

---

# TRAC Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference

---

www.trac.org.uk

## Paper Information:

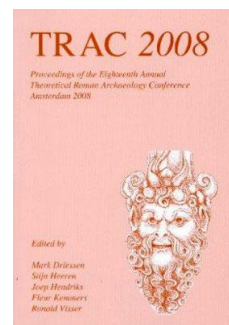
Title: Creating a Community: The Symbolic Role of Tumuli in the Villa Landscape of the Civitas Tungrorum

Author: Laura Crowley

Pages: 113–126

DOI: [http://doi.org/10.16995/TRAC2008\\_113\\_126](http://doi.org/10.16995/TRAC2008_113_126)

Publication Date: 17 April 2009



## Volume Information:

Driessen, M., Heeren, S., Hendriks, J., Kemmers, F., and Visser, R. (eds.) (2009) *TRAC 2008: Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Amsterdam 2008*. Oxford: Oxbow Books

## Copyright and Hardcopy Editions:

The following paper was originally published in print format by Oxbow Books for TRAC. Hard copy editions of this volume may still be available, and can be purchased direct from Oxbow at <http://www.oxbowbooks.com>.

TRAC has now made this paper available as Open Access through an agreement with the publisher. Copyright remains with TRAC and the individual author(s), and all use or quotation of this paper and/or its contents must be acknowledged. This paper was released in digital Open Access format in April 2013.

# Creating a Community: The Symbolic Role of Tumuli in the Villa Landscape of the *Civitas Tungrorum*

Laura Crowley

## Introduction

The subject of this article is the tumuli of the *civitas Tungrorum*. They are currently a subtopic within a study of privileged burials in the villa landscapes that lie on the loess plains more or less between *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium* (Cologne) and *Bagacum Nerviorum* (Bavai). Previously, the region had been witness to Caesar's displacement and/or genocide of the *Eburones* and *Atuatuci* around the year 51 BC (Caesar: VIII 25). These ethnic groups were replaced with a group known as the *Tungri*, the exact composition of which is unknown, but which most likely comprised survivors from the former tribes as well as Germanic immigrants (Mariën 1980: 45ff; Wightman 1985: 36, 40, 53; Nouwen 1997: 9, 31ff; Carroll 2001: 28–29). Hence we are looking at a heterogeneous group, possibly cherishing a host of diverse traditions, in a period of significant change. The migrants among these people needed to establish themselves in their new habitat, while the locals were forced to re-establish themselves in a new social, political, and economic climate. While Roman imperialism was the cause of this transition, fortunately for all parties concerned there was (arguably) no better context within which to stake a new claim and build on it than a Roman one. I believe that the construction of tumuli as burial monuments on villa estates was instrumental within this latter strategy, not in the sense of an ethnogenesis as such – occurring too long after the creation of the *civitas Tungrorum* and being restricted to a very particular group, namely middle- and upper-class rural residents – but in the emergence of a social group, a community of peers.

Over 100 tumuli in the region can be positively identified as such by means of excavation (Fig. 1). Roughly a further 60 have been excavated inconclusively, with more than 150 additional sites being identified as *possible* Roman burial mounds. These, and the inconclusive sites, cannot be assumed to be tumuli proper. Although far less common, other options include Roman period lookout points and medieval mottes (Dunning and Jessup 1936: 45). 60 tumuli are still visible in the landscape today (Massart 2006: 78; 2007: 45); many mounds have been levelled, and survive solely in toponyms or written references. Tumuli are generally striking features, with some of the best-preserved reaching as high as 15 metres (at Glimes and at Awans, for example: Massart 1994: 34, 50), making it no surprise that they have been the victims of extensive looting and primitive excavation through the centuries (Fig. 2). In many cases, poorly executed digs have proven just as damaging as the furtive exploits of treasure seekers, with inadequate reporting and attention to such detail as stratigraphic information, organic remains, presence and patterns of various ashy remains and pits in the vicinity, etc. Even in the academic explorations up to the mid-1900s, the cremated remains of the individual buried there – not to mention associated ritual deposits, pits and soil variations – lost their primary significance and were rejected in preference for the rich assemblages that accompanied them. The tradition of discarding invaluable information in this area has resulted in rather shaky chronologies, often based on coinage and circular arguments of form. In the last few years, however, the tumuli have begun to receive

