

*Part III*  
**Multiple time**

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## Chapter 16

# The reuse of monuments in Atlantic Scotland: variation between practices in the Hebrides and Orkney

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During the Gardening Time conference, there was considerable discussion about whether there was any comparison that could legitimately be made between the brochs of Scotland and the *Nuraghi* of Sardinia. Clearly the chronology of these monuments makes direct comparison problematic. The *Nuraghi* are largely a Bronze Age phenomenon and are definitely not constructed in the Iron Age. Whereas, brochs are an Iron Age phenomenon which reaches its apogee at the end of the first millennium BC, though they continue to be built into the first centuries of the first millennium AD. Structurally there are also considerable differences between the stone vaulted towers that are *Nuraghi* and the stone and timber construction of Scottish brochs. Functional differences may also be significant, but unfortunately the limited number of well excavated primary deposits, in both areas, leaves this a mute point of difference.

Some of the seminar's participants were adamant that they were very different structures and that there could be little meaningful comparisons between the two different societies. I would disagree and argue that there is an essential similarity in their role as monumental houses that make a comparison between the two societies potentially illuminating. One of the principal similarities between the two phenomena is directly related to the conference theme of memory and concerns the materiality of these constructions. The common use of large quantities of large stones in the construction of both monuments means that both *Nuraghi* and brochs normally survive to be encountered by successive generations that will progressively have little direct knowledge of the individuals who built them and of the role(s) that they were built to serve.

Many monuments in temperate Europe make extensive use of timber and the natural decay of organic material can result in the complete destruction

of substantial structures of considerable social significance. In these cases only vestigial and ephemeral memories might linger, as place names perhaps, to record the significance of these ancient monuments. Such structures might lead to societies where forgetting is more important than remembering. In contrast, stone monuments, such as *Nuraghi* and brochs, have a corporeal presence, a powerful sense of materiality that makes it impossible to ignore their existence. These structures form prominent features of the landscapes of Atlantic Scotland and Sardinia and would be regularly encountered in the landscape during the seasonal routine of cultivation and stock movement. They are a constant visible reminder of the activities of past generations. The response to these monuments is not prescribed and could vary from region to region but what unites these regions is the necessity to respond because of the immanent presence of the physical monuments. As a result, we have in the periods following the construction of the monuments, complex patterns of rebuilding and reoccupation, of remodelling and total destruction, which tell us a great deal about social memory in these societies.

This chapter is not about these issues, instead it wishes to look at how the response to existing monuments influenced the creation of the brochs of Atlantic Scotland. Brochs are not the first monuments constructed in this region, and nor are they the only stone structures that have survived to impose themselves on the succeeding generations. Brochs occupy a landscape that has been occupied for generations and which is inhabited by tangible memorials as well as intangible memories. The main point I want to make in this chapter is that the physicality of some monuments demanded a response, but it did not dictate a single uniform response, there was scope for different engagements with ancestral monuments.

### Twentieth-century encounters with monuments

My original interest in the relationship between Iron Age brochs and Neolithic chambered tombs dates back to 1981 when I directed the excavations at Pierowall Quarry, Westray, Orkney (Sharples 1984). The excavation revealed a substantial Iron Age roundhouse built directly on top of a chambered tomb (Fig. 16.1), which produced one of the most spectacular pieces of megalithic art found in Britain (Sharples 1984). Subsequent interest was stimulated by work, in the 1990s, on the location of chambered tombs on South Uist, an island in the Outer Hebrides (Cummings *et al.* 2005). In the course of this survey, and some associated small-scale excavations (Cummings & Sharples 2005), it was realized that several tombs had structures built into them in later prehistory and that these provided an alternative narrative for the relationship between tombs and brochs.

When I published the Pierowall Quarry excavations (Sharples 1984), the relationship between the chambered tomb and the Iron Age roundhouse was not discussed and, if my memory serves me correctly, I generally thought this was simply a result of propitious use of a convenient mound by the Iron Age occupants; a prosaic functional relationship that had little symbolic content. My thoughts on this

relationship changed as I became involved in the discussions about the relationship between the causewayed enclosure and the hillfort at Maiden Castle (Sharples 1991, 2010) but more importantly through working with Richard Hingley in Historic Scotland in the early 1990s (Fig. 16.2).

At this time, Hingley was working on two papers (Hingley 1996, 1999) which were groundbreaking in highlighting the complex historical relationships that exist between archaeological monuments, and how societies can have important historical relationships with their landscape and locale. Since these papers were published, it has become commonly acknowledged that many of the roundhouses of the Atlantic Iron Age were deliberately located on existing chambered tombs. However, in these papers Hingley was vague about the nature of the relationship with the past. In his 1996 paper, Hingley suggests 'people in Later Prehistory drew inspiration from chambered cairns for the design of their own houses...'; '...round cairns may have provided an inspiration for a new architectural tradition of roundhouse building in later prehistoric Orkney' (Hingley 1996, 240). However, he also notes that 'Chambered cairns may have been seen at the same time as the homes of ancestors and as places where the powerful remains of these ancestors were housed' (Hingley 1996, 241).



**Figure 16.1.** A view of the section through the chambered tomb and monumental roundhouse at Pierowall Quarry, Westray, Orkney. The two revetments on the old ground face are the remains of the large circular cairn of Neolithic date. Over this and visible at the top of the vertical ranging rod on the right hand side is the wall of the roundhouse. The passage to the chamber of the tomb survives at the base of the vertical ranging rod on the left.

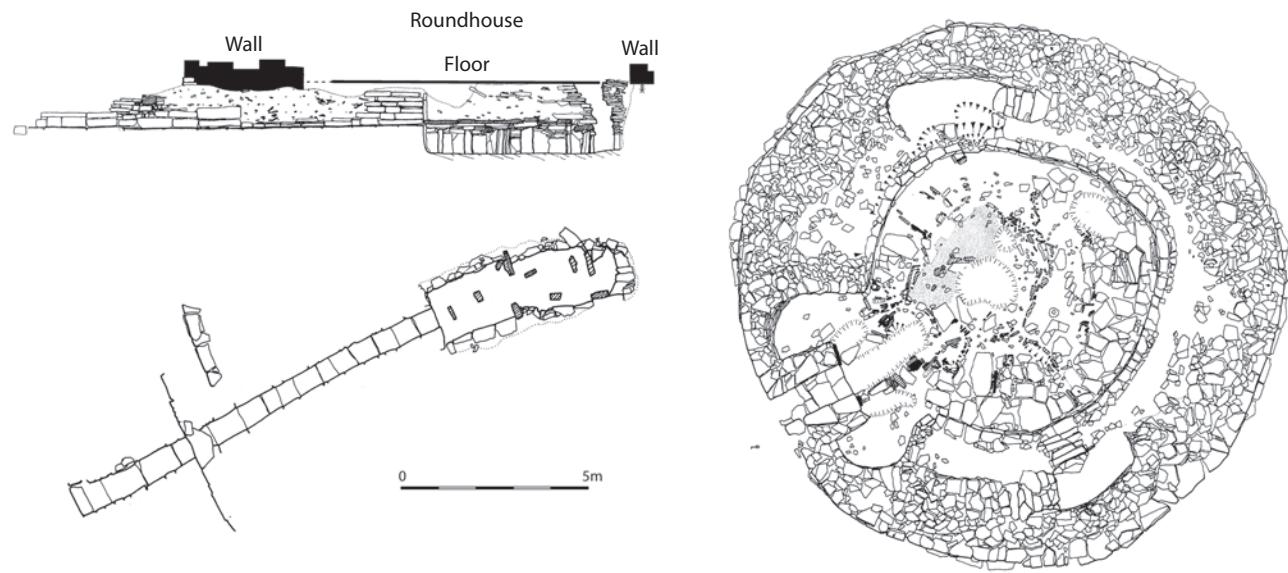


**Figure 16.2.** Richard Hingley encounters the ancestors in a chambered tomb at Skelpick, Strathnaver, Sutherland.

The 1996 paper in some respects painted a simplistic view of a homogenous Iron Age where the past was seen as a resource that was generally pillaged for inspiration. In the 1999 paper, some important differences were clearly present. The principal point was that 'during later prehistory communities partly identified their place in the world through references to ancient monuments' (Hingley 1999, 246). It is admitted that 'we should not...be looking for one simple standardised concept of what the "past" meant to these communities' (Hingley 1999, 246).

These papers focus on several monuments and in the second paper these are identified throughout Britain and include the complex of monuments at Stanton Harcourt in the Thames valley. However, in terms of the Atlantic Iron Age two groups of sites stood out. Three sites on Orkney, Pierowall Quarry, The Howe and Quanterness, which had all been recently excavated, and a couple of sites in the Western Isles, Unival and Cletraval, which were excavated in the middle of the twentieth century by Sir Lindsay Scott.

In Orkney there is a complex relationship between the roundhouse and the tomb, in some cases the tomb is systematically destroyed, but in others it survives with little alteration. This is best demonstrated by a description of the sequence at Pierowall, The Howe and Quanterness. At Pierowall Quarry (Sharples 1984) the excavations were minimal, but it was clear an already substantially modified Maes Howe type chambered tomb (Sharples 1985) was levelled and used as a platform for the construction of an Early Iron Age roundhouse. The wall of the roundhouse was about 3.1 m thick and the structure had an external diameter of roughly 16 m. Radiocarbon dating suggests the house was constructed before the sixth century cal. BC. The interior of the house was not excavated but it was clear that the passage and chamber of the tomb had been substantially destroyed and some form of structure constructed within these (Fig. 16.1). The interior of the roundhouse was subsequently deliberately infilled with rubble and there was no evidence that this structure had a long history of occupation.



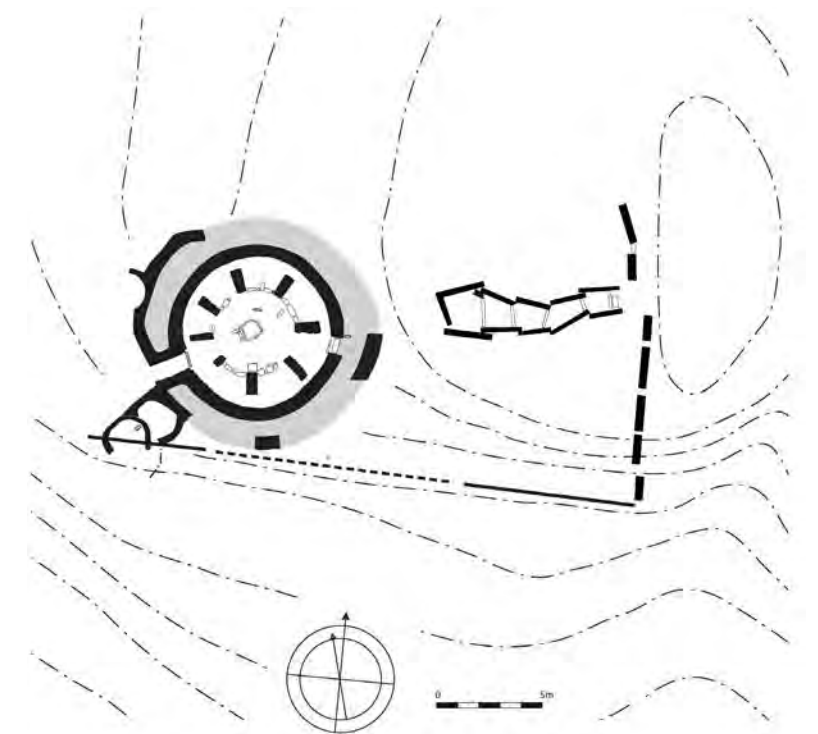
**Figure 16.3.** A plan of the The Howe showing the interior of the round house in phase 6, and a plan and section through the subterranean chamber. Based on illustrations in Ballin Smith 1994.

At the Howe (Ballin Smith 1994), the Early Iron Age roundhouse was also built directly on top of a Maes Howe type chambered tomb. The construction process involved the substantial demolition of the mound or cairn, the almost complete dismantling of the chamber and the systematic removal of any human remains contained within the chamber. A circular house, roughly 16 m in diameter and with a wall about 4 m thick, was then constructed on top of the mound. In the interior the partially paved and intricately subdivided central living space covered a subterranean chamber that was created by rebuilding the underlying burial chamber (Fig. 16.3). Access was by a staircase entered from directly opposite the main door. The original entrance passage of the chambered tomb was partially preserved and lay directly below the entrance passage to the roundhouse. A largely complete human skeleton was deposited within this passage which is believed to date to the Iron Age. This house was repeatedly rebuilt and the site continued to be occupied until the later part of the first millennium AD.

At Quanterness (Renfrew 1979) there was no attempt to remodel the substantial Maes Howe type tomb, which survived into the twentieth century as one of the best-preserved tombs on the islands. Furthermore, it retained the substantial assemblage of human bones that were deposited in it during the Neolithic, though these were probably rearranged in the Iron Age. In the Early Iron Age, a roundhouse was constructed

in front of the tomb and the original entrance passage was accessible through the interior of the house. The house at Quanterness was not a monumental roundhouse; it had an internal diameter of only 7–8 m and a wall thickness of about 2.2 m.

