TRAC *2000*

Proceedings of the Tenth Annual
Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference
London 2000



Edited by

Gwyn Davies
Andrew Gardner
Kris Lockyear

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THEORETICAL ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY CONFERENCE

held at the
Institute of Archaeology, University College London
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Contents

1 Representing the Romans in the Museum of Scotland 1
David Clarke and Fraser Hunter

2 Representing *Londinium* 12
Francis Grew

3 Writing Colonial Conflict, Acknowledging Colonial Weakness 25
Garrick Fincham

4 Identities in the Late Roman Army: Material and Textual Perspectives 35
Andrew Gardner

5 Medicine, Culture and Military Identity 48
Patricia A. Baker

6 Siege Works, Psychology and Symbolism 69
Gwyn Davies

7 Animal Iconographies: Metaphor, Meaning and Identity 80
Miranda J. Aldhouse Green

8 An Archaeology of Food: A case study from Roman Britain 94
Gillian Hawkes

9 Small Finds: Problems and Possibilities 104
Kelly Spradley

10 'Romanisation' and the Body 112
Gilly Carr

11 Infants, Cemeteries and Communities in the Roman Provinces 125
John Pearce

12 Unpicking a Myth: the infanticide of female and disabled infants in antiquity 143
Eleanor Scott

13 Playing Dead 152
Rebecca Gowland

TRAC *2000*

Gwyn Davies, Andrew Gardner and Kris Lockyear
Institute of Archaeology, University College London

The tenth Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference (TRAC *2000*) was held on the 6th–7th April 2000, at the Institute of Archaeology, UCL, and attracted a diverse range of participants. A welcome addition to the conference was a sizeable contingent of students and colleagues from the Low Countries, who helped to dispel the pall of insularity that has often characterised TRAC. It is to be hoped that this broader European dimension may be sustained in coming years.

In a relatively slim volume of proceedings such as this it is impossible to reproduce a faithfully definitive digest of the arguments advanced in the course of the conference, but we trust that the reader will find the papers presented here to be an interesting and representative sample. It is our hope that this publication will convey some sense of how rewarding it can be to employ theoretically-informed approaches to investigate the rich database that is the Roman world and that by introducing some of this potential via the papers within, we can foster the enthusiasm that will be required to keep TRAC on course into its second decade and beyond.

As the conference was divided into five separate sessions with the addition of an informal evening debate (see below), the same basic structure has been followed for the presentation of the papers. Whereas each of the thematic sessions has been represented in the following pages, the vicissitudes of the 'article formation process' have precluded any idea of ascribing equal prominence to the separate component elements. However, this comparative imbalance between sessions should not be taken to imply any judgement as to the respective merits of the actual themes and their participants.

In the opening session,*Representing the Romans*, the speakers explored the methodology (and the resulting consequences) of portraying the Romans to the wider world. Hunter and Clarke's paper outlines the challenge of designing appropriate gallery displays for the new National Museum of Scotland, where the limitations of strict chronology were abandoned in favour of a broader thematic treatment. Grew's discussion of the various explanations advanced to account for the development of Roman London is similarly sensitive to a shift in perspective, and he argues that the interpretation (and presentation) of the available evidence will always be conditioned by the latent biases of the time.

The importance of recognising the impact of discrepant perspectives in shaping our reading of historical events was a theme that crossed session boundaries as Fincham's paper for *The Roman Army in Context* demonstrates. To illustrate his discussion of the rôle of 'suasion' (the threat of overwhelming military intervention by the imperial power) in colonial negotiations, the author employs the analogy of 19th century European adventurism in Africa, suggesting that the parallelism in treatment can be traced to those universal fears of isolation and vulnerability endured by the agents of colonial power throughout history.

The identification of inherent bias in our literary source material is also relevant to Gardner's contribution in which the problems of establishing identity (whether of

an ethnic, class, gender or occupational nature) within the later Roman army are addressed. In Baker's paper, the question of identity is again raised, this time in relation to the practice of medicine within different units of the Roman army.

An indication of the extent to which Roman army studies have been under-theorised in the past is provided by Davies, whose discussion of the connotative aspects of one particular class of field monument (the siege work) opens the possibility of pursuing explanations for other types of army-built structure that transcend the simply functional.

The general session, unsurprisingly, encompassed a wide range of subjects. Aldhouse Green's paper (which must win the award for the most intriguingly entitled contribution!) presents an important discussion of the nature of human/stag hybrids in Iron Age and Gallo-Roman iconography and posits the continuation of traditional concepts of liminality and states of transition between human and spirit worlds. Hawkes' presents an analysis of the differential foodways (the processes of preparing and serving meals) encountered in Roman Britain. This research also offers the possibility of obtaining an insight into continuity between Iron Age and Roman practices as well as allowing an assessment of the degree to which 'Roman' material culture may have penetrated (and have been assimilated by) the wider community on a very basic level.

A related question concerning the extent to which archaeology can explore the identity and status of the Romano-British population through artefact assemblages, formed the *leitmotif* for the fourth of our structured sessions, *The Identities of Romano-British Artefacts*. Of the two of the contributions reproduced here, Spradley's paper forms a *cri de coeur* on behalf of those beleaguered finds specialists who feel undervalued and marginalized in the new archaeological order. Carr considers the rôle of body decoration and grooming mediated via their manifestation in the artefactual record, to argue that individuals in different areas of south eastern Roman Britain 'made different cultural choices from the same repertoire of material culture to structure their ethnic identities, whether tribal, local or individual'.

The final set of papers focused on *Constructing Childhood in the Roman World* and reconsidered some long-standing truisms regarding the status and treatment of children in the Roman context. Pearce's paper re-examines the evidence for the contention that the increase in the incidence of infant burial in late Roman cemeteries compared to the numbers found in previous centuries represents a conceptual shift. His research would, however, seem to indicate that ascribing this to Christianity is far too simplistic a proposition. Scott examines the problem of the putative deliberate infanticide of unwanted female and disabled offspring, and shows that these ideas are too simplistic, with infanticide being a culturally specific phenomenon. Finally, Gowland's paper draws attention to how the general under-representation of children in Roman cemeteries has resulted in a failure to adopt any systematic investigation of the social identity of deceased infants in comparison to the commonplace examinations of other funerary contexts.

An important element in the programme for TRAC *2000* was an informal debate held at the end of the first day. This was partly intended as a follow-up to a much larger debate at the Roman Archaeology Conference, 1999, held in Durham, in the hope that a less intimidating environment would allow a broader spectrum of people to express their views. The tenth anniversary of TRAC seemed an appropriate point at which to reflect upon the past, present and future of the conference. The entire session, which was opened by Eleanor Scott and Ray Laurence, was recorded. Although it has not proved possible or appropriate to publish the recording, a summary of this

useful discussion is offered here. Several themes were flagged up by Eleanor and Ray. Both stressed the need for TRAC to retain — or perhaps develop — a more radical, cutting edge stance which would continue to challenge and confront the mainstream in Roman archaeology, in the spirit of the first conference which Eleanor organised. Both also drew attention to the dominance of postgraduate student speakers at recent TRACs, and while acknowledging the importance of this as part of the rôle of the conference, argued that it must always remain open to other voices within Roman archaeology. Critical importance was attached to TRAC reaching out, not only to 'mainstream' Romanists but also to other archaeologists of all persuasions.

Indeed, the theme of ghettoisation formed a key part of the subsequent debate, and it provides a useful way of structuring this summary. Ray in particular linked the inability of Roman archaeologists to develop — and communicate — innovative approaches to their material to the air of gloom hanging over the field in terms of academic jobs. While it can be argued that the fault in this lies on both sides — as one speaker pointed out, Romanists are often dismissed by those working in other areas — there is no doubt that the kinds of things talked about at TRAC need to be made relevant and available to the wider discipline of archaeology. A need for contributions to be made to conferences such as TAG was voiced, not simply in the form of 'Roman' sessions, but within cross-disciplinary themes. In a broader sense, given that one of the sessions at TRAC *2000* dealt with *Representing the Romans*, the issue of communicating whatever it is that makes TRAC exciting to us to a wider public was addressed. Various ways of 'reaching out' were raised, including adult education, schools talks and engagement with the media, although it was pointed out that these were things to be tackled by individuals rather than TRAC as a whole.

The focus on problems facing Romanists in the academic job-market prompted an important strand of the debate on the representation and participation of other professionals — field-workers, finds specialists, museums staff and others — at TRAC. Although a decline in the teaching of Roman archaeology in universities would, it was argued by one speaker, have serious consequences for all professional study of the subject, there was clearly agreement that TRAC should be a forum in which professional boundaries could and should be crossed. In spite of some practical obstacles to this — such as conflicts between the availability constraints of different groups and of facilities — it was agreed that future TRAC committees should make every effort to keep a mailing list going that included field units, museums and other professional bodies as well as universities.

The third 'ghettoisation' issue, which emerged from this discussion, was the somewhat parochial nature of most TRACs: they are dominated by British speakers, often discussing Romano-British archaeology, and are always held in British universities. The possibility of the conference moving elsewhere was raised, but again practical problems for British postgraduates and professionals in being able to reach such an event were pointed out. It was resolved to make sure that if money were needed to bring speakers to Britain, then appropriate applications would be made to the Roman Society.

The other major issue at the debate, on which a vote was held, was whether to continue the practice of twinning TRAC with the biennial *Roman Archaeology Conference*. There was some disagreement on whether this arrangement had been wholly successful, although as Eleanor pointed out at the start of the session, a convergence of interests could be detected in the agendas of the two conferences — indicating that TRAC had succeeded in influencing the more 'mainstream' partner. There was some concern, however, that this situation might leave TRAC with nowhere

to go, and might also be related to the increased postgraduate dominance of the latter, making it a kind of 'junior' RAC. Nonetheless, the positive benefits of twinning — promoting cross-fertilization and giving TRAC speakers a wider audience among them — were sufficient to carry the vote in favour of persisting with the current arrangement. In general, the tone of the debate was very positive about TRAC and its value as an open discussion forum. The first decade of the conference must therefore be seen as a success, but if this success is to continue, all of those involved with the conference must push harder on two fronts. First, TRAC should continually stretch the parameters of theoretical Roman archaeology, moving, as Ray discussed in his opening presentation, away from tired debates like 'Romanisation' and exploiting the extremely rich veins of data and of social theory which are available to us. Second, the conference must strive to avoid those ghettos into which it is vulnerable to being led, crossing boundaries of discipline or sub-discipline, profession, and nationality. If these goals are actively and enthusiastically pursued, TRAC can look forward to increasing success in its next ten years.

The conference would not have taken place without the help we received, both financial and practical. We would like to thank the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, and the Complex Societies, and Social and Cultural Dynamics Research Groups (both of the Institute of Archaeology, UCL) for their sponsorship. The organisation of the conference was made possible by the help and good will of the staff of the Institute, including Jo Dullaghan, Susan Brackstone, Barbara Brown, Judy Medrington and Steve Townend; Stuart Laidlaw kindly recorded the debate for us and put on a display of photographs; Ash Rennie helped with the web site and TRAC email; and the registration and coffee was manned by students of the Institute including Andrew Banyasz, Jonjo Corbett, Andrew Mayfield, Catherine Rayne and Helen Woodhouse. We would like to thank in particular Professor John Wilkes who helped with the conference organisation and gave the opening address. A number of people were press-ganged into organising, chairing, or being discussants at the sessions, and we would like to thank them, especially Ray Laurence and Eleanor Scott who agreed to speak at the debate. Lastly, we would like to thank those who agreed to referee the papers for this volume, and David Brown of Oxbow Books for continuing to publish the conference proceedings.

1
Representing the Romans in the Museum of Scotland

David Clarke and Fraser Hunter
National Museums of Scotland

1.1 Introduction

Despite the growing challenges to orthodox interpretations of Roman Britain, there has been surprisingly little commentary on the impact these may have on the presentations of the subject offered to a wider public by museums. Beard and Henderson's study of some of the issues is a notable exception, but their discussion of *displaying Roman Britain in the museum* is concerned only with the example of the Museum of London (Beard & Henderson 1999). Presumably the British Museum's latest gallery on the topic was seen as too traditional to merit serious comment. Beard and Henderson's remarks are fine as far as they go, but London is hardly typical of Roman Britain as a whole, either in terms of its history or the objects that illustrate it. Most museums face an altogether different set of problems in seeking to present Roman Britain. For instance, many of them in the north and west are portraying life in a military zone where the messages are more rooted in the operation and consequences of imperialism than they are in delineating the development of urban life. Nevertheless, the agendas have remained dominated by the perceived separateness and superiority of the Romans, even in Scotland where they were present on only three occasions for a total of some fifty years. Here we would like to present the rationale behind our treatment of the Romans in the context of a major new display of Scotland's past.

In the former National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland on Queen Street, Edinburgh, the Roman collections occupied a separate gallery at the top of the building. Admittedly, this was not the product of conscious intention but an *ad hoc* solution in the face of the flood of spectacular finds from Curle's excavations at Newstead in the first decade of the 20th century (Curle 1911). With the ground floor full of historical material and the first floor packed with prehistoric and early historic objects, the only solution was to clear the comparative displays of material from other countries that occupied the Second Floor. Certainly, this solution enabled the Newstead finds, and indeed Roman material from other sites, to be displayed in considerable quantity.

While all this is just an example of the expedient approaches that every major museum has to adopt in the face of major new acquisitions, it did nevertheless have the important effect of conferring on the Roman collections a sense of otherness. As this arrangement became effectively permanent, and particularly as the main first floor gallery struggled towards achieving a chronological arrangement for its contents, the feeling of otherness increased rather than diminished. Here were Romans represented by antiquities found in Roman forts or as stray finds. Yet Roman objects found on native sites were displayed in the first floor gallery below. So in no meaningful way could these Roman displays be considered as forming an integrated part of Scotland's

past. Only the accident of discovery of the objects in Scotland linked them to that and then not very explicitly. All of this harmonised well, however, with an education system which taught the Romans by emphasising the 'civilising' and pan-European aspects of the Roman Empire rather than their more circumscribed place in Scotland's history.

1.2 The Museum of Scotland

The creation of the Museum of Scotland, a new national museum for the Scottish collections which opened on 1st December 1998, gave us a rare opportunity. It was a blank sheet on which to develop integrated ideas about presenting Scotland's past, without the constraints and historical accidents of pre-existing displays. The conceptual structure developed for the displays in the Museum of Scotland uses four major chronological areas: *Beginnings*, from 3.3 billion years ago to the last ice age; *Early People*, from the first appearance of human groups *c.* 8000 BC until AD 1100; *Scotland in History*, AD 1100 to 1914, embracing the Kingdom of the Scots, Scotland Transformed and Industry and Empire; and finally, *Within Living Memory*, the 20th century. Within these broad chronological groupings, which are arranged vertically through the building with the oldest in the basement and the youngest just below the roof, issues were to be developed thematically and not through a simple refining of the coarse chronological framework.

Clearly, then, integrating the Roman material with the rest of the evidence for Scotland's prehistoric and early historic past was not to be simply a matter of ensuring that it now assumed its correct position in displays offering a visual time-line for the first nine millennia of human occupation of what we now call Scotland. Instead, Roman objects are used throughout an exhibition built around five major conceptual themes (Table 1.1). The first, which provides a general introduction to the displays, deals with *People* and is an unusual combination of figures by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi incorporating prehistoric and early historic jewellery, and images of humans from the first millennium AD, the only time such images are available in the period covered. The second, *A Generous Land*, begins the main exhibition. In twelve themes it develops the material culture evidence for the gathering and processing of resources, essentially looking at how people stayed alive by satisfying the basic needs for food, clothing, shelter and tools. Next comes *Wider Horizons*, exploring both methods of transport and the movement of people, goods and ideas. The fourth conceptual theme, *Them and Us*, looks at issues of power and social organisation. Finally, *In Touch with the Gods* examines issues relating to death, belief and ritual (Table 1.1).

This is the consciously constructed journey for the visitor, although the displays are not so rigid as to require that visitors take the intended route. If they do, the journey takes them from what should be most familiar (and about which we, as archaeologists, can speak with most confidence) to that which is both unfamiliar and challenging, where considerable speculation is a key element in the stories being presented. Within this overall structure, the information is presented in an unvarying visual framework: unvarying, that is, not in the sense of uniformity but in a manner comparable to the style of a newspaper where regular readers know where to look to acquire the information they want. In our case the information provided tells visitors what theme they are in; gives the topic of each case or uncased display with a supporting detailed text referring directly to the objects on display; shows and lists where in Scotland they were found; provides a short description of each object;

Conceptual area	Theme title	Topic
People		
A Generous Land	Fat of the land	Food
	Tilling the soil, tending the beasts	Agriculture
	Fruits of the wild	Hunting and gathering
	Made of bone	Bone working
	Weaving and winding	Textile working
	Skins off their backs	Hide working
	Working wood	Wood working
	Shaping stone	Stone working
	Baking the earth	Clay working
	Melting rocks, forging metal	Metal working
	Broken glass	Glass working
	About the house	Shelter
Wider Horizons	Getting around	Methods of transport
	Moving things, travelling people	Movement of people, goods & ideas
Them and Us	Bloodshed, weapons and heroes	Warfare
	Roman invaders	Imperialism
	Letters of authority	Literacy
	Symbols of power	Display
	Burying treasure, sacrificing wealth	Hoarding
In Touch with the Gods	Dead and sometimes buried	Death
	Glimpses of the sacred	Belief and ritual
	Gods of the frontier, God of the Book	Roman religion and Christianity

Table 1.1: Structure of the *Early People* gallery.

and indicates what date we believe it to be. All text here is intended to be clear and concise with no prior assumption of knowledge on the part of the visitor. But each theme is introduced by a piece of text which is imaginative and provocative. It seeks to make visitors imagine what the realities associated with the theme might be. Here, for example, are the texts associated with the themes dealing with war and imperialism.

First, warfare:

> Bloodshed, weapons and heroes
>
> Some of us liked to fight. It was a high calling to risk life and warriors deserved the respect we gave them and the rewards they took. They were strong and brave. For, when they set out raiding, a few of them together, no-one could tell who of the war band would return from the skirmishes. At first we fought with clubs and with bows and arrows. Later we fought with swords and spears. Our weapons got better, our warriors grew fiercer.

> The army of Romans was uncountable. They moved with the purpose of ants. Their weapons were murderous, their war horses terrifying. But we fought them anyway.

And now, imperialism:

> Roman invaders
>
> They were alien, the Romans. We had seen nothing like them. Three times they came and left again and we didn't know why they came at all. Some tribes hated them and never gave them peace. But other chiefs saw advantage in them and gained their trust. The Romans gave them silver and other marvellous things to amaze the rest of us. And they drank wine, the Roman drink.
>
> After they left the third time, the Romans gave even more to the people they knew. They needed friends then, when they had grown weak and everyone was attacking them. They were desperate.

Throughout the displays, the philosophy is that material culture has primacy. Yet objects have many possible stories to tell, and we can only select one or two of these to emphasise. In a thematic approach, most objects could fit into several themes, and decisions must be made about where they would make the most impact. A good example of this is the Cramond lioness, an object with a high public profile found shortly before the museum opened (Hunter & Collard 1997). Yet we do not attempt a detailed presentation of it. Instead, we display it in the theme dealing with death and focus on two aspects: as a symbol of status conveyed in burial, and as an example of funerary symbolism. The story of its discovery, its relationship to Cramond fort, and the unresolved questions it poses about whether it was used, where it was made and so on, are not covered. To do more for even a small percentage of the 5,500 objects on display would multiply the amount of text confronting the visitor to the extent that it would dominate the objects. This would, to our minds, defeat the purpose of the museum. For those wanting more information, other sources must be provided, whether textual, electronic, or by personal access to the curators.

An equally important general point about the displays is that they do not aspire to be comprehensive. This is the story told from selected aspects of material culture — not the story of Scotland or, in this context, the story of the Romans in Scotland. As a result, certain hallowed display favourites do not star in this presentation — there is no plan of a 'typical fort', nor is there a map or cross-section of the Antonine Wall. We believe such aspects are best dealt with when confronting the evidence in the landscape, or in a book. The Antonine Wall gets only passing mention in the displays, while sites receive consideration only as findspots. For the history of Roman Scotland, coinage is used as the visual key, with coin portraits of the relevant emperors and reverses showing victory propaganda of the various campaigns. Hence the history is related to objects rather than being an abstract text.

Many of the key aspects of our approach to displaying Scotland's prehistory and early history are rooted in the work we did with focus groups reflecting our visitor profile, both actual and desired, and groups of teachers who provided a closer definition of needs in formal education. Rather surprisingly, teachers expressed strong concerns that the Romans, who are undoubtedly perceived as incomers, should be identified by name whereas we cannot provide an equivalent name for the native inhabitants who are seen as ancestral to today's Scots. Presumably it was a similar viewpoint that resulted in the displays at Archaeolink Prehistory Park, Aberdeenshire, having

Glaswegian accents for Celts and Cockney ones for Romans. Here is a sense of otherness but not the one we started with. This sense of otherness, however strongly laced with inappropriate nationalist sentiments, does nevertheless view the Romans as an element in Scotland's past. We have not shied away from reflecting this in our displays.

1.3 Use of the Roman material

The ways in which Roman material is used in the displays can be split conceptually into four.

- As an undifferentiated part of a theme.
- As an exemplar of a general point not restricted to the Roman material.
- As a Roman-specific contrast to the general picture.
- As a broader case study.

To take these in turn, much of the Roman material fits easily into our general themes. For instance, the Roman objects related to hunting and fishing fit with other material on sport hunting; the evidence for textile production or bone working is essentially similar to the general run of things in prehistoric and early historic Scotland.

In other cases, the Roman material serves to exemplify a general point. The Cramond lioness is an example of this, as one of the best indicators of the broader theme of indicating status in burials. Equally, the magnificent selection of blacksmiths' tools from Newstead, probably the finest from the Empire (Curle 1911, pp. 285–6), are essentially the same as blacksmiths' tools since the Iron Age: by their completeness they illustrate a much wider series of points unrelated to their Roman cultural context.

However, there are also occasions where Roman objects act as a contrast to the rest of the Scottish material, and this reinforces one of our wider points: that the Romans are essentially alien to Scottish prehistory. For instance in leather working, the Romans introduced technical innovations (vegetable tanning) and large scale production: there is also the first clear evidence of specialists, seen best in the magnificent chamfrons from Newstead (Curle 1911, pl. XXI). In agriculture, the Romans also provide a contrast in the introduction of previously unknown tool types such as the scythe and the *ascia-rastrum* hoe, reflecting different types of agriculture (the need to gather hay for cavalry horses, and a more intensive horticultural approach). In pottery too, their bulk-produced, wheel-thrown, kiln-fired products are in total contrast to the individual hand-made, bonfire-fired pottery used at all other times. In each case we separate out the Roman material to reinforce its difference. However this is not to create a false dichotomy of 'progress'; we take pains to stress that the requirements of the Romans were very different, and that many of their innovations were simply unnecessary and over-complex for indigenous societies.

It is perhaps in the theme on warfare, *Bloodshed, weapons and heroes*, where the contrast is most marked. Here the display is split into two parts. The first deals with prehistory and early history, and stresses the small-scale nature of warfare, motives concerned primarily with plunder and status, and the idea of the warrior rather than the soldier, with his weapons reflecting his status. This is contrasted with the Romans, introduced by the Croy gravestone of three legionaries as an icon (Keppie & Arnold 1984, no. 90), with an introductory text to reinforce this:

> To native peoples the Roman army was an alien phenomenon in just about every way. It was an organisation of unimagined complexity and scale. Its imperialist motives for being in Scotland were incomprehensible to native people. The technology it used had never been seen before.

These points are developed in the following cases, looking at the organisation, scale and full equipment of the Roman soldiers (a point emphasised visually by putting more objects in the cases than before), along with their unparalleled technical support, notably artillery and a medical service.

The final use of Roman material is in broader case studies integrated into the wider picture. For instance, in the *Moving things, travelling people* theme, there are three cases devoted to the Roman supply system. Along with a similar treatment of the Viking trading network, this makes the general point that there are times when Scotland was connected to international trading networks, as well as looking in some detail at army supply. Equally in dealing with religion, the theme *Gods of the frontier, God of the Book*, looks at Roman religion and Christianity: while a number of points are dealt with, the meta-message here is to contrast our knowledge where written sources are available with the preceding *Glimpses of the sacred* theme which looked at the very fragmentary evidence for understanding prehistoric beliefs. There is a separate theme looking at Roman-native relations, which we shall return to later, while in the theme looking at literacy, *Letters of authority*, Roman material is one of the case studies. In this context we look mainly at literacy as a power tool, turning first to its rôle in propaganda and bureaucracy before looking at everyday literacy, graffiti, and its use in production and trade. Again the main Roman case is deliberately full of objects to make the subliminal message that literacy was important in the Roman world. This is visually contrasted with the much smaller and sparser case on the local take-up of literacy at this time, the evidence for which is minimal and ambiguous. Contrasts are also drawn with the second case study, the Early Historic use of literacy, which is more restricted and socially exclusive.

1.4 Developing themes

In constructing the displays we have been very anxious to portray complex topics and theoretical issues. The uses of literacy, discussed above, are an example. We also look at the topics of hoarding and deliberate deposition which have been to the fore of current concerns, including a specific section on the Newstead pits (*cf.* Clarke 1997; Clarke & Jones 1994); this is important in raising the issue of the source of the exhibits and why they survive, topics rarely touched on in museum displays.

To indicate something of this approach in more detail, we would like to use the *Roman invaders* theme as a case study. This is a key area, as it discusses the Roman/native interface which is crucial to the presentation of the Romans in the display. It sits in the *Them and Us* section, following the display of Roman warfare, and is the only theme devoted entirely to Roman material. The theme starts with a history of Roman Scotland using coinage, as discussed above, and then looks at Roman society and material culture in contrast to local Iron Age societies. Here we display a Samian bowl compared to an Iron Age pot; the massive leg from an equestrian statue (with overtones of the Imperial jackboot); a slave manacle; and sculpture and inscriptions which highlight the alien aspects of Roman culture in its religion, structure, bureaucracy and use of propaganda. The key piece here is the Bridgeness slab (Keppie & Arnold 1984, no. 68), which dominates the area: it is used to epitomise the



Figure 1.1: Part of the *Roman Invaders* theme. © NMS.

difference between Romans and natives. However we stress this is but one side of the picture. A series of cases present Roman artefacts in native contexts (Fig. 1.1). We emphasise that Scotland did not become 'Romanized', but that there were complex relations between the two groups of peoples. First the large quantities of Roman material on sites like Traprain Law are displayed — clear visual indicators of something other than warfare. Aspects of the relationship are then dealt with: the idea of the diplomatic gift, illustrated by the Helmsdale vessel hoard (Spearman 1990); and the adoption of certain exotic habits which fitted into local social ways. Here the adoption of wine-drinking is the main case study, emphasising how compatible this was with local traditions of status through generosity at feasts. Contact with the Romans provided a source of prestige items for use within local displays of status, and this prestige goods idea is continued in a number of cases, showing its extent well beyond the frontier.

The final section considers the very different situation after the final withdrawal from Scotland, when the security of the frontier became an increasingly significant issue. The idea of the buffer zone and frontier politics is introduced, and the Falkirk hoard of almost 2000 *denarii* (Robertson 1982) is presented as a classic 'gift', the Roman equivalent of used notes in a brown paper bag. This is the context for the display of the Traprain Treasure (Curle 1923) — a good example of our earlier point about focussing on only a few issues for particular objects or groups, as we plump entirely for an interpretation of this hoard as a gift or bribe, and do not mention other possibilities such as booty. In that sense the displays are personal: they represent our convictions and interpretations.

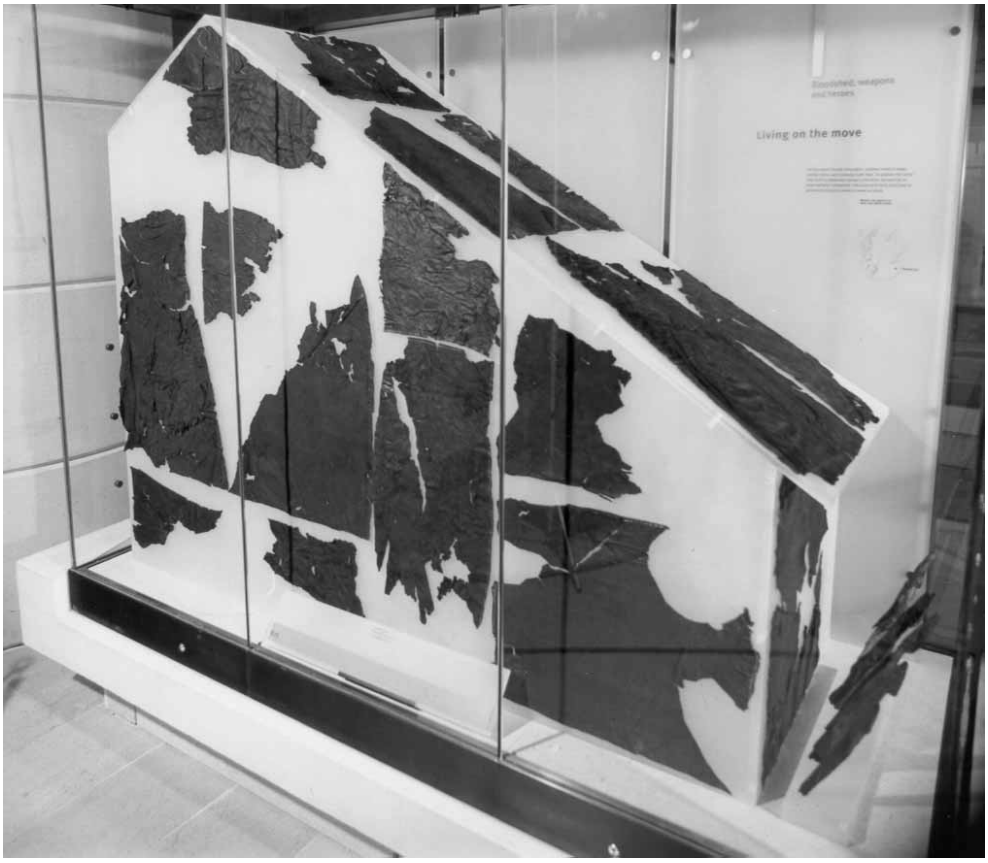


Figure 1.2: Partial reconstruction of a Roman tent. © NMS.

1.5 Practical display

Finally we would like to consider display practicalities: how to make objects understandable. Archaeological artefacts are some of the hardest exhibits for the public to comprehend, as they are often unfamiliar and fragmentary. We have used a number of ways to get round this. Some are developments of existing approaches, while others we feel are innovative.

Gemstones are a particular problem. Their great detail on such a small object makes them all but invisible to the naked eye, especially at a distance in a case. However normal approaches such as enlarged photos or magnifying glasses are, we believe, unsuccessful: in the first instance, they generally fail to highlight the key aspects; in the second, they cannot cater for the variety of people's vision. We have opted for greatly enlarged drawings. These have the dual advantage of rendering them more easily visible, while also allowing subtle emphasis to be placed on particular points of detail which are often hard to interpret otherwise.

With fragmentary material we have reconstructed certain key objects with the intention of developing an interpretative toolkit for the visitor when they approach the other fragmentary objects in the displays. Such an approach is especially important in the *Roman invaders* section, where there can be something of a credibility gap in claiming a miserable sherd of pottery or glass was once a highly desirable item. In



Figure 1.3: Reconstruction of the Newstead *lorica segmentata*. © NMS.

general we have used frosted perspex or resin for reconstructions — a clearly modern material, with no risk of confusion with the original. However with sculpture, and with Roman pottery in the *Roman Invaders* theme, we have gone for closer colour-matching of plaster and similar materials. With sculpture, this is for the dual reason that it looks less discordant and avoids confusion between any reconstruction and the frosted glass bases the stones sit on. With the pottery, we wanted to make it look like the intact Roman pots seen elsewhere, to make a closer conceptual link than would be possible with the visually different perspex reconstructions.

Apart from pottery and glass, there are a range of other reconstructions. A number of pieces of sculpture have been recreated, notably one of the Birrens Victory friezes and the Croy Hill depiction of Jupiter Dolichenus (Keppie & Arnold 1984, nos. 26 & 88). Examination of the Newstead leather by Carol van Driel-Murray allowed us to reconstruct part of the gable and side of a Roman tent (Fig. 1.2), while commissioned research by Mike Bishop and Peter Connolly has led to a new reconstruction of the Newstead *lorica segmentata*, with the missing components modelled in perspex (Fig. 1.3). As we hope the illustrations indicate, we feel this makes fragmentary material visually comprehensible without the need for detailed textual explanation which most people would not read.

The other key problem is unfamiliar material. Here we may take two examples. Bridle bits are essentially incomprehensible to all but the initiated equine-lover in normal displays: we have made horse muzzles in perspex and fitted the bits and headstalls to these. While less of the object is visible, it makes it instantly recognisable as horse harness rather than a bizarre metal contraption sitting unhappily on a glass shelf.



Figure 1.4: Reconstruction of a cavalry horse in parade armour. © NMS.

Our second example is parade harness for the Roman cavalry. There is a fine selection, notably from Newstead, but again it is hard to appreciate its original rôle. Rather than the normal use of an illustration to contextualise the material, we commissioned a full-size reconstruction horse from sculptor Tim Chalk; onto this the original material was mounted, with the straps and missing pieces modelled. Again the reconstruction is clearly modern, in this case in white plaster and resin (Fig. 1.4).

Finally, we are in the process of tackling the difficult problem of inscriptions. While these are vital to understanding Roman material, they are an instant turn-off to many people because they are an abbreviated form of an unfamiliar language. To tackle this, we are focussing on Roman religion, where most of our inscriptions are displayed, and are using a multimedia presentation projected onto a blank altar. This splits an inscription into three essential questions: who was the altar dedicated to; who dedicated it; and why? By taking a real inscription, displaying it line by line and transforming each line from Latin to English we hope to convince people that inscriptions are not as alien and difficult as they appear. The knowledge acquired from this programme is carried through the gallery by presenting our altar transcriptions in a similar way, giving an integrated line-by-line translation rather than a block of incomprehensible Latin text with adjacent translation.

1.6 Conclusions

We hope we have conveyed something of what we have tried to do in the Museum of Scotland: the concepts behind the general displays; the approaches to the Roman material, at times similar, at times very different; and the practicalities of making such material interpretable and interesting. There are, of course, areas we have not tackled which we would have liked to. For example, we had intended to have a section looking at the identity of Roman soldiers, to counter the popular misconception that they all came from Italy and spent their time on the frontier shivering and dreaming of Tuscany. Yet as our display structures evolved, this proved difficult, and there is no detailed treatment of the topic, although the origins of the troops are mentioned. However we hope we have presented a picture of the Romans which is not a conventional one, but shows them as interesting, complex and comprehensible, in some aspects part of our broader picture, in others very different. Have we been successful? We can but ask people to visit the museum and judge for themselves.

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2
Representing *Londinium*: the influence of colonial and post-colonial discourses

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Museum of London

2.1 Introduction

Two soldiers are discussing the campaign (Fig. 2.1). They have recognised the importance of the point just downstream from the tidal head of the Thames where two gravel islands jut into the river from north and south, and have decided to build a bridge and supply base. The base develops into a great port — a jewel in the crown of Roman civilisation, where the products of Mediterranean technology and taste are imported and enjoyed.

This is how Londinium was portrayed in the Tower Hill Pageant — a commercial 'dark ride' and museum that was open between 1991 and 1997 (Grew 1994) — and it reflects what has become, at least since the time of Sir Mortimer Wheeler, the most widely-held interpretation of the Roman city (Wheeler 1930, pp. 21, 32; Perring 1991, pp. 16–9; but *cf.* Marsden 1980, pp. 17–26, who argues for entirely civilian, mercantile, origins). There is, of course, a further element in this interpretation that was barely represented at the Pageant — concentrating as it did on the London Bridge area, and on London's rôle as a port — namely the political. Londinium is often assumed to have been a capital city from an early stage (Wheeler 1930, pp. 29–30; Merrifield 1983, pp. 71–84; for criticism of this view, see Millett 1998).

The popular media often go further. 'The Mayor's ancestor', one newspaper announced, when a stone coffin was found on an archaeological site last year (*London Evening Standard*, 16th March 1999, p. 21). 'Was this Rome's man in London 1,800 years ago?' Just as blatant as the reiteration of the classic triangle of men–wealth–power, is the implication that modern, successful London follows in a direct line from ancient, successful, Roman London. No serious academic or museum curator this century has or would make so crude a connection, but there is a danger that visitors to the Museum of London might be misled into 'reading' the permanent exhibition in this way. The galleries are laid out in roughly chronological order, telling London's story. The Roman gallery is prominent towards the beginning of that sequence. It contains writing, furniture, pictures of historical people — things we feel we can understand. This is in contrast to the preceding Prehistoric gallery, which lays more emphasis on ambiguities in the data and which seeks to humanise the past but perforce has to deal more with generalities (Cotton & Wood 1996). Can we blame the ordinary 'punter' if he or she misses the small print and connects 'them' — the 'Romans' — with 'us' (Fig. 2.2; see further, Beard & Henderson 1999, especially pp. 54–64)? More to the point, can we be sure that such a connection does not lurk, however repressed, in the subconscious of most students of Classical civilisation? As Raphael Samuel put it, with respect to national origin-myths, 'historians, however wedded to empirical



Figure 2.1: Tower Hill Pageant (1991–1997): Roman soldiers planning the foundation of Londinium. Note the cleanliness of the armour and the careful sheathing of the swords — details that affirm the benevolence of Rome and the uncontested nature of the conquest. Unconsciously, perhaps, the model-maker has worked entirely within a Roman discourse, and has perpetuated the image the Romans created of themselves.

enquiry, will take on, without knowing it, the deep structures of mythic thought' (Samuel 1998, p. 14).

So far as representing Londinium goes, an exhibition organised in 1999 by John Clark, the Museum of London's medieval curator, therefore assumes some significance. In *Alfred the Great: London's Forgotten King*, many of the mid-Saxon items found in recent years in the Covent Garden area were displayed. From these it has been argued that 7th and 8th-century London lay principally outside the Roman city walls to the west, and the exhibition concluded with the following epitaph:

> Alfred's legacy also includes ... a vision for the future of London. Alfred's London was not complete when he died in 899 but a new mercantile city grew out of his ideas and plans. The continuous history of the nation's capital city dates from his reign. (Clark 1999, p. 12)

This alternative representation of London — as a city just 1100 years old, with a long 'prehistory' punctuated by a 400-year period during which an earlier city came and went — is one that will require careful consideration when the Museum's permanent galleries are redeveloped.

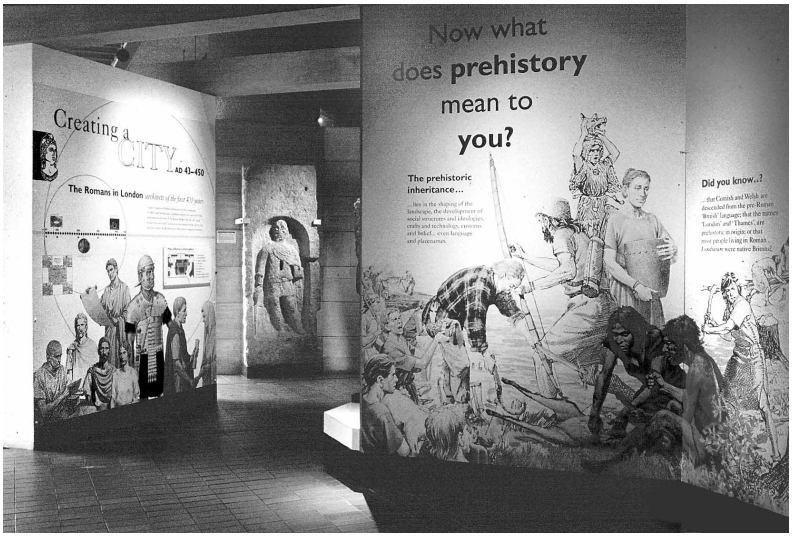


Figure 2.2: Museum of London (1996–2000): entering the Roman gallery from the Prehistoric gallery. The juxtaposition of the word 'Prehistory' with the words 'Creation of a City' not only suggests discontinuity, but could also — in some minds — create a direct link between the Roman period and the present day. Since this paper was given, in April 2000, the Prehistoric display has been dismantled; an entirely new gallery will be opened soon.

2.2 Perceptions of Roman Britain: inductive or historically situated?

Such an interpretation of London is hardly new. It has been current in academic circles as an interpretation of Roman Britain for at least fifteen years. Interestingly, too, it marks something of a reversion to ways of thinking that were common in the first half of the 19th century. In those days the Roman empire was more often a target for criticism than a model for emulation, being regarded as despotic and corrupt (Hingley 2000, pp. 19–22) or simply un-Christian (Samuel 1998, p. 14); it was not until the end of the 19th century that the Romans came to be regarded as fitting 'ancestors' for the English (Hingley 2000, pp. 24–7). With this in mind, it is worth exploring how such interpretations of Londinium come to be framed. Purely inductively, from the evidence to hand? Or, to some extent at least, as part of a more general trend in historical interpretation?

The following might be almost acceptable as a mainstream summary of current views on Roman Britain:

> The provincial conquests of the 1st century ended Britain's isolation, which had been marked in recent centuries. Rapidly, and sometimes brutally, Britain was dragged into the 1st century. Not everything the Romans brought was bad. Medicine and new methods of agriculture were generally good. Political ideas could be used for good or ill. But what is now clear is that in Britain, as in the eastern provinces, this was but one more layer superimposed upon an already vigorous people with a long history.

	Nineteenth century Africa	Roman Britain
Entrepreneurial	Trading posts, chartered companies preceding military and political intervention	Trade or exchange beyond the frontiers, preceding conquest
Macro-economic and political	Capitalist-driven search for new markets; political stalemate in Europe	Expansionist requirements of Roman political élites
Strategic and military	Need to safeguard the route to India; instability of African communities	Need to secure Rome's frontiers; instability of British and Gaulish communities
Personal	Leopold II; Bismarck	Claudius; Caesar

Table 2.1: Summary of the main explanations advanced for the 'Scramble for Africa' in the 1880s and 1890s, and for the conquest of Britain in AD 43.

We might disagree about the importance of Roman agricultural innovation, but otherwise this seems reasonable as an assessment of what happened between AD 43 and 410. In fact, it was written as a summary of current interpretations of Africa during the colonial era; I have substituted '1st century' for '19th century', 'Britain' for 'Africa', 'Romans' for 'Europeans', and so on (Chamberlain 1999, pp. 92–3).[1] Let us consider further, therefore, how Romano-British archaeology may lie within a much broader conceptual framework, or historiographical discourse — which itself lies within a set of yet broader colonial and post-colonial discourses.

For many years now, scholars have consciously pointed to analogies between the Roman empire and modern European empires. Rivet, for instance, argued that 'throughout history contacts between higher and lower civilisations have tended to follow set patterns' so that evidence drawn from modern history 'can point to probabilities, and ... can confirm us in some of the conclusions we may reach by other means' (Rivet 1958, p. 27). In a similar vein, one might mention a conference held in Oxford in 1978, during which a series of papers on British colonial experiences served as a basis for discussion of the invasion of AD 43 and the 'native' response to it (Burnham & Johnson 1979). What has been much less commonly acknowledged, however, is the extent to which scholars have been unconsciously influenced by wider, less explicit, trends in historiography. To stay with Africa, it is remarkable how similar are the reasons — often subtle and highly complex — that have been given by historians for the colonisation of that continent by the European powers in the 1880s and 1890s, to those that have been offered for the annexation of Britain by Rome in the 1st century AD (Table 2.1). Significantly, it seems, these have tended to engage support among practitioners in their respective fields at roughly the same time.

First, there is the view that colonisation is principally the result of entrepreneurs seeking out new territories with resources ripe for exploitation; setting up trading posts there; and getting into difficulties that ultimately require the reluctant inter-

[1] The original text is as follows: 'The colonial conquests of the nineteenth century ended Africa's isolation, which had been marked in recent centuries. Rapidly, and sometimes brutally, Africa was dragged into the twentieth century. Not everything the Europeans brought was bad. Medicine and new methods of agriculture were generally good. Political ideas could be used for good or ill. But what is now clear is that in Africa, as in Asia, this was but one more layer superimposed upon an already vigorous people with a long history' (Chamberlain 1999, pp. 92–3).

vention of their governments. This was indeed the sequence of events in many parts of Africa during the late 19th century, and the majority of those writing at the time — from journalists to academic historians — did not feel it necessary to dig much deeper to find explanations for the transforming acts of colonisation that were in progress around them. Priority was given to the superficial and local over the organic and general, events themselves seeming to be both causes and effects. Partly this was because things were happening at such a break-neck pace that it was difficult to make any sense of them. Returning to office in 1885, when the 'Scramble for Africa' was reaching its most frantic, even the British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, confessed: 'I do not know exactly the cause of this sudden revolution. But there it is.' (quoted in Eldridge 1978, p. 122).

So momentous was the process of European colonisation and so much a part of national consciousnesses, that it is unlikely to be coincidental that many late 19th and early 20th century archaeologists came to understand and explain the Roman Empire — and the invasion of Britain, in particular — in rather similar terms. Wheeler, for example, discussing the possibility of a trading settlement on the site of London before the invasion remarks:

> Latin writers tell us how, in Austria, Gaul and elsewhere, Roman traders preceded the 'flag' and, often at the peril of their lives, opened up commercial relations with the peoples beyond the Roman frontiers.
>
> (Wheeler 1930, p. 17)

Contrasting fundamentally with this form of interpretation, is a second, well-trodden path of thinking that proposes far more structural explanations, stressing macro-economic factors in particular. The publication in 1902 of J. A. Hobson's *Imperialism: a Study* precipitated a radical change in understanding both of late 19th century imperialism generally and of European motives in Africa in particular. Hobson argued that imperialism did not bring any benefits in terms of increased trade but, rather, provided the opportunity for highly profitable investment; it had become far more attractive to invest industrial surpluses overseas in projects such as railways than to reinvest them domestically (Hobson 1902, pp. 56–60, 86). The argument was rapidly adopted and universalised by Marxist thinkers, including Lenin, who came to regard imperialism as the inevitable, final stage of capitalism. Throughout the early and middle years of the 20th century, the theory was continuously refined and reshaped by historians and political philosophers; sometimes receiving a political stress — competition among the Great Powers for possession of Africa being regarded as the resiting of a conflict that in Europe itself had reached stalemate — or, at other times, a socio-economic one, as emphasis was placed on the rôle of financiers and on the hopes of those in the emerging service sector of the economy to buy themselves a status matching that of the landed aristocracy (Cain & Hopkins 1987, pp. 1–6).

