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ANCESTOR ARTEFACTS – ANCESTOR MATERIALS

'progress destroys before culture, one of the fruits of progress, seeks to conserve'
(adapted from Greenhalgh 1989, 248)

SUMMARY

Ancestor artefacts (objects of an earlier period, valued for their age and associations which are retained into a later period) are normally identified by archaeologists due to the difference between the date of the object and its context. These valued artefacts often demonstrate evidence of veneration (collection, cleaning and care). Recently the importance of fragments in referencing an earlier object and its associations has been recognised (Chapman 2000), though the detection of such fragments, even when in significant contexts, presents a challenge to archaeologists. The first example of the existence of an ancestor object which no longer exists even as fragments, but as remelted metal, is presented in this paper. This suggests that the material of which an artefact is composed may have significantly greater cultural meaning than previously proposed. Distinguishing such *ancestor material* from material recycled for economic benefit or its desirable physical characteristics presents enormous difficulty to the archaeologist and archaeological scientist.

ANCESTOR ARTEFACTS

Objects which are far older than the context from which they are recovered are often considered ancestral. Ancestor artefacts clearly have some value to those who have made the effort to retain them and in addition to retention have often been carefully stored, actively maintained (cleaned or restored), displayed or involved in traditional or ceremonial activities. Even in highly literate societies, artefacts can, as today's museum visitor figures demonstrate, be powerful mnemonic devices for evoking the past (Jones 2007, Haug 2001) or providing evidence about it. A distinction has been made between non-literate societies in which memory is transmitted through an oral tradition and artefacts are made and remade as part of (incorporated into) the ritual, and literate societies in which artefacts are retained, memorialised and inscribed (Barth 1987, Goody 1968). However, Kuechler (1987) and Rowlands (1993) have seen this incorporation / remaking and inscription / memorialisation distinction as more closely related to the nature of the society; mobile and transient or static and durable, rather than related to literacy. In both forms of society artefacts act as mnemonics, though in mobile and transient ones the retention of artefacts is rare or even non-existent. In all cases societies have artefacts which tell them about their past, either through recreation or retention.

Some of the earliest evidence of ancestry in the archaeological record of Britain is suggested by Bradley (1998) who noted the visual similarity between megalithic tomb structures - portal dolmens, sometimes known as quoits in Cornwall, and the

natural stone outcrops, known as tors, in areas such as Cornwall. These Neolithic tombs do not appear to have developed through copying the natural rock outcrops since they occur at earlier dates elsewhere on the Atlantic seaboard. However, since some of the natural rack outcrops appear to be incorporated within human made enclosures, Bradley has reasoned that the Neolithic people appropriated the natural rock outcrops treating them as ancestral places, perhaps seeing them as tombs of gods or ancestors. Thus they appear to have created a past for themselves and incorporated this physical evidence of that past into their culture, indicating a fundamental need for this society, and probably every society, to possess a past.

The importance of this concept of ancestry in artefacts is also suggested by Gillings and Pollard (1999) when discussing the stones of Avebury. In exploring the biography of the Grey Whether stone, they suggest that polished areas on the stone were initially created whilst it was still a natural boulder in the sarsen stone fields of Salisbury Plain when it acted as an abrasive block for smoothing and shaping flint axes. Over time it acquired meaning, a powerful place associated with activities and people of the past. Subsequently when the large ritual monument of Avebury was created, these sarsen boulders were used to form a megalithic ring, its power derived from the accumulated power and meaning of the ancestral standing stone artefacts of which it was composed.

Specific evidence for an earlier *ancestor object*, which was subsequently retained and reused in a location with significance and value also occurs at Locmariaquer in Brittany, where a decorated menhir was split and the halves used to roof separate megalithic prehistoric chambered tombs in different parts of the landscape (Bradley 2002, 36-7).

Hingley (1996) has drawn attention to the Iron Age reuse of Neolithic graves in Orkney and Atlantic Scottish seaboard and the reproduction of Neolithic decorative schemes on Iron Age ceramics as examples of the deliberate reuse of places and ideas from a distant past. It is unclear if this is a form of reverence, veneration or pragmatism. It is however, a conscious redefining and reinventing of the past, though a re-acquisition and re-use of the past may be the more accurate descriptor.

The presence of Roman finds on Dark Age sites (Dark 1993) and the presence of prehistoric finds on Roman sites (Eckardt 2004, Adkins and Adkins 1985, Ferris and Smith 1995, Turner and Wymer 1987) speaks of the superstitions and power associated with objects of the distant past in the peripheral provinces of the Roman empire (Eckardt 2004). In Rome itself, temples were filled with 'artistic spoila' (Greenhalph 1989), in particular Greek statuary, from the conquests of an expanding empire. This fuelled the collecting of such ancient art resulting in rising prices, forgeries, art critics, public officials to regulate care and display of the antiquities and new buildings to house the valued works (Haug 2001). However, since ideas about the past were very different from modern perceptions, there were also collections of the old and curious, natural wonders such as Emperor Augustus collection of prehistoric bones (Haug 2001, 118)