The two important excavations in the Western Isles that were discussed by Hingley (1996, 1999) were undertaken before and after the Second World War by Lindsay Scott on the island of North Uist. He excavated two chambered tombs on the island and both turned out to have significant Iron Age structures built into the cairns. At Clettraval (Scott 1935, 1948), a wheelhouse was built into the body of a substantial trapezoidal long cairn (Fig. 16.4). A wheelhouse is a non-monumental form of roundhouse found in large numbers in the Western Isles and Shetland (Sharples 2012). In Shetland, these appear as secondary villages surrounding brochs, such as Jarlshof and Old Scatness (Hamilton 1956; Dockrill *et al.* 2010), but in the Western Isles they appear to have been contemporary, geographically separate structures (Sharples 2012). The wheelhouse at Clettraval had an internal diameter of roughly 7.4 m and a wall thickness up to 2.1 m wide. The house was probably constructed in the early first centuries AD, though there are no radiocarbon dates to confirm this. There was no direct access from the house to the Neolithic chamber and the entrance to each structure was orientated in quite different directions; southwest for the house and east for the Neolithic tomb. There was evidence for the deposition of Iron Age ceramics in the



**Figure 16.4.** The chambered tomb and wheelhouse at Clettraval in North Uist. The wheelhouse is built into the body of the long cairn and has no access to the burial chamber at the east end.

Neolithic chamber which appears to have been open during the occupation of the wheelhouse.

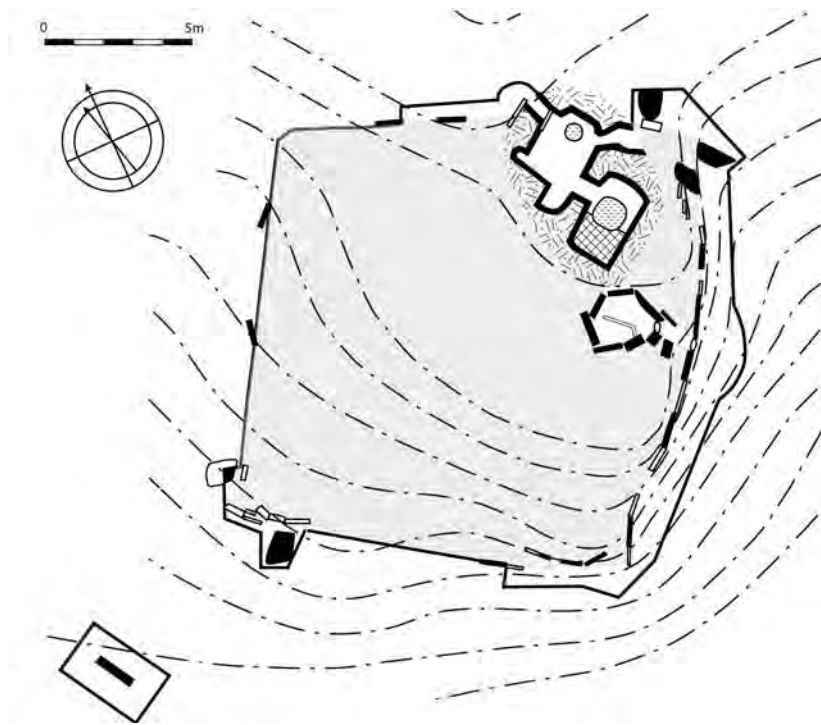
The situation at Unival (Scott 1947a) appears somewhat similar though the structures of both the Neolithic tomb and Iron Age house are very different to the structures visible at Clettraval. The tomb was a fairly characteristic small passage tomb in an unusual square cairn (Fig. 16.5). The tomb was entered by a short passage facing southeast. The Iron Age house comprised two rectangular rooms joined by a short passage and was located in the northern corner of the cairn. It lies immediately to the north of the Neolithic chamber but there was no interconnecting passage and the house was accessed from the north. The pottery from the Iron Age structure is difficult to date, but this, together with the bicameral structure, might indicate a date of construction later in the first millennium AD than the structure at Clettraval.

These tombs are not necessarily representative of all tombs in the Western Isles. Two tombs explored in the recent South Uist survey appear to show evidence for a direct connection between tomb and Iron Age roundhouse. At Leaval in South Uist, limited excavation revealed a simple megalithic chamber in a circular cairn, apparently without a passage, which had been substantially dismantled prior to the construction of an oval enclosure (Cummings & Sharples 2005). No excavation of the interior has taken place, but the enclosure almost certainly surrounds a later prehistoric settlement. At Loch a' Bharp a substantial Hebridean passage

tomb has had a circular house constructed on top of the entrance to a passage tomb (Fig. 16.6; Cummings *et al.* 2005). The front of a large corbelled chamber and the passage had been systematically dismantled as part of this Iron Age modification. Unfortunately, this tomb has not been excavated and the nature of the construction which caused this damage is unclear and undated. Nevertheless, it seems likely that both Leaval and Loch a' Bharp indicate a deliberate attempt to control access to the ancestral remains that is quite different to that visible at Clettraval and Unival. The most significant difference between these sites is altitude. Clettraval and Unival are located at roughly 250 and 350 feet above sea level, whereas Leaval and Loch a' Bharp are around 50 ft above sea level. Both the latter tombs would be much more accessible to the communities living on the low-lying coastal areas, and it is possible that access to these ancestors was much more contested and therefore controlled than those in the hills.

#### Landscape in the Western Isles

I have previously explored the significance of the Orcadian patterns and argued (Sharples 2006) that there was a deliberate attempt to control access to the ancestors by an elite that occupied the monumental roundhouses or brochs. Controlling access to the ancestors would increase the power of the occupants of these houses and the decision to build dwellings at these locations would mark a significant break with



**Figure 16.5.** The chambered tomb at Unival, North Uist, which has a small bicameral structure built into the northeast corner of the cairn in the Iron Age.

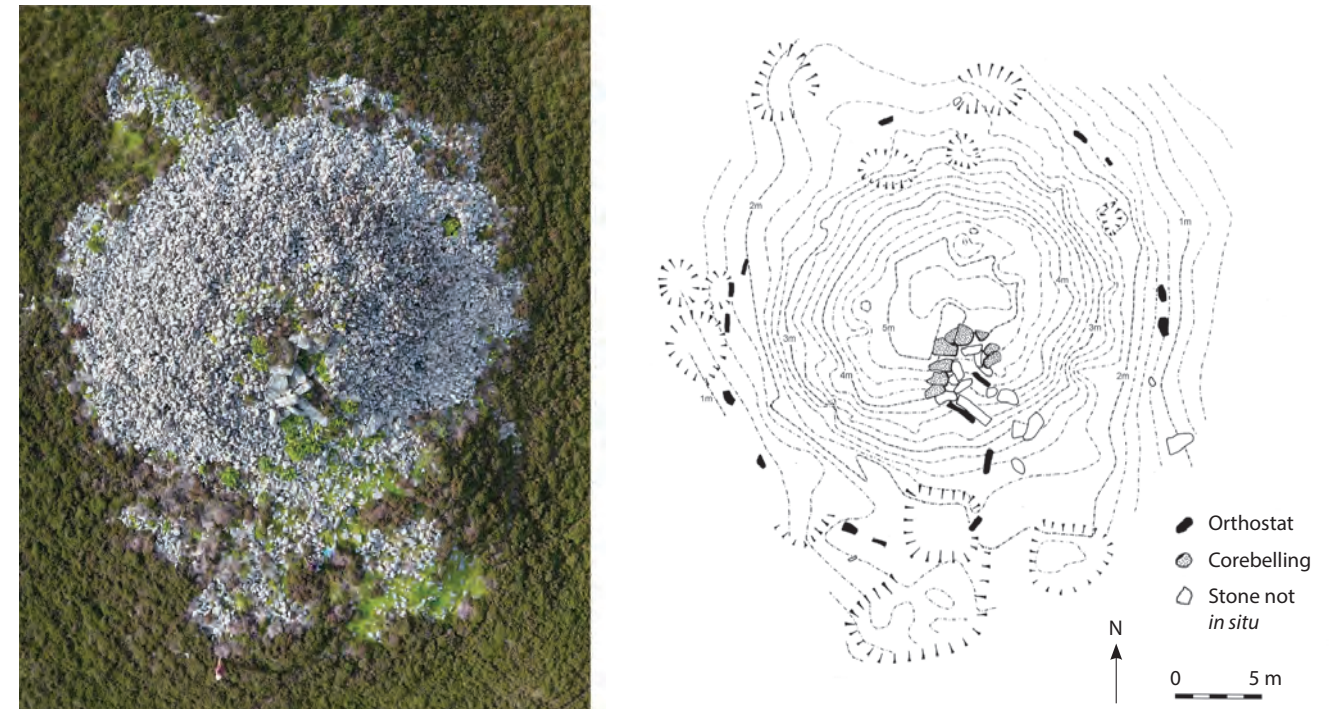
Bronze Age practice when the Neolithic monuments were avoided in a profane landscape of domesticity. The tombs also provided an architectural template for the creation of permanent houses.

In this chapter, I want to concentrate more on the monuments of the Western Isles, as these have been less studied than the Orcadian monuments, and also to concentrate on the landscape setting which has only really been skimmed by writers such as Hingley. In the Western Isles, no monumental roundhouse or broch, that I am aware of, was constructed on a chambered tomb. Some might argue that this is because the brochs have not been extensively excavated, and this is true up to a point. However, pre-broch deposits have been explored at Dun Vulcan (Parker Pearson & Sharples 1999), Dun Mor Vul (MacKie 1974), Dun Bharabhat (Harding & Dixon 2000), Dunan Ruadh (Foster & Pouncett 2000) and Dun Carloway (Tabraham 1977). At the first three sites, activity was detected that appears to precede the construction of the broch, but radiocarbon dates clearly indicate the activity dates to the first millennium BC and represents an increasing interest in the locale as a place for settlement activity. At Dun Carloway and Dunan Ruadh, the brochs were built on exposed rock outcrops with no earlier activity visible or likely.

It is important to note that the brochs of the Western Isles were not situated in locations that were likely to be occupied by chambered tombs. Most brochs in this region were located on islands in lochs; Rennell (2010, 53) reports that more than 60 per cent of the

Iron Age sites on North Uist and 53 per cent on Lewis are on islands within freshwater lochs and the preference appears to be even more emphatic on South Uist (Raven 2012). An island site would be an extremely unusual topographic position for the building of a chambered tomb. A detailed study of the location of tombs on South Uist (Cummings *et al.* 2005) indicated a preference for raised locations on the edge of the hills overlooking valleys used as communication routes. Coastal and island locations, such as Sig More, South Uist, are much more likely to be a result of recent rising sea levels encroaching on dry land rather than a true reflection of locational preferences.

It is possible that the island locations of brochs are related instead to Neolithic settlements, and there is certainly a considerable similarity between the locations of the settlements at Eilean an Tighe (Scott 1950) and Eilean Dhumnail (Armit 1992a) and the island brochs. The Neolithic settlement at An Doirlinn in South Uist was originally recorded by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments Scotland as a Monumental Roundhouse of Iron Age date (Canmore NF71 NW5). However, it is important to note that not only have none of the excavated brochs been shown to have Neolithic origins, but also none of the Neolithic settlements have any evidence for Iron Age activity on top of them. Indeed, in Loch Olibhat the Iron Age settlement, Eilean Olibhat (Armit *et al.* 2009) was located on a natural promontory a little to the east of the artificial island, Eilean Dhumnail, created in the Neolithic (Fig. 16.7).



**Figure 16.6.** The chambered tomb at Loch a' Bharp, South Uist. A roundhouse is defined by an irregular circle of rubble and green grass in front of the entrance to the tomb. Aerial photo provided by Cameron Wesson).



**Figure 16.7.** A view of Loch Olibhat, North Uist. The island to the left is the Neolithic settlement, the promontory on the right is the location for a long lived Iron Age settlement

It is still unclear whether there was a deliberate connection between these two phenomena. Island locations may have indicated a deliberate reverence for important Neolithic settlements that were avoided and copied rather than reoccupied. However, architecturally Neolithic settlements in the Western Isles were not spectacular (Armit 1992; Scott 1950). Excavation has seldom revealed well preserved stone buildings and it would appear that a considerable amount of timber and turf was used in conjunction with only occasional stone. If they were being acknowledged in the Iron Age this would have to have been through social memory, and possibly the presence of artefacts, such as pottery and stone tools, rather than recognizable architectural remains.

On the island of South Uist, in the Western Isles, brochs appear to have been quite specifically constructed in a liminal position (Sharples & Parker Pearson 1997). They are located between the principal settlement zone on the machair, a shell sand deposit that lies along the west coast of the island, and the extensive areas of moorland, loch and mountain that cover the centre and east coast of the island. Most of the evidence for Iron Age settlement comes from the contemporary wheelhouse settlements that were located on the machair plain and these were clearly surrounded by fields of barley, which dominates the carbonized plant assemblages from all Iron Age settlements (Sharples 2012). In contrast, the interior of the island, during the Iron Age, was a sparsely populated peat covered bog only suitable for the summer grazing of cattle and sheep. In the recent past, the occupation of this area was seasonal and based on sheilings, temporary summer settlements, and this is likely to have been the case in the Iron Age.

This Iron Age division of the landscape into a permanently settled domesticated coastal plain and a hostile and only intermittently occupied interior was a relatively recent pattern that reflected the deterioration in the climate during the early first millennium BC. It is clear that in the Neolithic, settlements were much more evenly distributed across the island and it is possible that the machair plain was not present, or at least not sufficiently stable to be occupied (Sharples 2009). The chambered tombs were located immediately overlooking and close to contemporary settlements and this is most clearly demonstrated at Caranais on North Uist, where a Neolithic settlement was located in close proximity to the long cairn at Bharpa Caranais (Crone 1993).

