

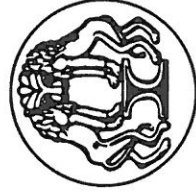
BRISTOL CLASSICAL PRESS DEBATES IN ARCHAEOLOGY

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Heritage, Communities and Archaeology

Laurajane Smith &
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something that is attended to on a case-by-case basis, rather than holistically embedded across the management process. As such, it is important to remind ourselves, as Brent (1997: 82) points out, that 'community is not a term suitable for use as a unequivocal slogan of redemption'.

Material culture, memory and identity

Introduction

What lies at the heart of the uneasy relationship between communities in general and the community of heritage professionals is the idea of heritage. How it is defined, what is done with it, and the uses it is put to are the pivotal points from which tensions, misunderstandings and conflicts arise. This chapter argues that there is a significant disjunction between authorised, professional and institutional understandings or definitions of heritage and the realities or material consequences that heritage has. That is, heritage does social, political and cultural 'work' in society, but definitions of heritage at large in public policy, legal instruments and management practices fail to acknowledge this. While they gesture at acknowledging that heritage has an integral link with identity, authorised or traditional definitions do not actually *understand* this link in any meaningful way. This chapter critically develops a definition of heritage that actively incorporates the linkages between material culture, memory and identity. The ways in which communities utilise heritage are identified and the disjunction between this use and professional definitions is highlighted. From this, the consequences of heritage knowledge and practice are identified and explored.

Heritage as a known thing?

In archaeological terms, heritage is often understood to be the material culture of the past, or all those artefacts and structures produced by humans that make up the archaeological record and are used to explain, or help explain, the past – heritage is a known thing. For some archaeologists, heritage and archaeological material culture are one and the same thing; and that is the data that helps to define both the past and who 'we' are in the present. Although there is explicit recognition in the literature that such interpretations of the past are neither definitive nor objective, there is often a tacit assumption that the knowledge produced by the discipline informs 'identity' and is thus 'heritage'. This assumption survives even though archaeologists recognise the multi-vocality of interpretations of the past, and is particularly strong in Europe, and in archaeological dealings with non-Indigenous pasts and communities in the ex-colonial countries of North America and Australasia. Indeed, so strong is this assumption that archaeologists – and archaeological knowledge – often form the primary body of expertise (followed, perhaps, by architecture) drawn upon in the development of heritage management practices. Archaeologists readily find employment as heritage practitioners in key government heritage agencies, inter-government heritage organisations, heritage amenity societies and other NGOs, or they work as freelance consultants within units, or other private/semi-private organisations involved in the environmental assessment process. This assumed synergy between 'heritage' and 'archaeological data' can be summed up in Britain with reference to the popularity of the term 'Archaeological Heritage Management'.

This materiality of archaeological data makes the concept of heritage (and, by inference, ideas of 'identity' deemed to be linked to heritage) inherently *knowable*. The way in which archaeological heritage can be discovered, defined (spatially and conceptually), recorded, mapped, put on a site register or any other list, and finally, managed and conserved, makes

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heritage both knowable and controllable. The sense that heritage is a known thing is also reinforced by the naturalisation of archaeological assumptions about heritage in legal and policy instruments. As much as heritage is knowable by archaeologists, it is also a known thing for heritage practitioners more generally, simply because it is defined in national and international legal and policy documents. However, this close linkage of archaeological material culture and heritage is problematic and has led to the conflation of heritage with archaeological data and knowledge. This conflation of archaeological data, and material culture more generally, with heritage underwrites the misunderstandings and tensions between archaeologists and many other communities. This is because heritage is *not* a known thing – nor is it a thing at all. Rather, it is mutable and intangible and means many different things to many different people and communities.

