Chapter 9

Beyond the Nuraghe: perception and reuse in Punic and Roman Sardinia

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Nuraghi play a pivotal role in the collective imagination of Sardinia. The large number of towers on the island means that there is practically no place without at least one of these great buildings in sight. We see them still standing on mountain tops, scattered in the plains, dotting the coast, safeguarding our homes and watching over fertile and mineral rich locations. In Punic (510–238 BC) and Roman (238 BC–AD 476) Sardinia, when more towers survived and were clearly visible, this presence would have been perceived in an even more significant manner. Unfortunately, the lack of written records and the unfamiliarity by Greek and Latin historians of the Sardinian world, does not provide us with direct evidence of how the later inhabitants of Sardinia perceived the Nuraghi. Among the rare quotations, only one gives a careful description of the Nuraghi:

In the island of Sardinia they say there are many beautiful buildings constructed in the ancient Greek style, and amongst others, domes carved in remarkable proportions. (*De mirabilibus auscultationibus* 100)

According to Diodorus Siculus, who probably draws from the same source as the previous author (Chiai 2004, 122), it is Iolaus, nephew of Heracles, who arrived in Sardinia at the head of the Tespiadi:

Iolaüs, the nephew of Heracles, was in charge of the undertaking, and taking possession of the island he founded in it notable cities, and when he had divided the land into allotments he called the folk of the colony Iolaës after himself: and he also constructed gymnasia and temples to the gods and everything else which contributes to making happy the life of man, memorials of this remaining even to this day (Diodorus Siculus V, 15.2 [Loeb translation])

The ‘gymnasia and temples’, named *daedaleia* after the architect brought by Iolaus, clearly refer to the towers and other nuragic buildings like the well sanctuaries and giants’ tombs, the collective megalithic tombs that were still clearly visible at the time of writing, even though they are attributed to the Greek world, probably influenced by an Athenian source (Chiai 2004, 120).

The few other references that are known from written sources should be understood from the perspective of Roman colonialist ethnology that instead of offering a realistic description underlines the opposition between civilization and barbarism. In this way Nuraghi are reduced to caves, underground constructions, the last refuge of uncivilized people:

They live in caverns (Strabo V, 2, 7)

They also built themselves underground dwellings, and by spending their lives in such dug-out homes they avoided the perils which wars entail (Diodorus Siculus IV.30.5)

They dwelt in scattered groups, where chance found them a home in cabins or caves (Pausanias X.17.2)

This lack of knowledge about Sardinia is reinforced by the fact that the term Nuraghe is not mentioned in any source, even though the word belongs to the pre-Latin substrate of the Sardinian language (Paulis 1993) and almost certainly must have been in use. The only evidence is in fact two Latin inscriptions: the first on Nuraghe Aidu Entos of Bortigali (*Fig*. 9.1, 7). The inscription on the lintel above the entrance of the Nuraghe reads: *Ili(ensium) iur(ale) in / Nurac(-) Sessar (?).*
It is the first appearance of the word and dates to the first century AD (Gasperini 1992, 303–6). *Ilienses* refers to one of the tribes that inhabited the island and who famously rebelled against the Romans (Mastino 2005). Beyond the legal interpretation, the inscription tells us the existence and use of the term *Nuraghe* in the Roman era: Nurac Sessar. The second, *nur(ac) Alba (-)*, is on a military diploma (AD 102) found near Posada, east Sardinia (Sanfu et al. 2013). In order to understand how the Sardinians perceived the *Nuraghi* during the Punic and Roman period and whether this perception influenced the reuse of the *Nuraghi*, we can only turn to archaeological data. Unfortunately, the lack of well-published stratigraphically significant contexts complicates the use of these data (Lilliu 1990; Pala 1990; Stiglitz 2005; Trudu 2010).

**Examples of reuse of Nuraghi**

I will illustrate the difficulties encountered in the ongoing investigations by analyzing some examples taken from across the island and discussed here in geographical order from north to south (Fig. 9.1).

*Nuraghe* La Varrosa (Sorso) is situated in the Romangia region in northern Sardinia at 7 m a.s.l. (Fig. 9.1, 1). This is a multi-tower *Nuraghe* that was reused from the second century BC onwards as a cult site until the first century AD. In the entrance corridor to the central tower, several square bases were erected and on top of one must have stood a bronze statue of which the arms have been discovered. The finds point to the cult of Hermes. Secondary uses of the area are discovered until at least the third century AD (Rovina 1997; Longu 2015).

*Nuraghe* San Pietro (Torpè) is situated in the Baronia region in northwestern Sardinia at an altitude of 17 m a.s.l. (Fig. 9.1, 2). The multi-tower *Nuraghe* was reused in the late nuragic period as a place of worship, as is indicated by the presence of finds like bronze figurines in the courtyard and in the central tower. The building seems to have been suddenly abandoned after a large fire. During the early Roman Empire (first to second century AD) tower F was reused as the communal granary of a local settlement. Containers of wood and cork, two wicker baskets, amphorae and a substantial amount of corn and beans have been discovered. After the roof collapsed during the Late Roman Empire, part of the *Nuraghe* was used for a small cemetery (D’Oriano 1984).

*Nuraghe* Santu Antine (Terralba) is situated in the Meilogu region in northwestern Sardinia at an altitude of 361 m a.s.l. (Fig. 9.1, 3). The multi-tower *Nuraghe* is surrounded by a village (Moravetti 1988). The finds of the old excavations seem to show a continuity of habitation throughout the first millennium BC (Madau 1988) and up to the fifth to sixth century AD (Manca di Mores 1988b). Between the first half of the second and first half of the first centuries BC the nuragic village was restructured and subsequently abandoned to make room for a large structure, probably related to the Roman villa that lies southeast of the *Nuraghe* (Taramelli 1939, 65–6; Colombi 2010). The central tower has yielded numerous *dolia* fragments that...
suggest it was used as a warehouse (Manca di Mores 1988b, 274).

*Nuraghe* Sa Tanca ‘e sa Mura (Villanova Monteleone) is *situated in the Meilogo region* in northwestern Sardinia at an altitude of 400 m a.s.l., along the banks of the river Temo. At present, the site is flooded by an artificial lake (Fig. 9.1, 4). The excavation of the single-tower *Nuraghe* brought to light Middle and Late Bronze Age material. At the end of the fourth century BC, it was included in a medium-sized Punic farm which remained in use until the second half of the first century BC. The rural site looks like a well-articulated building, geometrically laid out, which also contains the reused *Nuraghe*. The discovery of several iron slag and glass points to industrial activity. It should be noted that there is no continuity of occupation between the Bronze Age and the reuse during the Punic period (Manca di Mores 1988a; Madau 1991, 1997).

*Nuraghe* S. Efis (Orune) is situated in the region Barbagia in central-eastern Sardinia at an altitude of 750 m a.s.l., (Fig. 9.1, 5). The multi-tower *Nuraghe* is surrounded by a village. During the Roman Empire a large building was constructed in the village that may have been a *mansio*, connected to the road to the interior of the island. Occupation does not seem to have continued between the nuragic and Roman periods (Delussu 2009a).

