikh soldiers. In 1921 the memorial was erected on the site of the cremations.

The construction of the monument and its subsequent unveiling ceremony were highly symbolic acts that validated colonial ways of thinking reflective of that era. The subjectivity of Indian soldiers expressed by public discourse at the time was that of loyal colonials coming to the aid of the mother country. From a state perspective the memorial was a particular act of appeasement by the paternal ‘King-Emperor’ (Hyson and Lester 2012). The inscription on the marble base of the Chattri reads in Hindi and English, ‘To the memory of all the Indian soldiers who gave their lives for their King-Emperor in the Great War ...’. The monument was unveiled by the Prince of Wales, King-Emperor-in-waiting, on 21 February 1921 in a well-publicised ceremony demonstrating England’s worthy intentions towards its colony. A huge flag of the British Raj draped over the monument visibly marked the Chattri as an object of Empire, was removed by the Prince before crowds of English and Indian dignitaries, soldiers and school children (Figure 2).

This memorial’s original valuation was thus based on its function as an imperial gesture in the wake of World War I. However the maintenance of historical value depends on continued enactments of rituals of remembrance. Instead, the Chattri was abandoned by the government after its unveiling,



**Figure 2.** Chattri Memorial dedication ceremony, Brighton, 1921. Source: Photo courtesy The Royal Pavilion and Museums, Brighton and Hove.

confirming the impression that this symbolic performance was the primary intention by the British government. Situated in an isolated location only accessible by walking trail, after 1921 the memorial was deserted, even incorporated into an area of manoeuvres during the Second World War and subject to army target practices (Donovan 2005).

### Changing memorialisation processes

Isolation, and the passing of the monument from local memory, allowed the site to shed past valuations and take on new meanings and uses. In 1951, thirty years after its opening ceremony, a new generation began a somewhat-annual memorial ceremony at the Chattri. Organised at a local level by Second World War veterans, the goal was to perpetuate remembrance of that war and soldiers' sacrifice, shifting the value of the monument from a very specific colonial symbolic function to a broader-based value as place for rituals of commemoration. This Royal British Legion ceremony was attended by military representatives but uniquely, also by British-Indian veterans groups. In 1999 the Legion wished to give up the event, as its members were too old to trek across the fields to the monument. But the cancellation provoked an unanticipated reaction. A newspaper article in *The Observer* interviewed Indian veterans who accused organisers of 'racism and small-mindedness' (McVeigh 2000, 14). The Legion had decided to end the ceremony without understanding of the depth of cultural value of this event to the Indian veterans or community groups. As Crang and Tolia-Kelly (2010) observe, heritage sites can embed racialized modalities in their felt experience – and heritage-making rituals such as this Legion ceremony exemplified a white-British military performance. Thus, to withdraw their organisation was interpreted by some as a racist act, however unconscious.

This abandonment by the local Legion began the story of re-appropriation by Indian organisers. One Brighton resident from the Sikh community, who had never been to the ceremony, was not a veteran, nor had any connection to the dead soldiers, read the newspaper article and stepped forward to help. The first Indian-led memorial service in 2000 was poorly attended, but through the labour of this volunteer, with some support from a local historian and the director of the Brighton and Hove Black History group, word spread within the Asian community and through the local media. The Chattri became a site that allowed Indian culture to be made visible in Brighton – a community identified by race and colonial position.

I just feel that we're creating our own culture because there's nothing here for us ... To think that we lived in a city that was a hospital town for Indian soldiers, and you can walk around Brighton and not see anything to refer to that -nothing for the Indian man around Brighton. (Interview C, March 23, 2014)<sup>2</sup>

The shift from white Britons to ethnic-Indian Britons altered the nature of cultural understandings and what aspects of memorialising were made-valuable or heritagized. Dissimilar symbolic and material codes into what was valued as 'normal' memorialising (Ibarra-Colado 2006). The emphasis was re-placed on the men who were cremated on this spot and acts of remembrance perpetuated by Indian organisers. The formal order of service developed for the day reflects a hybrid of standard militaristic rituals and particular Indian cultural practices, such as replacing a Christian priest with Hindu and singing a Hindu hymn. The Chattri became less a site for bereaved descendants of the deceased, and instead more of a site of Indian cultural affirmation – 'we're creating our own culture' was echoed by other participants. Even the distinctive marble 'Chattri' ('umbrella' in Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu) architecture was re-appropriated by participants as evidence of Asian-ness. The Indian veterans and audiences perceived the identity of the person who organised the events as 'one of them' thus sharing understandings and responsibility (Focus Group – March 23, 2014).

