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Migrations and Material Culture Change in Southern and Eastern England in the Fifth Century AD: The Investigation of an Archaeological Discourse

Geoffrey James Harrison

Department of Archaeology

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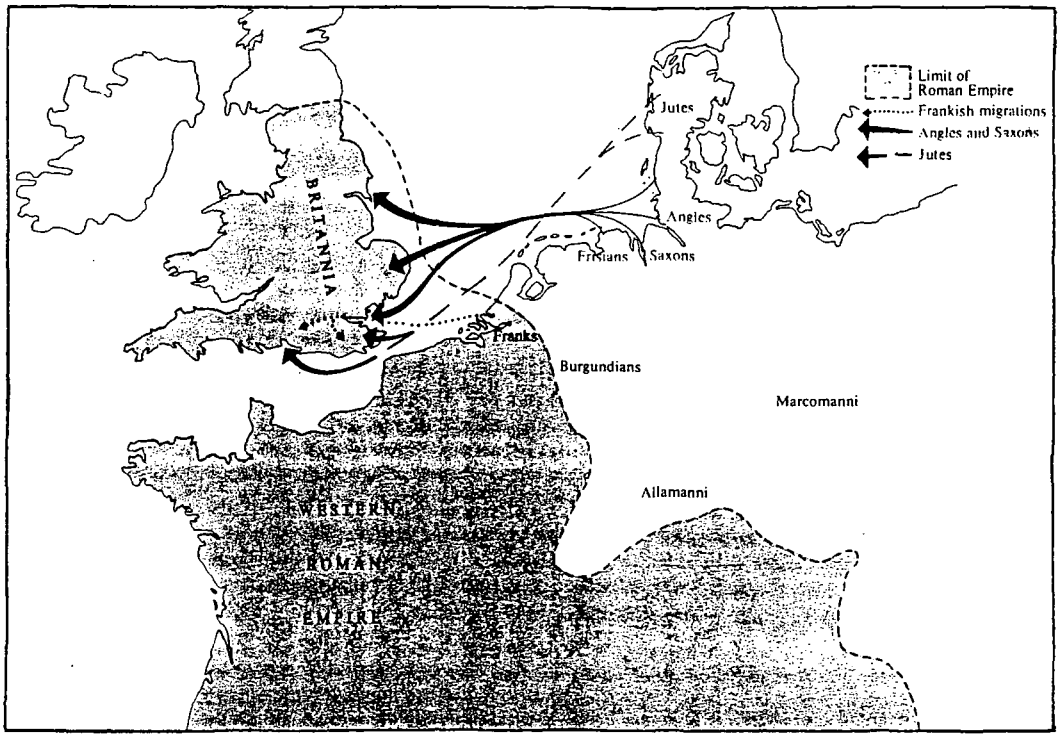
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July 2001

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2 8 MAY 2002



Frontispiece – The routes of the 'Germanic migrations' to England in the fifth century AD (after Laing and Laing 1979).

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Stored in *Microsoft Excel 2000*
File name: Appendix2.xls

FIGURES

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Migrations and Material Culture Change in Southern and Eastern England in the Fifth Century AD: The investigation of an Archaeological Discourse

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Department of Archaeology, University of Durham

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D, July 2001

Abstract

This thesis aims to reassess one of the principal concepts used by archaeologists in their attempts to explain how 'Roman Britain' became 'early medieval England': the Anglo-Saxon migrations (i.e. the movement of people(s) from northern Europe or southern Scandinavia to southern and eastern England in the fifth century AD). This reassessment involves examining two inter-related themes. The first is largely historiographical, the aim being to highlight the socio-political and intellectual contexts in which 'the Anglo-Saxon migrations' became an important discourse. This is achieved by contextualizing both the beginnings of Anglo-Saxon archaeology and the archaeological investigation of 'the migrations' as well as the early historical sources that appear to describe those migrations (why and how were they written and by whom?).

The second theme concerns material used by archaeologists to address questions such as: who were the people that migrated; where did they come from and travel to; when did this happen? A reassessment of the theoretical underpinnings of those archaeolological approaches is presented. Building on that, an analysis of several brooches types – material that has often been said to be significant for the above questions – is described. This analysis focuses on the contexts in which those brooches were deposited/found and thus highlights how people in the past used them as part of specific social practices. The results demonstrate that the pattern of material culture usually thought to prove that the Anglo-Saxon migrations did take place is actually quite varied and migrations may not be the best explanation for such diversity.

Having critiqued the discourse of the Anglo-Saxon migrations, a number of alternative ways in which the Roman-Medieval transition in England might be understood are suggested. These alternatives focus on theories of material culture appropriation and how this relates to changing personal and/or collective identities.

Declaration

The Graduate School Committee has given approval for the submission of this thesis that does not conform to the prescribed word length for the degree in question (due to the inclusion of Appendix One and Appendix Two). In all other respects this thesis conforms to Durham University's 'Rules for the Submission of Work for Higher Degrees'.

This thesis is the result of my own work. None of the material presented here has previously been submitted by the author for a degree at the University of Durham or at any other university. Material from the work of others has been acknowledged and quotations and paraphrases have been indicated.

Statement of Copyright

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This thesis is dedicated to Mum and Dad, in thanks for twenty-nine years (!) of help, advice and encouragement.

CHAPTER ONE

◈ ◈ ◈

Introduction

'The following pages contain an account of the principles on which the public and political life of our Anglosaxon forefathers were based, and of the institutions in which those principles were most clearly manifested. The subject is a grave and solemn one: it is the history of the childhood of our own age, – the explanation of its manhood.

On every side of us thrones totter, and the deep foundations of society are convulsed...Yet the exalted Lady who wields the sceptre of these realms, sits safe upon her throne...secure in the affections of a people whose institutions have given them all the blessings of an equal law' (Kemble 1849 (1876): v).

'...to most of the English, their history is just that, history. The contrast is with Scotland or Ireland, where every self-respecting adult considers themselves to belong to an unbroken tradition stretching back to the wearing of woad: oppressed peoples remember their history. One-time oppressors forget it. The English now have nothing in common with the tradition they see celebrated in the red-white-and-blue. Look at the Last Night of the Proms. How many of those joyous, nerdish faces belting out 'Land of Hope and Glory' believe a word of it? 'Wider still and wider shall thy bounds be set'? Come on' (Paxman 1998: 264-5).

1.1 Prologue

When John Mitchell Kemble dedicated his 1849 publication to Queen Victoria – and for many decades thereafter – few similarly educated English people would have disputed his assessment of the national identity; few would have questioned what it meant to be English. It was to be a part of a nation with huge industrial, political and military might which also prided itself on its love of liberty, its Christian faith and ancient language. Today, however, things have changed. The English identity has an ill-defined and uncertain role in the individual and collective consciousness of those who live in the largest constituent part of the 'United' Kingdom. In recent years Scotland and Wales have witnessed revivals of national sentiment (often focusing on 'Celtic' identities), culminating in the establishment of devolved parliaments. Yet the present Labour government in Westminster (i.e. in England) recently campaigned under the banner proclaiming 'New Labour – New Britain'. Where does that leave 'the English'? What is the role of 'England'? Of course, some still actively maintain more traditional views of Englishness (e.g. those who write and subscribe to 'This England' magazine – see Paxman 1998: 77-9) and allegiance to England often comes to the fore at sporting events or at The Last Night of the Proms. Yet compared to a hundred years ago, or less, specifically English sentiments are not nearly as widespread.



Given that the English identity has now lost a great deal of its socio-political resonance, it is perhaps an appropriate time to take a closer look at the origins of that identity. This is not an attempt to prove that England *is* relevant for any personal sense of national pride. Rather, when a particular identity – which has for so long been seen as a natural and obvious historically based reality – appears to lose its vitality and relevance, it highlights a range of questions that are currently of great interest to social scientists. How do we define who 'we' are, both collectively and individually? How and why are these identities created, challenged or maintained through time? Why do some lose their relevance?

In recent years, many social scientists have examined personal identities as a feature of human social life, addressing the questions posed above. They have discussed the nature and construction of identities related to age, gender, status and ethnicity in many different social contexts. Archaeologists are among those social scientists for whom the question of identity is an important issue (e.g. Jones and Graves-Brown 1996) and the following study is, to a large extent, a product of that trend. As might be guessed from the above discussion, the subsequent chapters will focus on one particular ethnic identity, that of Englishness. More specifically, the following chapters will deal with the role that archaeology has played in defining the origins of England and the English identity. This topic leads us inevitably to examine the archaeology of post-Roman Britain and the fifth century. This is because many of the personal, social or archaeological traits which have been seen as distinctively 'English' have, at various times, been traced back to the 'Anglo-Saxon migrations' of the fifth century and to the Germanic people who are said to have migrated to the British Isles in the wake of the Roman withdrawal. These traits have included the English language, constitution, laws, religion, certain items of material culture, the nature of the landscape and indeed the English people as a whole (as opposed to the 'Britons' or 'Celts').

As we shall see, the narrative of English origins based around the migration, invasion and settlement of 'Germanic' people(s) has its historical roots at least as far back as the sixth century AD, if not before. Yet it was only in the middle of the nineteenth century that this became a subject of archaeological research. However, while the English identity may be of limited relevance in modern socio-political life, amongst archaeologists (and many historians) the traditional migration narrative still has a profound influence on the interpretation of observable changes in post-Roman, southern and eastern Britain. Why has this situation arisen? To answer this question it will be necessary to examine the relationship between archaeology and the Anglo-Saxon migration narrative; to show how and why it developed and continued to be used through time even to the present day. This is not an attempt to reach a conclusion as to whether previous interpretations of archaeological evidence have been right or wrong, or to establish a

new, more objective, 'truth'. Rather, it is hoped that by highlighting the origins of the migration narrative as well as its theoretical constituents we will be able to see it, not as a historical and archaeological fact, but as a product of the creative human imagination. If this is the case, then the aim here is also to show that there may be other ways of understanding archaeological evidence from the fifth century in southern and eastern England.

1.2 Chapter outline

The proposed reassessment of the migration narrative will involve discussing many diverse and complex issues of archaeological interpretation. These include, for example, the relationship between material culture and social, political and cultural change, and between material culture and personal identities; explanations for the distribution of material culture; the relationship between archaeology and history; the relevance or otherwise of periodization; the academic process and why theories change, or do not change, through time. All these issues will be addressed at some point in the following chapters. However, to make the discussion of the English migration narrative as clear and logical as possible the present study will proceed by examining the following topics in separate chapters.

Chapter Two will provide the background for the study as a whole, tracing the archaeological investigation of the Anglo-Saxon migrations from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. This will highlight how and why archaeologists have changed their ideas about the narrative in question through time whilst also retaining a number of key ideas. These key ideas, it will be shown, mean that the idea of Germanic migrations to England has never seriously been questioned as a valid concept for archaeological interpretation. Chapter Three will begin the critique of the migration narrative by emphasizing the central tenets of archaeological theory required to support this idea. It will also be shown that, in the light of recent theoretical developments in the social sciences, many of those tenets may in fact be questionable. Chapter Four will take much the same approach to the individual historical sources used as evidence when discussing the Anglo-Saxon migrations. It will be shown that the relevant documents are not simply sources of factual information about the fifth century. Instead, and in line with recent theoretical developments in historical studies, they will be interpreted as narratives created by individual authors for certain, context-specific reasons. Hence it will become clear that the sources in question may not be entirely appropriate means of interpreting fifth-century archaeological remains in southern and eastern England. Chapter Five will take a similarly critical approach to various sources of evidence that will not be covered in detail in the following chapters but which are nonetheless important in order to gain a complete picture of fifth-century Britain. This will include the study of language, place-names, pottery, the landscape, settlements, and house types.

The archaeological study of the early medieval England has focused largely on cemeteries and funerary remains since these constitute the most archaeologically visible and therefore most extensively researched type of evidence for that period. A number of brooch types found in early medieval cemeteries have also been linked explicitly to 'the migrations'. These brooches, or more specifically, the contexts in which they were deposited, will be analysed in order to reassess the migrations in terms of actual archaeological material, not just theoretical ideas. Chapter Six will begin the examination of this type of artefact with a detailed assessment of their value as chronological indicators. Can the date of a brooch prove that it was contemporary with 'the migrations'? Hence, does the distribution of certain types prove that migrations occurred? This chapter will also include the outline of a methodology designed to test whether certain significant brooch types do in fact support the idea of migrations from northern Europe to southern and eastern England. The results of the analysis carried out using that methodology will be presented in Chapter Seven. In Chapter Eight the implications of the preceding chapters will be discussed and an interpretation of the evidence, which does not rely solely on the migration narrative, will be presented. Final conclusions will be drawn in Chapter Nine.

Although it is necessary to discuss the relevant themes separately for the sake of clarity, it must nevertheless be accepted that this arrangement of chapters and sub-sections is a somewhat artificial method of examining the Anglo-Saxon migration narrative. For example, it is not really possible to examine the question of ethnicity in the fifth century without also discussing historical sources. However, having separated the various themes to begin with, they will be considered together in the two final chapters.

1.3 Definitions and terminology

Before going on it is also necessary to clarify some of the terminology that will be used in the following chapters. First, the term 'migration' must be defined. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines this as 'the act of moving from one place to another'. While that is a rather vague definition, to define further how this applies to the interpretation of fifth-century archaeology (i.e. to ask who is migrating, how many people are involved, can in only be a one-way movement?) is to pre-empt several of the debates that will be addressed in the following chapters. A discussion of the appropriateness of earlier understandings of what constitutes 'a migration' will be presented in Chapter Eight.

Second, geographical terms. This study is primarily an investigation of explanations for change in southern and eastern England – the region where the Germanic settlers of the fifth century are said to have settled. There are two points to be made here. 1) Due to the lack of space, Continental, and especially German archaeology, can only be considered briefly; there will be no complete historiography of 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology on the continent. However, the

material compared in Chapters Six and Seven comes from both England and the Continent. 2) The use of the term 'England' should only be interpreted in the sense of a modern administrative region, not as a region in which a distinct nation or people – 'the English' – live(d). The terms southern and eastern Britain or the British Isles have not been used here as they may be misleading since none of the evidence examined below comes from Wales, or Ireland.

Third, as described above, the aim of the following chapters is to examine the origins and influence of the Anglo-Saxon migration narrative. In Chapter Seven, therefore, contemporary artefacts found in England and on the continent will be analysed, the latter including the regions from which the Germanic people are said to have originated. It is, however, accepted that in order to fully understand the Roman-Medieval transition and archaeological change in fifth-century England the theoretical ideas presented here must also be applied to a comparison of late Roman and early medieval material (if such a period division is indeed valid) (cf. Esmonde Cleary 2001: 97). Unfortunately this must await a further study as there is not enough space available here to deal with both migrations and late Roman change in the detail which they require, even though both topics are closely related.

Finally, it must be stated that this study is not an attempt to describe what *really* happened in the fifth century in southern and eastern England. It should instead be seen as a preliminary study; an attempt to highlight a range of theoretical problems with the Anglo-Saxon migration narrative, as employed by archaeologists in the past and the present. By raising these theoretical problems it is hoped that subsequent studies might investigate alternative ways of understanding post-Roman change in England that do not rely on potentially questionable assumptions.

With these qualifications in mind we can now begin the examination of the Anglo-Saxon migration narrative, beginning in the following chapter with a summary of how that narrative has been investigated by archaeologists during the last 150 years.

CHAPTER TWO



Migrations and Anglo-Saxon Archaeology

2.1 Introduction

Migrations have always been central to scholars' understandings of how 'Roman Britain' became 'Anglo-Saxon England'. The tradition that significant changes in the political, social and cultural life of the inhabitants of Britain – especially in southern and eastern England – could be attributed to an influx of people from north-western Europe and southern Scandinavia in the fifth century was documented at least as early as the eighth century (see Chapter Four for full discussion of the early historical references). Concerted efforts to study the archaeology of the early medieval period and the 'Anglo-Saxon migrations', on the other hand, only began in the nineteenth century. Archaeologists have attempted to understand when, why and how these migrations took place ever since and, as we shall see, this remains an important issue for early medieval archaeologists today.

Several historiographies of Anglo-Saxon archaeology have already been published (e.g. Arnold 1997; Hines 1998; Lucy 1998; 2000a) and there is no intention to repeat that work here. However, before outlining why certain views of the fifth-century 'Anglo-Saxon/Germanic migrations' might be questioned (see Chapters Three to Seven), it is important to discuss the origins and development of this tradition up to the present day. Not only will this establish the academic background and context for the present study but showing how and why certain ideas came about is also an important part of a general critique. First, it will be shown that scholarly and popular concern for the migrations in question originated at a certain time and in a certain socio-political and intellectual context. Second, it will be shown that, once this idea was established, it has remained part of the academic discourse to the present day, despite being revised and reassessed to greater or lesser degrees. Third, it follows on from the first two points that the idea of fifth-century migrations is not necessarily an immutable, factual narrative. Rather, this means of understanding the past constitutes an on-going discourse that has been subject to various political, social and intellectual trends. Indeed, this study is a continuation of that discourse.

2.2 The origins of Anglo-Saxon archaeology

At the end of the eighteenth century the historian Sharon Turner wrote that;

> '...the subject of Anglo-Saxon antiquities had been nearly forgotten by the British public; although a large part of what we most love and venerate in our customs, laws and institutions, originated among our Anglo-Saxon ancestors' (Turner 1799-1805: vii).

Although in 1839 J.M. Kemble (1839: iii) believed there was still 'too much ignorance' of 'our Saxon ancestors', in 1820 the author of the preface to the third addition of Turner's book described how 'a taste for the history and remains of our Great Ancestors has been revived, and is visibly increasing' (3rd edition, v-viii – quoted in Lucy 1998: 8-9).

The established, so called 'Whig' interpretation of history (prominent in the eighteenth century, it emphasized institutions and constitutional history and the evolution of civilized societies (see Kenyon 1983; Levine 1987; Lucy 1998: 16-17)), was clearly not entirely abandoned at the start of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, Celticism eventually flourished in response to – what became known as – the 'Anglo-Saxonist'/'Germanist' school (see Curtis 1968) and other contemporary scholars specifically rejected racial interpretations of history (ibid. 14). Nevertheless, it was the overtly patriotic and racial view of England's specifically 'Germanic' past that came to dominate English history. This will be the focus of attention here, since it is no coincidence that this growing interest in England's early medieval past was broadly contemporary with the beginnings of 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology.

'Anglo-Saxon' objects (mostly funerary items) had been unearthed before 1800, perhaps most notably during the Rev. Bryan Faussett's extensive excavations in Kent in the second half of the eighteenth century. However, it was another Kentish antiquarian, the Rev. James Douglas, who first described the finds from his excavations in Kent as 'Anglo-Saxon', when he published his *Nenia Britannica* in 1793. This deduction was based on coins found in the graves, the Saxon names of villages near the cemeteries and the fact that similar finds were known across England but not in 'Celtic' Wales (Lucy 2000a: 8).

Despite this early research, there was little further interest in 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology until the 1830s and 1840s. These decades, however, saw a proliferation of antiquarian printing clubs and learned societies (Westherall 1998) and the publications produced by the members of these institutions reveal the growing interest in early medieval archaeology. The British Archaeological Association (BAA), founded by Charles Roach Smith and Thomas Wright in 1843 was particularly influential in promoting the study of Anglo-Saxon antiquities. In 1852, Roach Smith observed that;

> '...our Saxon antiquities formerly attracted less attention than the Roman and British. Douglas led the way to their scientific examination, but it is only within the last few years

> that they have obtained that general notice they so peculiarly deserve' (Roach Smith 1852: 205).

There are several reasons why this interest arose when it did. First, the contemporary middle and upper classes sought to use their leisure time fruitfully, in self-improving, educational pursuits (Westherall 1998: 32). Second, with the Industrial Revolution in full swing, the rapid expansion of towns and the railway network meant that huge amounts of archaeological material were being exposed and often destroyed (Lucy 1998: 11). Indeed, the BAA was founded partly in response to the failure of the Society of Antiquaries to act to prevent this destruction (Lucy 2000a: 8). When archaeological material was recovered, it supplemented the ever-expanding body of archaeological material available for interested parties to study.

The above quotation by Sharon Turner illustrates a third, highly significant factor in the origins of Anglo-Saxon archaeology. Turner was the first historian to articulate an explicitly patriotic and 'Germanist' view of English history (White 1971: 585-6). He believed that the Germanic origins of the English accounted for the character and contemporary success of the nation. This view became widespread through the nineteenth century and it can be seen to have been an important motivating influence on several of the earliest Anglo-Saxon archaeologists. For example, Akerman and Wright described early post-Roman artefacts as belonging to England's 'Saxon forefathers' (Akerman 1855: vii; Wright 1847: 50) while Roach Smith wrote that;

> 'The English archaeologist can select no worthier course of study than that which directs him to the history of those from whom he inherits not only his material existence and the language he speaks, but also many of the civil and political institutions under which he lives in freedom, and surrounded with advantages and privileges unknown to many nations and countries' (Roach Smith 1856: ix).

Of course, the role of nationalism in the beginnings of archaeology was not restricted to Britain. Across Europe, states and individuals sought to define their national identities in the face of international antagonism and internal unrest. In this context the idealized, unifying concept of ancient national origins became an increasingly powerful formula. In recent years this link between the beginnings of archaeology and nationalism has interested many scholars. It has been shown how archaeology in France, Germany, Denmark and many other European countries began within, and was promoted by, a specifically nationalistic agenda (see Díaz-Andreu and Champion (eds.) 1996; Kohl and Fawcett (eds.) 1995). The establishment of a national past through archaeology served to legitimize nations and to define borders by demonstrating their antiquity (Austin 1990: 15; Jones, S. 1996: 62). In Britain, and across Europe, the nation became 'at the same time the basis and the aim of research' (Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996: 3).

The nationalistic emphasis present in early studies of 'Anglo-Saxon' antiquities was not the only theme present in these works that reflected wider social and intellectual concerns. The theories and methods used to interpret the brooches, pots and weapons found by archaeologists echo another contemporary trend; the emergence of racial theory as a means of understanding people and societies in the present and the past. Thomas Wright described how artefacts could be used to define the 'races of mankind', since they were illustrative of the 'manners and history' of a particular group (Wright 1852: vii). Roach Smith also believed that certain objects indicated the presence of particular groups of people. He wrote that all 'Saxon' antiquities could generally be considered as belonging to the same 'family'. He went on to state that more localized differences within England 'warrant our classifying such remains as characteristic of distinct peoples and of distinct localities' (Roach Smith 1856: xiii). Furthermore, uniformity of shape and ornamentation were seen as proof that objects were made by the same people at the same time (ibid: xiv).

The idea that 'races' (e.g. Britons, Germans or Celts), or indeed 'tribal' sub-groups (e.g. Angles and Saxons), could be defined by blood, personal characteristics, customs and material culture was becoming widespread and influential by the early nineteenth century (see also Chapter Three). At this time, previous understandings of people, society and institutions based on classical learning were largely abandoned, such that;

> '...civilization was perceived to advance not through the public debate of speech-gifted men and the reconciliation of differing claims and interests in law, but through the genius and character of the *Völker* naturally and biologically working as an energetic formative force in the blood of races and expressing themselves as *Kultur*' (Hannaford 1996: 233).

Understanding the world in terms of distinct races eventually became an intrinsic part of nineteenth-century social and political discourse, especially after the work of Darwin and Spencer appeared to give race a 'scientific' legitimacy (Hannaford 1996: 275). Racial theory encompassed the arts, social sciences and natural sciences, and, as a means of describing people and understanding the world, has influenced perceptions to the present day. Race also became central to nineteenth-century attempts to investigate and explain the past and the historical and biological/genetic origins of nations (ibid: 235-6). Thus, as described above, it became important for archaeologists concerned with the origins of England and the English to identify 'Britons', 'Germans' and Germanic tribes from the objects they recovered. The earliest 'Germanic' people identified in Britain were not just archaeological specimens, they were the ancestors of all 'English' people.

As a brief digression, it is worth noting here that the ethnic/racial interpretations of material culture employed by the likes of Charles Roach Smith and Thomas Wright (i.e. using material

culture to define cultural groups of people both spatially and temporally along with migrations or 'diffusion' to explain change (Shaw and Jameson (eds.) 1999: 185)) have a great deal in common with what would later be known as culture-historical archaeology. Culture-history is often said to have begun around the turn of the twentieth century, most famously in the work of Gustav Kossinna. (of course this was not a defined programme implemented by 'culture-historians'; the term was rarely used until the 'New Archaeologists' attempted to define earlier approaches) (ibid.; Malina and Vaŝíĉek 1990: 61-3). It has also been said that early medieval archaeologists adopted these methods from prehistorians (e.g. Arnold 1997: 9; Richards 1987: 4). While it is true that culture-history became a recognizable archaeological methodology in the early 1900s, it should nevertheless be noted that Anglo-Saxon archaeologists employed significant features of culture-history at least fifty years before. Were culture-historians actually influenced by Anglo-Saxon archaeologists (Anthony 1990: 896; Lucy 1998: 12-3)?