*Nuraghe* Mannu (Dorgali) is situated in the Baronia region in eastern Sardinia at an altitude of 180 m a.s.l. (Fig. 9.1, 6). The single-tower *Nuraghe* is surrounded by a village, dating from the Middle Bronze Age to the early Iron Age. After a long break the tower was reused as a warehouse during the late Republican period (mid-second century BC) until the early medieval period (sixth century AD) (Delussu 2008, 130). The nuragic village saw major restructuring, as the excavations brought to light square buildings that date from the late Roman Empire to the early medieval period (Delussu 2009b).

*Nuraghe* Aidi Entos (Bortigali) is situated in the Marghine region in central-western Sardinia at an altitude of 803 m a.s.l. (Fig. 9.1, 7). The corridor *Nuraghe*, was reused in the Roman period to indicate the boundary of the llinenses with an inscription on the lintel above the entrance (see above) (Gasperini 1992, 303–6; Moravetti 1998, 237–8; Mastino 2007).

*Nuraghe* Santa Barbara (Macomer) is situated in the Marghine region in central-western Sardinia at an altitude of 648 m a. s. l. (Fig. 9.1, 8). The multi-tower *Nuraghe* is surrounded by a village. Occupation of the *Nuraghe* and the village continued from the Middle Bronze Age to the early Iron Age, after which large parts of the buildings were abandoned and collapsed. Reuse in the Punic period is shown by the presence of a shrine in tower B and the finds of numerous thymiateria in the central chamber, the staircase and the slits. Occupation in the village continued during the Roman and medieval periods (Moravetti 1986).

*Nuraghe* Sanilo (Aidomaggiore) is situated in the Guicier region of central Sardinia at an altitude of 350 m a.s.l. (Fig. 9.1, 9). The multi-tower *Nuraghe* is surrounded by a village. The area surrounding the *Nuraghe* was reused as a burial space during the Punic and Roman periods (Gasperini 1992, 310; Filigheddu 1994, 811).

*Nuraghe* Lugherras (Paulilatino) is situated in the Guicier region in the highlands of central-western Sardinia at an altitude of 329 m a.s.l. (Fig. 9.1, 10). The central tower of the multi-tower *Nuraghe* was used as a shrine in the late Punic age. More than 700 thymiateria, many oil lamps, coins and a fragment of a statue of Bes were discovered in the lower chamber of the central tower. There does not seem to be a continuity of occupation between the nuragic and late Punic periods (Taramelli 1910; Regoli 1991; Del Vais & Serrelli 2014–2015).

*Nuraghe* S’Urachi (San Vero Milis) is situated in the Campidano of Milis in western Sardinia at an altitude of 4 m a.s.l. (Fig. 9.1, 11). The multi-tower *Nuraghe* is among the largest on the island (Fig. 9.2). The village was occupied without interruption from the Middle Bronze Age until the Roman Republican period. During the Punic period, at least since the end of sixth to fifth centuries BC, part of the *Nuraghe* was reused as a large cult site, which is yet to be excavated. The archaeo-
logi-
cal deposit is notable for the presence of clay statues (four of the god Bes (Fig. 9.3) and one of a black man (Fig. 9.4)), a clay matrix for votive breads (the bread of Ashtarte), terracotta moulds, and hundreds of thymiateria (Stiglitz 2012a, Stiglitz et al. 2015, Ibbba 2018).

*Nuraghe* Genna Maria (Villanovaforru) is situated in the Marmilla region of central-southern Sardinia at an altitude of 395 m a.s.l. (Fig. 9.1, 12). The multi-
tower *Nuraghe* is surrounded by a village, which dates from the Bronze Age to the eighth century BC. After a break of several centuries, from the end of the fourth century BC, the central tower of the *Nuraghe* and the corridor in front were used as a cult place. Inside there were a large number of oil lamps, coins, thymiateria and a clay matrix for votive breads (the bread of Ashtarte). The presence of numerous lamps is peculiar. In the courtyard, the presence of ash and burnt bones of animals indicates a place of sacrifice. Here too, it should be noted there is no continuity of occupation between the nuragic period and the Punic period (Lilli & Badas 1993; Atzeni et al. 1988).

*Nuraghe* Su Mulini (Villanovafranca) is situated in Marmilla region in central-southern Sardinia at an
altitude of 286 m a.s.l. (Fig. 9.1, 13). The multi-tower Nuraghe was constructed in the Middle Bronze Age and was surrounded by a village. Very interesting is room e, already used during the late nuragic period as a cult place; from the eighth century BC there was an altar in the form of a Nuraghe decorated with a half-moon and holes to hold votive swords. The presence of a large amount of oil lamps, vessels and furniture for worship indicates the performance of rituals. The room stayed in use as a cult place from the late Punic period (third century BC) until the Roman Empire. This second phase was characterized by the presence of lamps and reuse of the Nuraghe-shaped altar as well. Here again it should be noted that there was no continuity of occupation between the nuragic period (Middle Bronze Age and early Iron Age) and the late Punic period (Ugas 1989–1990; Ugas & Paderi 1990).

Nuraghe Arrubiu (Orroli) is situated in Sarcidano region in central Sardinia at an altitude of 513 m a.s.l. (Fig. 9.1, 14). At the moment, it is the largest Nuraghe in Sardinia with 21 towers (Cossu et al. 2003). The Nuraghe seems to have been abandoned at the end of...
Beyond the Nuraghe: perception and reuse in Punic and Roman Sardinia

centuries BC, in connection with the Carthaginian conquest of Sardinia, the temple area underwent an extensive transformation. The Nuraghe was destroyed and a new building was constructed on its remains. A final refurbishment of the temple in the mid-third century BC completely concealed the previous phases. The settlement was suddenly abandoned around 110 BC (Guirguis 2015, 24–5).

The archaeology of reuse

The known archaeological data reported above allow us to clarify the chronological correlations of each site and avoid generic discourses on the longue durée, which still deeply influences research on the island. We do not yet have an overall view of the phenomenon of reuse of Nuraghi, nor quantitative data that can be used for comprehensive analysis, although the examples are sufficiently representative of the whole sample as much as we can currently understand it.

Many of the Nuraghi show a break during the last stages of nuragic occupation. Reuse during the Phoenician period is rare. Reuse increases in the Punic and Roman Republican periods and reaches its peak under the Roman Empire, when most of the Nuraghi show traces of some form of reuse, both in the coastal areas and in the interior of the island. Especially interesting are the data from the interior of the island which is generally considered the most conservative part of the island and resistant to outside forces (Lilliu 1971). A recent examination of data, mainly from surveys, showed that of 246 Nuraghi that had been reused, 229 Nuraghi showed a break of occupation between the nuragic and Roman periods. The fact that 78.9 per cent of the Nuraghi are reused only from the Roman Empire onwards is even more compelling (Trudu 2010, 395–6).