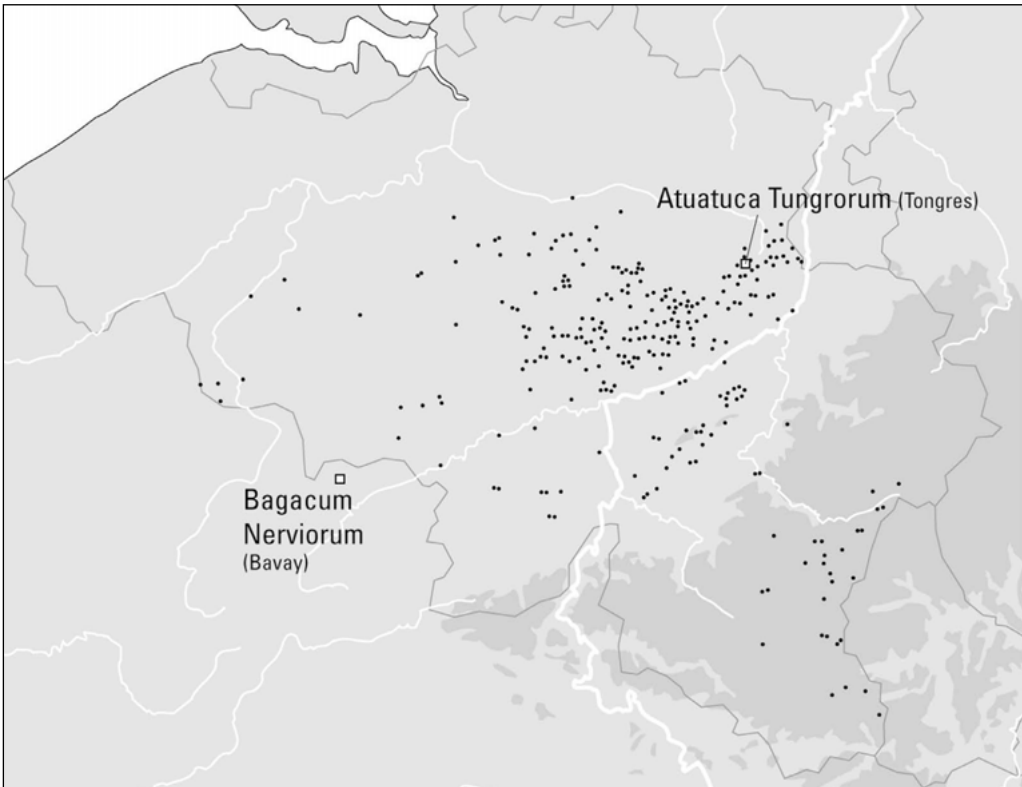


Figure 1: Map showing the distribution of tumuli in the civitas Tungrorum (after Amand 1985, Fig.9).

attention of the level they deserve, from the phases of excavation through to heritage management, to more in-depth studies of their significance (amongst others: Vanvinckenroye 1987; Fechner 1993; Massart 1993; 2006; 2007).

### *The puzzle of origin*

Despite all of this attention, one element has remained something of an enigma. The question of why the tumuli were built here at all has resulted in differing schools of thought (see Wigg 1993b: 371 for a summary; and 1993a for more detailed bibliography). One set of archaeologists saw it as the continuation of a long-standing ‘native’ tradition of barrow building (albeit in a particular area within the *civitas Tungrorum*, Amand 1960: 76; Van Doorselaer 1967: 176; for the Treveran region: Koethe 1939: 115; Ebel 1989) another as a practice emulating elite tumuli of the Mediterranean region (Dunning and Jessup 1936: 45–47), while a third group posited that returning veterans brought the tradition from Thrace (Mariën 1980: 153; based on the presence of *parazonia* among the assemblages of Omal, Piétrain and Herstal). While the latter hypothesis has received few adherents, scholars tended to divide between the first two, and a position straddling both standpoints emerged as the dominant belief today. J. Toynbee summed this up well in an ambitious overview of death and burial in the Roman world:



Figure 2: Examples of tumuli today. Left: Tumulus no.1 at Koninksem, seen from the southwest; Right: The tumulus of Middelwinden, shown from the northeast (photographs by the author).

‘The main concentrations of Roman-age tumuli are in Britain, Belgium, the Treviran region, parts of the Danubian provinces, and Thrace. None of these countries are among the most highly Romanized provincial areas; and it is precisely in such less Romanized lands that we would expect to find imitations of just that type of Italian tomb which could readily be acclimatized in a native, pre-Roman tradition. For immigrants from the south the type had its counterparts in their own homelands; while provincials found in it a means of blending a new taste for Roman fashion with something older and more familiar to them.’ (Toynbee 1971: 180–181)

While this statement captured the *Zeitgeist*, it is regretful that it has not been developed much in the intervening decades. It clearly suggests a stark opposition between ‘Roman’ and ‘Native’ which has long since been thoroughly refuted (Woolf 1997). It would stand to reason that when the concepts upon which a hypothesis stands are thrown out, the hypothesis itself should be overhauled, but this, to my opinion, has not really occurred, despite multiple, albeit more nuanced, references to the problem in more recent literature (Amand 1988; Becker 1993; Wigg 1993a; 1993b; 1998; Ferdière 2004; Massart 2007). Of course, there is a lot to commend Toynbee’s viewpoint, and even more that of her successors, acknowledging as it does the similarities between the tumuli that were coming to characterise elite burial in the core of the Roman Empire and the prehistoric barrows that had known a long tradition across the Roman North (Fig. 3). However, it is insufficient to say that this crossover was enough reason for this particular form of burial to become as popular as it did, or where it did, to the virtual exclusion of other forms of conspicuous entombment in the countryside of the *civitas Tungrorum*. Addressing the issue of continuity, several elements spring to the fore. Firstly, there is a hiatus of at least 300 years between the latest of the Iron Age barrows and the earliest Roman period tumuli in this region. Hence, we cannot speak of continuity proper, or indeed continuity at all, although it is to be conceded that the Iron Age graves would have been a visible presence in the landscape. There is evidence of continuity of burial – albeit not in mound form – upon or in the vicinity of several Iron Age sites during the hiatus, for example at Niel-bij-Sint-Truiden, Berlingen, Esch, Gutschoven and Champion (for references see Massart 2007: 47). That notwithstanding, people had not been buried under raised mounds of earth for nearly half a millennium in most areas, so that there cannot be talk of continuity within the practice, but rather of an extinct tradition.