Hobson himself saw clear parallels between the British and the Roman empires, arguing that the anticipated returns from taxation and usury was a prime motive for developing new provinces (Hobson 1902, pp. 387–90). During the mid to late 20th century, ancient historians were, on the one hand, circumspect about adopting wholesale modern politico-economic theory of this type — emphasising instead the vastly different nature of ancient and modern economies (*e.g.*, Finley 1973, pp. 21–3) — but, on the other, almost paradoxically enthusiastic about embracing broad socio-economic explanations, both for Roman imperialism generally and for particular manifestations of it. For instance, the predominantly Republican practice of colonisation could be seen as motivated principally by land hunger in the metropolis (Finley 1973, p. 172);

and the mineral wealth and human resources of Britain could be regarded as 'a sort of invisible export balancing the costs of occupation' of that island (Frere 1987, p. 46). In the 1980s and 1990s the argument took a more socio-political twist (somewhat similar to that taken by Cain and Hopkins in the context of Victorian imperialism), when it began to be argued that Roman imperialism was driven primarily by competition among the ruling élites, and that exploitation of new provinces became necessary for guaranteeing political stability at home (*e.g.,* Millett 1990, p. 7).

A third group of explanations for colonisation and imperialism stress military or long-term strategic objectives. This form of analysis — which often sees annexation of new territories as 'inevitable' and poorly thought out, rather than as part of a reasoned foreign policy — has been used at various times as a counter to the 'macro-economic' interpretations. Thus Britain's occupation of Egypt in 1882, or Britain's acquisition of colonies on the east coast of Africa, has sometimes been regarded as part of a grand strategy to safeguard the passage to India (Robinson & Gallagher 1981, pp. 462–8). But while the strategy may have been grand, the tactics were often less so:

> British advances in tropical Africa have all the appearances of *involuntary* responses to emergencies arising from the decline of Turkish authority ... They were largely the work of men striving in more desperate times to keep to the grand conceptions of world policy ... inherited from the mid-Victorian [period]. (Robinson & Gallagher 1981, p. 466, my emphasis)

Roman relations with Gaul and Britain have often been interpreted in a rather similar way. The inexorable, unavoidable nature of Roman expansion generally, and into Gaul in particular, has been stressed by a number of writers (*e.g.,* Drinkwater 1983, pp. 13–14, with regard to 1st century BC Gaul) — perhaps partly because this is how Roman historians often explained it themselves. Polybius saw the acquisition of Spain and north Africa as accidental consequences of the war with Hannibal, and, for rather different reasons, Caesar portrayed not only his expeditions to Britain in 55–54 BC but also the entire conquest of Gaul as essentially defensive measures. They were, he argued, an inevitable consequence of the barbarians' penchant for migration; of their inability to organise themselves peacefully and properly; and of the relentless reinforcement by the Britons of the rebels in Gaul. At the same time, behind explanations of the purely tactical responses, we find that ancient historians occasionally identify and emphasise more wide-ranging, strategic objectives. Some have argued, for instance, that Caesar's prime purpose in Gaul was to secure long-distance trade routes through to Britain, and to safeguard the tin trade in particular (*e.g.,* Hawkes 1977).

In the fourth of these explanation given for colonisation and imperialism, there is the type of analysis that emphasises the rôle of individuals. Sometimes, this can be used to isolate an immediate cause, as opposed to a more fundamental explanation drawn from the list above. For Bismarck or Leopold II of Belgium (whose schemes were to lead to the formation of the Belgian Congo), read Caesar or Claudius. Home politics, not foreign policy, was usually the driving force. Just as it seems that in 1884 Bismarck first came to recognise the significance of colonisation as an election issue (Chamberlain 1999, p. 86) — and in consequence initiated the feverish scramble for colonies that took place in that and the following year — so does it seem that Claudius in AD 43 decided to bolster his weak personal position in domestic politics with military success in a remote land.

By making comparisons of this kind, we can see that Romano-British studies sit within a much broader historiographical framework (Table 2.1). This can enable us

to evaluate alternative interpretations of Roman foreign policy with greater circumspection and, at the same time, to make judicious use of the techniques of source criticism that have been applied by students of more recent history. Nowadays, for example, there is much greater understanding of the distinction between subjective motives and objective causes, as Robinson and Gallagher put it in their suggestively-titled book, *Africa and the Victorians: the Official Mind of Imperialism* (Robinson & Gallagher 1981, pp. xi, 20). Motives are often articulated by particpants at the time something happens (compare the first and fourth groups of causes analysed above), whereas causes may only be detected subsequently by historians (compare the second and third groups). In another respect too, modern analyses of Victorian imperialism hold up a revealing mirror against Romano-British studies. This is in the tendency to emphasise local factors and differing responses, rather than to apply over-arching theories, and it is at least partly a consequence of the contribution made by national historians who, since the Second World War, have written histories of Asia and Africa from a non-western perspective (Eldridge 1978, pp. 138–40). The parallels with the contribution made by archaeology in provinces such as Germany, Gaul or Britain are too obvious to be stated; just as the recognition by modern historians that historical studies are themselves historically and socially situated (*e.g.,* Southgate 1996) has its counterparts in post-modernism, post-structuralism and post-processual archaeology.

How much further has this taken us in understanding Roman Britain? Before proposing an alternative view of Londinium in the 1st and early 2nd centuries, it is worth noting the contribution made by those studies — initially situated within literary criticism and linguistics, rather than 'history' — that have sought to characterise the discourse within which discussion of colonialism has traditionally taken place. These have stressed the extent to which discussion that may appear liberal and spontaneous is in fact tightly constrained by the possibilities of a language that was itself created from the assumptions and stereotypes of a literate, colonising power. Because of their rarity and persuasive force, and because they are perceived as the cornerstones of Western humanist scholarship, Classical authors have been granted a position of almost unchallenged authority. Scholars may have agonised about distortions caused by rhetoric in Tacitus or by self-justification in Caesar, but it is only recently that we have woken up to the fact that when trying to understand the Roman provinces we are generally working within parameters devised by the Romans themselves (Hingley 1994, p. 19; Barrett 1997, p. 1; Webster 1995). Indeed, in one sense, simply to think of 'history' is to position oneself entirely within a Graeco-Roman discourse. The colonised of Roman Britain have left hardly any texts, and certainly none that approximate to 'history'. A particular feature of this discourse is the value placed on urbanism and the rôle of the city. Aristotle had theorised the organisation of the city-state, and both Romans and Greeks had established numerous colonies, so that when Caesar, for instance, came to describe Britain or Gaul it was almost inevitable that he would try to identify *oppida* and to articulate his narrative around them.

In the case of Londinium, our perceptions have been largely conditioned by Tacitus' description of the place at the time of the Boudican revolt:

> ... cognomento quidem coloniae non insigne, sed copia negotiatorum et commeatuum maxime celebre.
>
> ... not indeed distinguished by the name of 'colony' but very famous for (or 'crowded with') numerous merchants and supplies.
>
> (Tacitus, *Annales*, XIV.33)

Haverfield glossed this with the comment:

> We know ... that the Roman provinces contained many such clubs or communities of Roman traders, ruling themselves on a quasi-municipal pattern. We may think that London was, at the outset, one of these communities ...
> (Haverfield 1923, p. 62)

That Londinium was home to thousands of 'Britons' as well as 'Romans' would seem likely simply from the size of the population that was massacred — indeed Tacitus includes an unspecified number of 'our allies' among the victims — but deconstruction should go further. I suggest that the comment concerning the legal status of London should not be read as an objective remark, almost casually made, but as bearing a special significance within the context of Roman imperialist discourse. To Tacitus' readers, a *colonia* would have been synonymous with *Romanitas*, and so the destruction of a chartered town could be easily portrayed in terms of a binary opposition between 'Roman' and 'barbarian'. However, because London was not a *colonia*, the event became less explicable. Attention was drawn, therefore, to the crowds of traders and merchandise, enabling Tacitus to play on the common assumption that 'natives' are always likely to vandalise property and are stereotypically avid for booty (see further, Grew 2000, pp. 161–2). As a consequence, however, there has been more debate among modern scholars about the legal status of Londinium than about almost any other topic. Was the place a *colonia* or a *municipium*? When did it attain a particular status? Does the construction of a forum/basilica denote the grant of a new charter? In the absence of inscriptions, such questions are almost unanswerable — and, in any case, they may miss the point.

2.3 Interpreting early Roman London: models derived from colonial archaeology

This is far from saying that the description of Londinium in *Annales* XIV is entirely fictitious. On the contrary, sufficient amphora, samian and other imported material survives to confirm the presence of abundant *commeatus* — and, presumably, some *negotiatores*. But we should, perhaps, question the judgement made in 1985 that these finds are to be explained principally by the presence of

> ... 'colonists' [who] created a demand for goods to be transported long distances from their home towns so that they could continue to live in the manner to which they were accustomed. (Milne 1985, p. 122)

The origins of such explanations in more general historiographical and colonialist discourses have already been discussed, but it is worth considering how recent colonial archaeology might assist us in reassessing them.

Official documentation on the establishment by Dutch and British trading companies of settlements in the New World, shows that they might be provisioned for a time by ship from the home country — often, mainly with seamen's rations. Very soon however, this method of provisioning was supplemented or replaced by local supplies, so that a hybrid form of diet can be recognised in the archaeological record. There are many reasons for this: local availability of comparable foodstuffs, the difficulty of guaranteeing long-distance supplies, or the need to adapt to different environmental conditions (for arrangements at the Dutch colony founded on Saldanha Bay in 1669, see Schrire 1995, pp. 94–6). However, the change entailed a complex series of negotiations between settlers and the indigenous population, and current students of

colonial practice regularly stress the importance of the 'contact zone' where a process of two-way 'transculturation' can take place (*e.g.,* Pratt 1992, p. 6).

Might this model be helpful in interpreting Londinium? While it is true that pre-Boudican fire levels have yielded a higher proportion of imported pottery — Gaulish pottery, in particular — than those of any other period (Davies *et al.* 1994, p. 167, Fig. 143), there is often a degree of circularity in the inferences from such evidence. If we rely heavily on ceramics to identify and characterise the relevant deposits — hypothesising that pre-Boudican London was mostly confined to the hill east of the Walbrook — we are liable to overlook precisely those 'contact zones' where ceramics may have played a different rôle. Significantly, perhaps, on the western outskirts, where round houses were standing in the 50s, imported pottery comprised a much smaller proportion of the assemblage. Crucial to any such investigation is analysis of the animal bone, but this remains almost entirely unpublished. Tantalisingly, at Leadenhall Court — one of the few published groups — the late Neronian levels have revealed evidence of local animal husbandry in the form of neonatal sheep, calves and pig, and shows a statistical profile only moderately comparable with that regarded as characteristic of the most 'Romanised' early sites (West 1993).

So far as both the artefactual and the animal bone assemblages go, some of the most fascinating developments in London seem to have occurred at the very end of the 1st century or early in the 2nd. Pork was consumed in large quantities for the first time, echoing a pattern that has been observed on legionary sites in Britain (King 1984; West 1993). Glassworks were established within the town; fineware pottery kilns were built alongside to produce unusual forms in eggshell, glossy black or mica-dusted fabrics (Marsh 1978, pp. 195–9; J. Drummond-Murray, *pers. comm.*, for more recent discoveries); and it is possible that a range of rare, almost pure tin, plates and canisters was made locally (Jones 1983, p. 52). While it is plausible that these reveal the presence of military craftsmen — based nearby in the newly-constructed twelve acre fort — parallels from colonial archaeology suggest a slight reframing of the hypothesis.

Work on sites both in North America and South Africa has shown the extent to which utilitarian goods might be used by colonists in an effort to affirm their identity in opposition to the colonised. For employees of the Dutch East India Company at the Cape settlement, a close copy of humble Dutch Red Earthenware was manufactured locally, and seems not only to have been used in this way by Company employees themselves but also to have served in attempts to enculturate other sectors of the population with a more 'European' identity (Jordan 2000a,b). So too at the Massachussetts Bay colony in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, imitation British red earthenware served to create or preserve the image of a colonial élite (Turnbaugh 1996). In some situations — at the Cape, for instance — such developments began almost immediately, but in others they took place several generations after the foundation of the colony — at the time when statuses began to be questioned and identities were under threat of merger. Transferring this analogy to Londinium, should we infer a similar maturing of the settlement fifty years after it had been founded and a similar crystallisation of perceived identities? For whatever reason — and indeed as sometimes happened in the colonies — such developments were both sudden and brief.

In this context, it is worth considering how far the establishment of the fort at precisely this time might have both symbolised and engendered a new interest in the distinctions between 'Roman' and 'non-Roman', between ruling and ruled. The conventional view holds that London's garrison had an administrative or ceremonial

function (*e.g.,* Merrifield 1983, p. 77) — a conclusion that undoubtedly derives from study of military sculpture and epigraphy from Londinium, but one which may also draw unconsciously upon perceptions of the present-day rôle of the armed services in London pageantry. In its own time, the Cripplegate fort, encompassing about twelve acres and surrounded by a high stone wall, will have represented a major physical intrusion into the cityscape. In the cemeteries meanwhile, soldiers were setting up life-sized sculptures of their dead comrades (Bishop 1983), to symbolise in perpetuity their rôle as agents of the Roman government.

Potential enough for creating division — but why overlook the obvious potential of the Roman army to act also as a repressive force in civilian areas no less than on the northern frontier? Interestingly, since the early years of this century, when much of the agenda for Romano-British studies was set (Hingley 1996, pp. 38, 42), it has become customary to regard the defence of the frontiers and the civilisation of lowland Britain as two separate, though complementary, aspects of Romanisation. The possibility of intervention by the army in the 'civilian' areas of Britain after the Boudican revolt has rarely been discussed. To turn again to modern parallels, recent studies have emphasised the extent to which colonial control generally depends on the twin, complementary, methods of physical coercion and intellectual acculturation. Significantly, representatives of once-colonised peoples often feel that western post-colonial deconstruction tends to emphasise the rôle of the latter — which might be regarded as 'civilised' if not entirely acceptable — and to downplay the rôle of the former (*e.g.,* Loomba 1998, pp. 31, 69).

2.4 Conclusion

We have moved some way from our initial consideration of Londinium as represented in the media and museums. How then should we be advising those charged with creating new public displays? Here are a few recommendations:

1. Let Londinium be located both within its regional context and within a broad time frame that encompasses both what happened before and what was to happen later.

2. Let us work from the assumption that Londinium contained a hybrid population; but, at the same time, let us note that the true nature of that population may be concealed from us by the fact that the evidence has generally been interpreted within a discourse formulated by just one of the contributors to the mix. To correct this, we might replace the common assumption that Roman-style artefacts must invariably have been used in 'Roman' ways — or that a particular city, building or individual can be ranked by the degree to which it matches up to a supposed Roman ideal — with a determination to investigate how people used the materials and artefacts available to them in a way that would express their identities and would enable them to survive in the world at that time.

3. Let us recall that archaeology itself both draws on and contributes to a much wider set of discourses within the social sciences. Put simply, archaeological interpretation is all part of the fashion business.

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3
Writing Colonial Conflict, Acknowledging Colonial Weakness

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3.1 Comparative Colonialism

On the 12th of April 1877 a small mission stood in Pretoria, and read a proclamation that served to annex the Transvaal to the British Empire. As Melmoth Osborn read the proclamation, he was so nervous that Rider Haggard, also present, had to take over from him. Osborn's nervousness was well-founded. Despite being the representative of the most powerful nation on earth there were a mere handful of officials and twenty-five mounted Natal police to hold this new territory. There was no pomp and ceremony about the annexation: that was tactfully left for a month until the first British battalion arrived, and the position of the colonial staff became more secure (Pakenham 1992, pp. 40–1). In the absence of an immediate military presence it would seem that even representatives of the most powerful empires must act with caution. In other words, in some circumstances, colonial negotiation may be less one sided than we often imagine.

In the paper that follows I shall use the well-documented phenomenon of European colonialism, especially (though not exclusively) the British experience in South Africa, to consider the way in which our own colonial past has influenced our writing concerning colonial conflict. This will allow a more informed approach to the less well-understood phenomenon of Roman colonisation. It is thus the working assumption in this paper that situations occurring in different times and different places *may* have a family resemblance that allows informative comparison. This is not to deny the importance of issues like human agency, or 'negotiation', or the importance of historically-specific analysis, and studies of this kind do not seek to claim that all colonial situations are identical (Webster 1994, pp. 2–3). The aim is simply to provide an informed context for more detailed historically located study. Neither is it my intention to attempt to offer a 'general theory of colonial conflict'. This clearly runs counter to the deconstruction of Romanisation and other social meta-theories, which has occurred in relation to the Roman Empire in recent years (Mattingly 1997c). The model is a partial one, relevant in some circumstances, some of the time — it is just one tool that may be used to reach an understanding of the experience of the coloniser.

3.2 Defining Colonial Power

Said (1993, p. 8) defines colonialism as the 'implanting of settlements on a distant territory'. To achieve this, a small group of individuals with ties to the metropolitan centre manage to dominate a (usually) much larger 'native population', by virtue of

some form of military superiority. The impact of such military power may well be mediated through trade and/or religion, but it is the ability to coerce which underpins the inequality of colonial negotiations. This is evident throughout the European occupation of Africa (see Pakenham 1992 in general, but also Keegan 1996, pp. 15–37 on the early Dutch and British settlement in South Africa) and in the wider context of European colonialism, for example in the Spanish in Central America (Ferro 1997, p. 34). Thus, taking European colonisation as an example, it can be argued that European ascendancy was ultimately reliant on a military superiority stemming from a level of technological warfare that could not be matched by indigenous populations.

A second common feature of colonial domination is that it is usually only viable when maintained from the outside. If a small force is to dominate a large area or population, it needs to call upon resources from a wider imperial structure, which is effectively the test that Said (1993, p. 8) uses to distinguish 'imperialism' from 'colonialism'. In part, it is the ability of 'the men on the spot' to call upon an empire's greater ability to summon resources and military muscle to a given location that allows the development of imperial technologies of power and control. For example, in the case of the annexation of the Transvaal, even though for a few short weeks the British presence was very small indeed, a military force was on the way — the twenty-five military police had power disproportionate to their strength, backed as they were by the prospect of a larger scale military intervention. For that month, the authority of the mission to Pretoria was based not upon their actual power as present in the Transvaal, but upon the power of the empire which had sent them, a power articulated through the strength of the prevailing colonial discourse, rather than present military strength. It was not, in this month, the power of the mission that created this discourse, but the more distant and abstract resources of the British Empire upon which they could draw in case of trouble. This may function on a more informal level, when settlers and natives have differential access to wider economic structures where technological advantage can be bought. The 14,000 Boers of the Great Trek were able to carve out geographically large territories in relation to their numbers in the face of African opposition, in part because the sale of imported firearms was permitted to the emigrant white population, but not to the Africans undergoing colonisation (Schreuder 1980, p. 47).

The great weakness of colonial control in such a circumstance is that in a large formal empire, where there will be many competing demands for resources, there is a real possibility that the necessary military assets will be stationed elsewhere at the time they are required to suppress a local native revolt or reverse a defeat. In the case of the famous British military disaster at Isandhlwana, Disraeli was forced to 'divert troops urgently needed elsewhere' (Guy 1979, p. 52). The 'man on the spot' is in an ambiguous position in that his presence is an active affirmation of Imperial power, but at the same time he is isolated from that power to a greater or lesser degree. The actions of colonial administrators were essentially underwritten by military 'suasion', albeit that the instruments of this power may have been quite distant (if, for example, there was no local military presence). This situation would necessitate some considerable delay before any transgressions on the part of the subordinate population could be duly punished. A good Roman example is that of the Boudican revolt (see Salway 1981, 113–23 for a brief summary of the conflict and its aftermath, and Webster 1993 for a fuller account), which we will pursue further below. It would have been of little help to the procurator, Decianus Catus, faced by a revolt in East Anglia, to know that there was a legion in North Wales fighting Druids, and this probably explains his early flight to Gaul (Webster 1993, p. 93). Any administrator in a situation of

colonial negotiation must calculate how far the threat of hypothetical retaliation at some unspecified future time by troops stationed elsewhere, will secure compliance with orders given now. If this balance is not struck, and revolt occurs, the issue (from the perspective of the Imperial Administration) rapidly becomes one of how long the besieged colonials can survive until help arrives.

This theme of numerical asymmetry lies at the heart of an important feature in modern portrayals of colonial conflict. The number of colonial troops committed to an engagement is usually small and precisely recorded, but by contrast, the natives are numberless, or recorded as suspiciously large round numbers (making them 'many' rather than 'few'), or simply not quantified. The figures quoted for the action at Isandhlwana have almost 1,800 Europeans (although this figure is broken down in detail), but 'over 20,000' Zulus (Morris 1966, pp. 360 & 387). At Rorkes Drift there were 84 British against 4,000 Zulus (Morris 1966, p. 389). Obviously this is partly because of the better availability of information on European deployments. However, the failure to accurately quantify native insurgents is a common feature (see also Edwards 1973, pp. 73 & 76, on the siege of Lucknow and Ferro 1997, p. 33, on Cortes' campaigns in Mexico as two examples amongst many). The specific circumstances in which such figures are generated matters less than the fact that it is a commonly repeated pattern, and that such figures originally functioned in a context of colonial conflict for consumption by an imperial audience. The casualty figures of the Zulu war were 'experienced' by a British, not a Zulu public, and are a product of imperialism, as much as any other aspect of the colonial experience. However, these figures are then absorbed more or less uncritically into modern accounts.

This has the effect of reducing native insurgents from the status of individuals to simply part of an undifferentiated mass, impossible to define, and thus dangerous when unleashed. The primeval, and animalistic threat of the 'primitive' may be extended from people to environment somewhat in the manner of Marlow's sense of experience in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. On one level the 'darkness' may be read as a metaphor for a remote, primeval evil with the capacity to taint and corrupt (Singh 1988, pp. 271–2), and the 'unspeakable' rites of the region add to the lack of engagement with specifics that would generate a sense of history for the native. In relegating people to the status of an undifferentiated a-historical state, they become one more force of savage nature for the coloniser to contend with. For the coloniser this simultaneously emphasises both the sense of difference with the native, but also that such 'difference' can only be maintained artificially by continued contact with the outside. The 'Primitive' is thus an all-embracing state in which people are almost inanimate, like disease or tropical weather — something to be contended with and, if possible, 'civilised'.

This is a familiar aspect of colonial representations of native peoples, and has been explored in the context of historical archaeology (Miller *et al.* 1989b, p. 22), and more specifically in the 'a-historical' barbarity of Celtic warrior societies (Webster 1996). As Webster points out such constructs are established from two principal discourses, that of the 'timeless primitive' and that of 'barbarism' (Webster 1996, pp. 111–4). These discourses, rooted in a wider eurocentric perspective on the colonial encounter, are widespread in historical analysis, ethnography and archaeology (Webster 1994, pp. 1–2), but as we shall see later, they are also present in the historically located context of classical texts.

The response to this position has largely been to recover the 'lost' history of subordinate peoples, an activity for which archaeology is seen as the principal tool (Deetz 1996, pp. 4–11), acting, roughly speaking, as a corrective to historically informed

accounts which tend to favour the dominated, at the expense of the élite. This has resulted in a growing literature on resistance to domination in many different historical contexts (*e.g.,* Miller *et al.* 1989a; Scott 1985, 1990). The danger, however, is that limits to domination are couched only in terms of resistance, rather than resistance in the context of the greater or lesser weakness of the élite. The limits to domination lie not only in the ability of the subjugated to retain identity in the face of homogenising forces, but also in the inability of the élite to create true hegemony over their subjects (Scott 1990, pp. 77–96).

3.3 Considering the coloniser's perspective

Discrepant perspective, a concept developed by Said in the context of literary theory (Said 1993, pp. 35–50), is useful when deployed in an archaeological context (Mattingly 1997c, pp. 11–15). Simply stated, the concept suggests that different individuals will have differing experiences of life, depending upon their circumstances — their perspective is socially located. Such an approach has, hitherto, been largely deployed in the understanding of subject peoples, either in an attempt to understand broad landscapes (*e.g.,* Alcock 1997; Fincham 1999, 2000; Mattingly 1997a), or particular social aspects of their existence, like religion (Webster 1997). However, all groups in society have their socially located viewpoint, including those who rule. The lived experience of empire as perceived by representatives of the colonising power are as important to the understanding of colonial contact and concomitant issues of colonial negotiation and culture change, as the increasingly complexified study of those under domination.

Recent developments in the understanding of the relationship between ruled and rulers in the Roman Empire have begun to stress the options open to subordinates for pursuing resistance to Roman rule. Non-violent resistance has been fully explored by Scott (1985, 1990), and the concept has had an increasing impact on the archaeology of the Roman empire (see Hingley 1997 for Roman Britain as a case study, but also Alcock 1997, dealing with Greece, Webster 1997 on religion, and Fincham 1999 for the specific case study of Roman Fenland). However, the themes of unnumbered and faceless natives, numerical asymmetry between conquered and conqueror, and the absolute necessity of the colonial authorities to maintain contact with the outside world, suggests that in order to characterise the colonisers' experience of empire we should go beyond consideration of resistance to colonial rule. We need to recognise the active weakness of colonial control, rooted in the essential nature of colonialism, a weakness leading to a fear (which may be more or less hidden) of those who have been colonised.

This model is valid in the context of European empires, but an obvious objection to further extrapolation is that the Roman empire was not one of these. However, I would argue that this discussion has two things to offer to a consideration of the Roman colonial situation. Primarily, as I will illustrate, a post-colonial deconstruction of the portrayal of colonial conflict is vital to disentangling the influence of our own imperial past on the way in which colonial conflict in the Roman empire is conceived and written. However, it is also the case that the model of colonial interaction presented here offers some insight into the reconstruction of the Roman colonial encounter itself, and can be used to inform a limited reconstruction of some aspects of the Roman administrators 'discrepant experience' of empire. This issue is explored

by Majeed (1999) with reference to race, in which he adopts a comparative approach in a contrasting study of the Roman Empire and of the British in India.

3.4 Deconstructing Boudica

The Boudican revolt will act as our test case, both for the post-colonial deconstruction of modern portrayals, but also for a limited reconstruction of an 'official' perspective. The first task here is to consider modern accounts of the revolt, and the principal of these is G. Webster's (1993) *Boudica, the British Revolt Against Rome.* I would argue that the narrative supplied by Webster functions as a colonial document in itself, following the pattern established in other modern portrayals of colonial conflict, a contention supported by Webster's own comparisons with other conflicts, those of the Middle Ages, Ireland, and the Mau-Mau in Kenya. Although Webster catagorises these conflicts (and the Boudican revolt) as 'religious wars' (1993, p. 132), this comparison is established within a colonial context, drawing heavily upon parallels with the attitudes of the colonial English élite, or the 'traditional stiff upper lip of the upper-class Englishman', which are equated directly to the ruling class of ancient Rome (Webster 1993, p. 131).

The events of the revolt are relatively well known, and do not need to be rehearsed in detail. Roman treatment of the Iceni on the death of the client King Prasutagus was excessive, and sparked revolt. Boudica, daughter of Prasutagus, led the revolt, which neighbouring tribes joined. An early target for the rebels was Colchester, and the newly built Temple to the Divine Claudius (Webster 1993, pp. 86–93).

> Here the tough veterans might hope to hold out long enough for help to come. But it was such a small area that the Britons could concentrate all their efforts on to it by throwing continuous missiles and by heaping burning brushwood round the walls. The Romans were trapped, totally unable to keep the natives at a distance, as soon as their own supply of missiles was exhausted. The enclosure was packed with survivors, men, women and children, overcome by the great heat, fire, smoke and rain of spears which never stopped. In two days it was all over. (Webster 1993, pp. 91, 93)

To my mind, this passage reveals all of the key characteristics of a western portrayal of colonial conflict. Not only do we encounter the recurrent theme of 'endless native spears', suggesting an inexhaustible, indefatigable force for destruction, but this is given further emphasis by the isolation of the colonial defenders, cut off from the wider structures of the province and thrown back on their own limited resources.

The ruthless destruction of London, and the helplessness of the Imperial authorities on the spot to contain the situation, backed by insufficient — and precisely numbered at 200 — soldiery, also follows this pattern of portrayal. The sense of helplessness once the natives are in revolt, the fact that the city is lost because it takes too long to summon sufficient troops to defeat the rebels, underline the 'colonial' nature of the conflict. Referring to the treatment that the natives accord to the inhabitants of London, Webster remarks: 'Used though we are to horrors and bestialities in our modern world, one still cannot read his [Tacitus'] words without revulsion' (Webster 1993, p. 94). This revulsion stems from the fact that lurking beneath every situation of colonial dominance is an underlying sense of the fragility of control. The sense of horror and impotence in the face of such violence arises from the sense that those on the spot are probably doomed to a grisly fate, despite being the servants of a power-

ful imperial state, and that once unleashed, the 'barbarous' nature of the native is in direct opposition to 'civilised' values.

The ultimate defeat of the Boudican rebels also gives an important insight into the construction of visions of colonial conflict, and the realities of colonial power. The odds quoted against the Roman army, numbered at thousands, were heavy, as the natives are horde-like, numbered in the tens, or hundreds of thousands, moving, as Webster describes (1993, p. 96), in a 'huge mob' said to 'flow like a great snake'. In the final battle Webster describes the British as being 'in a state of wild disorder', experiencing 'high exultation' (1993, p. 99), a 'solid surging mass' prone to 'rush about, yelling taunts and hurling missiles to little effect' (1993, p. 100). The bestial, primeval nature which made them so terrifying, is now their undoing, faced as they are by a small, but disciplined force of Romans, described as 'still, steel men coldly staring at them [the natives] with unflinching contempt' (1993, p. 100). In the fighting itself, Roman discipline overcomes British wildness, and colonial order is restored.

The themes running through Webster's account of the Boudican revolt are similar to those examined in the context of European colonialism in the first part of this paper. The same may be said for other modern portrayals of Roman colonial conflicts, be they popular accounts of the Boudican revolt (Sealy 1997), the loss of three legions in Germany under Varus (Wells 1972, pp. 238–42), or straightforward narratives of colonial conquest (Peddie 1987). This suggests that, as ever, elements of our own society's colonial past have a tendency to work into the way we think about the Roman empire — a tendency reinforced by traditional modes of classical education which encouraged the drawing of parallels between the British and the Roman empires. This is as true of certain specifics of our portrayal of conflict and military activity as it is of any other area of scholarship that is susceptible to post-colonial deconstruction. The 'barbarous' nature of the insurgents underlines their dangerous nature, cast as they are as almost primeval, and certainly primitive, force. Numerical asymmetry is an important aspect, excusing defeat, but increasing the achievement implicit in final victory. Webster's treatment of the rebels is located firmly within the ethnographic and historical traditions of 'timelessness' and 'barbarity' (Webster 1996, pp. 111–14).

Tacitus' *Annals* are, of course, the principal source for Webster's account, but the construction of a modern account around an ancient one has important consequences. Whilst it ensures that the modern history will carry with it an implicit Romano-centric viewpoint, this may actually generate a relatively good account of the 'discrepant perspective' of the Roman authorities.

3.5 Thinking Like Tacitus

Examination of the influence of our colonial past on the way in which archaeology has been conducted is not, of course, new. There is long-running debate on the links between the British empire, and the British conception of Rome (see Hingley 1994, and Webster & Cooper 1996 in general, but Freeman 1996 and Hingley 1996 in particular). Within this comparative context I would suggest that if colonial power has certain structural similarities wherever it occurs — albeit in historically specific contexts — and if western portrayals of colonial conflict are based upon a partisan understanding of the experience of such events based upon our own colonial past, then an understanding of how such portrayals themselves play a part within wider colonial discourses will lead us towards a discrepant experience of the coloniser.

Thus we see that Tacitus' account of the revolt (*Annals* XIV), as the principal source for Webster's historical narrative, contains many of the same elements, hordes of barbarous and undisciplined natives, vague estimates of enemy strength, figures for the Roman army which are smaller, and have at least the appearance of greater accuracy, isolation of military units and civilians. The two accounts are couched in the mould of a 'colonial' conflict, and function from a Romano-centric perspective. I would argue that in his treatment of the revolt, Tacitus is writing an account of a colonial conflict aimed at a Roman audience, and underlying his account are themes similar to those that we recognise in western portrayals of our own colonial conflicts, founded in the underlying nature of colonial power.

In the aggressive Roman behaviour that lead to the revolt, we may note that representatives of the Roman state had overstepped the point at which threatened retaliation held the natives in check. The vivid picture that Tacitus paints of the build-up to revolt suggests that the colonial 'negotiation' implicit in the first few decades after the conquest had been badly mishandled by the Roman authorities, who had clearly overestimated the degree to which at least some tribes were intimidated by the Roman Army, much of which was now absent from the area of the rebellion. The fall of Colchester illustrates this.

> Then a native horde surrounded them. When all else had been ravaged or burnt, the garrison concentrated itself in the temple. After two days siege, it fell by storm. A Roman division, attempting relief, was stopped by the victorious Britons and routed. (Tacitus *Annals* XIV, trans. Grant 1959, p. 318)

Here, and in his description of the fall of London, Tacitus reveals the weakness of the Roman position in the short term. With the available troops in the wrong place, there is little that can be done, and the price is paid for miscalculation, but it is at points when colonial power breaks down that we see its reality. In areas where there is no large military concentration available colonial negotiation is less one-sided than it might otherwise be, and this knowledge (and perhaps fear) must underpin the consolidation of any successful empire.

Thus, such accounts provide a clue to the 'discrepant perspective' of the Imperial authorities involved in such conflicts, and allow us to investigate their experience of empire. This is a vital element to set beside more 'native friendly' versions, because colonial negotiation can only be understood when we engage with the experience of both conquered and conqueror. Only together do they form something approaching the whole.

3.6 Conclusions

> If the 300,000 Natal Kaffirs chose to follow the amaHlubi lead, the colony might be snuffed out in a twinkling. The fear that gripped Natal was natural and acute, and it accounted for much of what followed. (Morris 1966, p. 222)

In 1873 Langalibalele, chief of the Hlubi, rebelled rather than register his arms with the British, whom he did not trust. He scored an early victory, but the ultimate result was violent and vindictive reprisals carried out by Natal forces, driven by humiliation, fear, and greed. Many Hlubi were killed, and their lands and property seized (Pakenham 1992, p. 48). It is not an apology for colonialism to suggest that to understand this event we need to reconstruct not only the sense of subjugation experienced by Langalibalele's people, but the sense of weakness, perhaps even terror, felt by the

colonists of Natal. I would suggest that an awareness of 'colonial weakness', and the deep-seated unease at the numerical asymmetry with the conquered, provide an important backdrop to understanding the social and political context of colonialism. This is illustrated by Majeed's exploration of the race issue for the British in India, where unease over possible colonial weakness re-enforced the need to demarcate ruler from ruled (Majeed 1999).

In pursuing this issue, both analogy with our own colonial past and consideration of modern representations of Roman conflict assist in the deconstruction and reconstruction of the Roman colonial experience. When looked at from within a deconstructive framework built around the awareness of the a-historical nature of the portrayal of native peoples, accounts of warfare between imperial powers and their opponents can often reveal as much about imperial anxiety, as they do about empire-building. Such accounts articulate an underlying fear and knowledge of a fundamental weakness of colonial power: in essence what is expressed is the fragility of colonial control, and colonial identity.

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4
Identities in the Late Roman Army: Material and Textual Perspectives

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4.1 Introduction

The study of the Roman army, as with any other aspect of the Roman world, is inescapably an exercise in historical archaeology. Whether we accept or reject the detailed use of written sources in our interpretations, many of our concepts and chronologies are clearly structured by such sources at a very fundamental level. Simply to talk of Romans is to use an identity label of a kind unavailable to a Palaeolithic archaeologist. In this paper, I will use the archaeology of the late Roman military to problematise the whole concept of historical archaeology, a term which I use in a fairly loose sense as applying to any society with some kind of written culture (*cf.* Andrén 1998, p. 6; Funari *et al.* 1999b, pp. 1–3), and to give explicit thought to the relationship between written texts and material culture in Roman studies.

My argument that this is an issue requiring urgent attention is partly based on developments over the last 25 years in the philosophy of history (see Munslow 2000, for example). These, as with a number strands of general archaeological theory, have not been given as much attention as they deserve by many historical archaeologists (Johnson 1999b, pp. 25–8; *cf.* Morris 1997, 4–8). However, a new approach is also demanded by the complexities of the archaeological and historical data pertaining to the late Roman military, and their place in society. These require an interpretative framework which is highly sensitive to varying perspectives on social identities. I therefore hope to situate an understanding of particular aspects of the army within two overlapping contexts. One is the diverse spectrum of identity categories negotiated by various social groups in the Roman world. The other is the way in which different manifestations of these processes of negotiation have come to be separated by a disciplinary boundary in modern scholarship. While historical archaeologies have attempted to sit on this boundary, all too often they have merely fallen between theoretical stools.

4.2 Historical archaeologies of the Roman army

I will begin with a brief (and necessarily over-simplified) review of some previous approaches to using written and material sources, with particular reference to the study of the Roman army, but also linked in to wider paradigm shifts in archaeology. I will then offer an alternative framework, and explore this with a range of data. In more traditional forms of Roman archaeology, texts are commonly regarded as a substitute for theory, providing the narrative framework upon which to hang material culture as well as the normative categories with which to describe it (Frere 1988,

p. 36; *cf.* Johnson 1999b, p. 29). The most obvious manifestation of this in Roman army studies is the genre of military history (*e.g.,* Nicasie 1998). This can actually be difficult to separate from more mainstream histories of, for instance, Roman Britain, which often place a heavy emphasis on campaigns (*e.g.,* Frere 1987). Those Roman authors who were themselves interested in military narratives, such as Tacitus and Ammianus, typically form the basis for such accounts, with excavated camps or forts, equipment, and topographically-identified battle-sites employed as illustrative material. Certainly, the written sources are often amplified or even questioned on the basis of more archaeological information, and chronological narratives obviously have their uses. However, the perspectives and selections of so-called facts presented by a small number of ancient authors tend to become all-powerful in dictating the directions such narratives take (*cf.* Hingley 1989, pp. 2–3; Johnson 1999a, p. 154).

This kind of approach clearly has close links with traditional history, but different ways of using texts and material culture do obviously exist. Moving away from event-based narratives and more towards a model or hypothesis-oriented framework (Storey 1999, p. 206), the themes of military organisation and equipment are major areas of research involving documents and archaeological material of various kinds (including representations). Such work can, however, still be text-determined to a considerable degree. Examples include the rôles of inscriptions, a small number of literary sources and excavated fort plans in attempts to establish the structure of the army (*e.g.,* Webster 1985, 96–230), or more specifically, the pervasive influence of late Roman documents, particularly the *Notitia Dignitatum*, on the understanding of a variety of administrative aspects of the later army, again tied in to forts and other sites (*e.g.,* Coello 1996; Southern & Dixon 1996, 39–66). This kind of work is certainly not to be dismissed, and has considerable value. However, the epistemological problems, let alone the ontological ones, of using written and material cultures as evidence in an unstructured way are rarely considered.

More explicit testing of hypotheses generated by written sources, such as technical treatises, can be found in many equipment studies, particularly those involving reconstruction. These tend, however, to address mainly functional questions (*e.g.,* Hyland 1993; Peddie 1994, pp. 92–100; Zienkiewicz 1994, p. 13). In certain senses, some of this work moves in the direction of what can loosely be termed processual historical archaeology, with interests in testing, functionality and the 'systemness' of the army. However, much more developed processually-oriented uses of texts and material culture are evident in other areas of Roman studies, such as *Annales*-influenced landscape archaeology (Johnson 1999b, p. 29; Storey 1999, pp. 206–12). In the context of the military, the notion of testing one source against another all too often fails to expand the range of questions beyond those raised by the texts, or to escape the reductively descriptive and functional approach implicit in the commonly-held idea of a universal 'military science' (*cf.* Haynes 1999a, p. 8).

In contrast, perspectives which take a more social and contextual approach to Roman armies are increasingly common, linking in both to post-processual archaeology and to the New Cultural History (Johnson 1999a, p. 153; Morris 1997, pp. 6–8). In the broader discipline of archaeology, Hodder (1991, pp. 145–6) has referred to written sources as useful for constructing the contexts of ideas and meanings so important to deepening understanding of past human activity, just as Binford before him had advocated employing historical sources in constructing Middle Range Theories (Binford 1983, pp. 25–6). Several recent studies deploy a wide range of social theory to integrate written and material culture in the construction of social histories of Roman armies. Themes investigated in such work include the nature of the com-

munity of soldiers (James 1999), social dynamics within the *auxilia* (Haynes 1999b), and relations between soldiers and others in Egypt (Alston 1995). Issues of social and cultural identity are a prominent element in this kind of historical archaeology, and also feature in my own work on the late Roman military in Britain (Gardner 1999).

4.3 Texts, material culture and structuration

However, while pursuing this research, I have recently come to think that we need to look even more closely and critically at the relationship between texts and material culture, and not simply in terms of their relationship in the present as 'evidence'. Rather, we must attempt to generate complex interpretations of the rôles that written and non-written forms of discourse have played in the lives of past human agents. Obviously, this entails the integration of texts and material culture within a body of theory, rather than the opposition of texts to theory referred to above (Andrén 1998, pp. 3–4; Scott 1993, p. 19). This will not only enhance our understanding of the enormous diversity of experiences of the Roman world, but also speak to the concerns of the wider disciplines of archaeology and history. To achieve this we need to take on board what historians as well as archaeologists have been doing in the last ten years. Obviously there is no more unity in the philosophy of history than in archaeological theory, but the strand I would like to pick up on is post-modern or post-empiricist history (Berkhofer 1995; Jenkins 1991; Munslow 2000, pp. 9–20), following on from the 'linguistic turn' initiated primarily by Hayden White (1973).

This really undermines the whole historical project as traditionally conceived. Simply put, to say that history has taken a linguistic turn is to say that some historians have become more interested in the way historical knowledge and meaning is constituted and reproduced through language than in assembling facts. Indeed, the very nature of facts becomes problematic once the level of interpretation involved in creating history is acknowledged, and the traditionally distanced relationship of subject (historian) and object (past) undermined (Munslow 2000, pp. 11, 97–100, 151–3). This clearly resonates strongly with debates about objectivity and relativism that have taken place in archaeology (*e.g.,* Hodder 1999, pp. 23–4, 153–77; Wylie 1992), and below I will explain how uniting these convergent theoretical streams in history and archaeology actually allows us to resist a complete collapse of subject and object. The key thing to take from post-empiricist history, I think, is the reminder that written texts are in no way unproblematic or untheorised (*cf.* Johnson 1999b, pp. 29–32). Just as we would say for material culture, indeed as items of material culture themselves, texts represent partial perspectives on a world, created by human agents with particular objectives, which, at the same time, are capable of being read in many ways. We are thus forced to engage with multiple interpreted pasts, rather than attempt to represent a single true past (Berkhofer 1995, pp. 39–75).

However, in order to ground our attempts to understand these pasts and bring them within the scope of a present hermeneutic, or interpretative, exercise, we need to link these elements of historical theory with a particular approach to material culture, one which emphasises its meaning content as created in practical action (Hodder 1999, 74–9; Tilley 1999, 262–72). I would argue that historical archaeologies are in a unique position to make the most of this. By treating written texts and material culture as each possessing some of the qualities of the other, we can explore the diversity of meaningful discourses that shaped the Roman world. Writing is clearly a material practice (Johnson 1999b, pp. 31–2; Potter 1999, pp. 20–119), the significance of which

is all too easily lost in modern translation. Equally, the idea that material culture has textual qualities has some advantages, emphasising the importance of the meanings of things: how these fit in to systems of symbols, but may also be highly contextually variable. Like words, material signifiers are intrinsically polysemous — that is, having multiple meanings (Tilley 1991, pp. 16–23, 95–6). This 'textual' approach also has limitations, though, which are critical to the theoretical synthesis proposed here. Objects, including ones with writing on them, are unlike spoken language in their very materiality (Hodder 1995, pp. 201–12; Tilley 1999, pp. 262–72). They are bound up in the embodied, repetitive practices of human agents, which often act to solidify or reify the meanings attached to them.

Giddens' structuration theory (1984) provides a useful way of understanding the nature of such practices, and therefore of underpinning the interpretation of written and non-written material culture as actively involved in the reproduction of the social world. Concerned with the relationship between the rules and resources of social structure, and individuals as knowledgeable actors or agents, structuration theory enables us to treat material culture and written or spoken language as equally important media of interaction between agents. This interaction, embedded in the routine practices of human agents, is critical to the generation and regeneration of social formations, including institutional organisations (Giddens 1984, pp. 5–92). As the various cross-cutting aspects of social identity — ethnicity, age, gender or occupation — are all profoundly implicated in this process, the negotiation of these identities will often involve material culture and writing as forms of meaningful discourse. Thus, structuration allows us to work with both written texts and material culture in a novel way, overcoming the divide between these as forms of evidence. It enables us to exploit the full potential of a historical archaeology concerned with different perspectives on past social identities and institutions, such as those surrounding the military organisation of the Roman state.

4.4 Material perspectives from late Roman Britain

I will now attempt to work through some of these ideas, using a variety of material and textual perspectives on the Roman military in the fourth and early fifth centuries AD. My research has been focused on Britain, and the comparison of a range of sites of different kinds has highlighted various patterns. It has not always proved easy to reconcile the published results from excavations conducted at very different times and in very different circumstances, but in looking at as many kinds of artefactual material as possible, as well as at structural sequences, it is possible to build up a multi-layered interpretation. The artefactual ambiguity of late Roman fort assemblages has always been an archaeological problem, resisting easy categorisation as either military or civilian (Esmonde Cleary 1989, pp. 51–63; James 1984, p. 168). From my comparisons between forts and other sites, this remains essentially true, demonstrating that not only do these categories overlap in terms of specific artefacts, but also as levels of social identification.