These facts underline the more general phenomenon of a significant reduction in the number of settlements between the seventh and fifth centuries BC. Only areas in the vicinity of the Phoenician urban centres show traces of rural settlements that can be dated to the Phoenician period (van Dommelen & Finocchi 2008, 173), while at the same time evidence of nuragic presence seems to disappear at the end of the seventh century/first half of the sixth century BC. The reoccupation of the countryside takes place very quickly in the late fifth and fourth centuries BC (van Dommelen & Finocchi 2008, 172), at the time of the new territorial policy of Carthage in the western Mediterranean.

The data from the systematic surveys of the hinterland of some cities show different patterns. In the case of Nora and Neapolis, new Punic settlements in lowland areas closer to the city seem to prevail, while a reoccupation of old nuragic sites occurs in the more...
internal areas (Van Dommelen & Finocchi 2008, 173). In the hinterland of Tharros, however, this difference is not noticeable (Stiglitz 2011, 363–8). A credible explanation for the apparent disappearance of people for several centuries and the sudden repopulation has not been found. Colonists from Carthage are assumed to have resettled a number of territories (eg. Rendeli 2005, 167; contra Van Dommelen Gomez & Bellard, 2008, 224), but this does not seem to be a sufficient explanation of the phenomenon as it does not explain the persistence of a community of clear nuragic descent even as late as during the Roman Empire. To this we must add our current inability to recognize proper nuragic evidence after the sixth century bc.

From this point of view, it seems interesting to note that the few cases of continuous occupation between the late nuragic and the Punic-Roman periods show that persons of nuragic descent continued to live in settlements that took on Phoenician and Roman connotations. Paradoxically, these places seem to be those that show the greatest detachment from the previous nuragic world and that are characterized by their full integration into the new world. This means that the inhabitants of those places were an integral part of the developments that took place on the island in this period and that they cannot be suggested to have led archaic lifestyles. Significantly, this fact is clearly visible at Nuraghe S’Urachi (San Vero Milis) and Monte Sirai (Carbonia), which played a key role in the relations between the coast and their respective hinterlands rich in resources.

In the case of S’Urachi (San Vero Milis), the settlement has ceramic material that is clearly identifiable as nuragic from the early Iron Age throughout the eighth century bc, when Phoenician material appeared by the end of the century. During the seventh century bc, local craft practices were increasingly influenced by new oriental technologies and morphologies and, starting from the sixth century bc, a clear Phoenician style can be discerned (Roppa 2012; Roppa et al. 2013). The votive deposit in the Nuraghe that can be dated to at least the sixth to fifth centuries bc, did not in fact display craft and cultural elements that relate to the nuragic world (Stiglitz 2012a, b) and this remains so until the Roman Republican period. In other words, the continuous occupation of nuragic sites seems evident only in areas that are related to the more productive territories and where the integration between the different elements of the nuragic and Phoenician world is at its height.

In areas further inland, as in the case of Nuraghi Gennamaria (Villanovaforru) and Su Mulini (Villanovafranca), where an interruption of many centuries is clear, the reuse is in some ways similar to that of late nuragic practice, although the types of craft used are totally Punic and Roman. The rituals of worship seem to show the continuity of nuragic traditions, such as the deposition of several lamps (Ugas & Paderi 1990, 482–6; Lilliu 1990, 435–7; Lilliu 1993, 20). The question remains whether, during this second phase of reuse, the altar in the shape of a Nuraghe that was still present and visible continued to be a powerful sign of the sacred, or whether it had lost its meaning and was used merely as furniture. Both possibilities are credible, but we are missing too many elements to reach a conclusion. The interpretation suggested by the excavators of the two Nuraghi (Ugas & Paderi 1990, 479; Lilliu 1993, 13) assumes the continuity of a community that held on to its place. Specific analyses of the contexts, however, allow us to say that there is no continuity of use by a community tied to its past, but by a newly settled community that reused the shrine after centuries of neglect. In the coastal areas, by contrast, in Nuraghe La Varrosa (Sorso) the reuse of the tower and the corridor as a place of worship took place in the Roman period, after nearly a thousand years of interruption and follows the Roman tradition of worship unrelated to the traditional nuragic world, as is illustrated by the type of cult statue (Rovina 1997).

Finally, the grandeur of the structures in itself do not have to recall ancestral values. For the Roman period for example, Nuraghe Santu Antine (Torralba) illustrates this point well. Its central tower was still very impressive at over 20 m in height, but the Nuraghe was reused as a utilitarian space for agricultural activities (Colombi 2010). For the Punic period, the case of Nuraghe Sa Tanca e’ sa Mura (Villanova Monteleone) shows the same outcome. The Nuraghe was incorporated as an ancillary room in the rural structure. In the latter case, and perhaps in that of Nuraghe Orrubitu (Orroli), we may see the reoccupation of the sites by people who may come from Libya or mainland Italy in the wake of the colonial power (Acquaro 1996, 8; contra Ridgway 1989, 136; van Dommelen & Finocchi 2008, 194–6) and who, therefore, are indifferent to the history of the place.

The comparison of these cases makes it clear that we have different forms of reuse. This raises the question of a consistent pattern for regions within the island that are not necessarily linked to scales of identity. On the other hand, detailed analyses of archaeological data, where the excavation permits us to identify the precise forms of reuse, demonstrate that every place has its own specific history, which cannot be fitted in a single general model that is valid for every period; Sardinia shows, in fact, considerable variety in the way Nuraghi are reused in distinct areas and also within the same area.
Who reused the Nuraghi?

Behind the specific data addressed above, the central issue is the identity of those who reused Nuraghi: can they be neatly defined as nuragic people, Carthaginians and Romans? This question is not easily answered although some clues can be detected in the material and linguistic world.

It appears that in Monte Sirai (Carbonia), during the Phoenician period, the Nuraghe was reused as a place of worship by a community that comprised Phoenician and nuragic people. This is indicated by an object discovered in the sacred space within the Nuraghe: it is a small votive bronze figurine that dates to the eighth century BC, that is of an eastern type but with strong nuragic elements. In particular the pot held in the figurine’s hand is of the well-known nuragic askos type (Guirguis, 2010, 24; Bernardini & Botto 2010, 51–4) and this can be seen as a sign of an integrated, hybrid community. The discovery of a contemporary necropolis shows evidence of a hybrid nuragic-Phoenician community as well (Guirguis 2010, 25).

Even more direct evidence is provided by funeral inscriptions from the Nuraghi in the central regions of Sardinia (Stiglitz 2010). Even though the majority of the inscriptions date to the late Roman Empire they are no less significant. I will limit my example to Nuraghe Sanilo (Aidomaggiore), from where three interesting inscriptions come that date to different periods and contain anthroponyms that provide useful information for understanding the complexity of the Sardinian situation. The oldest one dates back to the third century BC and contains the word WG C written in Punic: it is a personal name that demonstrates the persistence of a strong palaeo-Sardinian substratum in the naming of people during the period of Punic and Roman domination on the island (Filigheddu 1994, 811). The second one is written in Latin and dates to the first century AD. It contains the text URSETINERICAUNI: these are two personal names, Urseti and Nercaui that are also known elsewhere and that are considered to be of nuragic origin (Gasperini 1992, 310).