A continuing relationship with the past is also evident in the Anglo-Saxon period, with large numbers of Roman artefacts, particularly coins having been found in Anglo-Saxon graves, particularly of the 5^{th}-7^{th} century (Meaney 1981, White 1988,

Greenhalgh 1989, White 1990, Eckardt and Williams 2003). Twenty five percent of all Anglo-Saxon graves are found in association with earlier monuments, in particular Bronze Age barrows (Williams 1998, 92). This suggested to Williams (1998, 96) that a relationship was being sought with 'an ideal community of ancestors', though Semple (1998) demonstrated through literary references to barrows; their position within the landscape and the nature of their later use, that the interpretation of these ancient monuments can be very variable. Sometimes they are a place of attraction, sometimes a place to be feared and avoided. Relationships with ancestral places and artefacts can be complex and vary over time.

Where we have written texts, such as wills, we have evidence for the creation of family heirlooms through the passing of jewellery to succeeding generations. One 10th century example is Wynflaed, who is recorded as leaving an 'engraved ring and cloak fastener' to her daughter and 'an old wired fastener worth six mancuses' (filigree disc brooch or brooch of concentric beaded wire) to her granddaughter (Hinton 2005, 331). Such heirloom objects of the preceding generation occur frequently amongst the grave goods of the Early Medieval period, as at from Taplow (Hinton 2005, 63). However, the occurrence of Roman and Iron Age brooches in Anglo-Saxon graves, also the presence of Roman coins, (invariably dated pre AD 375 and thus not directly linked to the deceased) as part of necklaces, indicates a connection with a more distant (mythical) past, an older ancestry is also being created and invoked (Hinton 2005, 272).

These and many other examples have suggested to authors such as Hinton (2005) that some ancestor artefacts passed down through the family can be considered *heirlooms*. They are objects with a known history, perhaps even a genealogy of ownership. They may be artefacts retained as a personal or family past with direct meaningful associations (Eckardt and Williams 2003, 148). Haug (2001) describes these objects as being from a 'recent past' from the previous 80 years, i.e. 3 generations, such that there could be a direct communicable relationship, a knowable past through family or colleagues.

Artefacts from a more distant past age are treated with reverence and respect, though they appear to have no direct connection to their present owners. These old and respected artefacts could perhaps be termed *venerable artefacts*. Haug (2001) describes these objects as being from a *distant past*, beyond direct experience, part of a past of myth and legend, part of a socially defined and agreed past.

VENERATION OF ARTEFACTS

Though the acquisition, care, storage and display of artefacts is usually discussed in terms of the history of museum collections (Lewis 1992), as the examples above suggests the retention of *heirloom* and *venerable* artefacts has clearly occurred from the Neolithic to the present day – effectively as long as we have been a settled and sedentary society. This refers back to the ideas of Rowlands (1993) and Keuchler (1987) of the inscription and memorialisation of objects in static and durable societies. Evidence of retention and care of artefacts may, in addition to difference in date between the object and its context, be considered signifiers of ancestral status.

- Veneration through retention, which includes the examples listed above. The motives for both personal and institutional (museum) collecting in the present day and the nature of collections have been discussed by many authors (Pearce 1995; Thompsen 1992, Section 4). Work on collections suggests that retention / collection is a human act independent of the age of the object. Motives of personal remembrance and curiosity are often ascribed to individual collecting. Organisational collection and retention is often associated with ideas of ownership and power – the objects providing physical evidence of rights, privileges and events, their presence demonstrating ownership or supporting particular beliefs or ideas (Caple 2006, 205).
- Veneration through cleaning. Though cleaning is a method of retaining the functionality for a working object, when it has been carried out innumerable times to an older object it can be considered an act of veneration of a valued artefact. In such cases it has often worn away decorative or other features of the object, eventually becoming a ritualised activity. Artefacts such as the Anglian Helmet (Tweddle 1992, 980-2) showed evidence of the brass 'rope' edge decoration around the inscription having been worn smooth through polishing. Evidence of the care of the helmet, which lasted the 50-100 years that elapsed between its construction and deposition.
- Veneration through restoration. Repairs can be made to any broken artefacts in order to maintain its functionality and could not be considered veneration. However, there are a number of examples where considerable effort has been made to restore the original form of the object using the original parts, though the artefact can no longer fulfil its original function. However, in its restored form the artefact can perform the mnemonic and physical evidence roles of an ancestor artefact. Willmott (2001) drew attention to a group of seventeenth century wineglasses that had been repaired with lead strips or wire, especially at the stem. Such objects would no longer function effectively as drinking vessels, but their original form had been restored, thus they perform an effective mnemonic function. This may also be the case for a number of Roman Samian vessels that have been restored with riveted lead strips or butterfly rivets (Marsh 1981, Ward 1993). Similarly the large number of holes in sherds of Grooved Ware appears to be related to repair of the vessels with now decayed organic material. However the fact that this type of Neolithic ceramic is four more times more likely to have such repair holes suggests efforts to preserve these particular types of vessel as heirlooms (Bradley 2002, 57; Cleal 1988). It can even be suggested that obvious repairs may even have acted in the same way as patina, indicating age and an earlier 'life' or ancestry for the vessel. Brooks (forthcoming) quotes de Roux (2007) proving an ethnographic parallel for such an approach.

