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The Netherlands

**On colonial grounds: a comparative study of colonialism and rural settlement  
in first millennium BC west central Sardinia**

Dommelen, P.A.R. van

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## 7 Colonial comparisons. Concluding remarks

*Au vrai, notre projet ne consiste pas à établir un inventaire de tous les phénomènes d'expansion ou de colonisation, ou à banaliser le phénomène colonial européen; mais bien, à l'occasion, à le confronter à d'autres.*<sup>1</sup>

Marc Ferro, *Histoire des colonisations* (1994), 8

### 7.1 History, Structure and Material Culture

Comparing the three colonial situations discussed in the foregoing chapters may finally contribute to a better understanding of colonialism in a general sense. As the basic instrument of modern anthropology, the comparative method has been fruitfully used as a means to distinguish between contingent historical circumstances and structural features of the phenomena under study. With regard to colonialism in particular, whether ancient or (early) modern, comparison can help overcome monolithic representations. Moreover, comparing the present three colonial situations clarifies not only the structural properties of the three instances of colonialism but also those of west central Sardinian society, because they occurred in the same region and were historically related to each other.

In the case of west central Sardinia during the first millennium BC, the structural properties of the situations are in the first place constituted by the region and its cultural background. They consisted of the physical landscape as well as of the past of indigenous Nuragic settlement and external contacts with the nearby islands and surrounding coasts of the western Mediterranean and together made up Braudel's *longue durée* time-scale. Contemporary wider historical conditions, however, remained far from constant during the first millennium BC, as has been amply illustrated in the foregoing chapters. However, for any given moment in each of the three situations the historical context constituted an important structuring element, in particular because of the involvement of the region in the wider colonial networks. If the conventional distinction between history and structure is therefore difficult to uphold, as Marshall Sahlins has claimed (1985, 136-156), the succession of and historical connections between the three colonial situations examined are even more significant because they highlight how one colonial situation rooted in its predecessor.

A cursory overview of the previous three chapters makes it clear that close connections coexisted with salient discrepancies: the colonial situations of the Punic and Roman periods presented many similarities, whereas the Phoenician period and Nuragic Iron Age seem to have been utterly different from the later two periods. Precisely because of the differences, the Phoenician/Iron Age period illustrates these points: while this period can hardly be labelled as colonial, since the Phoenician impact on and involvement in the region remained rather limited, during this very same period the foundations were laid for later Carthaginian and Roman domination over the region. The role played by the originally Phoenician settlements as the urban foci of the region in the later periods is the most obvious example, as they not only provided a bridgehead for later colonial intervention but also largely structured subsequent regional organization. This holds in particular for the tree-partite division of the region in Punic and Roman times between Tharros, the coastal strip with Neapolis and Othoca, and the interior of the central Campidano and the Marmilla. It can be traced back to the Iron Age, when Phoenician presence developed in two stages from the Tharros and the S. Marco peninsula to the Arborèa, while Nuragic settlement remained confined to the interior, withdrawing even further inland at a later moment (pp. 104-107). This case moreover demonstrates that it was not the Phoenician presence alone which structured the precolonial situation and gave rise to the later colonial ones but rather that it was the entanglement of colonial and indigenous elements which jointly (re-)organized the region. The label 'precolonial' for the Phoenician and Iron Age period is therefore a most fitting one, as the developments of this time not simply preceded but more importantly also paved the way for the later colonial situation of the Punic period (cf. p. 71).

The structural role of history is exhibited most clearly by the mismatch between the wider historical conditions and events on the one hand and regional or local developments on the other: the so-called *conjonctures* clearly evolved at a different pace when compared to regional trends, despite their structuring of the wider conditions (cf. Braudel 1972, 899-900). The discrepancy between the Roman dominance over Carthage in the western Mediterranean and the persistence of