A third inscription from the same Nuraghe and dating to the first century AD, contains the text: qtabinell. / Dom (inus) fec (it). The name of the deceased, Qtabinell, clearly illustrates the Punic component of the Sardinian population (Gasperini 1992, 307–10), the name is, in fact, to be connected with the Punic kbd’in – honor of the god, a common name in North Africa (Zucca 1999, 35–6). The three inscriptions show that, during the Punic and Roman periods, cultural components of various origins (nuragic, Punic and Roman) were still present and recognizable. They are not demarcated and all belong to the same social reality, and sometimes the connections can even be seen within one family.

These finds challenge the traditional interpretation of the reuse of Nuraghi and other nuragic structures that emphasize the survival of traditional nuragic communities within the Punic or Roman societies, stuck in a conservatism without any contamination by the dominant official culture – which Giovanni Lilliu called the costante resistenziale sarda (permanent Sardinian resistance: Lilliu 1990, 1971). This interpretation is consistent with the primitivist views of some Anglo-Saxon scholars (Webster 1996; Rowland 2001; Dyson & Rowland 2007).

The visibility of the towers obviously played a role in the imagination of the people and, in some cases, certainly recalled the memories of their ancestors. But memory does not necessarily turn into ideological action. In many cases, the structures are seen as useful for domestic functions: durable existing buildings that could provide excellent storage space for foodstuffs.

In other cases, however, the combination of the monumentality and the cave-like appearance did induce religious experience that led to the construction of cult places. In other cases, we are dealing with real persistence, or a renewal of ancestral worship, but should not be seen as a mere survival of what would by then have been dated archaizing elements, but as an actual interpretation of dynamic traditions.

Archaeological evidence has thus brought to light a more complex situation that is quite different from the conventional representation of the island based on nineteenth-century colonial ideology. It has in fact become clear because of the discontinuities demonstrated at many nuragic sites, their reuse cannot be interpreted as mere survival. When, after a break of many centuries, a reused site evokes traditional elements, it is no coincidence that this occurs at rural sanctuaries that can be seen as places of dialogue and integration between cultures.

The case of Su Mulinu (Villanovafranca) is particularly informative in this regard. During the early Iron Age, a space within the Nuraghe was perceived as sacred and furnished with what can be termed an altar that reproduces the Nuraghe within which it is located (Ugas & Paderi 1990, 478). The consecration, then, centres on the memory of the Nuraghe. Problematic, however, is the Punic-period reuse after several centuries of abandonment, because the similarity of offerings between the nuragic and Punic-Roman period, in particular the large numbers of oil lamps (Ugas & Paderi 1990, 477–9) suggests a revival of earlier traditions transformed by new artisan practices but not by the types of objects offered. This situation may thus perhaps be interpreted as the return of the
as defined by Gramsci (van Dommelen & Gomez Bellard 2008, 237–8; Liguori & Voza 2009, passim; Stiglitz 2020), rather than in nineteenth-century colonial terms. Notions such as ‘survival, persistence and continuity’, which have long been used to analyse these situations, no longer seem to be able to provide the appropriate conceptual tools for interpreting these complex realities:

S’agit-il véritablement d’une catégorie historiographique recevable? Rend-elle compte de phénomènes homogènes ? peut-elle assumer le rôle de principe explicatif qu’on a voulu lui attribuer parfois? Le thème, on le voit, n’est peut-être pas d’un maniement aussi simple, aussi commode, ni aussi innocent qu’il peut paraître à première vue. (Benabou 1990, 7)

In the end, it comes down to exploring the role in and impact of nuragic towers on their local setting place by place:

Memory and tradition alone do not preserve an object’s identity, it is the ongoing incorporation of that object into routinized practices that generates its meaning (Blake 1998, 68).

It is therefore the social practices of that reality that will clarify our ideas. In conclusion, the Nuraghi tell us a long story with a solid foundation, but that is also one with many twisted branches, rich in different narratives.
Chapter 10

The Nuraghe’s life in the Iron Age

Carlo Tronchetti

It is not the intention of this chapter to discuss the function of Nuraghi in the Bronze Age, a topic that has been well covered by others (Depalmas 2009a, b, c). Coverage will be restricted to the Iron age, that is from 900 BC onwards. Excavations, mainly those carried out in the past ten/fifteen years, and the research that has emerged from them, have pointed out clearly that Sardinian society was going through a critical stage during this span of time (Perra 2012; Usai 2012a). The abandonment of many Nuraghi, and the change in function of some others, displayed a shift in territorial organization, most probably, that is almost certainly, in response to social and economic changes (Tronchetti 2014).

The changed use of Nuraghi in the Iron Age

New Nuraghi were not built in the Iron Age and their original function was no longer relevant. The defensive role became redundant. In some cases, the large perimeter revetments, constructed from larger stones were overthrown. The ruins were superimposed by new smaller dwelling places, sometimes of rectangular shape; sometimes new huts had their walls of small stones placed on the remains of the massive defensive walls. However the Nuraghe, even if of changed function, retained its role as a focus of aggregation, continuing to play an important role in the life of the community.

Where we can observe continuity of use, in most cases, the main structure of the Nuraghe became a place of worship. Unfortunately, many excavations occurred in the first decades of the twentieth century AD, and many data were lost. Thus we can only base our observations clearly on the finds of more recent excavations, and from this evidence we are able to link some pottery shapes to cult practice. By inference, we can reasonably also identify some old excavated Nuraghi equally as places of worship.

The best data nevertheless come from the recent excavations and publications of some Nuraghi, villages and sanctuaries (Fig. 10.1). We find some common elements in Nuraghi, sanctuaries, and in the capanne delle riunioni (meeting-huts), namely large huts distinguished by long benches along the walls. In almost all these buildings and in most sites we notice the presence of a stone model of a Nuraghe. In Nuraghe Su Mulini (Villanovafranca) (Ugas 1989–90), there is a big and elaborate stone altar, with a large basin and a high model of a nuragic tower. The upper part is shaped in the form of the enclosure of the Nuraghe terrace. The cult place, or small shrine, in Sorradile, Su Monte, has a very similar altar (Santoni & Bacco 2008) (Fig. 10.2a). The excavators dated both altars to the Iron Age, to be precise, to the eighth century BC.

It is no surprise to see such an increase of places of worship places at this time. A recent study of nuragic sanctuaries by Nicola Ialongo (Ialongo 2010) has clearly and convincingly proved that the floruit of the most important, as well as the smaller, sanctuaries began in the early Iron age. These sanctuaries were always linked to the cult of water, shown by the pit-temples in their precinct. The altars from Villanovafranca and Sorradile are actually large water basins with a model of nuragic tower, once again demonstrating the presence of a cult of water.