  'In Africa people do not just do away with masks, statues, calabashes or other objects that have been more or less damaged through time and constant use. Instead they mend them in a visible way, as if the repair made them more precious. Few Westerners share this opinion which explains why such pieces are so rare in collections – and why they are even more rarely displayed to the public.'

- Veneration through re-enactment. Leland in his tour through England in the 16th century recounts seeing the old (Saxon) cross at Reculver brightly painted (Leland 1907, 10). Given the loss of paint on any surface exposed to wear, this indicates that this stone monument had been repainted repeatedly as an act of veneration generation after generation for hundreds of years. In this case the object is both memorialised and inscribed as well as being remade and incorporated (Rowlands 1993). Though such use could be described as either use or re-use, if there is a conscious act of repeating an ancient activity and the actions have effectively become ritualised, then what is actually occurring is a re-enactment.

- Veneration through display. The piercing and high levels of wear on many of the Roman coins in Saxon graves indicate a considerable period of use for display as pendants for these objects. Almost all classical antiquities collected in the Renaissance and during the 18th and 19th centuries show some evidence of having been on display. Roman stonework incorporated into Saxon and Medieval churches, such as the crypt at Hexham Abbey, invariably have the Roman decorative side visible displayed.

REUSABLE MATERIAL

Old artefacts which do not retain any values of either age or associated meaning can still represent a functional source of raw material *(reusable material)*. At Avebury throughout the medieval and post medieval period many of the standing stones had fires lit around them to break them into smaller stones – which were used to construct the houses of the village (Gillings and Pollard 1999). There is no archaeological evidence of associations of fear (hiding or defacing the artefact) or veneration (retention, display, cleaning, restoration etc), the break up of the artefact into smaller pieces is necessary for its subsequent use. The artefact was a valuable raw material and, as anyone who has worked in an agricultural community, subsistence economy or industrial workshop will attest, the benefit of a raw material is rarely squandered. Thus, though objects have complex and often multiple meanings, they also all posses utility - the functional benefit of an object from its form and material.

Large blocks of freestone, which can be carved again and again, were always a valuable material. One such example is the stone in Figure 1, which was initially a Roman altar to the God Jupiter (right face). It was re-erected as an altar and inscribed (left face) in the third century AD in the fort of Piercebridge, Co. Durham. It was later reused as a column capital (back face) in Gainford Church a few miles from Piercebridge (RIB 1022). The partial damage to the decoration and inscription of the stone through later use was purely related to shaping for its subsequent use, which seems to indicate that the stone was used simply because it was a readily available large piece of carvable freestone. There is no evidence that the earlier use was venerated or even deliberately obliterated in any way.

White (1990) noted that the vast majority of Roman coins occurring in Anglo-Saxon cemetery contexts are lower denomination copper alloy coins. Those of gold and most of the silver had seemingly been melted down for bullion. These and other examples show the utilisation of some artefacts purely as *reusable material*. Their

ancestral past seems seem not to matter, or at least their value as *old material* outweighs their value as *ancestor artefacts*.

This re-use or recycling of artefacts and materials is a well-attested practise, highlighted in object biographies (Schiffer 1972, 158; Caple 2006, 13). The terms reuse and recycle are not used consistently. It can be suggested that the term reuse, Schiffer's 'lateral recycling', should pertain where an object's form is largely retained as in the case of the painting of 'Prince Henry on Horseback' (Woodhuysen-Keller et al 1988; McClure 1992). The term recycle should pertain where the object form is lost and it is used as source of material as in the case of broken glass (cullet) collected to be melted and reformed into a new object. However, in reality objects like the stone alter above or gem stones from old jewellery that are recut and reset in new pieces of jewellery fall between the definitions.

SAUCER BROOCHES

Materials such as metal and glass that can be melted and reformed into artefacts are frequently recycled. If we explore a period when it appears clear that ancestral objects are an important element in society, is it possible, through compositional analysis, to detect earlier alloy or glass compositions associated with later object forms?

In the mid 10th century, the will of Wynflaed records giving her '*goldfagan* cup' to her grandson, in order that he could 'enlarge his *beah* (arm ring) with the gold'. This attests a tradition of melting down old artefacts to create a new object (Hinton 2005, 331). However, we do not know whether her grandson considered that the 'new' arm ring carried an association with his grandmother or it was merely a larger and more valuable arm ring. Thus it is uncertain if the gold cup should be considered *reusable material* or an *ancestor artefact*.

The studies of saucer brooches (5th –7th century AD) undertaken by Tania Dickinson (1993) included alloy compositions determined by Peter Northover. An initial group of these analyses were supplied by Peter Northover and Tania Dickinson to the author of this article, circa 1983, as part of a study into medieval copper alloys of the period AD 400-1600 (Caple 1986). However, when considered in terms of object biography and ancestral artefacts, the analytical data can be reappraised to suggest something of the origins of these objects.