By the mid-nineteenth century it can therefore be seen that Anglo-Saxon archaeologists were motivated by patriotism and influenced by racial theory. These two concepts, however, cannot realistically be separated. For example, racial theory was clearly being used as a means of defining nations (i.e. a people with a common origin, lineage, culture and language). In England, such ideas crystallized in, what is now called, Anglo-Saxonism (Curtis 1968). This 'ideology' (ibid: 12) rested on the assumption that the Anglo-Saxon race was united by blood and language and that history (and eventually archaeology) could trace the geographical origins of the race back to the forests of Germanic northern Europe (ibid: 11). This 'Germanist' origin myth was used to account for the supposedly unique nature of English civil and political liberties, the superiority of the English temperament, virtues and personal characteristics, and the lack of biological 'contamination' from other races. The belief in English superiority was also used to explain England's pre-eminent place in the world and as a justification for the Empire (Curtis 1968: 11-12. See Fig. 1 for an illustration of such sentiments). As will be shown below, Anglo-Saxonism reached its most extreme form (in terms of both its nationalistic content and its use of racial theory) in the second half of the nineteenth century. Establishing English origins was clearly an essential part of Anglo-Saxonism. Hence, from around the middle of the nineteenth century English archaeologists attempted to distinguish those remains that might help them illuminate the historical descriptions of 'their' origins; the narratives referring to the Anglo-Saxon migrations.

2.3 The identification of the Anglo-Saxon migrations

By the middle of the nineteenth century, a number of archaeologists were regularly excavating 'Anglo-Saxon' cemeteries (e.g. Akerman 1853; 1860; Neville 1852; 1854 and reports in Roach Smith 1852; 1868). Also, debates concerning the dating of cremation burials in decorated urns and burials with spears, shields or distinctive brooches were largely resolved at this time. For

example, a publication by Akerman in 1847 showed that they belonged to the fifth to seventh centuries (but see Henslow 1847 for a different view) (see Lucy 2000a: 10-11 for full discussion). Some had also begun to notice regional variations in the form and content of such burials (ibid: 11-12). That these remains were referred to as 'Saxon' or 'Anglian' illustrates the long-established familiarity of scholars with the historical sources that referred to these centuries (see Chapter Four). However, it was not until the 1850s that scholars claimed to have identified the historically attested migrations using archaeological remains.

In 1852, Roach Smith described some 'remarkable and hitherto unnoticed' similarities between 'Frankish' antiquities in France, Germany and England (Roach Smith 1852: 203). He went on to write that it would be very useful if material could also be collected from north of the Rhine (ibid: 204). By 1855, John Mitchell Kemble had spent time researching north of the Rhine. In that year he published a paper in *Archaeologia* describing the close similarities between cremation urns he saw excavated at Stade-on-the-Elbe in northern Germany (and many other sites – Wiley 1979: 236-9) and examples found in England (Kemble 1855a: 270). Kemble concluded that;

> 'These urns, agreeing in form, colour, size, and material, with those found in Germany, are obviously Germanic; and those found in Germany, and so closely agreeing with the English ones, are, by the same comparison vindicated for the German race. The urns of the "Old Saxon," and those of the "Anglo-Saxon," are in truth identical, as there was every reason to suppose they would be. ...The bones are those of men whose tongue we speak, whose blood flows in our veins' (Kemble 1855a: 280).

This quotation again demonstrates the close relationship between nationalism and racial theory at this time, as well as the importance of both in establishing the archaeological veracity of 'the Anglo-Saxon migrations'. In the same year, Akerman also compared a number of urns in the British Museum's collection to those from Selzen (Rheinland-Pfalz) and also concluded that the English urns belonged to the Saxon people who originated in Germany (Akerman 1855: 8). Together, these publications mark the beginning of the archaeological investigation of the Anglo-Saxon migrations/invasions.

As will be seen during the rest of this chapter, as the primary means of explaining fifth-century archaeological change, migrations have never seriously been questioned. Nevertheless, it will also be shown that the way in which people have perceived the migrations and the role of those migrations in the transition from 'Romano-British' to 'Anglo-Saxon' has changed through time. In the middle of the nineteenth century, it was accepted that the antiquities in question (brooches, pots, weapons etc.) did indeed belong to the earliest English people (e.g. Akerman 1855: vii; Kemble 1855a: 280; Wright 1847: 50). Nevertheless, analysis of the evidence also led scholars

to believe that the migrations resulted in a mixing of the Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon populations. Akerman (1847: 123), for example, noted that some 'Saxon' pottery was not unlike that from the Romano-British period. He thus concluded that the Britons were 'entirely subdued' but not totally annihilated (see also Wright 1847: 50; 1852: 507). Roach Smith (1856: xii) and Kemble (1849 (1876): 14) also wrote that the Saxon settlement of England must have been a gradual process. These ideas were largely abandoned in the later nineteenth century as scholars became increasingly zealous in their use of racial theory and nationalistic rhetoric (see below).

The earliest Anglo-Saxon archaeologists also had certain attitudes to historical sources that would later be revised. As will be seen in Chapter Four, the narratives of the Anglo-Saxon migrations originated in a number of texts dating from the fifth to the tenth centuries (e.g. Gildas's DEB, Bede's HE and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*). To some extent, these sources have always been the basis for the interpretation of early post-Roman archaeological remains, providing – archaeologists have usually believed – clues about the identities and origins of those who made and used those artefacts. Yet to begin with, it appears that many pioneers of Anglo-Saxon archaeology were highly sceptical of early medieval historical evidence. Sharon Turner had little regard for these 'folk tales' (White 1971: 586), and later Thomas Wright (1847: 50) wrote that between the third and seventh centuries history was 'almost silent'. He went on to state that Bede's description of the Anglian, Saxon and Jutish settlement, 'can hardly be looked upon as better than a legend'. Charles Roach Smith also had little confidence in the history of this period (1852: 203), writing that;

> 'For that epoch of transitions, the steady torch of history burns no longer; and the glimmerings which, here and there, supply its place, are like the flashes of lightning to the be-nighted and road-lost wanderer, which reveal more sensibly the gloom around him, without directing his footsteps' (Roach Smith 1852: x).

The philologist, historian and sometime archaeologist John Mitchell Kemble was equally, if not more, sceptical. Of the sources in question he wrote that 'the smallest possible amount of historical truth is involved in a great deal of fable' (Kemble 1849 (1876): 23. See also Kemble 1839: v; 1855b: 318). And, in this well-known passage, Kemble described how;

> '...the more I examine this question, the more completely I am convinced that the received accounts of our migrations, our subsequent fortunes, and ultimate settlement, are devoid of truth in every detail' (Kemble 1849 (1876): 16).

Such attitudes clearly led early Anglo-Saxon archaeologists to emphasize the importance of their own nascent discipline. Wright, for example, stated that, for want of adequate historical sources, archaeological remains provided the 'only authentic memorials' of 'our own forefathers' (Wright

1847: 50). Similar sentiments were echoed by his contemporaries (e.g. Akerman 1855: vii; Roach Smith 1852; 203). Doubts about the value of historical sources were, nonetheless, insufficient to divorce archaeology from history. As Roach Smith wrote;

> 'Vague and unsatisfactory as are most of the details of Saxon history, the gradual subjugation of Britain by successive immigrations of Teutonic tribes, may, at least, be accepted as the most reconcilable with reason...Testing our Saxon antiquities with reference to the usually received chronology of the advent and settlement in Britain of the Teutonic tribes, it will be no unimportant result should they be in accordance with accepted historical facts' (Roach Smith 1856: xii).

Kemble's article of the previous year had provided the confirmation that, with regard to the 'Anglo-Saxon migrations', history and archaeology could be used together. Hence, although scholars have argued over the details, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards there has always been a close relationship between history and archaeological interpretation in this field.

Despite the researches of those scholars discussed above, it should be noted that not all contemporaries shared their views concerning the importance of 'Anglo-Saxon' antiquities. This much may be deduced from a number of statements written by Charles Roach Smith. In his 1852 publication, Roach Smith wrote that Anglo-Saxon remains had recently begun to receive the 'general notice they so peculiarly deserve' (Roach Smith 1852: 205 – quoted above). Yet in the same volume, he also recorded that such antiquities – or 'national remains' – were still 'underestimated by the country at large' and that 'Englishmen, though on special occasions they boast of their ancestors, in reality care nothing about them, and despise their works' (ibid: 156-7). He also contrasted the situation in England to that in France, Germany and Denmark, where there was far greater state backing for national museums (ibid: 157, 205). A degree of apathy towards Anglo-Saxon antiquities is perhaps confirmed by noting the disputes between Roach Smith and the British Museum that took place between 1853 and 1855. Roach Smith vigorously asserted that the museum should pay to acquire the Faussett Collection as well as his own collection. Yet the trustees of the British Museum had very little interest in Anglo-Saxon antiquities and were more concerned with procuring and displaying foreign material (see MacGregor 1998 for full description of the disputes).

Thus, by the 1850s, although not everyone was agreed on the importance of the archaeological remains, the foundations of early medieval archaeology had been laid. Scholars felt able to say that those who made, used and were buried with certain types of pottery, weapons and jewellery were 'Anglo-Saxons' who lived between the fifth and seventh centuries. They also believed that the form and distribution of these objects could be used to support the narratives contained in a number of historical sources. This included the recognition that (based on the observed

similarities between English and German artefacts) archaeology could be used to illustrate the veracity of the historical accounts of the Anglo-Saxon migrations to England from homelands in northern Germany and southern Scandinavia. Those buried with 'Germanic' objects in England were seen as the first English people; the forefathers of the English race and founders of a nation that was emerging as a world power.

It was also described above how the earliest Anglo-Saxon archaeologists were influenced by racial theory and the nationalistic ethos of the period. However, to draw all these themes together and as a final point concerning the origins of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, it is interesting to take an even broader view of the social, political and economic context in which this discipline emerged. Brooks (1998; also Hobsbawm 1983) has described how the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries led to widespread social, economic and demographic changes in north-western Europe, especially in England. These upheavals caused many earlier patterns of life to change or disappear and many new social identities, economic institutions and ways of life to emerge. Brooks believes that these processes meant that men and women living at this time experienced a 'moment of historical disjunction' (ibid: 4); previous ways of life and ways of describing the past were lost or abandoned creating a schism between the past and the massively transformed present realities. Another result of such widespread change was social unrest (in France and America there were full-scale revolutions (MacDougall 1982: 86)). Hence, the break with the past, physically and conceptually, and the threat of insurrection both facilitated and necessitated the reconstruction or reinvention of history in order to define and legitimate new identities (Brooks 1998: 5). The past itself became a 'domain distinct in place and time shaped by its own social, cultural, and political stresses' (ibid: 2). It was thus available to be manipulated and deployed as required (ibid: 3).

Brooks has identified two ways in which the past was manipulated at this time that also help situate the beginnings of Anglo-Saxon archaeology within wider processes of change. First, in the early nineteenth century, there was a growing fascination with material artefacts (although this had its roots in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century antiquarianism and collecting). This manifested itself most visibly in the many revivals of architectural styles (Greek, Neoclassical, Gothic, Romanesque etc.) and, no doubt, also in the increasing interest in archaeology. This interest in material culture may be related to the fact that it can be such a powerful and effective vehicle for expressing ideas and ideologies (ibid: 13). Roach Smith, Kemble and others certainly saw the objects they wrote about as embodying something quintessentially 'English'. Second, the nineteenth century was 'the great age of narrative history' (ibid: 6). Metanarratives, Brooks believes, permitted;

> '...a conceptual recoupling of the present and the past as a substitute for the organic relationship that had been lost: and as such would necessarily be an invention' (ibid: 7; cf. Hobsbawm 1983: 2).

In England, as well as in Germany and Denmark for example, the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the growing popularity of the myth of Nordic or Germanic origins (Barlow 1998; Rowlands 1988). The Anglo-Saxon origin myth was one branch of this metanarrative in which ethnic migrations were key features. The idea that Scandinavia and northern Europe was the 'hive' or 'womb of the nations' rapidly replaced the idea of biblical or Trojan origins in many northern European countries; especially among those groups who believed their ancestors had over-thrown classical (Roman) civilization. This narrative became a 'remarkably resilient fiction' (Barlow 1998: 406). The Nordic migration myth, and in England the myth of Anglo-Saxon origins, had been discussed for various reasons by scholars since the sixteenth century (see Chapter Four). Yet it was in the first half of the nineteenth century that these narratives gained popularity in a racial and nationalist discourse, inspiring a few English scholars to study remains which they believed to be those of their Anglo-Saxon ancestors.

2.4 Anglo-Saxon studies in the later nineteenth century

The later nineteenth century witnessed an increasing popularity and awareness of the Anglo-Saxon origin myth in Britain alongside subtly changing views of that narrative. At this time, the central tenets of Anglo-Saxonism were expressed in their most extreme form (Lucy 1998: 10; White 1971: 587); a trend that can be attributed to the burgeoning patriotism of the later 1800s when Britain's confidence in its Imperial and industrial might and in the reign of Queen Victoria was at its peak (White 1971: 587).

In terms of Anglo-Saxon studies, such confidence can perhaps best be seen in the work of a number of historians often known collectively as the 'Oxford School'. These scholars included E.A. Freeman, J.R. Green and Bishop William Stubbs and they drew much of their inspiration from the earlier work of Edwin Guest (ibid: 587-8). Guest, and those who followed his lead, rejected the critical views of the early historical sources (i.e. Gildas, Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*) as outlined by Turner, Kemble and others (ibid: 587). He said that such views 'threatened to reduce that portion of our history to the level of a fairy tale' (quoted in Sims-Williams 1983b: 2). Guest's account of the earliest English settlements, on the other hand, was written as if he were an eyewitness (White 1971: 587-8) and the Oxford School in general were 'supremely confident of the literal truth of the native traditions of the invasion' (ibid: 588). In the political climate of the later nineteenth century, it was 'almost treasonable' to dispute the veracity of the historical sources which referred to the Anglo-Saxon invasions. Freeman went so far as to state that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* should be revered alongside the Bible and Homer

(ibid: 588). It was therefore the views of the 'Oxford School' concerning the histories of the migrations that carried the day. It became a popular narrative that was taught in schools for decades to come (Lucy 1998: 11).

Hence, by the later nineteenth century, patriotic, 'Germanist' views of the migrations prevailed. Using the historical accounts as guides, the most common understanding of fifth-century change in England was of a massive, catastrophic invasion, obliterating almost all traces of *Romanitas* and of the British population. There was little mention of mixing between Britons and Anglo-Saxon in these accounts (if Britons were mentioned they were seen as slaves) and England could thus be presented as a purely 'Germanic' nation (see Freeman 1898 (1872); 1903 (1881); Stubbs 1874; 1906 and other quotations in Curtis 1968: 9-11 and Lucy 1998: 10).

It should not, however, be assumed that all scholars working in the later 1800s shared the views of the historians who were popular at this time. Palmer (1885) stated that contemporary writers (he mentions Green and Stubbs) had 'fallen into error' by taking the early chronicles at face value and by adopting the extreme view that all the Britons were wiped out by invading Germans (ibid: 174, 178-9). Yet he also criticized Kemble and others for believing that all history was mythical (ibid: 180). Palmer compromised by suggesting that the two populations had in fact mixed. This mixing, he believed, could be observed in the physical anthropology of the contemporary population. He described differences between 'Celtic Britons' and 'Saxons' on the basis of skull types, facial features, height and eye colour, as well as linguistic and intellectual abilities and personal emotions. Given the status of many Welsh and Irish immigrant workers at the time, he rather conveniently found that the 'lower classes' were descended from the Celtic/Romano-British population, while the middle and upper classes were either of Saxon or Norman descent (ibid: 181-2, 189. See Curtis 1968 for full discussion). Norman (1880) also questioned some contemporary approaches to historical sources. He wrote that Gildas was 'not a man to be proud of' and that Hengest and Horsa were probably not historical figures (ibid: 101). He believed that 'authentic history' only began with Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (ibid.). Norman nevertheless followed the contemporary orthodoxy in describing a cataclysmic Germanic invasion after which only a few enslaved Britons survived (ibid: 105-6). He also wrote that Englishmen 'belong to the great Teutonic race which is likely to rule the world' (ibid: 98).

Aside from these historical debates, archaeological research continued throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. However, it appears that there was little explicitly nationalistic rhetoric and little discussion concerning the nature of the Germanic settlements in archaeological reports. This may be due to archaeologists wishing to present their discipline as a 'science', using as neutral and 'objective' language as possible. Historians, therefore, *appear* to be more

nationalistic because patriotic prose did enter their narratives. It does not mean that archaeologists were divorced from such feelings.

For the most part, cemetery reports simply listed (to a greater or lesser extent) the skeletal evidence and artefacts found (e.g. Akerman 1860; 1863; Dryden 1882; Lawford 1881; Pownall 1866). Priority was given to the artefacts, and significant items were sometimes compared to other known examples (e.g. Dryden 1882; Lawford 1881; Pownall 1866). Like the historians, most archaeologists of this period took historical sources at face value, using the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* especially as a guide to when the Anglo-Saxons arrived in a certain area of England. This provided a means of dating cemeteries (e.g. Dryden 1882; Read 1896). The cemeteries themselves, and the artefacts found in them, were usually described as 'Saxon' or 'Anglo-Saxon' and thus it appears to have been taken for granted that certain types of pottery, weapons and metalwork were indicative of the Germanic settlers.

As a final point, it must be mentioned that despite the fieldwork by those archaeologists referenced above, knowledge of 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology may still not have been widespread, even among scholars interested in the Anglo-Saxon period. For example, when the historian G.W. Norman (1880) sought possible archaeological evidence for the Saxon invasions, he quoted Romano-Celtic ornaments, pottery and coins excavated from a cave in Yorkshire. The artefacts, he believed, were left by fugitives from the Saxon or Danish invasions (ibid: 109). It therefore appears that he did not know about the 'Anglo-Saxon' artefacts that had, for several decades, been excavated and identified as such by archaeologists.

2.5 Anglo-Saxon archaeology in the twentieth century

As patriotic and vociferous as the Anglo-Saxon scholarship of the later nineteenth century was, there were changes to the ways both historians and archaeologists approached early medieval studies in the early twentieth century. Those historians who had declared an unshakeable faith in the veracity of ancient sources began to receive severe criticism from scholars such as H.M. Chadwick and W.H. Stevenson (White 1971: 588-9). In an obituary, Freeman wrote of Guest's 'almost morbid' love of certainty and accuracy, whose work was 'all of the purest gold' (quoted by Stevenson 1902: 625). Yet Stevenson replied by stating that Guest's work was 'an attempt to write history without documents' (ibid: 626). He went on;

> '...there can be no justification for the thoroughly uncritical manner in which Guest uses the medieval chronicles and his philology is equally indefensible' (Stevenson 1902: 641).

Early in the 1900s, archaeology was also changing. E.T. Leeds, perhaps the most influential archaeologist of the period, certainly voiced his scepticism concerning the early historical

sources (e.g. Leeds 1913: 9-10; 1933: 230-1). Leeds' work is also important for demonstrating the extent to which the theory and methods of Anglo-Saxon archaeology were being defined and made more explicit. As mentioned above, Anglo-Saxon archaeologists from the mid-1800s were using the central tenets of culture-historical archaeology (pp. 9-10). Yet in his 1913 publication *The Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (a volume which may be seen as a manifesto for at least the next fifty years of early medieval archaeology), Leeds may be alluding to the defined, culture-historical methods of contemporary prehistorians when he described the need for Anglo-Saxonists to produce general surveys and to adopt 'modern scientific methods' (Leeds 1913: 3). Such approaches aimed to link the geographical distributions of artefacts to ethnic/racial groups (some of whom were named in early historical narratives) and migrationist theory was central to explanations for why the ethnic *Kulturprovinzen* referred to by Kossinna changed, spread or diffused through time (Malina and Vašíček 1990: 61). Likewise, Leeds described how the location and movements of different 'racial elements' of particular tribes could be deduced from early medieval mortuary assemblages (Leeds 1913: 24-6).

As such, post-Roman archaeologists in the first half of the twentieth century still attempted to understand the large-scale movements of invading Angles, Saxons and Jutes, thus maintaining earlier 'Germanist' concerns. These historically derived concerns were addressed primarily through chronological and typological analyses of, what were believed to be, ethnically specific artefacts (mainly metalwork, e.g. Åberg 1926; Leeds 1912; 1913; 1933. See Chapter Six) and by publications that described and illustrated large amounts of material, thus facilitating comparative studies (e.g. Baldwin Brown 1915; R.A. Smith's sections in the *Victoria County Histories*) (Webster 1986: 123). As with the historical sources, some maintained a degree of critical awareness of these methods. For example, Myres was concerned by the reliance on ornamental brooches up to that point (his own research on pottery aimed to remedy this – Myres 1937: 320) and by the practice of using solely typological evolution as an indicator of chronology (ibid: 318-9).

The work produced in the first few decades of the twentieth century established a pattern of research in Anglo-Saxon archaeology that was to continue relatively unchallenged until the 1980s (cf. Arnold 1997: 9-10; Lucy 1998: 15). Research was directed primarily towards a better understanding of the Germanic migrations and settlements through analyses of certain artefact types. The detailed knowledge of particular types (including those on the continent) needed to establish sufficiently comprehensive typologies meant that individual scholars concentrated all their efforts on a limited range of material culture (e.g. Harden on glass, Leeds on brooches, Myres on pottery) (Arnold 1997: 9). Examples of this typological/chronological research will be presented in Chapter Six and Appendix One. Work of a similar, and perhaps increasingly specialized, nature has continued to the present day (e.g. Dickinson 1993; Hines 1997; Mortimer

1990). Material analysis is now, however, far more sophisticated, involving, for example, chemical analyses and computer-based statistical methods. Nevertheless, as will be shown in Chapter Six and Appendix One, through much of the twentieth century the traditional ethno-historical and typological assumptions regarding the migrations were retained unchallenged.

However, a number of interesting themes and quandaries concerning migrations have emerged from such studies, although these cannot be discussed in detail here. Attempts to define the Jutish (e.g. Hawkes 1961), Frisian (e.g. Bremmer 1990; Myres 1948; 1977: 116-7) and Frankish (e.g. Evison 1965) involvement in the migrations indicate that scholars were looking beyond the Anglian and Saxon groups and, to some degree, were investigating the ethnic complexities of the settlements. There was also the problem of accounting for 'early' inhumations in England (i.e. those containing 'early' brooches) when such burials were expected to be cremations, seeing as cremation predominated on the continent (see Kemble 1855b: 317; Leeds 1912: 176; 1933: 233 and the critique of these ideas in Williams forthcoming). Similarly, archaeologists had trouble explaining the occurrence of 'early' brooches in the Upper Thames Valley; not where the earliest invaders from across the North Sea might be expected (Leeds 1912; 1933).

Two other studies further highlighted questions concerning the nature of the migrations. In 1936, Leeds published *Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology*. The aim of this book, he wrote in the introduction, was to discuss not only those early medieval artefacts which could be attributed to the Germanic invaders, but also to highlight material which he believed had been made and used by 'native' people (e.g. penannular and quoit brooches) (Leeds 1936: 1, 3). This emphasis on the possibility of 'considerable native survival' (Myres 1937: 328) in the years immediately before the Second World War may be related in part to an 'anti-German backlash' (Lucy 1998: 14), reflecting Germany's contemporary status as the pariah state of Europe. Not only did Leeds (1936) emphasize British continuity, he also emphasized the squalor and primitive conditions in the Germanic settlers' houses (Leeds 1936: 20. See Section 5.6.2). Kendrick (1938: 61) was similarly derogatory about their craft working abilities.

Whatever the political background to these opinions, the increased emphasis on the native population marks a significant shift away from Germanist accounts of the migration process (i.e. taking historical accounts at face value and describing a complete Germanic take-over); even though such a shift was not discussed explicitly. The main emphasis had previously been on defining and dating the origins and movements of the invaders through the analysis of certain types of material culture (e.g. Åberg 1926; Leeds 1933). If, however, it were accepted that there was some native survival, even in 'Anglo-Saxon' cemeteries, it would inevitably be asked, 'how many natives survived, how could they be identified and what was their relationship with the Germanic incomers'? The conflicting views caused by these questions can be seen in the debates

surrounding Quoit Brooches. Leeds believed them to be native artefacts – elaborations of the penannular brooch – while Hawkes and others stated that they were Germanic and evidence for the earliest settlers in south-eastern England (see Harrison 1997; 1999 for full discussion). The question of the scale and nature of the migrations has, however, only recently become widely debated (see below).