A big hut in the sanctuary of S. Anastasia in Sardara has a stone altar of nuragic tower shape (Fig. 10.2b), another model come from the district of San Sperate near Cagliari (Fig. 10.3b), and the sanctuary of Serra Niedda has several models of stone and one of bronze. The late sanctuary of Santa Vittoria di Serri has another stone model. The meeting huts of Nuraghe Palmavera (Alghero) and Nuraghe Su Nuraxi (Barumini) (Fig. 10.2b) have stone models. Many others were found in other sites, but the precise context is rarely recorded: Paulilongo, San Sperate and the two amazing models:
Chapter 10


the first model came from Nuraghe Cann’e Vadosu (Cabras), but actually from Monte Prama (Fig. 10.3a); the second model came from Serra ‘e is Araus (San Vero Milis). Both are notable for the link between the architecture and the human figure. The figures on the last two are clearly linked to ritual action: in the first, we recognize a worshipper raising his arms; in the second a man is leading an unidentifiable animal to sacrifice. Furthermore, we have a few bronze models, showing a high tower presiding over a wall with four smaller towers (Fig. 10.3d). Finally small models are recognized in bronze ‘buttons’ and in the mast of some bronze small ships (navicelle) (Fig. 10.3c).

Recently, Campus and Leonelli (2012) edited a book on Nuraghe models, where it is possible to find the full bibliographical references to all the models discussed. However, whereas the catalogue is comprehensive, they make the claim that most activity ended with the Final Bronze Age. For them, Iron age Sardinia is a land without creativity. This is most emphatically shown by their chronological table which shows a gap between 900 and 720 BC, when Phoenician culture is presented as predominant and the only force on the island. This view contrasts with the archaeological data from the most recent excavations and studies, and with the well-grounded chronological data obtained from the contexts with Sardinian objects found outside Sardinia. The book is really useful as a data source but must be read with this fundamental correction.

The Nuraghe as a symbol of memory

Read in its proper chronological context, the Nuraghe was now a symbol of memory, a territorial focal point and an object of worship, both as a cultic object and an altar. Following the suggestion of Alessandro Usai, the Nuraghe, regarded as a cult place, is also the place where the properties of the community were collected under divine protection. In the Sardinian Iron age, we can reasonably argue that some large families, let us call them aristocratic families, because their military power and pre-eminence in the religious hierarchy, played a strong political role in the late nuragic communities.

In the site of Monte Prama (Cabras) in central west Sardinia, we have amazing remains that support this ideological hypothesis, involving the Nuraghe. Here there is an Iron age necropolis, with pit tombs. The tombs of the later phase (second half of the eighth century BC) are monumentalized with large limestone cover slabs, accompanied by big limestone statues, portraying archers, warriors and boxers covering their head with a shield, most likely people acting out sacred games (Fig. 10.5). Together with the 28 reconstructed statues there are 16 limestone models
Figure 10.2. Nuraghe models: a) Sorradile, Su Monte; b) Sardara, Sant’Anastasia; c) Sorso, Serra Niedda; d) Barumini.
Figure 10.3. Nuraghe models: a) Cabras, Cannevedosu; b) San Sperate, Sa Bia 'e Decimu; c) Vetulonia; d) Furtei.
Figure 10.4. Nuraghe models from Cabras, Monte Prama.
of Nuraghi, mostly of a high tower surrounded by a containing wall with four smaller towers (Tronchetti 2012a) (Fig. 10.4).

Such an outstanding display illustrates this new ideology. The family (anthropological analysis proves that most of the deceased were members of one family group) displayed to the community their core values: military, religious, and consequently political, by means of the models of Nuraghi that combined all these values. In the necropolis, some more ancient betyls have also been found, stylistically linked to the memory of Late Bronze Age Giant’s tombs; another reference to the mythical ancestors who ruled the country and built extraordinary superhuman monuments like the Nuraghi. The Nuraghi had been transformed into materialized memories, articulated through the plethora of models that represent them (Tronchetti 2012b).

Conclusion

The Nuraghe models are located in peculiar buildings in the nuragic villages, that is in the so-called meeting huts: larger circular structures than the normal huts, with a bench along the walls and a model of Nuraghe in the centre or a niche, always in a prominent position. This is a clear reference to the symbolic social and political value of the Nuraghe within the community.

The models of Nuraghe also find their place within the sanctuaries, where they are sometimes connected to tanks containing water, used in rituals. The water cult is found from the Late and Final Bronze Age in the well temples; in the Iron Age it is located in both the huts with benches and a basin, evidently linked to private and even public cult practices as shown by the structure found at Sa Sedda and sos Carros (Salis 2013).

The presence of numerous models of Nuraghe in the monumental necropolis of Monte Prama is extremely important for understanding the meaning attributed to the models. Members of undoubtedly elite family groups symbolized in their values are buried in the tombs: political, in the ostentation of the weapons that qualify them as defenders of the community; religious in the attitude of ‘boxers’ engaged in ritual games.

The Nuraghe models combine both features, and, with the statues, compose a complex in which the construction of memory takes place, inserting the dead in a chain that links them to the ancestors, real or mythical.

The model of Nuraghe, therefore, referred to a still easily perceived past, a symbol of ‘built memory’, whose function was to affirm and strengthen the cohesion of the social body around the elites who guided it (Perra 2017).

The life of the Nuraghi in the Iron Age was different from the life in the Bronze Age, but not one of declining value or force. The Nuraghe remained the very ideological, and often materialized, centre of the community, combining religious and political values, and the memory of the past times, deeply linking the current generation to the old mythical ancestors and the descent groups that connected one to the other.
Chapter 11

Monumentality and commemoration at a Late Neolithic henge site in Scotland

Rebecca K. Younger

It seems that archaeologists sometimes implicitly assume monuments are memorials. The word ‘monument’, as Richard Bradley notes (1993, 2), comes from the Latin monere, ‘to remind’. Interpretations of the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age in Britain have traditionally been dominated by an interest in monuments, sometimes to the detriment of other aspects of Neolithic life, as some have pointed out, because of the high visibility of monuments in the archaeological record (Garrow 2006, 3; Pollard 1999, 90). Large earthwork or stone monuments can also remain highly visible parts of today’s landscape, and therefore we understand them to be enduring parts of the landscape, testament to the past; and there seems to be a tacit acceptance amongst archaeologists that monuments therefore have an abstract mnemonic quality because of their existence as ‘old things’ in the landscape. The perceived longevity of monuments means they are often understood to be places in the landscape which make tangible reference to the past (e.g. Tilley 1994). Since this is how we understand monuments, there is a tendency to assume that this is what they were intended for and how they were understood in the past.

We cannot be certain that this was the case however, and therefore in this chapter, it is suggested that a slightly different approach to understanding the memorial aspects of monuments might be fruitful. Rather than assuming monuments to have been intended as permanent reminders of the past, here it is suggested that greater consideration should be given to the particular ways in which people used monuments to remember – for example, the use of monuments as places of commemoration. This is discussed in relation to henge monuments, earthwork monuments of the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age in Britain, but the concepts of commemoration explored in the chapter will have relevance to other times and places. First, however, it will be useful to outline some of the pitfalls of assuming prehistoric monuments to be memorials as we understand them in a contemporary context.