Artefacts commonly given particular military significance, such as crossbow brooches and belt-fittings, occur on a range of sites, including towns and villas. It is to be expected that soldiers moved around (*cf.* Bishop 1991; Esmonde Cleary 1989, pp. 54–6), and there is a woeful lack of fort cemetery excavation in Britain to permit associations with individuals rather than places, but it is equally likely that such symbols had wider currency amongst state officials (Reece 1999, pp. 156–7). In other

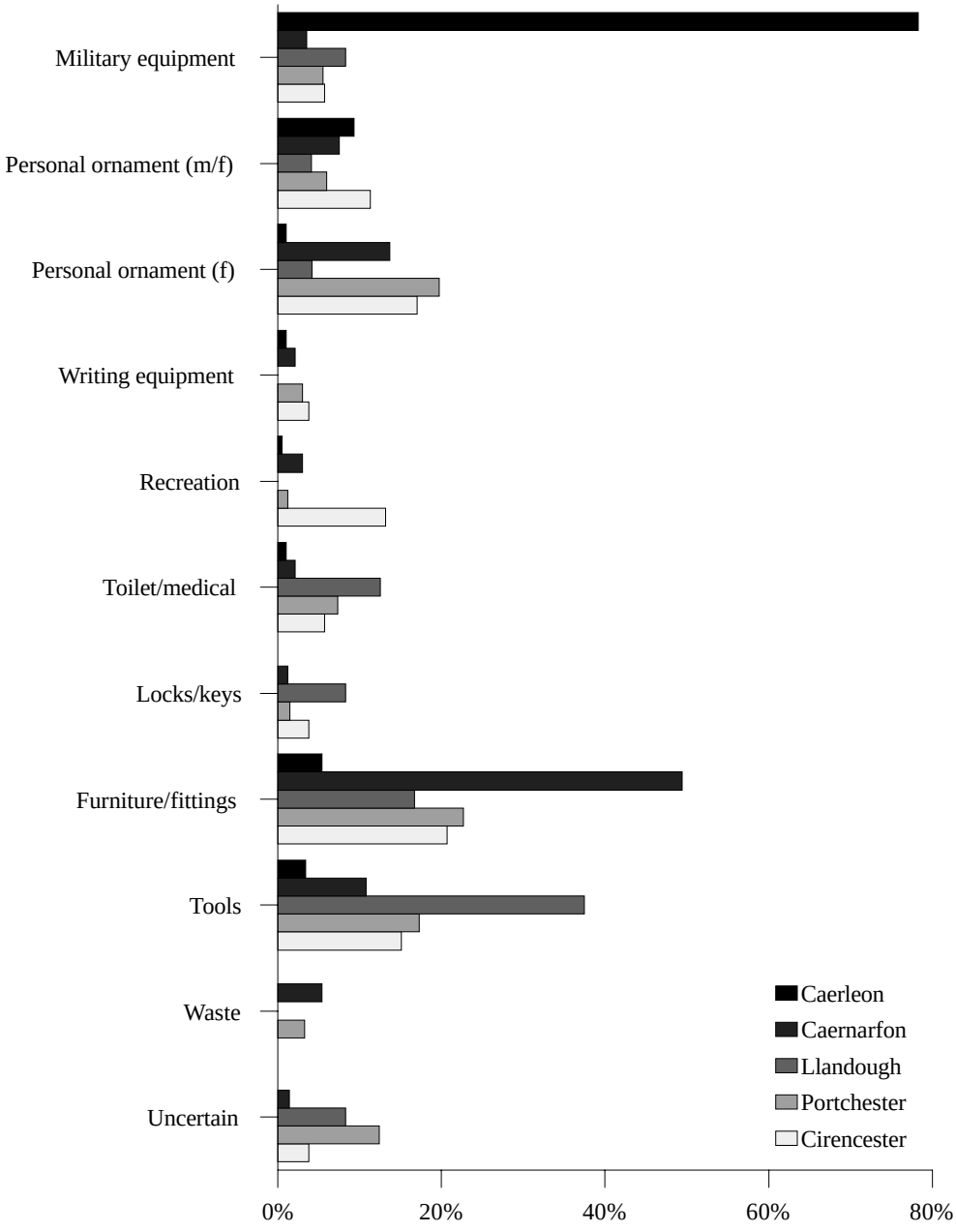


Figure 4.1: Percentages of Roman-period small finds, by category, from selected sites. Categories based on Cool *et al.* (1995, pp. 1626–47); data from Cool *et al.* (1995, pp. 1635–6) and reports in Casey *et al.* (1993); Owen-John (1988); Cunliffe (1975); Rennie (1971).

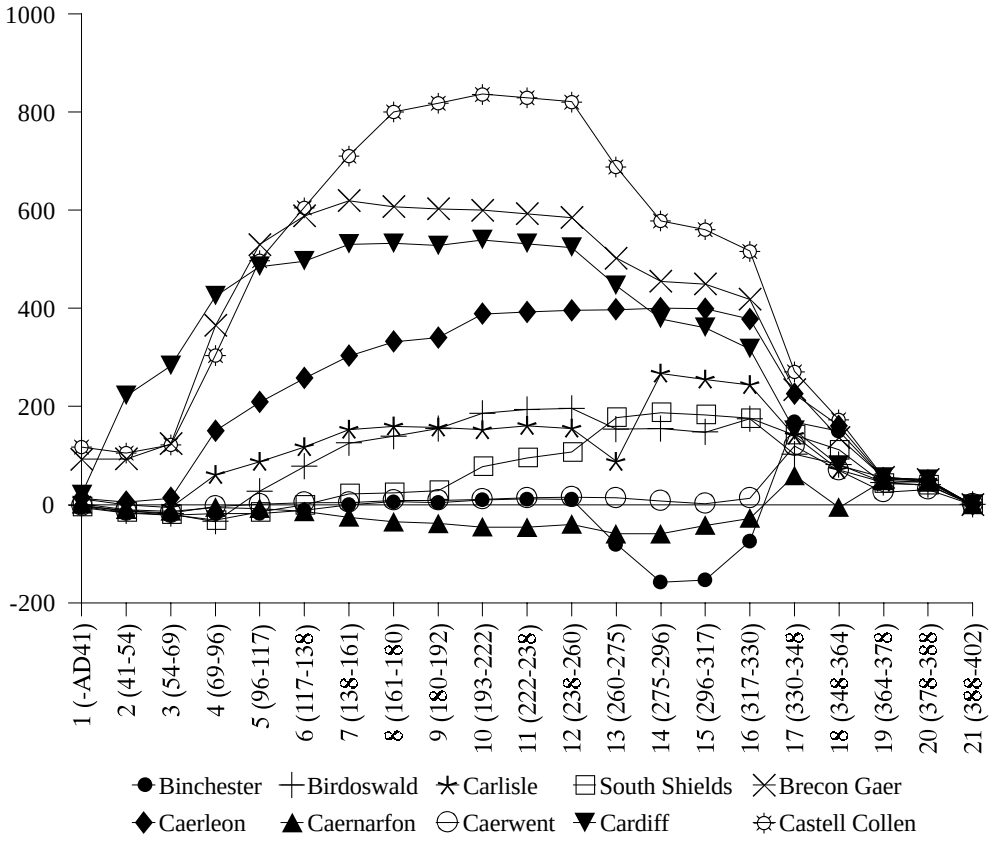


Figure 4.2: Coin-loss patterns for various sites in Wales and the north. Method after Reece (1995); for data see Gardner (1997, forthcoming).

respects, small finds assemblages show considerable variation throughout the Roman period (Fig. 4.1), and while some sites like Caerleon's Prysg field stand out with a great quantity of early military material, there is no reason to suppose that fourth century forts were not inhabited by a similarly mixed community of men and women as any other sizeable settlement (*cf.* van Driel-Murray 1995). In terms of faunal assemblages, a brief look at the dominant species in the fourth century reveals cattle to be in the majority at most sites regardless of type (*e.g.,* O'Connor 1986; Rackham 1995; Scott 1999; Wilson 1986) though pig tends to crop up more often as the second-most abundant on fort sites. Unfortunately many key sites lack well-published assemblages of this kind of material.

There is a considerable range of coinage patterns from sites of different types, and geographical or chronological factors are as likely to affect this as any characteristic kinds of coin-using activity. For instance, the forts of Wales hang together as a group more than those of the north (Fig. 4.2; see also Gardner 1999, pp. 411–12), which have a greater range of foundation dates. Some of the town sites in each area show similar trends to certain forts. It is true that many forts decline in coin-use in the fourth century, but this is far from a unique feature which can be ascribed purely, for instance, to the *annona militaris* (*cf.* Casey 1974, pp. 48–50), and there are some exceptions which reflect a considerable degree of local variation in loss patterns.

Pottery assemblages are considerably more difficult to compare than coinage, but a coarse-grained analysis of different wares present at various sites through their occupation does not suggest any distinctive 'military' patterns in the fourth century.

There are more signs of distinctiveness to be gleaned in some cases from architectural features in forts, though again localised variation becomes more common through the fourth century (even beyond that which is actually a feature of military sites in the Principate). South Shields stands out as a fort with a fourth century plan of a particular type (Fig. 4.3), with a large new courtyard house, barracks and a principia arranged in a cruciform pattern also identified by the excavators at certain contemporary forts in other parts of the Empire (Bidwell & Speak 1994, pp. 40–2). However, at other sites there are significant changes in the use of space, with structures being used for purposes other than that for which they were apparently built, particularly rubbish disposal. The most obvious example is the use of the stores at Birdoswald for just this activity (Wilmott 1997, pp. 203–9). Similar changes can be observed in other kinds of site, such as at the Marlowe Car Park baths in Canterbury (Blockley *et al.* 1995, 171–210), and even in the less well-understood later fourth century phases back at South Shields (Bidwell & Speak 1994, pp. 43–6).

4.5 Literary and documentary perspectives

These material patterns can be interpreted as offering a range of different perspectives on identification, with different kinds of material culture used in different ways at a variety of local and wider scales. All are involved to at least some degree in the creation of meanings in the social world of those using them, simply by virtue of being involved in the practices of daily life. Before discussing these further, comparison can be made with certain other perspectives materialised in a different way — writing. The narrative account of military and state affairs provided by Ammianus Marcellinus has had a profound influence on modern studies of the fourth century, particularly of the army and its campaigns (*e.g.,* Jones 1964, pp. 115–54, 607; Nicasie 1998). As such, and because written discourses are so often treated as unproblematic compared to material ones in the historical archaeology of this period (*cf.* Johnson 1999b, pp. 29–30), the things that Ammianus says have been generalised beyond what I would prefer to take as just another partial perspective.

To keep Ammianus in his place, we need to think about the how and why as well as the what of his writings — addressing issues of form as well as content (Munslow 2000, pp. 100-6). He describes the social formation of the army as he sees it, from the point of view of a relatively high-status individual with literary aspirations (Barnes 1998, pp. 54–66; Wallace-Hadrill 1986, pp. 14–15). Thus, while soldiers and civilians are generally quite clearly separated in the narrative, and Ammianus certainly places military activity at the heart of state interests (as well as making a point of describing himself as 'a former soldier'), ordinary *milites* are often portrayed as brutish, greedy and fickle, and battles are often described in formulaic fashion (*e.g.,* XIV.10, XIX.8, XX.4, XXVI.2, *cf.* XXXI.16; Wallace-Hadrill 1986, pp. 22–35). If we focus on these aspects of this particular written source, we begin to see how one individual could perceive and present the military in a complex and ambiguous way. Such a perception is bound up with Ammianus' other cultural preconceptions (such as those regarding Roman identity), and these are all filtered through the text he has written with certain literary goals (Barnes 1998, pp. 187–98). This is no transparent rendering of

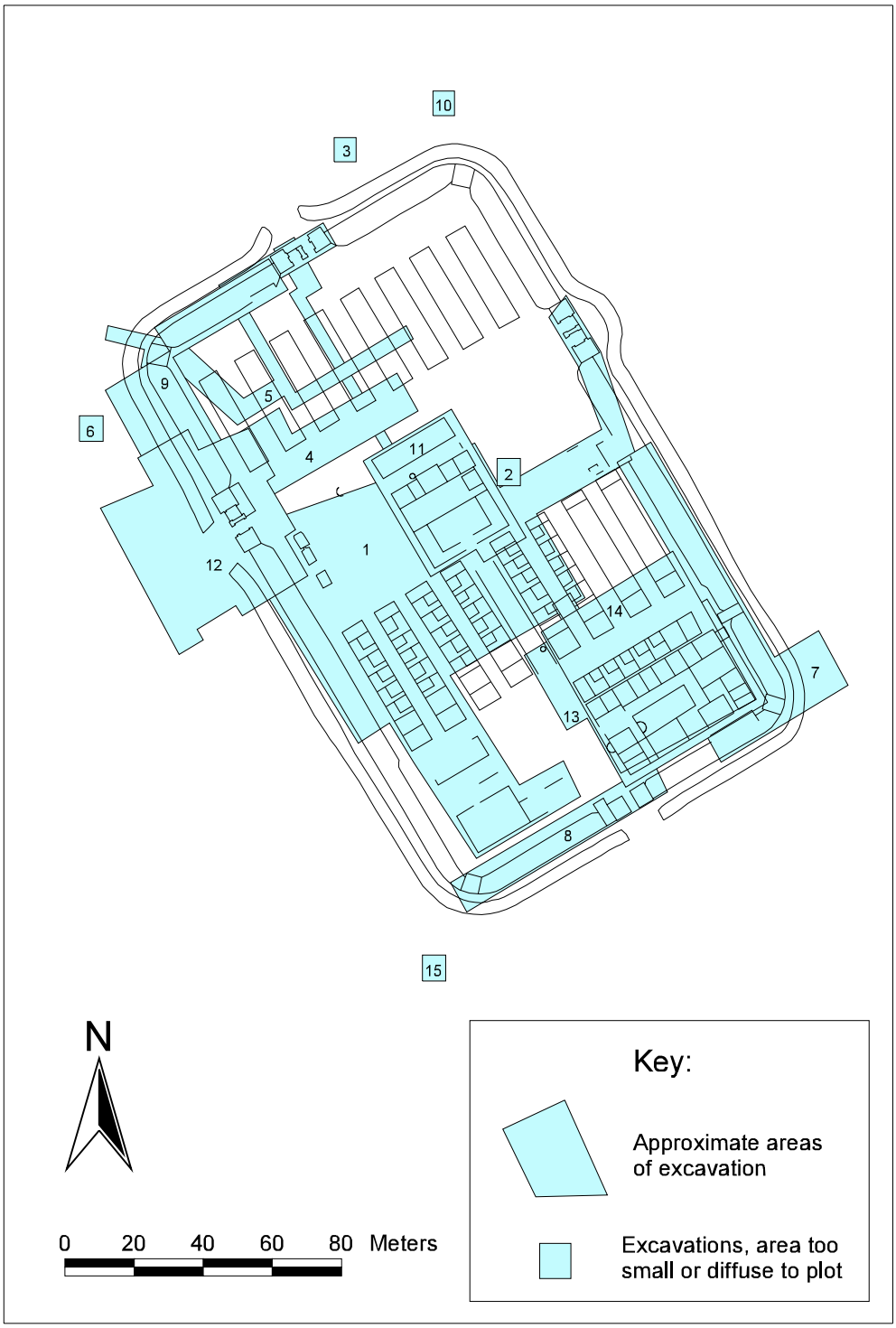


Figure 4.3: Plan of South Shields in the fourth century AD, with excavated areas shaded and numbered in chronological order. Plan after Bidwell & Speak (1994, p. 34).

an objective reality, but an unavoidably subjective arrangement of material of varying degrees of facticity.

Another significant body of (mostly Greek) written material is the so-called Abinnaeus Archive, a collection of letters apparently belonging to an officer at the fort of Dionysias in Egypt in the mid-fourth century (Bell *et al.* 1962). Clearly, this is different in kind to Ammianus' history, reinforcing the obvious point that to lump written sources into one category, contrasted with material culture, is not only unhelpful for the theoretical reasons outlined above, but also because there is great variation between different kinds of written discourse, and the meanings that might be conveyed in them (Johnson 1999b, p. 30). This does not make Abinnaeus' letters any less partial than Ammianus' literature, however, they are simply partial in different ways. Featured in some of the correspondence are complaints from villagers (many actually written by a third party) against misbehaving soldiers, which resonate with some of Ammianus' attitudes, and with some separation of identities (*e.g.,* Texts 18, 28, 48). At the same time, the letters indicate that the soldiers of Dionysias were deeply involved in the lives of those living in the vicinity of the fort in various social and economic interactions, so the separation only works on some levels (*e.g.,* Texts 3, 13, 21, 27, 46). Of course, the most obvious way in which this source might be described as partial is in its geographical particularity — did similar situations occur across the Empire or only in this small part of Egypt? Once again, it is vital to keep this in its place as one of several possible viewpoints on the military, not the whole story.

4.6 Multiple perspectives, multiple identities

In attempting to write a multi-vocal historical archaeology of the late Roman army, this range of viewpoints must be retained. I have tried to demonstrate in the second half of this paper that such a range does exist, and may be related to the different levels of identification negotiated in various ways by members of the military and other social groups in the Roman world. To return to the material I discussed from Britain, the essential ambiguity of artefactual assemblages from many sites clearly suggests that quite a number of the routine activities of people living in or around forts relate to interactions structured not upon the axis of soldiers and civilians, but upon other levels of identification, such as gender or family relations.

Other aspects of the archaeological patterning do, however, relate to military identities, though again of potentially diverse character (varying between ranks and units, and sometimes embracing all officials; Reece 1999, pp. 156–7). The architecture of South Shields, for instance, reflects well the institutional aspects of military life (*cf.* James 1999, 16–21). The regulation of space, and therefore of the routines of individuals moving in that space, is clearly a key part of the reproduction of institutional arrangements through repetitive practices (Giddens 1984, pp. 16–37, 60–73). That this regulation may be changing at a number of sites in the fourth century would imply a lessening of over-arching institutional control, even at a site like South Shields, which hitherto had maintained greater external contacts than inland forts.

The important point to make is that these different levels of identification, which may seem to be pulling in different directions, actually overlap. The military community of the Roman world was not a 'total institution' which cut its members off and turned them into automata (*contra* Pollard 1996; *cf.* Giddens 1984, pp. 145–58). Rather, it was a complex institution which co-existed and interacted with other social groups in the Roman world, through its members who were part of such groups at

the same time as being soldiers. These relationships were dynamic across time and space, and we can certainly see them changing in the fourth century in different parts of Britain. If the perspectives of the written sources from other parts of the Empire that have been discussed above are partial, they are nonetheless consistent with such a degree of complexity and potential ambiguity.

4.7 Conclusions

In conclusion, it must be stressed that Roman military archaeology simply cannot be cut off either from the broad and enormously complex social patterns of the Roman world, or from the theoretical issues that we confront in trying to understand those patterns. The issue that I have focused on in this paper has been the relationship, in the past and in the present, between those forms of material culture that bear writing, and those that do not. This is a central issue, not just to Roman archaeology, as a form of historical archaeology, but also to the disciplines of history and archaeology as a whole. Consequently, this is one area where significant contributions can be made by Romanists to wider debates. It is, moreover, just one of many ways forward that I think we can open up by placing the archaeology of the military in its empirical and theoretical context in the present, and thus firmly in its social context in the past.

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5
Medicine, Culture and Military Identity

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5.1 Introduction

Celsus, a Roman medical writer whose work dates to the reign of Tiberius, stated that medical treatments were not the same in all areas of the empire. According to him the methods of practice were subject to the nature of localities, and he exemplifies this by stating that one method of treatment was used in Rome, another in Egypt and another in Gaul. He felt that if the causes of disease were understood by all cultures to be the same, then the same remedies should be employed by each of the different groups. Despite this, he was aware that even if different people had the same understandings of a specific cause for a medical problem, such as *ophthalmia* (an eye disease), or wounds, different treatments were still employed by these societies (*de Medicina* proem. 30–1). Another example of cultural differentiation in medical practice is provided by Soranus, a second century writer on gynaecology (*Gyn.* 2. 8. 12), who mentions the different ways Germans, Scythians and even some Hellenes treated their newborn infants in comparison to the Romans, by plunging them into cold water to test their strength and ability to survive. The variations of medical practice discussed by both writers did not, however, simply differ between cultural groups within the empire, but within Roman medicine itself.

Although we refer to medicine from the Roman era as Roman medicine, which implies a standardised system, it is actually difficult to give an exact definition to the term Roman medicine because it was not understood or practised in the same manner throughout the empire. There were different philosophical viewpoints on ways to treat the body, no universal means of training or testing doctors (Nutton 1995, pp. 44–6), and in conjunction with this, there were many folk remedies and religious ideas about treatments in existence that contradicted the philosophical writings (*e.g.,* Pliny *NH*), indicating that a doctor's care in the Roman world would differ according to the philosophy that he or she believed and the way in which the individual was taught medicine. For this paper the term Roman medicine will be used to describe medicine in the Roman era that has been discussed in Latin and Greek medical texts. In archaeological terms, Roman medicine is used to define the tools that are similar to those found in Italy. This should not, however, imply that there was a homogenous form of treatment being used in Roman Italy, it is simply a means of comparison between other populations living within the Roman empire. With these variations in mind it is questionable why, so frequently, studies made about medical care in the Roman army describe the organisation of medical care as if it were a uniform system throughout the entire empire (*e.g.,* Callies 1968; Davies 1969, 1972, 1989; Jackson 1988, pp. 133–4; Nutton 1969; Salazar 2000, pp. 74–81; Scarborough 1968; Wilmanns 1995a,b)? Although there are different views about how the system was organised

(*e.g.,* compare Davies 1989 with Wilmanns 1995a,b or Scarborough 1968 with Nutton 1969) it is most frequently referred to as a medical service, implying homogeneity. To move away from this view, the main objective of this paper is to ask whether there is evidence for different attitudes towards Roman medical practice by military units that originated in varying cultural backgrounds.

5.2 A background to understanding the perception of homogeneity in Roman military medicine

Descriptions of the Roman army as a homogenous group are based on ideas about the military that were formed by scholars in the late nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries, and have become deeply ingrained in the way military studies are approached. One manifestation of this is the way that auxiliary groups in the army are argued to have been Romanised in order to have been controlled — for example, it is argued that they had to be homogenised (*e.g.,* Cunliffe 1988, p. 130; Drummond & Nelson 1994, p. 16; Saddington 1997, p. 496; Watson 1969, p. 15). Saddington mentions that from time to time auxiliary soldiers did revolt and argues that training in Roman discipline was a method of maintaining control over these units. However, auxiliary units were permitted (on some occasions) to continue fighting in their own manner and retain their own command systems (Saddington 1997, p. 496). In other instances, however, scholars have argued that there would have been some adoption of Roman lifestyles in the army to fulfil the needs of the state (*e.g.,* Haynes 1999). Thus, the situation was more likely to have involved soldiers adopting certain aspects of Roman military practices, but this does not necessarily imply that soldiers conformed, or rather, adopted all aspects that one would consider Roman. If auxiliary soldiers were able to retain some forms of their cultural identities in military matters, then it is probable that they could have retained other aspects of their society, including their traditional medical practices.

Before continuing though, it must be made clear that there is no intention in this paper to assume that each auxiliary unit consisted of a group of soldiers who were from the same area, as the name of their unit might imply. Although auxiliary units were originally named after the area from where the unit first came, it does not mean that all soldiers in the original unit, or those following, originated from the same region. There were obviously cultural variations within the units themselves. One demonstration of different groups can be seen on inscriptions belonging to the *cohors Tungrorum* stationed at Birrens. The inscriptions identify the unit as the *cohors Tungrorum* and then mentions the place the soldiers were from: Raetia, the Vellavian District and the Condrustrian district (*RIB* 2100, 2107 and 2108). In the context of medicine such cultural differences cannot necessarily be discerned because of poor archaeological recording and the only means to test medical variation is to compare units as a whole based upon their respective title designations.

Cultural variation in Roman military medicine is not an issue that has been raised by medical scholars, and the idea of homogeneity, as mentioned, is intrinsic to the study. Wilmanns, for example, argues that the units in the second and third centuries would have adopted Roman medical practice without question, this being based on evidence that there were more inscriptions from the frontiers mentioning *medici* from these centuries. Moreover, she believes that the Roman army would have been a ready vehicle for the spread of Roman medicine to other groups of people who had contact with the military (Wilmanns 1995b, p. 121). It is possible that ideas about

Roman medical practices could have been transferred through the army to auxiliary units, or groups of indigenous people living in the provinces. Yet, having pointed out that there were philosophical differences in medical teaching (and most likely cultural differences in practice), one would need to question the type of medical knowledge that was being transferred because it is unlikely to have been of standardised form, inciting one to introduce new questions about the soldiers' medical identity.

Medical treatment, like any aspect of a society, is culturally determined. Many anthropological studies have demonstrated that, on a basic level, the culture within which the patient is living influences that patient's experience and understanding of the disease and the healing process (Lupton 1994, p. 13). The awareness of this demands that archaeologists of Roman medicine need to consider the possibility that there might have been a range of different beliefs about health care. When units of a non-Roman background were approached with new understandings of illnesses and treatments provided for soldiers who had an understanding of Roman medicine, a reaction, either for or against its acceptance, would most likely have been raised. A more recent example of peoples' reactions to new medical practice is demonstrated in a study of medical treatment made in Grenada and Trinidad in the 1950s that showed people were more willing to approach a local curer rather than a doctor trained in western medicine, unless the curer realised that western medicine would be more beneficial to the patient's treatment (Landy 1977, pp. 472–3). From this it can be seen that western medicine was basically rejected until there was no other hope for a cure by traditionally accepted means. More specifically, medical practice is bound up in behaviour that is significant to a culture and affects beliefs about how treatments are to be executed. The people of Fatiha in rural Egypt use bodily ornaments as medicine, such as tattooing the forehead veins to relieve the pressure from frequent hauling of loads of goods. They also use ear piercing as a means of curing a fever. The ear piercing has to be done by the females of the society who use pointed earrings as their medical instruments, and the hole they make allows for the fever to escape through the hole in the ear (Morsy 1993, pp. 83–4). More directly related to Roman medicine, a philological study made by Nijhuis discusses the cultural construction of illness in an association with Greek doctors and Roman patients, and argues that there were problems that stemmed from the fact that Roman doctors would have prescribed chants whilst Greek doctors had other ideas about curing (Nijhuis 1995, pp. 57–60). These anthropological examples show that not only are there cultural variations in medical treatment, but there are also different ways of accepting and rejecting foreign medical practices when introduced to different societies.

5.3 Testing medical variation

To test whether it is possible to find evidence of cultural variations in military medical care, an examination was undertaken both of inscriptions mentioning doctors and of the remains of medical tools from auxiliary forts where the unit is known, keeping in mind that the name of the unit does not imply complete 'ethnic' homogeneity of those within it. The evidence for this question was taken from a larger study that is concerned with the comparison of evidence for medical care (artefacts of medical instruments, inscriptions and literature) on the frontiers of the Rhine, Upper and Middle Danube and Britain (Baker forthcoming). The main concern of the study is to see if there was a uniform system of medical care in the Roman army. In the main study it became apparent that there were differences in the quantity of evidence

Province	Legion	Auxiliary	Numerus
Germania Inferior	2 (1)	1 (1)	0
Germania Superior	5 (3)	6 (6)	1 (1)
Raetia	1 (1)	0	0
Noricum	1 (1)	0	0
Pannonia Superior	3 (2)	0	0
Pannonia Inferior	10 (1)	2 (2)	0
Britannia	2 (1)	2 (2)	0

Germania Inferior: *CIL* XII 8011; *CIL* XII 7943; *AE* 1975 634; Germania Superior: *CIL* XIII 6778; *CIL* XIII 6700; *CIL* XIII 11979; *CIL* XIII 7415; *CIL* XIII 11767; *CIL* XIII 6621; *AE* 246b; *CIL* XIII (252) 5208; *CIL* XIII 5623; *CIL* XI 3007; Rowland 1977, p. 175, no. 407; Raetia: *CIL* III 5959; Noricum: *V* 4367; Pannonia Superior: *ILS* 9095; *AE* 1929 215; *CIL* III 4279; Pannonia Inferior: *AE* 1937 180; *AE* 1937 181; Wilmanns 1995b, p. 217, no. 65; *Codex Iustinianus* 10, 53 (52) 1; *CIL* III 14347; *CIL* III 3413; *CIL* III 3583; Wilmanns 1995b, p. 215, no. 63; *CIL* III 14347, 5; *AE* 1923 14; *CIL* III 13386; ILS 9169; Britannia: *CIL* VII p. 48; *AE* 1969/70 291; *RIB* 1028; *CIL* VII 690.

Table 5.1: Total numbers of medical inscriptions per province. Numbers in parentheses relate to the number of fortifications that have produced medical inscriptions.

Province	Legion	Auxiliary	Numerus
Germania Inferior	111 (3)	25 (5)	0
Germania Superior	360 (2)	111 (22)	3 (2)
Raetia	5 (1)	73 (14)	0
Noricum	30 (1)	0	0
Pannonia Superior	202 (3)	0	0
Pannonia Inferior	15 (1)	15 (1)	0
Britannia	54 (3)	67 (9)	0

Table 5.2: Total number of instruments per province. The numbers in parentheses represents the number of fortifications that have produced instruments.

between the frontiers. Germania Superior, Germania Inferior and Pannonia Inferior have the greatest number of artefactual and epigraphic remains; Britannia and Raetia have some evidence; and Pannonia Superior and Noricum have produced very little archaeological evidence for medical care (Tables 5.1–5.2; Baker forthcoming).[1] Some of the discrepancies between areas is clearly due to the amount of excavation that has occurred in these provinces (*e.g.,* Noricum has had very little excavation in comparison to Germania Superior). Yet, this does not account for all of the variations: where the numbers of forts and excavations are fairly consistent, such as in Raetia, Britannia and Germania Inferior, the proportion of forts with evidence for medical care, and the numbers of instruments recovered vary. On a more specific level, some forts in different provinces have had a fairly equal level of excavation but have very different numbers of instruments and inscriptions. As the frequency of excavation does not provide an entire answer for the variations, it was asked if military events might have played a rôle in the way medical treatment was supplied to the troops. For example, Germania Superior, a province with many military engagements, had more evidence for medical care than Raetia, which saw far fewer military events. Yet, Pannonia Inferior also

[1] The artefactual evidence mentioned in Tables 5.1–5.2 is based on 69 fortifications with evidence for medical care and a total of 1,078 medical instruments.

Fort	Medical personnel	Unit type	Unit name	Province of origin
Pannonia Inferior				
Ulcisa Castra	Capsarius *CIL* III 13386	Cohors millaria Sagittariorum	Syrorum	Syria
Dunaújváros	Capsarius *ILS* 9169	Cohors millaria Sagittariorum	Hemesenorum	Syria
Germania Superior				
Niederbieber	Capsarius *CIL* XIII 11979	Numerus	Exploratum Germanicorum	Germania
Niederbieber	Medicus Ordinarius *CIL* XIII 11979	Numerus	Exploratum Germanicorum	Germania
Groß-Krotzenburg	Medicus *CIL* XIII 7415	Cohors quingenaria	Vindelicorum	Noricum
Obernburg	Medicus *CIL* XIII 6621	Cohors quingenaria	Aquitanorum Civium Romanorum	Gaul
Osterburken	Medicus *CIL* XIII 11767	Cohors quingenaria	Aquitanorum	Gaul
Germania Inferior				
Valkenburg	Medicus *AE* 1975, 634	Cohors Equitata quingenaria	Gallorum	Gaul
Britannia				
Housesteads	Medicus *CIL* VII 690	Cohors millaria	Tungrorum	Gaul (Belgica)
Binchester	Medicus Ordinarius *RIB* 1028	Ala	Hispanorum	Spain
unknown				
Unknown	Medicus *CIL* XI 3007	Ala	Indiana Gallorum	Gaul
Unknown	Medicus *CIL* XI 3007	Ala	Astorum	Spain

Table 5.3: List of medical inscriptions from auxiliary forts with named units.

saw military action, but not many fortifications seem to have evidence for medical care, so other reasons have to be deduced to account for the variations. It is possible that the differences were affected by provincial organisation, though there does not seem to be much consistency within most provinces for the arrangement of forts with evidence for medical treatment. These explanations might all have contributed to the differences for medical evidence, but it is important to ask whether cultural variations might provide a further reason.

In order to examine this question, a comparison was made of artefacts and inscriptions from auxiliary forts where the unit's name denotes its original home region. Although the sample number is not large, it does provide a place from which to start such an investigation. In the case of inscriptions (Tables 5.1 & 5.3), it is noticeable

that the representations across types of units (such as cavalry groups and the different varieties of cohorts) varies in such a way to suggest that no particular unit type was receiving more Roman-style health care than another. However, when examining the origin of the units, those from areas of Gaul have more epigraphic evidence for doctors in comparison with those from other areas. In the larger study mentioned above (from where this information is taken), an enquiry was made to see if there were provinces that had more of a tradition for using and making Roman inscriptions of any sort, not only medical. This comparison was undertaken to see if the units with epigraphic remains of a medical nature might have been from an area where there was a tradition for making such inscriptions. Overall some provinces had more inscriptions than others in both civilian and military sites, but as all provinces have them, it is difficult from this comparison alone, to determine whether the medical inscriptions found in forts resulted from the fact that the unit in question came from an area that had more enthusiastically embraced the epigraphic tradition. Overall, however, there did not seem to be a specific difference between the use of inscriptions in any unit and thus it seems that medical inscriptions might be useful for determining which groups had Roman-style medicine.

For units with artefactual evidence of medical tools (Table 5.4), those of Gallic origin (including Belgica) again have the highest representation, followed by units from Hispania. One problem with this part of the study is that many forts had more than one unit stationed at them, so it is often impossible to differentiate which unit the medical instruments belonged to, unlike the inscriptions where the unit name is given. Even when a couple of units are known to have occupied a fort that contains evidence of medical tools, it is interesting to note that the instruments appear where groups from Gaul and Spain are known to have occupied the fort for a time. However, this must be suggested with caution. As for total numbers of instruments found within forts, it is those units associated with Spain that tend to have a higher figure overall, although these numbers are quite small. The difference in instrument numbers suggests a few possibilities: perhaps the representation of finds is biased by limitations of archaeological recording and publication; perhaps it is a demonstration of how instruments tended to be viewed (and therefore retained or discarded according to the belief systems of each unit); it is also possible that these remains demonstrate which of the units adopted the use of more Roman medical tools than others. The last possibility must carry a proviso. Roman medical tools need not imply the practice of Roman-style medicine. Like any form of material culture, such tools might be adopted and transformed in accordance with local understandings. Of course a combination of these possibilities may also be relevant.

The virtual absence of epigraphic and artefactual evidence for those units from other regions, such as Britannia, Dalmatia and Dacia, suggests that not every unit coming into contact with Roman ways of life was automatically adopting the new lifestyle. The argument taken here is that medical treatments more familiar to those in Italy were made available to the different auxiliary units, but were rejected or changed by units with different ideas about health care and treatments of the body. One example of non-medical cultural rejection is described by Hingley who argues for the continued use of roundhouses in Roman Britain by certain populations after Roman-style houses had been introduced (Hingley 1999, pp. 146–7). There is also evidence of auxiliary soldiers buried at Kempten in Bavaria, who combined both German and military identities with their grave goods (Wells 1999, pp. 135–6). These examples are demonstrations of Dietler's statement that cultural interaction is not a simple process of diffusion between an active donor and a passive recipient (Dietler

Fort	Unit Type	Unit Name	Country	Inst.
Germania Inferior				
Vechten	Cohors millaria equitata	Brittonum	Britain	17
	Ala	Thracum	Thrace	
	Cohors quingenaria equitata	Hispanorum	Spain	
Valkenburg	Cohors quingenaria equitata	Gallorum	Gaul	4
	Cohors quingenaria equitata	Thracum	Thrace	
Germania Superior				
Heftrich	Numerus	Catherensium	Noricum	2
Zugmantel	Cohors quingenaria	Treverorum	Gallia Belgica	19
Holzhausen	Cohors quingenaria	Treverorum	Gallia Belgica	2
Saalburg	Cohors quingenaria	Raetorum	Raetia	9
Groß-Krotzenburg	Cohors quingenaria	Vindelicorum	Noricum	1
Wiesbaden	Cohors quingenaria	Dalmatiarum	Dalmatia	4
	Cohors quingenaria	Pannoniorum	Pannonia	
	Cohors quingenaria	Thracum	Thrace	
	Cohors quingenaria	Delmatarum	Dalmatia	
	Cohors quingenaria	Raetorum	Raetia	
Neckarburken	Cohors quingenaria equitata	Aquitanorum	Gaul	1
Bad Wimpfen	Cohors quingenaria	Aquitanorum	Gaul	2
	Cohors quingenaria	Hispanorum	Spain	
	Cohors quingenaria equitata	Germanorum	Germany	
Stockstadt	Cohors quingenaria	Hispanorum	Spain	1
	Cohors quingenaria	Gallorum	Gaul	
	Cohors quingenaria	Gallorum	Gaul	
Langenhain	Cohors quingenaria equitata	Aquitanorum	Gaul	1
Öhringen	Cohors quingenaria	Helvetiorum	Helvatia	1
	Cohors quingenaria	Belgarum	Gallia Belgica	
Mainhardt	Cohors quingenaria equitata	Asturum	Spain	1
Raetia				
Straubing	Cohors quingenaria	Raetorum	Raetia	21
Weißenburg	Ala	Hispanorum	Spain	6
Gnotzheim	Cohors quingenaria	Bracaraugusto-rum	NW Spain	1
	Cohors quingenaria equitata	Thracum	Thrace	
Dambach	Cohors quingenaria equitata	Aquitanorum	Gaul	1
Pannonia Inferior				
Dunaújváros	Ala	Tungrorum	Gallia Belgica	15
	Cohors milliaria sagatorum	Hemesenorum	Syria	

Table 5.4: List of Auxiliary Forts with named units from which medical tools have been recovered.

Table 5.4 continued from previous page ...

Fort	Unit Type	Unit Name	Country	Inst.
Britannia				
South Shields	Cohors quingenaria equitata	Gallorum	Gaul	10
Wallsend	Cohors quingenaria	Nerviorum	Gallia Belgica	3
	Cohors quingenaria equitata	Civium Romanorum Lingonorum	Gaul	
Halton Chesters	Ala	Pannoniorum	Pannonia	2
Chesters	Ala	Asturum	Spain	13
Housesteads	Cohors milliaria	Tungrorum	Gallia Belgica	6
	Numerus	Frisiavonum	Frisia	
	Numerus	Hnaudfridi	Germany	
Birdoswald	Cohors milliaria	Tungrorum	Gallia Belgica	5
	Cohors quingenaria	Dacorum	Dacia	
Corbridge	Cohors milliaria equitata	Vardullorum	Spain	23
Carlisle	Cohors quingenaria	Gallorum	Gaul	3

1995, p. 90). He describes how, in studies of Greek contact with groups in what is now France and Bavaria, Hellenocentric readings of interaction between the different societies have been created because modern European cultures tend to place the Classical world at the zenith of civilisation. Romanocentric readings of the past are also created on account of this belief, predicated upon the assumption that any culture coming into contact with Rome would have wished, after seeing the Roman way of life, to adopt a similar lifestyle because of its supposed superiority. Such may also have pervaded attitudes to Roman medicine, it being assumed that those who did not have Classical medical care would have wanted it, because modern scholars have regarded such practices as superior to the less understood and studied provincial medicine. This underlying assumption is demonstrated in arguments about Romanisation, as is the case with Wilmanns, who states without support that Roman-style medicine would have been openly adopted in the army by the second century (Wilmanns 1995b, p. 121). On the other hand, Künzl does discuss evidence for native and Roman interaction in the field of pharmacology at least by showing that Romans adopted some 'Celtic' medicines from plants, these plants being described by their indigenous names not a Greek or Latin one (Künzl 1991, p. 189).

Although Künzl may suggest such possibilities for interaction, the army is still seen by him as a homogeneous group, employing similar medical practices. Moreover, the underlying supposition as to the superiority of Roman medicine is reinforced by a lack of study into provincial medical practices, although, once again Künzl makes some progress in this regard, albeit if this is almost always viewed in the context of Greek influence on 'Celtic' and Germanic medicine before any later Roman influence (Künzl 1991, p. 185). It is possible, as demonstrated by the lack of Roman style medical instruments and inscriptions from some military contexts, that certain auxiliary units may have rejected Roman medical practice; or if tools were found, adapted them to their own understanding of how to use them.

5.4 What is meant by the term 'instrument'?

The instruments discussed in this study are similar to those found in Italy, especially at Pompeii (Bliquez 1994b). They may be representative of the medical treatments used by Roman doctors in Italy, and can be employed as a means of determining the spread of some aspects of Roman medicine, with the stipulation that the tools might have been borrowed, but used in a different manner. It must also be mentioned that the instruments are most likely not the only tools to have been applied in medical practice. The ones that we are aware of are the ones that scholars have identified by comparisons with the medical writings of Celsus, Galen, Paul of Aegina and Soranus (*e.g.,* Bliquez 1984, 1994a,b; Braadbaart 1994; Jackson 1990, 1992, 1994, 1995; Künzl 1983; Milne 1907). Not all of the instruments mentioned in the ancient sources have been identified or found in the archaeological record. The identified medical instruments have been divided into three groups by modern scholars (*e.g.,* Riha 1986) in an attempt to define the instruments by function. They are categorised as surgical, surgical/toilet and toilet instruments. Since these are modern interpretations, an indication of how the Romans and others would have perceived them cannot be established quite so definitively, and they might not have placed them in such specific groups. Deetz has argued that 'formal artefact typologies are arrived at, by necessity, independently of what the makers of the objects perceived as different types, ... such classifications are not only sterile exercises but potentially misleading' (Deetz 1977, p. 13). Moreover, Miller maintains that archaeologists try to make the artefacts fit very concrete forms, when it is likely that they have a multiplicity of meanings (Miller 1994, p. 406). One example of how a misinterpretation can come about is apparent in the identification of some scalpels found in a structure identified as a *fabrica* on the Bonner Berg near Bonn (van Driel-Murray & Gechter 1984, p. 62). This structure has much evidence of leather working, and it is quite possible that the scalpels found within had been used to work the material. Thus the modern identification of these as surgical tools need not exhaust the range of functions that they may have performed. There is also the likelihood that such artefacts could have changed their meaning and function throughout their life-span.

Another problem with the categories is that the instruments are taken out of their archaeological context and published in separate classes, rarely mentioning other objects found with them, artefacts that may shed greater light on our understanding of medical practice. The omission of such information leaves one with less of an understanding of original material associations found with recognised medical tools. The associated materials might have been used with, or as medical tools, and might have been considered a necessary part of the rituals of medical treatment. The term ritual is used here in accordance with Victor Turner's interpretation, which is described as a process of mediation between different states of being (Turner 1974). For medicine, a ritual is simply an act of healing between the states of health and illness, and any act, either what we would consider rational medical treatment, or religious or magical treatment, is a ritual. It is only the so-called rational medicine that tends to be the focus of archaeological studies of Roman medicine, and when it comes to the identification of tools this only tells us some of what people believed and practised. If we look at Pliny's *Natural History*, for example, other means of medical knowledge are demonstrated that we would consider irrational. In support of irrational aspects in Roman medicine, archaeological evidence of sanctuaries, amulets and altars to medical gods indicate that it was either used in conjunction with rational aspects, or that rational medicine was not always trusted or even practised. Thus, certain objects

found in association with the recognised medical tools might have served a function in the ritual of medical practice that has yet to be understood.

Objects found in burials with medical tools might begin to shed some light on the full range of medical beliefs. A tomb from Stanway, Essex (Jackson 1997, p. 1471), has identifiable surgical instruments along with pottery, a gaming board with gaming pieces and iron and copper-alloy rods, which might have been used for divining. The instruments were found on the game board, in close proximity to the rods; perhaps these two objects might have had an important 'ritual' aspect to the medical treatment offered by the doctor. Künzl's study of medical instruments found in tombs mentions other finds buried with medical tools, but he does not consider their possible functions in the ritual of medical practice (Künzl 1983). Some of these finds are rather unusual, such as three Neolithic stone axes (Künzl 1983, p. 57), a cuttlefish bone (Künzl 1983, p. 59) and an iron bell (Künzl 1983, p. 79). It can be speculated that in certain areas, these items might have been used as charms or as tools that were integral to medical treatment. Thus, whilst the medical texts give one perspective on medical treatment, the material culture can be used to establish culturally determined behaviour and to ask what other practices people may have been expressing through their deposition of objects.

5.5 Deposition of the finds

It is argued here that the deposition of instruments can be used as a means of determining culturally-specific attitudes between units in the Roman army towards medicine. Deposition can include casual dumping and 'more directed, intentionally structured incorporations that are consciously bound up in specific symbolic values' (Whittle *et al.* 1999, p. 355). Rubbish is not a universal category as indicated by Moore's study of the Marawket, an east African tribe (Moore 1982). Here, it is demonstrated how items are discarded according to their gender association, so that the deposition is a reproduction of the symbolic categories that constitute this particular culture. Moore's study shows that every culture perceives refuse in a different manner, and that objects can carry complex symbolic associations that condition how they are discarded.

Studies of deposition in relation to the Roman army rarely consider complex questions about how (and more importantly) why, objects are deposited in specific places. In general deposition tends to be understood in terms of recycling, refuse disposal and deliberate clearance (Bishop & Coulston 1993, p. 34). According to Bishop and Coulston there are not as many metal finds as one might expect from Roman military sites because metal objects were frequently being recycled. Their argument is convincing in some degree, but not all metal objects were recycled, and some objects are found in some very strange deposits indeed. It has been argued that a box of equipment from Corbridge, buried in the floor of the building identified as the *fabrica*, or store building (Bishop & Dore 1988, p. 128) was buried for recycling (Bishop & Coulston 1993, p. 35). However, it is questionable why something meant for recycling was carefully packed in a chest with the armour wrapped in cloth and placed under a floor. Whilst Bishop and Coulston suggest that the hoard was awaiting repair (1993, p. 37), one must question why it was left there for centuries. Other possible reasons for this deposition are equally plausible, including the suggestion that this may have been some form of votive deposit.