Another significant paper was published by Thomas Lethbridge in 1956. He went beyond the idea of native survival. By questioning the long-established relationship between grave goods and particular ethnic groups/identities, Lethbridge in effect questioned the idea that archaeologists could identify migrations at all. He believed that the crucial problem underlying all previous artefactual studies was that 'No one could prove that the wearers of these ornaments were Saxons, or Angles, or Romano-Britons or a mixture of them all' (Lethbridge 1956: 114). He wrote that;

> 'Because a large number of ornaments are found in a series of graves and it can be shown that the origin of the style of ornaments lies in some continental district or other, is it any proof that the people in those graves were descended from those in the land in which that style of ornament was formerly common? Of course it is not. ...Because we speak of a collection of objects as Anglo-Saxon, we must not assume that they indicate the presence of pure-blooded Teutonic stock in the district in which they were found. They indicate no more than the presence in that district of people with a taste for barbaric ornaments of Teutonic type' (Lethbridge 1956: 113-4).

As Lucy (1998: 16) points out, these ideas pre-dated the rejection of the invasion hypothesis by prehistorians by at least ten years (cf. Clark 1966), yet contemporary Anglo-Saxon archaeologists were unmoved (Hunter Blair 1956, quoted in Lucy 1998: 16). Indeed it may be argued that the implications of Lethbridge's comments have still not been fully realized in this discipline (see below).

2.6 The influence of 'New'/Processual archaeology

As mentioned above, traditional typological/chronological research within a historical framework has continued to the present day. Nevertheless, wider trends in archaeological theory have been incorporated into Anglo-Saxon archaeology to greater or lesser extents. The 'New Archaeology' influenced methods and interpretations used by prehistorians from the 1960s. Yet it was as late as 1980 that Philip Rahtz, in his inaugural lecture, encouraged medievalists to embrace the, as yet un-used, methods of processual archaeology (e.g. reliance on 'scientific' data collection and hypothetico-deductive modelling) (Rahtz 1981. See Driscoll 1984 for a critical reply).

Processual methods and interpretations were evident in books on the early medieval period by Chris Arnold (1980; 1984; 1988) and Richard Hodges (1989). Arnold (1984: 10; 1988: 16) aimed to break away from traditional approaches and to 'test' theories relating to the Roman-Medieval transition through the quantitative analysis of archaeological data (e.g. by using cemetery evidence to deduce the wealth/status of individuals, cemetery populations and regions (Arnold 1980)). However, his methods involved many theoretical problems (e.g. equating directly the number and perceived value of grave goods to an individual's and region's wealth/status) and despite the aim to 'deliberately avoid' using historical evidence (Arnold 1984: 6) Arnold's narrative was clearly based on a simplistic use of textual sources (Lucy 1998: 17).

The work of Richard Hodges (1989) was also undoubtedly influenced by processual theories (e.g. his analysis of the early medieval period involved using Renfrew's theories of 'peer-polity interaction' and 'systems collapse'), yet his interpretation of historical sources, artefact distribution and how this related to social change was more critical (ibid: 4, 22). He wrote that the settlement and cemetery evidence usually used to support the migration/invasion hypothesis was 'far from conclusive' in these respects (ibid: 28). Additionally, Hodges work was significant for drawing attention to a wider continental perspective on early medieval archaeological interpretation (e.g. Hodges and Whitehouse 1983); a perspective that had received little attention from 'Anglo-Saxonists', except in terms of the origins of migrating people.

Concerning the nature of the migrations, Arnold and Hodges also broke away from traditional understandings. Processual archaeology originated out of dissatisfaction with culture-historical approaches and one of the ways that this manifested itself was in the rejection of ideas that saw change as being caused solely by external influences on a society (e.g. by attributing material culture change to migrations or invasions of ethnic groups). As such, Arnold and Hodges sought to identify internal stimuli for social and material cultural change that, in turn, reduced the importance of migrations. They believed that only a small number of Germanic people migrated to England; mostly a male, military elite (Arnold 1984: 161; Hodges 1989: 42). Fifth-century archaeological change was attributed largely to acculturation, whereby native people adopted the material culture and practices of the high-status 'Germanic' migrants. This approach has since gained wider currency and will be discussed further below.

2.7 The last ten years

During the last ten years there has been a noticeable broadening in both practical and theoretical approaches to fifth-century archaeology; especially when compared to the earlier traditional methods which focused almost exclusively on typologies, chronologies and elucidating historical frameworks of interpretation. While these established research topics continue to evolve (see Chapters Four and Six), archaeologists dealing with the immediate post-Roman period have

incorporated a much wider range of evidence into their research (see Chapter Five). Furthermore, discussion of the theory that underpins past and present research has become more explicit (see below and Chapter Three). Archaeologists have therefore questioned previous approaches and have used early medieval remains, not only as a means of supporting historical models, but also as a medium through which to investigate past social identities and the social practices involved in the use of cemeteries (e.g. Hines (1994) on ethnicity, Lucy (1997a) and Stoodley (1999) on gender, Crawford (1993) on age, Williams (1998) on cemeteries in the landscape, McKinley (1994) on cremation ritual). As a result, many have now recognized the complexity of the data available to archaeologists attempting to explain the Roman-Medieval transition. Hence, few would now support a simple, 'Germanist' population replacement model (e.g. Hamerow 1994a; Hills 1993b; Scull 1995). A number of significant themes can be seen to have influenced archaeologists' interpretations of the period in question.

First, historians (e.g. Dumville, Sims-Williams, Yorke) have shown that the historical sources that supposedly describe Britain in the fifth century cannot be read at face value; they do not simply record 'facts'. These issues will be discussed in Chapter Four. Second, the evidence gathered from eco-environmental research and landscape studies has shown that there is substantial evidence for continuity from the Roman to medieval periods (see Chapter Five). This implies that the traditional ideas of population replacement and a clear break between Roman Britain and Anglo-Saxon England must be reassessed (e.g. Hills 1993a: 14).

Third, the complexity of material culture usage has been highlighted and this has forced scholars to question a number of simplistic assumptions that had been used in artefact interpretation. For example, Härke (1990; 1997) showed that weapon burials do not necessarily indicate that the deceased was a warrior or that contemporary society was especially violent. Rather, he believes that weapons were used symbolically, possibly to represent an ideological, social and ethnic warrior status, which could be held by children, young or old men alike (ibid: 42). Richards (1987) has also investigated the symbolic relationships between the form and decoration of cremation urns and the individual buried inside. Previous approaches to artefacts and ethnicity – in which historically attested groups were seen as defined, homogenous entities that could be identified from their material culture remains – have also been questioned. Hines has described how ethnicity was in fact ideological, and could be adopted, or attributed, in a variety of ways and for many different reasons (Hines 1994: 49-50. See Chapter Three for full discussion). Bringing these interpretations of both material culture and ethnicity together it has been said that material culture cannot be used in a straight-forward manner to 'read off' the ethnic identities of those with whom it was deposited (e.g. Hills 1993a: 15; 1998: 146; Scull 1995: 73. Cf. Lethbridge 1956, quoted above).

These, what are called 'post-processual', theoretical perspectives have forced archaeologists to re-think the traditional migrationary models since the assumption that history and material culture supported the idea of ethnic movements and a clear break between Roman Britain and early medieval England has been questioned (e.g. Scull 1995: 80). Hamerow (1997) believes that this re-thinking has caused an identity crisis in Anglo-Saxon archaeology, and currently opinion does appear to be divided on the question of migrations and fifth-century England. A number of scholars have described how there are now two opposing schools of thought (Hamerow 1994a: 174; Hills 1993b; Hines 1998: 159; Scull 1998: 179) and both of these will be outlined here.

2.7.1 Small-scale migrations.....?

Archaeologists using processual approaches were the first to propose that the migrations may have taken the form of settlements by a relatively small number of Germanic warriors (see above). Recognizing evidence for continuity as well as change, these authors emphasized acculturation and indigenous adaptation; factors which marginalized the role of migrations. Subsequently, other scholars adopted this model, adding more evidence and detail. Both Higham (1992) and Michael Jones (1996) produced strong cases in support of small-scale migrations (by a Germanic elite (Higham 1992: 223) or by small war bands (Jones, M. 1996: 39-107)), drawing on a wide range of archaeological and historical evidence. Because this model is essentially dealing with relative population sizes, Jones went so far as to calculate actual figures for the numbers of migrants, using historical sources and archaeological evidence for boats of the period. He arrived at a figure of '25,000 to 35,000 for the overall Anglo-Saxon population', although this may have been reduced to 10,000 to 20,000 given the logistical problems inherent in such a migration (ibid: 67). These calculations, however, relied on several dubious assumptions (e.g. using the *Historia Brittonum* to deduce the numbers of *keels* (ships) used to bring the settlers to England (cf. Chapter Four)). Others have also stressed that it is pointless to attempt to deduce actual numbers of settlers given the enormous problems inherent in archaeological demographic reconstruction (Hills 1993a: 15; Hines 1994: 49; 1998: 159).

Although the elite migration model is now well established in Anglo-Saxon archaeology, it has not been without its critics. Hills (1993b: 304) has criticized the quantitative methods used by Arnold, while Hines (1998: 158-9) has questioned the need to dismiss migrations as an explanatory device just because processual archaeologists sought to challenge culture-historical assumptions (cf. Anthony 1990 in Chapter Three). Additionally, Hills wrote that she could not accept that all those buried at Spong Hill (Norfolk), or living in the small huts found at West Stow (Suffolk) were 'elite' (Hills 1992: 988-9; also Hamerow 1993b: 173; 1994a: 164; Scull 1998: 183).

A number of scholars have also argued that this anti-migrationary trend is partly a result of modern socio-political factors. Hills (1993a and b) and Härke (1998) have described how the study of migrations appears to be out of fashion in modern British archaeology, with the result that archaeologists emphasize continuity and 'immobilism' (ibid: 20; Hills 1993b: 310). Härke attributes this to the fact that British academics are constantly questioning earlier theories and poor language skills among British students mean that there is little influence from continental scholars (Härke 1998: 20). The rejection of migrations has also been linked to a sense of insularity in Britain, while continental countries have, during the last century, had very different experiences of invasions and migrations (ibid: 20-1). Hills concludes that;

> 'It seems a pity to discard the migration model solely on the grounds that it is not fashionable, or because Hitler never made it across the Channel' (Hills 1993a: 15-16).

It is, however, worth noting comments in Philip Kohl's reply to Härke's (1998) article. He wrote that, although archaeology is inherently political, not all archaeological practice can be explained in terms of such political linkages (Kohl, in Härke 1998: 32). Other reasons for questioning the migration model will be discussed in the following chapters.

2.7.2 .....or mass migrations?

While some have criticized the elite migration model, other English scholars have retained more traditional approaches. The work of Martin Welch has been quoted in this context (e.g. Hamerow 1994a: 166; 1997: 35; Hines 1990: 17-18). While he does not deny that native Britons were present after the Germanic migrations, Welch argues that 'considerable numbers of Anglo-Saxons settled in southern and eastern England'. This is based largely on linguistic considerations (Welch 1985: 13-14, quoted in Hines 1990: 17-18. See Chapter Five for full discussion). Hamerow has echoed this view. She believes that a small-scale migration cannot account for the mass of archaeological, historical and linguistic evidence for the movements of Germanic peoples. She refers to herself as 'an unreformed "migrationist"' (Hamerow 1993b: 172-4).

2.7.3 The middle ground

Despite these seemingly polarized opinions, other archaeologists have adopted a less extreme, more pragmatic view of this debate. Chris Scull, for example, maintains that the differences between pro- and anti-migrationists are more apparent that real, since those who emphasize acculturation still concede some degree of population movement and those who emphasize migrations recognize some degree of native survival (Scull 1998: 178. Also Scull 1995: 72, Hines 1998: 159). Hamerow (1997: 41) also asserts the need for archaeologists to reconcile the dual processes of migration and Germanic overlordship with substantial indigenous continuity.

In order to do this, Hines has emphasized the complexities of the process that he called the 'Germanization' of Britain (1990: 19). This may have involved varying degrees of adoption and imposition of material culture and language around the North Sea during the period of demographic disruption of the migration period (Hines 1994: 52-4, 57). He also describes the need for more detailed comparative studies of social structure in England and on the continent and the need to obtain a clearer picture of sub-Roman Britain (Hines 1998: 165). Finally, it is worth noting comments made by Hills on how archaeologists might deal with the variety and complexity of evidence for the fifth century. She writes that '[s]eeking for a simple account of the fifth century for the whole of England is clearly a mistake' (Hills 1993b: 314) and 'monocausal explanations are likely to be inadequate' (Hills 1998: 148).

2.8 A critique of current debates

From the above it is clear that early medieval archaeologists have recognized not only the complexities of the archaeological data, but also the theoretical complexities relating to how this data is interpreted. Hence, many would now agree that the processes that saw 'Roman Britain' become 'Anglo-Saxon England' involved a complex mixture of change, transition and continuity. Nevertheless, although important questions have been posed by a number of influential scholars, it appears that the implications of those questions are not being followed through. A few examples will illustrate this assertion.

Archaeologists have drawn attention to the complexity of ethnicity, recognizing that it is not an easily defined and immutable social identity but is fluid and context-related (e.g. Hines 1994: 49; 1995: 79). Nevertheless, generalized ethnic labels, such as 'Germanic', 'native British', 'Angle' or 'Saxon' continue to be used as a means of referring to large-scale groupings of people that are believed to have remained constant over several centuries. For example, Härke (1990; 1997) used weapon burials and skeletal evidence in an attempt to distinguish 'Germanic' people from 'Britons' in the same cemetery. Likewise, Hines (1994: 50; 1995: 79; 1996: 264) traced objects, supposedly used to construct Anglian and Saxon identities, from the continent to England. The all-pervasive, immutable quality of such identities – which in turn suggests that possible material cultural expressions of such identities are just a veneer – is further illustrated when Hills asks of those using 'Anglo-Saxon' material culture, 'are the East Anglians really just disguised Britons?' (Hills 1993a: 15. See also Hills 1993b: 308; Scull 1998: 182).

It was also mentioned previously that material culture can potentially be used to express a variety of social identities (e.g. Härke 1990; Richards 1987) and ethnicity cannot simply be 'read off' from certain types of material culture (e.g. Hills 1993b: 308; Scull 1995: 73). Yet many continue to link material culture directly to certain ethnic groups and assume that the distribution of that same material culture proves the migrations took place. Indeed, Hines has written that;

> 'We can identify culture-groups in areas Bede points out on the continent and follow the transference of these to Britain in the immediate post-Roman period. Assuming that the association of these culture-groups with the ethnic groups Saxon, Angle and Jute is generally valid – and that is not a significantly problematic thing to do – we can note that these fit Bede's plan of the settlement of England in some substantial ways but certainly not perfectly' (Hines 1994: 50. See also Esmonde Cleary 2001: 90).

Finally concerning ethnicity, Hines (1995: 79) described how this form of social identity is an 'ideological instrument'. It is therefore primarily a *mental* concept (although people may draw on physical attributes in order to define it). Yet some archaeologists still make the untenable assumption that ethnicity can be deduced from *physical* skeletal remains; not unlike racial anthropologists of the nineteenth century (e.g. Beddoe 1885; Palmer 1885). Härke (1990; 1997), for example, has asserted that 'Germanic' men buried with weapons are 2-5cm taller than other males in the same cemeteries who were presumably 'Romano-Britons' or 'Celtic' (Härke 1990: 40). Härke's skeletal analysis has, however, been widely criticized by bone specialists (R. Gowland pers. comm.). Hamerow (1994a: 168) has also discussed physical anthropology as a potential 'demographic guide', quoting Härke (1990) and the skull from inhumation Grave 44 at Spong Hill. That skull is said to have a shape commonly found in Romano-British East Anglia and was found in a crouched burial. It was therefore concluded that this was possibly a native woman (but see Lucy 2000b for a critique of the idea that crouched burial was a 'native' rite). Finally, Hills refers to the cemetery at Vron in northern France where the intrusive 'Germanic' skeletons were said to be 'more robust and taller than the indigenous inhabitants' (1993a: 15). Nevertheless, elsewhere she points out that this could in fact be due to nutrition rather than ethnicity (Hills 1993b: 310) and this surely also applies to Härke's (1990) research.

The discussion of certain ethnic identities, such as 'Germanic', 'Anglian' or 'Saxon' derives ultimately from historical sources, especially Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. As mentioned previously, many have questioned the precise veracity of these sources and many archaeologists now claim to use historical evidence cautiously. Yet Hines's work (e.g. 1990; 1994; 1996; 1998) still appears to draw heavily on Bede's ethnographic description as a framework for understanding artefact distributions. He also claims that it is possible to trace the changes to various Germanic groups through the work of classical authors, from Caesar onwards (Hines 1996: 264; also 1998: 161). Most other authors also use terms such as 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'Germanic', yet it could also be argued that the use of such terminology, and even the concept of migrations, implies some degree of faith in historical sources (see Chapter Four).

Thus, early medieval archaeology is currently in a situation where there is a growing critical awareness concerning the theories and methods used to research this period. Yet despite a range

of critical publications that have substantially altered the views held by earlier scholars, ethnic migrations, as a means of discussing the Roman-Medieval transition, remain firmly on the agenda. Scull (1995: 73-4; 1998: 177) believes that there is no sound reason to doubt that the migrations occurred and that the material culture patterns found by archaeologists cannot be explained otherwise. Likewise, Hills (1993a: 15) states that the fact that there were migrants seems 'incontrovertible' and migrations cannot be dismissed as 'largely mythical' (ibid: 22). Hines also cautions that the migrations should not be seen only as an 'explanatory hypothesis'; they were a past reality. He writes that;

> 'We should not be embarrassed over pursuing pure research into this question for no explicit reason other than that it is a prominent historical event that we would like both to know more, and to know something more certain, about' (Hines 1998: 164).

Hence, there is a somewhat ambiguous situation. Many now seem to have accepted the general archaeological trend towards critical awareness, recognizing the complexity of data and the discussion of social identities. Yet these methods have at the same time been used to elucidate the supposedly historically-attested ethnic migrations into fifth-century England. The specific assumptions involved in this approach will be discussed in the following chapters.

2.9 Migration period archaeology in Germany

Although the present study is concentrating primarily on the use of migrations as an explanation for change in fifth-century England, it is also necessary to consider how continental archaeologists have discussed that period. This is because, from Bede to the present day, the Anglo-Saxons are said to have migrated from northern Europe – mainly northern Germany – or southern Scandinavia. Hence, German archaeologists have excavated the sites believed to have been previously occupied by the English settlers and have excavated, classified and dated the material from which the early English artefacts are said to have originated. It is therefore important to consider the views of those archaeologists who have studied the material that is believed to support the migration model (e.g. the brooch types to be analysed in Chapters Six and Seven).

As with the study of Anglo-Saxon archaeology in Britain, J.M. Kemble also deserves a prominent place in early German archaeology. When Kemble arrived in Hanover in 1849, for what was eventually a six-year stay in Germany (Wiley 1979: 236), archaeology there was certainly well-established. Kemble became a member of the 'Historical Association of Lower Saxony' and met and debated with prominent local archaeologists. Kemble (1855a: 270) wrote that urns had been exhumed in northern Germany for the last two hundred years (many, no doubt, found during unsystematic excavations like those at Borgstedt in 1876 (Mestorf 1886:

69)). From Kemble's account it appears that the excavations of the mid-nineteenth century were conducted (as in England) by enthusiastic amateurs, such as 'the clergyman from Stade' (Kemble 1855a: 271) and 'Lieut.-Gen. The Count Münster' (ibid: 272). Kemble witnessed excavations by these and other archaeologists across northern and central Germany (Kemble 1855a; 1855b: 315) and also conducted several of his own excavations, publishing accounts of these and his own theories in German (Wiley 1979: 237-9). Most significantly however, as in Britain;

> 'Kemble is most famous in Germany because he was the first who brought together the similarity of certain findings in England and North-west Germany and the migrations of the Saxons to England' (Gummel 1951; quoted in Wiley 1979: 252).

No doubt it was the fact that Kemble was a historian, a philologist and a keen archaeologist in England and, for six years, in Germany that allowed him to make such significant observations.

Yet, it appears that the study of Anglo-Saxon artefacts was not as popular in Germany as in England in the later nineteenth century. Tischler has written that '[l]ittle work was undertaken on the continent for fifty years or more after Kemble's death' (in 1857) (Tischler 1959: 1). By the early twentieth century, however, significant works on migration period pottery and metalwork (especially brooches) were being written in Germany. Scholars such as Plettke (1921), Roeder (e.g. 1930) and Shetelig produced comprehensive surveys of fourth- and fifth-century artefacts and were early practitioners of comparative typological methods of classifying and dating material culture (see Chapter Six). Nevertheless, Tischler has written that these scholars were 'almost the only pioneers working on Anglo-Saxon problems in north-west Europe' (Tischler 1959: 1). Fifth-century archaeology was clearly of quite limited interest in Germany at this time, especially when compared to England where this period was believed to have witnessed the birth of the English nation.

Nevertheless, as in England, German archaeologists spent much of the twentieth century mapping, classifying and dating fourth- and fifth-century artefacts. The work done by the earlier scholars (see above) remained extremely influential (cf. Brooks 1994: 88, 96; Morris 1974) as subsequent archaeologists produced large catalogues of material, describing either one artefact type (e.g. Reichstein 1975; Schuldt 1955a) or a range of material culture from certain geographical areas (e.g. Böhme 1974; 1986; Genrich 1954; Hingst 1959; Koch 1937; Korner 1938). Others were involved with the excavation and publication of large fourth- and fifth-century cemeteries (e.g. Grohne 1953 (Mahndorf); Janssen 1972 (Issendorf); Schuldt 1955b (Pritzier); Waller 1957; 1961 (Altenwalde, Wehden); Zimmer-Linnfeld 1960 (Westerwanna)). Many of these cemeteries became significant as sources of material that could be paralleled in English cemeteries.

It is also important to note that all this research was conducted within a culture-historical paradigm. The distribution of certain artefacts was explained in terms of ethnic groupings and the dispersal of those artefacts around the North Sea coast was explained by referring to ethnic migrations (e.g. Böhme 1974; 1986; Jankuhn 1952). Furthermore, German archaeologists were also influenced by historical sources from England and southern Europe, which seemingly described large-scale migrations of Germanic peoples (be they Angles, Saxons, Frisians etc.) from northern Europe to England in the fifth century. Bede (HE 1: 15) was particularly influential since he broadly defined the 'homelands' of the Angles, Saxon and Jutes. His assertion that *Angulus* (Angeln) remained deserted until his time of writing was also believed to be reflected in the archaeological evidence since there appeared to be a hiatus in occupation during the fifth and sixth centuries in this area, when the large cemeteries fell out of use (e.g. Jankuhn 1952: 24. But see Gebühr 1998).

More recently, while British archaeologists have been debating the scale and nature of the Germanic migrations, the more traditional view of mass migrations and the virtual disappearance of the native populations is 'still alive and well' and virtually unchallenged in Germany (Hills 1993a: 14). Hills (1993b: 303-4) has referred to the work of Böhme (1986) as an example of the continuity of the traditional, culture-historical methods in German archaeology. Böhme plotted the distribution of certain types of material culture and interpreted the results by very direct readings of historical sources (1986: 559-561). He stated that there would have been few Romano-British left north of the Thames by the fifth century (ibid: 525).

Härke (1995; 1998) has suggested a number of political and academic reasons for the continuity of such ideas. For example, he attributes this to the fact that Germany has numerous land borders and, during the last century, has experienced large-scale population movements and invasions. The legacy of Nazi archaeology, Härke believes, has also resulted in German archaeologists being unwilling to engage in theoretical debates (see also Arnold and Hassman 1995: 73). Additionally, the rigid nature of German academia, with the need to conform to the views of influential professors and produce large, totally comprehensive theses and publications, has created a desire for 'continuity and consensus' and few critical studies (Härke 1995: 48).

Many German scholars today do not express views as traditional as those of Böhme. Nevertheless, Heinrich Härke has described the 'disbelief' among German academics that large numbers of British natives survived the fifth-century Germanic migration/invasions. He goes on to relate how a young colleague argued that 'if there had been that many surviving Britons in England the Anglo-Saxons could not have forced them to adopt Anglo-Saxon dress and customs' (Härke 1998: 19). Thus, the concept of migrations remains central to current archaeological

research and interpretation, and scholars aim to elucidate this process further through their work (e.g. Bode 1998b; Weber 1996; 1998a).