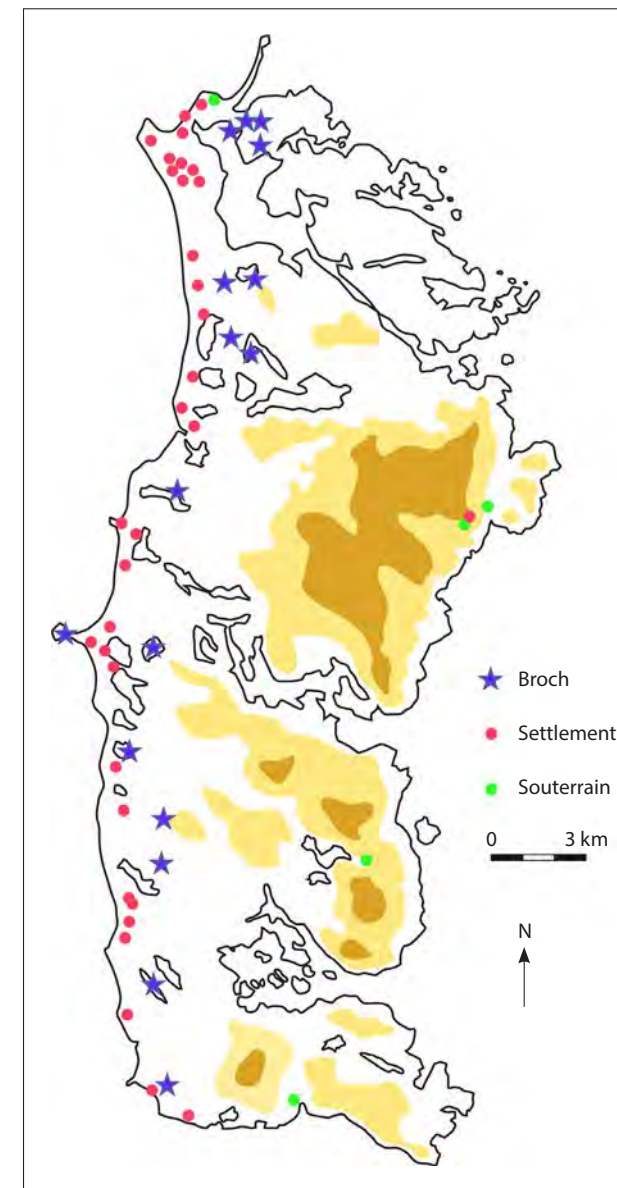
In the Bronze Age, settlement began to appear on the machair (Sharples 2009), but the evidence suggests that this initially started as a seasonal occupation in the Beaker period as the landscape was still very unstable,

and it was only in the Late Bronze Age that large settlements were created. It seems likely therefore that the upland continued to be the principal location for settlement in this period, and this was certainly the principal period of forest clearance in the peat columns from the island (Brayshay & Edwards 1996).

By the Iron Age, however, things had changed dramatically; peat growth was becoming a serious problem and the centre of the island became increasingly damp and inhospitable (Sharples *et al.* 2004). Settlement was essentially forced onto the machair and there it remains for approximately 2000 years. The machair is not the most fertile environment for agriculture, nutrient levels are poor, and the shell sand can suffer catastrophic erosion if the conditions are dry and windy. Settlements were marked by the deliberate accumulation of substantial midden deposits, which helped to reduce the possibility of erosion and provided a source of manure for the cultivated areas. A dichotomy was created in the Iron Age which contrasts the inhospitable moorlands, where the homes and tombs of the ancestors were located, with the green and fertile plains of the machair, where the contemporary settlement was concentrated.

On South Uist the brochs' location on the boundaries of these two landscapes seems in many senses to be a 'defensive' arrangement to impede the continued expansion of the moorland (Fig. 16.8). However, it was also an attempt to position the local elites that occupied these structures in a location that detached them from the prosaic domestic landscapes of settlement and daily activity (Sharples & Parker Pearson 1997). This was a landscape that contained many lochs and I have argued previously that the water was an additional boundary used, together with the architecture and the location, to separate further the occupants of the brochs from other members of their community (Sharples & Parker Pearson 1997). The role of water as a substance with symbolic significance also must be considered and this can be documented in many other Iron Age societies.

The chambered cairns in this Iron Age landscape were central to the wilderness. They were too distant from the main Iron Age settlement zone to empower the elites located in the brochs. The buildings that occupied these monuments were isolated outposts in an otherwise inhospitable landscape. The wheelhouse at Cletraval might indicate the last remnants of the communities that once occupied these locales in the Bronze Age or alternatively, an ambitious attempt to recolonize the wasteland when the climate slightly improved in the Iron Age. Structures such as those found at Unival are more likely to be protection for seasonal occupations associated with the use of this area for grazing. In both cases, I would argue that the



**Figure 16.8.** The location of brochs and settlements on South Uist, Western Isles.

Iron Age occupants were calling upon the ancestors for protection from the inhospitable environment that surrounded them.

#### Northern landscapes

This interpretation can also be used to reconsider the situation on Orkney. The Orcadian landscape is much more fertile than the Western Isles because the geology is a lime rich permeable sandstone which is eroded into rolling countryside that is generally low lying. Hills are restricted to the geological distinctive island

of Hoy and a limited area of the Orcadian mainland. The islands are generally not characterized by the clear-cut distinction between an inhospitable mountainous interior and a marginal restricted agricultural zone on the coast, which is such a prominent feature of the Western Isles. Large areas of the interior on Mainland Orkney were occupied throughout prehistory and many islands can be farmed from coast to coast.

The dense prehistoric settlement of the Orcadian landscape gives us a very different chronological narrative. In the Neolithic, the settlement densities were large enough to enable the construction of the earliest permanent village settlements in Britain (Richards *et al.* 2016). They also encouraged the development of large complex chambered tombs, the Maes Howe type, that were located within the settlement zone (Sharples 1985). The central position of these Maes Howe type tombs meant that they became the focus for ceremonial activity. They contrast with the early small tombs which were located on the edge of the uplands, a location similar to that of nearly all the tombs on the Western Isles.

These large tombs were the focus for activities throughout the Late Neolithic and the type site, Maes Howe, was incorporated into the principal ceremonial centre of the island. Many tombs were substantially remodelled during the Late Neolithic (Sharples 1984), but in the Bronze Age they appear to have been left alone and this is a period which is generally less visible in Orcadian prehistory. Their central location and substantive presence suggest they were not forgotten and ignored, but represented an ancestral presence that was avoided and perhaps regarded with some reverence.

As we enter the Iron Age, we have in contrast to the Western Isles, a domestic landscape which is extensive and not naturally split into obvious territories. It had a long and continuous history of use and preserved within it were massive monuments that were known to contain chambers with significant deposits of human remains. The construction of a roundhouse on top of the tombs was a powerful statement of change at the beginning of the Iron Age. The act immediately separated the inhabitants of the houses from other households in the profane landscape that surrounded these ritually charged monuments. The construction of the roundhouses was also carefully designed to allow but control access to the chambers of the tombs and the human remains they contained. Access was possible, but in most houses it involved traversing the main living space and at the Howe it was through an entrance that was covered by paving and perhaps invisible to visitors. It seems likely that access to the ancestors was much more restricted and controlled in

the Iron Age than it had been previously and that this privilege gave the occupants of the broch a religious as well as a secular status within the local community. They became a restricted elite who could communicate and receive instructions from the ancestors.

In Orkney, the tombs had a much more central role in the development of the Iron Age because landscape and human action in the Neolithic gave them a prominence, which was much greater than the tombs in the Western Isles. They provide the model for the development of a unique series of subterranean structures which were central to the brochs' importance in the Middle Iron Age (Sharples 2006).

### Conclusion

The development of power relations in the Iron Age was focussed on the construction and occupation of architecturally sophisticated houses. These required the control of skilled builders who were able to construct these impressive towers, some up to 13 m tall. They required the mobilization of a substantial labour force in their construction and they utilized important scarce resources, most notably timber, but also good quality building stone, which though available

still required quarrying and transporting to the construction site. These buildings acted as a symbol of the independence of the local community and of the power of the family that occupied the building. The position of these families was emphasized by their liminal location. They were separated from the community by the architectural boundaries of the massive wall, the low entrance passages, the doors and guard chambers. In the Western Isles, this separation was enhanced by their location on islands surrounded by water and accessed across long narrow causeways. In Orkney, this environmental separation was not so easily available and instead ancestral locations surrounded by ancient taboos were chosen to provide this separation.

In both regions the tombs of ancestors provided a resource for the Iron Age population. In Orkney, the ancestors were a powerful symbol that could be used as a model for the development of sophisticated architecture and provided additional resources for elite control. In the Western Isles, the ancestors were more distant and divorced from contemporary society and could be called upon by individuals and communities to protect them from the hostile environment that had destroyed their ancient homelands.

## Chapter 17

### The nuragic adventure: monuments, settlements and landscapes

Alessandro Usai

Perhaps more than anywhere else, in Sardinia, the memory of the past is selective and consoling. It chooses the features which exalt the greatness of the Sardinian people and leaves in the shadows the moments of decline and even the normality of human activities. The nuragic civilization is still considered as the Earthly Paradise of Sardinia and, rightly or wrongly, it is perceived as the foundation of our feeling of historical and cultural identity (Frongia 2012).

The word *Nuraghe* itself (*nurac* in the Roman inscription carved on the lintel of *Nuraghe Aidu Entos* at Bortigali: Gasperini 1992, 303–6) is a living piece of memory, a venerable linguistic residue of the Bronze Age, still surviving after many changes of language in Sardinia. Trying to interpret the remains of cyclopean and megalithic monuments, the popular memory imagined a people of giants. Therefore television, newspapers and politicians still simplify and trivialize the historical meaning of the nuragic world, perpetuating complaints and claims which produce the opposite effect, even though they are justified by deep-rooted economic and social injustices.

So, what really were the *Nuraghi*? Today Sardinian archaeologists work to give new answers to this question, well beyond the answers given by the twentieth century tradition of studies. Still 60 years ago, when an absolute chronology did not exist yet in Sardinia, it was believed that the *Nuraghi* had been built in the space of one thousand years, from 1500 to 500 BC, that is from the time of the Mycenaean *tholos* tombs to that of the Carthaginian invasion (Lilliu 2000b, 14–60).

For this reason, the nuragic archaeology is still a young discipline, in which many fields remain to be explored. Today we know that the phenomenon of the *Nuraghi* was much more explosive and manifold and had a huge impact on the Sardinian landscape. About 7,000 or perhaps 10,000 *Nuraghi* were built, not

in the space of 1,000 years, but over 500 years, roughly from 1700 to 1200 BC: Middle and Late Bronze Age in Italian terms, which are the phases of formation and maturity of the nuragic cultural cycle.

The archaic *Nuraghi* are squat and low, at first provided with corridors and niches but without rooms; only afterwards did elliptical or rectangular rooms develop. The settlements, both next to the archaic *Nuraghi* and isolated, are constituted by small groups of round single buildings or by hollows dug in the ground with organic superstructures. In the same phase, the earliest 'tombs of the giants' appeared, megalithic burials made up of a ceremonial forecourt and a funerary gallery (Lo Schiavo *et al.* 2009, 265–9; Webster 1996, 62–84; Moravetti 2015, 39–41; Depalmas 2018, 55–6).

The *tholos* or false dome made up of rings of dry stone smaller and smaller from the base to the top, was the great invention of the nuragic architects of the mature phase, which gave to the classical *Nuraghi* their characteristic shape of towers on a round base (Fig. 17.1). This clever simplification allowed both the widespread construction of single towers and the development of complex multi-towered monuments with several rooms at ground level and one or two superposed floors (Fig. 17.2) (Lilliu 1962, 11–52; Lilliu 1988, 485–517; Moravetti 2015, 41–2; Depalmas 2018, 56–8).

In this way, the nuragic communities began to carry out a prodigious colonization of plains, hills, tablelands and mountains, organizing their territories as polycentric hierarchical districts characterized by the multiplication of monuments, settlements and tombs. This population process went along with the deforestation and the development of an efficient integrated economic system (Lo Schiavo *et al.* 2009, 269–72; Webster 1996, 85–107; Vanzetti *et al.* 2013; Usai 2015, 62).



Figure 17.1. A simple Nuraghe: Zuras (Abbasanta).

#### Nuraghi and nuragic societies

Scholars and the general population have perennially wondered about the *Nuraghi*'s function; yet the question is often wrongly posed. Supposing they were royal houses or fortresses or lookout towers or temples or tombs, leaving to one side even odder ideas, does not seem suitable to the organization of the societies that built them. The archaeological evidence suggests that the *Nuraghi* were built by societies that were, especially at the beginning, of a tribal type, that is compact, with minimal rank differences and weak functional specialization (Usai 1995; Webster 1996, 81–2, 98–100; Perra 1997a, 54–62; Perra 2009; Perra 2018b).

For this reason, the *Nuraghi* probably carried out all the material and symbolic functions which were necessary to the nuragic communities' life, within a mostly agricultural economic system and a social structure which was beginning to differentiate. So, though not simple dwellings, they were used for household activities; though not actual fortresses, they were also fortified buildings, etymologically 'made strong' and equipped for protecting people and things; above all

they were instruments of widespread land control and resource management, and evident signs of power and wealth of the communities that owned them. Only in the Iron Age did some *Nuraghi* become temples and only in Roman and Medieval times were they sometimes used as tombs.

It is important to stress that the several thousands of *Nuraghi* do not follow a unique ideal model; they rather constitute a polymorphic category which is highly variable in building techniques, architectural shapes, dimensions, structural and functional complexity. Actually the word *Nuraghe* defines several types of buildings which are considerably different from each other, though all are characterized and perceived as real monuments in comparison with the normal dwellings (Usai 2006, 560).