Saucer brooches were worn as pairs together above the left and right breast, securing a peplos like garment worn by Saxon women. They are recovered almost exclusively from the graves of adult Saxon women in central southern and eastern England and date from the 5th to early 7th centuries AD. Though saucer brooches act as a pair and are invariably the same size and shape, the decoration of the brooches varies. In some pairs the decoration is very similar, though not identical, sometimes entirely different. Most usually there are considerable elements of similarity, which has led Dickinson to conclude that the brooches were probably made at the same time in the same workshop so that the elements of similarity (size and shape) and differences (decoration) could be controlled. The failed casting from Purwell Farm, Cassington, indicates that these objects were created by casting

using two-piece clay moulds, with separate moulds for each brooch. The moulds were created using models, the central decorative section of which was almost certainly made of wax, into which the differing decorative forms were scribed. The moulds were never re-used.

Since saucer brooches were typically 40-45mm in diameter and the crucibles from this period range in capacity from 20-100cm^3 (Tylecote 1986) almost all crucibles could have held more than enough metal for casting a pair of brooches. The analyses of the saucer brooches, which are presented here in terms of the principal alloy components, Table 1, show that the range of alloy compositions used in the manufacture of saucer brooches is comparable to that of copper alloy metalwork found throughout England at this period (Oddy 1983, Caple 1985, Brownsword et. al. 1986, Mortimer et. al. 1986, Mortimer 1990, Mortimer 1991). Dickinson (1993, 34) has previously noted that the lead content of saucer brooches was deliberately kept low in order to allow the objects to be gilded. This indicates that conscious control of the alloy composition was practised. The fact that the alloy compositions of pairs of brooches are not identical indicates that separate crucibles were used to melt the metal for each brooch. It is probable that each crucible was simply charged with scrap or fresh metal, melted and poured into the separate moulds. Since there is no functional or economic benefit from such an activity, indeed it makes the process slower and it uses more materials, there must be a social or cultural explanation for such a deliberately complex act.

The other group of brooches of 5th and 6th century date from southern and eastern England, that occasionally occur in pairs and which have been analysed, are cruciform brooches. When they do occur in pairs the alloy compositions are normally very similar (Mortimer 1990, 398-401) suggesting that in almost all cases they were poured from a single crucible into the two moulds.

In the case of the saucer brooches, though the analyses of the brooches in a pair were not identical, since they are made in the same workshop at the same time it might be expected that they would at least have similar compositions. Certainly, it might be expected that their compositions would be closer than the wide variation in alloys seen in the full range of saucer brooches from throughout the south east of England. To test this hypothesis the difference in the tin content between the brooches in a pair was compared to the difference in the tin content between any two brooches selected at random from the group (excluding pairs) this was repeated for all pairs of brooches and for all the brooches in the group analysed by Northover. Graph 1 shows the distribution of the difference in the tin content between the brooches in a pair (■) (right vertical axis) and all the saucer brooches in the analysed group (grey columns) (left vertical axis). The two distributions are almost identical, thus the tin content of a pair of brooches is just as variable as any two brooches picked at random from the all the saucer brooches analysed. This is also expressed in the similar mean and standard deviation of the two distributions of the differences in tin content (Table 2). The process was repeated for the differences in the lead content and the differences in the zinc content. A similar pattern is seen for lead where again the distribution of the difference in levels of lead present in the pairs of brooches is similar to that between the brooches in the group (Graph 2 and Table 2). However, Graph 3, shows that there is a marked difference in the distribution of the zinc content between the brooches in a pair (■)

and all the saucer brooches in the analysed group (grey columns). Much lower levels of difference are seen in the zinc content between the pairs of brooches than between two brooches selected at random from the group. This difference is also seen in the dissimilar mean and standard deviations for the zinc content difference distributions, Table 2. Mann-Whitney tests confirmed that whilst the tin and lead difference distributions were not significantly different, the zinc difference distributions were significantly different. This means that the zinc contents are very similar between the brooches in a pair – sometimes high, sometimes low, but invariably similar. This indicates that there was some mechanism of control of the zinc content, in marked contrast to the tin and lead contents where there was no control.

This is a very surprising result since zinc is the most mobile of the alloy components in a copper alloy and likely to be lost to the walls of the crucible, to slag or into the gaseous phase when remelted. Consequently we would normally expect the variation in the zinc content to be as great as or greater than the variation in the tin or leads contents. However, these saucer brooch results indicate that there was considerable control in the zinc content within the pair of saucer brooches, a control which applied only to the brooches in a pair and not to the group of brooches as a whole. Since at this date zinc was only present as a metal in the form of the alloy brass made through the cementation process (Pollard and Heron 1996, Tylecote 1986, 369), in reality this means roughly the same amount of the same composition brass was deliberately placed in each crucible but variable amounts of copper, lead, tin or bronze were added to make up the charge.