Another argument is that objects were buried on account of a deliberate clearance. Again, this line of reasoning is often taken as 'fact' without discussion of other suggestions. In the case of the unusual deposits within the Newstead pits, argued by Bishop and Coulston to be related to clearance (1993, p. 34), it is possible to see this material as being deliberately and ritually deposited (Clarke & Jones 1994; Ross 1968, pp. 268–70). In some instances human skeletons were buried in the pits, suggesting that the action of burial was more than simple clearance, perhaps comprising votive boundary offerings. Other possible examples of ritual deposition can be seen in the burial of cavalry helmets in the environs of the legionary fortress of Nijmegen (van Enckevort & Willems 1994, pp. 127–34). Although they were not all in perfect condition, such objects would probably have been purposefully deposited because of their symbolic, rather than economic, value (Clarke & Jones 1994, p. 119).

The cultural or 'identity' value of an object will often determine the way it is deposited. Birds-headed winged pendants, for example, seem to have been found only where Thracian cavalry units occupied sites, and these objects might have been a symbol of the unit (Bishop & Coulston 1993, p. 197). Since they were not recycled, one might suggest that the Thracian units had a specific cultural understanding about how the objects were to be discarded. Another example can be seen at the site of Velsen, where along a ridge near the site, a mixed set of objects was found that strongly suggests ritual activity (Bosman 1995, p. 89). Bosman notes that there were 59 military items found along with bone and indigenous pottery. The majority of the bone is horse, and 90% of the pottery is indigenous. Deposits like this seem to have been a Frisian, rather than Roman, practice, and Bosman questions whether the Romans recognised the ritual importance of the site and used it along with the local Frisians, or perhaps whether it belonged to Frisian soldiers (Bosman 1995, p. 94). From these examples it may be suggested that one can demonstrate the possibility of cultural variations in deposition with Roman military sites.

The body is a prime source of symbolism, and it is not surprising that the placement of objects closely associated with the body (*e.g.,* medical instruments) should embody complex rules. Van Driel-Murray, for example, has demonstrated how shoes were ritually deposited in wells and house foundations (van Driel-Murray 1999, pp. 135–7). It is conceivable that other items associated with the body, such as medical instruments, could carry a ritual significance as well. An object that had been used in medical practice might have had its significance increased because of its association with a specific person or the sick body. It is interesting to note the occurrence of two Roman instruments at Stonehenge (Cleal *et al.* 1995, p. 433, nos. 32, 35), along with a large group of coins and pins and brooches (Cleal *et al.* 1995, p. 431). Medical tools might also have been considered to be polluted if they had been used in an unsuccessful operation, or had belonged to either a dead or rather unsuccessful doctor, and may have been deposited in specific areas because they were considered somehow harmful, or taboo, with their disposal being conditioned by the need to keep them from 'infecting' people or places.

5.6 The Sites

A comparison was made of three legionary fortresses, where the medical instruments' find spots were adequately recorded, to see if there might be any differences between the units' depositional practices. Originally the intention was to examine the named auxiliary units, as undertaken earlier with this investigation, but unfortunately this

proved impossible because the recording of the instruments from many auxiliary forts has been done without regard to their context. There are four legionary fortresses with fairly good records of the location of medical instruments: Chester, Caerleon, Vindonissa and Neuss, but as the first of these has only 13 medical tools, it has been disregarded for the purpose of this study.

The site of Caerleon, located in south-east Wales, has yielded 38 instruments; although only 21 have a provenance recorded. When looking at their distribution (Fig. 5.1), it becomes immediately apparent that the instruments seem to appear in clusters, albeit in small numbers. The areas they are concentrated in are mainly in the tower/rampart area (1), the amphitheatre (2), the barracks (buildings 3 & 4), the baths (5) and in building 6. The rampart area had five probes of varying sorts; two of these instruments were broken, and one bent, but the other two were in good condition. Five instruments were found in the amphitheatre: three were broken and two in good condition. The barracks of the first cohort had a spatula probe in good condition buried in a posthole (3). The barracks in Prysg field (4) had one probe with lettering inscribed on it and three ear probes in good condition. A surgical needle and a probe were found in the so-called workshop (6). The baths and the vicus drains also have a higher number of instruments, and with the baths it seems that this might be one place where surgery was performed because children's teeth showing signs of surgical extraction were found in bath drains (Zienkiewicz 1986, p. 223). One broken spoon probe was found in the headquarters building (7). One scalpel was found outside the fortress in a rubbish pit (8). From the patterning it is clear that there is some form of clustering of instruments, which might indicate specific places where they were made, used, or permitted to be deposited. Most interesting are the ones found in the rampart area of the fortress and in the post-hole in the barracks. In the case of the scalpel found in the rubbish pit, since it was in good condition, one might speculate that it had been deliberately deposited perhaps because of pollution taboos or because it was a votive offering associated with the body. It might also be asked if the pits were for rubbish, or whether they really served another purpose?

The fortress of Neuss in Germania Inferior, has three areas where the instruments seem to be clustered (Fig. 5.2). One of these is described as the hospital (1), and it has ten probes and four scalpels. The other areas are: in a group of barracks (2), where seven instruments were found, and in the headquarters building (3) where seven instruments were found, mainly ear probes, and all in good condition. Two instruments were possibly found on the corner tower (4), but they might have come from building five. The baths had a few instruments (6) and one or two were dotted around other areas of the fortress. Four instruments were found in the south section of the fortress, but the exact location of the instruments is not known (Lehner 1904; Watermann 1970). As with Caerleon it is noticeable that the instruments appear in clusters, but in Neuss they appear in different areas of the fortress. There is the possibility of instruments being deposited in the ramparts, but this is not completely certain.

Vindonissa, a legionary fortress in Germania Superior, has the greatest number of instruments (325), but only 142 have their provenience recorded (Fig. 5.3). Again they appear in clusters. Sixty instruments were found in an area called the *Schutthügel*, a rubbish deposit[2] located outside the fortress (1). This deposit has a number of instruments in good condition, which suggests that the instruments might have been placed in this region because they were considered unclean through their association

[2]I would like to thank Dr. C. van Driel-Murray for bringing to my attention the fact that the Schutthügel is thought to be a rubbish deposit.

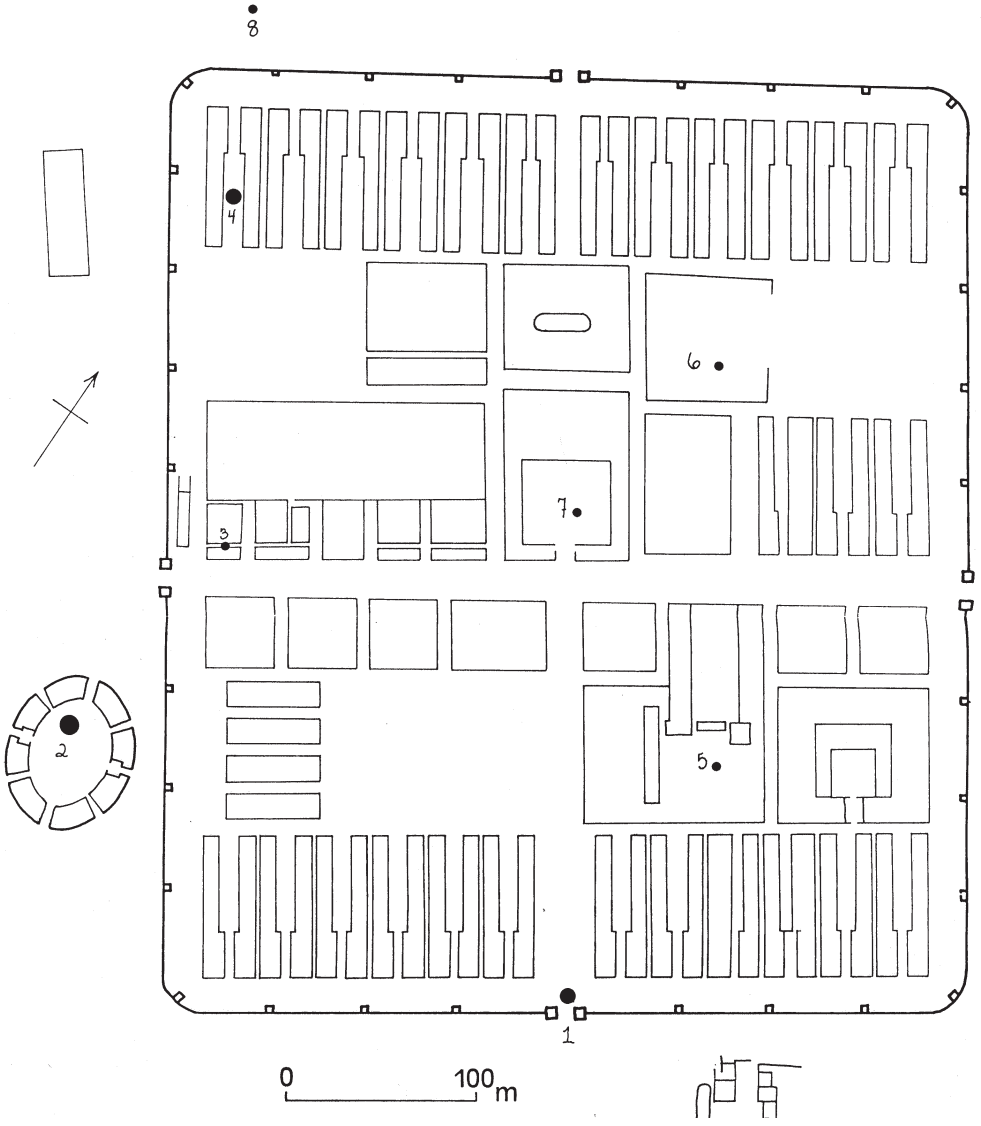


Figure 5.1: Distribution of medical tools from Caerleon. Plan after Boon & Williams (1967). Numbers on plan relating to numbers of medical instruments: 1 5; 2 5; 3 1; 4 4; 5 2; 6 2; 7 1; 8 1.

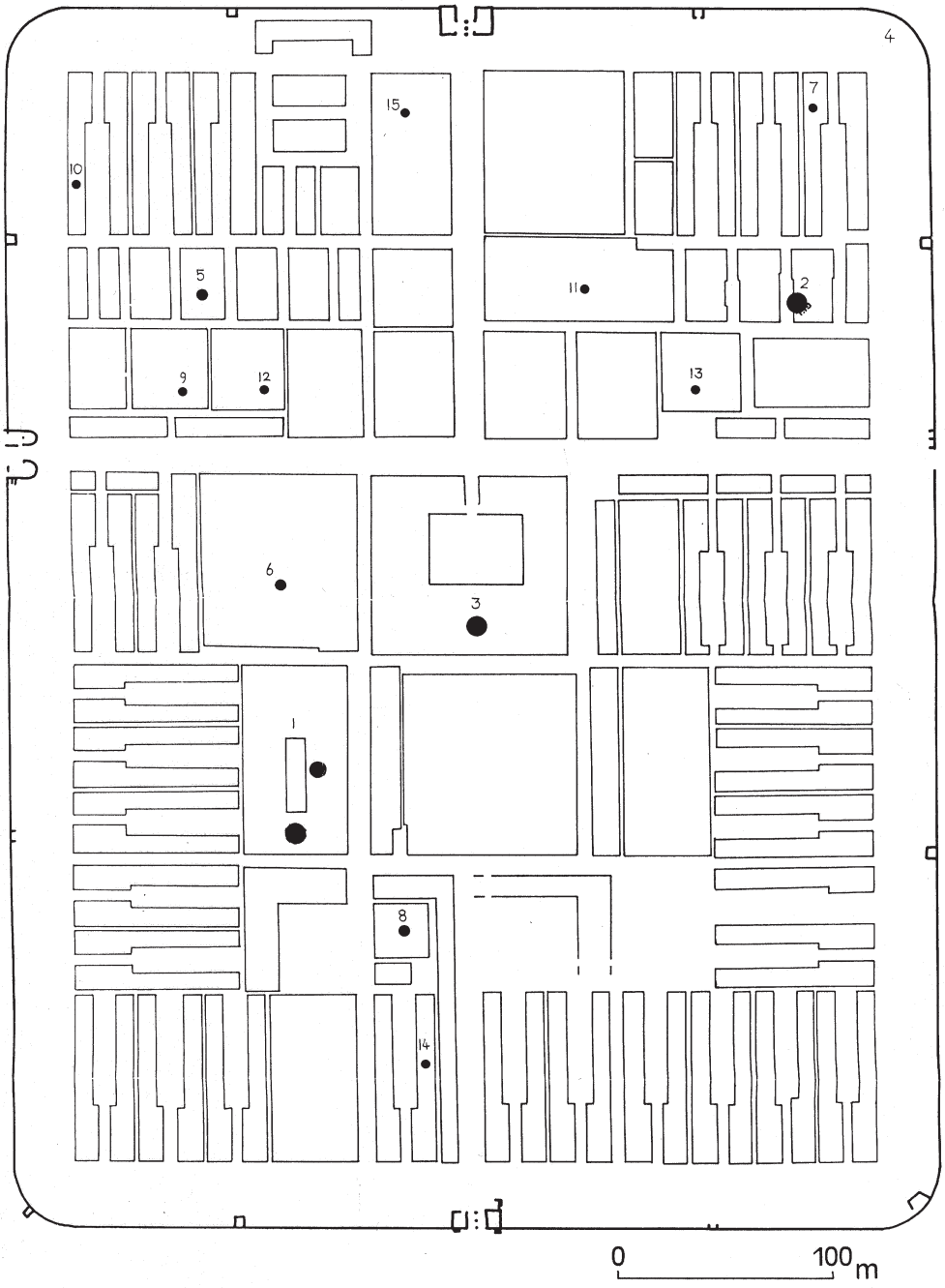


Figure 5.2: Distribution of medical tools from Neuss. Plan after Johnson (1983). Numbers on plan relating to numbers of medical instruments: 1 15; 2 6; 3 7; 5 2; 6 2; 7 1; 8 2; 9 1; 10 1; 11 1; 12 1; 13 1; 14 1; 15 1.

Figure 5.3: Distribution of medical tools from Vindonissa. Plan after Unz & Deschler-Erb (1997). Numbers on plan relating to numbers of medical instruments: 1 60; 3 1; 4 1; 5 1; 6 13; 8 3; 9 7; 10 13; 11 2; 13 10; 14 2; 15 5; 19 1; 23 4; 24 4; 28 2; 29 6; 30 3; 31 1; 35 1; 43 1; 44 1.

with disease. The barracks (4, 5, 30, 31, 36) do not have many instruments with seven in total, but the area in the *principia* (8–15) has a high number, along with the baths area across from the headquarters building (23–24). The so-called hospital has a few instruments as well (6). Again it is noticeable that they appear in groups.

In order to 'test' the validity of these distributions, the location of surgical instruments from Vindonissa was compared to that of another common artefact type — horse-trappings (Fig. 5.4). Ninety-one of these were found in the *Schutthügel* (1), thirteen in the so-called hospital (6), thirteen in area (5), 34 from the area of the principia (8–15), eighteen from barracks (4, 30, 31, 32, 36, 37), eighteen from the amphitheatre (49), whilst there were more found in other areas around the fortress. This seems to suggest that different types of objects were found in different areas of the fortress, perhaps because each had specific places of deposition. Thus, there does seem to have been a difference in the places metal objects were discarded within the fortress of Vindonissa, suggesting disposal practices varied according to item.

Overall it is noticeable that each fortress has different areas where the instruments were deposited and different numbers of instruments. The majority do not seem to appear in a random pattern, but in clusters. Some instruments seem to have been deposited as part of ritual practices, especially those in the rampart areas of the fortresses and the one found in the post-hole at Caerleon. Those that were most likely deposited as rubbish were sometimes found in good condition, begging the question as to whether they were thought to have been polluted, or if they belonged to a dead soldier or doctor and were thus considered 'unlucky'. Furthermore, it is suggested that the different patterns of deposition within each fort may be the manifestation of different cultural attitudes. Thus with these differences in mind, one can think back to the anthropological examples of medical practice to understand the culturally-specific nature of medicine. Even if firm conclusions may not be possible, this exercise has hopefully made us think more about attitudes towards small finds and cultural variations in a military context.

5.7 Conclusion: Why would there be differences in deposits?

This study asks us to question the overall assumption of homogeneity that underlies all studies of military medicine. Although I cannot say much about the specific details of differences in medical care and traditions in the Roman army, it can be observed that there are variations in the use of Roman medical inscriptions, Roman instruments and depositional practices amongst different units, and there may be a link to different cultural perceptions of the body and of medicine in general. With a closer look at the deposition of instruments, and with a better awareness of how various societies have defined medical tools and their use, one could make more informed comparisons of the sites and units to see if there are differences in military medical care. However, from our current understanding of the information available and our reliance upon earlier archaeological reports, the suggestions that one can make must be thought of as limited, but it is to be hoped that future investigations will consider these problems with greater care.

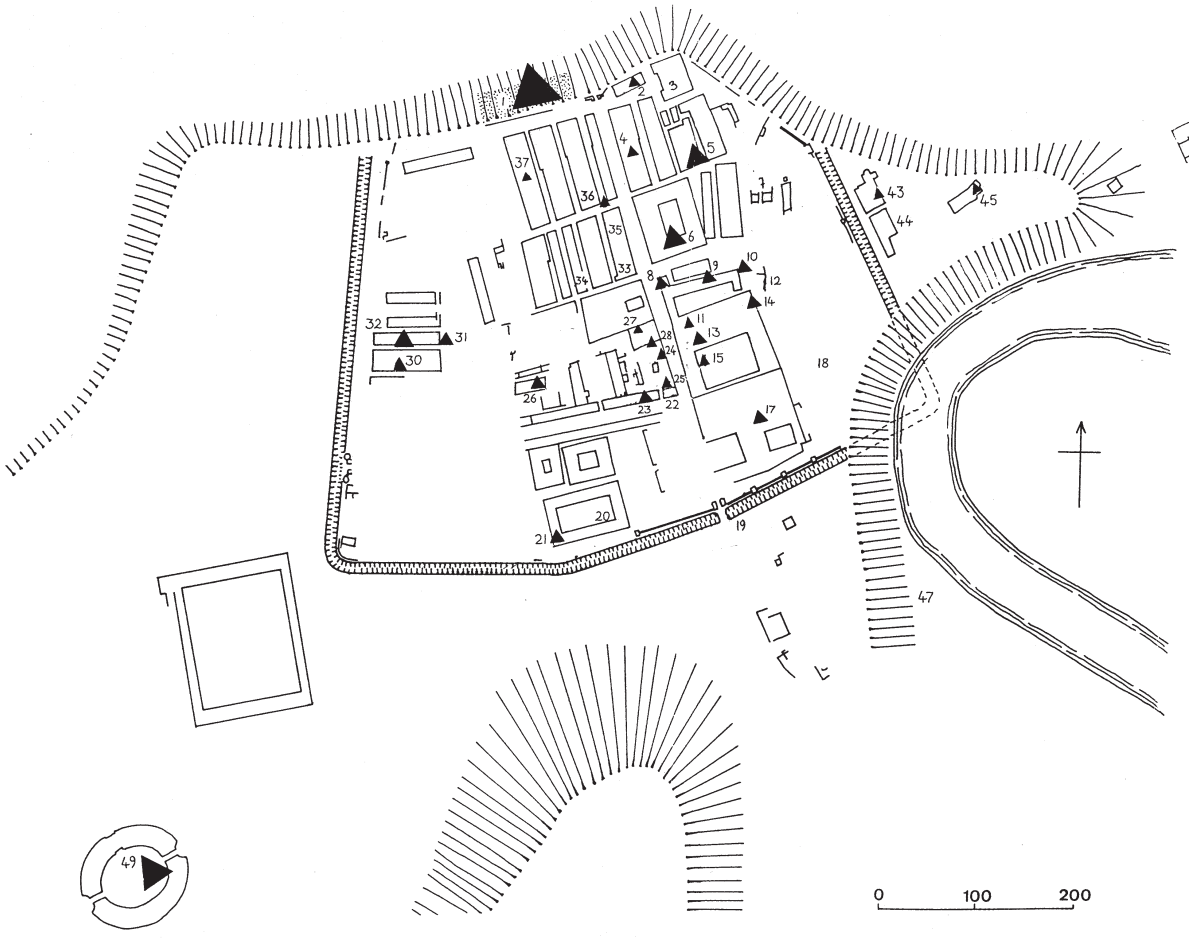


Figure 5.4: Distribution of horse-trappings at Vindonissa. Plan after Unz & Deschler-Erb (1997). Numbers on plan relating to numbers of horse trappings: 1 91; 2 2; 4 2; 5 13; 6 13; 8 6; 9 5; 10 6; 11 3; 13 7; 14 4; 15 3; 17 4; 21 5; 23 2; 24 3; 25 2; 26 7; 27 1; 28 3; 30 4; 31 6; 32 9; 35 2; 37 1; 43 3; 45 2; 49 18.

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Abbreviations and original sources

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RIB Collingwood, R. G. and Wright, R. P. 1995. *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain,* second edition. Alan Sutton, Stroud.

CIL *Corpus Inscriptorum Latinorum Consilio et Ductoritate Academie Litterarum Regiae Borussical.* 1862–. Berlin: Academie der Wissenschaften.

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6
Siege Works, Psychology and Symbolism

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6.1 Introduction

Although the construction of siege works by the Roman army may have been undertaken in pursuit of a whole range of different strategic and tactical objectives, it would be a mistake to seek an entirely functional rationale behind their completion. Beyond overtly practical concerns over such matters as siting or raw material availability, it may also be possible to identify other, less tangible influences which, despite their general subordination to the exigencies of the military situation, may still have affected (albeit subconsciously at times) the decision-making of the besieging commander. It is the rôle of these less tangible factors in assisting with the reduction of defended centres that will be considered in this paper.

The design and completion of an effective siege system depended upon a competent mobilisation of those resources (both of manpower and matériel) that were available to the attacker. Although the task of constructing the actual works may not necessarily have been as time consuming as the scale of the field remains might first suggest (Roth 1995), the success of the operation must always have been dependent upon such variables as the experience and competence of the troops/engineers involved, the nature of the terrain, and, of course, the selection of an appropriate siege strategy (with the different 'suites' of siege elements that this decision implied). Nonetheless, it is clear that many offensive sieges undertaken by the Romans demanded the allocation of considerable resources to bring to fruition and it may be possible to recognise the operation of psychological and symbolic dimensions that acted to reinforce the direct physical threat posed by the resulting works.

6.2 Expressions of power

Notwithstanding the essentially temporary nature of siege works, the surviving components of a small number of siege systems would seem to belie their characterisation as ephemeral phenomena. This is particularly true in the case of the assault ramps at Machaerus (AD 72) and Masada (AD 73) or the siege mound at Cremna (AD 277–278), where the structures survive as impressive testaments to the labour and craft of their builders. Of course, it is no coincidence that these examples are located in areas that mostly have been abandoned by human settlement, and it is likely that equally dramatic survival might have been expected elsewhere had Bourges (Avaricum), Marseilles and Jerusalemnot have proved such successful urban centres, to mention only the more obvious examples.

Although it is these ramps and mounds that may still command our attention in the present day, a contemporary witness would also have been confronted by the visual impact of the other constituent elements of the siege system, and would have

been aware of the labour requirements involved in completing the final scheme. By forcing the observer to recognize the physical effort made by him in the pursuit of his objective, the besieger may be seen as making a direct assertion of his power over the besieged.

If we were to follow Trigger's claim that 'the most basic way in which power can be symbolically reinforced is through the conspicuous consumption of energy' (Trigger 1990, p. 128), then the advantage to an assailant of large-scale siege structures can be seen to transcend the purely functional concern to reach or overtop the enemy defences. As the extravagant expenditure of energy 'expresses in a public and enduring manner the ability ... to control the (requisite) materials, specialized skills and labour required to create such ... structures' (Trigger 1990, p. 127), the besieger is making an explicit declaration of his authority. Simply by being conscious of the energy expended by the attacker, the besieged are obliged to adopt active strategies of their own if they are not to be seen as acquiescing to this claim to power. Therefore, a responsive expenditure of energy by the defenders, for example, through the construction of counter-mounds (as at Cremna) or the raising of the ramparts and the addition of turrets (as at Avaricum), may be interpreted as effective statements of resistance, both practically and symbolically. As there may be a question as to whether such measures would be sufficiently proportional to challenge the conspicuous efforts of the assailant, an alternative way in which to reject the besieger's claim would be to take direct action against its manifestation, that is, to destroy the siege structure(s) in question. Sallying or countermining (quite apart from the energy expenditure that the latter might entail) would be an incontrovertible demonstration of the defenders' repudiation of the attacker's assertion of power over them.

It should also be noted that statements of power of this nature may equally serve to reify control from an internal perspective as well. The physical reality and purposive determination of the Roman state would have been as apparent to those engaged in construction as much as to those who were the subject of such operations, and this internal reinforcement would have been particularly valuable when the besieging force included a significant proportion of allied troops or auxiliaries. By witnessing the mobilization of resources at Rome's disposal and, most notably, the harnessing and extravagant consumption of the available energy reserve, the *socii* would be compelled to accede to Roman claims of sovereignty. The complicity of participation in campaigns such as the reduction of Numantia (134–133 BC), where the energy expenditure would appear in marked disproportion to the level of the threat posed by the targeted city, not only bound the allied contingents within this relationship of subordination, but also served as a stark warning as to the likely consequences of any future re-assertion of autonomy.

Even though Trigger's 'thermodynamic explanation' of symbolic behaviour is mediated through the vehicle of monumental architecture, the 'scale and elaboration [of which] exceed the requirements of any practical functions that a building is intended to perform' (Trigger 1990, p. 119), it could be argued that the essentially temporary nature of siege works allows for a similar argument to be advanced on their behalf. Although siege structures were conceived with utilitarian objectives in mind, the degree of energy applied in the construction of what were only intended as ephemeral field works, may be sufficient to amount to the sort of conspicuous consumption that Trigger would regard as a signifier of asserted power (the grossly over-engineered circumvallation thrown around Masada being a case in point). Accordingly, the fact that these works may not have been designed to stand as 'enduring statements of power' in the same way as monumental buildings (where commemorative motives

may have exerted an equal attraction to the builder), does not devalue their impact as avatars for the articulation of the besieger's affirmation of power. That some of these 'statements' still survive to allow a modern observer to comprehend the original discourse that they embodied, must surely reflect the vagaries of fortune as much as any deliberate evocation of posterity on behalf of their creators.

Apart from the symbolic dimension, it is also possible to discern something of the visual impression that these structures must once have conveyed, even from the eroded remnants that exist in the present day. Although when built, these siege works would have been provided with superstructures and revetments, with hoardings, mantlets and the panoply of engines that gave immediate expression to the intentions of the assailant, the basic character of the same as threatening alien intrusions can still be appreciated today. Thus the architectural 'potency' (measured in terms of the emotional impact that the structure may inflict upon an observer) of the assault ramp at Masada, is scarcely mitigated by the disappearance through erosion and earthquake (see Roth 1995, p. 106, *contra* Gill 1993, p. 570) of Josephus' stone platform that originally would have crowned the same. Certainly, watching the raising of such impressive structures must have had a serious psychological impact on the defenders, particularly those who had not witnessed any comparable siege activity in the past. This effect probably explained how the morale of the defenders of Satricum (386 BC) had been shaken by the advance of Camillus' ramp and why the townspeople of Negrobriga (152 BC) surrendered after 'mounds' had been cast against their walls. Indeed, Caesar explicitly makes the point (*BG* II.12) that the defenders of Noviodunum (57 BC) were so awed by his preparations for an assault that they quickly sued for terms before the works had been completed.

However, the expression of inherent power does not always rely on sheer mass or large scale to transmit its message, rather, the use of coarse forms, crude materials, rough textures and dark colours may be equally successful at communicating the architecture of intimidation (Küller 1980, p. 94). That the Romans were well aware of the potential of detailing to make explicit use of the 'emotional dimension of control' (Küller 1980, p. 95), can be recognised, for example, in the decision to clothe the Porta Nigra at Trier with 'unfinished' black stone blocks which imbue the gateway with an impression of solid durability and unostentatious strength (Wightman 1970, pp. 94–6). Although siege works may not have been planned with the same, careful attention, the message conveyed by the raw scarring of the landscape with freshly dug trenches, the use of serrated palisades and obstacle fields and, above all, the ominous crudity of the approaching siege mound or ramp, would nonetheless have been explicitly menacing from the perspective of the besieged. On a slightly more abstract plane, the operation of what architects have described as 'second level signifiers' (those factors that form an important part of the architectural 'experience' but are more significantly expressed through other media such as noise, smell, tactility *etc.*, Jencks 1980, pp. 73–4), may also play a subsidiary rôle in this evocation of 'potency'. Thus, the clamour of the work parties engaged in the various construction processes, the taste of the smoke from the enemy camp fires and furnaces, even the stench of the latrine pits and the unburied dead, might all evoke a response which, in a cumulative sense, would compound the feeling of helplessness and the impression of Roman invincibility.

By articulating symbolic connotations in this way, siege works may be seen to have exerted a significant psychological impact that buttressed their formal, militarily-designated *raison d'être*. Such pressures would have been all the more pronounced as a result of the activity taking place in such close proximity to the besieged and it is the effect of this spatial dimension that will now be examined further.

6.3 Alienation and appropriation

Siege systems did not exist in a vacuum, devoid of any reference to terrain and environment, as topography and the achievement of specific tactical objectives served to modify decisions as to the choice of the appropriate suite of siege structures and their deployment on the ground. Indeed, the relationship between siege works and the landscape in which they were situated, can scarcely be thought of as less than symbiotic, albeit that one should not pursue any deterministic assumption that the latter always dictated the manner of construction of the former. That the natural world was not always respected by the ambitious besieger can be seen in the case of the unfortunate P. Claudius Pulcher, whose efforts to build a mole in the restless sea off Lilybaeum (249 BC) were so derided by Diodorus Siculus (XXIV.3), or, with greater success, in Caesar's campaigns (*BG* III.12) against the promontory forts of the Veneti (56 BC). However, where such operations were undertaken in specific contravention of topographical reality, invariably they were militated by cogent military reasoning. Abstract notions such as the triumph of humanity over nature and the expression of power that this may have represented over the besieged, can not have been primary considerations in the decision to commence large-scale enterprises of this nature (even if they may have served useful propagandist purposes in subsequent literary accounts). But despite sounding this cautionary note, there are several issues arising from the imposition of siege works in the local environment that should be discussed, ranging from the psychological implications of these alien intrusions for the defenders, to the more symbolic connotations that stem from the appropriation of familiar geographical and socio-cultural landscapes by the assailants.

Spatial encroachment

In order to pursue these arguments further, it is necessary to understand that the sense of being part of (and being 'situated' within) the local landscape is central to the cognitive process that anchors our recognition and appreciation of our immediate environment. Therefore, when these surroundings undergo some form of transformation, disorientation may be expected to follow thereafter and in severe cases this may result in social disruption. However, it should also be stressed that it is not simply the destruction of its specific component elements that converts a familiar landscape into an alien one, rather, it is the complex interplay between the processes of destruction and re-modelling that combine to erode an individual's sense of identification with their milieu. Because the impact of change is cumulative, it is necessary to contradict the 'implicit assumption that because space only exists where it is constituted by objects, it is wholly reducible to them' (Sayer 1985, p. 57). This reductionist approach is particularly unhelpful in the context of landscape studies as here it is the holistic impression that is important, even though specific physical elements may confer distinctiveness upon any given space and act as referential territorial signs (see Brower *et al.* 1983, p. 420). The landscape may be viewed as 'the extension and collection of human activity in a material setting. It is organized, choreographed ... [and] can produce profound emotional effects on the beholder' (Kobayashi 1989, p. 164). If it is to be understood, the landscape should be analysed in much the same way as language so that its history, its structures and its syntax should be taken into account, and because people 'share the landscape they create through their labour' (Kobayashi 1989, p. 178), its relational dimension must always be emphasized. According to August Heckscher, what the individual requires of the landscape 'is not a plot of ground

but *a place* — a context in which he can expand and become himself. A place ... [which] must be shaped, usually over long periods of time, by the common efforts of men and women. It must be given scale and meaning by their love. And then it must be preserved' (quoted in Brett 1970, p. 140).

As people participate in the formation of their local environment (whether actively as labourers, or tacitly as consensual observers), it is likely that simple recognition will be translated into affection as the continuous process of habituation acts to imbue a sense of place and belonging (Küller 1980, p. 97). If the familiar, accretionally fashioned landscape is subsequently threatened, and old surroundings disappear too quickly and too extensively, then a strong reaction must be predicted from the observer (Küller 1980, p. 98). It is not implausible to suggest that this type of emotional response will be exacerbated if the process of alteration is brought about by alien manipulation.

Given the foregoing, it might be expected that resentment and anger would be incited by the destructive (or at the very least, disruptive) intervention of a besieging force in the immediate vicinity (and, particularly, within sight) of the besieged centre, but other, more debilitating psychological influences are just as likely to be stimulated. A feeling of disquiet, even fear, might be engendered by the violation of the communal sense of spatial autonomy. Just as individuals apparently require some minimal amount of unencumbered personal space (*cf.* Baum *et al.* 1974, p. 91), then the same aversion to spatial invasion should be extrapolated for the community as a whole, albeit that the actual radius at which an act might be constituted as unwelcome spatial intrusion at this aggregated level is always likely to be much wider than that projected for any given individual. Although to some extent dependent upon the degree to which the local environment has been 'colonised' by this communal sense of exclusivity, it is inevitable that the actions of the besiegers would soon start to infringe upon this subliminal zone. As blockade camps and encircling entrenchments gave way to more active approaches, it is not difficult to envisage that the mounting frustration of the defenders would lead to the adoption of increasingly desperate expedients to alleviate the tension. Some such pressures may well have persuaded the Xanthians (42 BC), for example, to launch the disastrous sally which allowed Brutus' troops to force their way inside the city alongside the retreating citizenry. It is likely that further research addressing the psychology of group dynamics would provide significant insights into this type of stress-conditioned behaviour.

Even if the besieger's encroachment upon its territory was viewed in a relatively sanguine light, once the city wall itself was menaced by these approaches, then the sense of invasiveness must have become apparent to everyone. After all, city walls in the classical world enjoyed a symbolic significance that may have been just as important as their task in protecting the citizenry.

> [La] dialectique ... entre *securitas* et *dignitas* se fonde implicitement sur l'idée que l'enceinte et la ville sont indissociables, la première n'étant en somme que la projection de la seconde vers l'extérieur. (Gros 1992, p. 211)

As city walls were an explicit statement as to the definition of the formal urban area (whether in terms of delineating the Aristotelian *kosmos* or the Roman *pomerium*), an attack on the same threatened to violate this bounded, ritually purified core with debilitating consequences for the communal *Selbstverständnis*. Furthermore, as city walls were also often regarded as embodiments of municipal pride and status (as in the absurdly extensive circuits at Augustodunum or Nemausus erected in the early Principate, Johnson 1983, p. 15), the damage inflicted in the course of a siege would

serve to negate such expressions of self-esteem with a possible attendant impact on the morale of the besieged. The collective sigh that Josephus reports as emanating from the defenders of Jerusalem (AD 70) once the rams had started to pound the 'Third' wall (*BJ* V.227), may suggest that it was only then, with their outer wall under direct attack, that the besieged realised the acuity of the danger that they faced.

That physical factors can alter the spatial perception and the related spatial behaviour of individuals and groups, presents us with a subsidiary explanation for the raising of counter-mounds, walls and turrets by those defenders confronted with Roman siege mounds and assault ramps. Apart from delaying the overtopping of their enceinte, such structures also served to preserve the field of view enjoyed by the besieged, maintaining their link with the wider world outside the walls. Without such measures, the defenders would have been obliged to accept the reality of their confinement and, through inaction, might have been in danger of acceding to the assailant's encroachment upon the communally-asserted area of inviolability. Once that basic claim to the control of territory had been conceded, then sustaining resistance to the cession of full independence became less plausible from a psychological perspective.

Altering the earth, assimilating the past

Of course, the impact of the besiegers' works must also have engaged the defenders even more directly in the way that their superimposition transformed a familiar, shared landscape. This sense of alienation is still palpable at Cremna, where the red ochre siege mound contrasts sharply with the prevailing grey of the local limestone geology, a distinction that must have been still more pronounced at the time of construction when the bare earth would not have been masked by a clothing of scrub. Such an obvious intrusion also represented a threat on the cosmological level, as it can be argued that the manner in which people understood how their world was constituted (and their place within that order) was often founded upon shared mythohistorical associations inextricably tied in with their immediate environs. The drastic alteration of established geographical 'realities' by hostile outsiders resulting in the transformation (or elimination) of the cosmological referents of the past, must have had a profoundly disturbing impact which may have served to erode the capacity to resist. But however unsettling the physical metamorphosis effected by the assailants, their assimilation of the socio-cultural references that identified and laid claim to the defenders' ancestral landscape, must have resulted in even greater emotional stress for the besieged.

Although the demolition of certain structures such as aqueducts would have proceeded as a matter of course (as in the Gordian siege of the Praetorian camp in Rome, AD 238), the extent to which a besieger might despoil the immediate surroundings would have depended upon the ready availability of the raw materials necessary for the completion of his works and engines, and on the tactical requirement to obtain a clear avenue of approach to the enemy walls (the motivation behind Titus' orders to remove the obstructions between Mount Scopus and Jerusalem). Whilst decisions of this nature may have been tempered by issues such as the amount of matériel already transported to the site by the besieging force and the scale of the projected siege system, less practical considerations may also have been taken into account.

Thus, for example, the decision by Sulla to ravage the sacred groves at Athens (87–86 BC) and the famous, well-wooded suburbs of the Academy and the Lyceum (related with such distaste by Plutarch, *Sulla* XII.3), ostensibly to provide timber for his extensive works before the Piraeus, was probably as much an act of calculated

vandalism, demonstrative of his implacable hostility, as any product of utilitarian calculation. That such conduct may have breached the conventions of acceptable behaviour has an interesting echo in a passage from Deuteronomy where the prohibition against the destruction of particular trees is made explicit:

> When you are at war and lay siege to a city for a long time in order to take it, do not destroy the trees by taking the axe to them, for they provide you with food; you shall not cut them down. The trees of the field are not men that you should besiege them. But you may destroy or cut down any trees that you know do not yield food, and use them in siege works against the city that is at war with you, until it falls. Deuteronomy XX.19–20

The idea that there were strictures against certain types of despoliation can also be discerned in two separate incidents that took place during Carthaginian campaigns in Sicily. In the first (Diod. Sic. XIII.86.1–3), in 406 BC, a Carthaginian general at the siege of Acragas ordered the destruction of nearby monuments and tombs in order to provide for his assault ramps. This was duly undertaken despite the fact that one of these tombs had been struck by lightning and the soothsayers had forbidden its demolition. The impious general died as a result of the plague that immediately struck the army and, with the appearance of the 'night spirits of the dead', the surviving commander ordered that the remaining monuments be spared and the gods propitiated by sacrifices. In the second incident (Diod. Sic. XIV.63.1–3), during Himilcon's siege of Syracuse in 396 BC, the Carthaginians plundered the temples of Demeter and Corê and destroyed most of the tombs in the area, including the costly monument to Gelon and his wife. Once again, 'by influence of the deity' (XIV.70.4), the army, severely weakened by disease, was routed by a sortie from the city.

It is not at all clear whether the Romans took the possibility of divine displeasure into account when pillaging for the requisite materials to undertake the construction of their siege works (after all, tombs in particular, would have provided extremely useful building blocks). Certainly, as we have already seen, Sulla had no compunction in ordering the devastation of the Athenian sacred groves, while his simultaneous plundering of the temple at Delphi (Plut. *Sulla*, XII.4–5) demonstrated that the dangers of sacrilege did not weigh heavily on the mind of this particular commander. The fact that references to the specific use of tombs for construction purposes remain a rarity in the sources (an exceptional example recording their employment as constituents of Cassius' substantial assault ramp at Laodicea in 43 BC) might suggest that defiling the monuments of the dead may have been an expedient of last resort. Certainly, at Cremna, the surveyors observed that the line chosen for the 'first blockading wall', although crossing a cemetery of rock-cut cists and free-standing sarcophagi, seemed to respect the actual graves themselves (Mitchell *et al.* 1995, p. 202). However, it should also be noted that the rebuilding of wall-circuits that took place at a similar time elsewhere in the empire (as in Gaul: Johnson 1983, p. 33), would appear to have included such *spolia* as a matter of course.

If there was a generally observed practice of avoiding spurious offence either towards the shades of the dead or particular local deities, then those commemorative monuments that acted as territorial markers may have been spared the indignity of quarrying. However, the familiar argument advanced by Parker Pearson and others (*e.g.,* Parker Pearson 1993, 1995) concerning the utility of appropriating such monuments for ideological purposes, should still be acknowledged, for if monuments provided 'a way in which successive generations established a sense of place and time

in relation to the living and the dead' (Bradley 1993, p. 129), then their demolition and subsequent incorporation within the works of the besieger might be interpreted as reinforcing the new, alien claim to the landscape. Whatever the merits of this argument, it should be remembered that a besieger could make the same symbolic statement (without risking any supernatural intervention) equally effectively by razing and re-using other extra-mural structures.

That suburban buildings could provide a useful harvest of materials to a besieger was a point that was not lost on several Roman commanders. For one example amongst many, M'. Acilius Glabrio was eager to order the levelling of that part of Heraclea (191 BC) that lay outside the city walls as it furnished him with a full range of material that could be pressed into service in his field works (Livy XXXVI.22.11). Although preparatory demolitions of this nature may have taken some time to complete, the clearances enabled three separate assault ramps to approach the walls and the scavenging provided the construction material for the same. Additionally, there must also have been a calculated psychological element to the whole process, with the defenders being forced to acknowledge their weakness as passive witnesses to the destruction of their own property. Although such tactics may also have stimulated an angry response leading to a strengthening of the will to resist, it would have been difficult to avoid the explicit message as to the eventual fate of the city should operations have to be prosecuted to a close. The besieger may also have derived positive psychological reinforcement from the satisfaction of employing the enemy's own property as a means for achieving the reduction of the city and his troops would have remained motivated, their appetite having been whetted for further plunder.

In these circumstances, Livy's explanation that the depredation at Heraclea was made possible because the inhabitants of the suburbs had already fled within the defences, rings very hollow. With such advantages accruing, Glabrio would have been sure to have issued the same orders regardless of whether or not the residents had already evacuated their homes!

Given the convenience that extra-mural structures afforded to an assailant, it is perhaps surprising to note the scarcity of those accounts that mention active attempts by the besieged to prevent these assets from falling into hostile hands (although such preliminary preparations would only have been possible when the defenders had foreknowledge of the impending siege). A case in point is provided by the Xanthians who demolished their own suburbs prior to the arrival of Brutus. Not only did this intervention withhold potentially useful construction material from the Romans but, even more importantly perhaps, the denial operation would have allowed greater sensitivity to be shown in the clearance process, with household shrines and similar foci being secured against desecration at the hands of the enemy. Such acts of deliberate sabotage by the defenders would have served to counter the feeling of powerlessness which may otherwise have been engendered by witnessing despoliation at the hands of the besieger.

In the same way as the destruction of particular monuments may have been shunned by the besieger, it is also possible that certain types of landscape manipulation may have required some form of propitiatory act before being undertaken. This was particularly likely in those cases involving interference with watercourses, as a healthy regard for the power of river-deities would appear to have been deeply embedded within the Roman psyche (see Braund 1996). If solemn ceremonies had accompanied the canalisation of the Orontes by the Syrian military establishment under Trajan's father (Braund 1996, p. 45), then the diversion of the Natesio to deprive Aquileia of its water supply (AD 361) must have been a similarly serious undertaking,

both from religious and engineering perspectives (after all, Julian more than anyone, would have been expected to recognize the potential sacrilege implied by the restraint on the river-deity's freedom). In these circumstances, it is perhaps surprising that we do not read of preparatory rituals being performed by attacking commanders to avert any charge of impiety, but the silence of the sources may simply reflect the generality of a practice that required no particular comment.

6.4 Summary

The preceding pages have attempted to place siege works within a broader symbolic landscape which is not restricted by the straightforward demands of form, function and tactics. But despite laying such emphasis upon these more cognitive issues, it would perhaps be wrong to make too much of the apparent distinction between the *utilitas* of siege structures and their symbolic connotations. After all, Umberto Eco would argue that the denoted and the connotative are both aspects of functionality: whilst the symbolic connotations 'may not be immediately identified with the 'functions' narrowly defined, they do represent (and indeed communicate) in each case a real social utility' (Eco 1980, p. 24). Accordingly, it may be preferable to follow Eco further and to identify a primary function for siege work construction (the 'practical' concern with the methods to be employed to ensure reduction) and a whole complex of accompanying secondary functions (the related, perhaps even unconscious, symbolic connotations of these structures and their siting; Eco 1980, p. 25). However, in order to understand these secondary 'functions', we must always refer back to the 'primary' starting point, as a symbolically constructed attack on the spatial and cultural environment of the besieged will only be relevant if it supports a more direct, physical intervention. Whereas in architectural discourse there may be some debate as to the degree to which secondary signifiers play a 'conscient [*sic*] and explicit' rôle in architectural design (Gandelsonas & Morton 1980, p. 248), it seems that in the context of siege operations at least, the structural components of the system were frequently laid out with categorical messages in mind. Not only were the defenders to face an unambiguous material threat, but their will to resist was also to be subjected to other, more insidious pressures.