Smith's notion of the AHD, as developed in Chapter 1, goes some way towards explaining this propensity to equate 'heritage' with 'archaeological data', as it is a discourse that works to define both the concept of heritage and the boundaries of debates about its nature, values and meanings. These boundaries are very much guided by the discourse's historical associations with archaeology. What is significant about this discourse is its near complete naturalisation, as it is from this position that the AHD is able to promote and maintain social inequalities. While the extent to which the AHD underpins heritage policy and practice has already been discussed, it remains crucial for understanding the misunderstandings and tensions between various communities and groups, including communities of archaeological and other heritage professionals. The AHD works to appropriate, obscure or misrecognise the heritage values and knowledge that communities have of the past. Moreover, heritage professionals assume a role as spokespeople and *educators* for the past and thus community heritage, not only because they are stewards for the past, but because it is 'the past' – singular – and the past belongs to all of humanity. Thus, community heritage will never, in terms

of the hierarchy of values constructed by the AHD, be as important or as representative as 'national' heritage, and consequently is devalued or ignored.

Rethinking heritage

The re-theorisation of heritage adopted here emerges out of Smith's (2006) idea that heritage is a cultural process or performance of meaning-making. Heritage, therefore, becomes not a thing or a place, but an intangible process in which social and cultural values are identified, negotiated, rejected or affirmed. It is thus what is done at, or with, heritage sites that is significant, rather than the places themselves. As Smith states:

There is no one defining action or moment of heritage, but rather a range of activities that include remembering, commemoration, communicating and passing on knowledge and memories, asserting and expressing identity and social and cultural values and meanings. As an experience, and as a social and cultural performance, it is something with which people actively, often self-consciously, and critically engage in ... The product or the consequences of heritage activities are the emotions and experiences and the memories of them that they create (ibid.: 83).

The memories and experiences created and reinforced by heritage performances help bind communities and other social and cultural groups through the creation of shared experiences, values and memories, all of which work to help cement or recreate social networks and ties. This definition of heritage draws on Samuel's (1994) notion of 'theatres of memory', through which 'place' becomes a locus for performing, mediating and negotiating the meaning of the past for the present. It also draws on similar work by Dicks (2000b) and her suggestion that heritage is an act of communication, and that of Harvey (2001), who argues that heritage is a 'verb' rather than

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a noun. This idea also underpins the work of Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), Byrne (2008) and Bendix (2008), and informs their explorations of how concepts of heritage or material culture are used to legitimise, or make material, the intangibilities of culture and human experience. The idea of heritage as a cultural process is important as it allows for a broader capacity within which to consider how and why a variety of things can become heritage or, conversely, cease to be heritage. This definition of heritage does not negate traditional arguments about the importance of identity-making. Rather, it sees this process as ultimately more fluid and changeable than identifying heritage as a 'thing' or place allows.

Memory and identity: the emotive nature of heritage

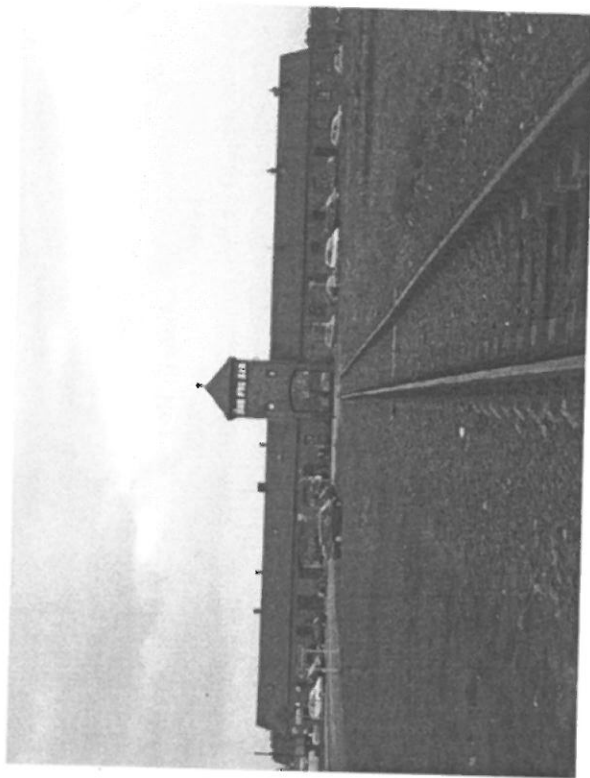
Memory and identity are fluid, intangible and inherently social concepts. Recollection, reminiscing and remembering – either in formal ceremonies of commemoration or in day-to-day activities – are social activities (Connerton 1991). The way societies or other collectives choose to remember and reminisce, and what they choose to remember and forget, are thus cultural and social processes of meaning-making. Further, any single event can be remembered differently and made meaningful or non-meaningful by different individuals and communities.