A second point worthy of note is that the part of the *civitas Tungrorum* that was later to host numerous Roman period tumuli was not the area in which Iron Age barrows were most plentiful (these lie, rather, at the peripheries of the Roman concentration: for example northern Limburg and the Kempen area: Wightman 1985: 31; cf. also Koethe 1939: 115; Wigg 1998: 295). If there were indeed a direct connection between Iron Age burial mounds and those of the Roman period, we would expect them to have similar distribution patterns, which they clearly do not. Thirdly, Roman period tumuli in the *civitas Tungrorum* are considerably larger than their Iron Age counterparts, and tend to occur either as isolated monuments in the landscape, or in small groups of two or three. As a rule, burial mounds from the different periods are visually easily distinguished from each other. It cannot be argued that the later phenomenon is an attempt at one-to-one imitation of the earlier, externally at least, which would have been the most obvious way of physically emulating the ancestors. A stronger case for similarity can be argued between Roman period tumuli and Bronze Age barrows. The latter are generally more substantial than those of the Iron Age, although, again, internal structure is significantly different. Considering the even greater time gap, however, there can be even less talk of continuity with these distant forbears.

Let us then turn briefly to the possibility of tumuli owing their popularity exclusively to the Roman Mediterranean. This type of burial monument certainly had a high status in and around Rome itself, commencing with the mausoleum of Augustus commissioned long before his death. This is thought to have its origin in the burial mounds of the Etruscans, and had parallels in the eastern Mediterranean in Thrace and Moesia (although this, too, is a contentious issue; see

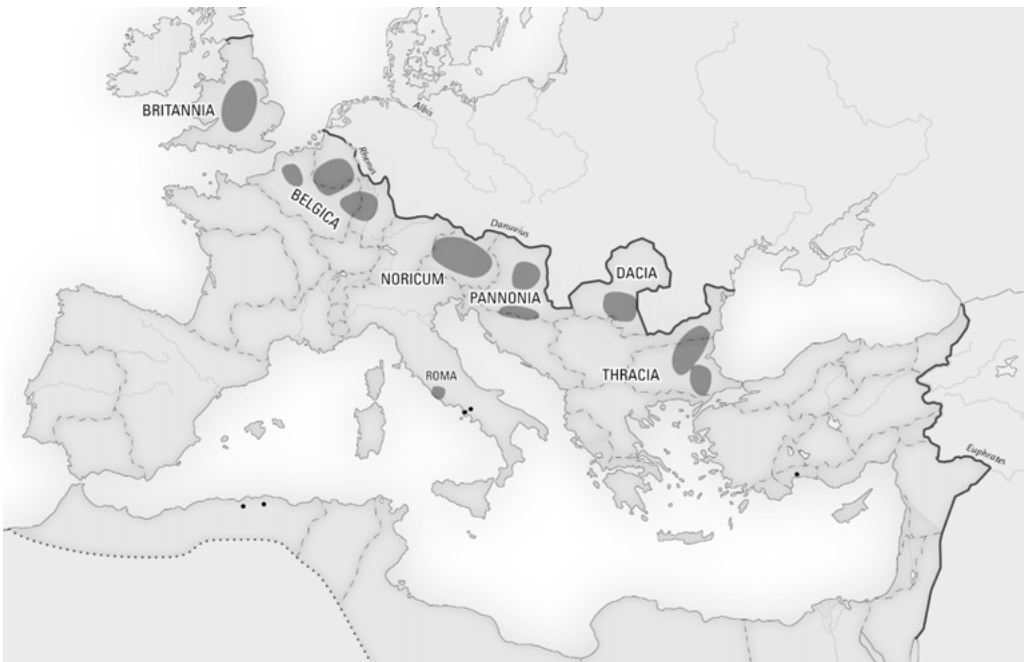


Figure 3: Distribution of tumuli in the Roman Empire (after Amand 1985, Fig. 1). (Note that this does not include burial mound clusters immediately beyond the limes).

Amand 1987: 172–179). It was not long before this form of burial became a hallmark for Roman aristocracy. This aspiration was a drive among the upwardly mobile in the northern Roman Empire, where a ‘society in which social status was based on wealth and culture [which] was much less disrupted by social and economic mobility than one based on wealth and race’ prevailed (Woolf 1998: 145). The appropriation of such an imposing symbol in the provinces would make a lot of sense. But the tumuli of the *civitas Tungrorum* cannot be classed as perfect reproductions of their southern models – for example the tambour, or circular enclosing wall (Wigg 1993b: Fig. 3; 1998: Fig. 3), was a typically Mediterranean architectural feature that appeared in only a small minority of tumuli in the region in question, and even then without characteristic stone buttresses (Massart 2007: 49f). Also, the presence of rich assemblages beneath tumuli in the *civitas Tungrorum* are more reminiscent of local Iron Age practice than a Roman imported one (Becker 1993: 362; Ferdière 2004: 35, 48–56).

Furthermore, elites in other provincial *civitates* held similar ambitions, but opted for different funerary rituals. Even in the Treviran region, which is close in proximity and host to numerous tumuli, there is a much broader spectrum of privileged forms of burial, including stone towers, pillars and enclosures (Cüppers and Neyses 1971; Baltzer 1983; Heinen 1985; Ebel 1989; Wigg 1993a; 1993b; Freigang 1997). The uniformity in Tungrian land cannot be put down to a lack of natural resources, and arguing for the absence of skilled sculptors would be circular in nature. We are looking at a very deliberate choice of one particular type of funerary monument, and then its reproduction in a very local manner. What *was* going on in the *civitas Tungrorum*?