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7

Animal Iconographies: Metaphor, Meaning and Identity (or *Why Chinese Dragons Don't Have Wings*)

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> What comes after them is the stuff of fables — Hellusii and Oxiones with the faces and features of men, but the bodies and limbs of animals. On such unverifiable stories I will express no opinion. (Tacitus *Germania* XLVI)

7.1 Introduction

This paper is concerned with an idiosyncratic group of images occurring principally in Roman Gaul but which — unlike most forms of 'religious' iconography — clearly have their genesis in the Iron Age. The images in question take the form of semi-anthropomorphic, semi-cervid beings. They are frequently, though questionably, identified under the name 'Cernunnos' because of a single Parisian carving of an antlered human head, of early Roman date, accompanied by an inscribed dedication 'Cernunno' (Espérandieu 1911, no. 3133; Green 1989, pp. 89–90, Fig. 36). Images like these, appearing in Gallo-Roman or, occasionally, in Romano-British contexts (as on a small stone relief-carved plaque from Cirencester in the Cotswolds: Green 1989, Fig. 39; Henig 1993, no. 93 — see Fig. 7.1), are generally assumed to represent indigenous, non-Roman divinities whose theriomorphic features endow them with symbolism associated with nature and abundance. This enquiry seeks to explore other possible avenues of meaning contingent upon the metaphoric significance of hybridity or monstrance, on the one hand (Green 1999), and of deer, especially stags, as liminal (or boundary) motifs, on the other. It may even, in some circumstances, be appropriate to challenge the divine status of antlered images and to propose alternative models of interpretation.

Before examining these questions in detail, it is important to emphasise the context-dependence of any semiotic interpretation: the images were imbued with a set of meanings that were consonant upon their social, cultural, artistic and cosmological context (Hodder 1987). Indeed, we will see later that the historical context of colonialism and Roman imperialism is crucial to at least certain aspects of iconographic interpretation. Antlered images belong to a later prehistoric and early historic western European tradition wherein figural images break the rules of realism in a manner evincing a stark contrast with Graeco-Roman mimetic schemata (Green 1998b). Antlered anthropomorphic depictions should be viewed in precisely similar ways to a number of other Iron Age and Gallo-Roman forms of representation, such as exaggeration (heads, horns, dorsal bristles, hands, eyes) or multiplication (heads, faces, genitalia or whole figures) (Green 1997b, 1998a). More closely analogous still



Figure 7.1: Romano-British relief-carving of an antlered being accompanied by two ram-headed snakes; Cirencester, Gloucestershire. Ht. 23cm. ©Corinium Museum.

are other examples of human/animal hybrids in Gallo-British iconography of the Iron Age and Roman periods: human-headed horses prance on the reverse of Breton late Iron Age coin-issues (Duval 1987, pp. 45–6; Green 1998c, Figs. 88, 90), highly reminiscent of an earlier image on a bronze flagon-lid from a grave at Reinheim of the fourth century BC (Green 1996, Fig. 87); a human-faced bronze dog-figurine was offered to the British god Nodens at the late Roman temple in Lydney Park, Gloucestershire (Wheeler & Wheeler 1932, pp. 89, 119, pl. XXVI; Green 1997b, Fig. 7).

7.2 Gallo-Roman stag-human images

Images exhibiting a blend of human and stag characteristics are particularly common in the east of Roman Gaul, though they occur elsewhere in the western Roman provinces. Although Pan, the slightly disreputable Greek nature-god, was depicted with goat-legs and horns (Virgil *Georgics* 2: lines 490-94; Ferguson 1980, pp. 17, 32), antlered images do not occur within the repertoire of the Classical world. Such iconography seems to originate in the pre-Roman Iron Age: the earliest such images occur in the rupestrine art of Val Camonica, near Brescia in North Italy, during the seventh to fourth centuries BC (Priuli 1988, p. 78, nos. 134, 136–7; Priuli 1996, p. 29, Fig. 51) particularly on the Naquane (Capodiponte) and Paspardo rocks (Fig. 7.2), where several standing human figures wearing antlers are represented. Other figures include the well-known image on the Danish Gundestrup Cauldron (Fig. 7.3), which

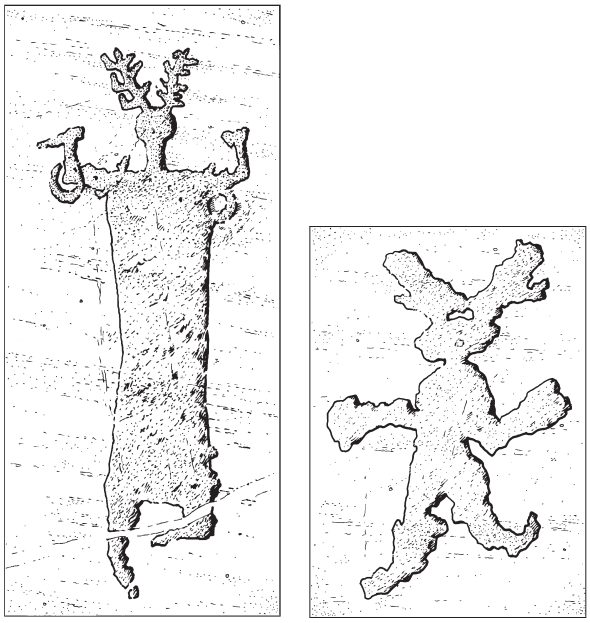


Figure 7.2: Iron Age rock-carvings of antlered anthropomorphic figures from Capodiponte and Paspardo, Camonica Valley, Italy. ©Anne Leaver.



Figure 7.3: Image of an antlered being on the Danish silver cauldron from Gundestrup, Jutland. 2nd–1st century BC. ©Anne Leaver.



Figure 7.4: Iron Age rock-carving of a half-human, half-stag figure, from Camonica Valley, Italy. ©Paul Jenkins.

probably dates to the 1st century BC (Olmsted 1979, pl. 2A; Taylor 1992, pp. 66–71; Kaul *et al.* 1991, Fig. 221), whose cross-legged posture resembles several of the Gallo-Roman images (below). A similar attitude is present on the bronze late Iron Age torc-wearing figure from Bouray (Essonne, Seine-et-Oise) (Joffroy 1979, no. 78; Green 1989, p. 91, Fig. 37) who has no antlers but whose feet are in the form of stags' hooves, The Camunian iconography includes a variation on the standing antlered human figures, in depictions of stags bearing on their backs centaur-like riders whose lower bodies merge with those of their mounts (Priuli 1988, p. 77, nos. 133 & 135, p. 84, nos. 140–142; see Fig. 7.4).

Although, as explained above, there is limited evidence that stag-antlered iconography has its genesis in the pre-Roman Iron Age, it is not impossible that hybrid imagery such as this drew on new, creative ideas. According to this alternative model, Gallo-Roman sculptors gained inspiration not only from their Iron Age ancestors but also from the repertoire of the Classical world, which had a fascination with the grotesque and the monstrous (Garland 1995). This certainly might, at least, have contributed to the great increase in the depiction of fantastic creatures, with horns, antler, extra heads and exaggerated body-parts.

In Roman Gaul, stag-human depictions appear more frequently than in the Iron Age: sometimes they are triple-headed, as at Bolards (Devauges 1974, p. 434; Planson & Pommeret 1986) and Savigny (Thevenot 1968, pp. 144–9; see Fig. 7.5), both in Burgundy; some wear torcs, as at Reims (Espérandieu 1913, no. 3653; Green 1989,

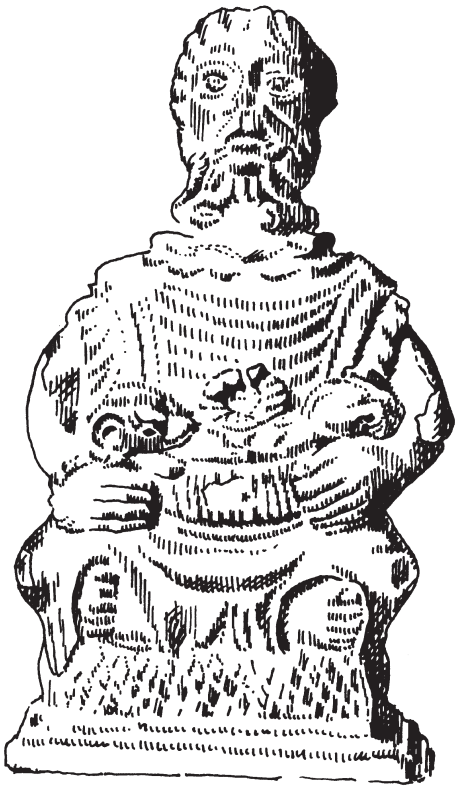


Figure 7.5: Gallo-Roman bronze image of a triple-headed being with holes in the main head for the insertion of antlers, and holding two ram-headed snakes; from Savigny in Burgundy. ©Paul Jenkins.



Figure 7.6: Gallo-Roman relief carving of an antlered being, flanked by two youths; from Vendoeuvres (Indre). ©Paul Jenkins.

Fig. 38), Paris (Espérandieu 1911, no. 3133)) and on the Savigny bronze image, just as they do in pre-Roman representations at Camonica and Gundestrup. They may be represented alongside other beings, as on the stones from Vendoeuvres (Indre) (Espérandieu 1908, no. 1539; see Fig. 7.6) and Reims (Fig. 7.7); this latter stele depicts the antlered image seated centre-stage and flanked by the Classical deities Apollo and Mercury.

7.3 Gods or humans?

It is probably the case that at least some of the antlered images from Gallo-Roman contexts should be identified as deities. It is, for instance, difficult to interpret the Reims figure as other than divine: he is accompanied by two members of the Classical pantheon and the treatment of his image displays parity with them, if not superior status. But scrutiny of certain other depictions inclines me to the view that they may, instead, represent people in the guise of deer: the reverse of a late Iron Age silver coin from midland Britain (Boon 1982; Green 1986, Fig. 88; see Fig. 7.8) displays the head of an antlered being, wearing a curious wheel-shaped device; the treatment of the eyes and nose, with their clearly delineated outlines, may represent a mask; the physiognomy of the Gundestrup also suggests that the figure might be wearing a mask and an antler headdress. The ten skull-caps of antlered deer with holes pierced in the frontal bones, as if for attachment, from an Iron Age sanctuary at Digeon, Somme (Meniel 1987, pp. 89–100), and the single set from a Roman context — in a pit with second century AD pottery, at Hook's Cross in Hertfordshire (Fig. 7.9; Tony Rook *pers. comm*; Green 1997a, p. 58), lends credence to the notion that ceremonial antler headgear was sometimes worn by people. It may be that this is the interpretation we should put on the curious bronze images of women wearing antlers from Roman Gaul (Green 1995, p. 168; Boucher 1976, nos. 317–8; Deyts 1992, p. 40 — Fig. 7.10). With the exception of reindeer, female deer do not grow antlers any more than human females do! In this context, it is significant that, with a few notable exceptions, it is only the head of these dyadic stag-human representations that exhibit zoomorphic characteristics.

If the divine status of certain human-stag depictions under consideration can be challenged, then it is necessary to propose alternative meanings for these images. One possible interpretation is that the depictions represent shamans, holy men or women who adopted animal features in order to facilitate the soul's transference between earth and spirit worlds, as is the case in some hunting/herding societies, particularly in circumpolar regions, such as Siberia (Anisimov 1963, pp. 84–123). Before exploring this theory further, we should consider reasons why, if this is so, the stag was selected as the particular beast to represent shamanistic boundary-crossing.

7.4 Stags and liminal symbolism

Deer, especially stags (Fig. 7.11), lend themselves readily to liminal or boundary symbolism. Their physicality is changeful: the annual shedding and re-growth of their antlers would be recognised as contingent upon the seasons, and may thus have provided powerful sacred metaphors in some early cosmologies. Indeed, certain of the antlered human images from Roman Gaul — for instance the images from Savigny (Thevenot 1968, 144–9) and Sommerécourt in Haute-Marne (Espérandieu 1915,

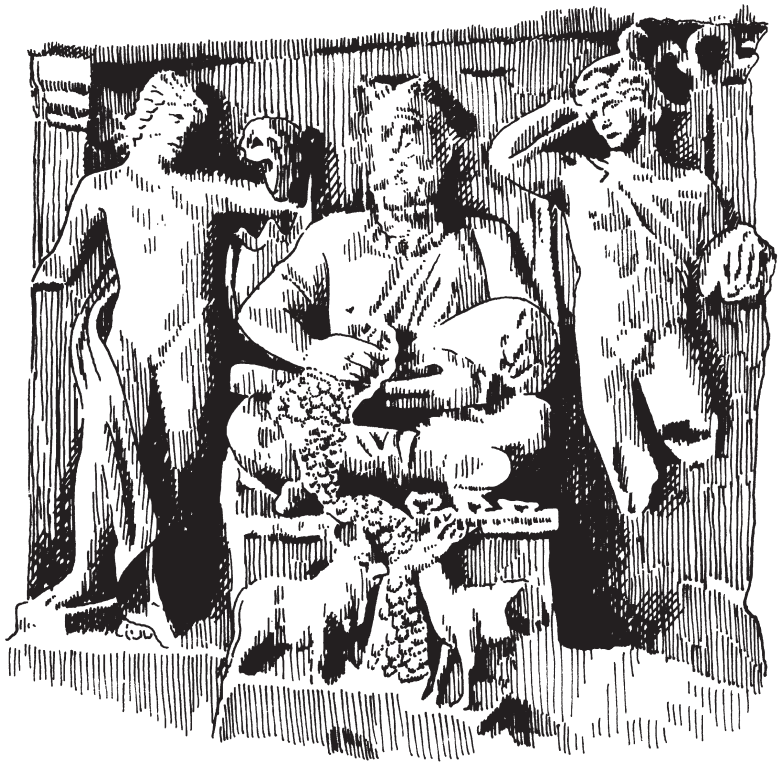


Figure 7.7: Gallo-Roman relief carving of an antlered being, seated on a throne, flanked by Apollo and Mercury; Reims. ©Paul Jenkins.



Figure 7.8: Iron Age silver coin (*c.* AD 10–20), allegedly from the British Midlands, bearing an image of an antlered human head wearing a wheel-shaped headdress.©Anne Leaver.

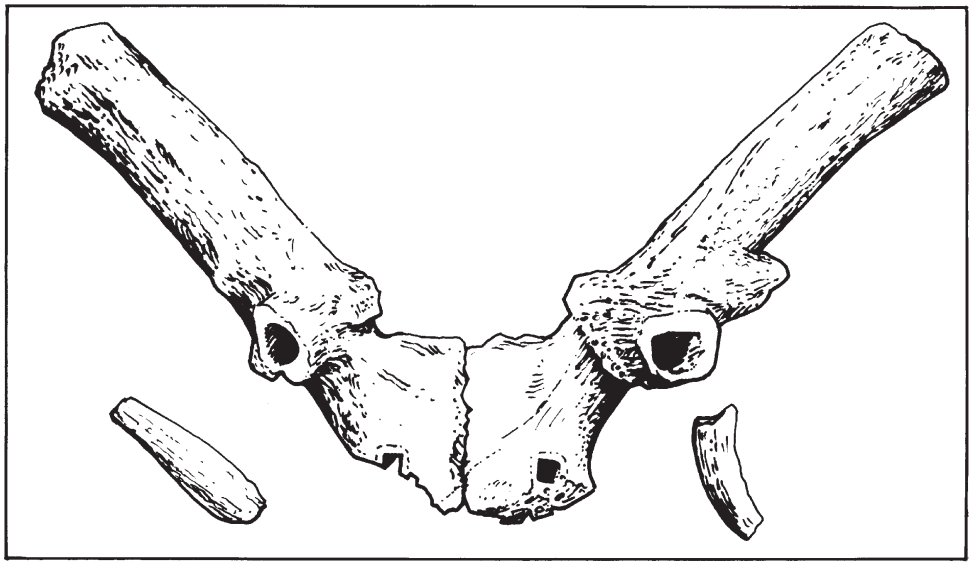


Figure 7.9: Pair of red-deer antlers, the frontal bone pierced, as if for attachment as a headdress; from Hooks Cross, Hertfordshire. ©Anne Leaver.



Figure 7.10: Bronze figurine of a woman wearing antlers; from an unprovenanced Gallo- Roman context. ©Anne Leaver.

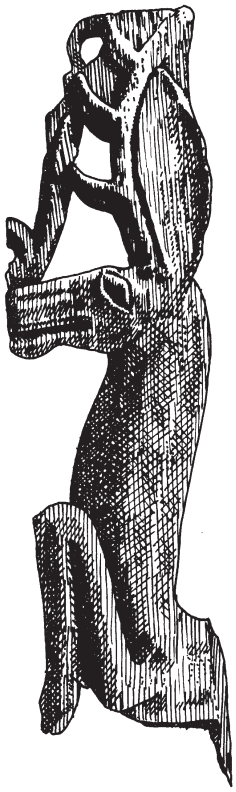


Figure 7.11: Oak carving of a stag; from an Iron Age Viereckschanze at Fellbach Schmiden, Germany (dendro-dated to 123 BC). ©Paul Jenkins.

no. 4839) — appear to reflect seasonality inasmuch as the antlers were clearly detachable, perhaps being inserted or removed for ceremonies taking place at different times of the year. But, apart from this obvious mutability, deer are associated with other liminal perspectives, notably in respect of their relationship with human communities.

In certain societies, both past and present, deer occupy an ambiguous position, hovering between wild and domestic worlds and on the fringes of each. In traditional circumpolar reindeer-hunting communities, there exists a contradictory connection between animals and people; the ambivalent attitude to the reindeer relates to the paradox of hunting and predation, on the one hand, herding and nurturing, on the other (Loring 1997, pp. 185–220; Aronsson 1991, p. 5). Among the Innu of Labrador the animals are hunted in the context of respect for their spirits (Loring 1997). In some North American communities, the collective spirit of the caribou herds is perceived as possessing immense spiritual power (Ingold 1986, p. 247). Hunting itself contains metaphoric paradoxes inasmuch as the hunt is associated with violent destruction but its result is nourishment for the hunters; furthermore, deer-hunting by sedentary agriculturalists may relate to crop-protection, and thus the killing of the animals may be linked — both in practical and symbolic terms — to the prosperity of farming communities. In European antiquity, there is some evidence that deer possessed liminal symbolism, perhaps associated with similar ambiguities of relationships with people. Faunal assemblages from Neolithic and Iron Age sites in parts of Britain, on Orkney, for instance, seem to indicate that red deer had a special symbolic significance associated with their closeness and separation from the humans that exploited them: they were, perhaps on the boundary between wildness and domestication (Jones 1998,

pp. 301–24; Sharples 2000; Parker Pearson & Sharples 1999, p. 21; Parker Pearson *et al.* 1999, pp. 149–52). In prehistoric Orcadian communities, where farming land was scarce, there is evidence that red deer were tolerated close to settlements, even though they competed with domestic animals for grazing; whilst signs of butchery are not necessarily common, deer bones were carefully curated and deliberately deposited. J. D. Hill reminds me (*pers. comm.*; 1995, p. 108) that on Iron Age sites he has studied in Wessex have produced bone and antler 'weaving' combs of which only those made of antler are decorated. Where wild species, deer in particular, were deposited on sites in Iron Age Wessex (Hill 1995, pp. 102–4), their presence may well be the result of ritual activity. Deer were perhaps considered as important boundary symbols, partly because they were neither fully wild nor domesticated, because of their complex social organisation (which resonates with that of humans) and, maybe, because they behave differently in woodland and open environments: in forests they are solitary, in open country they live in hierarchical groups (Sharples 2000).

7.5 Metaphors of transition

The ambivalence of relationships between deer and humans may be sufficient for the adoption of stag motifs by people in order to present symbolic transitionality or boundary-transgression. One way in which this can operate is in the realm of the shaman, who seeks to negotiate pathways between the human and spirit dimensions. We have seen that stags may have occupied a liminal position in rural communities such that their imagery may have been perceived as an enabling agent, facilitating transference between worlds (Alekseev 1997, pp. 153–64; Anisimov 1963, pp. 84–123; Vitebsky 1995). In addition to the particular significance of the stag as a symbol of transience, consideration should be given to the more general meaning of monstrous, hybrid iconography (Green 1999). The shamanistic experience in rural hunting/herding communities, for whom the natural world and natural phenomena are numinous (among the Saami of northern Scandinavia, *e.g.,* Bradley 2000, p. 8), is associated with double consciousness; the shaman's vision involves looking at both inward and outward realities (Ascott 2000); during movement between earthworld and the spirit domain, there is a constant shifting of persona, of perception. Hybrid, monstrous images may themselves reflect such restless and disturbing instability; the viewer of such a depiction is thrown into uncertainty, confusion, with oscillating realities, and is faced with the need to engage in interactive discourse with the shifting meanings engendered by such immersive (Nechtvatal 1997), open-ended symbolism. We should perhaps be seeing these liminal images as 'freeze-framed' between worlds, the shaman — perhaps — in the midst of shape-shift and consequent transference between states of being.

I do not, for one moment, suggest the presence of direct linkages between the tradition of circumpolar shamanism and religious constructs that obtained in Iron Age western Europe, However, I would argue that the Gallo-Roman images under scrutiny may be the product of an essentially similar kind of 'cosmovision', where the act of shifting between worlds was represented by hybrid human/animal beings. Additionally, the deer was perhaps perceived as a special metaphor for boundary-crossing because the animal itself was charged with of a particular grammar of meaning, predicated upon the relationship between deer and people, on the one hand, and characteristics specific to the animal, on the other.

7.6 Contested identities

There is a further, not unrelated, manner in which hybrid human-animal images may be perceived, that is as metaphors of identity. I suggest that the semiotics of changing physicalities, that are presented in essentially shamanistic imagery, might have been adopted by Gallo-Roman communities, who may have seen themselves as in conflict with *romanitas*. Contra-normative iconography may be associated with the troubled disturbance engendered by cultural change, with resistance to a new set of cosmologies and with contesting identities. If mimetic, life-copying iconography was viewed as reflective of the Roman way, one method of resisting the colonial presence, in Gaul or Britain, might be to challenge verism. In such a context, monstrance should be seen as simply one of many ways of eschewing realism: it is possible to point to other kinds of contra-normative iconography, such as gender-ambiguity, exaggerated or multiplied somatic elements, sinistrality or schematism. In the Roman world man (in the sense of both the generic *homo* and the gender-specific *vir*) was the measure of all things; any departure from mimetic realism or from the proper attribution of masculinity or feminity could, therefore, be considered as 'other', as a challenge or even a threat to the even tenor of 'right-thinking' (Roman) society. In provincial situations, which involved a degree of cultural disjunction, however peaceful the process of absorption into the empire may have been, it could be deemed necessary to reassert indigenous identities using a range of methods which avoided direct conflict with the *status quo*. I have argued elsewhere (Green 1998b, pp. 17–30), as have others (*e.g.*, Webster forthcoming) that the reassertion of *gallitas* under Roman rule may have found a voice through the development of alternative panthea of deities and sacred images These divergent symbolic constructs might be presented through alternative schemata, like schematism and monstrance, that constituted a deliberate shift from the grammars of 'realism' obtaining in the Mediterranean world and expressing discrepant realities associated with shamanic vision and the supernatural world. The desire to challenge or contest *romanitas* may also be evoked within the schema of monstrance itself: Shanks (1996, pp. 368–81) has argued that monstrous depictions may reflect conflict by means of the display of tension between equivalent opposites engendered by merged, hybrid images.

7.7 Conclusion

In considering a discrete and idiosyncratic group of images, I have proposed two distinct but interconnected ways of seeing hybrid, monstrous iconography in the western Roman provinces. On the one hand, it is possible to cite anthropological comparanda, for instance among certain circumpolar and indigenous North American hunter/herder communities, which point strongly in the direction of shape-shifting shamans, assuming animal personae by donning animal costume, in order to transgress boundaries and move between earthly and otherworld dimensions. On the other hand, it may be valid to view the blending of human and stag in sacred image- making within a broader context of contra-normative representation which both reflects shamanistic transference and, at the same time perhaps, develops the metaphoric symbolism of shape-shifting into the adoption of hybrid religious depictions in order to present expressions that deliberately countered *romanitas* and *humanitas* (Woolf 1998, pp. 206–37). Indeed, the formation of animal-rich iconographies in Roman Gaul may well have originated in shamanistic visions, in which reality and fantasy mingled in a surreal grammar of perception. In any case, animals are good to think with, and their symbolism is

capable of exploring socio-cosmological issues associated with people's worldview and perceptions about themselves in relation to their physical and spiritual environments (Wolch & Emel 1998, p. xiii).

Whatever the precise nature of hybrid representations like the stag-human images of Roman Gaul, the contingency of meaning upon context must always be acknowledged. Images can be 'read' meaningfully only within their socio-cultural matrix. Figural depictions can function as metaphoric windows on the societies that made and consumed them, and currencies of iconographic value are wholly embedded within the perceptions, symbolic mindsets and cosmologies of those societies. To illustrate the importance of cultural context, I end with the analogy of the dragon as the motif pertains to two totally divergent cultures, Wales and China, in each of which the dragon shares a basic reptilian form, but only the Welsh dragon has wings. The specific physicality of the dragon is dependent upon its evolutionary context. The same is true of the equally fantastic creatures of Gallo-Roman religious art.

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8
An Archaeology of Food: A case study from Roman Britain

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8.1 Introduction

The analysis of faunal remains from both Iron Age and Romano-British sites may well be established, but this work has mostly been conducted to recover information about the economy and husbandry regimes practised. Another important point to raise, is that animal bones and other classes of finds have rarely been looked at with regard to their cultural and social significances. They are also mostly studied in isolation: finds reports often do not consider the relationship that certain artefacts may have had with each other. It is particularly rare to find the study of ceramics to be integrated with that of animal bones and plant remains. In addition, the animal bones and other finds from Roman sites have mostly been studied from a Romano-centric viewpoint, *i.e.,* assuming that people eating Roman foodstuffs were Roman or desired to be more like the Romans. This paper aims to address some of these issues, and to put forward a methodology which will enable the study of these different forms of material culture. This will thus provide us with a framework for studying food in a socially meaningful and theoretically-informed way. The model integrates the different classes of data which would have been associated with a meal, both in its preparation and consumption, and therefore seeks to explore areas beyond the simple economic and environmental interpretations of remains. This model helps us to study meals from the perspective of those eating them.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the methodology devised to analyse food from Romano-British sites. It will also briefly consider how the model can be applied to the data. The case study which will be used is that of the site of Dragonby in North Lincolnshire (May 1996). The case study will illustrate how such an approach can help us to gain insights into the foodways of Roman Britain.

Post-Colonial theory has had a significant influence on Roman scholarship in the past ten years. Although first developed within the field of literary criticism, it has now been successfully applied to a wide range of other disciplines, including archaeology. Although this study of food is not wholly informed from a post-colonial perspective, the basic arguments, such as viewing Roman Britain as a colonial context and ascribing a proper weight to the rôle of the native poor, have been influenced by it. The concept of discrepant experience, meaning that depending on where you stand within a colonial situation your perception of that situation will be different (Said 1993), has also been important in constructing the background to this work. This idea can also be applied to material culture, for example, depending on its context of use the artefact may have had different meanings to different groups within society. Just as an event can have differing meanings and be open to different interpretations,

so too can artefacts. The use of post-colonial theory has been in many ways a deconstructive one, highlighting the colonial overtones within past study of the Roman Empire (Webster & Cooper 1996). Many other areas of theory are more relevant to the study of food and material culture in particular consumption theory (Appadurai 1986; Bourdieu 1984) and anthropology (Goody 1982).

Although anthropology may have received much censure in the light of post-colonial critiques of its eurocentric bias (Ashcroft *et al.* 1998), it addresses everyday issues, such as food, in greater depth than other disciplines. As long as it used in a sensitive way, anthropological literature can provide us with many insights into how food is used in the construction of identity and how food is central to life, not just on a nutritional level. It is not just concepts gained from post-colonialism that can be useful in this study of food, but also issues which are related to post-processualism, such as the need for contextuality. Other issues such as identity can play a rôle in such a study. If food is central to life and to the construction of identity then we must take full account of the many regional, ethnic and gender identities which may have been present in the past. Furthermore, there were also many different and often unequal power relationships present which influenced people's perceptions and actions (Scott 1990). These may be traced through their use of food as an expression of identity or status. The use of contextual archaeology can help us to gain new understandings of old problems. For example, it can be suggested that it is not the source of origin of pottery which is important but rather its context of use. Thus, it is not the simple presence or absence of Samian within a site which is significant but rather how it was used and by whom. Therefore, from this theoretically-informed perspective, it must be borne in mind that even though people were using Roman material culture and ingredients it did not mean that they wholeheartedly consented to Roman rule, or even that they were cooking and eating Roman meals.

These considerations, as mentioned above, are particularly relevant to the study of Romano-British artefacts which may have had multiple identities and meanings. We must also recognise that other factors influenced the choice of material culture used, like utility and availability as well as status and the perceived attractiveness of an object.

8.2 Romano-British food

Based on these theoretical considerations, a model has been constructed to study food in Romano-British contexts (Table 8.1). The model has been based on the processes involved in the cooking of a meal. The model is divided into two main stages: food procurement and food preparation. These have been subdivided into different phases which take account of the meal process. The first stage is that of food procurement, *i.e.,* obtaining the different ingredients such as meat, dairy products, cereals, vegetables, flavourings and the utensils needed for the food's preparation. The next stage has been labelled the food preparation stage. This stage goes through the different types of activities which would be needed to prepare, cook, serve and eat the food obtained in the first stage. It is important to note here that the main thrust of the model is based on the integration of the different types of data: animal bones, botanical remains and ceramics. Although other sources of data are available, such as structural evidence, these categories have been chosen as they are directly related to the food being prepared and consumed. Areas of analysis have also been identified within these stages. It is not sufficient to characterise the diet of a site on

Process	Evidence
Meal Stage 1: Food Procurement	
husbandry regimes	age-at-death profile
supply	pottery (amphorae),
(pottery and flavourings)	botanical remains (exotica)
hunting, fishing	wild animal remains
agriculture	plant remains
Meal Stage 2: Food Preparation	
1. Initial Processing	
meat	butchery
chaff, husks, cereals	grains
dairy products	husbandry regimes
	pottery
2. Initial Storage	
smoking/curing of meat	hole through scapula
grain storage	structural evidence
	botanical evidence
3. Meal preparation	
meat	butchery (filleting); skeletal element representation
flavourings	amphorae
preparation vessels	mortaria
4. Cooking methods	
pottery	forms and fabrics; size of cooking pots; native/imported fabrics
size of joints	fragment size
type of joints	skeletal element representation
5. Serving and eating	
pottery	size, form and fabric
6. Other Information	
	size of animals
rituals associated with food	context of deposition

Table 8.1: Model used to study food in Romano-British contexts.

the basis of the species proportions of the different livestock present, rather one needs to consider all the different issues associated with the use of animals for consumption. These include age at death patterns, skeletal element representations, butchery, size of animals and the fragment size of bones. Traditional pictures of the Roman diet have been largely based upon the use of species proportions (see King 1978, 1999), but the methods of quantification here need to be carefully considered. The use of meat weight as a guide to the actual contribution made by any given species to the meat component is central to this model. Within these stages specific artefact types have been highlighted. For example, are mortaria present and, if so, in what quantity and from what date? Such artefacts have, after all, often been cited as evidence for the Romanisation of the food.

The second part of the model is based on the theoretical frameworks which have informed this work. Therefore, we need to be critical of so-called markers of 'Roman-

ness'. As mentioned above, different artefacts in different contexts can be read in multiple ways and this needs to be constantly borne in mind before ascribing the overly simplified labels of 'Romanised' or 'Unromanised' to a site. The quantity with which goods are present will be considered very closely, for example, the presence of olive oil could superficially be seen as evidence for a more Romanised diet. However, when evaluated, it may be the case that only two oil amphorae were actually present on the site, hence olive oil would have had very little impact on the cuisine. Obviously it could be stated that olive oil was not necessarily used in food preparation but rather for lighting or beauty treatments. This is however, a related but different issue and will not be discussed in any greater detail here.

Roman material culture was widely used and is present on almost all sites of this period. However, this need not imply that native practices were superseded or discarded but may still have continued, incorporating and altering the new ingredients and ceramic vessels within an existing framework. Food, as has been shown from anthropological research, is a very deep-seated part of the cultural identity of a group (MacClancy 1992). Therefore, as will be discussed in the case study, people are often conservative about what they are willing to eat and are often wary of 'new' or 'foreign' foodstuffs.

This model helps to integrate the different classes of material culture associated with a meal and incorporates the basic theoretical principles outlined above. It helps us to see parallels in the separate and different classes of material culture which would otherwise not be seen. This will become evident in the case study which is outlined below. It removes food from the realms of subsistence and highlights its social and cultural significances. These can often be more important to a group than mere nutritional requirements as examples from both historical archaeology and anthropology have demonstrated. Food taboos in many societies also play a large rôle in determining what can and cannot be eaten. These have often not been established along nutritional lines but rather upon ritual, religious or ideological ones (Goody 1982).

8.3 Dragonby: a case study

In this section I will briefly outline how the model has been applied to the site of Dragonby located within the Corieltauvian territory close to the River Humber (May 1996). The site was occupied from the late La Tène to the medieval period and has been interpreted as an *oppidum* site which is substantiated by the presence of high quality imported pottery and other artefacts in both the pre- and post-conquest periods.

From the varied strands of evidence analysed and discussed, we can see how the inhabitants of Dragonby partially and in a negotiated way, adopted new practices and foods. The animal bones were analysed by Harman (1996, pp. 141–58), and the fish remains by Jones (1996, p. 164). The initial (published) data have formed the basis for this re-interpretation in the light of the model and the theoretical framework outlined above. There is very little change in the meat consumed, beef being the most common in both periods, followed by mutton and pork. Horse is also present in quite large proportions which may be indicative that horse was actually eaten. However, there are many different ways of quantifying the data beyond the analysis of species proportions, and one of these methods is that of meat weights, which provides a measure of how important each species was in terms of its contribution

	Min. no. of individuals (%)		Meat weights (%)	
Species	Iron Age	Romano-British	Iron Age	Romano-British
Cattle	22	27	61	68
Sheep	63	59	26	21
Pig	14	13	12	9

Table 8.2: Meat consumption at Dragonby.

to the available meat on any given site. This method of quantification will be used throughout this study of food and is based on the figures published in Vigne (1992). The results obtained using these different methods of quantification are very different as is illustrated in Table 8.2.

From this we can see that there is very little difference between the species favoured for consumption in the Iron Age and the Romano-British period. However, what is clear is that sheep dominate the assemblages when using minimum number of individuals whereas when meat weights are employed then it is cattle that can be seen to dominate. This can be simply explained as cattle have more meat available for consumption than sheep or even pigs. It can be suggested that this method of quantification provides a picture of species proportion which equates more readily with the actual importance that these species had. It can therefore be suggested that beef dominated the meat diet. However, it must be considered that meat was not the only product available for consumption; products such as offal and marrow may also have been important.

Other issues such as husbandry regimes, butchery, skeletal element representation and the size of bone fragments all need to considered. These can reveal information about the actual joints consumed on site and whether there were any changes in the type of joints favoured either in different periods or in different parts of the site.

Another important issue when dealing with the faunal remains is that of butchery. Although no evidence from Dragonby was available, this should be borne in mind for later research. Did the pre-existing Iron Age butchery pattern of small cut marks made with knives continue on rural sites, or did it change into a more Roman-style method with larger cut marks? It could be suggested that similar butchery patterns continued on rural sites as it may have been the same group of people doing the butchery, or it may have changed, as it did in the larger urban settlements. However, it needs to be considered whether or not a change in butchery methods meant a change in the types of cuts of meat eaten. Even though butchery techniques may have changed, the joints of meat consumed may have remained the same.

The plant remains were analysed by van der Veen (1996, pp. 197–210) and the data published in the report has formed the basis for this re-interpretation. The plant macrofossils recovered from the site indicate that the cereal crops cultivated stayed the same from the Iron Age into the Roman period, with six-row barley being the most common, incidentally a crop not known in Roman Italy. Some exotic flavourings were also present such as coriander, summer savoury and poppy seeds as well as woad. These may have been cultivated in the surrounding area after initial importation. Although woad is technically not a food crop, being mainly used as a decorative aid (Caesar, *de Bello Gallico* V, 14), it is nonetheless relevant to this survey as the plant itself is not native to Northern Europe but rather to South Eastern Europe (van der Veen 1996, p. 199). Its presence together with the other three exotic herbs indicates

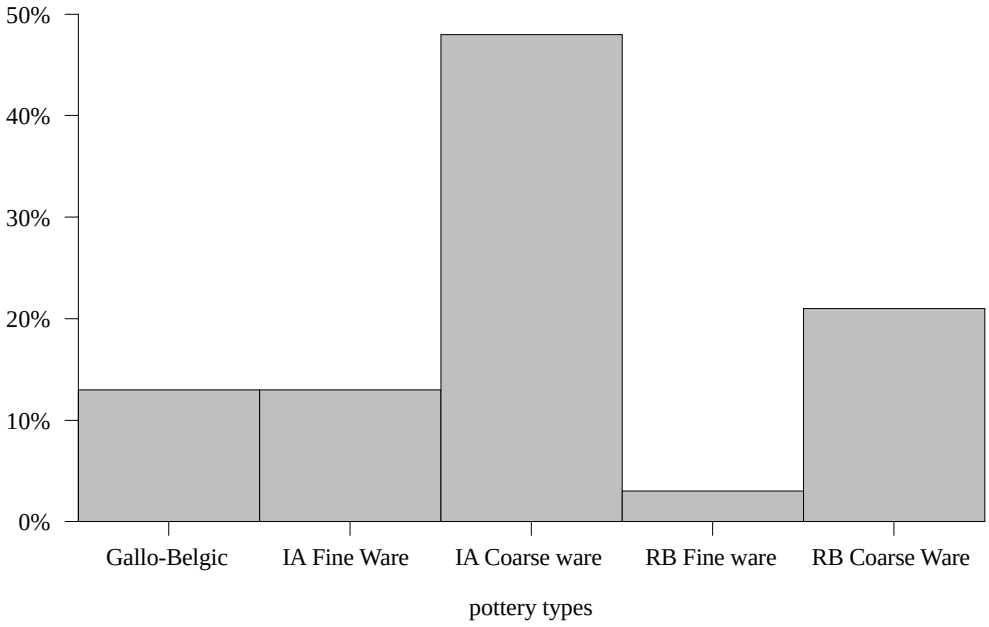


Figure 8.1: The early Roman pottery assemblage from Dragonby.

long-distance trade and contact with the Mediterranean world. Many other native flavourings and foods were also present such as elderberry, sloe, hazelnuts and juniper.

The Roman ceramic assemblage was analysed by Gregory (1996, pp. 513–608) and the data presented in the report has been used in this re-interpretation. The assemblage as a whole can be considered to be fairly conservative, much in the same way as the animal bones and plant remains suggest. As well as Samian, there are other fine ware imports present, although Roman pottery does not appear until some 50 years after the conquest and even then only in limited numbers (Figs. 8.1–8.2).

Most fine wares, as well as coarse wares, were locally produced. The Samian present on the site was well used and repaired and can therefore be seen as a cared for possession. *Mortaria* are introduced relatively early and are also well used and show signs of burning. Their presence however, need not automatically imply that the people using these objects had adopted Roman-style eating patterns, but rather that these were fitted into and adapted to already existing food patterns. However, their relative scarcity, both here and on other sites, would suggest that they were not in common circulation or use. Therefore it can be suggested that their presence may not be indicative of a great shift in food preparation. Even though this material may occur in relatively small quantities, it cannot simply be ignored. If these items were, for example, the preserve of a small élite group then they would occur in small quantities. Therefore, although these objects may not have made a huge impact on the daily food habits of the subordinate groups, they would still have played an important rôle in the construction and maintenance of the élite's rôle in society. The presence and use of these imported flavourings and ceramics could be established through a detailed contextual and spatial analysis of sites. However, as most finds reports are written in isolation, there is often very little contextual information on what occurred in the same contexts. Therefore, this integrated approach achieves a more detailed picture by cross referencing and brings together items of material culture which would in the

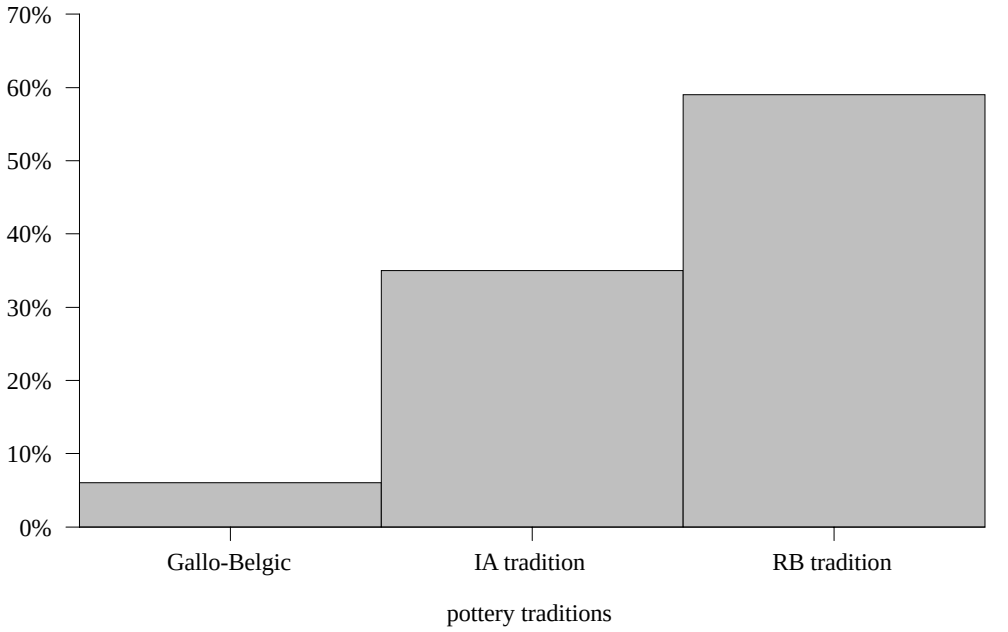


Figure 8.2: The second century Roman pottery assemblage from Dragonby.

past have been intimately related with each other. Even though the limitations of the archaeological data should be acknowledged, such a holistic approach can assist in the study of everyday life by examining these interrelated objects.

The presence of exotic, imported foodstuffs and flavourings also occurred on a limited basis. These can be identified in the archaeological record through the plant remains mentioned above and also indirectly through amphorae (Fig. 8.3).

These goods may only have been employed on special occasions or by a limited group of people thus making very little impact on the everyday eating habits. The issue of the presence of imported foodstuffs needs to be seen in the light of how they were incorporated into the cooking and eating habits of the native population. The question remains as to how they would have known the authentic Roman-style way of using these exotic flavourings. It can be suggested that such knowledge would not have been easily available in a world where news travelled only as fast as a person could run or ride a horse. Even today in a world where news is widely accessible, the recent introduction of the first zebra crossing in the Shetlands was still a cause for concern for local people as most had never used or seen one. There is all the more reason for this to have been the case in the Roman world and these exotic foodstuffs are likely to have been used in the same way as native foodstuffs that tasted or looked the same.

An example from North America can further highlight this issue of different groups in society eating different things. In nineteenth century Sacramento, different classes within the Chinese immigrant community can be identified from their respective food ways (Courtney 1997). For example, the rich Chinese consumed meat butchered in the traditional Chinese manner and ate it off imported Chinese porcelain. The lower classes on the other hand were eating cheap meat butchered in the American way and consumed this from cheap British earthenware plates. Thus if we did not have the detailed documentary information, we might, when using traditional methods of

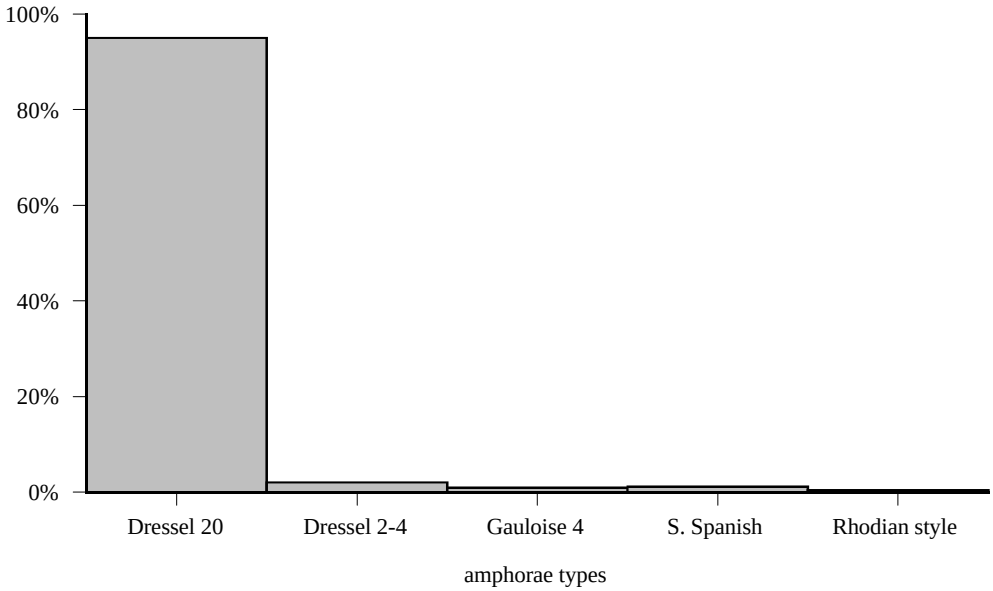


Figure 8.3: Proportions of amphorae present at Dragonby (early Roman period).

interpretation, suggest that these poor deposits derived from poor Americans (Courtney 1997). Although this example cannot be extrapolated directly for Roman Britain, it serves to highlight the fact that the use of material culture for food is more complex than a polarised view of Romanised and Unromanised.

Dragonby was obviously not a 'poor' site with many high-status artefacts present, and the consumption of pork in quite large quantities in both the Iron Age and Roman periods has been suggested as an indicator of high-status (see Grant 1989, p. 137). Although the detailed evidence is not present on this site, it can perhaps be suggested that different 'food communities' were present. Therefore, whilst the richer people on the site were using the imported wares and thus valued flavourings, foodstuffs and ceramics, the vast majority of its inhabitants were eating in a similar way to their predecessors before the conquest. Although this approach could be criticised for being normative, it needs to be considered in the light of Medieval and Tudor foodways, where status was displayed by how many exotic spices and flavourings were added to a meal. Thus it could be suggested that Dragonby was not a homogenous settlement, but a place where people had differential access to commodities and consumed these in their varying ways. However, on the whole its inhabitants seem to have been rather conservative in their foodways, adding or experimenting with some of the new foodstuffs now available. The issue of conservatism in food is one that has been widely explored within both historical archaeology and anthropology. In the Caribbean, slave women would cook and eat the same food as was traditional in their areas of origin (Bush 1990). MacClancy (1992) suggests that identity in many cases can be constructed through the food that is eaten or, as more often the case, not eaten.