The biggest *Nuraghi* or complex *Nuraghi*, made up of several towers and courtyards, attract attention not only for their monumentality, but also because they express a structural, functional and territorial hierarchy, related to the control and management of resources and route networks. The biggest *Nuraghi* also suggest emulation and competition between neighbouring



Figure 17.2. A complex Nuraghe: Orolo (Bortigali).

communities (Lo Schiavo *et al.* 2009, 269–71). Nevertheless, it is not clear whether and how much the territorial hierarchy indicates steady rank and power differentiation within the societies; actually prestige and luxury items are extremely rare inside the *Nuraghi*, settlements and 'tombs of the giants', where the ancestors' cult continued in collective and egalitarian forms.

#### Nuraghi and landscapes: colonization, exploitation and the first nuragic crisis

An interesting feature is that some *Nuraghi* were built in the alluvial plains, where big building stones were absent. This choice required the transport of large amounts of blocks from rock layers some kilometres away. It seems likely that the construction of these big and small *Nuraghi* took place within huge territorial projects of agricultural transformation and economic and demographic reorganization (Stiglitz *et al.* 2012, 922). Here we begin to see that the cultural landscape not only adapted to the natural landscape and exploited its opportunities, but sometimes was superimposed on it and even clashed with it.

The same trend is shown by other phenomena, which reveal the mechanisms of reproduction of the settlement cells. Firstly there are clusters or chains of simple *Nuraghi* of medium-small size highly standardized, which indicate an intense effort aimed at occupation and productive transformation of areas which were important for the agricultural economy (Lo Schiavo *et al.* 2009, 271). Secondly, we know several scores of structures made up of one, two or three layers of blocks, without debris mounds and even without the usual small filling stones in the middle of the walls. They have certainly been reduced by stone robbery over the centuries, but I believe they must be interpreted as unfinished *Nuraghi*. Apart from a few uncertain cases of archaic and complex *Nuraghi*, the largest majority of them had been undoubtedly conceived to create simple *Nuraghi* (Fig. 17.3) (Usai 2006, 559; Lo Schiavo *et al.* 2009, 271–2). Both these phenomena appear not sporadically but with several examples grouped in clusters or regular arrangements like chains along the river valleys, couples or sets of three in the plains and tablelands. In particular, the unfinished *Nuraghi* are often found next to the main





**Figure 17.3.** An unfinished Nuraghe: Codina 'e s'Ispreddosu (Norbello).

settlements or at the boundaries of the settlement clusters, such as to indicate failed attempts of intensification or expansion (Lo Schiavo *et al.* 2009, 272; Usai 2015, 63–4).

Certainly there are many Middle and Late Bronze Age settlements without *Nuraghi*, but in general it seems that it was important to mark the conquest of new land with the construction of a monument, beyond its mere material functions. Was this too a form of memory, a repetition of acts almost ritual in nature, though seemingly not connected to any cult, aiming at perpetuating a tradition that had to be kept alive and unchanged, like a sort of never-ending social refoundation? Of course this could be a symbolic expedient which allowed the dominant social groups to expel young people, who were forced to create new opportunities.

Actually, during the Bronze and Iron Ages the territorial development of the nuragic people took place with the multiplication of the settlements within hierarchical polycentric systems, without a tendency to urban concentration. A new settlement implies a germination project, which requires the transfer of

a human group from an occupied place to another still unoccupied which in the same time has to be reclaimed and colonized. Thus a certain amount of settlement projects could obviously fail at any time for whatever reason. Nevertheless, since in some areas the unfinished *Nuraghi* reach 40 per cent of the total, we are probably facing a systematic failure, which can be explained only by considering structural reasons connected to the transformation of the nuragic society (Lo Schiavo *et al.* 2009, 272). That is why I suppose, though, subject to proof by excavation, that the majority of these unfinished *Nuraghi* were the latest ones to be started.

Most probably, the whole of the supposed colonization, exploitation and construction projects, carried out so far as to reveal an actual frenzy, soon became unsustainable. Beyond the traditional and superficial picture of Sardinia crowded with *Nuraghi* tall like skyscrapers and powerful like castles, another hypothesis emerges: a heavy crisis, a deep disorientation, a radical and painful reorganization (Usai 2015, 64). What happened at the beginning of the Final Bronze Age? Together with the small *Nuraghi*, how many big *Nuraghi* were abandoned? How many settlements? How

many lands? At this point I can't avoid recalling the images of the last Moai statues on Easter Island, left unfinished in their quarries or abandoned along the transport ways, as the best images of a revolutionary buffer to an explosive expansion.

The extent of these phenomena is currently under discussion (Usai 2012b; Perra 2012). I believe that this first great crisis of the nuragic cycle marked the end of the construction of the *Nuraghi*, yet not the end of the *Nuraghi* themselves. Some of them were certainly abandoned; others were certainly not, and not all those which survived became temples. In general, I suppose a functional decline from communal to private or family use; in some cases at least the upper room became a simple habitation occupied in the Final Bronze and Early Iron Ages.

In spite of this fascinating history, neither the popular memory nor the current political propaganda have ever been interested in the end of the *Nuraghi*'s construction. The myth of the people of the giants in the Sardinian Earthly Paradise still resists.

#### **Nuragic settlements and landscapes: reorganization and consumption of resources**

Likewise, the memory and perception of the importance of settlement vanished, simply because they are not as imposing as the *Nuraghi*; nevertheless, many of them are really monumental too. As well as the temples and sanctuaries, settlement development is the most evident mark of the recovery and reorganization of the nuragic people after the crisis of the *Nuraghi* (Lo Schiavo *et al.* 2009, 272–7; Webster 1996, 108–52). It is interesting to observe that the extent of the settlements is often not proportional to the monumental size of the adjacent *Nuraghi*. Some complex *Nuraghi* have no settlement or a very small one, while some simple *Nuraghi* have large settlements. Sometimes their extent can be precisely evaluated, mainly if there is an enclosure wall, but generally one must consider the dispersal of structural remains and finds or look for weak signs of nuragic presence within settlements of Roman times. The extent of the Final Bronze and Early Iron Ages settlements is generally between 0.5 and 1.5 hectares; an extent larger than three hectares must be considered exceptional. It seems that the Late Bronze Age settlements were much smaller, and even smaller were those of the Middle Bronze Age.

During the Final Bronze and the Early Iron Ages the settlement development was ambivalent: on the one hand they grew in size and population, yet without the least urban character; on the other hand they continued multiplying, producing new cells even if small or very small in size. The former were likely

permanent and long-lasting, the latter temporary and short-lived. In spite of the thorough change and the tendency to stabilization, there remained alive also the tendency to expansion, occupation of new lands, exploitation of new resources by means of transformation and colonization projects. From this point of view, the hierarchical polycentric arrangement remained unchanged, though managed by emerging elites that transformed the traditional forms of territorial and social organization into some sort of 'states without towns' (Usai 2015, 65).

The evaluation of the territorial demographic density is quite difficult, because it is impossible to establish how many settlements within a district were occupied at the same time. It is also impossible to estimate the weight of each significant factor in a picture lacking in information regarding the degree of stability, expansion, contraction, intensification or rarefaction of the settlement network. Most of the settlements provided with massive stone structures seem to have been permanently occupied for several centuries, with an evident spatial and demographic increase from the Middle to the Final Bronze and Early Iron Ages. The settlement density suggests that the custom of fission was usual in any condition, as it had previously been for the *Nuraghi*, though reasonably tended to intensify in times of social tensions, generation conflicts or demographic pressure (Usai 2006, 557–60).

Thus, as for the *Nuraghi*, even more for the study of the settlements, it is necessary to lay the basis for a reconstruction at a district scale, or even better at a tribal scale. Undoubtedly, the nuragic settlements of the Final Bronze and Early Iron Ages were interdependent elements of integrated networks, aiming at the exploitation and exchange of all different economic resources.

It is interesting to make a comparison between two cases in west-central Sardinia, one of which could be considered a 'normal' case and another which appears strongly anomalous.

In the Oristano area, the settlement of *Nuraghe* Pidighi at Solarussa has been studied. It belongs to a territorial system made up of 36 *Nuraghi* (archaic, simple, complex, indeterminate and unfinished) and 22 settlements, which, without exception, remained closely connected over the centuries with the places at first occupied by the *Nuraghi*. This settlement, nearly one hectare and a half wide, developed in several phases at least from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age (Fig. 17.4). The structural development is the material indicator of the resident families' genealogy, with a growing gathering of houses and rooms because of the demographic increase within a clearly bounded space. The factor which marks the shift from settlement

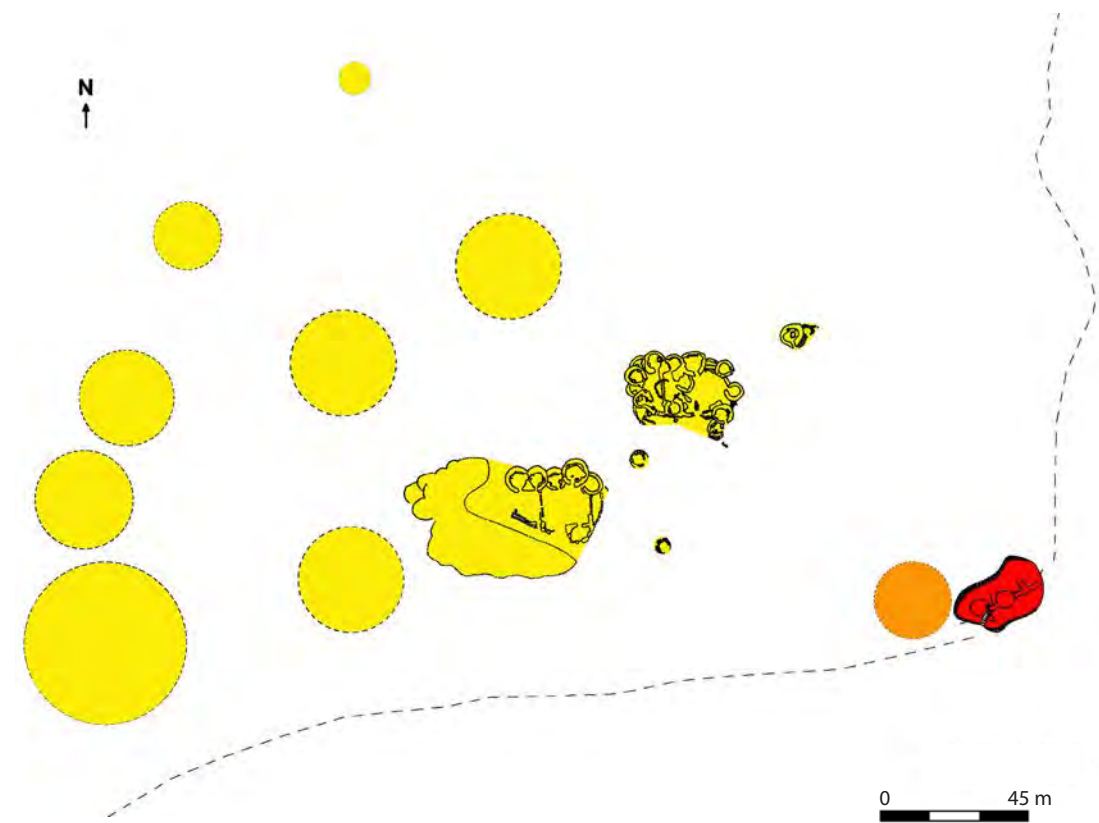


**Figure 17.4.** A compact nuragic settlement with the Nuraghe in the middle: Pidighi (Solarussa).

expansion to intensification is the construction of the enclosure wall, which indicates a pressing safety need. The continued settlement development around the *Nuraghe* bears witness to the permanent land occupation; its construction required a work investment even greater in comparison with the *Nuraghe* and reveals an evident confidence in the community's future, without any time limits, beyond the short life of individuals (Usai 2012c, 740–2).

The large plateau called Sa Jara or 'Giara di Gèsturi' offers a completely different picture. Scores of *Nuraghi* are distributed at different altitudes on the slopes, while the edges of the plateau are dotted with 21 *Nuraghi* and 15 settlements. There is only one archaic *Nuraghe* and a series of simple *Nuraghi* and particularly complex *Nuraghi* of small size. The settlements are partly next to the *Nuraghi*, but nearly half cases are without any *Nuraghe*. In spite of the morphological isolation, in the nuragic period the plateau had to be subdivided into several districts which were appendices of different territorial systems whose main monumental, demographic and economic centres were located on the lower fertile hills. The site of Bruncu Māduli presents a seemingly exceptional situation, which must be interpreted in a dynamic way as adaptation to the environmental

and socio-economic conditions (Fig. 17.5). The large archaic *Nuraghe* (in red), occupied at least at the end of the Middle Bronze Age, was never the centre of a compact settlement. Apart from small ruins of dwellings (in orange) lying next to the *Nuraghe* and perhaps connected to it, the settlement is made up of about ten distinct blocks and some isolated buildings (in yellow), seemingly occupied only during the Final Bronze Age. The total surface is about three hectares, while the area actually occupied by the buildings, including the *Nuraghe* and the adjacent ruins, is of about one hectare. This unusual conformation does not suggest the development of a compact community, deep-rooted for several generations in a well-defined place around a recognized aggregation centre; on the contrary it suggests the parallel course of several groups did not arrive spontaneously but in consequence of precise directives aiming at alleviating the overpopulation of the hilly areas, so promoting the exploitation of the marginal resources of the plateau and the activation of a product redistribution system. This impression is strengthened by the conformation of each block, which seems to have its own centripetal organization, tending to intensification instead of expansion, perhaps to keep unaltered the distances



**Figure 17.5.** A nuragic settlement made up of isolated blocks with the Nuraghe on its edge: Bruncu Māduli (Gèsturi).

and prevent fusion with the adjacent blocks (Usai 2012c, 742–4).