The experience at the annual event on a June afternoon, studied over two occasions in 2013 and 2014, was solemn, passionate, social, touching and joyous. The old ceremony by the Legion was enhanced by the new local volunteers to engender a unique sense of memorialisation. With some participants arriving by foot, some by car and motorbike, and others by hired bus from London, at least 250 people gathered at this isolated location on the downs (Figure 3). Dress code was not specified, but a wealth of suits, saris, turbans and military uniforms were joined by t-shirts and blue jeans. The





**Figure 3.** Chattri Memorial ceremony, June 2005. Source: Photo courtesy B. Williams, Brighton and Hove Black History.

presence of a military motorcycle group in leather regalia, bearing witness and expressing solidarity with war dead, added to the heterogeneous sensibility of the space. Assorted audiences come from across the country – Indian descendants, local residents, Black history enthusiasts and ethnic organisations mixed with official invitees, which grew after 2000 to include the Queen’s representative, the local Marquis, and the Indian High Command:

There was lots of people here last year. It was really horrible wet and cold last year – there was still lots here. Lots of older people ... and it’s good to see a lot of younger people here as well. It’s quite amazing isn’t it? (Ceremony participant, June 9, 2013)

What is interesting about this is that it is very intercultural! You get people who under normal circumstances would never meet. You get bikers, your Hindu culture – it’s really nice actually. (Ceremony participant, June 9, 2013)

Just the fact that mountain bikers stop and get off and participate says a lot. I like that it’s open. It’s not like there’s someone at the door, ‘ok you’re not allowed in anymore’. (Ceremony participant, June 9, 2013)

These were mostly strangers, but under the unconventional circumstances, and perhaps with a sense of connectedness because of that lack of convention, people moved about the space and talked to each other freely. This unlikely mixture of people came together and formed a ‘community’ joined in an affective sense of place and significance

It didn’t matter that there were Sikhs, Muslims, Gurkha or White, Australians, the fact is that they sacrificed their lives so that we may all stand here, regardless of colour. You know, people talk to me about things like that and that’s why they’re there. (Interview D, October 27, 2013)

### **New heritagization practices**

The remembrance activities of the new Indian organisers continued to reference the symbolic value of the material monument, and employed ritual to draw people together. But more than this, embodied actions in the space produced a unique sense of ‘occasion’ with affective impact that marked present-day concerns through engagement with the past. The affective impact of heritage practices has been debated in the literature, where non-cognitive and non-representational theories stress embodied knowledge that emerges from enactment, performance or witnessing more so than what is produced or represented (e.g. Crouch 2012; Thrift 2008), whereas others caution that any form of knowing is mediated, managed and involves the *making* of meaning (e.g. Smith and Campbell 2015). The Chattri research explored the power not just of the emotion generated by the embodied movements of people here, but also the conscious experiencing and interpreting of that emotion. What was important was

the awareness of 'doing', which places the emphasis on the performance of the body and what we think about our performance (Waterton 2012). Macdonald (2013, 12–13) has offered the concept of 'past presencing' to frame relationships with the past that are more than remembrance and have very little memory-content but encompass unconscious or affective, as well as conceptual or cognitive, levels of experience. It is within this sensibility that heritagization – the *conscious making-valuable* of the past through embodied actions – can be understood as a heightened affective process, or an 'act' of heritage.

The affective conditions at work at the Chattri were stimulated by a combination of the evocative impact of the memorial's location, the felt sense of historic resource's tangible form, and the generative sense of 'occasion' brought on by embodied actions during the memorialising event. 'Affective consequence', according to Roger Simon (2010, 134), emerges first from the experience with the sign itself. The emotional effect of the monument's remarkable setting on an isolated windswept hillside is a deep sensibility of solemnity and spirituality. Trigg (2012, 82–83) describes the heightened sensation of 'physical concentration' and isolation at the Chattri derived particular from the 'emergence of silence' at the 'sense of the uncanny' The white marble monument, curved and 'oriental' by design, has an ethereal quality that does not appeal to war or soldiering. There had been an intentional emplacement of the burning *ghat* at this location, and this very basic practice – the treatment of the dead – is itself the ritualised enactment of spiritual values. The memorial and its physical location were described by all study participants as fundamentally important:

There is something genuinely haunting ... If there's one thing that made an impression on me besides the monument itself is actually standing on the spot and looking towards the sea. (Interview K, October 28, 2013)

You feel very spiritual ... you're at peace. ... when you're there you feel that you're looking out at the city at a particular spot and know, um ... it has more significance standing there than if you were anywhere else, because you're actually somewhere that carries a lot of history behind it. (Interview M, March 26, 2014)

Meaning and value was derived from its attributes as spiritual place and historical object, but also from its role as a space of cultural practice. This emerged from the rituals, but also from the felt encounters generated by people's informal ways of doing in embodied, affective and novel forms. Being-there, or physical presence at the Chattri, was the point of the ceremony each year – participating and witnessing in person, on that very spot (Figure 4):

What's really nice is no matter what's the weather, you'll still have a good turnout.... people still trek up there in their wellies or whatever, in their raincoats and wellies.... If I miss it, I feel quite guilty that I have missed it. I think that the first time I went, I went because my mom goes and I have to go and support this. Now it's something I take my children to. (Interview M, March 26, 2014)



Figure 4. Participants assemble before the Chattri Memorial ceremony, June 2013. Source: Photo by the author.

Something new was created here – an unexpected and non-traditional experience that depended on and referenced the past, but achieved resonance from seeing, being seen, interacting and relating with each other, marking out the occasion. This observation reflects similar findings in battlefield tourism studies. Iles, for example, notes how sites of battle and commemoration in Europe have become sacred places for visitors where ‘something that is unique and special’ is created (2012, 194). In this case, tourists mediate their experiences through their bodies and social interactions with strangers, and express a range of different expectations, narratives and emotionally charged points of view (198). Such informal activities bring new ideas about the ‘value’ of official monuments and their historical milieu.

### Heritagization as valuation

People’s presence at the Chattri Memorial, their being-there, this ‘past presencing’ through memorialising practices, demonstrated a cognitive comprehension and action of valuation (Macdonald 2013). Those valuations enacted or verbalised by participants required a thought process that took the heightened affective responses to place, the past and human actions, and translated this into comprehension of a sense of occasion and importance. These valuations can be seen as acts of heritagization: their actions were about the *making-valuable* of the place, its past and their own position as a social group, through memorialising activities.

Three themes of valuation stood out from research observations, interviews and conversations with the British-Asian participants that expressed their ideas about what was important about the Chattri and how they understood it as their heritage. These are interpreted below and labelled to suggest heritagization processes not essentialised criteria: A Higher Good, An Embodied Presence, and A Mutual Recognition. In one way, these interpretations of value reflected broader societal ideals about the importance of memorials as shared heritage: value is placed on a spiritual and moral realm of collective social experience, enacted in visible ways through public monuments and ritual practices. On the other hand, the themes also suggest that for some participants at the Chattri Memorial, the heritage invoked through their activities took on additional cultural and political value related to their subjectivity as minority ‘outsiders’ in the UK.

### A higher good

Participants consistently placed value on the intangible realm of morality and spirituality as a fundamental aspect of the Chattri’s heritage that informed their present lives. The perceived ethical behaviour of humans was a central idea honoured by visiting the evocative site and attending the emotional rituals – a valuation shared with other war memorialising in the UK. This was expressed as the need to honour the dead and the sacrifice of soldiers. A typical response by a teenage girl at the ceremony: ‘so many chose to lay their lives down. They chose to do it – no one forced them to do it’. Another said ‘it’s just respect for people that gave their lives, really, for what we have today’.

This is important – it’s part of our history, isn’t it. We are honouring everyone, every single soldier that did fight and will fight, and made sacrifices. The least I could do is shown my respect. (Ceremony participant, June 8, 2014)

Sacrifice here was appreciated as an intrinsic and meaningful quality affecting their lives in a personal sense that was an aspect of their heritage. One participant further related the idea of past acts of sacrifice to the Sikh concept of *sewa*, a physical, embodied act of selflessness resulting in a gain for others, which has a higher order of value that is rooted in Indian traditions (Interview D, October 27, 2013).