Carthaginian influence in Sardinia is a clear case in point (p. 161): since the discussion of this situation in chapter six (pp. 146-157) has demonstrated the essentially *local* background of this phenomenon, it follows logically that the structuring role of history is often mediated by the local context. In order to bring out what Sahlins has termed the 'structure of the conjuncture' which he defined as the 'practical realization' of the general trends in any particular context (1985, xiv; 152-154), it is therefore necessary to emphasize the specific local and historical circumstances 'on the ground'. In particular with regard to studies of colonialism, in which the interplay between wider structures and local conditions should take a prominent place, this argument supports the local focus which I have proposed as a defining feature of a postcolonial archaeology (p. 34). A final critical element which has surfaced in all discussions of the three (pre-)colonial situations regards the role of material culture in society. More particularly, it has repeatedly been pointed out that material culture cannot be seen as having some intrinsic value deriving from its foreign or indigenous provenance. In this way it is for instance possible to understand the ways in which individual imports circulated in Nuragic Iron Age society: as the indigenous contexts of the imports appear to correspond closely to those of indigenous elite items in general, it can be argued that Phoenician, Greek or Etruscan imports in Nuragic Iron Age society were perceived in terms of Nuragic values rather than exclusively appreciated for their connections with the colonial worlds (p. 111).

More spectacular perhaps was the role of material culture in the Punic period, when colonial objects were massively and whole-sale adopted throughout the region at the expense of older indigenous products. Rather than interpreting this rapid spread of Punic material culture as denoting a large-scale Carthaginian occupation of and immigration into the region, it was argued that the adoption of Punic material culture by the local inhabitants was a much more 'superficial' development which affected only certain dimensions of society. New forms of settlement and land use for instance occurred exclusively in the coastal Arborèa and apparently important indigenous values and traditions were shielded off from colonial interference, as show the rituals performed in the shrine of Genna Maria. The meanings attributed to Punic material culture in the 5th and 4th centuries BC were therefore first and foremost constructed in the local context and they were used to build up a new society in the colonial situation (cf. pp. 151-156). In the ensuing Roman Republican period, material culture was used in basically similar ways in order to make sense of the new situation. In the circumstances of that time, Punic material culture could be represented as 'indigenous' while the meaning of colonial (Roman) objects was much more contested, as the objects

were ignored by some people and adopted by others (pp. 205-209). Again, the colonial situation has brought out the different and shifting meanings attributed to material culture, which were clearly related to the structural conditions of the time but which at the same time were actively constructed and altered by the local inhabitants of the colonized region.

While more detailed conclusions about particular issues of each of the three (pre-)colonial situations can be found in the concluding sections of the previous three chapters, in the next two sections I shall now return to the basic issues which were raised in the second chapter and which I have repeatedly touched upon in the discussions of the specific situations of west central Sardinia (chapters 4-6). These basic issues can briefly be characterized with the terms 'postcolonialism' and 'resistance and identity'.

## 7.2 On Colonial Categories and Cultural Concerns

Both basic tenets of the postcolonial approach outlined in chapter two are related to issues of categorization in colonial situations: one concerns the importance of breaking down dualist categories. As a result, particular significance is attributed to the role of intermediate social groups. The other pertains to the categorization of colonialism as an historical phenomenon, which in practice means the shift in attention from exclusively political and military matters to the cultural dimensions of colonial situations. Together with the remarks about the local focus in the previous section, the following observations are intended to be an evaluation of the archaeological implementation of the postcolonial perspective as proposed in chapter two (pp. 33-35).

The discussion of the archaeological literature on ancient colonialism in the Mediterranean has made clear that one-sided representations still abound, no matter whether of a colonialist or nativist perspective, and that they have now at best been replaced by a dualist approach (pp. 18-22). However, chapters five and six on the Carthaginian and Roman colonial situations have provided ample arguments for abandoning these dichotomies and asserting the role of intermediate categories emphasized in postcolonial theory. The town of Neapolis in many ways epitomizes the intermediate categories of west central Sardinia under Carthaginian authority, as it largely bridges the assumed colonial divide between the colonial Punic and indigenous Sardinian inhabitants (cf. pp. 151-156). It does so in the first place as a prominent feature of the coastal cultural landscape, situated in-between the thoroughly colonial situation of Tharros and Cape S. Marco and the more outspokenly indigenous character of the interior. Within the coastal landscape, Neapolis occupied a crucial place as the focal point of rural settlement. Neapolis thus lay not only in-between in a literal

sense but also metaphorically, exemplified by the locally created and produced figurines of the healing sanctuary (fig. 5-18). The settlement itself was also typical of the intermediate nature of Neapolis, as such large nucleated settlements clearly represent a colonial innovation; this is confirmed by the colonial origin of the town as a Carthaginian foundation. However, it did not meet the more strictly colonial and urban standards set by Tharros and the other colonial cities, which consequently detracts from the colonial status of Neapolis. The closer involvement of the town in the rural hinterland and the relative absence of artisanal production further curtailed the colonial dimension of Neapolis. Since the general situation did not change much in the earlier Roman period, the same arguments apply to Neapolis in Republican times.