8.4 Conclusions

A holistic study of this nature can reveal that the presence of Roman goods does not necessarily equate to Roman-style practices, or to the adoption of a Roman way of life. Food is and was important to people and formed an important element in the construction of their identities. We have seen that the people at Dragonby, at least, were conservative about what they ate, often not changing the basic pattern very much, and the presence of Rome may not have been noticeable for quite some period after the conquest (at least fifty years, if the evidence of the wider dissemination of Roman pottery is taken to be significant). Thus the Imperial administration may have been of little importance to what people ate, except for the limited addition of exotic flavourings.

Although this is merely a preliminary and brief outline of my research, it has highlighted the benefits of conducting a holistic and theoretically-informed study of everyday activities. Such a model can help to turn the passive peasants found inhabiting Britain in the acculturative models of Romanisation into active participants shaping, choosing, adapting and maintaining their identities within a colonial situation.

Acknowledgements

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9
Small Finds: Problems and Possibilities

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9.1 Introduction

The term 'small finds' was one adopted, sensibly, due only to the size of most of the artefacts included within the intended scope of the category. Why bother to call a collection of brooches, hairpins and furniture studs 'big finds'? But all too often, these objects have been treated in accordance with their name, and their significance ignored or under-appreciated. It is much more glamorous to give detailed examination to a building plan than a group of gaming counters. Brooches, a long term status symbol for archaeologists as well as (possibly) the people they study, often are given more attention, and those finds considered to be unusual or rare are usually singled out for more detailed mention than their less attractive companions. But even these are only described in detail, a few interesting observations on style or manufacture noted, and then forgotten about for the remainder of the report. If we are lucky, a typology of claw-footed chair legs may be compiled at some point, but this is often as far as it is taken.

For finds to be useful in the study of identity, this approach must change. Identity requires the study of objects which are believed to have occupied a place close to the people being studied, and nothing could be closer than the objects used on a daily basis: the small finds. If we accept that people express their identities through their manipulation of the world surrounding them, small finds must no longer take a back seat in meaningful analysis. Although recent work has accepted that certain artefacts may have stories to tell about their users, this is usually confined to personal accessories or items of like nature (*e.g.,* Cool 1990; Jackson 1985). However, upon close inspection even the furniture studs and claw-footed chair legs have things to tell, if only we are willing and open-minded enough to look. If identity is accepted as something which runs through every aspect of one's life, whether conscious or not, expressions of it must be sought in every part of material culture. Small finds, as the material culture used and manipulated every day, must be included at the forefront.

9.2 Small finds' potential

The potential for the analysis of identity through small finds does not have to be demonstrated in a grand manner. Simple, basic methods are often effective to notice differences, or even similarities, which are telling enough to raise questions answerable by more sophisticated means. Some of these indicators may be seen by looking at the assemblages from a group of villas in southeast Britain, in the counties of Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire. As part of the analysis, eight sites were chosen, four of which had a history of immediate pre-Roman occupation: Gorhambury (Neal *et al.* 1990), Park Street (O'Neil 1945), Rivenhall (Rodwell & Rodwell 1986a,b) and

site	personal adorn.	fittings/fasts.	tools	textile manuf.	unknown /uncer- tain	religious beliefs /prac- tices
Boxmoor	✓	✓		✓		
Dicket Mead	✓	✓			✓	
Gadebridge Park	✓	✓	✓			
Gorhambury	✓	✓	✓			
Latimer	✓	✓	✓			
Park Street	✓	✓	✓			
Rivenhall	✓	✓	✓			
Stanton Low	✓	✓				✓

Table 9.1: Most prevalent functional categories appearing at each site.

Stanton Low (Woodfield & Johnson 1989); and four of which did not: Boxmoor (Neal 1976), Dicket Mead (Rook 1987), Gadebridge Park (Neal 1974) and Latimer (Branigan 1971). This selection was made in order to detect whether there were differences among assemblages, which were noticeably attributable to site history. A simple study was undertaken, using only two of the artefacts' characteristics: function and material. Those included in the study were the small finds in occupation levels from the immediate pre-Roman period if applicable, through to the end of Roman period occupation, excluding pottery, vessel glass and coins. These were loosely grouped into sixteen categories according to assumed function, based on Nina Crummy's 1983 classification system for the finds from Colchester (Crummy 1983, pp. 4–5),with some modification.[1] They were also analysed based on the material of composition; the results from each site were then compared with each other.

Before continuing, the 'functional' aspect of the analysis must be qualified. It is accepted that there can be more than one possible function for an object, and that not all functions are always easily detected. It is also accepted that as time progresses, objects take on different meanings based on a number of factors: who is using them, under what circumstances they came to belong to, or be used by, a certain person, or even the prevailing social conditions of the time. However, in order for any investigation to be conducted, some allowance must be made. Even if an object was produced with the sole purpose of looking pretty, then that objective can be considered here to stand as its function. Although often problematic, functions were an essential part of an artefact's total makeup, and thus cannot be ignored. Hidden meanings are likely to remain hidden, deceptive objects are likely to remain deceptive, and so the best we can do is to proceed with the most apparent function. When there is more than one obvious function, for instance a sword sheath which may operate both as an item of personal adornment and one with military associations, this presents an opportunity to look at the object concerned from more than one angle, something which should not be, but often is, ignored.

When examined on the basis of both functional categories and materials, the most striking characteristic the assemblages display is their high degree of similarity to one another. This was detectable both among individual sites and between the two groups. Of the sixteen categories, two dominate the assemblages in almost every case: objects

[1] Due to certain ambiguities inherent within the categories, and/or lack of quantification, 'buildings and services' and 'objects with military associations' (Crummy 1983, 4–5) were omitted from this analysis.

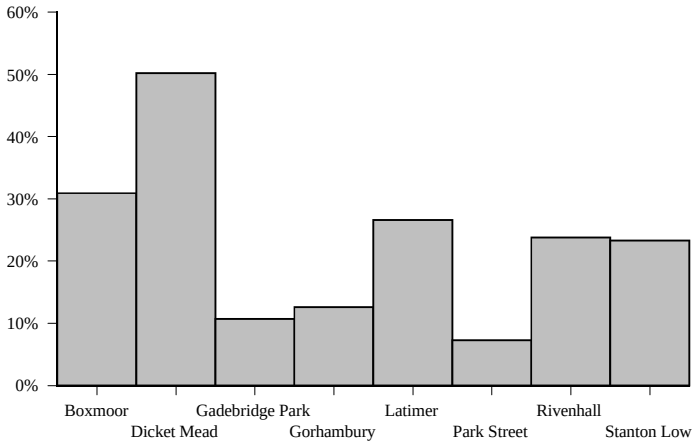


Figure 9.1: Alternative material usage: percentage of object assemblage not made of copper or iron.

of personal adornment and those used as fasteners and fittings (Table 9.1) Personal adornment and fasteners/fittings occurred in the three categories with the highest proportions of finds at every site. In all but three sites, tools rounded out the top three. In addition, within these functions there is no noticeable change over time in the sites with pre-Roman occupation. Objects we tend to identify as 'Roman' or in a 'Roman style' appear in the earliest levels, so there is no drastic change from 'native' to 'Roman' objects, no gradual 'Romanisation' of tastes. Similarly, if perhaps predictably, copper alloy and iron are always the most frequent materials used. The types of materials used in each category were also virtually identical: the only difference appears to be a marginally greater inclination toward objects of fired clay at the sites with pre-Roman occupation. These artefacts included spindle whorls, loom weights and figurines. Objects similar to those made of fired clay also appeared at the sites without pre-Roman occupation, but were made instead of lead or stone. However, the number of artefacts of such material are so small that any comparisons are preliminary at best (Spradley 1999, pp. 39, 70–78)). So here it is apparent that we have several groups of people using more or less the same objects, which are made more or less of the same materials. Thus there is no detectable difference between the groups of sites with and without pre-Roman occupation that can be attributable to that particular characteristic. Far from being a disappointing result, this has important implications for the issue of Romanisation, hinted at in theoretical discussions for several years. In this case, by using only the small finds it is shown rather more concretely, as well as easily, that the issue is not a straightforward one. It does not boil down to a simple distinction between 'Romans' and 'non-Romans', thus questioning the validity of the debate at its current stage, and to a degree substantiating the theoretical discussions. In a rather general sense, this is just one benefit of using small finds.

Within these seemingly similar assemblages, individually there is one detectable deviation with regards to materials used (Fig. 9.1). At all but one of the sites, non-copper alloy or iron objects comprise less than one third of the total assemblage. The exception is Dicket Mead, where such items amount to over 50% of the assemblage (Rook 1987, 107–73). The slack is normally taken up by bone objects, and at Dicket Mead the third most common material is indeed bone. Materials other than copper alloy, iron or bone however, still account for one third of the total of the artefacts recovered here. Comparably, of the remaining seven sites, the highest proportion of artefacts made from materials other than these three comes in at only half of that,

17%. As the site of Dicket Mead lies on river gravels, this could partially contribute to the lower survival rate of bone objects (Rook 1987, p. 79). The people at Dicket Mead may not have been deviating significantly in what they used, but in the materials they used. What does this mean? Clearly they were doing something different from everyone else. This site is not an isolated one: copper alloy and iron objects surely must have been as available as they were for the other seven sites. At the very least, we can say that a preference different to that expressed at the other sites is manifested at Dicket Mead, and preferences betray our identities, whether they are conscious ones or not, whether individually self-inflicted or culturally ascribed. Perhaps matters would be clearer if more of the site's features were examined together, a point to which I will return later in the paper.

Keeping the overall assemblage similarities in mind, if detailed examination is undertaken, we find that there are subtler issues which can be raised about those other aspects of identity which often exist simultaneously with each other. Simply noting the amount of utilitarian items such as building studs or furniture handles which have been elaborated or decorated may reveal something about the perceived need (or even ability) to impress, the importance of display-issues which could be influenced by a number of factors, of which status and wealth are only two. Likewise, the existence of multi-layered identities can be hypothesised without undue difficulty. Superficially, the assemblages look more or less the same, yet closer inquiry reveals the occasional oddity as indicated by the two examples discussed below. Firstly, the unique occurrence of a green metal variscite ring from the main building at Gadebridge Park requires comment. With origins only known from Saxony, Austria and Bohemia, this suggests some sort of connection with Central Europe (Neal & Butcher 1974, p. 138), although whether this was at the level of the owner or the manufacturer of the ring is of course unclear. But the public use of the site suggested by the presence of a large bathing pool connected to the baths presents exciting possibilities (Neal & Butcher 1974, pp. 68–9, 75–6). Was the owner of the ring originally from Central Europe? Could it have been an army veteran with a former posting there? Or a man with a wife from the area? Perhaps it is simply evidence of trade, but what was it about this particular ring which made it so attractive? Knowing this much, one might ask whether there are other items, which also suggest a Central European connection. If so, what could be the implications for expressing gender or age differences? As a second example, at Dicket Mead, the presence of a stone Graeco-Egyptian amulet (Rook 1987, p. 162), raises questions of a similar sort. It is the only object of this kind found at any of the sites studied. Someone with a connection to Dicket Mead at least had an affinity for Graeco-Egyptian art or religion, an interest or connection which is not visible at the other sites. Why?

Thus whilst the small finds at these sites appear to represent groups of people who only express the same sort of identity (which in this case looks much like what would traditionally be called 'Roman'), they also show signs of other identities as well, existing simultaneously with each other. Perhaps with further investigation, these aspects will prove to be significant. Rather than providing immediate, concrete answers, the importance of both of these examples lies in demonstrating how easily finds enable the mind to expand in different directions from a single point of origin.

9.3 Associated Problems

Small finds cannot be used to their full potential, however, until various problems are addressed. Certainly, unless there is a change in the way finds are reported and an increase in the types of analyses done on them, the rich potential of this material for illuminating questions of identity will not be fully realised.

One word may be used to encapsulate the greatest need in finds studies: integration. This is essential in two respects, the first of which applies to the world of finds reporting itself. Contrary to what one might assume when reading site reports, finds have a number of characteristics worthy of study. Classification according to material, the preferred and often only form of reporting, is clearly the most expedient method when time is a serious factor, and some valuable analysis may indeed result (*e.g.,* Clarke 2000, p. 25). However, with respect to identity, using this method alone is restrictive to effective and thorough examination. In most cases, there are several untapped attributes which, when examined as a whole, can reveal far more information about the objects' rôles in the lives of the people concerned. Intra-site location, material, associated finds and function are but a few. For example, a few apparent furniture handles might not say much on their own, but silver-plated copper alloy handles found in an outbuilding with metalworking tools and waste in close association could result in a more rewarding analysis. All these characteristics work together to tell the story of the artefacts, and hopefully something about their users — at least, as much of the story as we, coming on to the scene almost 2000 years later can know.

So integration is important with regards to finds alone. But once this is achieved, integration of a different kind is just as essential: that of finds within the whole. Parts of the body separated from each other cannot reveal how the body works as a unit. In the same manner, small finds, as objects used in everyday life, were a part of the functioning of a community, and thus cannot be expected to communicate the whole story. When identity is under consideration, looking at the big picture is of utmost importance. Recent theory has stressed repeatedly the existence of multiple, or overlapping identities (*e.g.,* Jones 1996; Jones & Graves-Brown 1996; Tilley 1989). But evidence of such multidimensionality will never be found to the satisfaction of those concerned, if all the constituents of the whole are not considered together. Small finds did not exist in isolation on a site. They formed a part of the overall life its inhabitants, existing in relationship with other parts of the villa, town or village concerned. The peculiarities in the Gadebridge Park and Dicket Mead assemblages, for example, may be clearer when considered in light of the pottery or coin loss patterns, or layout of the site. Small finds are of much greater use in studying the identity of their users when an understanding of their relationships with pottery, coins or architecture, is achieved. In turn, examination of these other parts of a site's design is not complete unless it is integrated with that of the small finds. These constituent parts, of course, helped shape and were shaped by the site's history and location. In turn, each site was part of a region, which was part of a province. Thus inter-regional and inter-provincial comparisons of finds are of fundamental importance.

For these to be effective, there is also need of a functional classification system, which is applicable across borders, yet flexible enough to avoid rigid pigeonholing of artefacts. Crummy's system for the Colchester finds (Crummy 1983, pp. 4–5) provides a good starting point, but as seen in the above examples, lacks the capacity on its own to account for multiple or changing functions. Clearly, modification is necessary. There must be allowances for many possibilities from one object, and for the same

object to move from one category to another, in accordance with each possibility. Such methods need not be rigid, or taken as the final solution. Several artefacts are unidentifiable, or indeed deceptive to the modern mind as to their ancient function. Rather than fostering discouragement, within identity studies this ambiguity should present exciting possibilities, as opportunities to think about our interpretations in different lights and alter them if necessary. If the theory of identity as multi-layered and dynamic is accurate, then our approach to the evidence should also be multi-layered and dynamic.

9.4 Conclusion

Identity is a relative concept, based on the world surrounding us. Small finds, as objects which often endured or signalled changes throughout life, should be a principal means of fostering this area of study. Statistical and locational techniques such as Correspondence Analysis or other multivariate techniques are available to help reveal patterning and changes within the data (*e.g.,* Cool *et al.* 1995, pp. 1626–45), and even examination by sight alone may illuminate more than expected. In searching for the answers to questions such as, 'what influences the pattern?' or 'why are these patterns detectable in one place but not another?' identities will slowly take shape. However, the effectiveness of these techniques and issues is severely diminished without adequate reporting and publication. A few of the sites included in this study may have been more helpful if their finds had been reported more thoroughly. Coins and pottery have long been afforded the benefit of extensive recording or individual analysis. Within small finds, metalwork may be given a separate section, but often no comprehensive analysis is undertaken. One need not look far for examples: reports from Gorhambury (Neal *et al.* 1990) to Winterton in Lincolnshire (Stead 1976) demonstrate this trend. Ideally, excavators would take action to ensure that finds would be treated with the same importance given to coins and pottery. In addition to recognising that finds are important, this would require that they be treated as such from the moment they are taken from the soil, and all their details adequately noticed, and noted for future use. It only takes time and willingness to take advantage of the opportunities contained within finds reports which might result in the transformation of the corpus of data, allowing for a dynamic interpretation of the lives affected by the artefacts that comprise the data set. Once these opportunities are seized upon, only then perhaps 'small' finds may lose the pejorative quality inherent in their name.

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10
'Romanisation' and the Body

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10.1 Introduction

What evidence do we have for the change in identity (whether ethnic, local or individual), of the native, non-élite Britons from the later Iron Age to the early Roman period? I propose here that such a change in identity may be examined by following the use of four different 'Roman' 'body-related' artefact types through time. Related to this, I hope to be able to gain insight into whether the categories of 'Roman' or 'native' (in any hybrid or creolised combination, *cf.* Webster 1997a, 2000) held any meaning to the native Britons in terms of how they structured or expressed their identities.

My four categories of 'body-related' artefacts (taken from a total of 37 sites from Essex and Hertfordshire) have all traditionally been interpreted as 'Roman' artefacts. They comprise hairpins; toilet instruments; brooches; and cosmetic grinders. These are all currently assumed to be representative of the *Roman* practices of grooming and adornment and general identity construction; *e.g.,* for the creation of Roman hairstyles; for grooming in a Roman manner; for holding up or holding together Roman-style clothes; and for the application of Roman-style cosmetics respectively. In this paper I wish to address the questions: were they were used by the Britons? If so, for what purposes, and did they structure their ethnic identity by the adoption, adaptation or rejection of these tools? These artefacts are especially useful for the determination of the aims of this paper because they are all relatively common in the archaeological record; most of them have a typology and chronology; and all of them are connected with appearance and, thus, identity.

10.2 Hairpins

Roman-style bone hairpins, which date from around AD 50 (Crummy 1979, 1992) have been found at many sites in Essex and Hertfordshire. However, we must not assume that these artefacts were necessarily used solely for creating Roman-style hairstyles. Out of all 37 sites examined, only nine had more than 20 hairpins. Of those, the greatest number was found at the *civitas* capitals of Colchester and Verulamium. Allowing for post-depositional factors and excavator error, this low number of hairpins might suggest that the complicated Roman hairstyles were only adopted by a minority of women or perhaps only worn on special occasions. However, we have no proof that these women were recreating Roman hairstyles, nor even that they were used by women. At the cemetery in Poundbury, out of six burials which were found with bone hairpins, two were biologically (though not necessarily gender) male (Farwell & Molleson 1993). Finds such as this demonstrate that we cannot make assumptions

about how people may have been exploring and constructing gender identities, (which Jundi & Hill 1998 tell us were fluid at this time) with new items of material culture.

Figure 10.1 presents a one possible typology of hair pins derived from the work of Crummy (1979, 1992). It seems that different hairpin designs prompted different choices and practices. For example, some hairpin types (such as Crummy Types 2 and 3) were very popular. Other hairpin types appear to have been 'boycotted' by certain sites. The sites of Gorhambury, Braughing-Puckeridge, Gadebridge Park and Baldock had no Type 6 hairpins, but did have those which came chronologically earlier and later. Verulamium had 557 hairpins and only three Type Six hairpins. Yet other sites were doing their own thing entirely: at Hill Farm in Gestingthorpe, Essex, 54% of all hairpins had a cross-hatched design on the pin head (Draper 1985). This compares with only three cross-hatched pins out of a total of 602 from Colchester. In fact, the cross-hatched headed pin is sufficiently unusual to be considered a 'miscellaneous' type by Crummy. It is not found in enough numbers to merit its own type in the typology, and has not been assigned a date within the chronology. It is thus simply labelled as 'Roman'. It should also be noted that not one of the settlements at Stansted had any hairpins at all (Cool, *pers. comm.*). At the very least, such a quick overview of the variations in the archaeological record between geographically close sites shows the potential folly in applying one chronology based on one typology (Crummy's typology and chronology was based on the hairpins from Colchester alone) to many different sites. Such chronologies and typologies are likely to be site-specific. We cannot be sure that people in different places were making and using certain types at exactly the same time as the archaeological record of different sites is rarely homogeneous.

We must conclude that many people were making statements about their identities by the hairpins they chose to wear in their hair; further, the archaeological record would appear to suggest that these identities were site-specific. It seems that people were doing something different and not entirely conformist (however they perceived this) with their hair, even if it was only in terms of decorating it in a non-conventional way. However, while it is important not to read 'deliberate non-conformity' into what might otherwise be interpreted as simply a regional or personal preference, we must ask why people preferred certain types of hairpins over others — was their choice deliberately different to what other people were doing? If they were decorating their hair in a non-conformist or deliberately different way, it is possible that they were also wearing it in a non-conformist or different way. The fact that only nine out of a total of 37 of sites under review had more than 20 hairpins might back up this suggestion. It seems likely that most people were doing other, non-Roman things with their hair. This British-style use of Roman hairpins is also reflected in the context of deposition of the hairpin, with most being found in pits and ditches in accordance with pre-existing Iron Age practices of ritual deposition (Hill 1995).

10.3 Toilet Instruments

Toilet sets, usually made up of ear-scoops, nail-cleaners and tweezers hanging from a chatelaine which was carried on the person, have their *floruit* in the mid to late first and second centuries AD. They show us the importance of grooming in Roman society. The fact that they were worn on the person suggests that to be *seen* grooming was as important as the act itself. Thus, we might conclude that to groom in public was not viewed with the same distaste as it is in our society. In addition, as tweezers are more common than nail-cleaners, which in turn are more common than ear-scoops

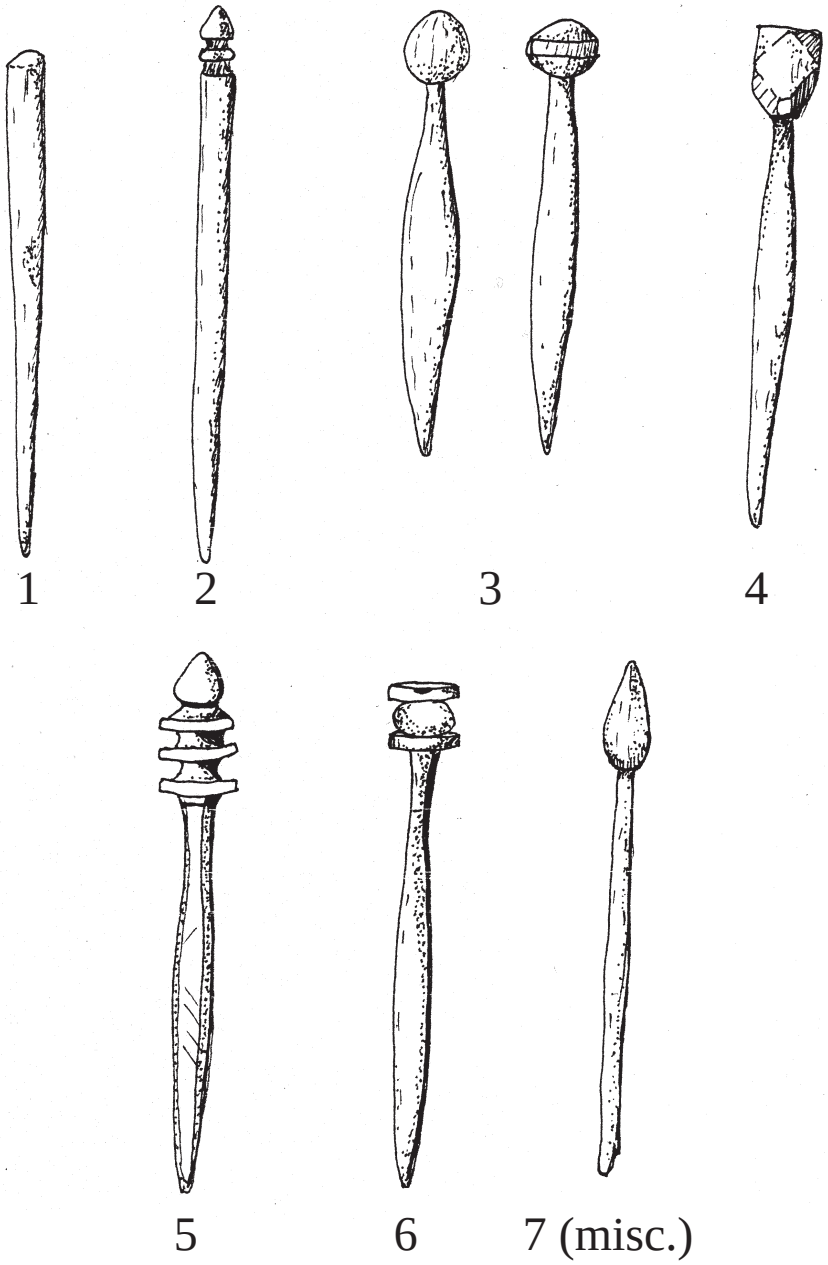


Figure 10.1: Bone pin typology (after Crummy 1979, 1992).

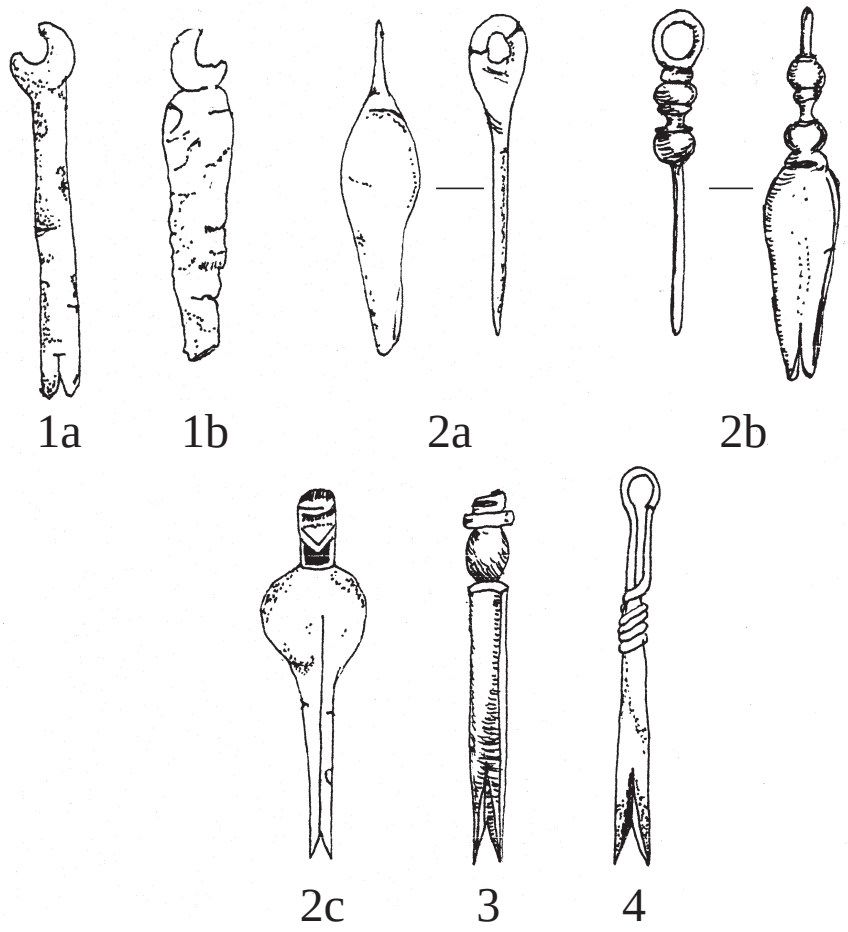


Figure 10.2: Nail cleaner typology (after Crummy 1983).

in the archaeological record, we might suggest that this is a reflection of the relative importance and visibility of plucking facial hair versus cleaning nails versus cleaning out ears.

The nail cleaner typology presented in Figure 10.2 is after Crummy (1983). A typology exists for nail cleaners only. This is because there is insufficient variation through time in the design of tweezers or ear-scoops. Crummy (1983) categorised nail cleaners into Types One to Four. Although these form the vast majority of nail cleaners found in Essex and Hertfordshire, they are not the only ones. Drury (1988, Figs. 64.42–64.45) divided nail cleaners from Chelmsford into types A, B, C and D, where types B and D overlapped with two of Crummy's types. There are, however, many other types of nail cleaner design. Crude, 'home-made' types were found at Station Road, Puckeridge (Partridge 1979, Fig. 7.3); Gadebridge Park (Neal 1974, Fig. 62.191) and Hill Farm (Draper 1985, Fig. 12.76). Further, there are some well-made but unusual nail cleaners at sites such as Kelvedon (Rodwell 1988, Figs. 48.45, 51 and 52), where three out of four nail cleaners were unusual types; similarly, at Gadebridge Park cleaners illustrated in Figs. 62.184 and 190 were also unusual (Neal

1974). Hill Farm, which also had its own style of hairpins, had a unique nail cleaner type (Draper 1985, Fig. 12.77).

Other variations in toilet instruments as a whole are seen, for example, at the cemetery at Stansted, where the instruments making up the two toilet sets (normally a combination of ear-scoop, nail cleaner and tweezers) comprised a *ligula* rather than an ear-scoop. A toilet set was also found with a nail file in Balkerne Lane at Colchester (Crummy 1983, SF 1941/2106), also the location of a toothpick (SF 1939/372), the only one from the 37 sites under review; further, a small knife for attachment to a toilet set was found at Hill Farm (Draper 1985, Fig. 12.75).

These local variations in design and, in some cases, in choice of grooming instrument may also reflect the variation in use between different sites. These local, site-specific practices may have emphasised the importance of site-specific identities within which individual identities based on age, gender and status may have existed. In addition, there is no evidence to suggest that women were the only people who used toilet instruments. It is more likely that they were used by anyone who wanted to groom themselves or modify their appearance.

We must remember that toilet instruments were present in Britain before the Roman period and throughout the Iron Age, albeit in smaller numbers, *e.g.,* the tweezers and probe from Gussage All Saints in Dorset (Wainwright 1979, Fig. 87, 3075 and 3004 respectively) which date to the first century BC/AD; and also the iron tweezers from Winnall Down, Wiltshire (Fasham 1985, Fig. 43.20) which belong to the middle Iron Age. Toilet instruments were also present in the Bronze Age, so it is likely that those present in the Iron Age represent a continuation of use rather than an introduction of a new practice from the continent. It is entirely possible that people continued to use toilet instruments in the later Iron Age and early Roman period for native-style grooming and, as such, their increase in number could have been a continuation of earlier practices rather than what some might call 'Romanisation'. It is likely that toilet instruments may have held no *a priori* association with the Romans as they existed before the conquest. People may also have been using them to recreate the identity of their ancestors in themselves in order to reinforce their native identity as part of an alternative discourse to new ways of self-representation and identity. If this is so, 'Roman' or continental influence *may* have been responsible for the increased use of toilet instruments, but not in the most obvious way.

Because we have no clear idea *exactly* how these instruments were used beyond general cleaning and plucking, it is possible that they were used in many different ways by different groups of people for different purposes. It is likely that appearances were cultivated according to such social categories as gender, age-group and status as well as family-, clan- or site-specific practices. These variations in practices may well be reflected in the variation in the toilet instrument typology discussed above.

10.4 Brooches

From the later pre-Roman Iron Age and especially at the time of the Roman conquest, the brooch stands out in the archaeological record from all other types of jewellery. This is because it is found in markedly increased numbers during this period. The increase is so sharp and dominates the small-find assemblage to such an extent that the phenomenon has been characterised as the 'fibula event horizon' by Hill (1995, 1997), and is related to what Willis (1997) called a 'deposition Geist': a wider phenomenon of increased deposition of material culture at this time.

One of the reasons why the brooch, above all other pieces of jewellery, became such a ubiquitous item in this time of flux is suggested by Jundi & Hill (1998). Because gender, social and cultural identities were increasingly fluid in the Late pre-Roman Iron Age (LPRIA) and after the Roman conquest, dress and appearance and even the brooch may have been an important way to differentiate between these identities. However, were people signalling their identity, whether what we might recognise as 'native', 'Roman', both simultaneously or any number of hybrids, with brooches?

We must be aware, of course, that there is no simple division between being 'native' or 'Roman'. For Barrett, for example, being 'Roman' was a question of 'bodily dispositions, movement, appearance, the occupation of places, relations of domination, and the submission of the self to other authorities' (Barrett 1997, p. 60). Being Roman was a lived experience for its subjects, differing from individual to individual and over time and space. It was a practice. Thus, the presence of Roman / imported Mediterranean material culture on a settlement does not prove that the inhabitants were Romanised. They may have been using Roman objects in a 'native' way for 'native' (*i.e.,* indigenous, traditional) practices.

When it comes to brooches, however, it may be difficult to know how people were using them. We cannot just ask whether they were being used in a 'Roman' or a 'native' manner, *i.e.,* whether they were being used to hold up 'native' or 'Roman'-style clothes, because these two categories are polyvalent. A combination of clothing types may have been worn. It may not have been merely a choice between one thing or the other. In addition, a brooch does not, of itself, have any independent 'ethnic identity', but is merely used in certain ways by certain people for certain reasons. By examining the brooch itself, we can perhaps gain a deeper insight into the identities that it helped to create.

As an example, I would like to take the Roman period Dragonesque brooch. Jundi & Hill (1998) argued that it drew upon pre-existing visual motifs relating to the past to assert a non-Roman identity. This assertion could be argued to be a form of covert resistance against being 'Roman'. There are also other examples of brooches that, one might argue, had this potential, as discussed below.

The active construction of a non-'Roman' identity can be a strong statement even if signalled only to other non-Romans as a way of 'thumbing one's nose' at the Romans behind their backs. This would have been especially effective, and perhaps a source of amusement, if this were done using signals that would not necessarily have been readable by, or visible to, Romans. An example of this is suggested by the parallel of 'gay men in a straight world' by Matthews (1994). He tells us that 'gay men have resorted to a number of devices to make themselves mutually recognisable whilst remaining hidden to the rest of the world. This can take the form of dress codes involving clothing, jewellery, hairstyles, make-up and tattoos, although such codes may need to be relatively fluid, subtle or ambiguous, otherwise they may become readily readable by heterosexuals' (Matthews 1994, p. 123).

What 'mutually recognisable but hidden' devices might be found in the brooches of the Essex / Hertfordshire region? The most popular brooches of this region are, without doubt, the Colchester (originally an import but also made in Britain) and Colchester derivatives (a British version of the Colchester), which date to around the time of Conquest and beyond. On examining these brooch types more closely, we see that there are subtle differences. While the Colchester was made in one piece, Colchester derivatives were made in two pieces. The Colchester was undecorated while Colchester derivatives were decorated with such features as enamel, loops and head-studs. The Colchester was simple, plain and had a curved bow. The bows of

Colchester derivatives were often humped and decorated with a crest and cavetto mouldings.

Because these features are fairly subtle, it can be assumed that brooches played a rôle important enough for people to want to come close to examine and admire them, and to notice, understand the significance of, and appreciate the subtle differences. We can see that decoration was the chief difference between the Colchester and its derivatives. This is exemplified in one single but important feature, which proves to us that the Colchester and its derivatives were seen as different types in the minds of the metalsmiths and the inhabitants of Britain as well as to us. They consistently had a different metallurgical composition and were thus different colours.

Bayley (1985) states that whereas most LPRIA copper-alloy brooches in Britain are made of bronze (an alloy of copper and tin with or without lead), first century imported brooches found in Britain have shown to be made of brass, *i.e.,* an alloy of copper and zinc. This sudden appearance of brass demonstrates conclusively, according to Bayley, that these later brass brooches were not part of Britain's indigenous metalworking tradition. Given this information, using x-ray fluorescence (XRF) and atomic absorption spectrometry (AAS) on the brooches to discover their composition, Bayley went on to show that whereas Colchester brooches were almost universally made of brass (although they were not universally imports, as unfinished Colchester brooches have been found at Baldock), Colchester derivatives were mostly made of leaded bronze, and sometimes of unleaded bronze or leaded gunmetal. This follows for the sites from Essex and Hertfordshire under examination in this paper. What was the reason for this? Bayley suggested several: that brass is malleable and springy and is thus suitable for making the hammered out one-piece Colchester brooches. Leaded bronze, on the other hand, is not suitable for wrought work, and can crack if hammered, and so is cast instead in two pieces. But why did the change in metal and the change from Colchester to Colchester derivative take place? Bayley makes several suggestions: did a change in the metal available to the craftsmen prompt a change in design, or did the new design permit the use of a different but cheaper alloy? Had the exploitation of Britain's mineral resources by the Romans reduced the volume of metal available to the civilian population, forcing a return to indigenous bronzes?

I suggest that the main reason why the Colchester derivative was adopted by some was to do with its colour. Whereas brass is an attractive golden colour, bronze is browner with the main decoration of the Colchester derivative brooch lying in its mouldings, enamelling and addition of chains. In rendering, perhaps reinterpreting, the Gallic-origin Colchester in a British style and making the Colchester derivatives out of bronze, the same metal as LPRIA brooches and, indeed, at some sites favouring these brooches above those made of an attractive golden brass, the colour of imported brooches — indeed, the brass Colchester brooches made in Britain were made to be almost identical both visually and in composition (see Bayley 1989, p. 270, Fig. 86) to their Gallic inspiration and predecessor, differing only in the cross-section shape of the bow — a statement was being made. Similarly, a rejection of bronze brooches at some sites in favour of those of brass and those imported from the continent might be said to be making a different statement.

It could be argued that those who favoured bronze were, on some level, signalling their association with the past, the ancestors and a 'native' identity, whereas those who favoured brass were signalling their rejection or indifference to the past and old ways of identification, and an association or affiliation with a new 'Gallic' or 'Roman' modes of identity. The choice of brooch is likely, however, to have been a purely personal preference and need not necessarily have symbolised either 'Romanisation'

site	total no. of brooches	Colchester (%)	Colchester Derivative (%)
Hertfordshire			
King Harry Lane settlement	40	17.5	10
King Harry Lane cemetery	236	43.6	0.4
Skeleton Green	75	24	1.3
Gadebridge Park	31	16.1	38.7
Gorhambury	58	13.8	19
Baldock	162	11.1	9.9
Braughing	94	10.6	9.6
Verulamium	113	9.7	15
Essex			
Colchester	172	5.8	25
Sheepen	280	29.6	9.6
Chelmsford	74	2.7	43.2
Kelvedon	33	21.2	6
Stansted settlement	68	16.2	32.3
Stansted cemetery	17	11.8	35.3
Harlow	238	15.1	23.5
Holbrooks	137	8.8	32.1

Table 10.1: Relative percentages of Colchester and Colchester derivative brooches.

or rejection, as I discuss below. We should also bear in mind that an artefact which we may interpret as continentally influenced or inspired may still have been used in a very traditional way in the society where it was used.

Willis (1994) examined the question of imports from a different perspective. He suggested a reason why it was necessary to make British copies of Gallic imports in a different metal. He suggests that imports from the Continent were culturally and politically sensitive objects which may have carried a potential to be highly subversive of established social relations, not least because they came from outside the British social order. He suggests that the definition and circulation of imports would therefore need to have been managed and controlled. This was achieved through the production, by indigenous communities, of copies or imitations of the imported material. Through copying or re-interpreting an import in a familiar manner using local technologies, the import may have been rendered acceptable to indigenous populations, thus legitimating both the copy and the copied. A similar suggestion was made by Helms (1988), who described how objects from lands regarded as dangerous could be considered impure or polluted and thus needed to be rendered in a native style if they were to be made clean.

If Willis and Helms were right, how would this translate into the actions and motives of the people of Britain? Simply, those who wanted to signal a 'native' identity would wear the Colchester derivative brooch, which had been rendered into a 'safe' and acceptable medium. Those who were not interested in keeping the 'native' *status quo*, but preferred to wear the subversive Colchester brooch with a continental origin, made a statement by wearing a culturally and politically sensitive object.

However, while not denying the ability of Colchester and Colchester derivative brooches to symbolise native and foreign identities, they may have had other meanings

on a local level: meanings that reflected aspects relating to gender, age and status. Different people could interpret the same brooch in different ways. The Colchester and Colchester derivative brooches were probably multivocal artefacts and were used to symbolise multiple identities. We cannot be sure that they were used purely to symbolise pro-native and pro-Roman identities.

10.5 Cosmetic grinders

Cosmetic grinders are currently believed to have been used for grinding and applying Roman-style cosmetics (Jackson 1985, 1993, forthcoming). I have investigated the possibility that they were used for grinding, mixing and applying native facial or body pigments such as woad for body painting or tattooing; practices that were mentioned by the classical authors (see Carr 2000, forthcoming, for full theory which also discusses other sources of evidence including coins, plant remains and potential tattooing / body painting / dyeing paraphernalia). I have argued that they were used for native rather than Roman cosmetics on the basis that they are not found outside Britain; that the Romans had their own artefact, the stone palette, for grinding cosmetics; that a small handful date to pre-Conquest times; and that they are made in a 'native' and not a 'classical' style (Jackson 1985).

To derive the indigo pigment from the woad plant (*Isatis tinctoria L.*), it is necessary to adopt the following procedure: chop up the leaves of the plant, boil them in water, and leave them to steep for an hour. Strain the liquid and throw the plant matter away, then add ammonia (perhaps in the form of urine) to the liquid until it reaches pH9 or above. Stir the liquid in air for 10–15 minutes until blue particles appear on the top, let the particles settle, then decant, leaving the sediment (or indigo) to dry out. The indigo is then powdered for further use (Buchanan 1987).

I suggest here that the cosmetic grinder was used to powder the indigo or woad and also to mix the pigment with a binding agent or to prepare the pigment for tattooing instead of body painting. I further suggest that the design of the cosmetic grinder and the decoration of the mortar terminals relate to possible agents needed to bind the pigment to the body. The terminal designs include bovine and duck heads (the binding agent in this case being milk or egg whites, or perhaps the fats and juices from cooking beef or duck); and also phallic designs (the binding agent being semen). A binding agent of fat is an important consideration when we remember that the Britons are recorded as having gone into battle naked (Diodorus Siculus V, 29–30). This would have kept them insulated. Experimental work (Carr 2000) showed that beef fat was the most effective binding agent: it cooled to a consistency of shoe-polish suggesting that it could be saved until it was next needed. We should be aware, however, that literary *topoi* such as those given by Diodorus Siculus could have been merely part of the rhetorical vocabulary used to articulate concepts of the 'uncivilised' natives (*cf.* Stewart 1995).

The different binding agents produce a variety of colours, from steely grey-blue through intense midnight blue to black. Some of the colours yielded were similar to those used in military camouflage palettes. The steel-blue colour produced by mixing beef fat and indigo has the potential to yield the face almost invisible in certain lighting conditions (Lt. Patrick Larkin, *pers. comm.*), another advantage in wearing it into battle.

To answer the question of why the Britons might have used body paint or tattoos, we should be aware that tattoos signify courage; the backwards-and-forwards motion

of the grinding 'male' and 'female' parts of the cosmetic grinder would signify virility (Jackson, *pers. comm.*); and indigo painted on the body with semen as a binding agent would signify fertility. The display of such manly attributes would have been important in battle. Further, the woad plant has anti-bacterial properties (Philip John, *pers. comm.*), and thus would have helped protect the warrior's wounds from going septic.

However, one of the most important rôles of body paint or tattoos is in providing marks of individual or group identity. These would also have marked the wearer as 'non-Roman'. Thus, cosmetic grinders could have been used in native body art in the early Roman period as a means to symbolise native identity or ethnicity. The grinders had the potential to be used by the Britons as tools of resistance, either against the Romans or against their own fellow Britons who chose to conform to the more 'Roman' standard of appearance.

While body painting for various ceremonies or rituals could have been easily washed off afterwards, leaving Romans none the wiser (useful for Britons with duplicitous affiliations), tattooing would have acted as a strong symbol of resistance against the Romans. It could have acted as a private joke among the Britons, a hidden discourse, signalled among themselves by acts such as casually rolling up a sleeve.

However, we must not assume that all body painting and tattooing in the Roman period was performed for reasons of resistance; they may also have acted simply as statements of identity which would have included information regarding gender and status. If so, there is no reason why they could not have been used in combination with what some may term a more typically 'Roman' mode of appearance in terms of hairstyle and dress. As Webster (1997b) puts it, 'resistance ... and acceptance need not be regarded as discrete responses but may occur simultaneously'.

10.6 Conclusion

My conclusions from the examples above are fourfold. First, all the artefacts listed above arrived in the archaeological record at subtly different times. Toilet instruments were present throughout the Iron Age but flourished in number in the late first and early second centuries AD; cosmetic grinders were arguably pre-Conquest but were greatest in number during the first and second centuries AD; hairpins were post-Conquest; and brooches increased in number during the Conquest period. Thus, even if the concept of 'Romanisation' was an uncontroversial one, it would still not be possible to argue in favour of a single process of a 'Romanisation of the Body'. What we can say is that, over time, people were investing more time, attention and commitment to their appearance and to grooming ever-smaller and subtler details of the body in their daily regimen, especially in the region of the face, hair and hands.

Second, but perhaps most obviously and importantly, not all 'Roman'-style artefacts were used solely for 'Roman'-style ways of life. Rather, artefacts were incorporated into existing spheres of use and meaning for indigenous practices as part of the pre-existing, pre-'Roman' trajectory. Thus, to refer to a 'Romanisation' of the body is a misnomer.

Third, there was great heterogeneity within three of the artefact classes mentioned above: the hairpins, toilet instruments and relative percentages of Colchester and Colchester derivative brooches. In addition, no two cosmetic grinders are identical (Jackson 1985). We should not be surprised at this. Such variation is normally ignored due to the constraints of the Romanisation model with its emphasis on homogeneity

and gradual uniform change. 'Roman' styles of material culture may have been used by some to articulate a 'Roman' identity (which may have varied widely and should not be regarded as 'fixed'), but may also have been subverted, appropriated and transformed (or even have occurred simultaneously) in varying, heterogeneous, and more localised expressions of ethnicity, status and gender.