The nuragic complex houses have been compared to similar African compounds known as kraals; the similarity has been interpreted as an indication of the existence of polygamous households comprising few men, more women, their children, some dependents and animals (Webster 1996, 126–8). This interpretation remains unproved.

These nuragic landscapes were defined not only by monuments, but by the relationships among all the natural and artificial, material and immaterial elements of both land and resident community, and by the relationships with the neighbouring landscapes: internal and external relations of power, exchange, marriage, collaboration or exploitation. These were landscapes of hard work, conquered with force applied to nature, planned and domesticated with patience, transformed into Mediterranean gardens: most often these were rocky, spiny and arid gardens, but in some favourable areas there are elements which also indicate an early development of intensive specialized gardens with fig trees, grapevines and watermelons, as proven since the Late Bronze Age in the settlement of Sa Osa at Cabras, in the alluvial plain of Tirso river (Usai 2011; Usai 2015, 66). Many of these landscapes

are still exploited; many have been exhausted over the centuries, then abandoned or left to extensive pasture.

No memory of that is preserved, apart from the archaeological research. Yet perhaps the nuragic people tried to construct a memory of their work. For instance, the bronze statuettes and ships with scenes of agricultural work, were they only realistic images or rather celebrations of work or even commemorations of mythical colonization enterprises?

#### Degeneration and dissolution of the nuragic civilization

The period between the later Final Bronze Age and the beginning of the Early Iron Age (tenth to first half of the eighth century BC in traditional chronology) appears to have been the time of maximum settlement occupation, wealth accumulation in the sanctuaries and development of the workshops which produced ritual offerings in bronze and stone. During this period the social elites, that had become leaders of the reorganization process, legitimized and celebrated their own power by exploiting the religious practices (Lo Schiavo *et al.* 2009, 272–7; Webster 1996, 153–94). Against the opinion of some authoritative scholars, I believe that this was the time of the last nuragic apogee. Of course,

that world had deeply changed in comparison with the times of the cyclopean monuments.

In spite of the lack of systematic data, the example of the settlement of *Nuraghe Pìdighi* leads me to believe that at least a part of the enclosure walls of the west-central settlements may belong to the later Final Bronze Age and the beginning of the Early Iron Age. In fact, in some regions, those walls might mark the main settlements which had not been abandoned earlier, as a response to a widespread safety need expressed during that period, or as a means to strengthen the emerging social elites. This does not exclude the persistence of several undefended settlements up to the Early Iron Age.

Throughout Sardinia, the nuragic sanctuaries, which were the pulsating centres of the social and economic organization, reached the peak of their development during the ninth and the eighth centuries BC, then began to decay and disappeared very fast. In some regions of southern Sardinia, many settlements survived during the Late Iron Age (late eighth to seventh centuries BC in traditional chronology), with a material culture which bears witness to the dissolution of the nuragic tradition and the growing cultural hybridization between the island people and the Phoenician newcomers. In other regions, like west-central Sardinia where I am working, it seems that most settlements were abandoned during the Early Iron Age or at its end. In the Oristano region just a handful of settlements were still occupied during the Late Iron Age. Here we are facing a real process of recession and depopulation, which does not seem to be compensated at all by the urbanization of local groups into the new coastal towns founded by the Phoenicians (Usai 2012b; Usai 2015, 68–9). Yet it is worthy of note that other thorough studies are trying to trace elements of continuity and indications for an active role of the communities of nuragic tradition (Lo Schiavo *et al.* 2009, 280–3; Bernardini 2012a; Stiglitz 2018; Usai 2018).

Therefore, the Iron Age of Sardinia looks like a period of accelerated evolution, if not revolution. It is not anymore marked by outdated ideas of opposition between two ethnic and cultural blocks; nevertheless, the exhaustion of the nuragic cultural cycle retains a huge historical importance, for it expresses a complex and painful process of transformation, disintegration and readaptation, in which played both factors of continuity and change.

### Conclusion

Although it may appear paradoxical, I believe that the last nuragic apogee period did not precede, but on the contrary included in itself a great part of the degeneration process. I intend degeneration as conversion of traditional strong points into limitations and weakening factors: for instance, from the expansion of land to the exhaustion of resources, from competition to conflict, from settlement multiplication to inability to achieve urban evolution. The nuragic societies of the Final Bronze and Early Iron Ages had overflowing resources and energies, but were also fragile and had no alternatives. The exhaustion or internal depletion should have involved the disintegration of the system, but this could not emerge in the outward appearances (and in the archaeological record) until the complete maturation of the process and the consequent collapse, which should have been only seemingly sudden. I believe that this process, which had begun in the brightest times of the nuragic cultural cycle, underwent a strong acceleration during the second half of the eighth century BC, and finished around the end of the century with assimilation and loss of cultural identity. Nevertheless, the popular memory still prefers to believe that the nuragic people were overwhelmed by the Phoenicians, firstly by fraud and then by arms. By this account the end of the nuragic Earthly Paradise was the first historical injustice suffered by Sardinia.

## Chapter 18

# Changing media in shaping memories: monuments, landscapes and ritual performance in Iron Age Europe

Peter Wells

Mounds containing burials are an important aspect of prehistoric European cultural landscapes in central Europe. In some periods and regions, mound burial was common, in other contexts less so. During the Early Iron Age (800–450 BC) in the central regions of temperate Europe, mound burial became a standard part of funerary ritual. In the earlier part of the period, when cremation was common practice, mounds typically contained remains of one or two individuals. Later, when inhumation came to predominate, frequently more than 10 individuals were interred in a mound, and sometimes well over 100, as at the Magdalenenberg tumulus in the Black Forest region (Spindler 1976) and at Stična in Slovenia (Gabrovec 1966).

At the beginning of the Late Iron Age (Early La Tène Period), mound burial continued, but ordinarily without the very large mounds of the Late Hallstatt Period. From the early fourth century BC onwards, mound burial became rare in most parts of temperate Europe, and common practice was flat inhumation.

In regions east and south of the Main-Rhine confluence, the practice of burying the dead waned during the second century BC, and although a few small cemeteries are known, the large cemeteries that we would expect at the great *oppidum* settlements are missing. Evidence from a number of sites indicates that some kind of funerary rituals involving bones of the dead were performed in settlement contexts (see below), but the nature of these rituals is unclear.

Following the Roman conquests of Gaul and the lands east of the Rhine, the practice of sub-surface burial was resumed. Although some mounds are known from this period, more common practice for well outfitted burials was stone monuments placed above the ground that commemorated the buried individuals.

Constructing above-ground monuments, visible to living communities for generations, would seem to be very different from leaving graves unmarked on

the surface, or at least unmarked as far as any kind of permanent markers were concerned. In this chapter, I argue that the changes summarized above are connected to different ways of creating memories (Jones 2007), which in turn were linked to major cultural changes taking place during the final half millennium of prehistory.

### Memory

For purposes here, memory is the recollection of objects, experiences, and social relationships, based on both what a person or group has seen and done and on the transformations that take place in people's minds as they recollect past events and experiences (Connerton 1989). Through our memories we fashion our identities, both as individuals and as members of communities. We need memories upon which to base our present and future thoughts and actions.

### Memory, monuments and the performance of ritual

Funerary rituals are critical events in societies. They are highly charged emotionally, and when the deceased is a person of social or political importance, they are of political significance (Huntington & Metcalf 1979). These ceremonies remain strong in the memories of participants. (For examples from contexts for which textual accounts are available, see Kurtz & Boardman 1971 on ancient Greece and Owen-Crocker 2000 on *Beowulf*.) As Williams notes (2004, 94), the ways that rituals are performed, including the ways in which objects are manipulated, determine how the events are remembered.

Graves are the material manifestations of funerary ceremonies, and from them we can learn a great deal about the ceremonies. The discussion that follows



Figure 18.1. Map of principal sites mentioned in the text. Basemap source: Esri.

focuses on well outfitted burials. The same principles apply to less richly equipped graves.

The objects that were placed in Iron Age graves were selected to convey specific meanings (Hallam & Hocky 2001, 1). This aspect is apparent when we compare assemblages of objects in different graves of the same period and region. It is clear that specific rules were followed with regard to the inclusion of certain kinds of objects, though every grave was unique.

Although in most cases we cannot reconstruct in detail the process through which objects were placed into graves (but for some instances in which we can, see Wells 2012, 162–5), it is most likely that objects were displayed to those participating in the ceremony as they were being set into the grave, perhaps held aloft to the accompaniment of words spoken about how the object was important to the deceased individual and to the community. The objects are likely to have served as mnemonic devices to guide those performing the ceremony, in the sense of extended mind theory (Clark 2008; see Williams 2007, 145).

Cultural rules also guided the arrangement of grave goods – the ways in which they were arranged with respect to the remains of the deceased, to the walls of the grave, and to other objects. Arranged graves can be understood as ‘diagrams’ of their communities and their societies, in the sense that Bender and Marrinan (2010) argue that arrangements of objects and people

in representations are diagrams of how societies work and of how their memories are created. (For full details of this argument for graves as diagrams, see Wells 2012, Chapter 8.)

#### Patterns of change – Early Iron Age burial: ritual performances for individuals and their monuments in the landscape (800–450 BC)

The Early Iron Age grave at Hochdorf, near Ludwigsburg in southwest Germany, dating to about 525 BC, was richly outfitted with culturally important objects, was undisturbed, and was very well excavated (Biel 1985). In the context of the present discussion, I highlight four aspects of this grave with respect to the theme of memory.

Those who arranged the body of the man attached to it a whole series of visually evocative objects that would remain in the memories of all who attended the funerary ceremony. He was decorated from head to foot with gold – neck ring, two fibulae on his chest, wide ornate bracelet, gold belt plaque, dagger in a gold-covered sheath at his waist, and sheet gold ornaments on his shoes. Whatever members of his community recalled of him in life, they would surely remember how he looked in death, laid out with this elaborate display of gold on his body (for more detail on the visual aspects of this individual, see Wells 2008, 66–9).

The most striking theme conveyed by the burial assemblage at Hochdorf is the representation of the man’s social role by the feasting equipment that literally framed the space inside the oak-built chamber (Fig. 18.2). The body was laid out on an ornate bronze couch, a type of furniture that played a central role in feasts (*symposia*) in the Greek and Etruscan worlds (Boardman 1990). At his feet was an enormous bronze cauldron manufactured in a Greek colonial workshop, along with a gold bowl. On the south wall of the chamber were hung nine drinking horns, all decorated with gold bands; along the east wall was a four-wheeled wagon with nine bronze dishes on it – apparently drink and food containers for the deceased man and eight of his followers. This arrangement of objects in the grave seems to have been designed specifically to emphasize his role as host and leader (Krausse 1996). The material representation of this role, through these visually striking objects – especially the cauldron, 80 cm high, 104 cm in diameter, and with a capacity of some 500 l – surely created a vivid memory in the minds of the participants and observers.

The third visually striking aspect of the burial chamber is the open space in the centre, measuring about 2.5 by 4 m – the affordance, to apply James J. Gibson’s (1977, 1979) concept for visually empty spaces. Whether this space was left open during the ceremony, or occupied by people moving in and out

and performing with objects as they conducted the ritual, this open space was, as Gibson argues, visually critical to the message conveyed by the grave. It was a space of potential, bounded by highly evocative objects. And it would have been remembered as such by those present at the performance.

Finally, and perhaps most powerfully affective as regards memory, was the laying out of bedding on the couch and the subsequent wrapping of the body and later of the entire contents of the grave in brightly coloured textiles. Movement of objects makes them much more visible and attention-getting than stationary states of objects (Gregory 1998). When we watch someone manipulate objects – swinging an axe against a tree, lifting a chalice, or wrapping something in cloth – our brain responds to seeing those actions by taking part in them vicariously (Johnson 2007, 19–32). These responses would result in more vivid and lasting memories than simply seeing objects in a stationary tableau. Because of the unusually favourable conditions of preservation and the detailed analysis of organic remains by Udelgard Körber-Grohne (1985) and of textiles in particular by Joanna Banck (1996, Banck-Burgess 1999), we can say much about movement and sequential actions in the manipulation of these materials.

Körber-Grohne’s analysis shows that in preparation of laying out the man’s body, a layer of badger fur was set down on the couch. On top of that was placed a textile woven from hemp, on that stalks of grass set perpendicular to the weave of the hemp. Next were placed finely woven textile of badger hair, and on top, wool. The corpse was wrapped in a blue cloth decorated at the edges with red bands, then in a red textile, and finally another blue textile was placed over the lower part of the body. Other textiles decorated objects in the grave, and others were hung on the walls of the chamber. Many of the textiles were decorated with geometrical motifs woven into the fabrics.

Before the burial chamber was closed, every object was wrapped in textile (reconstruction drawing in Banck 1996, 40–1). If the wrapping was carried out in front of the participants in the ceremony, this action may have been the most powerful of all with regard to the creation of memories of the event – removing the objects from the visual world of the observers through a dramatic performance (Banck-Burgess 1999, 129).