2.10 Conclusion: 'Revisionist' approaches

To return to the three themes mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the first has described how and why the study of the Anglo-Saxon migrations and early medieval archaeology began where and when it did. The origins of the methodologies used by the first Anglo-Saxon archaeologists have also been discussed. Second, it has also been shown that understandings of the migrations and interpretations of historical sources and archaeological evidence have changed during the last 150 years. Yet there have also been elements in the debate that have continued to the present, despite recent critical appraisals. These elements include approaches to ethnicity, the relationship between material culture and ethnicity and a degree of faith in the historical sources. All these ideas are central to proving the veracity of the fifth-century migrations to England and thus this concept too has been retained since the middle of the nineteenth century.

To end this chapter it is important to highlight the few studies that have questioned these assumptions and thus the validity of the traditional discourses in Anglo-Saxon archaeology by noting how and why certain ideas came about (e.g. Austin 1990; Harrison 1997; 1999; Lucy 1998; 1999; Whyman 1993; Williams (forthcoming), also Halsall (1999) on early medieval Europe). This 'revisionist' work (Halsall 1999: 141) has built on recent scholarship in history, archaeology and other social sciences and indeed in other periods of archaeological research (e.g. Iron Age/'Celtic' studies and Romanization studies) such ideas are already well established (e.g. Barrett 1997; Hingley 1994; James 1998; 1999; Woolf 1998). This was the third theme of this chapter; ideas that may appear to constitute historical or archaeological 'facts' often change through time and are not necessarily as obvious as they sometimes seem. It has been shown that a variety of understandings of history and material culture have been present in the past and it should therefore be possible for alternative interpretations of early medieval England to now also be proposed. Hence, the following chapters will not proceed by accepting that the migrations are the best or only way to understand fifth-century archaeological change. Rather, specific theoretical themes that are implicated in the study of 'the migrations' will be discussed in detail and reassessed where appropriate; beginning with themes involved in archaeological interpretation.

CHAPTER THREE



Archaeological Theory

3.1 Introduction

Archaeology is the study of people in the past through their material remains. While this may be quite an obvious statement, it is nonetheless necessary for every archaeologist to establish how he/she wishes to define the relationship between people and the physical/material world; be that stone tools, standing buildings, the landscape, pottery or brooches. Indeed, it is possible to see the major trends in archaeological theory (i.e. culture history, processualism, post-processualism) as alternative means of understanding this relationship. Highlighting these interpretational trends – which have all influenced early medieval archaeology to greater or lesser extents – is an important part of the present study since it demonstrates that, depending on the questions asked of archaeological remains and the methods used to interpret them, it is possible to produce different understandings of the past. It is therefore inevitable that our understandings of archaeological phenomena are, to some degree, subjective and contingent.

A historiography of research on the 'Anglo-Saxon' migrations has already been described in Chapter Two and the present chapter will begin by emphasizing how material culture has previously been interpreted and why these approaches might be theoretically questionable. Following on from that critique, the primary aim of this chapter is to show that there are alternative ways of understanding human social life and the social role of material culture. These alternative understandings will be based largely on approaches usually referred to as theories of practice or structuration. Finally, in the light of these approaches, three topics with particular relevance to the study of early medieval England will be discussed; namely ethnicity, mortuary practice and migrations.

As stated in the introduction, this is not an attempt to replace 'erroneous' ideas and interpretations with new, 'correct' versions. Rather, the aim is to show that, although certain ideas still appear to be fundamental to early medieval archaeology (e.g. the idea of migrations by ethnic groups), alternative understandings of the available evidence are nonetheless possible. Indeed, these ideas will be used as the basis for (re-)examining the actual archaeological evidence in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. Hence, the theoretical ideas presented in this chapter have important implications for how archaeologists identify and understand the fifth century in southern and eastern England.

3.2 Background: Approaches to material culture in early medieval archaeology

As described in Chapter Two, the study of Anglo-Saxon archaeology started when nationalistic and racial theories were beginning to influence academic and popular thought. In this intellectual context, archaeologists had little reason to doubt their ability to link, very directly and unambiguously, national/racial groups (e.g. Britons, Germans, Celts etc.) or sub-groups/tribes (e.g. Angles, Saxons and Jutes) to artefacts believed to have been made and used by those people(s). This close relationship between people and material culture allowed archaeologists to claim that when similar objects were found in two different geographical areas, people belonging to the same ethnic group were present in both places. Furthermore, ethnically diagnostic artefacts found in 'new' locations (i.e. an area thought to have previously been occupied by a different ethnic group) suggested that people had migrated to new areas, bringing with them their distinctive possessions. Thus, if a grave was found in England with, for example, a type of brooch also found in northern Germany, then the individual in that grave was presumed to have held a Germanic identity (of one form or another) in life and to have had a biological or racial ancestry that could be traced back to northern Europe. Such reasoning was explicit in some of the earliest work on early medieval artefacts, especially when continental parallels for objects found in England were first noted (e.g. Kemble 1855a: 280 – quoted in Chapter Two). It should, however, be remembered that historical sources also influenced these interpretations (see Chapter Four).

The ideas described above became a more formalized and explicit theoretical approach – culture history – from early in the twentieth century (especially amongst prehistorians such as Gustav Kossinna). Of course 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeologists had been using these methods for at least fifty years and so it is perhaps debatable as to whether this period saw any significant changes in their practices. Nevertheless, some Anglo-Saxonists did perhaps echo the work of contemporary prehistorians in attempting to make their methodologies more explicit and 'scientific' (e.g. Leeds 1913). Research thus became focused on establishing more objective definitions of the ethnic groups in question through material culture, determining their development across both space (using distribution maps) and time (using material-based chronologies). These aims remain a significant part of research in early medieval archaeology today (see Chapter Two and Six).

Processual archaeology began in the 1960s largely as a result of dissatisfaction with culture-historical methods and assumptions, especially the reliance on history and the migrations of

ethnic groups to explain material culture patterning and change. These concepts were rarely discussed by processual archaeologists and as an alternative there were attempts to produce general models to show how social systems operated in the past. Thus, although there was less emphasis on defining ethnic groups and their movements, there was still believed to be a close relationship between material culture and social identity. That was certainly the case when processual approaches eventually found their way into early medieval archaeology in the early 1980s, when material culture (e.g. from cemetery assemblages) was used to infer local and regional status and wealth structures (e.g. Arnold 1980; 1984).

Dissatisfaction with previous methods and theories again contributed to the emergence of 'post-processual' (especially structural and symbolic) approaches and these also influenced early medieval archaeology (e.g. Pader 1982; Richards 1987; 1988). Indeed, personal identity and material symbolism are now common themes in the study of this period. Härke (1990), for example, has argued that sword burials symbolised a Germanic, male warrior elite, while Hines (e.g. 1990; 1994) described how the spread of a certain range of material culture types represented the spread of a Germanic identity and the 'Germanization' of England. Nevertheless, these interpretations still imply that there is a very direct relationship between people and material culture and that generalized understandings of both are thus possible.

To summarize, as we have seen (above and in Chapter Two), there have been a range of theoretical approaches applied to the study of early medieval archaeology during the last 150 years. Yet all these approaches involve the assumption – explicitly or otherwise – that there is a direct and discernible relationship between the material culture found by archaeologists and used by people in the past, and the identities held by those past individuals (although Lethbridge (1956 – quoted p20) did question this). Shennan (1991: 31) has summarized this idea in the equation 'culture = people'. In early medieval archaeology, this equation has been particularly influential concerning past ethnic identities, although it might be applied equally to understandings of other personal identities, such as gender or age (e.g. brooches/weapons used to infer female/male graves, miniature items suggesting a child's grave) (see Lucy 1996; 1997a; Stoodley 1999 for critiques). Yet from the approaches described in this section and in Chapter Two it can be argued that, although early medieval archaeologists have shifted their attention from ethnic/racial identities ('culture-history') to status and wealth ('processualism') and thence to the material used to symbolize a wide range of other possible identities ('post-processualism'), the 'culture = people' equation has remained largely intact. Anglo-Saxonists have always believed that we can, to some degree, know what today's archaeological artefacts meant to people in the past and that different people understood those artefacts in the same way across time and space.

3.3 Reassessments

Of course, some of the ideas discussed above cannot simply be abandoned; ethnicity and migrations *are* potentially important for our understandings of the past and material culture may indeed symbolize a wide range of personal identities. However, there are two significant problems with the approaches summarized above. First is the use of generalized assumptions concerning the relationship between people and material culture that are applied across time and space. From the point of view of the people in the past, such assumptions suggest that all those who made, used or saw objects (or buildings and places) understood them in the same way. Yet did everyone who saw a deceased individual adorned with a cruciform brooch in a grave understand that the deceased was an Anglian, with ancestors who came from (what is now) northern Germany, or that it was a relatively wealthy person, or that this was a woman? Furthermore, did people in the Upper Thames Valley interpret or understand equal-armed brooches in the same way as people in East Anglia?

Following on from this, the second problem concerns material culture itself. Barrett has described how direct, generalized interpretations of material culture treat archaeological remains as a static record of the past. Thus, '[i]nferences about the past are drawn from the various procedures which 'read', 'translate' or otherwise give meaning to this record' (Barrett 1988a: 5). He describes how this treatment of archaeological evidence has taken two forms. Material culture has been seen as either an objective, fossilized record of mechanical relationships between people (as with culture-historical and processual approaches), or as a record of ideas and meanings ascribed to artefacts by past individuals (as with structural/symbolic approaches to material culture) (Barrett 1987: 470; 1988a: 5-7).

Barrett questions the validity of these ideas for two reasons. First, he doubts our ability to 'get inside the heads' of people in the past and to deduce their thought processes (Barrett 1988a: 8). Second, he argues that the relationship between people, material culture and social structures (such as status or ethnic groups) was not – and is not – static. 'Meaning' (singular) cannot, therefore, simply be 'read off' from material culture by archaeologists (Barrett 1988a: 6). Hence, the relationship between people and material culture cannot be easily or simply deduced.

In order to avoid such assumptions and generalizations in this study, an alternative understanding of people and material culture will be presented. This will be based on ideas usually referred to as theories of practice or structuration. These approaches are based on various works by Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu. The works of both authors contain the idea that a dynamic relationship exists between individuals, the social context in which they

live and the material culture they use. It will be shown that these ideas have huge implications for the interpretation of material culture in the early medieval period.

3.3.1 Theories of practice and structuration

Structuration theory is usually associated with the work of the sociologist Anthony Giddens and it was explored comprehensively in his 1984 publication, *The Constitution of Society*. These ideas have since become influential in archaeology and have been incorporated into several publications (e.g. Barrett 1987; 1988a; 1994; Graves 1989; 2000; Lucy 1998; Mizoguchi 1993; Revell 1999). As such, no attempt will be made here to discuss structuration theory in detail and the following is a brief outline of these ideas. The wider implications of this approach for the practice of archaeology will be explored in this chapter and the following chapters.

Central to Giddens's theory is his understanding of the relationship between the individual human subject – the 'social agent' or 'actor' – and the objective social systems or structures of human life (e.g. institutions or identity-based groups). To begin with, Giddens believes that social analysis must recognize the presence of individual, subjective agents and the role of 'agency' (i.e. the individual's ability to influence events, be that intentionally or otherwise) (Giddens 1984: 8-9). This prevents people being seen merely as 'docile bodies' (ibid: 16) or as 'cultural dupes' (Graves 1989: 298) who simply conform to gender roles, ethnic groupings and so on. Instead, agents are seen as competent social actors who are hugely knowledgeable about the world in which they live and 'how to go on' in daily life. Agents may be able to explain some of their actions (Giddens calls this 'discursive consciousness'), although many actions are actually automatic and unconscious ('practical consciousness') (Giddens 1984: 41). Knowledge of which actions may be appropriate or inappropriate at certain times and in certain places is learnt through actors engaging with the world in which they live. This is done by talking to others, observing and remembering previous experiences. It therefore follows that human action must always be understood as occurring in specific time-space contexts. It should also be noted that the influence of agency is not always purposive; actions may have unintended consequences which then influence subsequent action (ibid: 179). Furthermore, power (not necessarily in a negative sense) is an important aspect of structuration theory. People could always have acted otherwise, and decisions made by individuals and their ability and willingness to conform to, reject or challenge certain ways of acting is crucial to any understanding of the creation and reproduction of social institutions, social practices and the whole character of 'society'.

Turning to social structures, institutions or systems (the other half of the agency–structure relationship), Giddens describes these as features of human social life that appear to have a

degree of 'solidity' and objectivity across time and space (ibid: 24). It has already been stated that in order to understand human social life it is important to recognize agency. Yet when individual actions are repeated through time and space using a set of rules that are understood by social agents they may be referred to as social practices. Social practice is therefore 'the means by which any kind of social discourse or interaction is maintained' (Graves 1989: 298). Thus, social systems and structures are produced and maintained by the 'situated activities of human agents, reproduced across time and space' (Giddens 1984: 25).

Both agency and structure are brought together in the theory of structuration. Giddens notes that agents and structures can never be independent phenomena; he refers to the 'duality of structure' (ibid: 25). On the one hand, structure cannot exist without agents to create and maintain it. 'Society' is not a thing, or an abstract concept since 'it' only exists through the social practices of individual agents. At the same time, knowledgeable social agents live within, and draw upon, a range of rules and resources that may thus constrain or enable their actions (although it should be remembered that such rules and resources may be an unconscious part of an individual's learned knowledge of how to act or 'go on' in a particular social context). Graves has summarized this duality between agency and structure writing that;

> 'Structuration is the way in which the structuring principles of social institutions are both the medium and the outcome of their reproduction through human action' (Graves 1989: 298. Cf. Giddens 1984: 25; Barrett 1988a: 8; 1988b: 31).

One problem with Giddens's work is that he did not define how the material world fits into his views of social life (Barrett 1988a; 9; Graves 1989: 299). It is to the work of Pierre Bourdieu that some archaeologists have turned in order to address this problem (e.g. Barrett 1988a; 1994; Graves 1989; 2000). Again there is no space here to deal with these ideas in detail. However, like Giddens, Bourdieu proposed a 'theory of practice' (Bourdieu 1977) and there are many similarities between their works. Yet the latter emphasized that an individual's awareness of his or her own social context and how to go on is both socially *and* materially learned and constituted (ibid: 87). He calls this inhabited context the *habitus* (ibid: 78).

Barrett (1994: 13-14) has described how the construction of the individual's *habitus* – his or her own biography and current sense of social awareness and competency – is dependent on the senses of sight, sound, touch and smell as much as on memories and awareness of social interaction. As such, the physicality of the human body and the world in general is a primary reference point for any individual's understanding of social context. Likewise, Graves has noted that;

> '...spatial divisions, ease or constraint of access, the temporal location and frequency of practice, and any material objects used, all become imbued with cultural meaning through that practice, forming media through which people recognize their own status relative to others. Thus the individual becomes socialized within the culture of the group, whilst at the same time the group and its cultural values are reproduced' (Graves 1989: 299; also Barrett 1988a: 8).

Hence, just as there is a dynamic and dialectic relationship between agency and structure, the same can be said for the relationship between the material world (objects, buildings, places etc.) and human social practice. The material world has no inherent, abstract meaning unless it is invested with it by social practice (although the repeated understandings or use of material culture in certain contexts may allow certain meanings to appear natural and inherent). Conversely, social practices are to a large extent created, maintained and acquire meaning for the individual participants through material conditions (Barrett 1988a: 9). As such, the material world will have a huge variety of meanings for different individuals at different times and places (Graves 1989: 299). However, as Graves points out (ibid; also Barrett 1988a: 9-10), social power and authority lies in the ability of an individual or institution to promote and maintain a particular meaning (a 'dominant discourse') to the exclusion of other possibilities, although the influence of agency means that such meanings can always be challenged or subverted or have more subtle differences (ibid.).

3.3.2 An archaeology of practice

These observations concerning the material realities of practice theories lead us back to the interpretation of archaeological remains. To begin with, this understanding of human social life means that to adopt generalized, aggregate approaches to material culture interpretation is too simplistic, since this fails to recognize the importance of subjective, knowledgeable agency. For example, how is it possible to say that swords in fifth- and sixth-century graves represent – to the exclusion of all other understandings – a Germanic, male, warrior elite (cf. Härke 1990)? Did everyone across south-eastern England during the time when these burials took place interpret them in the same way? Yet it is also not possible for archaeologists to recover 'the ideas in people's heads' (Barrett 1988a: 8) or to 'read' the meaning ascribed to objects in the past. Even if that were attempted it would be to concentrate solely on past individuals (Barrett 1987: 472; 1994: 5). Indeed, an individual's perception of an object's meaning may also change depending on time and place. Archaeological remains, therefore, can never simply tell us about people's views of them in the past; we can never enter into a dialogue with the past. Barrett believes such ideas to be 'both dubious and unnecessary' (Barrett 1987: 472).

It therefore follows that approaches that aim to generate generalized meanings, realities or facts concerning the past and material culture are flawed. Historical reality cannot be determined because 'it' (singular) never existed (Barrett 1994: 169, 171). Instead, it must be accepted that in any particular situation, material culture will be subject to a huge range of dynamic 'interpretive strategies' (ibid: 171) as individuals use and encounter objects, buildings or places. Material culture may in turn create, maintain, challenge or subvert practices, identities, and institutions. Nevertheless, it is still possible for a dominant or authoritative discourse to emerge, which may be reflected in regularities in material culture usage. How that discourse came about and was maintained through time must be investigated in each case (Barrett 1988a: 9).

Of course, this subjectivity does not exist solely in the past; the constitution of a past 'reality' is an equally subjective judgement for modern scholars. For this reason, the present study is as much about modern scholarship as it is about 'Anglo-Saxon England' or 'the fifth century' (whatever those terms may mean). It is, in effect, about one particular interpretative strategy – the 'Anglo-Saxon migrations'. This discourse has been maintained, transformed, rejected and revised through time (see Chapters Two and Four) and, since the middle of the 1800s and the emergence of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, it has had its own material 'reality' (i.e. it was/is not only historical, although documents are of course also material culture). The combination of history and archaeology was probably significant in reinforcing the concept of Anglo-Saxon migrations as a dominant and authoritative discourse in academic social practice to the present day.

It may be said that these ideas lead archaeological interpretation to a dead-end of relativism; by being situated within a modern academic discourse, scholars will only ever reflect their own context and ideas. In other words, there is no external reality (Barrett 1994: 170). However, Barrett rejects this charge of relativism for two reasons (ibid: 170-1; also Barrett 1991: 2). First, if the aim is instead to be objective, it implies that it is possible to find a past reality. As has already been stated, that is a flawed concept. Second, while present subjectivities cannot be ignored, it is not necessary to assume that a) all interpretation is relative and we can only ever approach the past in our own terms or that b) we can devise general models to interpret material culture or 'read' its meanings. Barrett asserts these conclusions can be countered. He has written that;

> 'The material evidence does not exist as the mute record of a past society, but exists as the fragmentary remains of worlds once inhabited by speaking acting humans, who used those

> material conditions to structure and defend certain traditions of discourse. The meanings which may be represented in material culture, situated within several histories of discourse, are consequently many' (Barrett 1991: 6).

The structuring and defending of discourses applies to academics as much as to the past. Thus, the material culture in question provides a link between past and present. Archaeologists create and maintain particular discourses by interpreting the same objects that were interpreted by people in the past and though which they lived their lives. It is therefore not the material culture that is of central importance, but rather it is always the interpretation of material culture by individual agents as a means of structuring and defending certain discourses that must be considered (Barrett 1994: 4-5, 171). The challenge for archaeologists, therefore, is to attempt to understand (not *explain*, because we can never *know*);

> '...how, in any particular period, the lives of people were created by their engagement upon those material conditions which the archaeologist is also able to investigate. It is the *creation of people as subjects*, and not simply the creation of material things, which will be the object of our archaeological enquiry...In other words, we move away from asking 'what kinds of people made these material conditions?' to an understanding of what the possibilities were of being human within those material and historical conditions' (Barrett 1994: 4-5).

Through this approach to archaeological interpretation, the context in which material culture is found (or where sites are situated in the landscape) becomes important. This is because, as described above, material culture only becomes meaningful in the context of social practice, when acting as a prop for the strategies of social life (ibid: 168-9). Meaning is not fixed and may change according to the specific time-space context of social practice in which it is being used; what Barrett calls the 'field of discourse' (Barrett 1987; 1991a: 3). Thus, when archaeologists discuss the variety of ways in which a particular object or place may have become meaningful at certain times, this must take account of the specific context in which those material realities were found (with due consideration for taphonomy and disturbance). It is not possible to discuss 'meaning' outside this context, because that meaning was not, and is not, static. Archaeologists, therefore, cannot create any past they wish, the possibilities of interpretation are not infinite (cf. Barrett 1994: 170), because the archaeological data – the material conditions of past lives – must be central to any interpretation proposed.

What this leads to is a practice of archaeology that requires an extremely close engagement with excavated remains, a detailed understanding of objects, places, how they may have been used and the contexts in which they were deposited or built. In doing this, scholars must expect

to find complexity, diversity and variation, not uniformity or conformity with pre-existing models (cf. Barrett 1995: 9-12; Jones, S. 1996: 73). It is uniformity that must be investigated and explained; might objects or practices have maintained a dominant discourse? Furthermore, particular attention must be paid to whether such uniformity is a true reflection of past practices, identities and institutions or whether they actually reflect our generalizing methods of analysis and understanding (cf. Barrett 1997 on approaches to the Roman Empire; Hill 1995b on Iron Age hill forts and society; Lucy 1998; 2000a on 'Anglo-Saxon' cemeteries). Finally, because the meaning ascribed to material culture is subjective – in the past and the present – it must be accepted that all interpretations are 'partial and provisional' (Barrett 1995: 9); we must expect our ideas to change with time. This is not a bad thing. It may lead us to a greater appreciation of the dynamic relationship between the past and the present, rather than assuming that certain ideas are simply facts or realities to be investigated.

It is these ideas that lie at the heart of the theoretical approach to be adopted in the present study. Positivistic[1], generalized approaches are rejected, and the aim is instead to attempt to consider and engage with the subjective lives (and deaths) of people in the past (in Chapter Seven this will be attempted through the close contextual analysis of archaeological remains). The implications of this approach will be discussed at various points in the following chapters, beginning here with three theoretical topics that are of particular significance to the archaeology of migrations in the fifth century.

3.4 Ethnicity

At the beginning of this chapter it was noted that a key element in the identifications of migrations in the past (and not only in early medieval archaeology) was the 'culture = people' equation (Shennan 1991: 31). Here, the aim is to deal with the people in the past and the question of defining who 'they' were. As we have seen, throughout the last 150 years of Anglo-Saxon archaeology fifth-century change has been understood largely in terms of migrations of ethnic groups from northern Europe or southern Scandinavia to southern and eastern England. Whether archaeologists have claimed to be able to identify particular groups (e.g. those described by Bede) or just 'Germanic' people, the theoretical understanding of human social groupings and identity – now usually referred to as ethnicity – has remained consistent. The aim of this section is to define how ethnicity has been understood in early medieval

[1] The use of the term 'Positivism'/'Positivistic' in the present work derives from the ideas of nineteenth century positivist philosophers, especially Auguste Comte. Their work emphasized that which cannot be disputed and must be accepted (i.e. 'facts'). Furthermore, questions that cannot be answered by scientific observation were to be left permanently unanswered (Speake (ed.) 1979: 283).

archaeology in the past, and why, in the light of current approaches, such ideas must be reassessed.

3.4.1 Background

To begin with, it should be noted that before the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century, perceptions of human group identity were often markedly different to those that followed. To illustrate this, Hannaford (1996) described how, in Graeco-Roman societies, the presence or absence of law and politics was used to define group membership. Those who were involved in the public, political life of the *polity* were accepted as civilized citizens while the *idiotes* and barbarians did not have such political systems or lived in private (Hannaford 1996: 10-12). Also, in the sixteenth century the Reformation forced religious identities to the fore and group allegiances often crossed the often-contested 'national' borders;

> 'Citizens came to be perceived as citizens, not by virtue of their membership of the *polis*...but as willing partners in the sacrament, which brought membership of the "mystical body of the faithful in Christ"' (Hannaford 1996: 184).

However, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there was a 'significant shift in the study of humanity' (Jones 1997: 41). The earlier political and religious foundations of group identity were largely forgotten (Hannaford 1996: 275) and instead certain social groups were seen as distinct, primordial entities, characterized by specific physical, linguistic and personal qualities (Jones 1997: 41). These ideas provided the basis of racial theory (although debates did continue concerning the precise nature of race, e.g. whether it could best be defined by language or physical anthropology) (ibid. See also Graves-Brown 1996; Hides 1996; Jones and Graves-Brown 1996). Such theories were both promoted by, and helped form, nationalist philosophies (Jones, S. 1996: 64). Hence, races, nations and states were often seen to be the same thing (Hannaford 1996: 235). The products of human labour – material culture – were also believed to define race, and in many European countries archaeology also became part of the process of racial/national self-definition. Archaeology, it appeared, could both identify distinct human groups and provide them with the legitimacy of a long history (e.g. Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996: 18).

Although the concept of race was certainly not forgotten, in the early twentieth century the explicit use of racial theory by social scientists (especially anthropologists) gave way to the study of 'cultures'. Human groups were believed to be separate and distinctive units, producing bounded material assemblages that reflected distinctive identities, beliefs, myths and values (Jones 1997: 45-6; Thomas 1991: 11). Culture-historical archaeologists, such as Gustav

Kossinna and later V. Gordon Childe, used archaeological remains to define more closely the spatial and temporal extent of distinct cultural groups, as well as the movements of those groups (ibid: 47) (however, varying degrees of correspondence between artefacts and ethnic groups were proposed by different archaeologists – see Thomas 1991: 20). Childe described these distinct cultural groups as being like individual historical actors (ibid: 25; Shennan 1989a: 5).

The details of how 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeologists applied racial and cultural approaches to their evidence have already been outlined in Chapter Two. It was shown how, in spite of an increasingly critical academic climate, certain ideas (e.g. the idea of monolithic, distinct ethnic groups that can be identified by archaeological remains (Jones, S. 1996: 63)) have remained largely intact to the present, thus supporting the idea of migrations. In order to reassess these approaches it is necessary to first look in more detail at the question of ethnicity itself and how social scientists have discussed this identity in recent years.

3.4.2 Definitions of, and approaches to, ethnicity

Interest in the nature of human group identities, and the use of the term 'ethnicity' itself, was instigated mainly by American anthropologists, such as Edmund Leach and Fredrik Barth, in the 1950s and 1960s, (Bentley 1987: 24-5; Jones 1997: 51). Yet within the last decade or so there has been growing academic interest in this subject; a trend that may be attributed partly to the profusion of 'ethnic conflicts' around the world and the widespread renegotiation of ethnic/national identities since the end of the Cold War. Historiographical research in the social sciences has identified the specific context in which previous approaches to group identity arose (see above), highlighting that racial or cultural groupings are not necessarily value-free, natural categories. It has also been shown that the idea of biologically defined races at regional or national levels is largely irrelevant as all humans are genetically closely related (Graves-Brown 1996: 87; Jenkins 1997: 9). Identity in general is 'a property of living things' (Graves-Brown 1996: 86) and ethnicity is not given at birth, nor is it 'in the blood'; it only comes into being when it is practised as part of human social life. Precisely how ethnicity operates in human social life has been the subject of long and involved theoretical debates, therefore only an outline of some of the key ideas can be presented here. This outline will also illustrate how and why the approach to be used in the present study was adopted.

3.4.3 Objective and subjective approaches

The first issue to face social scientists was the question of whether ethnicity is an objective or subjective phenomenon. The normative racial/cultural views of ethnicity outlined above treat group identities as objective phenomena (what Giddens might call 'social structures'). In the

case of archaeology, it was often believed that such identities could easily be 'read off' from patterns of behaviour and material culture. Ethnicity was therefore treated as being static and embedded in the biology or psychology and emotions of individuals in the past. This is an etic perspective, one based on the analyst's or observer's perceptions (Bentley 1987: 24-5; Jones 1997: 57). Scholars, beginning in 1969 with Fredrik Barth, who emphasized the subjective nature of ethnicity, questioned these ideas. In this emic approach, the views of the people being studied were prioritized; how they recognized similarities and differences in order to construct their perceptions of ethnicity. Barth and others therefore stated that ethnic identities were self-defining systems that should be determined through individuals' own categorizations of themselves and others (Jones 1997: 60; also Bentley 1987: 25).

3.4.4 Primordial and instrumentalist approaches

Closely related to the issues described above is the debate over how and why ethnic identities are created and maintained. Again, two polarized opinions have emerged. The 'primordial' view of ethnicity (cf. racial and culture-historical approaches) attaches an 'ineffable significance' to blood ties, kinship and obligation. Ethnicity is given at birth and the propensity for communal sentiments is seen as a fundamental and natural aspect of human nature (Jones 1997: 65-6). The inverse of this approach has been labelled the 'instrumentalist' perspective. Here, group identities are seen to be embedded in social behaviour. It was believed that ethnic boundaries persisted because groups became adapted to a particular socio-economic niche or that ethnic groups represent a collective strategy for the protection of political or economic interests, such as access to resources (Bentley 1987: 25-6; Jones 1997: 72-3). This approach echoes the functional/adaptive approaches to human behaviour employed by processual archaeologists.

All the above approaches have aspects that contribute positively to our understandings of ethnicity. Primordial ideas focus on the potentially deeply rooted emotions and the practices that may be considered as the objective manifestations of ethnic identities (Jones 1997: 68). This illustrates that ethnicity may have a physical manifestation and helps explain why certain ethnic identities persist even when they become socially disadvantageous. On the other hand, the more functional emphasis of instrumentalist ideas focus on the subjective, dynamic and situational nature of ethnicity and its potential to create social structures that can easily become politicized (ibid: 75-6). There are also problems with these ideas. Primordial approaches fail to explore the psychology of ethnicity. The ineffable attachments merely become mystified and romanticized. Ethnicity is therefore seen as a natural phenomenon, divorced from social and historical context and the dynamics of human social life (ibid: 69-71). Conversely, instrumental models are based largely on the analyst's mental models. Furthermore, ethnicity is believed to

serve only short term political or economic needs and hence the role of deep-rooted cultural attachments is neglected (Bentley 1987: 48).

3.4.5 Ethnicity as social practice

Bentley (1987: 25) has written that to adopt either one of these opposing views is to obscure many important issues. So how can all these ideas be reconciled? Several scholars have referred to the theories of practice in order to transcend the divisions between the subjective and the objective and between structure and agency. They have proposed a dialectic relationship between active, socially aware agents and the socio-historical contexts in which they live. Bentley (1987: 25-6) argues that ethnic practice is not just a passive reflection of real cultural/structural conditions, nor is it something that can be manipulated solely in pursuit of economic or political interests. Rather, he asserts that ethnic sentiments (the feeling of belonging to a certain group) as well as co-ordinated or collective action are brought about by subjective individuals becoming aware of objective commonalities of *habitus* with other individuals (i.e. their interests, experience, practices etc.) (ibid: 27-9). Jones echoes this view (although she has reservations about Bentley's use of the concept of *habitus* (Jones 1997: 92-3)) writing that;

> '...the construction of ethnicity is grounded in the shared subliminal dispositions of social agents which shape, and are shaped by, objective commonalities of practice, i.e. the *habitus*. Such subliminal dispositions provide the basis for the recognition of commonalities of sentiment and interest, and the perception and communication of cultural affinities and differences' (ibid: 128).

Jenkins has also asserted that in being aware of their social context, individuals also become conscious of similarity and difference with regard to others. As such, ethnicity (and indeed all personal identities) involve a dialectic between similarity and difference (Jenkins 1997: 13); for there to be an 'us', there must also be a 'them'. As for why such 'shared subliminal dispositions' come about, it is necessary to investigate the specific socio-historical conditions in which individuals find themselves and generalization must be avoided.

3.4.6 Summary

To summarize where these ideas leave our understanding of ethnicity, a number of points can be highlighted:-

1 – Due to the dialectic relationship between social structure and agency it must be concluded that ethnicity does not exist as a tangible, objective entity that can easily be observed or described (Jones 1997: 110). It is, in a sense, imagined, yet because at the same time ethnic

identities are professed and do influence individuals' thoughts and actions, they are not entirely imaginary (Jenkins 1997: 168).

2 – Because ethnicity relies on the perception of commonalities of interest amongst individuals, this agency means that there will be a potentially huge variety of ethnic experience. Furthermore, these commonalities and the nature of ethnic experience may change though time (cf. the discussion of the English identity in Chapter One). Ethnicity is not static or universal, it is something felt at certain times and in certain places by living people (Graves-Brown 1996: 88).

3 – Particular ethnic identities do not exist in isolation; an individual may hold several different 'ethnic' identities which may be stressed at different times and places, and depend on who is asking (e.g. I could claim to come from Yorkshire, England, Britain, Europe etc. cf. James 1999: 70). Ethnicity is therefore context-specific. As Jones has described (1997: 100), the 'bird's eye view' of ethnicity reveals a pattern of overlapping ethnic boundaries, all of which are subject to reproduction and transformation as part of the on-going process of social life.

4 – The defining of ethnic boundaries is further complicated by an often ill-defined link between ethnicity and other personal identities (cf. ibid: 130). A sense of belonging to a group may easily coincide with, for example, gender or status identities (e.g. Geary describes how some people in the area of the Rhine-Danube *limes* became 'Roman' civil servants and local chiefs by having a classical education and by adopting Roman language and religion (Geary 1988: 7-8)).

5 – While the view of ethnicity presented here does constitute a generalized means of understanding group identity, it is nonetheless important to recognize that by seeing ethnicity as a social practice, difference and diversity are in fact integral to this model. A single analytical framework has been proposed, but the very nature of that framework means that, when it is employed, generalization is invalid.

With these conclusions in mind, it is now possible to consider the relationship between ethnicity and material culture and how archaeologists might approach the question of ethnic identities.

3.4.7 Ethnicity and material culture

It has already been described how, from the beginnings of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, scholars adopted approaches that perceived ethnic/racial groups as holistic, bounded entities. This approach has, to some extent, continued to the present. This expectation of 'boundedness, homogeneity and continuity' (Jones, S. 1996: 64) was also reflected in culture-historical approaches to archaeological interpretation, where distinct groupings of material culture – 'cultures' – were often seen to represent groups of people (e.g. the 'Beaker people'). V. Gordon

Childe wrote that archaeological cultures could be identified 'when the same types [of material culture] are repeatedly found together at different sites within a limited region' (Childe 1958: 10). This recurrence of material culture (pots, house-plans, burial rites etc.) reflected traditional ways of acting within a particular cultural group (ibid.).

Such ideas were partially critiqued by processual archaeologists who proposed other explanations for the patterning of archaeological remains (e.g. the ideas concerning status/wealth and access to resources in early medieval England proposed by Arnold (e.g. 1980; 1984)). Also, post-processual understandings have stressed that material culture cannot be treated as a simple reflection of ethnic/cultural identity; rather it has a complex, active role in human social life where meaning is context-dependent (e.g. Barrett 1994; Hodder 1986).

Building on these ideas, it has now been argued that cultural groups are solely the product of homogenizing analytical techniques and could have been caused by a variety of different factors (Shennan 1989a: 13). Furthermore, if archaeologists look beyond similarities and regularities then material culture patterning may reveal, not bounded entities, but a huge variety of crosscutting patterns in which 'untidiness' should be recognized as normal (ibid. See also Jones 1997: 108-9 and results in Chapter Seven). Thus, Shennan (1989a: 11) has written that cultures do not actually exist as objective entities, they are merely 'summary descriptions of patterns of spatial variation' that only mislead analytical research. Likewise, Jones and Graves-Brown have written that;

> 'Culture groups are not neatly packaged in the present, nor are they likely to have been in the past' (Jones and Graves-Brown 1996: 17).

These conclusions appear to be supported by ethnographic studies. For example, De Corse (1989) found that, out of all material culture available to the three ethnic groups in his study area in Sierra Leone, only shrines were implicated in the negotiation of ethnicity and they were highly variable in style and not present at every site (ibid: 138). The most important indicator of ethnicity was ritual *behaviour* (ibid.). De Corse concluded that his research 'demonstrated the difficulty in using material culture to ascribe ethnicity or even to define broader culture groups' (ibid: 138).

It is also interesting to refer to a paper on the domestic habits of people in Sweden and Denmark (Linde-Laursen 1993). Linde-Laursen found that people living in these two countries had very different attitudes to hygiene in the context of washing-up. This was not just a difference in mentalities or everyday practice, but it also influenced the type of kitchen sink

that were used in those countries (i.e. material culture). Furthermore, Danes and Swedes see these attitudes as distinctive national traits and people in both countries believe that the other method is unclean. Linde-Laursen concluded that a huge range of everyday objects and practices could potentially become involved in the creation, maintenance and objectification of communal identities, defining both a sense of belonging and otherness (ibid: 277, 286). Thus, archaeologists should remember that ethnicity might not always be negotiated using distinctive, obvious material symbols. Furthermore, objects, and practices employing them, may only be seen to have ethnic significance at certain times, in particular contexts (ibid: 287).

These ethnographic studies illustrate that the relationship between material culture and ethnicity is potentially far from simple and direct. However, in order to avoid making cross-cultural generalized assumptions these examples should only be treated as 'cautionary tales' for archaeologists (Shennan 1991: 30); albeit significant ones.

3.4.8 Ethnicity and early medieval archaeology

Where do these conclusions leave our understanding of ethnicity in fifth century England? To begin with it must be reiterated that, despite recent critiques, in early medieval archaeology there is still a widely held belief that distinct ethnic groups can, to some extent, be identified using a limited range of material culture (see Chapter Two). The above discussions seriously undermine these propositions for the following reasons:-

1 – The idea that defined, rigidly bounded ethnic groups (e.g. British, Germanic, Anglian, Saxon or Jutish etc.) did exist in the fifth century must be questioned. To hypothesize the existence of such entities is to neglect the dynamics and variability of ethnic identities amongst individuals across time and space. The historical background to these ethnic identities will be discussed below and in Chapter Four.

2 – We must also question the ability of archaeologists to define cultural groups. Archaeologists have now recognized some of the complexities of the evidence for the fifth century in England (see Chapters Two and Six), yet the idea that certain types of artefact (e.g. brooches and pottery) can be used in all cases to define a general process of migration (on whatever scale) or perhaps 'Germanization' (Hines 1990; 1994) does suggest that these items are still being treated as culturally related and subject to the same processes (but see Barrett 1994: 86-7). This neglects agency, and the possibility of local and temporal variations in the meaning and active, contextual usage of material culture.

3 – Finally, the link between material culture (in the form of cultural groups or otherwise) and ethnic identities must be questioned. As ethnographic evidence warns us (although this is not an attempt to draw an ethnographic analogy), we cannot be sure of the means through which ethnic

identity was negotiated in the past; in some situations it may have involved practices or objects that do not survive archaeologically. Furthermore, even if swords, brooches and certain pottery types did have ethnic significance, to understand them solely in ethnic terms is to neglect the idea that material culture can have a variety of meanings and be associated with a variety of identities all of which are context dependent.

While these conclusions are a significant element in the reassessment of fifth-century archaeology, it must not be forgotten that the ethnic identities used to describe people living in this period are not totally arbitrary, nor are they epithets coined by archaeologists (in contrast to 'the Beaker people' for example). For the period in question, ethnic names originate from a number of historical sources. Those sources will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four. However, it is appropriate to discuss here briefly the perception of ethnicity contained in those sources.

3.4.9 Ethnicity in early medieval historical sources

Taken at face value, late antique and early medieval sources often appear to describe distinct, homogeneous groups of people (*gens* or *gentes*), their collective fortunes, migrations and so forth (Wolfram 1994: 20). Indeed, historical sources probably influenced the similar archaeological approaches to ethnicity, further illustrating the close relationship between history and archaeology in the study of this period (Chapter Two. See also recent studies of 'Celtic' identities, e.g. James 1998; 1999)). However, a number of historians, especially those studying continental sources, have now come to question normative interpretations and have arrived at understandings of ethnicity that echo those theoretical ideas outlined above. In one sense these examples constitute more 'cautionary tales' reminding archaeologists of the dangers of making generalizations about past ethnic identities. Nevertheless, as will be seen, some conclusions from these observations will also help conceptualize an alternative understanding of early medieval ethnicity, without relying on questionable assumptions.

3.4.10 Contextual historical approaches to early medieval ethnicity

Historians have begun their critiques of normative approaches by defining how ethnicity has previously been understood. Direct readings of historical sources appear to describe ethnic identities as 'kinship writ large' (Geary 1983: 25), where people formed highly homogeneous groups that remained constant, even in times of change. The natural character of these groups meant that their fortunes could be described using biological metaphors, such as birth, growth, flowering and decay (Pohl 1991: 39). Ethnicity was studied as something that was clear-cut and real; something that was 'out there' to be discovered through objective analysis (Geary 1983: 18; Pohl 1997: 11). This understanding of ethnicity is still quite common in modern research

(Pohl 1997: 11). However, some historians have now demonstrated that such interpretations are untenable and that the evidence is actually far more contradictory and opaque (ibid.).

Geary (1983) examined the ethnic terminology found in a variety of early medieval sources written on the continent. He found that, in order to define an individual's ethnic identity, contemporary authors stressed origins, dress and/or customs, language and the laws to which individuals were subject (ibid: 19-21). Having examined the use of these categories in the sources he concluded that in all cases they were far from being stable, immutable indicators of ethnicity (see also Pohl 1997: 12-13). Furthermore, ethnic identities often appear to have coincided or overlapped with other identities (Geary 1983: 21). Thus, Geary has called early medieval ethnicity a 'situational construct'; only becoming important for some people in certain situations. Halsall (1999: 140-2) and Pohl (1991: 41; 1997: 13, 40) have also noted the context-related nature of ethnicity and how it is thus a flexible and dynamic identity that cannot easily be separated from other identities. Additionally, echoing those who have discussed ethnicity and theories of practice (see Section 3.4.5), Pohl concluded that while ethnicity cannot be defined objectively, it is also not totally subjective or arbitrary. Rather, it only matters and becomes 'real' when it is practised (Pohl 1997: 8) and it therefore cannot be 'in-born' (Pohl 1991: 41). Halsall has effectively summarized these ideas with a statement that has important implications for this study as a whole. He writes that;

> 'At some point, Anglo-Saxon archaeology must realize that ethnicity has no necessary link at all with genetics or geographical origins. Ethnicity, as an identity, is a state of mind. Material culture may very well be used actively to create such categories, to underline these identities, but if there *is* a link between artefacts and ethnicity it is with *this* mental state of affairs, and *not* with the birthplace of one's ancestors' (Halsall 1999: 141).

Although the above interpretations emphasize the dynamism and flexibility of ethnic identities, several scholars have noted that ethnicity appears to have been particularly important in political contexts (e.g. Amory 1994; Austin 1990: 16; Geary 1983: 16, 22-5; Pohl 1991: 41). For example, people(s) often gained their identity through their adherence to a particular leader or royal family (Geary 1983: 22). As Wolfram (1994: 21) has written, the formation of ethnic groups (or at least the codification of a *belief* in such groups in written sources) was 'not a matter of common descent but one of political decision'.

The political nature of ethnic identities is further emphasized when considering the authorship of some early medieval sources (authorship will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter). It is clear that some authors (e.g. Bede and the compilers of the *Anglo-Saxon*

Chronicle) were using ethnic identities as a tool in the writing of dynastic propaganda for their political masters (Austin 1990: 16), for example, by emphasizing a king's lineage or the unity of their kingdom and subjects. Other authors were writing specifically as Christians (e.g. the Gallic Chronicler and Gildas) or Roman citizens (e.g. Zosimus) attempting to describe the ills that had befallen the Empire. Their mentalities and perceptions of ethnicity were heavily influenced by their classical and Judeo-Christian perspectives (Pohl 1997: 16-19 and Section 4.5.4.2).

Nevertheless, it should not be said that these identities were simply the literary creation of those authors (Pohl 1991: 44; 1997: 23). These authors, as individuals aware of their own socio-historical context, must have been describing, to some extent, identities with wider importance that *some* people held to be a reality (Pohl 1997: 23; Wolfram 1994: 25). The identities may also have been well established in oral traditions (see Section 4.3.2.6) and might have been reinforced (in literate circles at least) by having been written down. However, in stating that historically attested identities were not simply fictitious, it must also be asked; who were they a reality for and in what context?

3.4.11 Non-elite/non-religious ethnic identities?

This brings us back to the idea that ethnic identities appear to have become particularly important in political/elite and religious contexts. With that conclusion in mind Amory has written that;

> 'In the obscure rural world of the majority of the population, allegiances and groupings must often have attached to names and localities that have completely escaped the net of aristocratic evidence' (Amory 1994: 4).

This therefore begs the question; what were the identities expressed or felt by the rest – the majority – of the population on the continent and in England in the fifth century? Pohl has stated that there is scarcely any proof that the lower strata of society felt part of any larger grouping and hence 'it is more likely that their identity was rooted in smaller local groups, like clans or villages' (Pohl 1991: 41). Continuing this theme, Pohl discusses the *Tribal Hidage*; a seventh- or eighth-century, possibly Mercian, document listing the land owned by thirty-four local and regional groups. Some of these groups are well known historically. Wessex has 100,000 hides (units of land), while Mercia has 30,000. However, a number of kingdoms or peoples have only 3-600 hides (e.g. the *Hwicce* – see Bassett 1989). Pohl comments that;

> 'Most of the smaller units never made it to the pages of narrative history, but we may ask ourselves at which level group affiliations and ethnic identities were really felt' (Pohl 1997: 13).

Whilst considering the possibility of local identities in the early medieval period it is worth referring to studies made of English cemeteries using contextual methodologies. Pader (1982) analysed two cemeteries in Cambridgeshire (Holywell Row and Westgarth Gardens) while Lucy (1998) examined several sites in East Yorkshire (e.g. Sewerby and West Heslerton). In both regions it was found that, while the graves in the individual cemeteries contained generally comparable material culture assemblages, the burial practices and the use of that material culture – the way in which items were deposited and with whom – was found to vary from one cemetery to the next (e.g. Lucy 1998: 65; 1999: 37; Pader 1982: 158). If items such as those belonging to the female burial costume or swords were also linked in some way to the negotiation of group identity (as has often been claimed) then it might be suggested that their differential usage indicates the existence of quite localized identities. In other words, the fact that the people in question may have had a shared *habitus* – at least in the context of funerary practice – means that group identities on this local scale may be hypothesized. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that we cannot necessarily discern which practices or types of material culture were used in the negotiation of ethnic identities (see Section 3.4.7). Also, if people in the fifth century did maintain local identities, we cannot rule out the possibility that much broader identities were also maintained in certain situations. Yet to date, such complexity with regard to ethnicity has not usually been considered.

3.4.12 Discussion and conclusions

There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn from the ideas presented above. First, normative approaches to ethnicity are theoretically dubious. Archaeologists should not expect to find objective proof of large-scale, clearly defined ethnic groups in the early medieval period because ethnicity does not work like that. Nor can it be said that historical sources support the idea of ethnic homogeneity; a consideration of authorship in context reveals that reading texts at face value ignores the complexities of early medieval ethnicity. Furthermore, Austin has described the possibility that;

> '...people in the Migration [Period] cemeteries became Angles or Saxons or Franks or Burgundians long after they were dead and past caring, simply because the people broking power in the protostates a century or two later needed a coherent identity, a name and a homeland, and because archaeologists in the successor nation states and empires needed, or chose, to sustain that identity within their own current polity and ideology' (Austin 1990: 17).

It has also been shown above that material culture, and especially archaeological cultures, cannot be directly equated to ethnic groups, and anyway, the usage and distribution of artefacts and practices may be as variable across time and space as ethnicity itself.

Second, there is the potential for some early medieval group identities to have been quite localized. Even though it is not possible to identify local groups with any degree of certainty or theoretical validity, the possibility that such groupings did exist (cf. the *Tribal Hidage* and localized cemetery evidence) must again lead us to question the simplistic application of broad, all-pervasive identities such as 'Anglian', 'Saxon', 'Germanic' or 'British' to people living in the fifth century (cf. Reynolds 1985).

Third, it must be stated that, although the previous two points are valid, the archaeological discussion of ethnicity can only ever be hypothetical; ethnicity is purely a mental identity (as opposed to sex and age for example, which has some degree of physicality that archaeologists can recover). As Walter Pohl has commented, defining ethnic groups and affiliations was difficult for contemporaries, for us it is impossible (Pohl 1991: 46). Likewise, Atherton has stated that archaeologists should avoid the 'fruitless quest for paleosociopolitical epiphenomena such as ethnicity' (Atherton 1983: 96, quoted in De Corse 1989: 138). Lucy has echoed these ideas and has argued that, given the problems inherent in understanding ethnicity in the past, it is perhaps best if early medieval archaeologists look primarily at the local contextual usage of material culture and the local means of creating and maintaining gender or age identities, rather than *starting* with broad ethnic groupings in mind (Lucy 1999: 34). This approach will be reflected in the methodology and analysis presented in Chapters Six and Seven.