Monuments, memory and archaeology

Considering monuments to be mnemonic, because we think of them as permanent references to the past implies that understandings of memory, the past and the meaning of monuments have always been similar to our own contemporary Western perspective. It also assumes that monuments are static entities, unchanging representations of the past in the landscape. This is not the case however, and a growing body of research into monuments has demonstrated that they were commonly ‘reused’: remodelled and rebuilt at different times, used for different purposes and interpreted in different ways throughout their histories (Bradley 2002; Driscoll 1998; Hingley 1996; Holttorf 1998). Monuments were not always preserved unchanged – or necessarily seen as things of ‘the past’, but were reused in the present. In fact, the very concept of ‘the past’ might have been different to our own. The perception and concept of time is not a constant between different cultures (Gell 1992), and a person living during the Neolithic or Early Bronze Age would have conceptualized their past very differently from us. The same distinctions between history and myth may not have existed (Gosden and Lock 1998), and so the ways in which existing monuments were interpreted would have been different. Indeed, it is possible that they might not have been interpreted as humanly made constructions, and the distinction between culture and nature, if a distinction was made, would likely have been drawn along very different lines to our own (see Tilley 1996, and Bradley 1998a). People may therefore have interpreted and remembered the past differently from our own concept of memory.

Traditional concepts of memory used in archaeology also tend to treat memory in abstract terms.
Seeing monuments as memorials implies that they possess a mnemonic quality which would function in the same way regardless of human interaction with, and interpretation of, the monument. Alasdair Whittle has pointed out that, while memory has been something of a fashionable topic in archaeology in recent years, human agency has not always had a major role in these debates (Whittle 2010, 35), meaning that the significance of the active creation of memory in the past has sometimes been overlooked.

Perhaps this is partly because of the fact that many discussions of memory and monuments in archaeology have focused on the monument after it is finished, and sometimes only after it has gone out of use. Despite it being considered that the purpose of monuments is memorial, this is often linked with later reuses of the monument rather than its original use – what Bradley (1993) terms the ‘afterlife’ of monuments. Dušan Borić has suggested that archaeologists have used ‘memory’ as an ‘umbrella term’ for thinking about ‘the past in the past’ (Borić 2010, 3). If we are to consider how and whether monuments functioned as memorials, it is necessary to think about their construction and use, rather than only thinking about the finished monument as a memorial. Bradley has suggested that the ‘project’ of constructing monuments may have been more significant than the finished monument (Bradley 1993, 1998b). While sites such as henges might have been memorials because they were places where the past was monumentalized, the ways in which people deliberately altered existing monuments could also be significant. Memory cannot be seen as an inherent or self-evident quality of a monument, but something that has to be created. Ruth Van Dyke and Susan Alcock describe the creation of memory, and particularly of social memory, as an ‘active and ongoing process’, constructed as people choose what to remember or forget (Van Dyke and Alcock 2003, 3). The act of forgetting may be as significant as remembering, and suggests a deliberate interest in reinterpreting the past. If we are to consider any of these aspects of memory, we need to move beyond a traditional concept of monuments being static memorials to the past, and to think instead about how monuments might have been used to engage actively with, and renegotiate, alternative concepts of the past. One way of doing so might be to consider the construction and use of monuments as a commemorative practice.

**Henge monuments in Scotland**

The construction and use of henge monuments might be one such example of a commemorative practice, and of monuments which might have been used to engage with the past. Henges are circular earthwork monuments, usually comprising an external bank and internal ditch, with one or two narrow breaks in the earthworks forming ‘entrances’ into the interior space defined by the earthworks. Henges are found throughout much of the British Mainland and Orkney, and are traditionally dated to the Late Neolithic – Early Bronze Age, c. 3000–2000 BC (Harding 2003). Over 80 henges are known in Scotland, many of which have been discovered as cropmarks through aerial survey (Barclay 2005, 84).

Although generally defined in the terms outlined above, henges form a somewhat heterogeneous monument type, and vary in size, date and form. The henge category includes sites which range from small ‘mini-henges’ or ‘hengiforms’, as small as 5–6 m in diameter, to large ‘henge enclosures’ such as Avebury and Durrington Walls in the south of England (Harding 2003). In Scotland, the largest henges are about 100 m in diameter, although most are smaller, about 30 m diameter (Barclay 2005, 84). Recent research by Richard Bradley has also extended the chronology of henge monuments in some regions, dating the construction of some mini-henges in the northeast of Scotland into the mid-second millennium BC (c. 1600–1400 BC) (Bradley 2011). Henges have traditionally been associated with Grooved Ware pottery, a style of Late Neolithic decorated pottery which, like henges, supposedly originated in Orkney around 3000 BC (Harding 2003). Henges have therefore often in the past been characterized as archetypal Late Neolithic monuments – a ‘hallmark of their age’, as Harding and Lee (1987, 66) described them. Henges are usually interpreted as ritual or ceremonial monuments.

When excavated, henges are usually found to be multi-phase monuments. Although the term ‘henge’ describes the bank and ditch, henge sites are often associated with a range of other features, including timber or stone settings, and burials. In the past, this has led to attempts to classify henges on the basis of morphology and internal features (e.g. Burl 1969; Catherall 1971; Wainwright 1969; Clare 1986, 1987). The interest in understanding the architecture of henges has been such that at times, other aspects such as the use and purposes of henges, or their relation to the landscape, have been overlooked, as Aaron Watson (2004) has argued. The interest in defining and classifying henges – and other monuments – has also perhaps meant that we overlook the extent to which such monuments have been reused and reworked over time. The henge earthworks are often only one phase in the use of a site, and not necessarily the first or last monument to be constructed in a particular location (Barclay 2005, 92–3; Thomas 2001, 132–3). The other
monuments and features found at henge sites are often found to pre- or post-date the henge earthworks, sometimes by hundreds of years. Pre-henge activity is often characterized by deposition (e.g. of pottery), pit-digging, burial, or the construction of timber circles. Where timber circles are found in association with henges for example, the timber monument is always found to pre-date the henge earthworks (Gibson 2005). Post-henge activity often involves burial, sometimes in large cists, or cairns. Similar trajectories of use have been demonstrated at several excavated henge sites, such as North Mains in Perth and Kinross (Barclay 1983), and Cairnpapple, West Lothian (Piggott 1948; Barclay 1999). Some 27 henge sites have been excavated in Scotland, and all of these have been found to be multi-phase sites, where the henge earthworks were neither the first nor last element to be constructed on site. Henge sites were often used (perhaps sporadically) over millennia.