A case in point is the cultural phenomenon of Holocaust remembering, which has been memorialised in dispersed and diverse ways, internationally, nationally and sub-nationally. This has occurred through a range of Holocaust Memorial Days undertaken by at least fourteen countries, all of which are negotiating as much a process of national forgetting as of national remembering (Yuval-Davis & Silverman 2002). For Britain, this form of national remembering involves a process of obfuscation that subtly forgets anti-Semitism and complicity during the Second World War (ibid.: 116). In their examination of cosmopolitan memory formations in Israel, Germany and the USA, Levy and Sznajder (2002) note that different collective memories are drawn upon to represent and

mediate the same difficult past for different communities. For Israel, this oscillates between silenced, painful memories and sacred remembrance (ibid.: 94). In Germany, the immediate silences of the post-war years have been replaced by a more self-critical national narrative of the nation's past (Huysen 1995: 257), while the USA has performed its own unique memorialisation, referred to as the 'Americanisation of the Holocaust', which remembers the American nation as 'the primary keepers of the flame of remembrance' (Shandler 1999; Levy & Sznajder 2002: 98). At the same time, sub-national processes *within* each country present alternative memories or ways of remembering. Further, these debates reflect upon the iconic status granted to the historical reality of Auschwitz as an emblem of the Holocaust, rendering it a monument whose memories are under dispute (Yuval-Davis & Silverman 2002: 111) (Figure 2.1).

In the case of the Warsaw Ghetto Monument, the monument evokes different memories for different viewers, as a site of resistance, a memory to suffering and mythic memory of heroism (Young 1989). Moreover, as different political groups and communities undertake different performances of commemoration at and around the monument they rehearse and make new meanings for themselves. The point is that memory cannot be understood as something that is simply passed on, unchanged, from generation to generation, nor is it a 'thing' to have and catalogue. Indeed, no form of memory, collective or otherwise, will cease to be contingent and unstable despite international appeals to its intractability and permanence (Huysen 1995: 249). Rather, memories are recast and recreated in the minds of each generation to help them make sense of the present and, in the process, come to understand themselves (ibid.: 90). Even the immediate recollections of individuals, whether they are of private and family events or as eye-witnesses to historic moments, will be reinterpreted and thus remade and re-understood in the context of present day experiences and the aspirations and desires of those doing the remembering (Wertsch 2002).

This fluidity of memory is something that challenges us. It is



2.1. The main entrance to Auschwitz II-Birkenau, Poland. The railway tracks that transported prisoners from across German-occupied Europe to the concentration and extermination camp (1940-45) are still visible. It now forms part of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1979. [Photo: E. Waterton]

much easier to accept the authority of the written text and the intellectual authority of historians and archaeologists when dealing with collective memories or recounting pasts to which we were not witness. Moreover, there is no spontaneous memory. Memories need to be actively remembered, and thus memory needs to take root in the concrete object or site, and needs to be maintained through anniversaries or celebrations, otherwise it becomes overtaken by, or lost in, the authority held by universal claims of history (Nora 1989: 9-12). Monuments, and material culture more generally, act as cultural tools in the processes of remembering and forgetting (Wersch 2002). Indeed, heritage works to help 'organise' public and historical memory (Young 1989: 101). Further, memories are also recalled in the

'doing' (Crouch & Parker 2003: 396), and both the commemorations society organises around monuments and the practices of heritage management are actions involved in the creation and maintenance of collective memories.