West central Sardinia in the Phoenician/Iron Age period on the contrary appears to contradict the postcolonial repudiation of colonial dualisms, since the regional situation of that period was defined by a sharp contrast between Phoenician colonial presence along the coast and Iron Age Nuragic settlement in the interior (pp. 104-107). In this case, however, the evident separation between colonial and indigenous settlement should not so much be interpreted as a colonial divide but rather as denoting a precolonial situation in which both 'sides' essentially remained independent from each other. Since the precolonial characteristics of this particular situation have been deduced from other evidence, they cannot rebut the foregoing arguments about the later colonial situations.

When considered in the wider context of the whole of Sardinia, however, the separation between the Phoenician foundations on the southern and western Sardinian coasts and Nuragic Iron Age settlement in the interior and the northern half of the island can be argued to have been much less definite. Although the contrast between the two settlement systems was a significant characteristic of west central Sardinian regional organization, the Phoenician foundations did not constitute the exclusive contact points with the outside world for the indigenous inhabitants. On the contrary, extensive networks had already been established long before the Phoenicians set foot ashore in Sardinia and they continued to function after these newcomers had founded their colonial settlements. Although the importation of foreign objects has for a long time been automatically ascribed to Phoenician intervention, detailed study of the distribution of the imports and their indigenous contexts has now shown that importation was anything but a colonial prerogative and that the Nuragic Sardinians themselves were equally active in maintaining exchange contacts (Ugas/Zucca 1984, 58-86).

The ongoing contacts of Nuragic Sardinia with Etruscan Tuscany throughout the 7th and 6th centuries BC clearly show that the precolonial situation was not determined by a

dichotomy between colonizing Phoenicians and colonized Sardinians alone but included Etruscans as well; from the 7th century BC onwards, a distinction can even be made between northern and southern Etruscans (pp. 79-80). Since this resulted in a divergence between the northern part of the island where contacts with the Italian mainland were dominant, and the southern regions of the island, including west central Sardinia, which interacted primarily with the nearby Phoenician settlements, the island as a whole was characterized by three major groups, namely the inhabitants of the 'two Sardinias' in roughly the northern and southern parts of the island (Gras 1985, 126) and the Phoenicians on the southern and western coasts. If the general situation of Iron Age Sardinia was thus far too complex and involved too many participants to be reduced to a simple dualist (pre-)colonial situation, the regional context of west central Sardinia likewise resisted such a categorization: the contraction of indigenous settlement into the interior and the increased distribution of Etruscan and Greek imports in the central Campidano by the end of the 7th century BC similarly suggest that the local inhabitants were far from dependent on the Phoenician foundations for their contacts with the outside world (p. 103; cf. Gras 1985, 113-244).

If the over-all precolonial and colonial situations cannot be fitted into a dualist scheme, the shortcomings of these representations are perhaps still more convincingly demonstrated by several minor instances of blurred colonial categories which can be found throughout the region in each of the three periods examined. A case in point are the villages in the Marmilla during the Punic and Roman Republican period which on the one hand denote an 'indigenous' way of settlement and land use, emphasized by the association with a nuraghe, but on the other hand these villages also comprise numerous typically 'colonial' elements such as domestic pottery of exclusively colonial types, the use of ceramic roof tiles and in some cases even the house type itself (as at Malfudi: fig. 6-12). Compared to these, the single farms of the southern Arborèa and the towns of Neapolis and Othoca represented a relatively 'pure' or outspoken example of colonial settlement. However, it is precisely the *relativity* of the colonial or indigenous nature of these sites which comes to the heart of the matter: just as Neapolis seems much less completely colonial when compared to Tharros or Carthage, likewise the Roman villages of the Marmilla are much less 'indigenous' in comparison to contemporary settlements in northern or north-eastern Sardinia which adhered much more closely to older Nuragic traditions (cf. Lilliu 1988, 474-480). Other examples of blurred categories are the Punic and Roman shrines in Nuragic monumental constructions, usually nuraghi but occasionally also well-sanctuaries. The intricate nature of these cults and rituals has already been discussed at length and need not be repeated here (see pp. 151-156,

201-205). These cases show that hybridization processes often played a critical role in the blurring of colonial categories and the transgression of colonial boundaries (see next section).