Finally, people would have picked and chosen artefacts from a variety of sources from the available repertoire of which Mediterranean imports were a part. This repertoire would have been combined in unique ways by various social groups. Native people would have appropriated these new goods and invested them with new values for use within pre-existing social contexts. They would have used them for their own ends and within their own practices to fashion and construct local identities.

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11
Infants, Cemeteries and Communities in the Roman Provinces

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11.1 Introduction

It is commonly estimated that in Roman, as in other pre-industrial societies, 50% or so of individuals born were unlikely to reach maturity (Chamberlain 1997, p. 249). Under the influence of this grim statistic some historians have postulated a 'demographic determinism' for the apparent indifference towards their young children on the part of parents in past societies (Golden 1990, p. 82). The lack of attachment, the marginal position of young children in communities and the lesser degree of pollution resulting from child death have been argued to be manifested in the different burial rites performed on their behalf in many historical, archaeological and ethnographic instances. Among the most conspicuous and recurrent of these is burial in settlement space rather than in formal cemeteries (Duday *et al.* 1995; Ucko 1969, pp. 270–1). In the Roman period such differences in burial rite are explicitly documented by a small number of authors (see below). The apparent agreement between textual and archaeological evidence seems to require little further comment. However this paper re-investigates whether the archaeological evidence does fit so closely to expectations derived from texts and explores the implications for burial location as evidence for the peripheral status of infants in Roman communities.

Ancient historians have shown an increasing interest in concepts and experience of childhood, exploring for example the stages of development envisaged by medical and philosophical writers, the rites of passage that introduced the child to domestic and public life and the structural position of the child within family and society (*e.g.,* Golden 1990; Néraudau 1984, 1987; Rawson & Weaver 1997). Responses to the death of children have been exploited as part of this consideration. As well as counsels of indifference in philosophical consolations on the deaths of children, Néraudau (1984, 1987) has also shown more tender responses in other sources, as in the passage from Juvenal cited below. The *mors acerba* and *mors immatura* of the young imply a particular bitterness experienced by the deceased and those connected to them and the 'unripeness' of an untimely death. As in the early modern period (*e.g.,* Pollock 1983), the indifference thesis has been challenged in favour of an approach more sensitive to the genres from which information is taken and which admits a greater range of attitudes. Ariès' observation stands that concepts of childhood in the past were very different, but subsequent work has shown that there is no single pre-modern character for childhood (Ariès 1962).

The ancient literary and legal sources, however, give access largely to an élite and Mediterranean based world. Most children's lives are unlikely to have been structured by the progression of ceremonies and education described by the texts. Epigraphic

and artistic sources (*e.g.,* Huskinson 2000; McWilliam 2000) widen our scope, but most people had neither the resources to raise monuments nor the 'epigraphic habit'. The archaeological evidence offers potential access to a much larger proportion of the empire's population, allowing us to examine variation in behaviour across space and time, within and beyond the Roman period (Moore & Scott 1997). Of particular interest are differences in constructions of childhood between Roman societies and those incorporated into the empire (*e.g.,* Martin-Kilcher 2000) and change in these over time (Néraudau 1987; Wiedemann 1989). As with other aspects of provincial culture, textual evidence from the core has too often provided the only explanation.

Children are not archaeologically visible in burial alone (*e.g.,* van Driel-Murray 1995) but burial evidence has so far been little exploited. A number of different aspects for burial rituals can be explored, for example monuments, burial containers and grave goods, but the particular focus of this paper is the exclusion of infant burials from cemeteries as evidence for their marginality as social beings. In the first section, current views on the location of infant burials are presented and the relationship between burial treatment and age categories discussed. Taphonomic and analytical biases, which have been neglected in previous discussions, are then examined. The final section draws on selected groups of evidence from Gaul and Britain to assess current characterisations.

11.2 Rituals for infants

The principal textual references for the funerary rites for infants in the Roman world are as follows, although others also discuss more generally the appropriate ways to mourn young children (Néraudau 1987, 196–7).

Pliny (1st century AD): *Natural Histories* VII 15.72

> Hominem priusquam genito dente cremari mos gentium non est.
>
> It is the universal custom of mankind not to cremate a person who dies before cutting his teeth.

Juvenal (early 2nd century AD): *Satires* XV 138–40

> Naturae imperio gemimus ... cum funus adultae virginis occurrit vel terra clauditur infans et minor igne rogi.
>
> It's at nature's behest that we weep when the funeral cortège of a ripening virgin goes by, or the earth is heaped over an infant too young for burning.

Fulgentius (late fifth century AD?): *Expositio sermonum antiquorum* VII

> Quid sint suggrundaria. Priori tempore suggrundaria antiqui dicebant sepulchra infantium, qui necdum XL dies implessent, quia nec busta dici poterant, quia ossa quae comberentur non erant, nec tanta immanitas cadaveris, quae locum tumesceret; unde et Rutilius Geminus in Astianactis tragoedia ait: 'Melius suggrundarium miser quereris quam sepulchrum'
>
> What suggrundaria are. In former times the ancients called suggrundaria the burial places of infants who had not yet lived 40 days, because they could not be called graves since there were no bones to be cremated nor a big enough corpse for a mound to be raised. As Rutilius Geminus says in his tragedy Astyanax: 'You would do better to look for an infant's burial place than a grave'.

Pliny and Juvenal refer to the inhumation rather than cremation of infants at a period during which the majority rite was cremation, while in the explanation of obscure terms in his *Expositio*, Fulgentius reports this and the difference in location, supplying the term *suggrundaria* for the burials of infants around buildings. This is the only attestation of the term; its meaning is usually derived from *suggrunda*/*suggrundium*, a more frequently recorded term meaning 'eaves' and the space beneath. Fulgentius supports his interpretation with a quotation, but his use of sources is not entirely reliable. Whitbread (1971, p. 158) notes in the introduction to his translation that the *Expositio* 'is chiefly remarkable for the strong suspicion under which Fulgentius falls of having faked his evidence'. In the passage quoted Rutilius Geminus is a source known only to Fulgentius and no play titled Astyanax is recorded elsewhere. These sources are sometimes conflated in modern discussions (*e.g.,* Coulon 1994, p. 140) and *contra* Watts (1989, p. 373), Pliny does not refer to burial of infants in or near houses nor does he use the term *suggrundaria*. Nevertheless the composite view which may be derived from the textual sources has seemed a fair characterisation of much archaeological evidence from across the Roman world. Infant burials in early Roman cemeteries were usually inhumed when the majority were cremated. Infants have also often been excavated on settlement sites, although not always immediately beneath the eaves or around houses and were often older than 40 days (*e.g.,* Berger 1993; Duday *et al.* 1995; Scott 1990, 1991; Struck 1993).

The advice from Plutarch (*Mor.* 612A = *Cons. ad Ux.* 11) to his wife, on learning of the death of their two year old child, that mourning for infants should be minimal, based on their minimal connection to the world, may explain what appears to be an accepted framework for these different rites. Plutarch's reaction is however only one variant among responses to deaths of children in Roman literature (see above). Recent closer attention to infant burials on settlement sites has also revealed patterning not anticipated in these brief textual references. For example, the detailed excavation of infant interments in a potters' workshop at Sallèles d'Aude (Aude, France) (Duday *et al.* 1995) has revealed careful ritual rather than casual deposition. In more general surveys Struck (1993) and Scott (1990, 1991) have shown that the location of infant burials from rural sites in Britain reflects a recurring careful choice; in particular infant burial seems regularly to have inaugurated construction or terminated the use of buildings and installations. Scott's deconstruction of previous explanations shows that some modern value judgements on, or empathetic response to, this difference in burial location may be of questionable use in interpretation.

The investigation of age-related differences in burial rites, whether in location or otherwise raises more general questions as to the interpretation of burial evidence. From a 'processual' perspective, age-related treatments are among the 'horizontal' dimensions of identity expressed in mortuary rituals (Binford 1972). Like gender they have attracted less interest than determining social status hierarchies through burial differentiation, save where child burials equal to or more elaborate than those of adults might indicate ascribed rather than achieved status, and thus increasing social complexity. The post-processual critique has demonstrated that burial is not however a passive reflection of identity. Depending on contextual attitudes to death, identities are actively transformed in the context of burial ritual to present an ideological version of social structure (Shanks & Tilley 1982). Children are unlikely to be active agents in mortuary rituals (Lucy 1994); the burial ceremonies for a child are more likely to reflect the concerns of adults and may be manipulated by them to advance a position (*e.g.,* Morris 1987). Such arguments for the ideological rôle of ritual can be reductionist and omit the emotive dimension of responses to death (Meskell

1994). However a more empathetic approach risks imposing contemporary attitudes: the choice of child burials to illustrate this dimension may be based on modern views of special poignancy in child death. It is also difficult to use emotional response to explain variation in rites. The age categories which can be identified through differentiation in burial practices, in this case burial location, therefore do not correspond directly to general constructions of age categories in the society in question. They ought rather to be compared to categories operating in other spheres of public and private life, which the literary evidence from the ancient world shows both to overlap and to contradict (see references above).

This re-examination of the proportion of infant burials in cemeteries has also been prompted by recent observations on the interpretation of infant burials in Romano-British cemeteries. In particular Watts (1989, 1991, 1993, pp. 195–6) has proposed that the presence of neonate and infant burials, especially when treated with 'respect', is an important criterion in the identification of Christian cemeteries in the late Roman period. She has argued that pagan Roman religion did not classify infants as fully human and therefore did not accord them formal burial, but in a Christian context infants, already baptised or as catechumens, were classified as such, and provided with formal burial. Their presence is given a numerical weighting in a scheme which allows cemeteries to be scored in terms of their Christian attributes. This criterion has been influential on subsequent analysis of late Roman cemeteries (*e.g.,* Cooper 1996; Millett 1995b, p. 131; Woodward in Farwell & Molleson 1993, p. 236).

Watt's observations may have further implications. Her hypothesis resonates with some recent work on Christianity's transformation of the marginal position of the infant in a Roman world view, at the centre of which was the rational adult male citizen, into equal integration based on membership of the Church (Wiedemann 1989). However a systematic examination of Watts' hypothesis is so far lacking. Other criteria used to differentiate Christian and pagan burial can be challenged (*e.g.,* Millett 1995a) but only her observations on infant burials are discussed here. Watts examined largely fourth century evidence and did not consider the number of infants in earlier cemeteries. Evidence from other provinces was not used, which one would expect from her model to show the same changes. Nor did she define what she meant by 'respect' with regard to infant burials. Her analysis also raises methodological concerns critical to any discussion of the proportion of infant burials in cemetery populations. In most Roman cemeteries of any size some, if only very few, infant burials are recovered: rather than presence or absence a more explicit notion is required of the proportion of infants to be expected in the burial population. Watts did not define very precisely the age group under discussion, nor, like other commentators on Roman period infant burials (*e.g.,* Molleson 1991; Philpott 1991), did she take account of the taphonomy of her sample. The significance of taphonomy has been recently demonstrated in a re-analysis of the proportions of child burials in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries (Buckberry 2000).

11.3 Mortality rates

In the absence of reliable demographic statistics from the Roman world (Hopkins 1966), a guide to the proportion of infant burials to be expected in a cemetery, were all members of the population to have been buried there, must be derived from better documented historical populations and modern populations from the developing world. For comparative population statistics the Coale-Demeny model life tables are

Coale-Demeny Model West	Expectation of life at birth	Mortality rate as % (0–1 yrs)
Level 1 Female	20	36.5
Level 1 Male	18	41
Level 5 Female	30	25
Level 5 Male	27.7	29
Level 10 Female	42.5	16.1
Level 10 Male	39.7	18.9

Table 11.1: Comparative mortality rate from Coale-Demeny life tables.

now favoured over the UN life tables because of their basis in more reliable census data (Coale & Demeny 1983) and figures from Model West are preferred as a guide to an approximate structure of pre-industrial populations (Parkin 1992, pp. 79–83). Table 11.1 shows infant mortality rates of between roughly 20% and 35% from Model West, given life expectancies at birth between approximately 20 and 40, expectation of life at birth of 20 being the lowest at which a population can reproduce itself. Such expectations correspond well with those from some selected historical populations (Guy *et al.* 1997, p. 224).

The usual caveats apply to the use of such figures. They are obtained from 'transitional' or 'post-transitional' populations (the transition being that to industrialised societies with modern medical care): Greece and Rome fall into the category of 'pre-transitional populations', for which we generally lack reliable demographic statistics (Engels 1984). The exploitation of statistics from 'transitional' populations as comparanda is a standard procedure for the study of ancient demography, although demographic structures may not be entirely comparable. The life tables also represent abstractions which assume a stable population without immigration or emigration and not in growth or decline; these assumptions will not have universal validity for the Roman world. It is also likely that infant mortality rates will have varied across the Roman world. To take the most obvious example, the environment of Rome may well have produced infant mortality levels as high as those in the cities of early modern Europe (Scobie 1986). It is difficult to know to what extent conditions in smaller cities and towns will have exacerbated mortality levels. Infanticide is also a possibly significant factor: the extent to which it was practised in the Greco-Roman world is difficult to estimate, although its impact may have been exaggerated (Engels 1984). Recent analysis of the age profiles of infants from Romano-British settlements and cemeteries (Mays 1993b) suggests a relatively high level of infanticide but the methods by which infant skeletons were aged have been challenged (Gowland, this volume). Nevertheless for the purposes of this paper, figures from model populations provide a general guide to the significance of statistics from archaeological populations.

11.4 Taphonomy and analysis

With such figures in mind we may move on to consider the formation processes which intervene between the population buried in the cemetery under study and the available archaeological information, in particular those which may influence the study of young children from cemetery data.

Burial type

On the model presented above we would not expect infants to have been cremated, but is it possible that their visibility is affected by their sometimes having been cremated? Cremation has a more destructive effect on child than on adult skeletons, as they include a higher proportion of collagen which is combusted (McKinley 1989). It lessens the precision with which individuals may be aged, often reducing analysis to comparing 'immature' and 'adult'. Young children might therefore account for some of the unaged small deposits of cremated bone from cemetery sites, although in many cremation cemeteries these comprise only a small proportion of burials, many of which comprise damaged deposits, as at King Harry Lane, St Albans (Stead & Rigby 1989).

Grave depth

The burial of small children in shallow graves makes them more susceptible to post-depositional disturbance, for example the subsequent use of the cemetery (with the small and less regular cuts of infant burial possibly less visible to grave diggers), and to scavengers, root action, ploughing and erosion. If so, infant bones might be expected among the assemblage of disarticulated bone. In cemeteries from Britain such material was recovered among the disarticulated bone in several cases, for example at Trentholme Drive, (Warwick, in Wenham 1968, p. 147), East London (archive), Cirencester, Butt Road (Crummy *et al.* 1993, p. 61), and Newarke Street, Leicester (Cooper 1996). The differential effect on these cemeteries of recovery techniques, in particular on whether or not features are sieved, is not clear. However in no case was this material biased towards infants, and nor was evidence of more than a few infant individuals recovered.

Shallow burial of infants mean that relative depth or stratigraphic position cannot be applied to date them. The scarcity of grave goods with infant burials and the lack of burial container can also frustrate dating within a burial sequence. It may not therefore always be clear whether infant burials are evenly spread throughout the 'lifetime' of a cemetery, for example at Gabbari, Alexandria (Dzierzykray-Rogalski 1983).

Diagenesis

Cremated bone is less susceptible to radical change through time within the burial environment; however the age group with which this paper is concerned is more likely to have been inhumed. Skeletons of children generally survive less well than those of adults, because their bones are smaller, less dense, more porous and have a lower mineral and higher collagen content (*e.g.,* Gordon & Buikstra 1981; Walker *et al.* 1988). In less than optimal preservation conditions, for example free draining sands and gravels, child skeletons are likely to be in a poorer state than those of adults, although subjective descriptions hinder reconstruction of preservation conditions (Buckberry 2000). Sites where archaeological and documentary information is available have shown an under-representation of the infant burials known to have been buried there (Guy *et al.* 1997; Walker *et al.* 1988). However the preservation of immature individuals of different ages also varies. Changing bone mineral content and distribution is likely to cause poorer preservation of individuals younger than a threshold 'some time before the age of three' (Guy *et al.* 1997, p. 226). Observations of the better preservation of the bone of foetuses and neonates than of slightly older infants from the late Roman cemetery at Poundbury (Farwell & Molleson 1993, p. 175) may also be explained by

the decline in mineral content in bone after birth noted by Guy *et al.* (1997). Current understanding of the taphonomy of human bone of individuals of different ages in different burial environments, and of differences within the immature age category, is therefore incomplete. The expectation that the skeletons of immature individuals will be less well preserved in certain burial environments is a valid rule of thumb (Buckberry 2000), but dangerous to rely on in isolation to explain detailed differences between sites.

Excavation

The burial of infants can often be demonstrated to have concentrated in particular parts of cemeteries (see below). While partial rather than total excavation of cemeteries may miss such areas, it seems 'beyond coincidence' (Molleson 1991, p. 114) that these will have been missed where several cemeteries have been excavated.

Infant burials may be less likely to be recovered because of smaller, less regular grave cuts and because their bones may be more easily missed. Excavating child burials may previously also have been of lesser priority, as they were considered to contain less palaeopathological information (Buckberry 2000). A recent study of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries showed that the recovery of child burials has increased significantly since the 1970s (Buckberry 2000). However this trend could not be identified among Romano-British cemeteries, for example. The cemeteries with the largest proportion of infant burials were excavated during the 1960s and 1970s (see below). Of these the most important, Lankhills and Poundbury, were excavated under research rather than rescue conditions. This has applied only infrequently in subsequent excavations of Romano-British cemeteries.

Analysis and analytical categories

Where survival permits, the ages of young children can be established to within weeks or months (Mays 1998), but inconsistent and poorly defined terminology in bone reports further obstruct comparison. Among the categories used for non-adult individuals there is most variety in terms (*e.g.,* 'infant', 'child', 'juvenile', 'adolescent', 'sub-adult' and 'immature'), as well as in age brackets. A similar inconsistency characterises cemetery reports in other languages (Duday *et al.* 1995). Terms are not always defined and a more precise estimation of age for individual burials to accompany the descriptive term is sometimes lacking, particularly in the case of young children. Comparison within and between cemeteries is often therefore reduced to lowest common denominator categories, usually of immature and adult, which will conceal the differences of interest here.

Sample

Groups of cemeteries with usable human bone reports are not evenly available over time and space. For example, the (published) cemeteries of Britain and Hungary are biased to the late Roman period, while the early Roman period is better represented among those of the Low Countries and Germany.

For the meaningful comparison of cemeteries, a minimum number of several tens of burials is required. Applying such a threshold to Roman Britain yields a sample of mainly urban and small town cemeteries for analysis, with mortality profiles that may differ from those of rural areas in which the majority of the population lived,

although in other provinces, such as Gaul, large rural cemeteries are more plentiful (*e.g.,* Ferdière 1993; Murail & Girard 2000; van Doorsaeler 1967). The catchment areas of urban cemeteries may also affect the composition of the cemetery population but the influence of this factor is impossible to allow for.

Straightforward comparison of proportions of infant burials between large numbers of cemeteries is therefore problematic. Rather than disregard all but a few cemeteries, the following analysis assesses general trends from the largest possible sample and moves to more detailed observation where evidence permits.

11.5 Case Studies

Gaul

In a striking group of early Roman cemeteries from central and southern Gaul, the proportion of infant burials falls within, or in one case exceeds, the expected percentages. Excavations in the 1950s at Alesia, suggested that such areas represented cemeteries devoted to infants, but more recent work has shown that such groups of infant burials were either part of larger burial grounds or more occasionally located near buildings on rural settlement sites (Coulon 1994; Duday *et al.* 1995). The latter would be common in a rural Romano-British context but have excited more attention as being relative rare in Gaul.

At the 2nd–3rd century AD cemetery of Champ l'Image, St Marcel-sur-Indre (Indre, ancient *Argentomagus*), inhumed individuals under one year old comprise 28% of the 143 burials, the rest being mostly adolescent and adult cremations. Most of the inhumed infants were buried along what seems to have been the boundary wall west of the cemetery, although too limited an area was excavated west of this wall to be certain of this (Fig. 11.1). Evidence for containers is rare, although occasionally the cuts for infant burials were bordered by stones or roofed by tiles or amphora fragments (Allain *et al.* 1992).

Individuals inhumed in pottery jars, almost of all whom were under one year old, comprise 31% of the 500 burials from the cemetery of Chantambre (Essonne), in use from the 1st to the 5th century AD, this proportion remaining similar throughout the phases of use. These burials were grouped in the south-western corner of the cemetery (Murail & Girard 2000).

In the 1st–2nd century cemetery of Les Bolards, Nuits St Georges (Côte d'Or), the 120 inhumations of neonates comprise 52% of burials, the remainder comprising cremation burials, from which the human bone has generally not been examined, and 19 adult inhumations. Many of the neonatal burials cluster in the north-east corner of the excavated area. Almost all were buried between two *imbrices*; given heavy damage to the site and difficult excavation circumstances, other infant burials not so protected may have been destroyed or not recovered. Nevertheless the surviving proportion of infant burials exceeds substantially what might be expected. The excavator attributed this to a tradition of bringing sick infants to a healing sanctuary within the town in an, in these instances unsuccessful, attempt to cure them (Planson 1982, p. 176). However this seems implausible. The age at death of the infants (only provisionally determined), mostly dead before term, still-born or only a few days old, makes it unlikely that they were brought any distance to the sanctuary. It seems more probable that the excavation included an area of the cemetery in which infant burials were clustered, as at Chantambre and St Marcel.

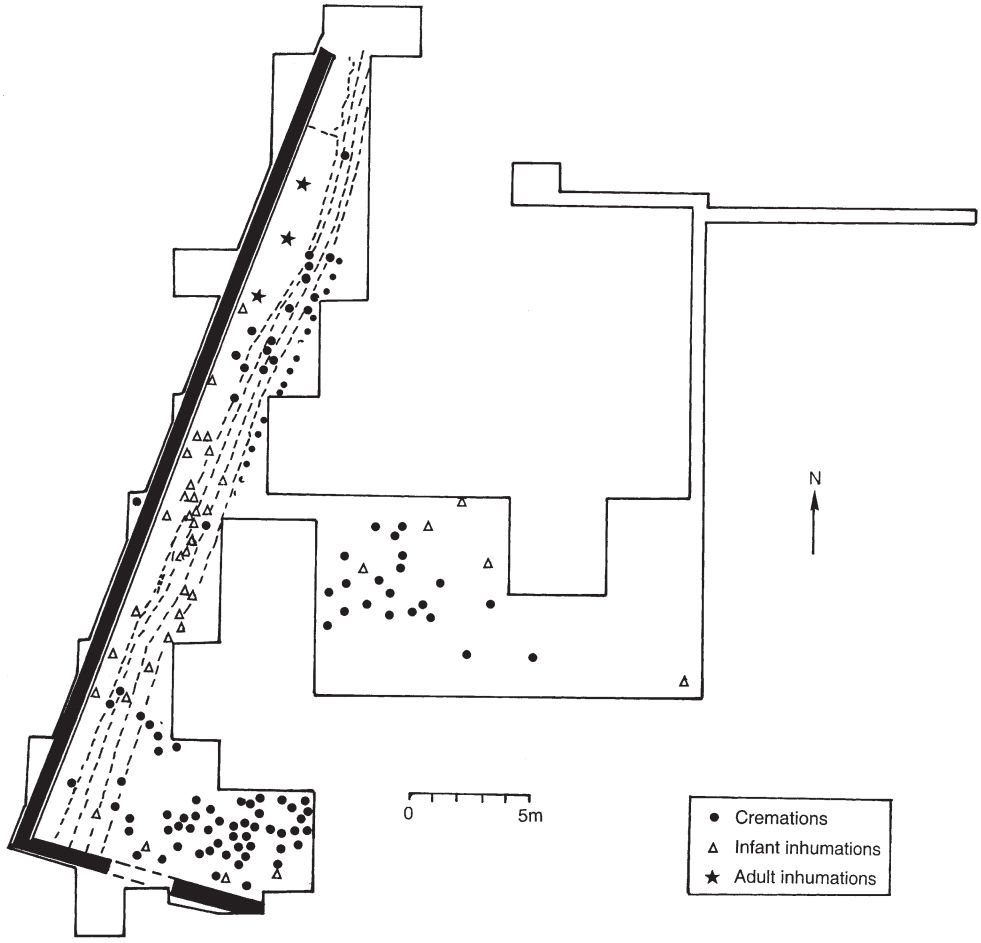


Figure 11.1: The main excavation area of the Champ de l'Image cemetery at *Argentomagus* (Indre, France). The dashed lines indicated ditch lines close to the boundary wall of the cemetery (redrawn from Allain *et al.* 1992, Fig. 18).

This high representation of infants is not however a universal feature of early Roman cemeteries in Gaul. At other recently excavated cemeteries the proportion of infant burials is lower, for example at Fréjus St Lambert less than 10% and at Fréjus Le Pauvadou and St Paul-Trois-Châteaux only 1–2% (Bel *et al.* 1991; Gébara & Béraud 1993). However, as these sites are not yet fully published the influence of taphonomy cannot be fully assessed. The minute proportion of infant burials from the rue Perdue cemetery in Tournai seems broadly typical of the small number of published cemeteries from late Roman Gaul (Brulet & Coulon 1977).

Britain

The following comments on Roman Britain are based on an examination of cemeteries with 40 or more burials from which the human bone has been examined. Late 3rd–4th century cemeteries outnumber earlier periods by a ratio of 2:1, and the sample is heavily biased towards urban sites in southern Britain. Taphonomic processes have

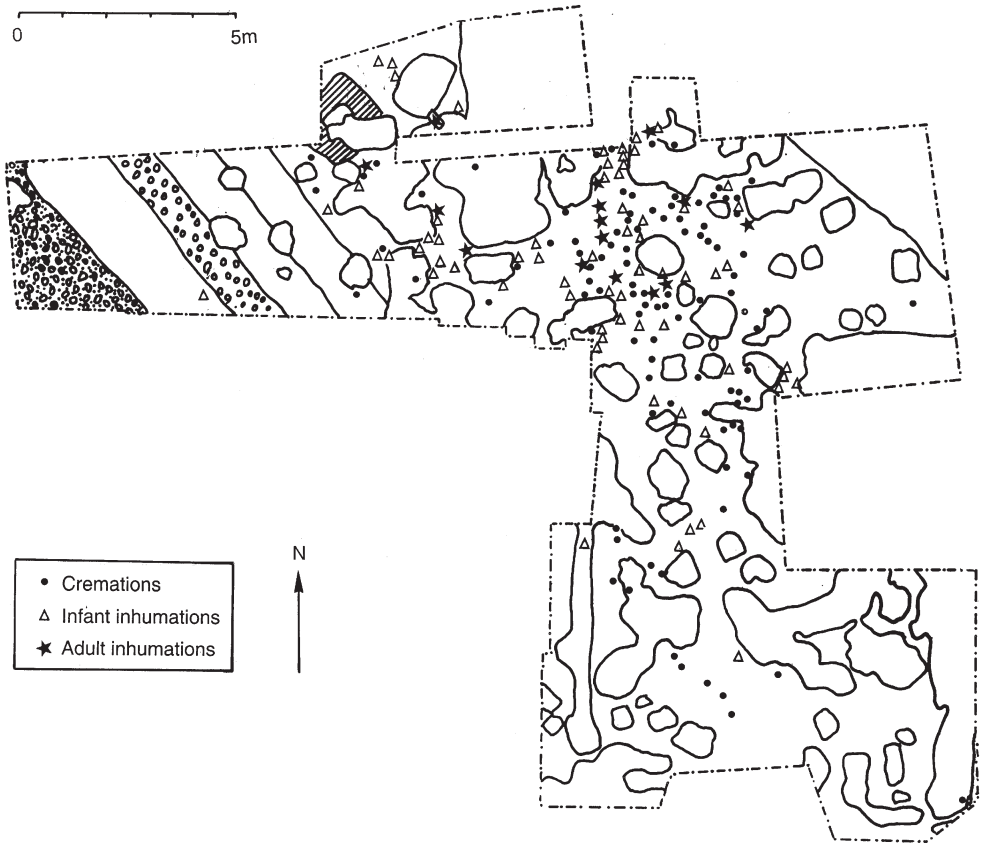


Figure 11.2: The Hyde Street cemetery, Winchester. The outlined areas indicate areas of post-Roman disturbance. A section of the road to Cirencester was excavated in the north-west corner of the site, next to which was a small burial monument (shaded) (redrawn from Kjølbye-Biddle 1992, Fig. 14.3).

not operated evenly across the sample and the precision of information across the sites is often not directly comparable. Fuller presentation of this evidence is in preparation but some provisional conclusions are presented here.

In almost all Late Iron Age and early Roman period (predominantly cremation) cemeteries the proportion of infant burials (usually though not exclusively inhumations) does not exceed one or two per cent, for example at Westhampnett (West Sussex) (Fitzpatrick 1997) King Harry Lane (Stead & Rigby 1989) and St Stephens, St Albans (archive), Wallington Road, Baldock (Burleigh 1993; archive), Braughing (Partridge 1981) (all in Hertfordshire), and from the Abbeyfield at Caerleon (Gwent) (Evans & Maynard 1997). In cemeteries the use of which began in the early Roman period, at Derby Racecourse (Wheeler 1985) and the east London cemetery (Barber *et al.* 1990; Whytehead 1986; archive), inhumed infants account for a similar small percentage. At many of these sites however the poor survival of inhumed bone and, less often, the intensive use of cemetery space may account for missing infant burials.

The largely cremation cemetery connected to a rural settlement just outside Godmanchester (Cambridgeshire) includes a higher percentage of inhumed infants (Mays 1993a, four of the 50 burials;), but the most obvious exception to this trend is Hyde

Cemetery	No. <1 year old	Total no. of burials	Percentage < 1 year old	Reference
Butt Road (Period 2), Colchester	6	545	1.1	Crummy *et al.* 1993
Lynch Farm	1	50	2	Jones 1975
Ilchester	1	49	2	Leach 1982
Chester Road, Winchester	4	114	3.5	Archive
Cassington	3	71	4.2	Harman *et al.* 1981
Bathgate, Cirencester (South)	19	362	5.3	McWhirr *et al.* 1982
Icklingham	3	44	6.8	West 1976
Ashton	14	170	8.2	Archive
Victoria Road, Winchester	11	129	8.5	Archive
Poundbury (Main), Dorchester	84	973	8.6	Farwell & Molleson 1993
Lankhills, Winchester	34	301	11.3	Clarke 1979
Ancaster	30	243	12.4	Cox 1989
Poundbury (E. peripheral), Dorchester	12	61	19.7	Farwell & Molleson 1993
Poundbury (Site C), Dorchester	30	68	44.1	Farwell & Molleson 1993
Oram's Arbour, Winchester	43	66	65.2	Archive

Table 11.2: The percentage of under one year olds in ascending order from 3rd and 4th century cemeteries in Roman Britain. Italics indicate cemeteries classified as probable Christian by Watts (1989) or those from which evidence was not available to her but which would be classified as Christian using her criteria (Victoria Road and Chester Road, Winchester).

Street, Winchester, where inhumed infant burials account for over 40% of the aged burials (archive; see Fig. 11.2). The extensive damage to the site makes this high proportion even more surprising. Although some infant burials cluster, in general both they and the cremations are mixed without obvious zoning. The site is close to the north gate at Winchester, lying in the triangle between roads to Cirencester and Silchester. It is possible that this area was preferred for infant burial because of its proximity to the town, from which like other towns in Roman Britain only a few infant burials have been excavated (*e.g.,* Zant 1993). However infant burials were also buried in large numbers further out from the town in the late Roman period (see below).

A larger sample of cemeteries where osteological analysis allows quantified comparison of the proportion of infants in the burial populations, is available for the 3rd–4th centuries in Britain (see Table 11.2, where bibliographic references are given). Preservation conditions range from relatively poor to good, generally being more favourable than the in the early Roman cemeteries discussed above (Table 11.2). In general the proportion of infant burials is slightly higher than in the early Roman period, but few cemetery populations include the expected proportion of 20–35%. Only in six cemeteries do they account for more than 10% of burials. Of these, only one is a Christian cemetery as defined by Watts. Some differences may be attributable to differential preservation, for example the poor preservation of human skeletal material

at Butt Road, or erosion, which may have affected the main cemetery to a greater degree than the eastern group of burials at Poundbury. However, in general such factors do not consistently bias against the representation of infants in the 'Christian' cemeteries. The similarity in the proportion of infant burials at Lankhills and the main cemetery at Poundbury is worth emphasising because they are archetypal 'pagan' and 'Christian' cemeteries in Watts' analysis. Both were excavated under similar circumstances and the preservation of human bone at Poundbury was certainly better than at Lankhills.

The infant burials from Oram's Arbour were recovered during excavations through the western stretch of the Iron Age enclosure ditch west of Winchester's Roman period walled circuit. As the focus of these excavations was the enclosure ditch, it is not possible to tell whether these burials were related to a larger cemetery containing burials of other age groups, although there were a small number of adult burials recovered close to or on the lip of the ditch where sectioned. Infants were recovered from boundary ditches at some other cemeteries in Winchester, although never in equivalent numbers. At Lankhills, for example, four infant burials, aged from six to 18 months, were the first interments made in feature 12, the initial eastern boundary of the site, possibly some time prior to the main use of that area of the cemetery for burials. At Victoria Road some infant burials were buried in the fill of the ditch separating the cemetery from the road to Cirencester.

Infants can therefore be seen to have been buried on the boundaries of several cemeteries from Britain and Gaul. This peripheral position may have spared the expense of a formal burial plot within 'managed' cemeteries (Philpott 1991; Thomas 1981), an interpretation which might support the 'indifference' view. However, the reconsideration of the locations of infant burials on settlement sites (see above) prompts other possible interpretations. The burial of infants at the edges of cemeteries may have served to inaugurate the use of cemeteries or to demarcate burial areas from surrounding spaces of different character.

The Romano-British evidence may therefore be summarised as follows. The burials of infants under one year old are better represented on third and mostly fourth century inhumation cemeteries than in earlier cemeteries, with one substantial exception. Within the late Roman cemeteries there are great differences in the proportion of infant burials. However this proportion is not determined by whether or not according to Watts' criteria the cemetery was that of a Christian population.

11.6 Conclusion

The reservations which preceded the case studies must not be forgotten. The mortality profiles which we expect in cemeteries from the ancient world are partly dependent on untestable assumptions. The proportion of individuals of different ages in different cemeteries is affected by taphonomic and analytical biases which are not fully understood and which are unlikely to have affected any two cemeteries in identical ways. This paper has also restricted itself to one aspect of burial treatment, location. Full consideration of the burial rites for infants must also incorporate other forms of burial ritual. Some general observations have been made: for example under one year olds are under-represented in epigraphic commemoration (Hopkins 1966). Other qualitative differences can also be identified which should be examined in relation to larger samples of data. The transition from inhumation to cremation inferred from Pliny as occurring at *c.* six months can be documented in several early Roman provincial

cemeteries (Mackensen 1978). Certain types of burial container and grave good seem to be associated with infant burials, some cemetery specific, some more general, such as pipe-clay figurines (*e.g.,* Allain *et al.* 1992; Planson 1982; Taylor 1993). Discussion has also concentrated on a single age limit, one year old, but other age categories may be equally (if not more) significant, for example six months, the threshold between cremation and inhumation.

Nevertheless it is possible to make some more confident statements based on study of location alone. The expectation that infants will be buried outside formal cemeteries is true of only some infant burials. Several cemeteries do include a proportion of infant burials which either falls within or even exceeds the range that might be expected from model populations. In these cases it seems likely that the whole of the population is receiving burial within the communal cemetery. In the cemeteries where few infant burials are attested, the arguments that infants were deliberately excluded may be difficult to prove in individual cases, given the formation processes behind samples, although the frequent finds of infants on settlement sites show that infants were frequently buried elsewhere. Infants may have been categorised as marginal in Roman society but such a categorisation is not universally manifested by their burial outside formal cemeteries. However, even were we to set problems of formation processes to one side, it is difficult to identify consistent trends in proportions of infant burials. More cemeteries from early Roman Gaul have the expected proportions of infant burials than in Britain, for example, but within both areas the variation in the proportions is very great. Local variations in ritual forms are probably more significant. An increase over time in the proportion of infant burials may be suggested by evidence from Britain but cannot yet be stated with any certainty. More emphatically, *contra* Watts, in late Roman cemeteries in Britain a higher proportion of infant burials do not occur within those cemeteries claimed on other grounds as Christian. This criterion does not distinguish Christian from pagan burial rites, nor can it therefore provide evidence for the 're-categorisation' of very young children within a Christianised world view.

The data presented here may be significant in a broader perspective. Previous surveys have noted that in comparison with the early medieval period, the proportion of infant burials in Roman period cemetery populations is high (*e.g.,* Crawford 1993; Lucy 1994; Molleson 1991). These surveys relied on smaller data sets but the observation has been confirmed in this examination of evidence from Britain and Gaul. The evidence discussed may be significant for long-term change in constructions of childhood. However, Buckberry (2000) has shown that preservation conditions may bias against the preservation of child burials in early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. It therefore remains to be seen if the apparent difference withstands closer scrutiny.

To conclude, the evidence for infant burial from recent considerations of settlement contexts and this examination of cemetery populations, demonstrates that simple characterisations based on literary evidence are inadequate: burial rites for infants show considerable complexity and diversity. The infant may well have been on the margins of a Roman view, but this is not unambiguously demonstrated in their burial rites.

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12
Unpicking a Myth: the infanticide of female and disabled infants in antiquity

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12.1 Introduction

This narrative is painted with broad brush strokes — moving at times outside of the Roman world and into other contexts of the human past — but it is not the intention of this paper to generalise. Indeed, it is generalisations that this paper wishes to question, notably the assumptions that exist in abundance about the infants who were the victims of infanticide in the ancient world, it being widely held that they fall into three categories: they are either illegitimate, or female, or 'handicapped'.

Archaeologists' assumptions about infanticide have, unsurprisingly, been predicated on historically specific and socially constructed belief systems. When Hambleden Romano-British villa was first excavated, for example, and the remains of 97 infants found buried there, the original excavator believed that these infants were the unwanted and concealed bastards of domestic servants, disposed of at birth, in the dead of night (Heneage Cocks 1921). This view, however, now sits uncomfortably with modern archaeologists, recalling as it does the collective concern with illegitimacy which so afflicted the Victorians and Edwardians, especially where the lower social orders were concerned. Two generations later, the explanation of the Hambleden infant burials offered by one of the greatest scholars of Roman Britain was that they represented 'the exposure of the unwanted female offspring of a slave-run establishment' (Frere 1978, pp. 303–4). But Frere was simply tapping into the zeitgeist, and the idea of the almost routine disposal of unvalued or unwanted female infants — preferential female infanticide — was to prove very influential in archaeological and historical narratives of infanticide.

More recent texts on infanticide continue to refer to illegitimacy and femaleness (*e.g.,* Mays 2000, pp. 180, 182–3), but a new causal factor is cited with increasing frequency. Thus, while Molleson has written of Roman Europe that infanticide involved the deaths of many illegitimate and female infants (Molleson 1999, pp. 74–6), she focused on the disposal of the disabled. For example, she asserts:

> Given the prevalence of infanticide in the past it would seem to be highly probable that any newly born child seen to have a malformation would not have been allowed to live. It seems certain that the exposure of deformed, sickly and illegitimate children was not uncommon in the Europe of antiquity.
>
> (Molleson 1999, p. 74)

The paradigms used to explain what makes infants 'unwanted' or 'unvalued' in the first place tend to change from generation to generation; and in the past 80 years we have seen a shift in explanatory focus from illegitimacy to femaleness to disability.

Even leaving aside the thorny problem of whether the evidence of infant remains in the countryside of Roman Britain even represents widespread infanticide at all,[1] it is necessary to question whether infanticide in the Roman world was really the story of the killing of the female or the killing of the disabled.[2]

12.2 Preferential female infanticide: fact or fiction?

The frequently expressed opinion that female infanticide was routinely and commonly practised in prehistory and antiquity (*e.g.,* McLennan 1865 cited in Reynolds & Tanner 1983; Birdsell 1968; Ehrenberg 1989; Hoffer & Hull 1984) is such an important assumption, with such crucial implications about how we view ancient societies, that it surely merits closer examination. First, we need to understand the origins of the assumption. It is important to be aware that the idea that female infanticide was normal practice in the past derives especially from one particular historical context — the ancient history of Greek and Roman texts. In a number of these texts the female infant is apparently devalued to the extent of being expendable. For example, in the famous papyrus from Roman Egypt, a man writes to his pregnant wife: 'If you have the baby before I return, if is a boy, let it live; if it is a girl, expose it' (Oxyrhynchus Papyri 744, (Select Papyri 105); trans. Shelton 1988).

The few texts which survive from the classical Mediterranean have had an almost overwhelming influence. To argue from this historically specific evidence to a notion of global female infanticide in the human past is fraught with risks. Further, considering that the social and demographic implications of believing in widespread preferential female infanticide are vast, there has been precious little examination of these beliefs. Just what social and economic systems cause the female infant to be so devalued in the first place, where this does occur? Or, is the presumption of female infanticide actually a modern construct which has been projected back onto the past?

Firm evidence, for example, that female infanticide was practised in Palaeolithic Europe, is decidedly lacking, yet this time and place is often cited as a context where female babies were snuffed out to control population growth (*e.g.,* Ehrenberg 1989). The evidence for female infanticide in this period is virtually all circumstantial and lodged in a processual systems paradigm (*e.g.,* Divale 1972), and even the ethnographic evidence is ambiguous and unconvincing. Lee, for example, in his well-known study of the !Kung, is actually rather reticent about instances of infanticide amongst !Kung women when discussing methods of birth-spacing; most of attention focuses on extended breastfeeding and suppression of ovulation (*e.g.,* Lee 1980).

Indeed, it is possible to present a substantial amount of evidence for the practice of preferential male infanticide which is of as good (or even better) quality than the supposed evidence for female infanticide. For example, the Bronze Age cemetery at Mokrin, Roman Ashkelon in modern Israel, and the Phoenician city of Carthage, in North Africa, all provide potential contexts for male infanticide.

[1] Mays (1993) argues for infanticide in the Romano-British countryside; but see Gowland this volume.

[2] Refutations of the view that infant burials in Romano-British (and indeed other) contexts represent the end product of the shame of illegitimacy have been presented elsewhere in detail (Scott 1991; Scott 1999, pp. 66–80, 109–23).

Mokrin

Despite relating to a context far removed from the Roman period, the study of the Early Bronze Age cemetery at Mokrin (to the north of Belgrade in the former Yugoslavia) nevertheless raises important methodological and interpretative issues of which are relevant to all of archaeology's period studies, including Roman archaeology. These issues revolve around the mortality profile of the cemetery, and how we interpret apparent demographic anomalies.

The mortality profile at Mokrin suggests that we are seeing a normal population represented in the cemetery, with two significant exceptions: there is an absence of neonatal infants in the cemetery, and there are more female children than male (Rega 1997).[3] The absence of neonates in the cemetery is a phenomenon common to many societies in the past, and, fascinating though it is, it isn't the subject of this paper (but see Scott 1999, pp. 90 ff., for full discussion). It is the disparity between the numbers of female and male children which is interesting here. It is significant that this can best be accounted for if there were, simply, more female members of the child population. Beth Rega thinks that this excess of female children in the cemetery may be due to the fact that there were greater numbers of female than male children actually alive in this society and that, therefore, the pool of those dying was larger. Assuming approximately equal numbers of male and females babies were born, mortality, therefore, must have been significantly greater for boys during the neonatal period.

Rega suggests a number of reasons for this possible case of preferential male infanticide — or neglect — including the idea, drawn from ethnographic parallels, that the female was highly valued in adult society and thus better cared for in infancy and childhood than the male. In Jamaica, for example, favouritism is shown toward female children. Women have the greater rôle of economic providers, and they are crucial to the maintenance of family stability in matrilineal society. As a result, the higher value of a daughter to the family in general and to the mother in particular is clear. But females are carriers of such value only where the prevailing social system actually allows it. If tradition dictates that females will carry their wealth with them through their lives, for distribution within their own biological family, then they are highly valued, for the fruits of their labours will remain their own and will have a beneficial effect on their biological family. Thus, in societies where, say, bride-wealth is practised, one sees preferential treatment of girls in poor families (Rega 1997). Conversely, in Greek and Roman society, and in modern China and India, where female infanticide is known, women did not, and do not, carry wealth with them throughout their lives, with dowry systems and other mechanisms operating to transmit the woman's wealth to the family into which she marries (Scott 1999, pp. 66–80).

Phoenician sacrifice

The Phoenician practice of infant sacrifice exemplifies how infanticide could be designed to fill a logical rôle within a community. Infant sacrifice is a form of infanticide, but it is a public performance of beliefs or vows, usually practised as part of a perceived religious obligation (Lee 1994). The remains of sacrificed infants have been found in a number of Phoenician cities of the first millennium BC, such as Carthage in North Africa. This context too may perhaps be a story of the killing of the infant

[3] Note, however, that the infants from Mokrin were sexed using criteria, such as associated artefacts and grave orientation, which were found to be reliable indicators if sex for adult burials.

male. Shelby Brown notes that where the victims are described, they are usually said to be one or more of the following: young, male, rich (*i.e.,* freeborn and noble), and the dedicant's own infant or child, or poor and an infant sold to the dedicant. There are also occasional mentions of the infant being the first-born male or the best-loved, and of being sacrificed singly and in huge numbers, in times of personal crisis and in times of war. The infants were aged between 0–4 years, and they were burnt, possibly whilst drugged or already dead, and their remains collected and placed in cinerary urns along with small trinkets or pottery provided by the parents (Brown 1991; Lee 1994). The parents were careful to add their names and genealogies to the markers in order to announce publicly that they had fulfilled their vow to the gods. The infants, then, were buried for the gods beneath the names of their ancestors.