These practices at Hochdorf are apparent in richly outfitted burials throughout the central regions of temperate Europe, though preservation of textiles is rarely as good. Other examples include chamber graves in northern Württemberg, notably Grafenbühl (Zürn 1970); and at Vix in eastern France (Rolley 2003), Grosseibstadt in northern Bavaria (Kossack 1970), and Hradenín in Bohemia (Filip 1966). In all of these

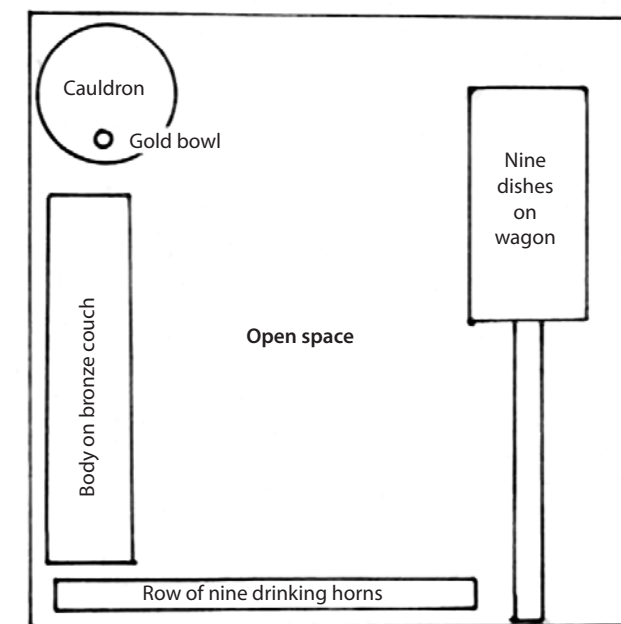


Figure 18.2. Schematic plan of the Hochdorf burial chamber, showing the framing of the central space by the objects referring to feasting, and the open space in the centre.

chamber tombs, the individual buried was decorated with special personal ornaments, often of gold, and in the chamber, feasting vessels played a major role in the funerary display. Open space was regularly a part of the overall display arrangement in this period.

Two elements of this set of practices are especially important, because they changed in the fifth century BC. One is the outfitting of the grave with feasting equipment for multiple participants, not just for the one deceased individual. The multiple sets of vessels, and extraordinarily large capacity of some, such as the Vix krater and the Hochdorf cauldron, represent the deceased's social role as host in the community. This individual-community link is all important, as will be seen below. The second is the open space in the burial chambers, unoccupied by grave goods – the affordances in Gibson's sense.

The richly outfitted burials of the sixth and early fifth centuries BC were the sites of the most elaborate rituals of which we have evidence during this period, in terms of expenditure of goods and labour, and presumably in numbers of participants. Both the focus on the individual person as community leader and the leaving of a substantial monument were closely connected to the hierarchical social structure of the time (for recent discussions of social structure, see the papers in Kienlin & Zimmermann 2012).

#### Patterns of change – community rituals and new kinds of memory: Early and Middle La Tène (450–150 BC)

The most familiar change in the archaeological material of the fifth century BC is the development of the Early La Tène style of ornament. But this was only one of a series of changes. At the end of the fifth century BC and the beginning of the fourth, burial mounds were still constructed over some graves, notably over the relatively richly outfitted burials of the Paris Basin, the Middle Rhineland, and Bohemia (summary articles in Moscati *et al.* 1991, 127–91). But the graves in those mounds were arranged differently from Hochdorf and the other chamber tombs of the preceding centuries.

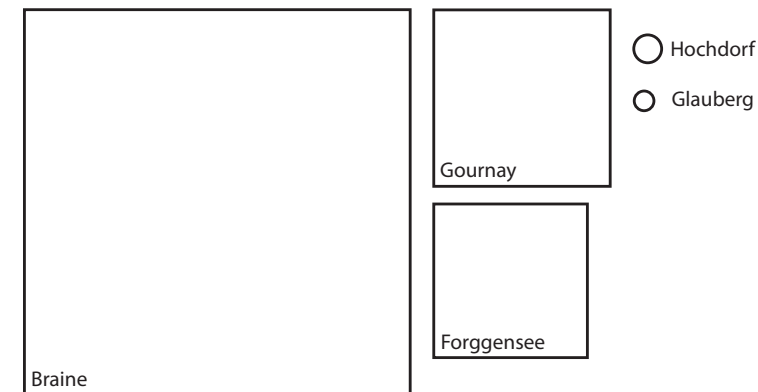
Glauberg grave 1 will serve as an example, since it was well excavated recently and is typical in important ways (Frey & Herrmann 1997). Like Hochdorf, it contained the body of a man outfitted with gold and bronze ornaments and with weapons. Instead of feasting vessels for nine individuals, this grave contained a single ornate bronze jug. The gold, the ornate fibulae, the weapons, and the jug mark this man as elite for his time, but in contrast to Hochdorf, it is only the status of the man himself that is represented in the grave goods, not his role in his community.

Consistent with this perspective is the lack of open space in the grave chamber. As the plan (Frey & Herrmann 1997, 467, Fig. 7) shows, the body and the accouterments fill the grave space. There is no open space into which participants might move during the performance of the funerary ceremony. Other graves of this period – around 400 BC – show this same pattern, for example the relatively richly outfitted woman's grave at Reinheim (Keller 1965, 16, Fig. 4).

A large number of cemeteries dating to the fourth, third, and early second centuries BC are known all over temperate Europe (map in Müller 2009, 83, Fig. 79). The graves are generally small, just big enough to accommodate the bodies, typically laid out flat on their backs with legs extended (e.g. Hodson 1968; Waldhauser 1987). Women's graves typically include items of personal ornament (neck rings, bracelets, fibulae). Some but not all men's graves contain weapons (swords, spears, occasionally shields or helmets). Exceptionally richly outfitted graves are rare, though some differentiation in burial wealth is recognizable (Bujna 1982).

Instead of the most elaborate community rituals being carried out at the graveside, as at Hochdorf, Vix, and other Early Iron Age chamber and tumulus burials, community ceremonies were performed now at spacious, open enclosures, or 'sanctuaries', as they are often called in the literature (Poux 2006). In contrast to burial chambers like Hochdorf, these sites provided spacious enclosures where potentially hundreds of people could assemble to witness and participate in the performance of ceremonies that included the breaking and depositing of quantities of weapons. At Gournay-sur-Aronde the excavators estimate that the over 2000 weapons recovered represent the full accoutrements of some 500 warriors (Brunaux 2006). Open places where hundreds could assemble to participate in ceremonies are apparent at other kinds of sites as well, such as the water deposit sites at La Tène in Switzerland (Alt 2007) and at Hjortspring in Denmark (Kaul 1988) and at the 'fire offering sites' (*Brandopferplätze*) in Alpine and Alpine foothill regions, as at Forggensee in Bavaria (Zanier 1999) and Wartau in Switzerland (Pernet & Schmid-Sikimić 2007).

The performances at these sites – breaking swords and spearheads at Gournay, throwing weapons into the lake at La Tène, tossing tools and weapons on fires in the Alps – all took place in open spaces, with broad views of the countryside, with the possibility of being attended by large numbers of people (Fig. 18.3). Where small communities could attend the funerary ceremonies at Hochdorf and at the other Early Iron Age burials, all focused on a single individual and his or her role in the community, now much larger numbers of people could participate, and the focus was no longer



**Figure 18.3.** Schematic sketches of sites of memory-generating performances, all drawn at the same scale. Hochdorf and Glauberg are represented here by the entire burial mounds, though the performances were focused on the graves in them, which occupied much smaller spaces. The performance spaces of Gournay, Forggensee, and Braine are represented by squares showing the areas of the enclosure interiors where performances took place.

on the relation of an individual to a community but rather on the entire community itself. At these sites, there is no evidence for special attention devoted to any single individual. The result was the creation of memories of communities, not of specific persons.

#### Patterns of change – increasing engagement with the wider world: Late La Tène (150–25 BC)

Throughout much of the central regions of temperate Europe, the practice of burying the dead in the ground declined during the second century BC. We have no sizable cemeteries at the major *oppida* during this period, and only west of the Rhine and from the Moselle valley north do we find substantial cemeteries. Instead of subsurface burial, throughout much of temperate Europe, rituals surrounding the dead changed to a variety of practices involving manipulation of the bones of the deceased, frequently on settlement sites. At Manching, human bones from hundreds of individuals recovered on the settlement have been extensively studied (Lange 1983, Hahn 1992, 1999), and they have been recovered at other *oppida*, including Breisach-Hochstetten in southwest Germany, Basel-Gasfabrik in Switzerland, and at Knovice in Bohemia. Little is known about the rituals practised. Practices involving the manipulation of human skeletal parts, but not burial of the type represented earlier in the Iron Age, are evident at other sites as well, as for example Acy-Romance in France (Lambot 2006) and Leonding in Austria (Pertlwieser 2001).

The occurrence of human skeletal remains on big settlements suggests that whatever the rituals may have been, they were public affairs, not restricted to the celebration of specific individuals. The evidence at Manching suggests that no special treatment was accorded to deceased individuals, and the bones did not end up in any kind of special grave or ossuary.

Many open-air sites of the preceding period continued in use during these times and often on into

the Roman Period. At the Forggensee, depositional practice continued from the late prehistoric Iron Age into Roman times (Zanier 1999), and many of the sanctuary sites in France and other parts of Gaul, as at Empel in the Netherlands, continued in use throughout the period of the conquest and into provincial Roman times (Arcelin & Brunaux 2003, Roymans & Derks 1994). Of special importance for my argument below is the appearance of some rectangular enclosures considerably larger than earlier ones, defined by ditches with deposits of quantities of imported Roman amphorae in them in place of the damaged weapons that characterize the earlier sites such as Gournay. Braine in Aisne, France (Fig. 18.3, left), is among the best documented examples of these larger sanctuaries (Auxiette *et al.* 2000).

Two new media became major factors in forming and preserving memory during the second and final centuries BC – coins and writing. Both of these media are complex in their significance; here I highlight just one aspect. Although the idea of coinage was introduced into temperate Europe in the latter part of the fourth century BC, and local coinages developed throughout the third, not until the second did legends come into common use – names written in Greek and Latin letters (Allen & Nash 1980, 107). Allen and Nash observe that some 500 or 600 different names have been identified on coins of this period, indicating that writing in this form and medium had become widespread. Evidence for writing in other media, such as stamped on swords (Wyss 1956) and incised on pottery (Krämer 1982), is less common but nonetheless significant. Caesar's remark (Gallic Wars I, 29) that his troops found in the Helvetian camp 'records written out in Greek letters' supports the idea that writing was considerably more widespread in Late La Tène temperate Europe than the inscriptions on coins and other metal objects, and on pottery, would suggest. As Greg Woolf has noted (2009, 47), the practice of writing expanded greatly in the Roman world during the second century BC. With

all of the interaction evident in imported amphorae, pottery, bronze vessels, and coins from the Roman Mediterranean into temperate Europe, it is not difficult to imagine how writing was adopted, at least by those involved in the commerce.

As many researchers have argued (Goody 1986; Olson 2009), there are close and important connections between writing and memory. The presence of writing in a society changes the way people use material culture to preserve memory, whether each individual in the society is able to read or not. When subsurface burial of the dead was resumed as common practice in temperate Europe after the Roman conquests, many of the dead, at least among the elites, were commemorated with written burial monuments – gravestones with Latin inscriptions that spelled out the information which earlier had been conveyed by performances with objects placed in burials and by mounds erected in the landscape.

### Interpretation

During the first centuries of the Iron Age, the greatest expenditure of resources and energy for ceremonial purposes was in the construction and arrangement of chamber burials under large earth mounds, as at Hochdorf. All indications are that the performance of the funerary ritual was a community event, and the arrangement of the selected objects in the chamber was intended to create powerful memories in the participants. The dominant theme of the funerary process was the individual in his or her role as an elite member of the community.

Early in the fifth century BC, this practice changed. The practice of erecting mounds declined, and small and spatially restricted graves replaced the spacious chambers of the previous century, and even the wealthiest burials (e.g. Waldalgesheim–Joachim 1995) contained only feasting equipment for one person, not for the groups represented by the sets in the earlier chamber burials. The focus of burial ritual was on the individual person, not on the person's role in the community. Much greater amounts of effort and material were expended in the construction of large open-air enclosures and in the display and deposition of quantities of material objects. These sites bear no signs of status display with respect to individuals, but rather emphasize community performances in large-scale deposition of swords, spears, shields, and other objects. The memories created in these events concerned communities, not individuals.

This profound shift from expenditure of effort and resources focused on individuals to expenditure focused on communities requires comment. Looking

beyond the confines of temperate Europe, we can see abundant evidence that long-distance contacts and interactions, not only with societies of the Mediterranean basin but beyond, were playing important roles in changing the worldview of people in temperate Europe. The stylistic elements of the new Early La Tène style were part of a Eurasia-wide sharing of design elements and motifs during the fifth and fourth centuries BC (discussion in Wells 2012, 201–9; 2019). Importation of exotic goods from beyond Europe also attests to the opening up of the continent to influences and products from other societies of the wider world, including ivory from Africa or Asia, silk from Asia, and ornate glass and metal vessels from north Africa and western Asia (Mac Sweeney & Wells 2018).