The second postcolonial tenet concerning the categorization of colonialism as an historical phenomenon is perhaps best illustrated by the observation that despite habitual associations with issues of power and domination, both the discussion above and the interpretative sections of the chapters four, five and six have only touched upon these issues in passing. The cultural aspects of the (pre-)colonial situations have been foregrounded, without, however, ignoring economic and political elements altogether. Emblematic in this respect are the questions of settlement location and land use, which take a prominent place in this study: obviously, they have an important economic dimension but cannot be reduced to it, as I have argued by drawing attention to the apparent avoidance of nuraghi in the southern Arborèa. In fact, the very notion of a cultural landscape presupposes that there is much more to land use and settlement than merely tilling the soil or selecting profitable site catchments (cf. Tilley 1994, 11-34). Overlooking the discussions and interpretations of the three (pre-)colonial situations, the postcolonial emphasis on cultural issues appears to be particularly significant for an archaeological approach, since military events and political regulations are notoriously difficult to detect archaeologically. The discussion of Sardinia under the Roman Republic in chapter six illustrates this point most conclusively: whereas the military interventions and the political exploitation of the island are primarily or often exclusively attested by literary evidence, the archaeological record sheds extensive light on cultural aspects of the colonial situation. Moreover, these have revealed the pervasiveness of colonial domination or rather on the limits of it. In this way, the Neapolis figurines (fig. 5-18) have for instance been interpreted as denoting a local or popular (sub)culture which could be related to the intermediate position of the town in the region. Apart from the fact that these statuettes are another example of blurred colonial categories, both the figurines and the fertility rituals of the Genna Maria shrine show that the impact of colonial culture touched virtually all parts of society. At the same time, the attention for both economic and cultural aspects of colonialism has revealed similarities and discrepancies between different social 'levels' (to use the Dumontian term). In the Punic period, for instance, the virtually complete domination of Punic norms at the level of daily life and agricultural production contrasted markedly with the fertility cult performed at Genna Maria, in which older 'traditional' forms were preserved and colonial influences were admitted much more selectively.

Postcolonial attention for cultural aspects is, therefore, partly founded on its contribution to the interpretation of the values

of local society under colonial rule. Equally important is that it provides a starting-point for examining the impact of colonial authority not just as political or military domination but also as a more subtle cultural hegemony. Precisely because of this shift in attention, the postcolonial perspective has a most promising archaeological potential for studying colonialism.

### 7.3 Hybridization, local identities and resistance

As their repeated occurrence in the previous chapters has already signalled, the terms 'hybridization' and 'local identity' are of critical importance to understand the ways in which colonial categories can be blurred and boundaries transgressed. They can in fact be regarded as key words in a postcolonial approach to colonialism. In this final section, I shall therefore consider these two terms and their implications in the light of the archaeological analyses of the foregoing chapters. To conclude, I shall dwell upon the frequently used term of 'resistance', which necessarily comes to mind.

The clearest instance of hybridization observed in the three periods studied is that of the cult celebrated in Roman times in the reused well-sanctuary of Cuccuru s'Arriu (pp. 203-205). In the first place, a more appropriate label than 'hybrid' is hard to find to characterize the multiple background of the rituals performed, the objects used and the place occupied in one and the same context. The thorough integration of the diverse elements only adds to this. Secondly, the case of Cuccuru s'Arriu most explicitly exposes the problematic nature of terms such as 'indigenous', 'colonial', 'Punic', 'Roman' etc. In particular, precisely because of the entanglement of the elements involved, it is difficult to sustain the essentialist meanings usually attributed to these labels: must the rituals performed at Cuccuru s'Arriu be defined as 'colonial' because of their Punic background or as 'indigenous' given the contemporary widespread opposition between Punic and Roman? Moreover, what exactly does the label 'Punic' cover in such a context? Does it refer to an 'authentic' Punic culture in North Africa or does it allude to the local Sardinian version? A similarly intricate web of meanings and backgrounds was pointed out in the discussion of the Neapolis figurines (pp. 154-155): given the diverse backgrounds of the statuettes, it is unclear whether they should be classified as colonial or indigenous.