Finally, where do these conclusions leave our understanding of 'the migrations'. As noted before, certain views of ethnicity and of the relationship between ethnicity and material culture were/are important in 'proving' that fifth-century migrations occurred. If these ideas can be questioned, then it follows that it may be necessary to seek alternative means of understanding material culture distributions and material culture change. Such possible alternatives will be presented in Chapter Eight.

3.5 Cemetery analysis and mortuary theory

The bulk of the archaeological evidence for the fifth century – especially that which has been used as evidence for migrations (e.g. pottery and brooches) – has been recovered from cemeteries (although landscape/settlement evidence is becoming increasingly well represented (see Chapter Five)). It is therefore necessary to consider the interpretation of cemeteries,

funerary and burial rituals in some detail. The following is not intended to be a comprehensive commentary on archaeological approaches to mortuary evidence as this has been included in several previous publications (e.g. Barrett 1988b; 1994; Lucy 1998; 1999; McHugh 1999; Pader 1982; Ravn 1999; Richards 1987). Rather the aim is to highlight how established approaches to this evidence have led to certain views of the period in question and that alternative theoretical ideas may lead to alternative understandings. Hence, archaeological examples will be drawn solely from the period in question, although many other examples from other time periods could have been referenced.

3.5.1 Normative approaches

Some of the earliest Anglo-Saxon scholars were interested in the religious beliefs of those buried in 'Anglo-Saxon' graves (e.g. Akerman 1855: vii. See also Williams (forthcoming)). Nevertheless, from the mid-nineteenth century and throughout much of the twentieth century scholars gave very little consideration to funerary rituals specifically. Instead, cemeteries were treated as convenient depositories of cultural traits (Barrett 1991: 6; Thomas 1991: 103) that could be used to address the research priorities of the time (i.e. defining cultural/ethnic groups both spatially (using distribution maps) and temporally (using typological/chronological techniques)). As described in Chapter Two, these approaches have dominated Anglo-Saxon archaeology with many key assumptions (e.g. the relationship between material culture and ethnicity) and research priorities (e.g. material chronologies – see Chapter Six) continuing to the present day.

3.5.2 Processual approaches

During the 1960s and 1970s, archaeologists such as Binford, Tainter and Saxe developed a body of processual theory dealing specifically with mortuary evidence. Burial rituals were believed to function as a means by which social groups adapted to the changes caused by the death of an individual (Thomas 1991: 103-4) and also as a means of monopolizing economic resources by using the dead to legitimize land claims (McHugh 1999: 1; Ravn 1999: 41). The analysis of burials and the deduction of general cross-cultural laws were achieved through the application of quantitative methods and ethnographic observations. As a result of this work, processualists were confident about their interpretations of mortuary remains. Mortuary evidence was seen, not as an expression of cultural belief, but as 'a reflection of the organizational principles of the social system itself' (Barrett 1988b: 30; see also Thomas 1991: 104). As Saxe wrote;

> '...an individual's treatment at death is a reflection of the position occupied in a status system in life...differences between individual interments reflect the type of status system participated in' (Saxe 1971: 39, quoted in Pader 1982: 54).

Thus, it was believed that archaeologists could recover the outlines of 'extinct status systems' (Saxe 1971: 39, quoted in Pader 1982: 54). Early medieval archaeologists adopted similar approaches to mortuary evidence and the work of Chris Arnold is often quoted in this context (Arnold 1980, 1984, but see also Hodges 1989 and the work of Shepard and Welch described in Pader 1982: 193-5). Arnold (1980) gave numerical values to different grave goods in order to produce 'grave scores' (e.g. a helmet = 30 points, a sword = 16, bead = 2) and from these he aimed to deduce the relative wealth/status of individuals, communities and regions. However, this approach did not have a huge impact on early medieval archaeology, perhaps due to the continuing pre-eminence of historically based research into typologies/chronologies, defined ethnic groups and their migrations. Furthermore, a number of scholars highlighted various questionable assumptions involved in processual approaches to early medieval cemeteries (see Chapter Two and below). However, as a general criticism, Barrett has emphasized the circular logic of processual approaches;

> 'We cannot proceed by analysing the organizational form of mortuary data to reveal the form of the social system, and then use the form of the social system to explain the form of the burial data' (Barrett 1988b: 30).

These shortcomings mean that positivistic, processual approaches to the analysis of mortuary remains will not be used when material from such contexts is examined in Chapter Seven.

3.5.3 Structuralist and symbolic approaches

Perhaps the main feature of 'post-processual' approaches to mortuary evidence is the rejection of the idea that burials are a direct reflection of past social realities (e.g. Barrett 1988b; 1994: 47; McHugh 1999: 1). In adopting this stance, a number of alternative, more complex views of mortuary remains have been proposed. Those using symbolic and structuralist ideas have suggested that material culture performed as an active means of communication, with defined sets of rules and meanings (much like language). Material culture, therefore, formed a symbolic language that could be read by members of a society, albeit with different readings or meanings being possible in different contexts (e.g. Pader 1982; Richards 1987; 1988).

The idea that mortuary evidence might have socially significant, symbolic meaning has now become a relatively common idea in early medieval archaeology. For example, Härke (1990)

believes that sword burials *symbolized* a Germanic warrior elite status, since swords have been found with individuals who could not have been warriors at the time of death, such as children, the elderly or sick, as well as with deceased adult males. Similarly, Hines (1994; 1995) has outlined how material culture could have been used to demonstrate an individual's allegiance to certain Germanic ethnic groups. Richards has also showed, though a detailed analysis of early medieval funerary ceramics, that the form and decoration of those vessels may symbolize a range of personal identities, such as age, gender, status (Richards 1987: 194) and ethnicity (although the questionable assumptions inherent in Richards's assertion that 'The general appearance of a vessel identifies it as Germanic' (Richards 1988: 159) were highlighted in Section 3.4).

While symbolic and structural approaches have opened up new ways of interpreting material culture, a number of problematic assumptions have nonetheless been identified. First there are the theoretical problems with the idea that we can 'read' the symbolic material text or record and understand its meaning for people in the past (see Section 3.3). Also, Pader (1982: 3) emphasized that the context-specific nature of material symbolism means that generalization (i.e. across different cemeteries or regions) is not possible. Nevertheless, in many cases symbolic meaning has been broadly applied (e.g. Härke 1990; Hines 1994; 1995) suggesting that individuals simply conformed to established social structures. There is no attempt to understand why objects, practices and what they symbolize were important to individual social agents in the past. The continuity of general, homogenizing tendencies among those who have nonetheless engaged with the theoretical issues of early medieval archaeology is exemplified in the view that;

> '...the message of the Anglo-Saxon burial ritual in the fifth century is of a homogenous society practising Germanic forms of burial' (Richards 1995: 56).

The views of ethnicity inherent in that statement have been discussed in the previous section and it is the approaches to burial practice that concerns us here. To avoid the assumptions described above, mortuary rituals will here be discussed using theories of structuration and social practice.

3.5.4 Mortuary rituals as social practice

Again, there is no space here to deal fully with the implications that theories of practice and structuration have for the analysis of mortuary remains (but see Barrett 1988b; 1994; Lucy 1999). Instead, the aim is to highlight the potential for early medieval burial rites to be seen as complex, multi-dimensional and dynamic, thus undermining the idea that cemeteries reflect

directly the identities of the deceased and general processes, such as migrations and ethnic/cultural change.

To begin with, it will be recalled that objects and places are/were given meaning through being used in social practices which they also help create and form (see Section 3.3.1). Individual social agents conducted those social practices and it therefore follows that their views and understandings of both the material culture and practices are likely to be diverse. Generalizations about the meaning of archaeological remains will therefore always be far too simplistic. It must also be reiterated that any meaning ascribed to an object or place by an individual is context specific, hence it may vary over time or space, as well as from person to person. Again, the idea that the same material culture or practices represent *only* common meanings or processes must be questioned (cf. Barrett 1994: 92). Archaeologists, therefore, should not attempt to produce generalized discussions of what their evidence meant in the past or what process it illustrates. Instead interpretations must highlight how and why places and practices might have been perceived differently by different people; how and why might individuals have lived and acted at certain times and in certain places, within a set of material conditions. Furthermore, if there appears to have been some uniformity in practice, such as inhumation burial with grave goods in fifth-century southern and eastern England (what might be interpreted as a dominant discourse), how did the actions of individual agents create this situation? To what extent is homogeneity due to our methods of analysis and interpretation?

Highlighting the role of agency and seeing funerary rituals as social practice has important implications for our understanding of early medieval cemeteries. In many previous approaches to mortuary remains the main concern has been with the dead; their ethnic identity, status and so on. However, it has become a truism amongst post-processual archaeologists that 'the dead do not bury themselves' (Parker-Pearson 1993: 203) and 'do not participate in their own funeral' (Barrett 1988b: 3; also Lucy 1999: 37; Mizoguchi 1993: 224). This is an important point because, in the analysis of mortuary remains, the focus is shifted from the deceased to those who buried them. As Barrett has written;

> 'Mortuary rituals are particular types of social practice and we must examine the way they were enacted by the living around the corpse and the grave' (Barrett 1988b: 31).

The practices and rituals selected by the living as an appropriate way to react to a death, and how emotion or grief should be expressed (cf. Tarlow 1992), will be determined by who the deceased was, who the mourners are and perhaps even how the death occurred. The rituals deemed appropriate in any given socio-historical context are determined by, and also maintain,

those practices and ways of seeing the world (although such practices and rules can always be challenged or subverted, and this may give such challenges a great deal of impact to those who are aware of this (cf. so-called 'deviant' burials at Sutton Hoo (Carver 1998: 137-153)).

Given the variety of people who may, to some extent, have been affected by a death, it is necessary to think about all the potentially different perspectives of those who may have been present at the graveside (cf. Barrett 1995: 11); or indeed those who may have been excluded. Who laid the body in the grave, who decided what grave goods it was appropriate to bury with the deceased, where did different people stand while all this was happening? It is also important to consider the temporal and spatial context of funerary rituals. How long after death did the burial take place? At Sewerby (East Yorkshire) a fly pupa was found in fabric remains, indicating that the body had lain exposed for at least a few days (Hirst 1985: 31). What happened during those days? Also, a number of authors have noted that 'archaeologists do not observe the entire sequence of a burial rite' (Barrett 1988b: 32. See also Pader 1982: 42; Pearce 1998). Indeed, if Pearce's (1998) analysis of the sequence of ritual in Roman cremation rites is anything to go by, the actual burials in early medieval cemeteries may represent just a small part of the ritual as a whole. There may well have been a variety of ceremonies both away from the cemetery and perhaps at the graveside as well (although we can only ever hypothesize about such rituals).

While considering the sequence of burial rituals, it is important to point out that this sequence may have been completely different when comparing cremations to inhumations. The act of building a pyre, adorning the body on the pyre (burnt or melted personal objects are often found in cremation urns), burning the body, collecting the fragments of bone and pyre goods, placing them in an urn then burying them is very different to preparing a body for inhumation, digging a grave and then burying the body (cf. Barrett 1988b: 32). Thus, the two rites are not just different means of disposing of a body, but rather they suggest entirely different practices, rituals and perhaps even understandings of death (cf. Chapter Seven).

It is also important to consider the spatial context of cemeteries. Different attitudes to death and what might be called 'the ancestors' (see Barrett 1988b) may be expressed in the geographical and topographical locations selected by a community for a cemetery. Why was it that many cemeteries have been placed in, around or near prehistoric monuments (see Williams 1998) or Roman sites, close to rivers or in prominent landscape locations? Lucy has shown that, through time, cemeteries in East Yorkshire were placed at progressively higher elevations on the Yorkshire Wolds. It might therefore be suggested that the increasing separation of the dead

from the areas where contemporary settlements would have been represents changing attitudes to death (Lucy 1998: 100).

The discussion of spatial relationships also has implications for the burial rites practised in and around cemeteries. Cemeteries were not created in a single event; rather they represent people repeatedly deciding that to return to a particular place was the right way to deal with the death of an individual. It might therefore be asked; why did people start burying at a certain place? Was it far from where they lived? Was it visible from the settlements? Was a funerary procession to the cemetery another part of burial ritual practice? Did people return to the site and commemorate the dead at other times? Why did a cemetery cease to be the appropriate place to inter the dead?

It is through asking such questions – even if we cannot answer many (most?) of them – that we may begin to contextualize those remains now recovered by archaeologists; remains which, in many previous approaches to mortuary evidence, have been the decontextualized object of enquiry. Given the views outlined above, the burial cannot be a direct reflection of the deceased individual's *self-perception*. The body must have therefore have been interpreted in a huge number of ways, involving a variety of emotions, by those who saw it and/or participated in the funerary rituals. The corpse itself becomes, therefore, a 'powerful symbolic medium' (Barrett 1988b: 31); a portable artefact carrying 'bundles of symbolic meanings' (Mizoguchi 1993: 224). Objects used to adorn or clothe the body may have helped create or reinforce some of those meanings and were equally open to interpretation. As for the burial rituals themselves, they involve the physical removal of the corpse from among the living, they control the transition from life to death and also allow the renegotiation or reaffirmation of social relationships and identities among the living (Barrett 1988b: 31; 1994: 50).

The final point to be made here, is that funerary rituals were probably not a daily occurrence; they were a form of social practice that happened at certain times and in certain places. They were a particular 'field of discourse' (Barrett 1987). Given that we cannot attempt to understand material culture without knowing the context in which it was used (since objects or places only become meaningful by being used in certain contexts and that meaning may change depending on context), then the archaeological remains of funerary rites can only be understood as part of the practices associated with death and burial. It is not possible to use funerary archaeology as a means by which to generalize about the structure or beliefs of a society as a whole (Barrett 1994: 87-8). Of course, funerary rituals are reproduced within the same material and social conditions as everyday life (Barrett 1991: 5, *contra* Pader 1982: 38); the people present, the identities they claim, the objects used to adorn the deceased and the location(s) of

the rituals may be encountered on a day-to-day basis. Yet within the context of funerary rituals, times, places and objects may, depending on who it is, become significant for different reasons. Thus, to map out the 'entire essence' of a society from this one social practice is an inherently flawed approach (Barrett 1988b: 31);

> 'Burial evidence must be accepted for what it is, which is a palimpsest of individual decisions made by different generations of mourners' (Lucy 1999: 38).

3.5.5 Discussion and conclusions

Of course, archaeologists cannot actually answer many of the questions posed above. Nevertheless, merely raising these questions and thinking about past funerary rituals in this way is important because it emphasizes just how diverse and complex these practices, and perceptions of them, are likely to have been. This approach stands in contrast to that employed by many early medieval scholars in the last 150 years. Archaeologists have often seen no problem with generalizing about the fifth century, using the fragmentary remains of the funerary practices they excavated. They saw these remains as reflecting a 'Germanic' (or Anglian, Saxon etc.) burial rite conducted by Germanic people who were part of a 'Germanic society'. Many key elements of traditional approaches have now been questioned by early medieval archaeologists (e.g. ethnicity, history, the role of material culture in social life – see Chapter Two). Nevertheless, as described above, generalizing tendencies have remained, with authors still referring to 'Germanic' material culture and practices and 'the meaning' (singular) of brooches or sword burials and so on.

Yet the approach outlined above makes it clear that archaeologists can never find the meaning of material culture or define a typical burial rite, because as a single idea this never existed (Barrett 1994: 50). Of course, there are features of archaeological evidence that do appear to have regularity over time and space (e.g. people being buried with certain brooch types on the continent and in England in the fifth century); these cannot be denied. These practices may also have maintained a dominant discourse or body of symbolism. Yet such symbolism 'whilst being widely recognized, was none the less deployed to carry forward many possible traditions of knowledge' (ibid.). Hence, coherency of archaeological remains does not imply they created and maintained entirely uniform meanings and practices for people living in the past (ibid: 92).

These conclusions also have important implications for understandings of change in fifth-century England. If it is not possible to generalize about meanings and practices, how can we possibly generalize about how such things changed? If it is too simplistic to define funerary rituals as 'Germanic' then it is also too simplistic to discuss where these rituals 'came from'

and thus discuss their origins only in terms of migrations and invasions. These issues will be discussed further in Chapter Eight, where an alternative understanding of material culture change will be presented.

Given these conclusions, how should archaeologists seek to understand early medieval cemeteries? Generalized assumptions must be abandoned. Lucy has summarized an alternative method of archaeological analysis;

> 'In order to be able to interpret archaeological evidence, a detailed understanding of developments in local areas must first be developed, before trying to explain changes over wider areas. If large-scale patterns can be seen (such as the distribution of a particular brooch type across Eastern England), they must be recognized as being the product of many more complex patterns and practices, which seem simple when viewed from a great enough distance' (Lucy 1999: 38).

The analysis of certain brooch types to be presented in Chapter Six and Seven will investigate material culture that has usually been interpreted with reference to a generalized process; the migrations of people from the continent to eastern England in the fifth century. Instead of accepting the reality of that common process the aim will be to highlight the complexities of the practices that employed those brooches; complexities which have hitherto been ignored.

3.6 Migration theory

Although the present study as a whole is addressing the issue of migrations, this topic is being examined with regard to one specific time and geographical region. Yet whatever conclusions are reached in that particular case it should be remembered that population movements do occur in the present, and probably also occurred in the past. As such, archaeologists working on many other time periods as well as social historians and anthropologists have often discussed them. Thus, the aim of the following section is to summarize and comment upon some of the more general, non-period specific, approaches to migrations in order to place the present study in a wider academic context.

3.6.1 Background

As described in Section 3.2, migrations were a key explanatory model for culture-historical archaeologists attempting to understand change and transition, especially in prehistoric periods (cf. the 'Beaker Culture' or 'the Celts'). This explanation relied on the idea that there was a close relationship between certain artefact types and defined ethnic groups (the 'culture = people' equation (Shennan 1991: 31)). In early medieval archaeology, historical sources that

appear to describe significant ethnic movements were also highly influential (see Chapter Four). Culture-historical/migrationist explanations remain influential today, especially among eastern European and German archaeologists (see Härke 1998 and papers in Austin and Alcock (eds.) 1990) as well as among many British early medieval scholars (see Chapter Two).

However, with the advent of 'New' or 'Processual Archaeology' in Britain and North America in the 1960s, the use of migrations as an explanatory concept became 'demonized' (Anthony 1997: 21). Processual archaeologists attempted to make archaeological methods stand up to scientific scrutiny and to deduce objective tests for generalized, systemic laws of human behaviour. Such concerns often served to highlight the theoretical weakness of normative views of archaeological 'cultures'. Because migrations were associated to a large extent with culture-history there was – at least amongst those influenced by processual methodologies – a 'retreat from migrationism' (Chapman 1997: 13. Also Anthony 1997: 21). Nevertheless, as Chapman and Hamerow (1997: 3) point out, this was in some ways an odd trend to have developed since population increase and population pressure was a common processual explanation for change.

In Britain, Grahame Clark's paper, entitled 'The Invasion Hypothesis in British Prehistory' (1966), was influential as a critique of migrationist ideas. Clark certainly did not reject the idea of migrations and invasions out of hand (indeed they were present in five out of the twelve socio-archaeological processes he described in *Analytical Archaeology* (1968) – Chapman and Hamerow 1997: 3-4). However, this paper was influential in drawing attention to, what he called, the 'invasion neurosis', whereby British prehistorians felt a 'strong compulsion' (Clark 1966: 172) to explain nearly all changes to British prehistoric material culture (e.g. pottery types, burial practices, monuments) in terms of migrations or invasions. After questioning these ideas he described how 'the younger school of prehistorians has been more inclined to seek explanation for change in terms of indigenous evolution' (ibid: 187-8). He concluded that invasions undoubtedly did occur, but less often than other forms of culture contact and hence they must be 'demonstrated, not assumed' (ibid: 188).

Processual approaches only emerged in British early medieval archaeology in the early 1980s (although to relatively limited effect – see Chapter Two). The work of Chris Arnold (e.g. 1980; 1984; 1988) and Richard Hodges (1989) are perhaps the best-known examples. Like Clark, they did not entirely reject the idea of migrations, and instead they claimed to have demonstrated that a small scale, elite migration took place in the fifth century. However, this idea did serve to emphasize the 'internal' or indigenous developments that must have taken place alongside the migrations.

Despite this trend away from migrations as a means of explaining the patterning of archaeological evidence, some have attempted to bring such ideas within a processual framework. For example, Rouse (1986) attempted to formulate specifically processual approaches to migrations using explicitly 'scientific' and hypothetico-deductive methods in order to deduce generally applicable laws (ibid: 2-3). His research was based on a number of ethno-archaeological case studies. Renfrew (1987) also described the need to study migrations. He argued that it was not migrations *per se* that processualists questioned, rather the way that archaeologists had previously demonstrated their occurrence (also Chapman 1997: 13).

3.6.2 Current debates on migrations

In rejecting processual methodologies, 'post-processual' theorists did not suddenly re-embrace migrationary ideas. Nevertheless, within the last two decades the wholesale abandonment of migration studies has been questioned. As part of this trend, there has been a greater theoretical awareness as to the nature of migrations, as well as of their changing role in modern archaeological explanation.

Several authors have discussed the relationship between migrations and socio-political trends. Clark (1966: 172-3) was perhaps the first to refer to such issues explicitly when he wrote of the link between migrationist ideas and Imperial/colonial expansion. Commenting on the situation in 1966, he wrote that the invasion neurosis 'seems to be waning with Imperial power itself' (ibid: 173). Chapman (1997) has also suggested that population movements and invasions in twentieth century (especially as a result of two world wars) have influenced the way archaeologists write their texts. Likewise, Härke (1995; 1998: 20-1) has recognized that the psychological impact of historical events (especially the Second World War) and of continental, as opposed to insular, geography (e.g. Germany's current experiences of refugees and asylum seekers). These socio-political and geographical factors, he believes, are one reason why continental archaeologists – past and present – are more likely to explain the past in terms of migrations and invasions.

Such historiographical observations have highlighted that the rejection of migrations may have been partly to do with contemporary trends and concerns and that population movements should not necessarily be dismissed from attempts to understand the past. This may be one reason why migrations are back on the archaeological agenda. In this context, the work of the anthropologist David Anthony appears to have been particularly influential (see Hamerow 1994a; 1997; Hamilton 1995; Härke 1998; Shennan 1991; Sørensen 1997).

Anthony (1990: 895) drew upon the work of geographers, anthropologists and sociologists in order to refute the perceived linkage between migrations and normative culture history. He suggested that instead migrations should be studied as a structured human behaviour that 'should be approached through the application of general principles' (ibid.). Anthony went on to write that most previous archaeological analyses of migrations involved asking 'the wrong questions' (ibid: 897); questions that dealt with identifying migrations, their causes and effects. All of these issues are hard to address archaeologically and Anthony suggested that archaeologists should avoid these potentially complex specifics and instead concern themselves with the structure of migrations (ibid: 899). This includes identifying the conditions that prompt migrations (push/pull factors), the different types of migrations (e.g. long and short distance and coerced migrations (Anthony 1997: 26)), how migrations developed through time (whether a 'migration stream' became a 'wave' (Anthony 1990: 903-4)), and who it was that migrated (perhaps scouts initially, followed by certain gender/age sections of the home community). Anthony also described the possibility of return migrations, such that movements may not always be one way (ibid: 904). In his 1997 article, he commented on how these ideas pertained to early medieval England. He argued that the migrations that brought Germanic languages across the North Sea were most likely to have involved a massive population replacement (Anthony 1997: 29).

Anthony's ideas have certainly highlighted the potential complexities of migrations and are thus an improvement on simplistic culture-historical approaches. Nevertheless, Chapman and Dolukhanov (1992) have raised a number of fundamental problems with his ideas. They questioned the application of generalized principles to specific examples and the fact that 'the wrong questions' referred to by Anthony are actually of fundamental importance for archaeologists (ibid: 170). Additionally, Chapman and Dolukhanov argued that it is theoretically dubious to identify 'migrant populations' on the basis of restricted age-gender groups in cemeteries (ibid. cf. Anthony 1990: 905) since social practices, not migrations, could lead to certain patterns in cemetery assemblages (e.g. a cemetery having a high proportion of young males).

3.6.3 Discussion and conclusions

Where do these discussions leave the study of migrations in early medieval England? First, some scholars have placed less emphasis on migrations in their attempts to understand post-Roman change (e.g. Arnold 1984; Higham 1992). In other cases, along with ethnicity, material culture and history, the study of migrations is now far more critical (e.g. Anthony 1990 and those who have used his ideas). This is undoubtedly a good thing. Nevertheless, 'the

migrations' (on whatever scale) are still usually seen as an unproblematic historical and archaeological fact.