A number of authors have suggested that much of the copper alloy in the post roman period was derived from recycled Roman scrap (Oddy 1983, Mortimer 1990). It remains unclear whether the production of metals such as copper, tin and lead continued in the initial post Roman period. The presence of some pure bronze artefacts indicates either controlled sorting of scrap (Dungworth 1995) or fresh copper, tin and lead production continued or very quickly restarted in Britain. In the Roman period brass was normally produced in the area around the river Meuse and was imported into Britain. In the 5th to 7th century, high purity zinc brass with >20% zinc has only rarely been detected in Britain, seemingly only used for unusual deliberate decorative effect in objects such as the boars head from Sutton Hoo (Oddy 1983). High zinc brass became more plentiful in the 8th century, used on the Anglian Helmet (Tweddle 1992) and in the 9th century, added to silver to debase the styca coinage of Northumbria (Gilmore and Metcalf 1980, Caple 1986, Table 12.4) suggesting that production and trade in brass had restarted by that date. However the vast majority of the analyses of copper alloy objects from the 5th and 6th century (Mortimer 1990) are made of a quaternary alloy of copper, tin, zinc and lead, typical of remelted Roman scrap (or scrap plus a small amount of fresh bronze metal Caple 1986, 554-565). As such, any brass from this period almost certainly derives from retained or recovered late Roman brass objects, probably of continental origin, since the zinc content of objects from late Roman Britain had declined after the first century AD (Bayley and Butcher 2004, 210).

In the case of the saucer brooches, to provide a suitable level of control in the zinc content seen in these brooch pairs it is likely that a single common brass object was divided in two, half in one crucible and half in the other. Additional copper and

bronze scrap was added to give the required amount of metal for casting the brooch. The most likely social or cultural explanation for this complexity would be that the brass object had particular meaning which it was desired to invest equally in both new saucer brooches. The most likely explanation is that a common ancestral brass artefact was deliberately divided so that the ancestral values were passed through the metal into the new saucer brooches, an equivalent process in gold seemingly referred to in the 10th century AD by Wynflaed's will (Hinton 1995).

It is interesting to note that Dickinson has previously suggested the role of ancestral objects on the basis of decorative devices 'I argued that the transfer of Late Roman motifs indicates not just adoption of their apotropaic charms, but also as symbols of real or claimed contacts with Roman authority, which might bolster social position in 6th century Saxony' (Dickinson 1993, 39). The proposal of an ancestral brass ornament or piece of jewellery, indicated on the basis of these analyses, provides a mechanism for this transference of motif.

Detecting and ascribing cultural meaning such as ancestry to the selection of materials can be difficult especially when studying archaeological rather than historic or ethnographic material (McGhee 1994; Caple 2006). When interpreting materials functional and cultural meaning are often combined, consequently it is often impossible to be certain which is the 'true' motive for material selection. Only where there is no functional benefit to be derived can the cultural meaning interpretation be advanced. In the case of saucer brooches, however, the lack of functional benefit and the additional complexity required to achieve similar zinc contents in pairs of brooches clearly points to a cultural meaning – in this case an *ancestral artefact*.

CONCLUSION

The term *ancestral artefact* has been used to describe objects of the past which occur in later contexts. Two subgroups have previously been proposed *heirlooms* referring to objects which are within 3 generations of the context in which they occur and it is conceivably that there is a memory of the objects original user and *venerable* objects to artefacts from the distant past which are venerated for their age and associated myth value. The appreciation of the value of age and associations of the artefacts is seen in the different forms of veneration; retention, care, cleaning, restoration, display and use (such as re-enactment). If an earlier object represents merely a convenient source of material to be recycled it could accurately described as providing *reusable material*. Only if it draws in some way on the values related to the age or associations (ownership, manufacture, symbolism, shape, use) of the predecessor object could it be considered an *ancestor material*. Saxon saucer brooches appear to be one group of objects which utilised *ancestor material*.

Though the discussions about ancestral object have usually focussed on complete or largely complete objects, the work of Chapman (2000) and others on fragmentation and enchainment has demonstrated that only parts of objects are required to invoke previous object forms and meanings. There is in fact a continuum from the whole artefact being retained, valued and reused, through damaged and partial artefacts to the smallest fragments (Rainbird 1999) and even now to recycled materials. Where artefacts are large, such as stone altars, there is considerable scope for detecting

ancestry and functionality and determining whether an object is *reusable material* or *ancestral material*. It becomes progressively harder as the pieces become smaller, both in terms of detection and interpretation – particularly high valued small objects such as the gemstones in jewellery. Thus the flat red garnet at the centre of the Milton Keynes pendant shows through the crude 'grozing' marks around its circumference, which indicate that it was almost certainly cut into its present circular form from an earlier large slab garnet, probably from an earlier piece of 5th century jewellery (Caple et. al. 1995). The shape of the original garnet was not important but the material had value. In this instance it is unclear whether this was purely functional - the property of being a flat, red precious stone which was desired or the material retained some form of meaning i.e. it was an *ancestor material*. Similarly Hilary Cool has previously noted the excessive use of Samian ceramics to make counters and spindle whorls in the 4th and 5th centuries AD (Cool 2000). The preference for materials of earlier origin is evident, but it remains difficult to disentangle the extent of cultural meaning from materials which are highly suited to their new purpose. The cultural references may be very slight.