Given the multi-phase nature of henge sites as places which are reused, henges are interesting sites for considering memory. They were sites which were returned to repeatedly over many generations, but were not preserved unchanged. Most henge sites were significantly remodelled at some point in their ‘life’, and change and innovation were evidently important at henges, as well as memory and tradition. Henge sites were places where the project of monumentality was reimagined in new ways at different times. Change was played out over centuries and while the same site was returned to repeatedly over generations, these were also places where innovation was the norm. So while henges may have been ‘memorial’ in that they did refer to the past, they were not places where the past was memorialized in unchanging, static form (YOUNGER 2016).

Can this understanding of henges as places which changed over time be reconciled with our concept of monuments as memorials? Henge sites were different things at different times. This is somewhat at odds with a traditional understanding of monuments being permanent, unchanging memorials. It is this relationship between memory and change, and what insights it might lend us into memory in the past, which will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Commemoration

The use of monuments such as henges over generations may be more than simply a memorial to the past, but this does not mean that memory was unimportant at these places. Our contemporary concepts of memory as an abstract quality of monuments which endure unchanged in the landscape might be faulty when applied to the past, and indeed do little to explain why monuments would be used again and rebuilt long after their initial construction. (Re)using such places, redolent of the past, was, however, clearly important to people in the past, even if they were not used in accordance with our contemporary ideas of memorialization. Perhaps such practices can be better understood as commemorative rather than memorial.

The use of the term ‘commemoration’ is not intended simply as an alternative word for memory, but rather refers to a distinct practice, and to a specific kind of remembering. While archaeologists may tend to think about memory in abstract, a focus on commemoration may allow greater consideration of past human experiences of remembering, and of the role played by monument construction (and not only finished monuments) in the active interpretation and negotiation of memory. The definition of commemoration adopted in this chapter is based on philosopher Edward Casey’s (1987) phenomenological account of remembering. The significant aspects of the practice of commemoration as described by Casey include that it is communal, relying on collective engagement with the past (CASEY 1987, 235–6). Commemoration can therefore be a way of remembering events in the distant past, rather than memories based on personal experience (CASEY 1987, 216–18). Commemoration might also be ritualized, and might be tied to a particular place (CASEY 1987, 218–19, 221, 245–6). These features of commemoration make it relevant for thinking about the use of monuments such as henges – ‘ritual’ monuments, probably built and used by large groups of people, and used over a long time period, beyond the span of an individual’s memory.

Commemoration is also useful for thinking about the memorial aspect of monuments because Casey argues that by referring to the past, in a particular location, commemoration makes the past ‘present’ in a certain place (CASEY 1987, 218–19). Commemoration does not only refer to the past however, but also to the future, being a way of actively preserving and ‘passing on’ the past to future generations (CASEY 1987, 256). While commemoration might revolve around a particular place or monument, the monument itself is not the agent of memory. Rather, the key aspect of commemoration as a way of referring to the past, ‘presencing’ the past and passing it on, is that it is enacted by people. Commemoration also allows for the active (re)negotiation of the past; it is not the existence of finished monuments, but the construction and use of monuments, which are important in making them places of memory.

It is particularly this emphasis on the construction and use of monuments which is helpful in understanding henges as commemorative places. The repeated
construction of monuments in the same location – a location which had a long history of use and of monument construction, as is the case at most henge sites – would require people to engage with their past. In building monuments which by their location refer to the past, but would endure into the future, henge sites might have been places where the past could be actively reinterpreted. People’s understanding of, and relationship to, the past could be renegotiated by building a new monument on the site of an existing structure. By doing so, they make a statement in the present, but also for the future. Henge sites, as places of commemoration, may therefore have been places where time and ‘history’ could be reinterpreted in ways which were not necessarily possible in everyday life.

In bringing together references to the past, present and future in one location, henge sites may even have been places where time could be considered to ‘flow’ in a different way. This is an idea which will be explored further below. A traditional concept of memory would not necessarily help to explain the significance of why henge sites were repeatedly changed and reused. If it is understood as a process of commemoration however, then it is possible to reinterpret this tradition of rebuilding monuments on the same site as an effort to actively engage with, and renegotiate, the past. The rest of this chapter will discuss how this commemorative process might have played out at one particular site, Forteviot in Perth and Kinross.

Fortevoit

Fortevoit is the site of a remarkable complex of monuments, revealed as crop marks during aerial survey in the 1970s (St Joseph 1976, 1978). The crop marks represent a group of ritual monuments dating from the Late Neolithic to the early medieval period, roughly the third millennium BC to the first millennium AD (Fig. 11.1). The main group of monuments is situated on a terrace above a tributary of the River Earn, to the south of the modern village of Forteviot. The Gask Ridge lies to the north of the site, and the terrain is overlooked by the Ochill Hills to the south. This chapter will focus on the prehistoric monument complex.

The prehistoric monument complex at Forteviot comprises an enormous palisaded enclosure. This large timber enclosure has been radiocarbon dated to 2926–2467 cal. BC (95 per cent confidence) (Noble & Brophy 2011, 793), and encloses an area of about 6 hectares (Gibson 2002, 18). The palisaded enclosure surrounds several other monuments, not all of which are contemporary. These include a henge; a small ‘hengiform’ monument; and timber circles. The palisaded enclosure had a narrow entrance avenue, and was made of timber posts, probably oak (Noble & Brophy 2011, 791–3). Outside the timber enclosure were more monuments, including another two henges, and a circular enclosure with a double palisade, with an internal triple cist burial (Fig. 11.1) (Noble & Brophy 2011). The Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot project (SERF), led by Glasgow and Aberdeen universities and largely funded by Historic Scotland, carried out excavations at Forteviot from 2006–10. The discussion in this chapter focuses on Henge 1 (Fig. 11.2), inside the palisaded enclosure, which was excavated over two seasons in 2008–9. Like other henges excavated in Scotland, Henge 1 at Forteviot had a long and complex ‘life history’, and although the same site was repeatedly returned to, it was used in innovative ways, and changed greatly over the time it was used.

Amongst the earliest activity on the site of Forteviot Henge 1 was a Late Neolithic cremation cemetery, dating to 3090–2638 cal. BC (95 per cent confidence) (Noble & Brophy 2011, 790). 9 cremation deposits were discovered (some representing more than one individual), within the area which would later be enclosed by the henge earthworks (Noble & Brophy 2011, 790). The cremation cemetery may have been marked by a standing stone or stone setting, although this was later destroyed (Noble & Brophy 2011, 790). The site of the cremation cemetery was transformed, possibly soon after the cemetery went out of use, and the emphasis of the site changed from deposition to enclosure. The first element of this was the huge palisaded enclosure. The posts of the enclosure may have been as tall as 6 m above the ground (Noble & Brophy 2011, 793). Constructed during the same period as the palisaded enclosure, a smaller timber circle was built inside it, enclosing the immediate area around the cremation cemetery. Although smaller than the palisade, the timber circle was still a substantial construction, also made of large oak posts, forming a circle roughly 45 m in diameter (Noble & Brophy 2011, 795).