Others stressed the honouring of sacrifice as a higher good in a nationalistic sense. For some Indian-descendants this involved a need to find external recognition and affirmation of the Indian soldiers. Focus group participants elaborated on how their presence in England as minority outsiders was validated differently, so recognition of the Indian soldier’s sacrifice was important:

When you die for your own country in your own country, it is a memorial. When you die for another country, in a foreign land- and you don't return home.... it's unique. (Focus Group, 23 March, 2014)

It is very important as it is our history especially those who are from an Indian background. The soldiers who died were sent to the trenches as volunteers in order to gain independence for India from the British. Remember, young lives, dying alone in a different country. (Focus Group, 23 March, 2014)

While most idealised the choice to lay down lives, some mentioned war as a negative value, although no respondents discussed soldiers killing. Said one ceremony attendant: 'I'm very anti-war. I also respect war and the reason why people go to war. But I have huge respect for everybody who fought in the war'. Another commented on the value of war memorialising: 'I am positive and negative, really. People losing their lives, but ... just the *need* for war?'

### **An embodied presence**

Respondents also emphasised the need for and value of their physical presence at the Chattri. Their embodied presence was essential to the heritagization process in several ways: it gave each person an affective sense of emotionality and excitement; enabled a sharing of such feelings among others, and conveyed a visible statement of meaning for each other and for others about the importance of this place and its history to their lives.

I had a woman, an elderly lady and her grandson came down from Leicester.... And she came up to me in a wheelchair; her grandson pushing her, and said to me that she wanted to attend [the Chattri] before she died. And I felt very touched by the people that use that as a place to visit, before they die ... there's nowhere else in England. (Interview B, December 9, 2013)

The Chattri ceremony can be seen as a public performance, an articulation of subjectivity and pronouncement of valuation through the acting, moving body seen in public (Turner 1986). The formal symbolism of a religious service invoked through familiar motions like wreath-laying, combined with spontaneous motions by the crowd that possessed an affective liveliness, a sense of chaos, and an openness to unexpected and random cross-cultural encounters.

Two embodied practices gave the ceremony a particular affective weight: the two minutes of silence and the singing of the hymn. The emotional responses of the participants, transmitted electrically through the crowd, imbued both auditory practices with a strong sense of value. The silence is the signature event of mainstream war remembrance ceremonies and acts to emotionally recall the value of sacrifice (Bonney 2013). The song is a unique Indian cultural referent but also resonated emotionally with non-Indians in the audiences because of its poignant sound. The hymn, a nationalistic song about soldiers and sacrifice, was a new formal element introduced into the Chattri ceremony in 2000. Its singing by Bindu Vachhani is now cemented into ritual. One focus group participant responded to Bindu: 'Men cry when you're done with it'. According to Bindu:

Wherever this song is sung, everyone just gets up; no one sits on their chair. There are some words, some phrases that touch your heart. At the Chattri ceremony, when everything is quiet, you're at the perfect place to sing it. (Focus Group, 23 March, 2014)

Post-ceremony, an additional signifying act came into play, as many members of the group crowded onto the steps and *ghat* platform, mixing dignitaries and audience, for the cheerful end-of-ceremony group 'memorial' photos – itself an act of remembrance of the day (Figure 5). This action, introduced by organisers for recordings by family and friends, has taken a life of its own; an actual 'doing' set aside and marked by participants as possessing value as living bodies infuse the monument with new liveliness. These embodied acts were singled out by ceremony attendees as 'valuable' and impossible for organisers to change, rendering the activities themselves as 'heritage'.

### **A mutual recognition**

The participants valued the Chattri as an ethnic Indian space and they sought respect and recognition through their activities there. For first and second generation respondents, the ceremony brought back



**Figure 5.** Participants converge on the steps of the memorial for a final group photo, June 2013. Source: Photo by the author.

emotional memories of historical experiences particular to India, not necessarily connected to the Chattri, which they perceived as a time of unity and belonging within their community:

There were all mixed, Sikh, Muslim, Hindu, all together. They never fought very different, they were all together, all Indian. (Focus Group, 23 March, 2014)

The event clearly brought out a sense of camaraderie; belonging to a community cemented through the historic site and annual ritual dedicated to remembering the past. What had been a colonial heritage object was re-appropriated by this minority group proud of their Indian heritage in an act that problematized the authorised heritage discourse of this place, and connects history and community to their position as minority outsiders in the UK.