Somewhat contrary to that assumption, it is hoped that the present study demonstrates that in studying 'the migrations' early medieval archaeologists have not addressed the more fundamental issue of how this idea came to be discussed in the first place. Furthermore, it could be said that the recent discussions outlined above have served to legitimize debates about migrations, giving a theoretical validity to a concept that might actually be illusory. We cannot simply assume that because migrations are known to have occurred at certain times and in certain places and because they have been studied by anthropologists and sociologists that this makes them an inherently valid means for understanding change in early medieval England. Neither does the identification of possible socio-political reasons for the academic swing away from migrations mean that all critiques are just contemporary trends. Both these assumptions do however appear to be implicit in early medieval archaeologists' attempts to re-establish migrations as a theoretically valid explanatory concept.

Changing perceptions of migrations (through time and in different countries) and the recognition of their complexity may also imply that, in any particular case, generalized assumptions are questionable or too simplistic. What this requires is that archaeologists do not approach a certain issue with pre-formed ideas. An *a priori* assumption that migrations did take place across the North Sea in the fifth century (whether that is based on history or archaeology) may be just perpetuating a very long tradition of historical and archaeological explanation. Yet it is equally wrong simply to dismiss migrations on the basis that they are a long-established idea, which has in the past, been subjected to questionable theoretical approaches (i.e. culture-history). Scholars must therefore approach each case with an open mind, examining the evidence for and against that case and avoiding generalized assumptions (i.e. cross-cultural parallels/general models, certain approaches to material culture and history).

Such an approach to migrations has implications for future chapters. Although much of the following is a critique of the methods used by archaeologists to identify migrations, the idea of migrations cannot simply be ruled out. So how can migrations be identified without relying on questionable archaeological or historical assumptions? Given that migrations are usually complex processes (Anthony 1990), it follows that the larger the number of 'converging traits' (i.e. not just material parallels, but practices also) at each end of a proposed migration route, the more likely migration is a valid explanation (Chapman and Dolukhanov 1992: 170-1). One of the aims of the present study is to test this idea with regard to the 'Anglo-Saxon migrations' by examining in detail fifth-century burial practices in England and in the 'Anglo-Saxon

homelands' (see Chapter Seven) as well as by examining other types of archaeological evidence (Chapter Five) and the historical basis of the debate as a whole (Chapter Four).

3.7 Conclusions

The conclusions for this chapter as a whole can be fairly brief as specific conclusions for each of the above topics have already been described. However, overall it has been shown that the whole theoretical philosophy employed by many previous early medieval archaeologists can be challenged. As has been argued by those researchers influenced by theories of structuration or practice, previous approaches to understanding material culture and the people who used it are unlikely to be valid because of the way they generalize. Theories of structuration or practice also provide alternative ways of conceptualizing the complexities and dynamics of human social life and the role of material culture. This has provided an impetus for asking new research questions and for investigating alternative understandings of archaeological remains.

Ethnicity, mortuary practice and migrations were also discussed above individually. All these theoretical issues have been central to the creation and maintenance of the Anglo-Saxon migration hypothesis. However, it has now been shown that in each case, the approaches used in many earlier analyses can be questioned, thus undermining the validity of the concept of migrations at this time and place. Again, it is the generalizations inherent in many previous studies that have been identified as being theoretically problematic. It was suggested instead that local contextual analyses of the extant evidence (e.g. cemeteries and all other available evidence) is required before any generalizations are made.

The importance of the conclusions discussed in this chapter will be emphasized by their being reiterated in many of the following chapters, both as ways of reassessing the idea of migrations and for developing alternative archaeological approaches to fifth-century Britain. Yet before returning to early medieval archaeological evidence in Chapter Five, it is necessary to consider in detail the historical sources that are, in effect, the origin of ideas pertaining to migrations and fifth-century Britain. As in this chapter, contextual approaches will be used to reassess generalized understandings of these sources.

CHAPTER FOUR



The Histories of Fifth-Century England: Historical Theory and Historical Sources

4.1 Introduction

Historical sources have always been, and remain, central to interpretations of material culture proposed by Anglo-Saxon archaeologists. They provide chronological evidence (e.g. 'AD 449'), descriptive terminologies (e.g. 'Saxon', 'Angle', 'Jutish', 'British' etc.) as well as evidence of the main explanatory framework for fifth-century archaeological change (i.e. the migrations). The aim of this chapter is to reconsider the use of historical sources in fifth-century scholarship. This will be done using two complementary approaches. Firstly, on a general and theoretical level, the aim is to highlight how documentary evidence has commonly been used by archaeologists and historians of this period and to ask whether, in the light of recent 'post-modern' historical approaches, these methods are entirely valid. The second objective of this chapter is to apply these theoretical conclusions to those sources that have most frequently been used to discuss the Germanic settlement of England in the fifth century. As with the archaeological evidence, the aim is to assess the historical sources pertaining to the fifth century in England in a way that takes account of current theoretical trends. The implications of those theoretical ideas and the conclusions relating to the individual sources will be discussed in the final section.

4.2 Previous approaches to historical evidence

To begin with, it is important to define how Anglo-Saxon archaeologists have usually treated historical evidence so that the methods can be made explicit and later reassessed. Despite the consistent usage of terms and concepts that derive ultimately from historical sources (e.g. 'Anglo-Saxon', 'Jutish' and 'the migrations'), attitudes (whether implicit or explicit) to such sources have varied widely during the last 150 years. In Chapter Two it was described how several eminent historians and archaeologists in the first half of the nineteenth century were highly sceptical as to the historical reliability of sources such as Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Yet during the second half of that century, many (especially the influential scholars of the 'Oxford School') treated such sources as the literal truth. Historians and archaeologists of the early twentieth century criticized these ideas and again emphasized problems with the historical sources for the fifth century. As Anglo-Saxon archaeology developed through the twentieth century, scholars rarely took the sources entirely at face value

and that certainly remains the case today. Instead, archaeologists have, in effect, moved away from solely historically based understandings, allowing artefactual research to influence their views of the fifth century. Hence, a number of reassessments of historical models concerning 'the migrations' have been proposed in the last sixty to seventy years (e.g. Leeds (1936) on 'native' continuity; Hawkes and Dunning (1961) on 'Germanic' troops in Late Roman Britain and the various fairly relatively recent works proposing small-scale/'elite' migrations).

In spite of these changes in historical and archaeological interpretation, migrations have always been seen as the primary catalyst for change in fifth-century England. It can therefore be said that because the whole concept of migrations comes ultimately from historical sources there has in fact been a close – albeit changing – relationship between history and archaeology since the middle of the nineteenth century. Thus, there has also always been, and there remains, a degree of faith in the sources, even if problems with them are now widely recognized. The objective 'fact' of the migrations derives from apparently mutually supportive historical and archaeological evidence and is still an integral part of Anglo-Saxon archaeological interpretation. Yet the archaeological basis for such an explanation was questioned in Chapter Three and this chapter will show why recent developments in historical theory might lead us to question the supposedly 'objective' nature of the sources that refer to Britain in the fifth century.

4.3 Historical theory

4.3.1 Traditional 'positivistic' approaches

That archaeologists, and many historians, continue to have faith in historical sources concerning the fifth-century Germanic migrations to Britain supports Cameron's assertion that there is still a 'lingering positivism' in ancient history (Cameron 1989c: 208), a subject that has proven 'remarkably impervious' to theory (Cameron 1989a: 1). This positivistic approach to history – whereby the historical sources are seen to provide objective, truthful or factual information about the past – has been a feature of historical scholarship since the Enlightenment period. From that time, scholars have often attempted to discover the truth about the past through detailed textual analyses. As the historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) wrote, the aim of the historian was to recover the past 'as it actually was' (quoted in Fay 1998: 5). This generally positivistic approach to historical sources can be further classified by highlighting three inter-related themes. These themes will be presented here and critiqued in the following section.

First is the idea that it is possible to discover historical facts, truth or reality. Frantzen has described how historians, from the Enlightenment period onwards, have adopted 'idealized views of knowledge' (Frantzen 1990: 103) and have sought to discover facts or establish concrete evidence about the past (Fay 1998: 1). If the facts could be established, then this meant

that the historian could also eliminate the 'fictive' elements of texts (Cameron 1989a: 2). Scholars, therefore, approached their sources with the assumption that;

> '...one engages in such inquiry mainly as a means to the end of discovering what is reliable in the work of this or that Greek or Roman historian, with a view to being able to use it in one's own reconstruction. The study of ancient sources is thus seen to provide the raw material for the modern historian' (Cameron 1989a: 1-2).

Similarly, Goffart has commented that, traditionally, historical documents;

> '...have been mined for information and have had their ore sifted through a fine mesh of criticism, so that their evidence, suitably refined, might take its due place in modern narratives' (Goffart 1988: 15).

The second point is that historians have often used 'facts' from particular sources as the basis for wider generalizations. Frantzen (1990: 100) has pointed out that historical texts were treated as if they preserved a generalized 'human reality', such that from a few surviving documents the whole society can be revealed;

> '...we find Anglo-Saxonists – Renaissance, romantic and modern – seizing a text – a homily by Ælfric, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* – as a fragment from which the entire civilization of early England can be deduced' (Frantzen 1990: 110).

Following on from this, the third theme to be noted here is that on going attempts to distil or refine historical facts leads to a notion of progress in historical practice (Frantzen 1990: 101). The errors and subjectivities of previous scholars were often identified as faults that could be improved upon by better scholarly methods. This constant improvement would thus bring the historian ever closer to past reality (ibid: 25).

In the following section the ideas inherent in these three themes (i.e. 'truth/reality', 'facts' and scholastic progress) will be challenged, leading to a somewhat different view of historical sources, their authors and perhaps the past itself. Such critiques have often been classified as 'post-modern' approaches to history.

4.3.2 Reassessments of traditional approaches to history

4.3.2.1 Literature and history

One component of the post-modern critique of history has been the discussion concerning the relationship between fact and fiction or between 'history' and 'literature'. As described above, the quest for historical facts is central to positivistic views of history. However, a number of

scholars (e.g. Brannigan 1998; Gossman 1990; Spiegel 1997) have asked whether it is theoretically defensible to separate those elements of a text that are believed to be factual from those that are seen to be fictive, literary or in some way the author's own creation. Such reassessments have often started by noting that the whole idea that fact/history or fiction/literature were in some way separate and distinct concepts is a relatively recent theory. Gossman has pointed out that;

> 'As late as the eighteenth century, and probably beyond, history was still a literary genre. Voltaire and Gibbon had no doubt that they were "writers" in a genre with a pedigree as noble and almost as long as epic or tragedy...Literature, in Walpole's witty formula, was "a species of history that is not believed"' (Gossman 1990: 3).

It was only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the needs of nationalism, racial and class struggles led to a need for certainty, a positivistic rationale in historical practice and a distinction between objective/factual 'history' and creative, expressive 'literature' (cf. Chapter Two). Even then, this trend was limited to institutionalized historical scholarship, while others continued to be 'conscious mythmakers or mere entertainers' (Gossman 1990: 153-4).

Recent historical theory has, however, questioned the simplistic division of literature and history. Theorists have instead suggested that this division is often meaningless since there is a complex dialogue between 'facts' and their creative interpretation (Brannigan 1998: 3). Brannigan believes that scholars should examine 'the role of historical context in interpreting literary texts and the role of literary rhetoric in interpreting history' (ibid: 4). The writing of historical texts – be it by a modern scholar or an ancient writer – is always (to some degree) a creative process on the part of the author. Choices must be made concerning the information to include and what style and structure the work should take. These observations have important implications for the present study. Given that the sources to be discussed below were written before history became primarily a search for 'facts' it may be that the authors had entirely different conceptions of what constituted 'history' (cf. Wheeldon 1989: 60). They were not necessarily aiming to record historical facts in a neutral, unbiased and objective manner, and hence, to judge them on those criteria is to judge them in ways that have been important only in the last two centuries. The factors that may actually have shaped the work of the authors in question will be discussed below.

4.3.2.2 Texts and contexts

Breaking down the distinction between fact and fiction is one reason why the idea of historical facts might be questioned. It is also possible to question these truths or realities as foundations for generalization. Did everyone who witnessed a certain event, for example, perceive it in the same way as the author who wrote about it? Were there in fact a variety of views across time

and/or space? When examining a historical text it is therefore necessary to consider not only what a text records but also who wrote it and '*why* and *how* a given form of literary work appeared as it did, where it did, when it did' (White 1975: 99, quoted in Spiegel 1997: 21. See also Goffart 1988: 16).

It has been said that the deficiency of traditional, positivistic approaches was due to their failure to acknowledge the importance of both text – as created by an individual author (i.e. 'agency') – and context (Niles 1997; Spiegel 1997: 14). Texts were therefore seen as timeless records of facts. Yet as in archaeology (cf. Chapter Three), some historians' ideas now encompass theories of context and agency in their interpretation of historical sources. Spiegel (1997: 24-5) has written that authors and the texts they write exist in particular socio-historical contexts and should not be divorced from them. Furthermore, authors and texts may influence the very context in which they become relevant;

> 'In that sense, texts both mirror and generate social realities, which they may sustain, resist, contest, or seek to transform, depending on the case in hand. Only a minute examination of the form and content of any given work can determine its situations with respect to broader patterns of culture at any given time' (Spiegel 1997: 24).

Historical authors are therefore not just automatons recording factual events; they are 'men and women struggling with the contingencies and complexities of their lives' (ibid: 21). It is these observations that undermine the quite common practice of using individual texts as bases for wider generalizations; to do so is to apply the content of a text outside the context in which it was originally conceived. In fact, there can be no inherent, all-pervasive 'meaning' in those texts (ibid.); '[h]istory as given chronicle or unproblematic "truth" simply does not exist' (ibid: 22).

In the following sections on the sources referring to fifth-century Britain, three different, but inter-related contexts will be discussed. First, it is important to establish where the various authors wrote, and second, when they wrote. The temporal and geographical contexts of the authors have implications for what they may or may not have known about eastern Britain in the fifth century – the region often said to have been invaded by Germanic peoples. The third type of context is the personal world-view or 'intellectual context' of those authors (Frantzen 1990: 100), the factors that led them to create a narrative with a particular form and style. This context will now be addressed in more detail.

4.3.2.3 Intellectual contexts: Modes of expression and the discourse of history

Just as temporal and geographical contexts are variables that are potentially different for each individual historical text, so the intellectual context is also a variable. As we have seen, writing

about the past or recording contemporary events is not simply a matter of objectively recording facts for posterity. Rather, the influence of the creative author and the literary element of a text cannot be ignored. Thus, given that authors are conscious, decision-making individuals (or 'agents'), they are able to choose how they write. It is therefore necessary to consider what it was that led them to write in a particular way at a particular time and place; what was the nature of their intellectual context?

A number of historians of the early medieval/late antique period have already examined such issues. Cameron has described the need to study the form and origin of 'modes of expression' (Cameron 1991: 16), while perhaps more specifically, Hanning declared the need to investigate an author's creative 'historical imagination' (Hanning 1966: viii & 1; also Howe 1989). In the following sections, it will be shown how, for example, Christian and classical approaches to historical writing and the past influenced the work produced by the authors in question. In some ways the traditions of scholarship learned (and thus maintained) by the authors might be seen as constraining their work, limiting their creativity. However, as we shall see, all the authors are resourceful in the application of conventions to contemporary situations, sometimes even changing or challenging those conventions. Hence, the texts – as products of discrete contexts – are all quite different. It might even be said that the Christian or classical heritage of the authors *enabled* them to make sense of the past and present and to express their views in a written form. We must therefore investigate the creative tensions between what may have been normal or conventional for a particular author and their personal opinions and creative capacities (Chartier 1997: 20). In other words, we must again recognize the complex relationships between 'structure' and 'agency' (see Section 3.3.1).

Of course, these observations do not only apply to ancient, late antique/early medieval authors. The following sections will also deal with the influence on historical writing of the politics of the English Reformation, nineteenth-century nationalism and so on. The influence of a modern academic/university environment on contemporary work – including this study – should also not be forgotten. Yet all the authors considered and referenced below and in Chapter Two (including myself) have been discussing – albeit in a variety of different ways – the same thing: Britain in the fifth century and/or the 'Germanic migrations'. Thinking about the Roman-Medieval transition in Britain in terms of different authors, writing for different reasons in different contexts has the potential to produce alternative views of that subject. It is no longer possible to sustain the view that texts containing facts were written by early medieval authors and these facts were then gradually teased out as later historical scholarship progressed. Rather, we are dealing with an on-going, dynamic debate about the past (not *with* the past); a history of mentalities.

Such approaches to the past derive largely from the work of Foucault (e.g. 1989 (1972)) and his ideas have been summarized by Frantzen (1990: 114-122; see also Cameron 1991). Historians, Foucault argued, have usually treated documents simply as memory banks from which it is possible to reconstruct the past (as described above). He challenged this idea by emphasizing that historians do not simply study the past. Rather, historians in any given epoch draw upon a range of epistemological assumptions in order to construct *their* historical 'truth'. It is therefore necessary to study how knowledge is ordered, represented and created in a particular context. Foucault described how knowledge is thus a 'discourse of power' since there are rules that govern what constitutes 'truth'. Of course, power and rules can always be challenged and it is also necessary to consider how and why certain discourses became dominant or accepted as truth while others did not; why some were maintained through time when others fell out of use. As mentioned above, examining a particular discourse (which will nevertheless intersect with many other discourses) through time reveals a history of mentalities, and Niles has written that;

> '...as soon as one begins to regard the past as one aspect of a history of mentalities rather than as a sequence of noteworthy events, one is led to a view of cultural process as many-layered and potentially fissured rather than as progressing steadily according to some smoothly flowing teleological design' (Niles 1997: 202).

One of the aims of this chapter, along with Chapter Two, is to show that the historical creation and maintenance of the Germanic migration myth has not been simply a matter of studying recorded facts. Rather, it will become clear that the discourse concerning the idea that the English originated from the Germanic peoples of northern Europe has become powerful in a wide variety of temporal, geographical and intellectual contexts for many different reasons. This narrative has been created, maintained, recreated and revised for around 1,500 years (see Frantzen 1990; Frantzen and Niles (eds.) 1997; Hanning 1966; Howe 1989; MacDougall 1982; Murphy 1982; White 1971).

While a historiographical approach to 'Anglo-Saxon' studies may be valid, it must be emphasized that the changing but continued usage and relevance of the Germanic migration myth does not mean that migrations in the fifth century are any more or less likely to have been a real event or process. Yet the on-going and cumulative effect of the discourse about them must not be underestimated. Modern scholars should not continue to use the relevant texts 'as if they contain the traces of Anglo-Saxons only, and no part of the consciousness of those people who followed them' (Frantzen 1990: 100). Yet this may be what has happened in early medieval scholarship, especially archaeology. During the last 150 years, few have even attempted to question the idea of migrations because they have always been seen as a secure fact (as witnessed by seemingly mutually-supportive historical and archaeological evidence) that must simply be studied (see Chapter Two). This discourse was, and is, powerful (at least in academia

– see Chapter One). Yet as explained above, the aim here is not to treat 'the Germanic migrations to Britain' as a 'fact', but to highlight the multi-faceted and dynamic nature of this discourse;

> 'Through such self-consciousness we can discern the lay of the historical ground on which we stand, the means by which other people have shaped that ground, and the ways in which we continue to inhabit it today' (Niles 1997: 221).

4.3.2.4 The question of relativism

Although these ideas will be discussed extensively below, they are not without their problems. 'Post-modern' approaches could be said to be highly relativistic (similar criticisms have been levelled at post-modern archaeological theorists (e.g. Bintliff 1991)). Can we only ever discover an individual author's point of view or just what they decided to set down in writing? Similarly, given that we can never know exactly what a past author was thinking, is 'the past' entirely made up by modern scholars imposing their views on historical sources (Spiegel 1997: 22)? Spiegel commented on this issue, writing that;

> 'The problem, of course, is not whether there is a past "out there" (or, as Nancy Partner wittily observed, if, once we get there, is there a "there" there?), but how we reach it and what procedures permit us to do so in ways that respect its integrity' (Spiegel 1997: 22).

The aim of respecting textual integrity is important in answering accusations of relativism. Although 'facts' may be quite useful for a modern scholar and his/her particular argument, extracting them from a complete text and disregarding the rest as mere fiction or literature is surely not respecting the integrity of that document. It denies a voice to the author who created that text as a whole; the individual who wrote in a particular temporal and geographical context in order to express personal concerns and points of view becomes mute.

Of course it cannot be denied that modern scholars are biased and that views and interpretations of the past are influenced by the present. But the same can be said of the early medieval authors whose work is studied today. Thus, the objective discussion of 'facts' is an unachievable goal. However, that very subjectivity is central to the understanding of fifth-century history to be adopted here. In order to attempt to understand what has been written – past and present, as part of a dynamic on-going discourse – it is important also to understand the contexts that led to particular compositions. As Nicholas Howe (1989: 2) has pointed out, historical sources are 'deeply eloquent' precisely because of their cultural biases; they can reveal something of the worldviews and personal experience of individuals, and perhaps the communities in which they lived, in the past. By highlighting the temporal, geographical and intellectual contexts of those authors we are at least beginning to attempt to understand how and why a particular source

appeared where and when it did in the form it did – even if the supposed 'reality' of their situation remains forever obscure. In some cases this may undermine the long-established 'facts' of history and the validity of wider generalizations. However, that is a situation scholarly practice must learn to deal with if the integrity of historical sources and their authors is to be respected.

4.3.2.5 Textual transmission

Regarding the interpretation of the sources to be discussed below, it remains to highlight the potential problems for textual interpretation caused by actual manuscript transmission. These might include, for example, changes made by later copyists or editors after a text was originally composed. This is another reason why the historical sources we have today should not be treated as simple records of a past reality that can be read at face value. This potential problem affects some of the sources discussed below more than others, and thus comments will be made as and when required.

4.3.2.6 Oral traditions

Although written sources have been the focus of attention here, and will continue to be through the rest of this chapter, it is also important to consider their relationship to people/societies that did not leave written records and instead maintained oral traditions of culture and history. A paper by Michael Richter (1994) has highlighted the need to consider this relationship.

Richter has pointed out that the presence or absence of written sources is not a reliable indicator as to the richness and vitality of cultural life (ibid: 82). Indeed, from what we know of early medieval 'barbarian' (i.e. non-Roman) life in north-western Europe, poetry, verse and song were woven into the fabric of society. Dynamic traditions and narrative would have been kept alive through the performance of narratives, particularly on special occasions such as at feasts (ibid: 256-7, 262). Yet this way of keeping alive traditions and preserving the memory of events is very different to textual history. In fact, the medium of writing, using Latin or Greek prose for example, is entirely unsuited to the recording of poetic narratives that were meant to be performed (ibid: 231, 258; Yorke 1993: 45-6).

Unfortunately, however, it is only through the medium of writing that we now obtain fleeting glimpses of late antique/early medieval oral traditions and of the people who did not live in a literate society. Given the differences between these two media and the people/societies that used them, it is possible that documentary accounts of non-literate people(s) are distinctly biased and over-simplified, emanating as they did from the particular viewpoints of literate Romans and/or Christians for example. The relevance of written culture is further diminished when it is remembered that writing in the period in question does not even tell us about

everyone living within the areas of classical 'civilization' (i.e. the (former) Roman Empire). Writing was in fact practised by a small group of specialists; the educated elite and/or Christian scholars (ibid: 255, 262).

The contexts in which those sources that mention fifth-century Britain were written will be discussed below. However, the above observations on oral traditions serve to place those documents in an even wider context that should not be forgotten even though we do rely on written records for information about the period in question (ibid: 260). The paucity of sources for this period in itself confirms the importance of oral traditions and the minimal impact of writing. Hence;

> 'The more the oral culture is seen as socially highly relevant, the more the written sources emerge as in no respect representative of the early medieval societies' (Richter 1994: 260).

The implications for the present study are that our understandings of fifth-century Britain and 'the migrations' should not be blinkered by the sources written by literate individuals. This is especially true when they were writing about non-literate people(s) and regions where vibrant and dynamic oral traditions were probably used to define self, others and collective histories.

4.4 Summary

Returning to textual history, to summarize the approach that will be adopted throughout this chapter in the interpretations of the sources in question I can do no better than to quote Gabrielle Spiegel at some length;

> 'We should...seek to locate texts within specific social sites that themselves disclose the political, economic, and social pressures that condition a culture's discourse at any given moment. Involved in this positioning of the text is an examination of the play of power, human agency, and social experience as historians traditionally understand them. Only after the text has been returned to its social and political context can we begin to appreciate the ways in which both language and social reality shape discursive and material fields of activity and thus come to an understanding of a text's "social logic" as situated language use' (Spiegel 1997: 27-8).