After the construction of the timber enclosures, the cremation cemetery was enclosed by a henge. The ditch of the henge was built inside, and concentric to, the timber circle, while the outer bank may have incorporated the earlier timbers. The lowest fills of the henge ditch have been radiocarbon dated to 2468–1938 cal. BC (95 per cent confidence) (Noble & Brophy 2011, 795), giving an approximate date for the construction of the henge earthworks. Although these earthworks were substantial – the ditch was as much as 10 m wide in places – the area enclosed was relatively small, approximately 22 m in diameter, with only one entrance (Brophy & Noble 2012, 26). Around 2199–1977 cal. BC, the way in which the site was used changed again. A stone cist with a dagger burial was
Figure 11.1. Transcription of cropmarks of prehistoric monument complex at Forteviot. SERF project.
Henge 1 at Forteviot, like other henges, was far from being a ‘permanent’, unchanging monument. It was a place which underwent a long process of change from the third millennium BC onwards – a process which spanned a millennium or more. It was a place where the ‘project’ of monumentality (Bradley 1993, 1998b) was reimagined, and played out in different ways at different times. A diversity of activities and architectures manifested in this one location suggest that the tension of continuity and change, of tradition and innovation, and of permanence and transience, were significant aspects of the ways the site was used and understood throughout prehistory.

Change was visibly important at Forteviot over centuries. Forteviot was transformed from an open cemetery site, to a place enclosed by a succession of massive timber and earth structures. Movement and visibility were reduced, or rather increasingly controlled, over time. Brophy and Noble have suggested that parts of the Forteviot complex may have been blocked or mounded over at some times, sealing off parts of the site, and making access in and out of these parts of the site difficult (Brophy & Noble 2012, 32). References to the past were thus made physically manifest in the way each successive monument used the space occupied by its predecessors, but were not necessarily easily accessible; and each new kind of monument also changed and transformed the site. Perhaps it was this transience and innovation which made the site commemorative; it would be as much in the construction of a monument, as in visiting a complete monument, that people might engage with their past.

It was therefore the act of transforming a place, rather than lithifying memory in a physical monumental form, which is commemorative. Transforming the site would have involved engaging with the past, renegotiating it, and making links between the present place and the past; a new generation reimagining their past by building a new monument.

The reasons for, and outcomes of, this commemoration might also have changed over time. At Forteviot, as at other henge sites, the enclosure of space becomes an increasingly prominent aspect of how these sites are defined over time. Henges have a distinctive architecture with an external bank and internal ditch. Warner (2000) has suggested that Iron Age hengiform monuments in Ireland, which share this arrangement, may have been intended to contain, and defend against, places which were considered magical, dangerous or ‘otherworldly’. Gordon Barclay (2005, 89ff.) has suggested that henges might therefore also have been intended to contain a threat. Similarly, this has led Alex Gibson to put forward the idea that henges might have functioned as ‘ghost traps’, and that, by enclosing sites of earlier activity, henges were intended not only to enclose, but also to contain (Gibson 2008).

Whether henge earthworks could have kept such dangerous forces at bay or not, they would have

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Figure 11.2. Plan of Forteviot Henge 1. SERF project.
served as an unambiguous demarcation of the space inside. In this sense, the aspect of commemoration or memory is also important. As Julian Thomas (2010, 11) writes, ‘The digging of henge ditches did not so much erase their contents as establish a distance between them and the lived landscape’. Commemorating these places by building new monuments was therefore a way to remember, and to control and contain, a powerful place. This might not have been so much a desire to establish a physical distance, rather henges might have been intended to separate things from the present-day: to create a temporal distance between the lived-in world, and the things enclosed by the henge. As places which built on and referred to the past, which reused already ‘ancient’ sites, these monuments were places which referred to timescales other than those of the day-to-day rhythms and routines of life. They keyed into timescales beyond the quotidian and even seasonal, to recall the activities of other generations and even of times beyond individual memory. Henges were places where other times were referred to: ‘temporal heterotopias’. Just as Michel Foucault describes heterotopias as places which are liminal and removed from the everyday world (Foucault 1986), so henge sites might have been places which were temporally liminal, outside the normal flow of time. This could be understood as an outcome of their use as commemorative places, since commemoration, in making simultaneous reference to the past, present and future, could have made these very potent places. They were powerful places, and removed from the everyday, because time and the past could be revisited and transformed. The desire to enclose and separate these sites may have been a way of controlling this power of reinterpretating the past, and of adding an aspect of mystery to it. Controlling access transforms henge sites into ‘imagined landscapes’ (Fig. 11.3). This is a phrase used by Laura McAtackney (2007) to describe Long Kesh/Maze prison in Northern Ireland. Although often depicted in murals, and an important part of people’s consciousness, relatively few people actually had access to the prison or first-hand experience of it. This ‘imagined quality’, as McAtackney describes it, was an important part of the experience and perception of the prison (McAtackney 2007, 44–5). Perhaps the long-term use of a site for enclosure (by timber circles and by henges) was a way of transforming a site into an ‘imagined landscape’: a place where the past was contained, only to be controlled and accessed by certain people. The monument itself was highly visible and prominent in people’s consciousness; the ‘imagined’ interior, not personally experienced or understood, kept out of sight (but certainly not out of mind) for the uninitiated.

**Conclusion**

At Forteviot, and perhaps also at other henges and other monuments, commemoration involved revisiting the past and engaging with ancient places; but it also involved reimagining these places, controlling and containing them, and building new monuments. Engaging with the past at henge sites was perhaps a more dynamic kind of remembering than we might readily associate with monuments as ‘memorials’. Commemorating the past through the project of building monuments was perhaps also a volatile, powerful act. It involved carefully considered strategies, ways by which people marked and drew attention to the traces or sites of earlier events or monuments; or concealed and controlled access to places associated with their past. Monuments might be memorials to the past, but the past is not stable or monolithic; and neither are monuments, as people return to them and rebuild them over centuries.

Perhaps the significance of monuments such as henges lies not in the fact that they were timeless memorials to the past; but rather in their use as places of commemoration; places where deliberate effort was made not to conserve the past, but to recreate it and remember it in different ways. Such monuments were places where this reinterpretation, and

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**Figure 11.3.** Schematic diagram showing henge monuments as temporal heterotopias.
the transformative renegotiation of memory, was contained and controlled. Memory, however, is not only rooted in place and architecture, but in lived experience, mediated through the body and the senses. Rebuilding monuments would be an important way of creating memories because the construction process would itself be memorable. Lesley McFadyen (2006) has vividly described how some Neolithic building practices would be very visceral, creating relationships both between people, and between people and materials. McFadyen (2006, 132) suggests that these relationships were memorable, and a means by which people ‘actively chang[ed] their worlds’. The commemorative process of monument construction makes henges landscapes of imagination, but also landscapes of the reimagination of the past. Commemoration can be seen as a creative strategy by which certain people or versions of events are remembered, while others are forgotten; the creation of monuments is one facet of this, and a means by which we can consider the mutability and contingency of interpretations of the past, in Neolithic Scotland and beyond.

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