Memory underpins identity, and different communities or collectives will have different mnemonic strategies they draw upon to help them reinforce their sense of self and collective identity (Misztal 2003: 15). Identity, like memory, is also intangible and fluid, such that none of us will possess a single 'identity'. Rather, our sense of self is composed of many different, although often overlapping and interlinked, social identities, which are forged not only in terms of 'who we are', but also of 'who we are not'. As with memory, linking identity to physical places and objects renders the intangible *material* and gives it physical 'reality' (Graham et al. 2000). Further, anchoring identity to material culture and places makes the mapping of our own individual or collective identities more manageable and comprehensible. This is a point illustrated by mural paintings of the Somme in Northern Ireland, which act as visual *aides-memoire* for a range of commemorative processes and objectified reminders of disparate Northern Irish identities (Jarman 1999: 184). Images of the Battle of the Somme and the 36th Division are tangible manifestations of a complex and contested process of identity construction within Ulster, which attempts to negotiate, as Graham and Shirlow (2002) argue, a range of identities including those associated with paramilitary legitimisation, protestant working-class identities and prospects for reconciliation. While the images contained within murals more generally are varied, as are the messages they contain, they nonetheless perform a role in constructions – and maintenance – of community identity (Graham 1998).

These links between identity and heritage are well documented in the literature, and its symbolic value is not in dispute here; the point is the emotive nature of heritage. Identity and memory are not simply something you 'have', but are something you experience and perform. Heritage, then, does

not just simply sit there and proclaim the viewer's identity. Rather, viewers must emotionally engage with heritage, and meaningfully interact with it, for that site or place to 'speak to' the individual. Indeed, it is in a mix of doing, reacting, feeling and understanding that heritage is created, as part of a wider cultural process within which people ascertain feelings of connection, belonging and a sense of themselves. Poria et al. (2003), in their study of the behaviour of domestic and international visitors to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, make a similar observation in their conclusion that people come to heritage sites not just to 'gaze' but also to 'feel'. The emotional quality of heritage is thus not abstract, but is *felt* and continually reinforced and remade in the performances of heritage; that is, it is continually *experienced* and *re-experienced* at and through the performances of heritage.

Memories and people's sense of self and belonging – their sense of identity – are highly emotive constructs. This is, of course, obvious and may appear to be hardly worth stating. However, the emotional quality of heritage is often like 'an elephant in the room'; we all know it is there but it can be seen as quite embarrassing, especially if it is linked to expressions of nationalism or patriotism, and so it often goes unaddressed. Further, the emotional quality of heritage is often tacitly assumed to be positive, as heritage is meant to provide a comfortable and comforting affirmation of 'who we are' – after all, as constructed within the AHD, heritage is 'good', 'great' and 'consensual'. However, with the creation of any sense of inclusion comes, inevitably, exclusion, and the emotions that heritage generates can be as negative as they can be positive. With places or heritage that acknowledge the traumatic aspects of a community's or culture's past – sites of dissonance, shame or pain – the emotions and memories evoked can be painful or mixed (Tunbridge & Ashworth 1996; Logan & Reeves 2008). Linkon and Russo's (2002) study of the way industrial workers in the deindustrialised town of Youngstown in the USA sought to renegotiate their sense of identity is a case in point. The past of Youngstown is both painful in terms

of the brutalities of working-class history, but also a source of pride in terms of community solidarity and achievements. The challenge is negotiating new identity(ies) that incorporate both the bad and the good as the Youngstown communities attempt to recreate themselves in the context of deindustrialisation (ibid: 245).