If an ancestral object is attested through these saucer brooch analyses, exactly what is being invoked through this act of veneration. Meaney (1981) and others have emphasised the magical, medicinal, amuletic and apotropaic power of artefacts. Such properties have also been recently proposed for the blue stones of Stonehenge (Darvill and Wainwright 2009, Darvill 2007). In the case of fragments, chips, scrapings or even recycled materials it appears that it is believed that an essential essence is transferred with the material despite and process such as crushing, melting or mixing. Thus the form of the original object is not crucial, making detection of such objects challenging.

Could the use of *ancestor materials* suggest something about the nature of society? Where artefacts are bought from retailers, purchasers have no relationship with the manufacturer and do not know the history of the artefact, thus even reset old gemstones are effectively new materials. However, in a society where there is a relationship between the maker and purchaser, artefacts like jewellery are often of bespoke manufacture, where the owner acquires stones from old jewellery and brings them to a jeweller to be reset. In such instances gemstones are frequently *ancestral* recalling the earlier jewellery of a mother or other relative. Thus the recycled material may have and be an important element of the new object, though no visual evidence of the form of the old object survives. If the use of ancestral material is widespread it could suggest a reason for a much closer relationship between customers and craftsmen. Far more artefacts would be created as bespoke objects, with customers regularly taking objects with personal meaning to craftsmen to be recycled into new artefacts. Though this relationship is observed in later medieval society for valuable materials such as gold and resetting precious stones, in the early medieval period it may have existed for base metal jewellery as well. This could account for the nature of some of the metalwork compositions coming from this period, with occasional high silver values turning up in some of the copper alloys and a lack of clear patterns in the copper alloy compositions. This closer relationship between craftsmen and customer may contribute to the explanations for the presence of craftworking on many domestic sites as well as high status and monastic sites in the early medieval period. The influence of customers on the shape and decoration of bespoke objects is well attested in more recent

anthropological studies (Jones 1993). In a society with greater familiarity with technology and materials much greater levels of meaning may have been invested in materials, which could potentially convey as much cultural meaning as form and decoration.

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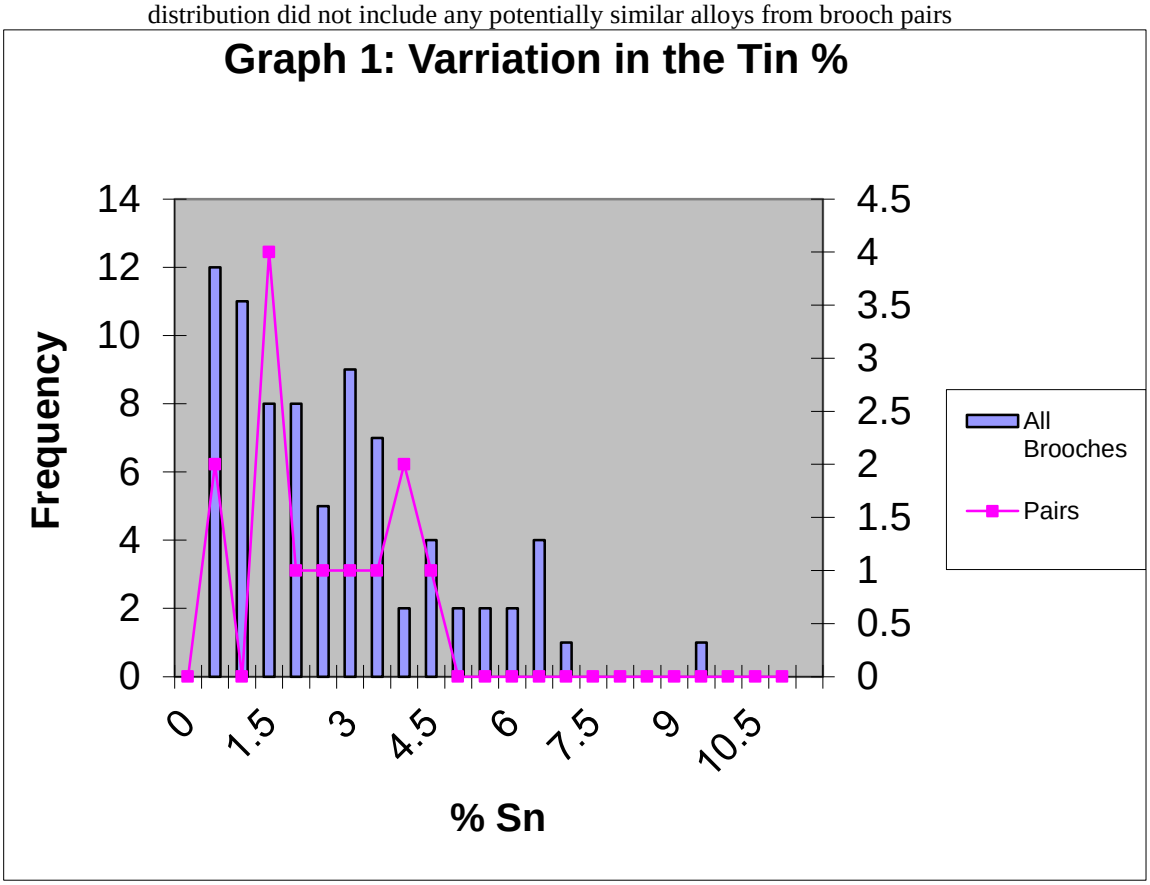
Table 1: Saucer Brooch Alloy Compositions