As I have shown in the foregoing chapters, the way out of this disarray is to abandon these essentialist questions and to specify such qualifications within their particular setting. To use the term which Foucault borrowed from Nietzsche, in order to understand the hybridization processes it is necessary to trace the *genealogy* of the individual terms and to consider the various relationships between the separate components and their backgrounds because these classificatory labels 'have no essence or [...] their essence *was fabricated* in a



piecemeal fashion from alien forms' (Foucault 1971, 142 quoted in Dreyfus/Rabinow 1982, 107; emphasis added). It is this creative nature of hybridization processes which explains the terms 'local culture' and 'identity' and which leads to their recognition as social constructs (cf. Kellner 1992, 143-145).

Because local cultures and identities are part and parcel of the contemporary social context, the meanings of their components necessarily refer to that very same context, whereas their 'origins' may but need not play a part (Marcus 1992, 309-315). Given these references, identities can be labelled 'local' without being inherently linked to the actual provenance of their constituents (cf. Rouse 1995). Since identities are above all situational, they are inevitably subject to historical changes and connected with aspects such as gender, class, professional activities, religion etc. (cf. discussion in Miller 1994, 257-290). In this light it is understandable that the Punic rituals which were originally — but not essentially — colonial could be reconsidered and recategorized — 'fabricated' in Foucault's words — as indigenous ones. The general relevance of this process is illustrated by the modern representation of the Sardinian language as the very essence of indigenous Sardinian identity today. In the modern context of the Italian state, this language is sufficiently different from its Italian counterpart to serve as a vehicle of opposition. The 'fact' that the Sardinian language 'originally' derived from Latin, which was the language of the Roman colonizers, cannot, in this view, contradict its contemporary social and cultural connotations.

As pointed out in chapter two (pp. 24-32), resistance as a theme is the necessary companion of studies of power and domination. As such, its repeated appearance in the foregoing interpretations of the three Sardinian (pre-)colonial situations need not cause surprise; it is rather the limited and only most recent attention for this theme in Mediterranean archaeology which calls for explanation. The Sardinian case studies have moreover demonstrated the close connections between local culture and resistance, which I have considered from a theoretical point of view in chapter two (pp. 31-33). The link between these two is what Homi Bhabha has called the ambivalence of hybridization, which gives local cultures a potential of subversion and resistance *per se* (Bhabha 1992b, 66; cf. p. 25).

The colonial situation of the Roman Republican period has demonstrated that resistance nevertheless remains a somewhat elusive concept because of its contiguity with the construction of local identities. Apart from situations of outspoken resistance which may be accompanied by armed rebellion, such as the Sardinian revolt against the Roman authorities in 215 BC, unequivocal examples of everyday or cultural resistance have been difficult to identify. Rather than trying to impose rigid classifications, it therefore seems

appropriate to acknowledge the inherent ambiguities and to accept them as critical elements of the colonial situation. A similar position has been taken by Lila Abu-Lughod in her studies of Bedouin communities in contemporary Egypt (1986; 1990). Citing Foucault, who has pointed out that resistance can be used 'as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their points of application and the methods used' (Foucault 1982, 211), she has argued that too narrow a focus on resistance entails the risk of overlooking its implications and its relationships to power. Instead, she has proposed that resistance should be regarded as a *diagnostic* of power which allows probing its workings (Abu-Lughod 1990, 42).

In the case of Roman Republican Sardinia, the many possible instances of cultural resistance among the rural and urban communities of the island can thus be interpreted as a response to equally tacit and veiled forms of Roman cultural dominance. The significance of such a representation of Roman rule is that it is by and large corroborated by archaeological evidence from the Republican period. Roman domination conceived as both cultural hegemony and economic exploitation explains why the Roman confiscation of Sardinian lands and the imposition of heavy taxation could for a long time remain without appreciable consequences for rural settlement and land use: in this view, the local inhabitants of the region complied with the imposed taxes but reacted in the first place to Roman cultural hegemony by holding on to traditional patterns of settlement and land use instead of 'rationally' adapting these to the imposed Roman political and economic measures. With regard to Roman domination, this means that the harsher economic and political aspects of Roman power were complemented by a less strict cultural hegemony which allowed the local inhabitants to preserve much of their traditional way of life. As shown in chapter six (pp. 205-206), this only resulted in significant changes of rural settlement in the course of the (later) 1st century BC.