The complexity of the emotional quality of heritage can also be witnessed in the religious and spiritual values it is given. Heritage does not just represent or symbolise established religious identities and beliefs, but can also take on spiritual values for other communities. This can be observed in the conflicts in England over pagan access to sites such as Stonehenge and Seahenge (Skeates 2000). As Byrne et al. (2006) point out, this aspect of community connection is often underplayed in the West because of what they label a 'secularity premise' in dominant approaches to heritage management. They argue that an array of deeply emotive and abiding spiritual affinities and responses emerge from our associations with heritage places, sites and landscapes. Their analysis of enchanted parklands documents the range of spiritual meanings given to landscapes around Sydney, Australia, by a range of community groups, as well as by established religious communities. Their contention is that while this aspect of emotional connection often falls below the threshold of conventional heritage evaluations, and thus remains invisible in a management sense, it is nonetheless a valid projection of meaning onto a landscape.

Our acknowledgment of the emotional qualities of heritage is important for the observations it enables us to make about the cultural process of heritage itself. This is because our emotional connections to heritage experiences are inevitably managed and open to interventions through the way heritage places organise and facilitate remembering and expressions of identity. Heritage sites are points at which our sense of place becomes anchored and emotionally manageable. Those experiences of memory-making, remembering and other forms of emotional identity expression are made manageable by taking them out of the 'everyday' and concentrating them in specific

performances in which 'heritage' places are identified, looked after and visited. This process is done at both national and community levels. Although the national process is called heritage management, and is governed by national legislation and public policies, it is nonetheless part of the process in which the emotional registers of national and collective identities, and processes of remembering and commemoration, are regulated and controlled.

The difficulties between communities occur as a consequence of the extent to which the emotional quality of heritage goes unacknowledged. More specifically, they are a symptom of the ways in which our emotional connections are managed and regulated through the privileged position of the heritage management process as opposed to other forms of heritage engagement. Nostalgia is an important issue here. Wright (1985) and Hewison (1987), in particular, have criticised the so-called 'heritage industry' (that is, heritage tourism) for creating sanitised and historically inauthentic versions of the past. In so doing, both have dismissed the emotional quality of heritage as nostalgia. While they make a valid point – that certain heritage interpretations and performances can create or legitimise reactionary nostalgic heritage performances – their concern over nostalgia has become a dominant theme in contemporary heritage debates in the West. In England, at least, there is a tendency to dismiss or equate the full emotional register of heritage with 'nostalgia', along with all the negative connotations of sanitisation and reactionary visions of the past that this entails. However, as Strangleman (1999) argues, nostalgia is often confused with memory. Indeed, discourses of nostalgia are often used to dismiss or debase the remembrings of communities and individuals whose heritage and sense of identity exist outside the dominant narratives of national heritage: nations remember, communities reminisce; national heritage constructs national identity, community heritage is nostalgic. This tendency is reinforced by the generic conceptualisation of 'community' that operates within the policy sphere discussed in Chapter 1, which is itself tied up with

images of either 'tradition' and a rural 'golden age', or strict parameters of social hierarchy in which only the non-white and non-upper to middle-classes have community. In this structuring, the nostalgia of communities and their remembrings is taken as self-evident. A hierarchy of heritage, then, is not only constructed by the AHD, where national heritage is valued more than sub-national or community heritage, but is reinforced by wider political assumptions of who can – and cannot – form part of a 'community'.