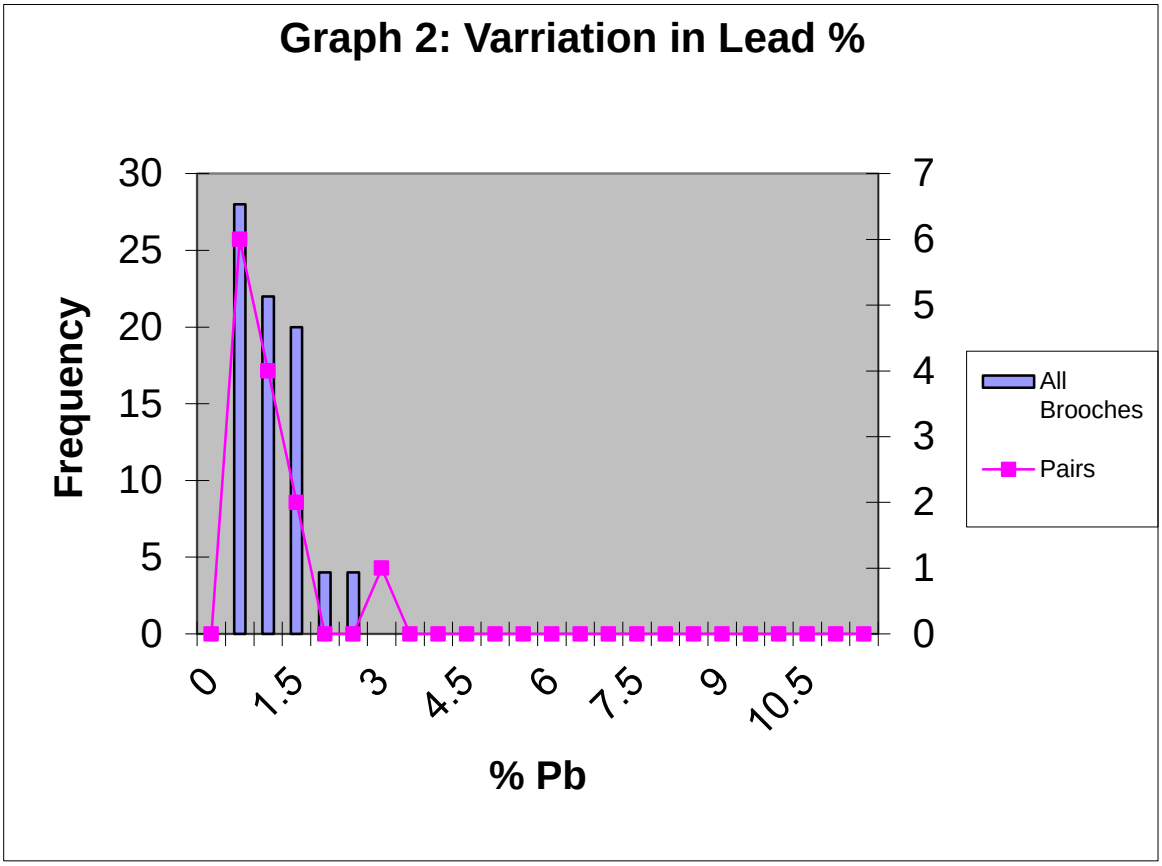
Cat. No.	Site	Grave	Mus. No.	Sn %	Pb %	Zn %	Cu %
TD2	Brighthampton			4.58	2.12	1.21	92.09
TD3	Brighthampton			5.81	0.67	1.51	92.01
TD4	Berinsfield	102		3.53	1.58	3.64	91.25
TD5	Berinsfield	102		2.15	1.17	1.14	95.54
TD6	Fairford	7	1961.17	6.18	0.31	0.36	93.15
TD7	Fairford	7	1961.18	8	3.05	0.37	88.58
TD8	Brighthampton	56	1971.479	5.87	0.97	2.39	90.77
TD9	Brighthampton	56	1971.48	6.18	1.21	3.67	88.94
TD10	Cassington I	7	1942.203a	3.18	1.09	9.68	86.05
TD11	Cassington I	7	1942.203b	6.25	0.55	8.95	84.25
TD12	Fairford		1961.96	5.46	2.16	0.88	91.5
TD13	Fairford		1961.97	7.54	1.26	0.79	90.41
TD18	Abingdon I	B102	1935.53a	0.1	0.11	0	99.79
TD19	Abingdon I	B102	1935.53b?	0.43	0.12	0	99.45
TD20	Fairford		1961.1	2.98	1.05	10.28	85.69
TD21	Fairford		1961.101	6.78	0.27	9.88	83.07
TD22	Fairford		1886.144	9.54	0.69	0.02	89.75
TD23	Fairford		1886.144	13.34	0.87	0.07	85.72
TD26	Abingdon	B6		5.91	1.43	3.24	89.42
TD27	Abingdon	B6		8.59	2.55	3.05	85.81
TD30	Fairford	15	1961.33	6.43	1.02	1.72	90.83
TD31	Fairford	15	1961.34	2.09	1	4.69	92.22
TD32	Fairford		1961.98	5.52	1.19	2.87	90.42
TD33	Fairford		1961.99	6.93	1.45	1.85	89.77
TD34	Frilford I	1920/11	1920.26	4.57	2.5	1.26	91.67
TD35	Frilford I	1920/11	1920.26	6.05	1.55	1.69	90.71