With regard to the two colonial situations *sensu stricto*, resistance has been fruitfully used in order to lay bare the workings of colonial power and to gain some insight into the hierarchies of values of local society. However, there is no point in denying that awareness of this concept and the recent surge in studies of resistance in both anthropology and, albeit more reluctantly, archaeology are intimately related to late 20th century ideas about colonialism, power and local cultures, in short, to postcolonialism as a product of Western (postmodern) society. Because of this link, which is presumably just as strong as the one between imperialist Western society and early 20th century archaeology and historiography, it remains important to consider the reasons why resistance is worth studying. Morality or political correctness to highlight the oppressed is surely not enough in itself (Brown 1996). The extensive discussions of Gramsci's

and Bourdieu's ideas about hegemony as a means of establishing and maintaining power in colonial situations and their adoption in the detailed analyses of the three (pre-)colonial situations of west central Sardinia have nevertheless shown, I suggest, that cultural resistance does offer a useful tool in order to probe the murky corners of colonialism and to understand how people from different backgrounds can make a colonial situation conceivable and bearable. The value of these insights, and perhaps, as a corollary, of this thesis, can perhaps most appropriately be illustrated by referring to modern 20th century Sardinian representations of ancient colonialism and indigenous values. As the earlier remark about the Latin roots of the Sardinian language today and its modern perception demonstrate, the past plays an important role in the construction of contemporary Sardinian identities. In order to stress the fundamental difference between the island and the Italian mainland, proving the authenticity of Sardinian indigenous culture has become an important theme, in which archaeology has increasingly become involved (cf. Clark 1996, 97-99). Cultural resistance is a key term in this respect which is frequently used as a means to indicate how the islanders managed to retain their own 'truly indigenous' culture and identity under the long succession of foreign occupations. Emblematic in this respect are the last phrases of Giovanni Lilliu's overview of Nuragic culture:

The romanization of the indigenous inhabitants of the interior of the island was a matter of language and less so one of culture. Much less was it one of *spirit*. Even Christian religion had to leave ample space — as it still does — to an instinctive and magical spirituality. The real transformation of these rebellious but generous people is only taking effect in our days, in the face of resistances which go back to ancient ethics, to a religion of tradition; resistances which need to be understood, not repressed in order to allow for the rise of a truly new world based on a modern *Sardinian culture*.<sup>2</sup>

Lilliu 1988, 481; original emphases

The observations and conclusions in this chapter may suffice to put these claims into perspective. I explicitly do *not* wish to imply by this, however, that such statements are merely illusory or even false because they do not correspond to academic representations. Nor do I intend to claim the representation of the past as a scholarly privilege which must be defended against politically inspired distortions. I rather wish to assert the very *reality* of such claims as cited above. As I

argued earlier in this section with regard to the Sardinian language, there are ample historical and linguistic arguments to dismiss the 'authenticity' ascribed to it, but these do not detract from the very real connotations of Sardinian identity and opposition to the Italian state which it carries nowadays. The role of the archaeologist or historian in such a context should therefore not be restricted, to my mind, to denouncing the artificiality of claims about the past and to debunking the 'invention of traditions'. Whilst recognizing that inventing traditions is an historical process which has taken place time and again, academic studies of the past should also, and perhaps primarily so, be based on an awareness of the past in its contemporary social setting. If we accept that 'our constructions of real pasts are not sacro-sanct, but [...] important elements in a continuing dialogue and dialectic' (Keesing 1989, 37), then perhaps conflicts about the use of and access to archaeological monuments such as described by Odermatt (1996) for nuraghe Losa can be avoided. That might not only contribute to a more nuanced understanding of these monuments in contemporary society (cf. Herzfeld 1996, 120), whether local Sardinian or modern Italian, but it could also preserve the more recent cultural biographies of these monuments, which have continuously occupied a prominent place in the Sardinian landscapes since their construction. With this study, I hope to have contributed, among other things, to reflection on the role of colonialism and local identities in the Sardinian past.

## notes

1 Naturally, our project does not consist of making an inventory of all instances of expansion or colonization, or of belittling European colonialism; it does, on the contrary, include comparing it to other examples.

2 'La romanizzazione delle genti indigene del Centro isolano fu, del resto, un fatto di lingua e in minor misura di cultura. Tanto meno fu un fatto di *anima*. La stessa religione cristiana fece — come fa ancora — larga concessione a una spiritualità istintiva e magica. E, in fondo, una vera trasformazione di quelle genti ribelli ma generose, sta cominciando ad avvenire soltanto oggi, con resistenze dovute a un'etica antica, a una religione della tradizione, resistenze che hanno bisogno di essere comprese, non represses, perché sorga veramente un mondo nuovo, fondato su una moderna *cultura sarda*.'