### *Who were the privileged deceased?*

Mortuary rites can play a key role in the reinforcement of community feeling, both in coming together for the performance of rituals and the subsequent impact of permanent monuments to the deceased in the landscape. The establishment of such a distinctive cluster of imposing grave mounds served to strengthen a particular group within the construct that was the *civitas Tungrorum*. This group is also to some degree elusive, but is focused around the rural villa culture in the region and tends to be referred to as the villa elite.

The term elite is a remarkably ambiguous one, rarely discussed yet extensively employed. Were the villa elite the elite among the villa owners, or elite by virtue of owning a villa? Were they by definition extremely wealthy, or politically powerful, or socially superior, or a combination of some or all of the above? To what extent did these factors overlap in such a society, and how do they relate to the decision to bury someone in a tumulus on a villa estate? These burials were sizeable, richly furnished with grave goods and in prominent locations – thus fulfilling not just one, but all of the requirements Ferdière (2004: 58) lists for considering a burial to be ‘privileged’ (Fig. 4 for an example). The cautionary tales embodied by such cemeteries as that just outside Ostia (Morris 1992: 42) notwithstanding, the evidence would indicate at the very least that there is a strong connection between the burials and a rural upper class. Simply being a member of the elite did not qualify a person for a tumulus burial, however. If that had been the case, villa estates in the *civitas Tungrorum* would have been jostling for breath under the mass of tumuli covering the remains of each family member. So would it have been the *pater familias* who was thus honoured? Not necessarily – several graves have been identified as belonging to females (by osteological research and/or grave good association) and some even belong to small children. Was it a factor of timing, then, or chance of birth, particular omens



Figure 4: The in situ assemblage of the tumulus of Hoepertingen (Amand and Nouwen 1989, Fig. 12).

or an unusual status that determined such monumental burial? Whatever the reason was – and every tumulus could have a different one – elite status alone was not sufficient. Therefore I have chosen to adopt the term *privileged* rather than *elite* burial, as is widespread in francophone literature (see, among others, Ferdière 2004), to describe Roman period tumuli.

### *Heterogeneity*

The heterogeneity of the Tungrian population has been discussed above. While the temptation is strong to seek component tribes within this population by linking Roman period traditions to late Iron Age ones; i.e. by ascribing the regions in which tumuli are plentiful to tribes who had previously engaged in barrow-building; it has been proved a misleading quest, by virtue of both lapsed time and contrasting form. Nonetheless, this very heterogeneity could be the key to the phenomenon of homogeneity in privileging burials, namely the tumulus building in the region, and furthermore elucidates the (in particular, internal) variety within this one type.

Members of units that are created purely for purposes of political administration often do not consider that group to comprise a significant part of their identity. In extreme conditions however, such as those created by genocide and mass migration, the formation of communities across diverse groups can prove a useful strategy. In Cohen's (1985) seminal work on the symbolic construction of community, community is seen as being created, understood and reinforced by means of symbolism. Furthermore, ritual 'also has this capacity to heighten consciousness, it should not be surprising, therefore, to find ritual occupying a prominent place in the repertoire

of symbolic devices through which community boundaries are affirmed and reinforced' (Cohen 1985: 50). Ritual is, then, a powerful form of symbolism, and mortuary ritual is a ubiquitously important one. Tumuli are the permanent physical remnants of such ritual, and therefore embody dramatic symbols of community. But why were tumuli chosen for this symbolic purpose?

A commonly observed trait of communities undergoing change or under threat from external forces is a tendency towards atavism. 'It has long been noticed that societies undergoing rapid, and, therefore, de-stabilizing processes of change often generate atavistically some apparently traditional forms, but impart to them meaning and implication appropriate to contemporary circumstances' (Cohen 1985: 46). The *civitas Tungrorum* provides a classic example of this, in its revival of the custom of raising burial mounds. In this case, the situation is complicated by the disruption that preceded the calm of Roman rule. We are not dealing with a case of a closed community being threatened by a more powerful external force, but a fragmented group of people thrown together by that very force, who nevertheless have more in common with each other than the authority that joined them, and than the less wealthy rural dwellers of the region. It can be explained: 'The community boundary is *not* drawn at the point where differentiation occurs. Rather, it incorporates and encloses difference and, as Durkheim asserted for his organic model, is thereby strengthened' (Cohen 1985: 74). Hence, the introduction of a symbol such as the tumulus into the region served not only to demonstrate this group's participation in contemporary Roman society, but also to strengthen the identity of that very community within both the local context and the empire: 'Of particular interest to us is the irony that they [the newly introduced structural forms] may well become media for the reassertion and symbolic expression of the community's boundaries' (Cohen 1985: 37). While this may give the impression of being a very Roman interpretation of the phenomenon, it must be borne in mind that '[C]ommunities might import structural forms across their boundaries but, having done so, they often infuse them with their own meanings and use them to serve their own symbolic purposes' (Cohen 1985: 37). Some of these purposes will be discussed below, but for the time being suffice it to say that 'the boundary represents the mask presented by the community to the outside world; it is the community's public face [...], the boundary as the community's public face is symbolically simple; but, as the object of internal discourse it is symbolically complex' (Cohen 1985: 74).