Another important indication of a widespread change in attitude toward the outside world is apparent in the treatment of imports from the societies of the Mediterranean region. The bronze vessels and Attic pottery that were imported from the Etruscan and Greek worlds during the seventh, sixth, and early fifth centuries BC were rarely altered by craftworkers in temperate Europe – they seem to have been valued as they were received and treated with special attention in their use in feasting rituals and funerary ceremonies. At the same time that the La Tène style of ornament developed, during the fifth century BC, we see indications of a change in attitude toward imports and presumably toward the societies from which they came. To cite just two examples – the Attic cups in the Kleinaspergle grave were transformed by a local goldsmith through the addition of La Tène-style ornaments of sheet gold to the ceramic bodies (Schaaff 1988); and the Etruscan bronze jug from Weiskirchen I was decorated locally with incised linear patterns, as were other imported vessels of this time (Megaw 1970, 63; drawing in Haffner 1966, 214). Whatever the specific reasons behind such alterations might have been, they show a change in attitude toward imports that had previously been unaltered after they arrived north of the Alps.

Textually attested service of 'Celtic' mercenaries in armies of potentates in the central and eastern Mediterranean regions during the fourth and third centuries BC (Szabó 1991) was another important aspect of this increasingly outward-looking activity on the part of Europeans. And the commercial activity between communities in temperate Europe and societies elsewhere, represented by the imports noted above, provided other contexts for interaction and development of new kinds of cultural self-awareness.

In this context of increasing interaction with the outside world, monuments and memorable experiences took on different aspects from those of earlier

times. The place of the individual in relation to the community became less critical, and the community as a whole, affirming its status and solidarity through performance of public ceremonies in open spaces, became more important. Memories created through large public ceremonies replaced memories generated by ceremonies performed with respect to individuals.

The introduction of coins and writing was part of the increasing involvement of communities of temperate Europe in the affairs – commercial, political and military – of the wider world of the greater Mediterranean basin (Dietler 2010). Quantities of Roman amphorae, pottery, bronze vessels, and coins attest to the growing scale of commerce between north and south. Exchange goods from the north remain elusive, but what have been interpreted as slave chains at Manching and elsewhere (Sievers 2003, 124) may point to a major aspect of the southward commerce, along with goods cited by Strabo (IV, 5, 2) and others.

The importance of a much more commercially orientated worldview during the final century BC is apparent in the character of the few unusually rich burials of this period (though they do not compare in wealth of gold and other luxury materials with Hochdorf, Vix, and Grafenbühl of the earlier period). For example, the grave at Clemency in Luxembourg included 10 Roman ceramic amphorae in the chamber (Metzler *et al.* 1991), that at Welwyn Garden City in southern Britain included 6 such amphorae (Stead 1967). This replacement of traditional local signs of special status, such as gold neck rings and fibulae, with signs of affiliation with the extensive commercial networks of the day is an indication of a substantial shift in the character of memories formed at ceremonial performances during the final half millennium BC. These individuals were not decked out with gold ornaments such as the Hochdorf man or the Vix woman were, suggesting that it was not so much the individual nor his or her role in the social system of the community that was being memorialized, but rather their position in commercial networks that were coming to dominate much of Late La Tène life. The display of amphorae in the sanctuaries at Braine and elsewhere, rather than the decorated weapons of Gournay and the other earlier sanctuaries, further emphasizes this aspect of ritual activity celebrated around the material signs of wider commerce rather than integration into local

communities. Memories of rituals at sanctuaries such as Braine and others at which imported commodities played such a major role (Poux 2006) were built around these new values that derived from the growing connections between communities in temperate Europe and societies in other parts of the world.

In temperate Europe, these widespread changes are further apparent in mass production of goods for the first time. Pottery made on the fast wheel came to dominate assemblages at both major settlements such as Manching and smaller settlements in the countryside. Iron tools and ornaments were manufactured in large series. And fibulae were mass produced. In all of these manufactures, detailed ornament and other individualizing features of objects that were so characteristic of earlier times largely disappear.

### Conclusion

The character of monuments and of performances carried out at them can help us to understand how the kinds of memories created through ritual practices changed along with much else during the final half millennium of the prehistoric Iron Age. During the Early Iron Age, the construction of burial mounds and the performance of funerary rituals at them created memories about individuals and their roles in their communities. A couple of centuries later, as communities in temperate Europe became increasingly aware of, and interacted with, societies of the Mediterranean basin and beyond, the emphasis shifted to open public spaces, where much larger numbers of people could congregate to participate in performances with objects that emphasized the community, not any one individual's role. In the final two centuries of prehistory, as European communities became increasingly entangled in economic and political affairs of the larger world, writing began to replace objects as a medium for remembering, a point nicely illustrated by coins bearing legends. At the same time, both burials of some individuals (Clemency, Welwyn Garden City) and ever-larger public monuments constructed for ritual performance (Braine) emphasized the increasing role of the connections with other societies that created memories in this period, as communities of temperate Europe became ever more thoroughly involved in the affairs of the larger world.

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## Chapter 19

### Cultivated and constructed memory at the nineteenth-century cemetery of Cagliari

Hannah Malone

A cemetery is a monument, or rather a collection of monuments, which serves to generate, reinforce, and perpetuate memories. However, that function cannot be easily defined in that it is complex, dynamic, and multifaceted. A cemetery is a vessel for many memories, not only of the recent dead, but also of cities, communities, and cultures. Moreover, the perpetuation of memories is an on-going and evolving process.

#### The Bonaria cemetery of Cagliari

This chapter represents an attempt to unfold the layers of memory associated with the nineteenth-century cemetery of Bonaria in Cagliari, Sardinia. It explores the construction of memories, and their evolution over time, with an eye to different analytical frameworks pertaining to monuments and memory (mainly: Riegl 1903; Halbwachs 1980; Rossi 1987; Lowenthal 1985; Connerton 1989; Gillis 1994; & Choay 2001).

The Bonaria cemetery in Cagliari is a rewarding case study partly because it accommodates a range of private and public monuments and their associated meanings. Whereas, on the one hand, a funerary monument is intended to commemorate an individual or a family, it also embodies memories regarding the social and political structures that bound the dead into a particular culture, and into alliances based on power and class. In that a tomb is a measure of the economic and socio-political status of the deceased, it carries meanings that relate both to individual remembrance and to the social, or collective, memory (Halbwachs 1980, Chapter 1). In short, a cemetery preserves memories that are both individual and collective, or that relate to the dead, the community, and society. However, the meanings, or memories, carried by cemeteries and funerary monuments are both reinterpreted, and overlaid, by subsequent generations.



**Figure 19.1.** Cagliari, Bonaria cemetery, monument to Antonietta Todde Pera (Ambrogio Celi 1879).

These memories are evident, for example, in the case of a monument at the Bonaria cemetery in Cagliari that was created by Ambrogio Celi in 1879 (Fig. 19.1, Dadea & Lastretti 2011, vol. I, 88–90). That monument was originally erected to the memory of a

young mother, Antonietta Todde Pera, who died aged twenty-five, leaving three children. Thus, its main purpose was to commemorate an individual. It may also be seen as a monument to an aspiring wealthy bourgeoisie, as reflected in the detailed and realistic depiction of Antonietta's modern and fashionable dress. The sculpture is also a testament to Christian beliefs that are expressed by the presence of an angel. However, as the mother's face carries an expression of mute sorrow rather than the certainty of salvation, this might be taken to suggest the impact of Romanticism, and the attention awarded to private and individual sentiments within nineteenth-century culture (Ariès 1974, 55–84; Ariès 1981, 409–558; Laqueur 2015, 271–312; Malone 2017b, 834–5). Seen in this light, the tomb is a celebration of the virtues of motherhood and the importance of the family in middle-class life. It also records a moment in art history and, more precisely, the period in the latter half of the 1800s when a new style emerged in Italian funerary sculpture. Termed 'bourgeois realism' for its reliance on middle-class patronage, that style was characterized by a shift from the representation of allegorical figures in classical dress, which were typically toga-clad personifications of faith or charity, to the portrayal of real-life characters in contemporary clothes – most often representing the dead and their relatives (Sborgi 1988, 355–62; Berresford 2004, 60–5; Dadea & Lastretti 2011, vol. I, 79; Malone 2017a, 66–80). In this instance, there is also potential evidence of associations with the development of photography in the frozen poses adopted by the figures, which create the appearance of a *tableau vivant* (Sborgi 1988, 388).

Given that the immediate descendants of Antonietta Todde Pera are now also deceased, the monument's original meanings, which were both personal and related to the commemoration of a known individual, have been lost. In effect, it might be assumed that the monument no longer performs its initial function in terms of commemoration and mourning. However, each succeeding generation may reinterpret that monument, adding new memories, and investing it with new meanings that overlay, and eventually replace, those that were tied to its original commemorative purpose. Individual memories might be forgotten, but broader social, historical, and human meanings persist. Thus, a tomb that was once invested with personal memories associated with an individual develops into a monument that may adopt a succession of meanings within the collective memory – meanings that represent an evolving culture and society. In this respect, a tomb also becomes, over the course of time, a historical monument. That expression is used in the definition coined by the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl (1858–1905) in his seminal essay of 1903 entitled, 'Der moderne Denkmalkultus: sein Wesen und seine

Entstehung', which translates as 'The modern cult of monuments: its character and origins' (Riegl 1903, 72; also, Choay 2001). The distinction is that the message of a monument is dictated by its original creators, but the meaning and value of a historical monument are established by later viewers. This implies that, whereas the monument has a deliberate intent, the historical monument is unintentional, or rather it describes the state in which the tomb's original purpose has been superseded by the superimposition of additional, or posthumous, meanings.

### The collective memory

The definition of private and collective memory, which can be applied to a single monument, may be extended to cemeteries as a whole. As a commemorative site, which aids the process of remembrance, the cemetery 'objectifies' memories, or facilitates the association of memories with objects and places. The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945) noted that the collective memory of a group can be sited within a material space that is common to that group, and which yields spatial images that aid recollection (Halbwachs 1980, Chapter 4). Similarly, in 1966, while drawing on Walter Benjamin's observations on the capacity of architecture to retain memories, the Italian architectural theorist Aldo Rossi (1931–1997) identified that 'the city is the collective memory of its people' (Rossi 1987, 191).<sup>1</sup> In that respect, it might be argued that the cemetery, as a space whose primary function is the preservation of memories, may serve the collective memory in a manner that is more direct, or more efficient, than the city – largely because of the singularity of its purpose, and the condensed nature of its monuments and the architectural framework within which they are embedded.

The cemetery of Bonaria in Cagliari was particularly suited to act as a monument to the collective memory because of its physical context and historical background. It was established on the southeastern outskirts of Cagliari in 1827. The site was convenient in that it was relatively flat and undeveloped (Spano 1869, 4). However, it was also historically significant in that the area had, albeit intermittently, been used to accommodate the dead over a period of approximately 22 centuries. The Punic, ancient Romans, and early Christians buried their dead within the same ground. Thus, the site was layered with the memories and bones of numerous generations. The nineteenth-century cemetery was built in the area known as Bonaria Hill, which had been the location of a Punic necropolis from around the fourth century BC (Pesce 2000, 89, 159–60; Dadea & Lastretti 2011, vol. I, 21). Excavation

has revealed chamber tombs dating from that period that were essentially deep niches, dug into the rock, with well-like openings. Subsequently, between the first and third century AD, the ancient Romans buried their dead within the same area (Dadea & Lastretti 2011, vol. I, 22–3). The Roman tombs that survive range from simple, carved-out graves to subterranean chambers, which house graves, *columbaria* for the placement of urns, and *arcosolia* (or arched niches) for sarcophagi. Other Roman remains include cinerary urns and related stone supports. In some cases, the tombs were surmounted by *cupae*, or semi-cylindrical coverings that functioned to accommodate the ancient ritual of the *refrigerium*, a commemorative banquet held by the relatives of the dead (Dadea 2001, 282–3). Moreover, there is evidence that a number of the tombs were lavishly decorated with frescoes, mosaics, and stucco work. Early Christian tombs dating up to the sixth century were also found on the same site, some with extensive decoration (Vivanet 1892; Pinza 1901; Pani Ermini 1968). Those tombs show that early Christians also placed their dead in graves or *arcosolia*, set within cave-like niches dug into the hill.

### A stratigraphy of memory

A map of Cagliari, which shows the location of Punic, Roman, and early Christian tombs, demonstrates how the nineteenth-century cemetery of Bonaria was set on an ancient place of burial (Fig. 19.2). The foundation of the new cemetery, which re-established a tradition that had been dormant since the sixth century, followed

from fundamental changes in funerary customs across Europe (Laqueur 2015, 215–38; Malone 2017a, 9–31). In Cagliari, as in most European cities, the ancients and the early Christians buried their dead outside the city walls. This was both a tradition and a legal requirement connected with hygiene. However, that tendency to separate the dead from the living was abandoned in the early middle ages when the Christian Church took control of burial practices. Religious customs encouraged interment within a church, or an adjoining churchyard, as the proximity of the corpse to relics was thought to increase the individual's chance of salvation. Hence, the dead were frequently retained within urban boundaries – a shift which may be dated to the period after the sixth century, when the last, surviving, early Christian tombs were created at Bonaria Hill. However, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a revolution in funerary practices across Europe was engendered, in part, by hygienic concerns and expanding urban populations, but also by cultural changes tied to the Enlightenment, and in particular to changing attitudes to death, a renewed interest in the dignity of man, anticlericalism, and an emergent egalitarianism. The result was the prohibition of interment within the city in favour of new suburban cemeteries, and the transfer of responsibility for the dead from the Church to the municipality. This, in the case of Cagliari, meant that burials were removed to the outskirts, and to land that was once the site of an ancient necropolis and which, in the early nineteenth century, was split between the archbishopric, the convent of Bonaria, and the Boy family.