I'm looking for a community here, an Indian community, bringing them, together, you know. And one way of doing that is to get the Indian community involved in the history. (Interview D, October 27, 2013)

I feel like it's the only event that celebrates ... a little piece of history in our landscape, a very significant piece of history that could very easily been forgotten about, and so I feel a bit of ownership that this is my home and I have that Indian connection as well. (Interview M, March 26, 2014)

In interviews and focus group, the topics of race, history and justice were prominent and interwoven. Racialization is a profoundly social, political and historical process that affects private lives and public culture in the UK (Dwyer and Bressey 2009). This was reflected in the subjectivity voiced by Chattri organisers and participants, who recounted exclusionary incidents in their life in the UK:

I was the only one coloured in [my] organisation – 'when are you going back, are you here for long?' Now that's not at all addressed because they realize they cannot do this. (Focus Group – March 23, 2014)

It is much more politically correct now. They won't tell it to your face. (Focus Group – March 23, 2014)

'Englishness' was referred to as a white trait separate from Indian or Black. At the focus group (Focus Group – March 23, 2014), all respondents, whether born here or had lived here for many years, unconsciously employed a We-They division in their speech:

We do have some British people coming down, they do come to Chattri.

I'll talk to an English family just because I'm proud and I think 'Oh, why did they come?' The little I know, I'll show them a leaflet or something. I feel that we're the representatives you know?

English people come up to me and say what an amazing feeling there is at the Chattri.

Belonging to community involved not only shared history with each other, but recognition by these white English 'insiders'. Heritagization through past-presencing at the Chattri can be seen a form of personal politics that asserted identity and belonging by asking for mutual recognition:

What I am saying is why WE should be, why Indian people [should] only remember this thing. I think the most important thing is that BRITISH people should be remembering them as well. (Focus Group – March 23, 2014)

The memorialising ceremony at the Chattri did connect to those non-Indians, embracing people ranging from military motorcycle group to white residents to the local Black History society. The activities brought white bodies into contact with brown in an emotional relationship of recognition that disrupted typical shared or collective heritage signification. Participants went out of their way to come to the Chattri monument at that moment, and through mingling and bearing witness appeared to share in the need to demonstrate recognition and relational connections (Baumann 1992). The embodied presence of strangers in a public space, and the interactions and social sense of being-in-each-others-presence, was a crucial part of this.

They feel that, you know, the community spirit. And the diversity of the people that are there, black, white, Indian- they're all there. And they feel that. This is a very 'white' County- East Sussex and Brighton and Hove. So this is a good example of multiculturalism in practice, if you like. Where everybody just comes in and there's a bond. (Interview D, October 27, 2013)

A 'public' was formed here, loosely organised, and political in the sense of different motivations, attitudes and ideas (Simon and Ashley 2010). This coming together is a creative practice of 'world-making', a kind of productive publicness lies at the foundation of democratic practice (Arendt [1958] 1989)). Through the mutual recognition that occurred here, heritage-making processes enabled the formation of a democratic 'public'. Interrelations are mobilised in part by realising one's own positioning while empathising with others (Simon and Ashley 2010). But as a democratic politics, this is never unified: such a process involves ongoing conflicts and contradictions that are unresolved (Lynch 2014). For example, while the Chattri memorial service was perceived by many white participants as multicultural integration in action, some Indian participants took the stance that they were publically asserting the values of an outsider non-white minority in relation to the insider English. Such is the nature of 'acts of citizenship': not state-sponsored acts but active relationships through which individuals and groups enact themselves as citizens, struggling for decolonization, recognition or other matters of concern, but also interacting purposefully to change the shape of society (Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Isin 2008). In the case of the Chattri memorialising activities, a mixed group of participants assembled to re-interpret old rituals in relation to each other, acts of creating new heritage that consciously aimed at changing the shape of their world. And participants could feel that something innovative – and something valuable – was created here.

It's about humanity, right? Humanity rises above nations, we are all humans. Anybody doing similar things in another country, as a human being, we will be respectful. (Focus Group – March 23, 2014)

## Conclusions

This article has looked at how memorialising can be seen as an important signifier of the value of the past. It inspected the ways that heritagization practices were deployed to achieve particular social and cultural meanings, using as a case study the changing valuations of the Chattri Indian Memorial near Brighton. It asked, how had the perceived importance of this memorial changed, and how did present-day participants express its value to their lives? From its origins in 1921 as an imperial gesture towards India, the memorial has been both tangible historical resource and site of heritage-asserting practices; a symbolic sign marked by felt experiences. When the memorial was taken over in 2000 by the local Asian community, the material monument and the annual ceremonies at the site took on new meanings. The affective practices by this minority culture were interpreted here as performative acts of heritage-making, stressing their actions as examples of 'past presencing' using Sharon Macdonald's concept, where a diverse group of people came together in an embodied and affective act of being-there in relation to the past. These activities acted heterogeneously to consciously foreground 'outsider' heritage sensibilities and relationships with the past, in a conscious public expression of citizenship by minority people, but also enacted relational connections and support by those perceived by minorities as 'insiders'.