Thus the broad similarity in form between Roman burial mounds and prehistoric ones facilitated an easy manipulation of the symbol in 'a selective construction of the past which resonates with contemporary influences' (Cohen 1985: 99). The tumulus served as a uniting force for the rural community on several levels. It provided a symbol of a past that was distant and hazy enough to be claimed as common by its diverse members. It provided a means by which this community could physically manifest itself with reference both to the community's past and to the present circumstances as part of the Roman Empire, for by this stage the burial mound was an established form of Roman symbolism, and a very strategic one at that. Adopting it fitted into the structures of the new regime, whilst simultaneously allowing the community to express a newly discovered sense of self in the face of an external force 'Change in structural forms is matched by a symbolic recreation of the distinctive community through myth, ritual and a 'constructed' tradition' (Cohen 1985: 73). The fact that the power of symbols lies in their ability to unite by means of being differently understood by their employers meant that tumuli could symbolise the unity of a somewhat heterogeneous community without compromising anyone's sense of self or blurring the projected image to the outside world.



This would appear to fall into the realm of the invention – or in this case perhaps, re-invention – of tradition: ‘responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations’, while ‘insofar as there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of ‘invented’ traditions is that the continuity with it is largely fictitious’ (Hobsbawm 1992: 2). However, Cohen urges us to refrain from imputing such ‘a contrived character’ (Cohen 1985: 99) to it as that label would imply, rather, we should consider it from a more anthropological perspective, that being ‘more inclined to treat myth as an expression of the way in which people cognitively map past, present and future’ (Cohen 1985: 99). The degree of contrivance one wishes to accord it, then, will determine what one calls the practice, but the essence is more or less the same. In light of the fact that the tumulus is virtually the only form employed for privileging burial in rural contexts in this region, it is difficult to deny that it would have been a conscious choice, a deliberate opting for a symbol of the repertoire available from the Roman example; it was the only one which had traits in common with the community’s own ‘putative past or tradition’ (Cohen 1985: 99). Interesting in this area is the work of Cubitt (2007) on history and memory. His eponymous book raises some interesting points on psychologist Pierre Janet’s emphases on ‘the fundamentally pragmatic and socially instrumental character of remembering, and on the intimate links between memory, culture and communication’ (Cubitt 2007: 127). Furthermore, he notes that ‘forms of contestation call forth other adaptive cultivations of past-related knowledge, designed to foster new claims to power, property or status, or to bolster old ones against new challenges’ (Cubitt 2007: 136). Groups simply ‘need retrospective knowledge in order to maintain and to communicate the sense of corporate or collective identity on which their continuing coherence ultimately depends’ (Cubitt 2007: 134), which has implications both for the practising of funerary ritual in general, and for the specific ‘memories’ selected for handing on (see below).

While we are clearly dealing with an example of atavistic behaviour, it must be borne in mind that furthermore, ‘[F]or most people, at most moments of history, the past is inchoate, transmitted only selectively according to contemporary purposes, and recalled selectively without historical rigour. It inheres in such indiscriminating categories as ‘the old days’, ‘when I was young’, ‘in our ancestors’ time’, history is wonderfully malleable’ (Cohen 1985: 101). Likewise, the symbols are malleable. The vagueness of the past, even its applicability to all members of the new community, is forgotten, its symbols are revived and employed to convey new relevant meanings to actors in the (then) present. The tumuli represented an emerging community of peers, of social climbers using a mixture of Roman and ancient local symbolism to assert their claims on territory, display the establishment of a dynasty, the stability of the area and their membership of an upwardly mobile privileged group. While burial mounds have an atavistically symbolic role, it must not be forgotten that they remain essentially a new Roman-influenced introduction. There is no gradated variation along a socio-economic scale: one either raised a tumulus or one did not; one either symbolised their participation in the community of peers, or did not belong to it.

### *Parallels*

So it has been established that the tumuli are part and parcel of privileged rural landscapes in the *civitas Tungrorum*. But it has also been mentioned that while a rural elite – whatever elements that may comprise – was a common phenomenon across the Roman Empire, in this area it

was unusual by virtue of its choice for privileging burials virtually exclusively by constructing tumuli. In seeking further insight into the phenomenon of mound burial, I came across the site of Wigber Low, England, mentioned in J. Moreland's *Archaeology and Text* (2001: 41–42). A Bronze Age barrow, it was reused for burial in the medieval period. Moreland states that: 'By inserting their dead into the barrow, the organisers of the seventh century burial collapsed, and sought to command, time. By making their dead contiguous with those of remote antiquity, they were making an eloquent statement, informed by oral tradition and memory, about their relationship with the dead and their place among the living.' (Moreland 2001: 41) This has echoes of the atavistic traits mentioned above. When Moreland describes the Wigber Low site as 'a point in the landscape where this world, and the otherworld, where past and present, intersected' (Moreland, 2001: 41), it is interesting as it draws attention to the impact of a burial mound in the landscape, not just in the immediate aftermath of the funerary rites, but for centuries, even millennia, later (cf. Roymans 1995: 9). It shows how such monuments shaped the eschatological landscape for multiple generations to come. While this *impact* is valid for the tumuli in question, how can Wigber Low be considered a useful comparison when exploring the *genesis* of the tumulus phenomenon in the *civitas Tungrorum*?