Table 2: Saucer Brooches: The mean and standard deviation of the differences in elemental composition between the brooches in a pair and between all the brooches (1).

		Pair	All
Tin	Mean	2.13	2.48
	SD	1.31	1.98
Lead	Mean	0.74	0.82
	SD	0.75	0.57
Zinc	Mean	0.77	2.68
	SD	0.96	2.56

1) Values for 'all brooches' were taken from only one brooch in each pair to ensure the distribution did not include any potentially similar alloys from brooch pairs




Graph 2: Varriation in Lead %
Frequency
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
0
1.5
3
4.5
6
7.5
9
10.5
% Pb
All Brooches
Pairs

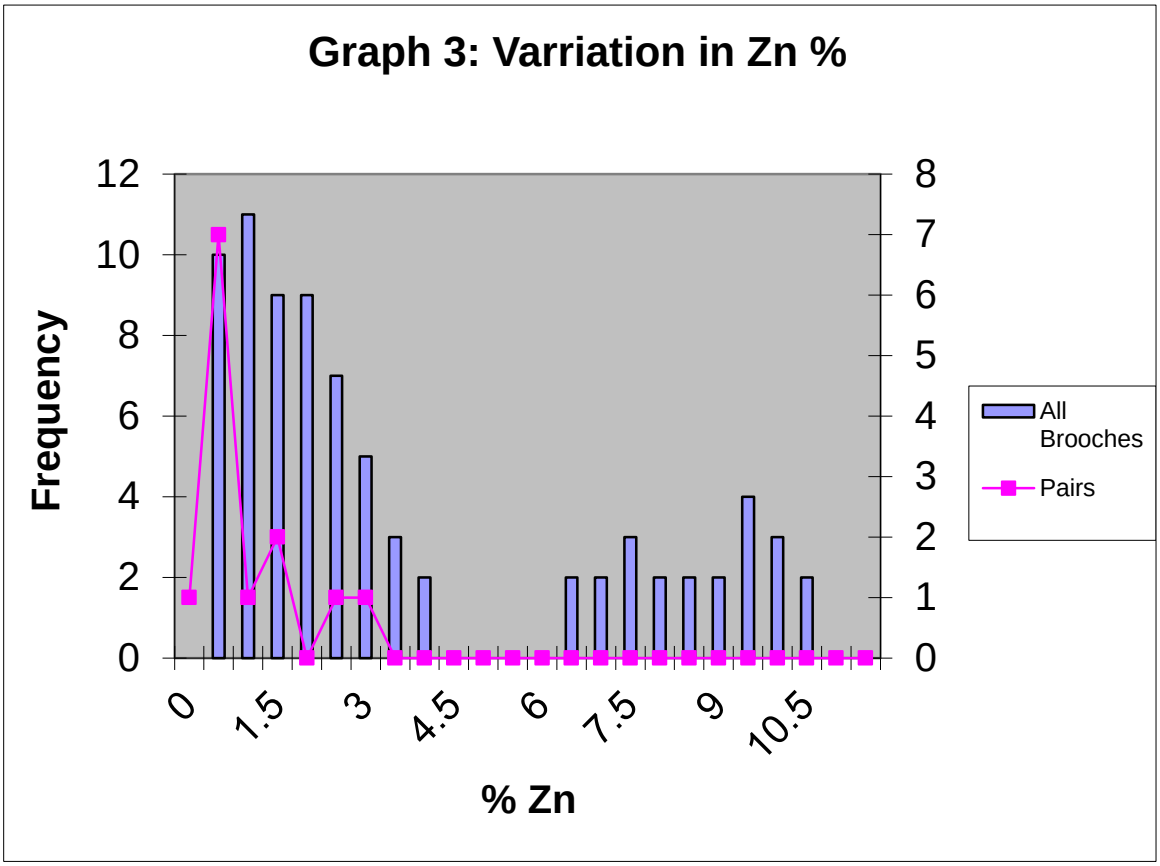

Graph 3: Varriation in Zn %
Frequency
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
0
1.5
3
4.5
6
7.5
9
10.5
% Zn
All Brooches
Pairs

Figure 1. (Photographed by Jeff Vietch, courtesy of Fulling Mill Museum, University of Durham)