One of the issues that heritage professionals have commonly commented on to us, and often with some bemusement, is the emotional response of communities not only to their heritage, but to external attempts to manage that heritage. This bemusement derives from the extent to which we work within the AHD, which obscures and ignores the emotional quality of heritage and all that means for an individual's and community's sense of place. This compartmentalisation of 'experts' from 'communities' also spills out semantically where it forms part of the way in which institutions and professionals talk and write about engagements with heritage. Here, communities are characterised as those that 'feel', whereas experts are those who 'think' and 'know' in a process that skilfully 'avoids' subjectivities (for an example of this in action see Clark 2006: 97). The emotional response of communities is thus often fuelled by frustration; a frustration that also often works to mask more complex and nuanced emotional responses from the heritage expert. This frustration can arise for a range of reasons, such as: the lack of recognition given to their heritage; 'talking past' experts about the nature and meaning of heritage; finding their heritage intensely personal and emotional, and seeing those emotions either disregarded or misinterpreted. These frustrations also mount when the emotional elements of heritage become the subject of 'management', and thus of interventions by expertise and heritage agencies – individuals and organisations that could not possibly have the same emotional linkage or understanding of the heritage in question as community members.

These interventions inevitably work to disregard those emotions without necessarily meaning to do so.

Conclusion: the arenas of conflict

Mapping the potential arenas of conflict around issues of heritage for community groups is a complex task. This is heightened by the fluidity of communities and the fact that no community is itself homogeneous and self-referential. Tensions more often than not exist between a range of heritage professionals and community groups, no matter what their nature. Even when there are apparently harmonious working relationships, the room for misunderstanding is always there and tensions arise not only from the differing aspirations and agendas of community groups but from the definitions of heritage each group employs. For archaeologists, heritage is data. As such, it offers them a convincing way of knowing and understanding the past. It is the material reason for the existence of the discipline. As Julie Lahn (1996) notes, the possession of certain prestigious objects or data sets by individuals, and indeed collectively by the discipline, is symbolic of the community identity claims made by archaeologists. This understanding of heritage is entirely cognisant with the way we have been arguing heritage is used by communities. For communities too, heritage is about knowing the past through remembrance and commemoration, and through the performances of identity creation and recreation. However, for both archaeologists and communities these performances are often masked by the AHD. Archaeologists often remain unaware of the heritage value the data they collect carries for themselves and the consequences of their knowledge for community self-awareness and pride. Moreover, they remain unaware of the power this gives them in terms of their ability to make claims about community 'involvement' and 'participation' without putting in jeopardy their rights of access and control as cultural experts and custodians. Communities construe a sense of heritage that they know may never be regarded as important or rele-

vant; they may not even recognise that a community heritage exists simply because that heritage is not recognised within the authorising agencies of the dominant heritage discourse. The AHD can work equally to mask the role and nature of heritage within and from communities as it does from archaeologists. The possibilities for conflict are endless as the AHD masks the consequences of heritage. The ability of the AHD to render heritage as a thing to be 'managed' means that the emotional and political work that heritage does in our society goes unrecognised and can lead to frustrating bewilderment as communities and the community of expertise talk past one another and misunderstand the impact each has on the other.

Community dissonance

Introduction

In the Introduction to the edited volume *Public Archaeology*, Nick Merriman (2004: 4) remarked that 'most of the public aspects of archaeology are about conflict, or what Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) have called "dissonant heritage"'. The AHD typically assumes that heritage is good, safe and consensual. Yet, if we accept that contemporary societies are diverse and conflict-ridden, it would probably be fair to say that the heritage drawn upon and used by each individual and pocket of society is itself variable and defined in its own terms (Bonnell & Simon 2007: 65). The idea, then, that everyone's idea of heritage will be 'good', 'safe' and meaningful for everyone else seems naïve, if not impossible. It is also an idea that carries significant implications – or impediments – for community groups attempting to define and assert a sense of heritage that is not always consensual, 'good' and 'safe'.

Difficult histories

In *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*, Elazar Barkan (2000) draws attention to the prominence of 'moral issues' in the current international arena, prompting what could be labelled a national self-reflexivity. From the 1990s onwards, Barkan argues, international and national politics have taken up an interest in dark histories, an interest that has been used to rewrite national memories and identities with a strong rhetoric of human rights and cultural pluralism. Those difficult histories include: the Holocaust; the