The tumuli are not reused Iron Age barrows; it has been shown that grave mound distribution in the two periods is quite different, as is the chronological variation in form. Therefore, we are not dealing with the recycling of old burial mounds, but with the building of new entities – that the body of the tumulus was raised *ex nihilo*, at least in terms of mound if not burial. Even so, evidence from well-excavated tumuli such as that at Gutschoven (Vanvinckenroye 1987), shows that some tumuli, at least, are constructed on the site of previous prehistoric cremation and burial sites (further examples occur at Niel-bij-Sint-Truiden, Berlingen, Esch and Champion (for references see Massart 2007: 47)). While there is then a new development in grave form, we can speak of continuing reverence for sacred places, of 'a point in the landscape where this world, and the otherworld, where past and present, intersected [...] laden with meaning, memory and power' (Moreland 2001: 41). This summarises the collision of the symbolic elements of religious beliefs, tradition (invented or otherwise) and power in the form of the burial mounds.

There are, indeed, many valuable studies on the concept of the past within past societies (more generally: Bradley and Williams 1998; Bradley 2002; Williams 2003; and particularly Bradley 1987; for the Roman period: Eckhardt 2004; closer to the study region: Roymans 1995; Sopp 1999); I chose this particular case study because it is a useful and interesting as a point of departure. Moreland offers an interpretation whose principles hold true irrespective of time or space; both the similarities and contrasts it forces offer alternative perspectives and new depths of insight. He points out the centrality of death in negotiating power and social cohesion, and the importance of the past both in the functioning of relationships in the present and providing for a future. The 'organisers' of the seventh century at Wigber Low were no different from the 'organisers' of the villa landscape. Both were aware of the power of monuments to the deceased as symbols of the past, not only of the individuals interred hereunder, but also of the past of the community. We have already discussed the fragmented pasts of the villa-inhabiting community of the *civitas Tungrorum*, which could have proved an obstacle in the harmonious co-existence of the 'elites' of various tribes, and would imply a need for unifying these histories. A mechanism of entering the past in the service of the present was therefore not an easily employable option. However, in a period of such social, political and economic change, which at the same time

offered potential for long term peaceful settlement in a previously turbulent region, appealing to the past to anchor the community was vital (Bradley 1987: 3, 14–15).

Moreland makes explicit the instrumentality of the practice he describes, stating that ‘[T]hose buried in millennia-old graves *entered the past in the service of the present to protect their future*’ (my italics) (Moreland 2001: 41). I would argue that this parallels what was occurring in the *civitas Tungrorum*. While burial in a tumulus does not entail literally entering the graves of the past, it does require emulation of that past through its reconstruction. The past is, in a sense re-entered, and exposed in the landscape for all to see. The service of the present in this case is the legitimising of a family line, and the implications for the future are the protection of that dynasty.

### *Location, location, location*

‘The croft, then, is not just an arena of labour, but is also a family territory with long historical associations. As such it is a fundamental referent of identity.’ (Cohen 1985: 103)

Territory was a crucial factor in the Roman period, and although appropriation of land is ubiquitous through the ages, land in the Roman period was subject to different ownership than in the preceding society. The significance of the tribe was replaced by powerful family units, with all of their associated client families and individuals. New levels of peace and stability were attained. Archaeologically speaking, one of the areas in which we see evidence of this stability in the countryside is in the increasing permanence of structures. Wealthy families associated themselves – their identity and fortunes – closely with their newly established estates, and founded them with a view to the future. Tumuli formed prominent features upon these estates. The strategic locations (along roadways or at prominent points in the landscape) of the monumental burials indicate participation in the aforementioned upwardly mobile society where anybody with means could climb the social ladder, regardless of race (Woolf 1998: 145). Such social and economic mobility required a type of active self-promotion that had not been heretofore necessary. It was thus in this context that the barrow-tradition was brought (back) to life, because the barrows had an instrumental role in this new form of society. Establishment and entrenchment of status was inseparable from entrenchment in a territory. The territorial elements of this action are inseparable from its protagonists. Those interred in these homages to the past play a pivotal role in the future of the estate, perhaps far more so in death than they ever did in life (not altogether unlike the concept of *Gründergräber* in medieval archaeology (Steuer 1987: 448), albeit not necessarily concerning the founder of the estate, as shown above). However, these monuments were, by necessity – excepting those few where a *dromos* was built (Massart 2007: 53) – only constructed *after* the death of the individual, in contrast to the numerous stone monuments erected in the lifetime of the deceased. It is thus important to stress that tumuli should not merely be seen as simple instruments of propaganda, but as the visible remains of complex funerary ritual in which social factors played a role.

The ca. three hundred year hiatus is generally perceived to be perhaps the most problematic aspect of the provincial tumulus phenomenon. It is, however, this very time gap that is crucial for the practice of ‘enter[ing] the past in the service of the present to protect their future’ (Moreland 2001: 41), and finds understanding also in Cohen’s view that ‘[M]ythological distance lends

enchantment to an otherwise murky contemporary view' (Cohen 1985: 99). In this context the cause for the absence is less important than the motivations people had when deciding to exploit it. I think that we can go so far as to ascribe an ancestralising function to the tumuli (cf. Roymans in press). This occurred on two levels: the simplest being the laying to rest of a member of the dynasty in a prominent position within a territory with a view to re-visiting the burial site. This would have occurred at the very least on the formal days in the calendar that required that attention be paid to the deceased, hence laying the foundations of a prominent ancestor cult with all its implications for the family, land, etc. An alternative perspective on this ancestralising is, arguably, that they were "faking it". Whether the community of villa-occupants in the Roman period were echoing their own distant forebears or those of the previous inhabitants of their land is, again arguably, irrelevant. The practice had already been discontinued, so reviving it was a sort of magnified ancestralising practice that had been fast-forwarded by virtue of the near half-millennium hiatus that lay between the villa-landscapes and the Iron Age ones whose antiquity was being "borrowed" by the current inhabitants – the latter not necessarily new, but responding to new circumstances. This coincides with the concepts of atavism and invention of tradition already described.