Roman Ashkelon

The picture from the Roman world, while not at all clear, is also beginning to be suggestive of male infanticide in some contexts. In 1992 Smith and Kahila reported on a large collection of infant bones from a late Roman sewer context at Ashkelon in Israel. They suggested that death was caused by infanticide on the basis of examination of the long bones which revealed that the infants were all of approximately the same age at death (around full term). Infanticide, they argued, drawing on ethnographic parallels, is generally carried out immediately after birth birth (Smith & Kahila 1992, cited by Mays 1993, p. 884). The Ashkelon infants have now been sexed on the basis of DNA by Dr Marina Faerman of the Hebrew University. She examined the skeletal remains of some 100 neonates which had been discovered in the sewer. Out of 43 left femurs tested 19 specimens produced results: 14 were found to be males and 5 females (Faerman 1997; *pers. comm.*) In other words, more males than females were being killed and deposited in the sewer — preferential male infanticide. Despite site-specific interpretations of this data[4] it is possible that this is not an isolated phenomenon.[5]

12.3 Disabled infants and infanticide

Was the infanticide of disabled babies a routine part of history? Despite the importance for Disability Studies of accurate historical narratives, there are only two papers which seriously address the subject of infanticide and disability in antiquity (Bredberg 1999; Edwards 1996). This is disturbing in light of the recent publicity given to the Princeton philosopher and bioethicist, Peter Singer. Through the medium of his academic works (*e.g.,* Kuhse & Singer 1985; Singer 1995), and through popular media outlets, Singer has made much of his advocacy of termination for abnormality and of the infanticide of disabled babies, and, in justification of his position, he makes great play of the fact that the ancient Greeks practised infanticide of the 'handicapped'. This assertion carries rhetorical weight and resonance, apparently articulating an image of civilised citizen philosophers, inventors of democracy, drama and history, wisely disposing of the disabled at birth.

[4]Scott (1999) expresses some doubts about the validity of the interpretation of girl infants being raised to work in a brothel.

[5]Simon Mays and Marina Faerman are currently working on a hugely important Roman research project, DNA sexing infants from Romano-British rural contents, such as villas and farmsteads. This is work in progress, but Simon Mays has very kindly informed me that the early indications are that more male infants than female currently appear to be represented in these samples.

Disability Studies is beginning to question the premise of infanticide being an entrenched human response to infant disability, but for a long time the writing of disability history has reflected the supposed long time-scale within which disabled people have experienced discrimination. The resulting 'orthodox' history of disability constructs both discrimination and disability, and the forms and outcomes of discrimination and disability, as immutable human conditions. This history is one in which the disabled have been unwanted and expendable since deepest antiquity, to the point of being killed at birth. While there is a certain empowerment to be obtained from the creation of hard-hitting, arresting narratives which portray widespread and long-term injustices, I would suggest that there may be greater empowerment in challenging the given orthodoxy altogether. Given the context of the details, archaeologists and ancient historians will have a rôle in assisting such a project. It will require a reappraisal of those current views on disability and archaeology which tend, however unwittingly, to reinforce orthodox prejudices (see papers in the *Archaeological Review from Cambridge*, 15(2), especially that by Molleson; see also Parker Pearson 1999, p. 104). The theoretical conceptualisation of the body, gender and the lifecourse is now firmly in place in archaeology, and the discipline could really make a difference and advance knowledge in the field of disability history. For example, most archaeologists would presumably not find much to argue with in Tom Shakespeare's assertion that there is danger in confusing the biological evidence with social experience (Shakespeare 1999, p. 100). After all, what is a disability? What is a handicap? What is deformity? Ideas already current in archaeological theory, such as Judith Butler's theories of the body and performance (*e.g.,* Butler 1990, 1993, 1997), would suggest that disability is written on the body, and that the social experience of the body is indeed more important that the simple recognition of biological or physical differences.

12.4 Reconsideration of the evidence

What actually happens if we reconsider the idea that disabled infants in the past were routinely killed through the practice of infanticide? Are there really myths to be dismantled?

The main evidence for the ancient Greek practice of killing disabled infants comes from a passage in Aristotle's *Politics* (1335b) where he recommends that there should be a law forbidding the rearing of disabled children. Aristotle's statement has been taken to mean that the ancient Greeks in general had a very negative view of disability and that they did not, would not, rear disabled infants. But Aristotle's view is a recommendation, so presumably at least some people had raised disabled infants. It is also dangerous to use the statements of individuals from ancient Athens, especially when they are taken out of context, to reinforce modern observers' own stereotyped views of human behaviour. Many such statements have a questionable relationship with reality on a number of levels, and often reflect attempts to set up ideological constraints in times of social change and tension.

Another well-known snippet of evidence on this subject comes from a dialogue in Plato's Republic. In this passage it is suggested hypothetically to the parents of an 'ill-formed' infant that it should be taken away and exposed. A father, having produced a disabled child, is asked:

> Will you be able to bear seeing [your child] examined, and not get angry if someone takes it away from you, even though it is your first delivery?

The passage is a difficult one to interpret, dealing in hypotheticals and ideals, but nevertheless the possible answers to this question do include: 'No. No, I won't be able to bear seeing it taken away'. Indeed, the writing of the passage really only makes sense if there was actually some possibility of resistance being shown to the idea by the parents to infanticide on the grounds of disability.

Perhaps a clue to where we should be going with the Platonic evidence, in terms of interpretation, is in the phrase 'even though it is your first delivery'. The Athenians were concerned with numbers of children in families for a number of reasons. The ancient Athenians were 'almost neurotically conservative' (Jones 1984, p. 157) about preserving households and clan groups, and they would kill newborn infants — male, female, disabled, abled — if there were already enough children born into a family to carry the responsibilities of inheritance and political participation.

The deformed infant cannot be universally invoked as a cause of infanticide, however tempting it may be for modern observers obsessed with the prevention of the birth of disabled infants. In actual fact, there is ample evidence that newborns with visible defects were accepted, raised and cared for, from the Ice Age through to Medieval Europe and beyond (see, for example, Parker Pearson 1999, pp. 71, 151). Human bones expert Simon Mays has observed that amongst the infant remains he examined from Roman Britain, a context in which he strongly suspects infanticide was practised, he could find no evidence at all of any skeletal deformities (Mays 1993, p. 887), which would suggest that in Roman Britain visible deformity was not the prime mover in the decision to neglect, abandon or kill a neonate. There is also evidence from Medieval societies — hardly known for their compassion and tolerance — that those with deformities were allowed to function as part of the community. A study by Skinner (1997) of adult nicknames in use in Mediterranean communities has identified the use of *Surdo* (deaf), *Gardapedem* (looking at feet), *Monoculum* (one-eyed), and *Stultus* (mad). That some of these deformities may have originated in birth defects is suggested by the work of Crawford on Anglo-Saxon cemetery data: she concludes that the adolescents found with birth defects, and artefacts such as a pot specially adapted for a child with a cleft palate, reveal that infants with obvious deformities were raised in Medieval society. In addition, law codes existed which make provision for parents who knowingly and deliberately raised disabled children from birth to adulthood (Crawford 1991, 1999, pp. 172–3).

In Greek myth, disabled newborn were feared but they were not killed, and some grew up to be powerful rulers. Myskellos, for example, was born with twisted legs and a hunchback, and was said to have established and ruled the colony of Croton (Ogden 1997).

Such a fear of difference is best exemplified by the fact that healthy 'normal' infants who were the product of multiple births were often also rejected, a social phenomenon which has recently been studied by Dasen (1997, pp. 49–63). Aristotle regarded the birth of human twins as abnormal and belonging to the category of monstrosities, because he believed that: 'their formation is contrary to the general rule and to what is usual'. His abhorrence of twinning can be better understood in the context of the Athenian male's fear of female adultery and loss of paternity — note Aristotle's description of a woman who gave birth to twins, one of whom looked like her husband and the other her lover. The idea of such 'superfecundation' appears in Greek myth; and beliefs in the essential differences between male and female at the point of development in the womb were articulated through the medical ideas of men like Pliny and Aristotle, who believed that the risks to twins were increased if they

were of different sexes because male and female foetuses do not develop at the same rhythm.

In fact Peter Singer's ideas are predicated on a fundamental misunderstanding of the rôle of infanticide in the past. Infanticide was first and foremost a method of contraception, and many societies in antiquity sanctioned it in many contexts, and some of these societies transformed it into a culturally significant public practice. It is very dangerous to suggest that societies in the past routinely disposed of particular types of infant because they manifested a biological commodity which we modern observers have arbitrarily decided is inherently 'unvalued' or 'unwanted'.

12.5 Conclusion

The beliefs which pervade archaeology that such forms of preferential infanticide were endemic in prehistory and classical antiquity need careful handling. This paper has suggested that it may be a modern myth that infanticide is the story of the killing of the female and the disabled. The cultural variation in the evidence would appear not to allow for such universals.

The ancient Athenians killed male babies as well as female. The ancient Carthaginians made great play out of sacrificing wealthy male babies and children, and recent DNA testing of mass infant skeletal deposits from Roman contexts suggests that male infants may be represented more than female infants in these probable contexts of infanticide, and that none of these were disabled. The decision to kill a baby on the grounds of its sex is intimately bound up with culture-specific constructions of gender, kinship and economic structures, such as dowries and patterns of inheritance. We should presumably approach the issue of the infanticide of disabled infants with a similar regard for the complexities of the archaeological and historical evidence, and not pass off interpretations based on prejudice with some kind of historical tradition.

The infant embodies powerful sets of contradictions and tensions, being at the same time powerless and powerful. In life, and particularly in death and burial, the infant is often outside society and yet is made a marker of that same society's social and ideological priorities. The manipulation of the infant, the infant dead, infant space and images of the infant frequently acts as metaphor for adult relationships and tensions, from the micro- scale of the family to the macro-scale of major political systems. Infanticide, particularly infant ritual sacrifice as seen at Phoenician Carthage, may well signal an evolving relationship between biological genetic imperatives and human attempts to control posterity in more cultural ways (Scott 1999).

The Roman world continues to produce a wealth of evidence for the death and burial of infants and children, and archaeology continues to offer us increasingly detailed and sophisticated ways of analysing and interpreting this material. Perhaps if we can get past the entrenched ideas that the victims of infanticide were of no 'value' and that they must therefore belong to categories which the modern observer feels had (and perhaps have) little value, then we might move forward and create a more useful debate and avoid circularity of argument. The ninety-seven infants buried at Hambleden villa will not be explained simply by assigning them to value-less categories. On a final salutary note it should perhaps be observed that we do not, of course, even know for sure how the Hambleden infants actually died.

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13

Playing Dead: implications of mortuary evidence for the social construction of childhood in Roman Britain

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13.1 Introduction

The latter half of this century has seen a radical overhaul in our understanding of the concept of childhood. Initiated by developments in history (*e.g.,* Ariès 1962; Hoyles 1979; Pollock 1983; Shorter 1976; Stone 1977), it has now become widely recognised that perceptions of childhood do not subscribe to a universal (Western) norm, but instead are contingent upon historical and cultural context. Recent works within anthropology and sociology have begun to conceptualise children and childhood as a valid and important area of study and children are no longer thought of simply as passive beings, acting solely under the socialising influence of adults (Hardman 1973). As Prout and James state:

> For some time now it has been possible to think of a theoretical space in which children ... can be looked at as active social beings, constructing and creating social relationships. (Prout & James 1997, p. 23)

Until recently, however, archaeological interest had gone little further than noting the probability of high mortality rates among children and their under-representation at cemetery sites, or drawing attention to the more sensationalist practices of sacrifice and infanticide (*e.g.,* Philpott 1991; Watts 1989). It has been argued that the neglect of children within archaeology is a consequence of those same androcentric biases that had previously served to marginalise women: not only has the past been interpreted from a purely male perspective, but also in overtly adult terms (Baker 1997; Lillehammer 1989). As Baker (1997) states:

> ... children have been both absent/invisible from the archaeological record, and invisible, unknowable at the conceptual level. Contemporary culturally constructed social knowledge, embedded as it is in masculist ideologies, fits 'children' in the interpretative framework as incomplete humans, that is, not male/masculine (Baker 1997, p. 187)

Feminist and gender discourses have acted as a stimulus to current debates concerning the 'invisibility' of children in narratives of the past and have highlighted the need for archaeologists to recognise the culturally-specific status of childhood (*e.g.,* Moore & Scott 1997; Sofaer Deverenski 1994). Current research now emphasises the importance of children both socially and economically in the structuring and functioning of past societies (Sofaer Deverenski 1994, 1997).

Very little work, however, has examined the relationships and tensions between age groupings, or has attempted to identify age thresholds in past societies. This neglect would appear to stem from the fact that age (more so than gender or ethnicity) is considered to be a purely biological phenomenon and subsequently age identities and age rôles have become naturalised. When an identity is naturalised, it also becomes imbued with universal properties, thus seemingly allowing us to project our contemporary age paradigm onto the past irrespective of social context (Gowland forthcoming).

Children have arguably suffered the most from this disregard of age identity. It is evident that there has been a tendency to apply only vague terminology to children, and terms such as infant, child, and adolescent are used with little standardisation or definition. Furthermore, the appropriateness of these terms (accompanied as they are by numerous social expectations of behaviour derived entirely from a contemporary Western context) for describing life course stages in the past remains unquestioned. We should be aware that through the use of such language we are not simply describing a chronological stage in the life course, but also imparting an age identity that has a questionable relevance to past societies.

Identifying the nature of childhood within any one period from the archaeological record is problematic. While artefacts relating, for example, to the dress of immature individuals (*e.g.,* van Driel-Murray 1999) provide a tangible link to past children, as do items such as the mammiform pot, interpreted as an infant's feeding vessel, excavated from Castledyke cemetery, Barton-on-Humber (Drinkall & Foreman 1998), they offer limited information concerning the experience and perceptions of childhood within that particular cultural setting. The material world of the child within present Western society is entirely different from that of adults and is one which relates to, and constructs, our perception of childhood as a distinctive stage of human development. It would be a mistake, however, to project this material distinction into the past, and attempts to access children archaeologically through the identification of 'toys', for example, are potentially problematic in that they confine the experience of childhood to that of the Western construct. When addressing children within archaeology, we should perhaps dismiss the notion of 'finding' them, and instead recognise that as individuals interacting as an important, and possibly materially indistinguishable part of the cultural milieu, they are no more or less 'visible', or responsible for creating the archaeological record, than other social actors (Sofaer Deverenski 1994).

13.2 Mortuary evidence: materials and methods

In light of the above, one could argue that our best direct contact with children in the past is via their skeletal remains. Funerary evidence has been used widely in the study of past social identities, providing valuable contributions to debates concerning such social constructs as gender, ethnicity, and status. It is, however, apparent that the social construction of age has been almost entirely overlooked. This study explores the way in which cemetery variables and material culture associations may be used to identify possible age constructs based on the fourth-century AD cemetery of Lankhills in Winchester (Clarke 1979).

Lankhills cemetery was chosen, in part, because children are relatively well represented, but also because of the high frequency of burials at this site with grave goods. In this respect Lankhills is not typical of all fourth century cemeteries, and the degree to which we are able to extrapolate the results from this cemetery to

generalise about other areas of the country is of course open to question. Regional idiosyncrasies in funerary practice frequently frustrate such attempts, although the findings from Lankhills will be briefly compared here to several other fourth century Romano-British cemeteries.

Funerary ritual, in some respects, may be seen as a public ceremony that reinforces and reproduces prevailing social norms, representing or symbolising the status of the individual in death. How this reflects their status in life is, of course, open to debate and although the relationship is structured, we must be cautious when making inferences of social identity based upon this type of evidence. When we are examining the treatment of infants and children in death, we are of course investigating adult behaviour, not only attitudes and perceptions of the adults towards the infant, but how they and society in turn, viewed their rôle as parent or guardian (Pollock 1983). This relationship was likely to be subject to the influences of social, economic, cultural and religious variation. The relationship between prevailing societal attitudes and actual human behaviour is often complex and inferences from the funerary record are, of course, even more problematic in that we are investigating the product of symbolic action (Morris 1992). The analysis and identification of age/sex related patterns in grave good deposition at Lankhills, does however, provide an insight into funerary conventions that are likely to relate in some way to broader social constructions within the burying society.

All of the individuals from Lankhills, including the adults, were re-aged and re-sexed by the author. This was necessary because the original published report of the skeletal material represented an assessment only, and was conducted prior to the development of some of the more recent ageing techniques. The ages at death of the immature skeletons have been derived from observations of dental development (Moorrees *et al.* 1963a,b) and eruption (Ubelaker 1978), as well as long bone length (Gowland 1998; Hoppa 1992) and skeletal maturity indicators (Schwartz 1995). The adults have been aged primarily using dental attrition (Miles 1962) and pelvic indicators of age such as the pubic symphysis (Brooks & Suchey 1990) and auricular surface (Lovejoy *et al.* 1985).

The skeleton undergoes numerous changes throughout the life course, from an array of developmental changes during the growth period, to the more subtle alterations in bone topography throughout adulthood. Our ability to age skeletal material during the growth period has been accepted as approximately accurate, although methods are still subject to statistical biases (Gowland & Chamberlain forthcoming). Once skeletal maturity has been reached, after the age of approximately 25 years,[1] the ageing process is increasingly difficult to characterise and the estimation of age at death of adult skeletons is a process fraught with difficulty. Ageing adults with any degree of accuracy is, therefore, problematic, with the majority of techniques exhibiting a particular tendency to underage older individuals (Aykroyd *et al.* 1999, 1997).

Sex determination of the adult skeletal material was conducted using methods described in Krogman & Iscan (1986) and Buikstra & Ubelaker (1994). Unfortunately there are at present no reliable techniques for sexing immature skeletal remains other than DNA analysis (Saunders 1992); consequently those individuals below eighteen years of age have not been assigned a biological sex.

[1] It should be made explicit that skeletal maturity will not necessarily equate with specific cultural concepts of social maturity

Age	Sex unknown	Male	Female	Total
child	5			5
< 1	34			34
1–3	25			25
4–7	30			30
8–12	10			10
13–17	8	1		9
18–24	6	18	33	57
25–34	12	23	34	69
35–49	5	31	21	57
50+	2	19	11	32
Adult	53	11	17	81
Total	190	103	116	409

Table 13.1: The age and sex distribution of the Lankhills skeletal collection.

13.3 Mortality at Lankhills

A total of 451 graves were excavated at Lankhills (33 only partially so), six of which contained more than one burial (Clarke 1979, p. 13). The skeletal remains of 409 individuals from Lankhills were available for analysis and Table 13.1 shows the age and sex structure of the cemetery population. Of those individuals that could be sexed, there were approximately equal numbers of males and females over the age of 18 years. This is in slight contrast to the original report which found a slightly higher number of males than females. This discrepancy between findings has not arisen from a direct disagreement between skeletal analyses, but primarily from the fact that 38 more individuals were sexed in this study than in the original report, while some individuals classed as males in the published report were found in this study to be insufficiently preserved to be confident of sex. Many individuals over 18 years could not be sexed (78 in all), and there is no reason to suppose that the ratio of males to females at Lankhills was anything other than equal. With respect to the age structure, females have a younger average age at death than males. This is a common feature of cemetery reports and is usually thought of as arising from the risks associated with childbirth.

The levels of infant and child mortality throughout the various periods in the past are unknown. Estimated infant (defined as less than one year) mortality figures from modern pre-industrial populations have been found to vary widely, up to approximately 200 per 1000 live births (Hobbs & Kigguridu 1992). Mortality figures remain high for children up until the age of about five years, before gradually decreasing (Weiss 1973). Clearly we cannot extrapolate these figures directly for past populations, but estimates of infant mortality during the Roman period are usually placed between approximately 25–35% (Frier 1982). Despite the degree of uncertainty surrounding infant and child mortality statistics from Roman Britain, the proportion of children buried at Lankhills still falls far short of the numbers one might expect. A comparison of Lankhills with two other late Roman cemeteries (Fig. 13.1), indicates that children are generally under-represented (with a few exceptions, see Pearce this volume). This is not a phenomenon unique to the Romano-British period: the situation is, if anything, more acute at fifth and sixth century cemeteries. In a survey of Pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, for example, Crawford (1991a,b) found that only ap-

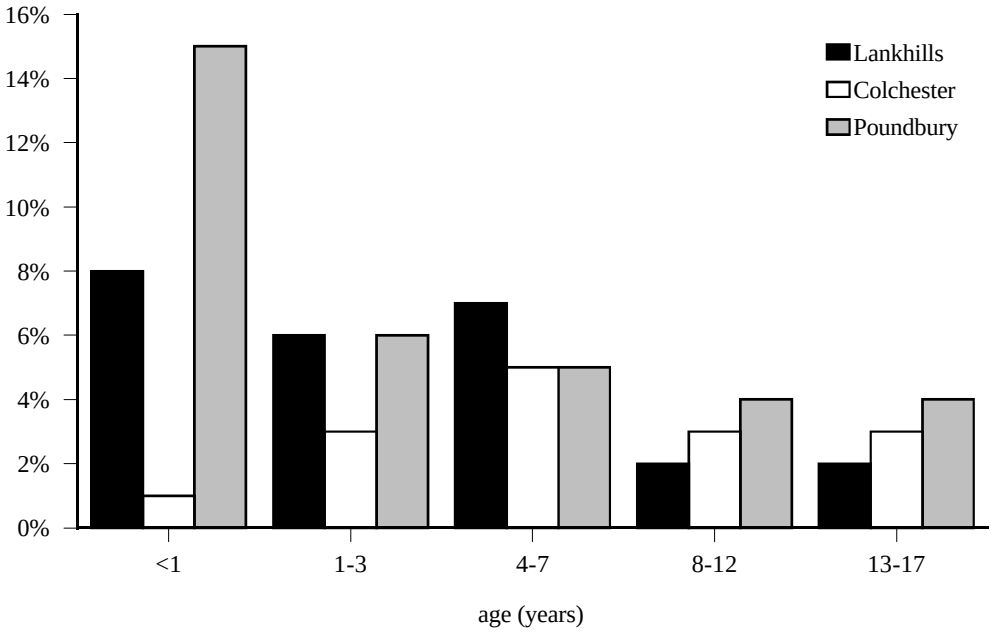


Figure 13.1: Age distribution of the immature individuals expressed as a percentage of the entire cemetery population. Lankhills: $n = 409$ (total number of individuals analysed in this study); Colchester: $n = 575$ (Pinter-Bellows 1993, p. 63); Poundbury: $n = 1075$ (Molleson 1993, p. 212)

proximately 10% out of a sample of 1005 aged burials were less than five years of age, despite these cemeteries having been chosen specifically because they had relatively higher proportions of child burials.

13.4 Infant death and burial

Although taphonomic factors undoubtedly contribute towards this trend (*e.g.,* see Buckberry 2000; Walker *et al.* 1988), it is clear from the Roman period at least, that cultural practices are also responsible for the exclusion of infants from cemeteries. In most regions in Britain, infants have been excavated, often in substantial numbers, from within and around settlements and villas (Scott 1991, 1992; Struck 1993). This differential treatment of infants in death has generally been interpreted either in terms of ritual (but one having little to do with the funerary concerns of the infant), or disposal (*e.g.,* Cocks 1921; Watts 1989). Intrinsic to the latter interpretation are preconceptions concerning a lack of emotional attachment to young infants in response to high infant mortality or the practice of infanticide (see Pearce this volume). As Golden states:

> It is almost a cliché to argue that rites for children are less elaborate, the pollution caused by their death less powerful simply because they played a less important social rôle; they have not fully entered into the community, and so can make the transition out of it more easily. (Golden 1990, p. 85)

Addressing the issue of infanticide, Mays (1993) aged a sample of 164 infants excavated from Roman settlements and cemeteries and found that the age distribution exhibited

a pronounced neonatal peak at 38 gestational weeks. Finding this data to be incompatible with twentieth century perinatal mortality records as well as archaeological evidence from the medieval cemetery of Wharram Percy, Mays (1993) suggested that infanticide may have contributed to the observed peak in the Romano-British data. The ageing technique used by Mays was the Scheuer *et al.* (1980) regression method, where age at death is derived from long bone length. Several authors have demonstrated that regression ageing techniques, if developed using known age samples that do not have an equal number of individuals in each age category, can produced biased results (*e.g.,* Aykroyd *et al.* 1999, 1997; Bocquet-Appel & Masset 1982). In a previous study Gowland & Chamberlain (forthcoming) found that the age distributions obtained from several archaeological studies that had employed the method of Scheuer *et al.* (1980) were strikingly similar: all exhibited a very pronounced neonatal peak at about 38 weeks gestation. This peak corresponded with the age distribution of the reference sample used by Scheuer *et al.* (1980), suggesting that it may have been an artefact of the ageing method used. A subsequent reassessment of this methodology found that this was indeed the case, and that when a large sample of almost 400 Roman infants were re-aged using a Bayesian statistical technique, the age distribution obtained was compatible with that expected when still-births as well as neonates were accorded similar burial rites (*i.e.,* a much broader range of ages at death). In other words, no osteological evidence was found to substantiate interpretations of infanticide (Gowland 1998; Gowland & Chamberlain forthcoming).

It is important to note that the ages of infants buried within settlements and villas ranges from approximately 24 gestational weeks to six months, after which they tend to be accorded different burial rites (Gowland 1998). This phenomenon is, therefore, a repeated funerary ritual associated with a very specific age group. The issue of when a foetus is considered a human being is much debated amongst anti- and pro-abortion groups within modern Western society. It is evident that a miscarried foetus and often a stillborn, will not receive the same burial as a baby that dies even after just a few days (La Fontaine 1986). This distinction, so important in our society, is not one that is apparent from the archaeological evidence in Roman Britain. Literary evidence relating to Rome indicates that an infant only attained an individual social identity on the day that it was named (the *lustratio*), a ceremony that took place on the eighth day after birth for females and ninth for males (Rawson 1991; Weidemann 1989). Further evidence relating to the Roman period however, indicates that infants were not perceived to have attained true personhood prior to teething, and possibly walking and talking (Philpott 1991; Watts 1989). The relevance of historical evidence relating to Rome, for attitudes in Roman Britain is, of course, open to considerable debate, but on the basis of such evidence one could argue that the grouping of stillbirths and infant deaths is to be expected; they were all considered non-people, and of little subsequent importance. Why then are they not found within rubbish deposits rather than houses and settlements? The incorporation of the infant in death, firmly within the social sphere of the living, should not be dismissed so readily. Perhaps the burial of infants was confined to the domestic sphere, not because it was convenient for disposal, but because the household represented the social world of that child. As the social relations or influence of infants tends not to extend beyond the immediacy of the household, one could argue that their burial was conducted within the small social arena of which they were a part. This may highlight the social constraints and lack of funerary ritual associated with miscarriage in our society: materially a non-event that belies the considerable emotional upheaval that such an experience provokes.

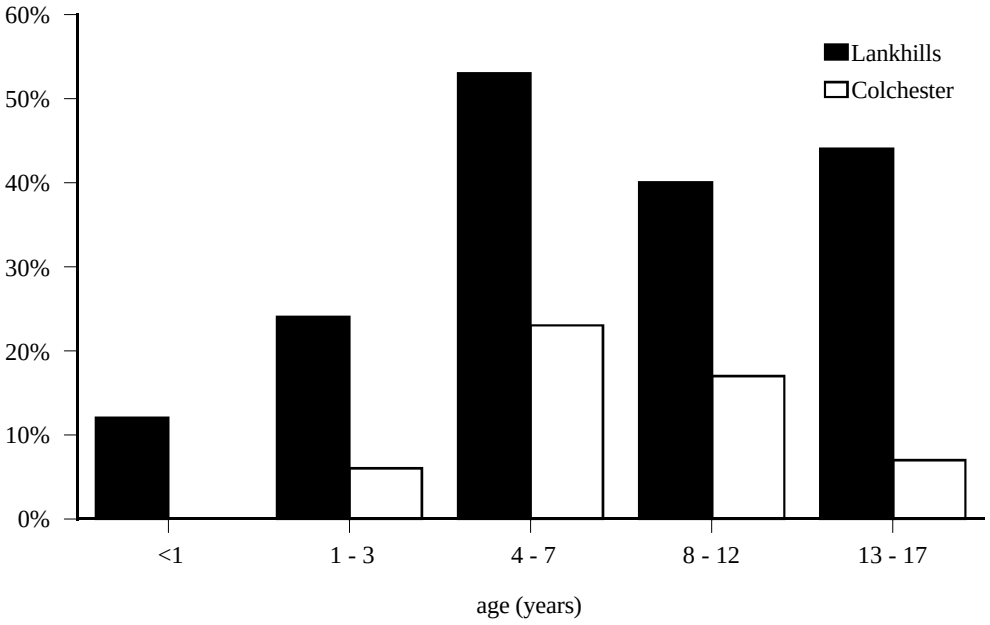


Figure 13.2: Percentage of individuals in each age category to be buried with grave goods.

13.5 Child burial at Lankhills

Focusing now on those children buried within Lankhills cemetery, one of the main sources of information used to examine age identities are the grave good associations. The numbers of individuals of each age group buried with grave goods, as well as the quantities, types, material and positions of those goods, have all been examined in order to discern any age-related material culture patterns. Grave good associations have been used widely to infer particular aspects of individual and social identity in Anglo-Saxon archaeology, but less so in studies of the Romano-British period, due in part to the dearth of grave inclusions from cemetery sites of the latter. Lankhills is unusual in that it has an exceptionally high number of grave goods compared with other contemporary Romano-British cemeteries, therefore lending itself to this type of analysis.

In total, 40% of females, 37% of males, and 26% of individuals less than 18 years of age had grave good provisions. When we compare the actual quantities of artefacts interred (hobnails have been excluded from this particular analysis), however, 30% of the total number excavated from the cemetery were associated with adult females, 16% with adult males, while 34% were buried with individuals under the age of 18 years (the remaining 20% of goods having been recovered from the graves of individuals of unknown sex or age). Therefore, despite fewer 'children' than adult males having been buried with grave goods, they actually have a higher proportion of the overall quantity of artefacts.

The percentage of 'children' (individuals under eighteen years of age) buried with grave goods (Fig. 13.2) alters considerably throughout the 'childhood' period. Individuals from the age of four years onwards, for example, are much more likely to be buried with grave goods. A comparison was made between these findings and those of the fourth century cemetery at Butt Road, Colchester (Crummy *et al.* 1993). Overall,

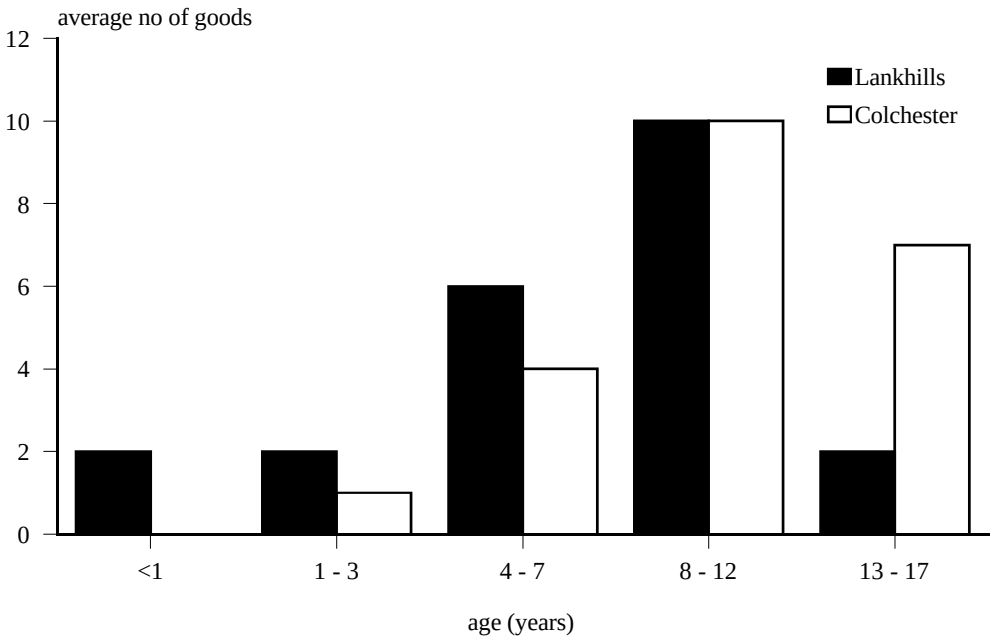


Figure 13.3: Average number of goods with each immature age category.

grave goods are much less frequent at Colchester than Lankhills. However, as Figure 13.2 demonstrates, the structure of the age-related pattern in grave provisioning amongst the immature individuals is not dissimilar.

Observing the actual quantity of goods for each age group (taking into account only those individuals buried with grave goods), it becomes evident that while approximately equal proportions of individuals over the age of four years were buried with grave goods, the average quantity of goods peaks between the ages of 8–12 years (Fig. 13.3). Again, when the results from Lankhills are compared with Colchester the pattern is approximately similar, although at Colchester the number of goods interred with individuals between the ages of 12–17 years remains high.

At Lankhills none of the neonates were buried with grave goods and only a small percentage of infants under one year of age were buried with any goods at all. Of those that were, the quantity and variety of types are limited. Personal ornamentation is rare, and grave goods are restricted to pottery vessels and coins. When we compare these findings to other cemeteries, we see that at Colchester none of the infants under one year of age were buried with goods (although it should be remembered that there are actually very few individuals of this age present at all). We must not take a lack of grave goods as consistently indicating a lesser social status, however, as instances of young infants buried within tile or decorated lead coffins are known from Colchester (Crummy *et al.* 1993) and Cirencester (McWhirr 1986). It is difficult to interpret these burials in relation to the perceptions of infancy as a category because, as discussed earlier, those infants buried within the cemetery would already appear to be in some way exceptional.

In the 1–3 year age category at Lankhills, we start to see an increase in the average quantity of goods interred with the deceased. The variety of vessel-types increases, and more occasionally, items of jewellery may be included. It is interesting to note that no individuals below the age of four years were buried with worn items

of personal adornment and the grave goods were primarily gender neutral: that is, objects not consistently associated with either biologically sexed males or females at this cemetery.

From the age of four years onwards a marked rise in the numbers of individuals interred with grave goods occurs. There is also an increase in both the quantity and variety of types of goods and from this age large numbers of bracelets, finger rings and necklaces are deposited. There is a relative decrease in the likelihood of being buried with coins compared to the younger age groups. The number of grave goods deposited within any one grave peaks in the 8–12 years age category (Fig. 13.3) where, again, items of personal adornment are most prolific. After the age of 12 years there is, however, a noticeable drop, less in the proportion of individuals buried with grave goods, than in the quantity of those goods. Overall, therefore, individuals between the ages of 4–12 years experience a dramatic rise in both the proportion buried with goods and in the quantity of goods deposited. These assemblages are amongst the richest in the entire cemetery and are characterised by large amounts of jewellery.

13.6 Discussion and Interpretation

This brief review of the grave good evidence for the under 18 age category at Lankhills demonstrates that we should not continue to regard these individuals as belonging to a homogenous category of 'children'. In order to begin to interpret the age-related material culture patterns, we must examine this evidence in relation to the graves and grave good assemblages of the rest of the cemetery. In this way we may contextualise the findings of these younger individuals within the entire life course, allowing us to examine age identities beyond the child/adult dichotomy. When examining the remains of skeletal material over the age of approximately 18 years we are able to determine biological sex. When considering the grave good assemblages of these individuals we are, therefore, able to not only establish whether certain goods are associated with either a masculine, or feminine gender, but also to observe the fluidity of gender and status dynamics with age.

The 'adults' at Lankhills have been divided into age categories according to Table 13.1. Approximately half of the adult females in all age groupings were buried with grave goods. Just over 50% of the total quantity of grave goods buried with females accompanied those aged in their late teens or early twenties. A substantial proportion of the total female goods were, therefore, confined to a highly restricted age grouping. Furthermore, the graves of these younger females frequently contained numerous items of personal adornment and grave goods manufactured from the more exclusive materials, such as glass, jet and ivory, compared to the pot and bone objects found with the older females.

In the grave assemblages of the male burials, the reverse is true. There are comparatively fewer grave goods amongst the younger adult age groups and little variation in grave good type. Amongst the older male age groups, however, there is an increase in both variation and quantity of grave goods. In contrast to the females, it is the older males at Lankhills that are buried with, for example, the silver, pewter, and glass materials. This age-related distinction amongst the males is not, however, as marked as that observed amongst the females.

While it is not the intention of this paper to address the age-related grave good provisioning amongst the 'adults' in any detail (although this is currently being investigated), some interesting patterns are clearly emerging. It is the implications of these

patterns for the social construction of stages of development that concern us here. It would appear from the grave good associations that gender-specific grave goods were deposited only with certain age groups. The expression of masculinity or femininity in death is not uniform but at least in part, is dependent upon age. Both the older females and individuals below the age of four years tend to be buried with fewer and non-gendered grave provisions. Halsall (1996) also found there to be a similarity in the graves of children and old people in cemeteries of early Merovingian Austrasia. He interpreted the reduced number of grave goods with these individuals as "demonstrating that deaths among neither group created much social stress" (Halsall 1996, p. 22). Rather than interpreting these burials as purely indicating a lower status, however, it could be that the expression of gender was associated with objects that are currently interpreted as reflecting high status (*e.g.,* bracelets, necklaces, *etc.*). Therefore, for the younger children and older females at Lankhills, one could argue that gender was not the overriding identity that it would appear to be, for example, for females in their twenties. Gender ambiguity in the material culture of the very young or very old has numerous ethnographic and historical correlates (Moore 1994). Up until the last couple of centuries in England, for example, young boys were attired in a manner very similar to girls, until about seven years of age when they were 'breeched'.

In contrast to the younger children and older women, it would seem that children aged between 4–12 years, and females in their twenties were buried with numerous items of material culture that have a strong feminine association (*i.e.,* the items are rarely recovered from skeletally-sexed male graves). Not only is there an increase in the quantity of grave goods from four years onwards, but there is also an apparent shift towards the inclusion of those grave goods typically differentiated by sex.

If we take the theoretical stance that funerary ritual is both structured by, and recreates, the social reality of the living, then we should assume that a shift in social status is occurring at around this age threshold, and what is more, this transition would appear to coincide with the expression of a more strongly signified gender identity. Literary evidence pertaining to Rome also indicates that the perceived identity of children underwent a transition after the age of about seven years, towards an identity that was more explicitly gendered. For example, after this age, terminology that differentiated between the sexes, *puer* or *puella*, rather than the asexual grouping of *infantia*, became appropriate. Furthermore, virginity is, for the first time, attributed as a characteristic after the age of seven years (Fraschetti 1997). From this age onwards, historical evidence also indicates that males and females experienced divergent chronologies in terms of social age transitions. Roman males underwent a significant rite of passage at approximately 14 to 16 years of age, during a ceremony that took place in both public and private, they replaced their *toga praetexta* with the *toga virilis* and removed their *bulla* (Eyben 1993, p. 6; Fraschetti 1997, p. 64). This event signified a new social age for males who were then considered 'more responsible' individuals as *adolescens*, until approximately 25 to 30 years of age (Weidemann 1989, p. 116).

Females had no similar rite of passage, the onset of menarche does not appear to have been socially significant, and only upon marriage did they experience a change in status (Fraschetti 1997, p. 63). This is in contrast to males where no clear distinction between an unmarried or married man is made with respect to terminology (Leijwegt 1991, p. 55). Epigraphic and documentary evidence indicates that high status females in Rome may have married as early as twelve years of age, puberty not apparently being a prerequisite for marriage (Hopkins 1965). However, Shaw (1987) in a re-examination of the epigraphic evidence from Rome and elsewhere in the Ro-

man Empire, has demonstrated that a more common age for marriage amongst lower status females was in fact from the late teens to early twenties.

In accordance with the findings of this study regarding the high frequency of females at Lankhills aged 18–25 years with buried grave goods, Hopkins (1987) has also demonstrated that females in the 15–29 year age group were more likely to be commemorated on Roman tombstone inscriptions than older females. Hopkins concluded that the younger women probably enjoyed heightened social estimation as being both wives and daughters. Again, the applicability of historical evidence relating predominantly to Rome to the prevailing attitudes and beliefs in Roman Britain may be considered tenuous, and epigraphic evidence, although used widely to infer demographic patterns for the Roman Empire, is laden with biases (for a discussion of some of these problems see Parkin 1992, p. 11). The existence of such evidence should, however, not be ignored as it provides, at least, a useful backdrop for comparison with the archaeological data from Roman Britain.

Examining the similarity in the grave assemblages of the 4–12 age category and females in their early twenties more closely, we may observe that in contrast to later fifth century Anglo-Saxon graves, many of the items of jewellery contained within Roman cemeteries are deposited in piles by the side of the body rather than worn. These items are, therefore, not necessarily related to everyday apparel or burial costume, but instead represent deliberate depositions. Approximately equal quantities of jewellery were recovered from the graves of adult females (96 items) and immature individuals (89 items), however only 14% of those found with the females are worn, compared to 39% with the immature skeletons (Fig. 13.4). In fact, none of the females in the 18–24 year age group have items of jewellery that are worn, they are all deposited by the side of the body. Of the unworn objects, those buried with the younger individuals were more frequently buried near the legs or feet, while those accompanying the adults tended to be buried next to the head.

When one compares such data to the findings at Colchester, we find that almost the reverse is true. Of those items of personal adornment buried with individuals under the age of 18 years at Colchester, only 13% were worn (the majority having been placed in piles next to the skull) compared to 43% buried with the adults (Fig. 13.4). Perhaps the important factor here is not whether the items were worn or not, but rather that a distinction was maintained between the adults and the young.

So although there is a similarity in the composition of grave assemblages of children between the ages of 4–12 years and young adult females, there are subtle differences between these groups in terms of placement of goods and whether they were worn or not. These differences may be important in terms of identity and demonstrate how different meanings can be conferred on, and imbued by, the same items of material culture depending not only on the gender of an individual, but also on his or her stage in the life course.

13.7 Conclusions

By adopting a life course approach, contextualising the study of the younger individuals within the entire life span, we may in some way elide the adult/child dichotomy that characterises the majority of studies, in order to more readily identify those age thresholds that have no symbolic or social significance within our current age paradigm. The imposition of almost arbitrary age categories upon the continuum of the life course is, however, unavoidable in this type of analysis and although such

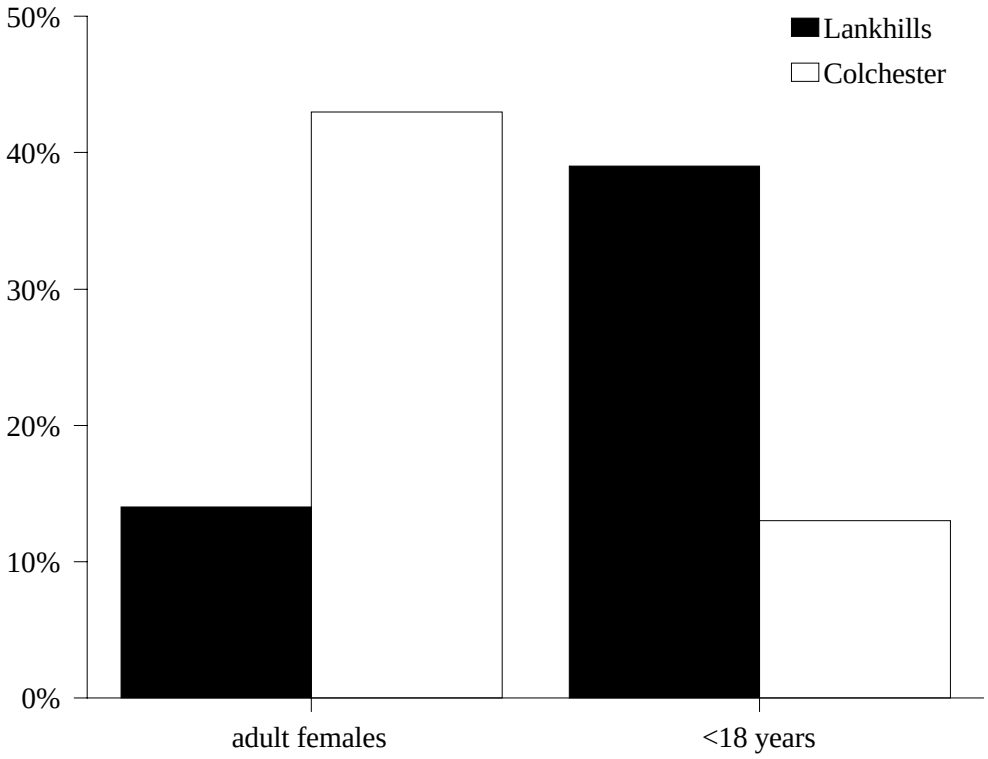


Figure 13.4: Percentage of items of personal adornment worn and unworn with age.

a procedure does effectively 'arrest' time for those individuals within the categories (and imposes a degree of homogeneity upon them that may be entirely false), we can at least remain open to a variety of possible categorisations.

Despite these problems, I believe that this outline of the age/grave good associations at Lankhills has been able to highlight a number of points. Firstly, we have shown that perceptions of infancy differ from our own in terms of the grouping of stillbirths and post-neonatal deaths outside of the cemetery context. Also, I would argue that there is another important age-related shift in identity that occurs around the 4–7 year age category extending to individuals of 8–12 years. I would further argue that this shift is in some way associated with a greater expression of gendered identity in death at least. The graves of these individuals are amongst the richest for the entire cemetery and this increase in burial wealth may also indicate a concurrent increase in the social status of children upon reaching this age threshold, although direct correlations of this nature are problematic.

The relative wealth of these graves may not, of course, be directly associated with the social identity of the interred, but relate instead to the sense of loss accompanying the untimely death of an individual of this age. A society's attitude towards death at different ages may profoundly influence the mortuary ritual. This concept of the 'bad death' is referred to in the literary evidence from Rome (Néraudau 1987) and it may be that the death of an older child was felt more strongly than that of a younger infant or child (Dixon 1988, 1992), perhaps because the risk of death generally diminished after the age of five years (Weiss 1973).

One other point that has arisen from this study (although differences in types and quantities of goods occurred throughout the life course), was the absence at Lankhills of that marked distinction in material culture that serves to differentiate and define children so effectively within our society. In the contemporary western world we have constructed a separate and distinctive material and social world of the child, one that both reflects and reinforces our perceptions of their specialness and vulnerability. This is absent from the cemetery evidence of Roman Britain, and may indicate that the emphasis and perception of the lived reality of childhood was not based on difference as it is today, but instead that children played a much more integrated rôle in the structuring and functioning of Romano-British society.

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