Participants voiced a number of reasons they felt their embodied actions of past-presencing were important and valuable to them. They emphasised the fundamental importance of the spiritual realm of human actions, carried out for 'A Higher Good'. Their presence at the Chattri each year confirmed that value, but particularly recognised how the historical actions of others who shared their cultural background affected their own lives in the present. Participants emphasised the need to affirm their connections to the past through 'An Embodied Presence' at the Chattri where emotional actions of people in public at this spot carried significance. 'Presence' required embodied not passive exchanges, solidarity, a sense of occasion and purposeful meaning-making. The nature of these symbolic yet affective actions had evolved in fresh and unexpected ways, anchored in ritual but spontaneous and liberating. The sense of occasion was stimulated in part by 'A Mutual Recognition': the understanding that this shared performance by outsiders and insiders had value. The Chattri activities were seen as an ethnic Indian location for witnessing, and gaining respect and recognition, but also for making conscious interventions over racializing discourse as a prominent preoccupation and fact of life for participants of this study. For these people who tend to be racialized by society, their conscious demonstrations of the value of heritage can also be seen as acts of citizenship (Isin 2008) that asserted their belonging within UK society.

The question of how to maintain and pass on this heritage emerged as a question of interest to study participants. As one focus group attendee said, 'now that I'm a grandparent, how important it is to have places like the Chattri ... we must pass on these values and make sure that they are passed on to our children and our children's children ...'(Focus Group – March 23, 2014). Cornwall and Coelho (2007) argue that informal cultural and civic activities such as these are ways that people excluded from authorised discourses can 'cut their teeth' and acquire new skills to act politically. The potential of such activities lies in their ability to provide new spaces to generate new leaders, as well as challenge old rules and ways of doing. Some respondents were keen to have their efforts recognised and supported through policies, and have begun to explore ways that their Chattri activities could gain financial support and even be expanded with the development of media and educational materials. Others, however, expressed fear that they might lose control to institutionalising forces. The exploration of these differing ideas will be the subject of further research.

Raising awareness of more marginal and excluded forms of cultural knowledge was at the heart of the Chattri project. The process of seeking this knowledge through filming, focus group negotiations, or conversations over tea, constituted a fundamental value – knowledge-generation – that was not just about academic results, but was useful to participants as well. As we sat in workshop focus group *talking about heritage*, it was pointed out: 'How often in our lives do we sit there and talk to other people about heritage, and about what's important in our lives? How often do we do that?' This consciousness-raising process generated through the project had value: relationships built, ideas shared, bonds made, other people understanding of their own world. How heritagization was enhanced or changed by the signification processes inherent in academic research will also be an intriguing topic for further research.

## Notes

1. Data assembly included documentary and news media research, site mapping and visual documentation using observation, notes and photography. The study of practices included ethnographic observation at two memorial services and informal conversations with 24 individuals; semi-structured interviews with eight community organisers; and a focus group of ten individuals. Methods also included on-site audio recordings of researcher's comments and participant conversations, photo documentation and videography expressions by two participants through their video recordings of the day's events. Participants included males and females of different ages (youngest estimated 16, oldest 80) from different religious and racial groups (Sikh, Hindu and Muslim, as well as Black and white British whose religious affiliation was not declared).
2. Interviews and Focus Group all conducted by the author in Brighton, UK.

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## Notes on contributor

*Susan L. T. Ashley* is senior lecturer in Cultural Management at Northumbria University. Her research on heritage and its relation to subjectivity, representation and citizenship has been published in books by Routledge and Ashgate, and in peer-reviewed journals such as *Organisation*, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, *Museum and Society* and *International Journal of Heritage Studies*. She recently published the edited volume *Diverse Spaces: Identity, Heritage and Community in Canadian Public Culture*. Dr Ashley holds a PhD in Communication and Culture from York University, Toronto. She also has 20 years of consultancy and government work coordinating projects for culture and heritage sites across Canada.

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