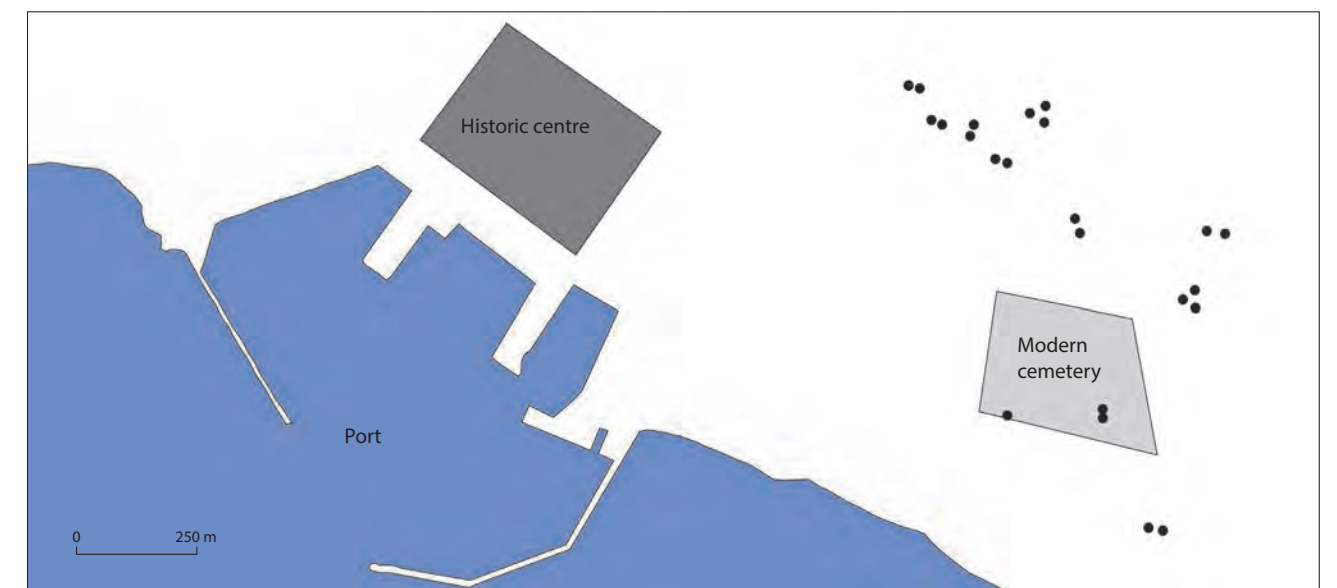


Figure 19.2. Map of Cagliari marking the location of ancient tombs (dots) with respect to the cemetery of Bonaria.





Figure 19.3. Cagliari, Bonaria cemetery, main chapel (Luigi Damiano, 1828).

From its foundation in 1827, the cemetery grew steadily throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its construction proceeded in parallel with archaeological excavations of which perhaps the most notable were undertaken by the archaeologist Giovanni Spano (1803–1878) who, in the second half of the nineteenth century, revealed Punic and Roman tombs that were under the cemetery and nearby churchyard of the Basilica of Bonaria (Spano 1864; Spano 1869, 18–23; Dadea & Lastretti 2011, vol. I, 21). Spano, a priest, theologian, and linguist, might be called ‘the father of Sardinian archaeology’ (Dadea & Lastretti 2011, vol. I, 21; Dyson & Rowland 2007, 10). However, the Roman necropolis at Bonaria was excavated as early as 1585, as part of what may have been the first modern excavations in Sardinia (Dadea 2001, 282; Dadea & Lastretti 2011, vol. I, 22). The expansion of Bonaria cemetery during the 1800s prompted further digs, which uncovered Roman and early Christian tombs (Crespi 1863). Of particular importance was the discovery, in 1888, of two early Christian burial chambers of the fourth century AD, which were remarkably well preserved

and richly adorned with frescoes. These archaeological investigations were part of concerted efforts to harness the historical value of the location, and enhance the significance of the new cemetery. By drawing on the past, the promoters of the nineteenth-century cemetery sought to establish a sense of continuity, and thereby re-enforce the identity of the local community (Connerton 1989, 12; Malone 2017a, 118). In 1869, the archaeologist Giovanni Spano published the first monograph on the history of the cemetery (Spano 1869). Moreover, that work was part of a vast literature relating to the burial ground that was written during the nineteenth century, and which ranged from artistic manuals, to guides for tourists, and articles in local newspapers and specialized journals. Together with the excavations, that literature contributed to a process of ‘monumentalization’, whereby the cemetery was invested with history, and with collective memories that were associated with the dead, the community, and the city. In short, the archaeological efforts, together with other generative elements of local culture, shaped the cemetery’s role as a historical monument, and as a place of collective



Figure 19.4. Cagliari, Bonaria cemetery, monument to Enrico Serpieri (Sisto Galavotti, 1876).

memories. In turn, the importance accorded to the cemetery contributed to its gradual development through a combination of private and public investment, as the local authority built an ever-expanding architectural framework within which private sponsorship gave rise to an increasing number of monuments.

Associations with antiquity were given emphasis in the architecture of the nineteenth-century cemetery through the adoption of a neoclassical style for both the main buildings and a number of the monuments, and also in the revival of the *columbarium*, as a system of stacking the dead that had been employed by the ancient Romans (Malone 2017a, 40, 152–3). In the initial design for the cemetery, the military engineer Luigi Damiano followed the Italian tradition of the Campo Santo, or cloistered burial ground, in that he created a rectangular, arcaded, court that was clad in the Tuscan order. The cemetery was entered via a recessed Tuscan portal that led into an avenue and on to an Ionic chapel, built in 1828 (Fig. 19.3). The choice of the neoclassical style reflected its dominance in Italian architecture in the first half of the nineteenth

century. However, the architectural character of the cemetery was also partly determined by the superimposed niches of the nineteenth-century *columbaria*, of which the first were built in 1866. The *columbarium* represented an efficient, space-saving, solution to the demand for burials that resulted from an increasing population (Spano 1869, 16), but it also suggested a reference to the ancient Roman *arcosolium* – examples of which were excavated nearby.

The historical legacy of the new cemetery at Bonaria bolstered its role as monument, which served both political and social purposes. During the nineteenth century, the cemetery operated as an instrument of politics in a period of turmoil and radical change within Italy. The Risorgimento, or the Italian struggle for independence, brought a jigsaw of minor states, each with its own administration and distinctive cultural identity, under a unified nation-state established in 1861. As in other major Italian cities, the cemetery at Cagliari contributed to political ends as its monumental architecture expressed the power of the city within the fledgling nation. As a destination for tourists, it was

the object of national and international interest, and a focus of civic pride (Spano 1869, 24). It was part of an assumed heritage that was aimed at the enhancement of national and local life, and the promotion of civic values (Lowenthal in Gillis 1994, 45). Moreover, like the many monumental cemeteries that sprung up all over Italy during the nineteenth century, the burial ground at Bonaria functioned as a monument that fostered nationalism and an emergent civic consciousness (Malone 2017a, 107–26). It was, as were other Italian monumental cemeteries, a major element of an emergent collective memory that had specific political overtones. For instance, at Cagliari and in other Italian cities, special areas were designated within the cemetery for the commemoration of national heroes, as exemplified by a monument of 1885 that celebrated those who died while fighting for the establishment of the nation (Dadea & Lastretti 2011, vol. II, 75). Built by the local *Società dei Reduci delle Patrie Battaglie*, an association of veterans of the Italian struggle for independence that was established after unification, the monument of 1885 was intended to fuel patriotism, encourage civic virtue, and contribute to the creation of an appropriate history for the new nation. In that the monument was inscribed with the names of soldiers from the military expeditions of Giuseppe Garibaldi, the Italian Wars of Independence, the Crimean War, and Italy's earliest colonial campaigns, the epitaphs read like a history of the *Risorgimento*, and of the first military efforts of the new nation. Essentially, such monuments contributed to the construction of a national identity by creating a shared memory of the dead (Gillis 1994, 8). Later, the process of generating history also led to the creation of the cemetery's *Viale degli Eroi* (Avenue of the Heroes), a stretch of wall flanked by monuments to those who fought in the First World War, which was defined in contemporary Italian propaganda as the Fourth (and last) war of the *Risorgimento*. Further evidence of the impact of the forces of nation-building may be found in Bonaria's private monuments. For instance, a detail of the tomb of Enrico Serpieri (1809–72), created by Sisto Galavotti in 1876, also reflects the historical events of the *Risorgimento* (Fig. 19.4, Dadea 2011, vol. I, 82). Enrico Serpieri's tomb depicts an episode in the history of the Roman Republic, a short-lived democratic government that was established in Rome in 1849 after an insurrection reduced the power of the Papacy. Serpieri, as a member of the Republican assembly, is shown resisting the French army that was sent by Napoleon III to restore papal power. A bas-relief creates a theatrical stage that casts the deceased Serpieri as a major player in a significant event in national history, when the French gained access into the Republican Parliament to arrest



**Figure 19.5.** Cagliari, Bonaria cemetery, monument to Giuseppe Todde (Giuseppe Sartorio, 1897).

its members. Originally from the region of Romagna, following the fall of the revolutionary government, Serpieri opted for political exile in Sardinia where he profited handsomely from the mining industry. It is interesting, however, that Serpieri's monument depicts a moment in his life that represents the historical events of 1849, thereby adding to the narrative of national history.

#### The cemetery as expression of social change

In addition to its role as a tool for propaganda that served the creation of a new nation, the Italian monumental cemetery was also an expression of social change during the nineteenth century (Laqueur 2015, 288–305; Malone 2017a, 57–65). Legislation was introduced into Cagliari in 1830 that abolished interment in churches and private chapels, and determined that all social groups (with the initial exception of the clergy)

were to be buried within the public cemetery, which thus became socially inclusive. Differences in economic or social status were reflected in the capacity to acquire burial plots and to erect monuments. Hence, the new cemetery mirrored the nature of urban social structures and shifts in the redistribution of power, albeit in a condensed, or purified, form. The cemetery also offered an emergent bourgeoisie a platform on which, through the creation of lavish monuments, individuals and families could assert their status and newfound socio-economic position.

Throughout Europe, prior to the reforms in burial practices that emerged during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a decorated tomb was a privilege generally reserved for the aristocracy. As family chapels were passed down from generation to generation, burial within a church tended to be restricted to the nobility. However, the creation of public cemeteries on the outskirts of cities from the early 1800s offered the middle classes the chance of an adorned grave. Moreover, particularly during the second half of the nineteenth century, a period of economic prosperity, industrialization, and urban growth, spurred the rise of a wealthy urban bourgeoisie, for which the cemetery represented an arena for both intimate and social forms of expression. This resulted in the production of numerous tombs and monuments, and statuary that combined emotive expressions of grief with the display of luxurious clothing, elaborate *coiffeurs*, and sentiments that exalted the bourgeois ideals of family and work. Given the richness and variety of their monuments, cemeteries were destined to become museums for nineteenth-century sculpture. For instance, the cemetery of Bonaria offers many examples of bourgeois realist statuary, such as the monument to the economist Giuseppe Todde (Giuseppe Sartorio, 1897) which offers a realistic 'snapshot' of contemporary life. Todde's wife, who may have commissioned the sculpture, is portrayed as a visitor to the cemetery, and is shown dressed in her finest mourning clothes as she prays at the foot of the tomb of the deceased (Dadea & Lastretti 2011, vol. I, 90). Similarly, the chapel of the Biocchi Silvetti Berola family of 1891, decorated by the sculptor Giuseppe Sartorio (1854–?1922) embodies an interpretation of a domestic bourgeois interior (Dadea & Lastretti 2011, vol. I, 112–13). The power of the bourgeois realist style was such that it was also taken up by members of the aristocracy. For example, generations of the noble Cugia family were depicted, in the 1870s and 1880s, by the sculptors Tito Sarrocchi (1824–1900) and Giovanni Pandiani (1809–1879) in a manner that,

in 1875, led the latter's work to be scornfully described by one observer as 'mercantile art' (Vivanet 1875, 4). However, the values inherent in nineteenth-century Italian funerary sculpture, which was created through the patronage of the middle classes, were evidently bourgeois in that common themes were rooted in the exhibition of wealth, the myth of the 'self-made man', the celebration of professional achievements, and the nuclear family. In fact, through these funerary monuments, the identity of the new social group was committed to collective memory.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to note that Bonaria cemetery exemplifies the construction of memory through the creation of monuments. Architecture, archaeology, and their supporting literature underscored the site's heritage as an ancient burial place. Associations with the past consecrated, and bolstered, the role of the cemetery as a monument that preserved, and transmitted, both individual and collective memories. Whereas, through its monuments, Bonaria cemetery imposed individual remembrance upon posterity, it also functioned to promote the passage of collective memories between generations. Moreover, in commemorating the dead, it helped to allay the individual's fear of annihilation while promoting a sense of permanence, which strengthened the common memory and the identity of a community. Arguably, those functions were particularly important in nineteenth-century Italy, when momentous changes were taking place within its political and social frameworks. In that context, the cemetery acted as a monument to an emergent social group, to a fledgling nation-state, and to the city of Cagliari as it moved through a shifting political landscape. Its monuments sanctioned socio-economic and political developments by establishing relationships between the present and the past. Thus, the cemetery at Bonaria illustrates the manner in which memory is generated, and is eventually overlaid by new memories. As the archaeologist Giovanni Spano suggested in 1869 'the most remarkable aspect of the cemetery at Cagliari is [...] that many of the graves of our ancestors, after twenty or maybe thirty centuries or more, now enclose the bodies of their descendants' (Spano 1869, 16–17).

#### Note

1. Translations from Italian are by the author.