### *Conclusion*

In summary, then, we are dealing with a community comprising diverse wealthy citizen families, each with political, economic and social aspirations. These aspirations are expressed in the countryside through the building of villas and prominent tumulus burials upon these lands in order to create a sense of ancestry and legitimate claims both to the land and as a dynasty, as well as asserting their participation in a community of similarly oriented rural 'elites'. The burials were indeed an eloquent means by which to do this: visible from a distance, imposing from up close, suitably pious, suitably Roman, yet suitably ancient and implying the presence of a legitimate and impressive family line on this land. On a different level, a key feature is that tumuli are part of a complex funerary ritual, a ritual which 'confirms and strengthens social identity and people's sense of *social* location' (own italics) (Cohen 1985: 50). Toynbee (1971), and even more so some of her successors, were entirely correct in suggesting that the idea of constructing tumuli in the *civitas Tungrorum* ticked all of the boxes. Where they fell short, is in the boxes that they thought required ticking. Their presence does not necessarily have to imply a form of resistance, nor reluctant adoption of Roman ways, but rather reveals a local strategy for negotiating position within new Roman societal norms. Furthermore, not only were the tumuli explained in a new light, but their instrumentality was shown. The above approach reveals the connection between the tumuli and social, economic and political ideals and aspirations, a desire for rootedness, acts of legitimation, creation of new custom and reverence for the dead within a community of peers.

### Acknowledgements

This is a part of Dutch Science Foundation (NWO) funded doctoral research entitled “Privileged burials in villa landscapes. Unity and diversity within a community of peers” within the larger project “Roman villa landscapes in the North: Economy, Culture, Lifestyles” led by Prof. Nico Roymans and Dr. Ton Derks at the VU University Amsterdam. I am grateful to both for their comments on this article, and the anonymous reviewers for theirs. Thanks also to Bert Brouwenstijn who produced figures 1 and 3.

### Bibliography

#### Ancient sources

Caesar (Translated by C. Hammond 1996). *The Gallic War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

#### Modern sources

- Amand, M. 1960. Roman Barrows in Belgium. In: *Analecta Archaeologica. Festschrift Fritz Fremersdorf*. Köln: Verlag der Löwe: 69–81 and plates 18–20.
- Amand, M. 1969. *De Gallo-Romeinse tumuli*. *Archaeologicum Belgii Speculum* 2. Brussel: Nationale Dienst voor Opgravingen.
- Amand, M. 1985. *De Gallo-Romeinse tumuli*. Publicaties van het Provinciaal Gallo-Romeins Museum 31. Tongeren: Provinciaal Gallo-Romeins Museum.
- Amand, M. 1987. La réapparition de la sépulture sous tumulus dans l’empire romain (I). Le bassin de la Mer Noire et les Balkans. *Antiquité Classique* 57: 162–182.
- Amand, M. and Nouwen, R. 1989. *Gallo-Romeinse tumuli in the Civitas Tungrorum*. Publicaties van het Provinciaal Gallo-Romeins Museum 40. Tongeren: Provinciaal Gallo-Romeins Museum.
- Baltzer, M. 1983. Die Alltagsdarstellungen der treverischen Grabdenkmäler. *Trierer Zeitschrift* 46: 7–151.
- Becker, M. 1993. Einführung von neuen Begräbnissitten: neue Bevölkerungsströmung oder eine autochthone, romanisierte Bevölkerung? Problemdarstellung am Beispiel der Tumulussitte. In M. Struck (ed.) *Römerzeitliche Gräber als Quellen zur Religion, Bevölkerungsstruktur und Sozialgeschichte*. Archäologische Schriften des Instituts für Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz 3. Mainz: Institut für Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz: 361–370.
- Bradley, R. 1987. Time Regained: The Creation of Continuity. *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 140: 1–17.
- Bradley, R. 2002. *The past in prehistoric societies*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bradley, R. and Williams, H. 1998 (eds.): *The past in the past : the reuse of ancient monuments*. World Archaeology 30(1). London and New York: Routledge.
- Carroll, M. 2001. *Romans, Celts and Germans; The German Provinces of Rome*. Gloucestershire: Tempus.
- Cohen, A.P. 1985. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. Chichester/London/New York: Ellis Horwood/Tavistock Publications.
- Cubitt, G. 2007. *History and memory*. Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press.
- Cüppers, H. and Neyses, A. 1971. Der römerzeitliche Gutshof mit Grabbezirk und Tempel bei Newel. *Trierer Zeitschrift* 34: 143–225.
- Dunning, G.C. and Jessup, R.J. 1936. Roman Barrows. *Antiquity* 10: 37–53.

- Ebel, W. 1989. *Die römischen Grabhügel des ersten Jahrhunderts im Treverergebiet*. Marburg: Hitzeroth.
- Eckardt, H. 2004. Remembering and Forgetting in the Roman Provinces. In B. Croxford, H. Eckardt, J. Meade and J. Weekes (eds.) *TRAC 2003: Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference*. Oxford: Oxbow Books: 36–50.
- Fechner, K. 1993. Étude pédologique d'une fosse d'extraction adjacente au tumulus romain d'Avernas-le-Bauduin (Hannut). *Bulletin des Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* 64: 259–270.
- Ferdière, A. 2004. Indigènes et “romanisés” à travers la tombe privilégiée en Gaule. *Latomus* 63: 35–57.
- Freigang, Y. 1997. Die Grabmäler der gallo-römischen Kultur im Moselland. Studien zur Selbstdarstellung einer Gesellschaft. *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz*. 44: 277–440.
- Heinen, H. 1985. *Trier und das Trevererland in römischer Zeit*. 2000 Jahre Trier 1. Trier: Spee.
- Hobsbawm, E. 1992. Introduction: Inventing Traditions. The Invention of Tradition. In E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1–14.
- Koethe, H. 1939. Römerzeitliche Grabhügel des Trierer Landes und seiner Nachbargebiete. *Trierer Zeitschrift* 14: 113–153.
- Mariën, M. E. 1980. *Belgica Antiqua. De stempel van Rome*. Antwerpen: Mercatorfonds.
- Massart, C. 1993. Tumulus et occupation d'époque romaine à Avernas-le-Bauduin (Hannut). *Bulletin des Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* 64: 241–257.
- Massart, C. 1994. *Les tumulus gallo-romains conservés en Hesbaye. Étude topographique*. Monographie d'Archéologie nationale 9. Bruxelles: Musées Royaux d'Art et Histoire.
- Massart, C. 2006. Sépultures privilégiées sous grands tumulus. *Dossiers archéologie et sciences des origines* 315: 78–85.
- Massart, C. 2007. Caractérisation des tumulus gallo-romains de Hesbaye (cité des Tongres): structures architecturales, funéraires et rituelles. *Latomus* 66: 41–66.
- Moreland, J. 2001. *Archaeology and text*. London: Duckworth.
- Morris, I. 1992. *Death-ritual and social structure in classical antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nouwen, R. 1997. *Tongeren en het land van de Tungri (31 v.Chr. – 284 n.Chr.)*. Maaslandse Monografieën 59. Leeuwarden/Mechelen: Eisma.
- Pearce, J., Millett, M. and Struck, M. (eds.) 2000. *Burial, Society and Context in the Roman World*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.
- Roymans, N. 1995. The cultural biography of urnfields and the long-term history of a mythical landscape. *Archaeological Dialogues* 1: 2–24.
- Roymans, N. in press. Die Bataver zwischen Germanien und Rom. Zur Entstehung eines Soldatenvolkes.
- Sopp, M. 1999. *Die Wiederaufnahme älterer Bestattungsplätze in den nachfolgenden vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Perioden in Norddeutschland*. Antiquitas 3/Abhandlungen zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte, zur klassischen und provinzial-römischen Archäologie und zur Geschichte des Altertums 39. Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt.
- Steuer, H. 1987. Archäologie und die Erforschung der germanischen Sozialgeschichte des 5. bis 8. Jahrhunderts. In D. Simon (Ed.) *Akten des 26. Deutschen Rechtshistorikertages: Frankfurt am Main, 22. bis 26. September 1986*. Ius commune Sonderhefte, Studien zur Europäischen Rechtsgeschichte 30. Frankfurt: Klostermann: 443–453.
- Toynbee, J. M.C. 1971. *Death and Burial in the Roman World*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Van Doorslaer, A. 1967. *Les Nécropoles d'Époque Romaine en Gaule Septentrionale*. Dissertationes archaeologicae Gandenses 10. Brugge: De Tempel.
- Vanvinckenroye, W. 1987. *Onderzoek van de Gallo-Romeinse tumulus van Gutschoven*. Publicaties van het Provinciaal Gallo-Romeins Museum 35. Tongeren: Provinciaal Gallo-Romeins Museum.

- Wigg, A. 1993a. *Grabhügel des 2. und 3. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. an Mittelrhein, Mosel und Saar*. Trierer Zeitschrift Beiheft 16. Trier: Rheinisches Landesmuseum.
- Wigg, A. 1993b. Barrows in northeastern Gallia Belgica: cultural and social aspects. In M. Struck (ed.) *Römerzeitliche Gräber als Quellen zu Religion, Bevölkerungsstruktur und Sozialgeschichte*. Archäologische Schriften des Instituts für Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz 3. Mainz: Institut für Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz: 371–379.
- Wigg, A. 1998. Römerzeitliche Grabhügel im Trierer Land: Assimilation einer autochthonen Bestattungssitte an eine mittelitalische Grabdenkmalform. In P. Fasold, T. Fischer, H. V. Hesberg and M. Witteyer (eds.) *Bestattungssitte und kulturelle Identität. Grabanlagen und Grabbeigaben der frühen römischen Kaiserzeit in Italien und den Nordwest-Provinzen*. Xantener Berichte 7. Köln: Rheinland-Verlag: 295–305.
- Wightman, E. M. 1985. *Gallia Belgica*. London: B.T. Batsford Ltd.
- Williams, H. (ed.) 2003. *Archaeologies of Remembrance: death and memory in past societies*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Woolf, G. 1997. Beyond Romans and Natives. *World Archaeology* 28: 339–350.
- Woolf, G. 1998. *Becoming Roman. The Origins of Provincial Civilisation in Gaul*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.