These theoretical approaches will be applied to a number of sources that refer to Britain in the fifth century (beginning with Gildas – the most chronologically and geographically proximate source to southern and eastern England in the fifth century – followed by fifth and sixth century continental sources and then the later insular sources). The following does not include all of the sources that refer to fifth-century Britain, however, those discussed here have been particularly

influential in debates about migrations and the Roman-Medieval transition and they are all referenced quite regularly in order to support or refute academic theories.

4.5 Gildas: The *De Excidio Britanniae*

The *De Excidio Britanniae* ('The Ruin of Britain', hereafter 'DEB'. Translated by Winterbottom 1978) is perhaps the single most important text for the history of the fifth and sixth centuries in Britain. The narrative pertaining to fifth-century Britain is relatively extensive and the text was probably written in the same country as the 'events' it describes; a distinct advantage over the fleeting references to Britain contained in contemporary continental and eastern Mediterranean sources. The DEB is also usually said to have been composed within a century or so of the 'Anglo-Saxon migrations/invasions' (see below for full discussion of geography and chronology). It has therefore been said that the DEB is the only primary source for mid-fifth century Britain (Hanning 1966: 61; Thompson 1979: 203) and the seed from which the English migration myth grew (Howe 1989: 13). Gildas was also significant for being the first person to write a specifically post-Roman and 'British' history (Sims-Williams 1983a: 29). Thompson declares that Gildas *invented* British history and was the first person in the entire West to write a specifically provincial history (Thompson 1979: 208). Every historian (and indeed archaeologist) thereafter who wrote about this period has been influenced by the DEB (Howe 1989: 35).

The significance of the DEB is such that many detailed studies of it have been made, and many of these have sought to ascertain how this text may or may not help us understand the fifth and sixth centuries in Britain. These studies have been both intensive, line-by-line exegeses of the 'historical' portions of the text (e.g. Thompson 1979), as well as more thematic approaches (e.g. Dumville 1995; Higham 1994; Lapidge & Dumville (eds.) 1984). In this section it will be impossible to discuss and comment on all this scholarship. The aim is rather to build on the theoretical discussion outlined in the previous section in order to achieve an understanding of the DEB that takes full account of Gildas's temporal, geographical and intellectual context. This will indeed be the aim for all the sources discussed in this chapter. To begin with, however, the content of the DEB must be described.

4.5.1 Format and content

The DEB is usually sub-divided into three 'books' (see Howlett 1995; Lapidge 1984: 43-6; Winterbottom 1978). Books II and III are lists of Gildas's grievances against the kings (principally five 'tyrants' (*tyranni*) – Chapters 27-65) and the clergy (Chapters 66-110) of his own day. However, these complaints are set in a specific historical context and it is this historical background that forms the majority of Book I (Chapters 1-26). It is in Book I that

Gildas refers to the ending of Roman Britain, the coming of the Saxons and the outcome of this invasion. It is therefore worthwhile presenting a brief summary of Chapters 1-26.

4.5.2 Summary of the DEB – Chapters 1-26

Gildas begins with a preface setting out his motivation for writing. He is self-effacing as to his own abilities, but describes how he has been moved to write by contemporary events;

> '...my style may be worthless, but my intentions are kindly. What I have to deplore with mournful complaint is a general loss of good, a heaping up of bad. But no one should think that anything I say is said out of scorn for humanity or from a conviction that I am superior to all men. No, I sympathise with my country's difficulties and troubles and rejoice in remedies to relieve them' (1:1).

The troubles of which he speaks are the sins of his contemporaries and the general rejection of the Church (1: 5) and Christian values (1: 11). Gildas describes how similar sins were committed by the Israelites and were recorded in the Bible (e.g. 1: 7). He also notes how God punished Israel, even though they were 'his own among all nations' (1: 13). Thus he wonders, 'What then will He do with this great black blot on *our* generation?' (ibid.). Gildas kept silent for ten years because of his 'inexperience' and 'worthlessness', but these worries forced him to write (1: 2).

Chapter Three is a geographical description of Gildas's native Britain (note how Britain is treated as a defined country, not as part of the Roman Empire), listing its dimensions, relationship to the continent, its rivers, cities and countryside. The historical narrative begins in Chapter Four, with a description of the British temperament;

> 'Ever since it was first inhabited, Britain has been ungratefully rebelling, stiff-necked and haughty, now against God, now against its own countrymen, sometimes even against kings from abroad and their subjects' (4: 1).

As such, when Rome took control of the island;

> '[The Britons] obedience to the edicts of Rome was superficial: their resentment they kept repressed, deep in their hearts' (5: 2).

Accordingly, the story of Roman Britain includes several examples of British rebellion followed by Roman oppression (6-7). However, one benefit of Roman rule was the introduction of Christianity in the reign of Tiberius, even though 'Christ's precepts were received by the inhabitants without enthusiasm' (9: 1). Extensive Christian persecution followed under

Diocletian, yet even in this 'thick darkness of black night' Gildas describes how God 'lit for us the brilliant lamps of holy martyrs' (10: 1). He refers specifically to saints Aaron and Julius and St. Alban, whose story he briefly describes (11: 1). After the Diocletian persecution the church recovered in Britain (12: 1-2), only to be tested again by the 'Arian treason' (see Section 4.6.1) that 'like a savage snake, vomited its foreign poison upon us' (12: 3).

The problems continued with the elevation in Britain of the tyrant and imperial usurper Maximus. He campaigned in Gaul, Spain and Italy, driving out one emperor and killing another until he was himself killed at Aquileia (13: 1-2). Gildas goes on to describe the net result of this rebellion;

> 'After that Britain was despoiled of her whole army, her military resources, her governors, brutal as they were, and her sturdy youth, who had followed in the tyrants footsteps, never to return home' (14: 1).

Because of this Britain suffered at the hands of 'two exceedingly savage overseas nations, the Scots from the north-west and the Picts from the north' (ibid.). Thus, the Britons appealed to Rome for military help, which was duly sent. They defeated the northern enemies and advised the Britons to build a wall across Britain for protection. The Britons, however, made it only of insubstantial turf and the Picts and Scots returned (15-16). The Britons, who were like 'frightened chicks', thus appealed to Rome for a second time (17: 1). Again the Romans came to Britain and saw off the enemy. They also built a second wall 'from sea to sea', this time of stone. They also advised the Britons on how to defend themselves, before leaving 'meaning never to return' (18: 1-3). Nonetheless, the 'foul hordes of Scots and Picts' returned again. The Britons were too lazy, foolish and frightened to fight them from the wall and were killed by the attackers. The renewed devastation led to widespread famine and internal disorders (19: 1-4). Thus, the Britons appealed to Rome for third time. They wrote a letter to the Roman commander and 'thrice consul' Agitus, describing the 'groans of the British' at the hands of the barbarians. However, no help was offered, and thus, the Britons were gripped by famine while some fought back from their hiding places in remote regions (20: 1-2).

The northern peoples eventually left Britain in peace for a time, but this peace led to a period in which the Britons became corrupted by an 'abundance of goods', luxury and fornication. Gildas also relates that royal authority at this time was based on cruelty rather than God's law (21: 1-6). Because of this, we are told that God 'wished to purge his family, and to cleanse it from such an infection of evil' (22: 1). He therefore allowed the rumour to spread that the Picts and Scots were about to return.

> 'Then all the members of the council, together with the proud tyrant, were struck blind; the guard – or rather the method of destruction – they devised for our land was that the ferocious Saxons (name not to be spoken!), hated by man and God, should be let into the island like wolves into the fold, to beat back the peoples of the north' (23: 1).

Gildas describes how the Saxons ('a pack of cubs'), thus invited, came to eastern Britain in three *keels*. Because the first group prospered, more barbarians followed, and when the Britons did not provide enough supplies they plundered the whole island (23: 3-5);

> 'In just punishment for the crimes that had gone before, a fire heaped up and nurtured by the hand of the impious easterners spread from sea to sea. It devastated town and country round about, and, once it was alight, it did not die down until it had burned almost the whole surface of the island and was licking the western ocean with its fierce red tongue' (DEB 24: 1).

The Saxon revolt led to the destruction of major towns and there were so many corpses that they could not be given proper burials (24: 3). After a time, however, there was a British revival, under Ambrosius Aurelianus (whose ancestors were Romans and had worn the purple). They were victorious in a battle against the Saxons, and after that there were both British and Saxon victories. These mixed fortunes continued until the siege at Mount Badon (*mons Badonicus*), which was 'pretty well the last defeat of the villains' (25: 2-26: 1). Gildas writes;

> 'That was the year of my birth; as I know, one month of the forty-fourth year since then has already passed' (26: 1).

Gildas finishes this historical section describing how the cities remain unpopulated, civil war continues, truth and justice have been overthrown, the church has few followers and 'people daily rush headlong to hell' (26: 1-4).

It should not be forgotten in all that follows that this historical summary was meant to set the scene for the bulk of the DEB. In those chapters he describes his numerous complaints about the behaviour (sexual conduct, judicial failings, war-making, murder and false oaths (Higham 1994: 190)) of the kings ('tyrants') and clergy of his day. The past was meant to show how vital it was that they reform their ways – for the good of the whole country.

4.5.3 The DEB in context

4.5.3.1 Who was Gildas?

The author of the DEB is only really known through this text. Traditions about Gildas's origins and career were recorded in much later medieval hagiographies, but these are now generally

regarded as wholly apocryphal (Higham 1994: 90-1). Current thinking on what may be deduced about Gildas, and his audience, from the DEB itself has been summarized by Higham;

> 'Gildas was a Christian Briton, with strong sympathies for asceticism and the monastic movement, perhaps himself a deacon, from a background which was sufficiently wealthy to have afforded the luxury of a good Latin education – hence he most probably sprang from a land-owning family... [H]is audience apparently included similarly cultured, Christian, aristocratic, Romanized Britons [cf. DEB 26:3] who enjoyed a level of education which can only have derived from estate-tenure...Such men may well have shared Gildas's fundamentally conservative social and political values' (Higham 1994: 97-8. DEB reference is my insertion).

It will be shown below that several of these inferred aspects of Gildas's persona – specifically his conservatism, his Christianity and his traditional Latin education – had significant effects on the form and content of the DEB.

4.5.3.2 Dating the DEB

Gildas's temporal context is important primarily because of the need to locate him in relation to his historical narrative, and the 'Saxon invasion' in particular. How far in the past were the 'events' he described? Did they happen in the recent past or was Gildas relying solely on unspecified sources of information? As with all aspects of Gildasian interpretation, the question of when the DEB was written has been widely debated for many years. Historians have used a number of strategies in attempting to date the DEB, although it appears that no clear consensus has yet emerged.

The traditional date for this source is c.AD 540 or the middle of the sixth century (e.g. Howe 1989: 35; Jones M. 1996: 46; Thompson 1979: 203). This date does not derive from the text of the DEB itself, but is an estimation based on entries in a Welsh annal known as the *Annales Cambriae*, the earliest know manuscript of which dates to c.1100 (Sims-Williams 1983a: 3). One entry records that Gildas died in 570, another that King Maglocunus (or Maelgwn) – one of the 'five tyrants' Gildas attacks in Book II of the DEB (e.g. DEB 33: 1) – died in 547. Both of these entries are late additions to the *Annales Cambriae*. Having examined this and other early Welsh annals, Dumville concluded that no reliable absolute dates for the early sections of these sources (i.e. the entries relating to the fifth/sixth centuries) could be obtained (Dumville 1984a: 59). Perhaps the only realistic conclusion is that tenth-century annalists believed Gildas was alive in the mid-sixth century (Sims-Williams 1983a: 4).

Given these conclusions, most scholars now attempt to date the DEB using evidence from the text itself. A relative chronology is implied by the sequence of events described in the

'historical' narrative, although there are no absolute dates given in the text, and only one specified time period (although Higham points out that the use of few calendrical dates is not unusual in late antique 'histories' cf. *Vita St. Germanus* (Higham 1994: 119)). There are, however, five potential chronological indicators in Book I of the DEB and these have been discussed extensively by historians.

First, Chapter Thirteen of the DEB describes the British rebellion under the Imperial usurper Maximus, and it is known that Magnus Maximus reigned from 383 to 388. The date of 383x388 is therefore usually taken as the start of the potentially datable part of Gildas's 'history' (e.g. Dumville 1984b: 83; Higham 1994: 137). The second possible dating point in the DEB is the passage describing how the Romans told the British to defend themselves after the second Roman intervention against Pictish and Scottish raids (18: 1). Scholars have claimed that this advice to the British alludes to a letter sent by the emperor Honorius in 410 that was reported by Zosimus. This letter apparently told the British cities to look after their own protection (Dumville 1984b: 83). The parallel with the DEB implies that this point in the Gildas's narrative might be dated to 410. However, as will be seen below (Section 4.8.3), there are problems with the idea that the letter was sent to Britain (e.g. some have linked it to *Bruttium* in southern Italy) and the passage in Gildas offers no specific support for the 410 date. The assumptions and problems involved with using Zosimus's 'Honorian rescript' to help date the DEB are therefore considerable (Higham 1994: 120; Wood 1984: 5).

The third potential dating point comes from the passage describing how the 'groans of the British' were recounted in a letter to the Roman commander and 'thrice consul' Agitus. But who was Agitus? He is usually said to be 'Aëtius', an influential figure in imperial politics from 425 and master of the Western Empire from 437 (Dumville 1984b: 68). The change in name may be attributed to an error by Gildas or by later copyists of the DEB (ibid: 67-8). Aëtius was a consul four times (Brooks 1994: 91) with his third consulship lasting from 446 to 454. It is therefore in this period that the British letter – their third appeal to the Romans – is said to have been written (Dumville 1984b: 68).

The final chronological indicators in the DEB are Gildas's description that he lived at the same time as the grandchildren of Ambrosius Aurelianus (DEB 25: 3) and forty-four years after the siege at Mount Badon (DEB 26: 1). Clearly, these time periods cannot provide absolute dates, although they have been used in attempts to estimate when Gildas was writing (Dumville 1984b; Higham 1994: 118). Nevertheless, the translation of this passage has caused some confusion. Wood believes that it could be translated as meaning there were forty-four years between the victory of Ambrosius and the siege at Mount Badon rather than forty-four years

between Mount Badon and Gildas writing the DEB (Wood 1984: 23). Again, as with all the above passages, we have no means of deciding whether this opinion is right or wrong.

Using these passages, scholars have arrived at a range of conclusions concerning the dating of the DEB and Gildas's own temporal context. Dumville places the British invitation to the Saxons, after the failure of their third appeal to Rome (and Agitus), to between c.480 and 490. He therefore concludes that the DEB was written between 500 and 545 (Dumville 1984b: 83). Wood (1984) gives a slightly earlier date of writing: between 485 and 520. Due to the many chronological uncertainties described above, most of which simply cannot be resolved either by using 'external' sources (e.g. Zosimus) or the text itself, Sims-Williams (1983a: 5) prefers to regard the DEB simply as a sixth-century work.

Finally, as an indication of how flexible the dating of the DEB can be, Higham has suggested a significantly earlier date. He argued that the attribution of the British letter of appeal to the third consulship of Aëtius may be a mistake, perhaps a later interpolation (Higham 1994: 123, 136). He believes that the appeal should be placed in the late 420s or early 430s, which thus supports the dating evidence offered by the *Vita St. Germanus* and the second fifth-century British entry in the *Gallic Chronicle of 452* which states that Britain's resistance against the barbarians had collapsed by 441. Thus, Higham argues, the date for the actual composition of the DEB must also be pushed back in time. He suggests that it was written between 479 and 484 (ibid: 136-8).

This dating might also be supported by studies made of Gildas's Latin style, including his use of classical rhetorical structures, grammar and syntax. These features of his work appear to be very sophisticated and not in any way 'stilted' or 'barbarous' (Howlett 1995: 49; Lapidge 1984). It has therefore been suggested that Gildas had both a classical education and an audience that would have appreciated such literary techniques. This in turn would preclude dating the DEB to the middle of the sixth century (Higham 1994: 141; Jones M. 1996: 46). However, Howlett (1986; 1995) has analysed the literary and grammatical structure of the DEB and other texts that employ the 'Biblical style' (see below for full discussion) and has traced this tradition from the fifth to the thirteenth centuries (Howlett 1995: 393-5). This should warn us against making assumptions and value judgements about the supposed decline of aspects of culture after the end of Roman Britain. It shows that, in terms of literary style, the DEB need not necessarily be placed as close as possible to the end of Roman rule in Britain.

From the preceding discussion it is clear that the dating of the DEB and the composition of the text itself remain contentious. It should also be noted that, even if dates are deduced for specific 'events', linking those events still requires proposing (guessing?) the number of years likely to have elapsed between them (e.g. Dumville 1984: 70, 73, 77; Higham 1994: 118-120).

Having presented a range of potential problems with the chronology of the DEB and having accepted that unverifiable assumptions will always be required to this end, I do not intend to assert that one scholar's argument will be preferred over another's. Nevertheless, it is still important to reach a conclusion on this subject and for this discussion it is relatively simple. Although it is important to know when Gildas wrote, it also appears that no definite answer can be achieved without fear of contradiction or the use of assumptions. Yet the question of *precisely* when he wrote ceases to be of the utmost importance if we accept that historical 'facts' are a subjective and illusionary concept and cannot be divorced from the narrative and authorial context in which they are employed. It is therefore sufficient to note that the focus of the DEB is 'the present' (i.e. Books II and III) – whenever that was – and the historical introduction (Book I) is a summary of 'the past'. It will be shown below that understanding Gildas's conceptions of the past and how it influences the present is of vital importance for any interpretation of the text as a whole and of the references to the 'Saxon' conquest in particular.

4.5.3.3 Where was Gildas writing?

As with the dating and chronology of the DEB, the question of Gildas's geographical context has also occupied scholars for some time and there is no clear consensus of opinion. The traditional view was that Gildas was living and writing in the west of Britain. This is based primarily on the fact that Books II and III refer to five kings of Wales and south-western Britain (Dumville 1977: 191; Higham 1994: 90-1; Jones M. 1996: 121; Thompson 1979: 225).

This view has been questioned by a number of scholars. Thompson (1979) proposed perhaps the most radical revision. He suggested that, given the severity of Gildas's attacks on the kings, it would have been too dangerous for him to remain in Wales/the South-west;

> 'The five kings whom Gildas names ruled in the south-west and the west of Britain, and so we may be sure that Gildas himself was not living in that area...It is not easy to believe that the murderous bullies whom he describes would have tolerated his forthright criticisms if they could have laid hands on him' (Thompson 1979: 225).

Instead, Thompson suggested that Gildas wrote in the north of Britain; a view based on the following passage from the DEB (Thompson 1979: 214);

> 'So they [the Picts and Scots] seized the whole of the extreme north of the island from its inhabitants, right up to the wall' (DEB 19: 1).

From this, Thompson hypothesized that the whole narrative of the DEB had a distinctly northern bias. Thus, if the 'peoples of the north' raided only in the north, then since the DEB

says the Saxons were garrisoned on 'the east side of the island' by the 'proud tyrant' (23: 4), then they must have been in north-eastern England (e.g. the East Riding or Vale of York) (Thompson 1979: 217). The Saxon wars are, for Thompson, wholly a northern event (ibid: 218-219). This, he believed, accounts for the discrepancies between the DEB and other fifth-century sources. The Gallic Chronicler of 452, for example, would have known only about southern Britain (ibid: 220).

Higham (1994: 92-6) rejects this hypothesis, disputing the interpretation of the crucial passage from the DEB quoted above (ibid: 92-3). Alternatively, he suggests that Gildas may have been writing in the 'deep south of central England', perhaps in Wiltshire or Dorset (Higham 1994: 111-2). First, the geographical introduction in the DEB (3: 1-4) suggests a southern viewpoint. For example, Gildas describes 'curving ocean bays', 'pebbles white as snow' (i.e. chalk?), lowland rivers and agriculture and sea crossings to Gaul. Elsewhere he refers to the rivers Thames and Severn and describes, in some detail, urban destruction and decay. Gildas also mentions the cities in which St. Alban and SS Aaron and Julius were martyred (St. Albans/*Verulamium* and, possibly, Caerleon respectively). Finally, Higham believes Gildas is generally ignorant of northern Britain and being in the south-west he would have been directly adjacent to the regions ruled by his 'five tyrants' (Higham 1994: 99-113), thus explaining his knowledge of them.

The question of Gildas's sources of information must also be considered here. Sims-Williams (1983a: 5) raises the possibility that Gildas's narrative reflects the geographical viewpoint of his sources rather than what he actually knew about. We have no real evidence as to the nature of these sources, other than what he tells us. Gildas says he will write as well as he can;

> '...using not so much literary remains from this country (which, such as they were, are not now available, having been burnt by enemies or removed by our countrymen when they went into exile) as foreign tradition: and *that* has frequent gaps to blur it' (4: 4).

Sims-Williams thus believes that Gildas depended on oral traditions rather than fifth-century documentary sources (with the possible exception of the letter to Agitus/Aëtius), and of these we can know nothing (Sims-Williams 1983a: 24). This makes any estimation of Gildas's geographical context particularly difficult.

Finally, despite the ideas outlined above, it appears that Gildas was at least attempting to write about Britain as a whole. The Romans, Picts and Scots are all defined and homogenous 'overseas peoples' (Wright 1984a: 87; also Howe 1989: 40) and their occupation or raiding of Britain also affects all the Britons and the whole island. Likewise, the Saxons are said in the DEB to have devastated 'the whole surface of the island' (24: 1) (Higham 1994: 96).

Additionally, Gildas often refers to his *patria* (fatherland) as a single entity, and his use of the term *ciues* (fellow-citizens) has similarly unifying overtones (Wright 1984a: 102). Thus, Sims-Williams concludes that;

> '...whatever his practical limitations, his aspiration is always to generalize about *Britannia* as a whole. I believe that he succeeds so well that we cannot tell where he wrote' (Sims-Williams 1983a: 7).

Thus the conclusion regarding Gildas's geographical context must be that we do not really know the areas with which Gildas was familiar or where he wrote. There may indeed be hints about this in the DEB, and Higham's argument for Gildas having written in the south-west is convincing (if this is not in fact a reflection of his sources). Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that the narrative itself describes homogeneous national/ethnic groups and conflicts covering the whole island of Britain. The historical section of the DEB is therefore not attempting to be geographically specific any more than it was trying to be chronologically specific. One final, and possibly quite significant point, is that wherever Gildas has been placed, none of the above scholars believe he wrote, or knew much about eastern Britain. That, however, is where Gildas tells us the Saxons landed and settled.

4.5.4 The intellectual context of the DEB

Having discussed when and where Gildas may have written the DEB, perhaps the most we can say is that Book I of this text was intended to deal with Britain's past. However, within the last twenty years or so, there has been increasing interest in Gildas's intellectual context as opposed to approaches which seek only to uncover the historical 'facts' contained in the DEB (e.g. when the Saxons invaded or when and where Gildas wrote) (Dumville 1995: 177). An important aspect of this trend has been the discussion of Gildas's literary style; how he structured the text, his grammar and vocabulary. To understand these aspects of the DEB and how they influence its form and content, it is necessary to discuss how these features may have originated.

4.5.4.1 Gildas's education and the literary style of the DEB

Lapidge (1984) describes how, in earlier discussions of Gildas's Latin style and education, it was common to see the DEB as being an early manifestation of what later became standard medieval Latin. This was no doubt encouraged by much later hagiographies of Gildas, such as that by an eleventh-century monk of Ruis in Brittany. This work describes how Gildas received a monastic education (Lapidge 1984: 27, 32-3). As mentioned previously, these accounts of Gildas's life are now generally seen as apocryphal. More recent studies suggest a somewhat different background for Gildas.

Lapidge's detailed study demonstrates that Gildas employed a wide variety of classical literary traits in the DEB. He used a specifically classical diction (ibid: 35) and his style implies that he had 'first-hand knowledge of Latin as a living language' (ibid: 37). Gildas also appears to have been very familiar with classical texts (especially Vergil's *Aeneid*) (ibid: 39-40; Wright 1984b) and the technical vocabulary of the Roman legal and administrative system (e.g. his definitions of *foederati* troops) (Lapidge 1984: 46-7; Thompson 1979: 217-18). Finally, the structure of the DEB suggests Gildas was well versed in the correct forms for rhetoric speeches or declamations, even though the DEB is described specifically as a letter (1: 1). This use of declamatory structure and language in the form of a letter was, however, not uncommon in late antiquity (Lapidge 1984: 44-5). These observations led Lapidge to conclude that Gildas, like many other late Roman writers, was educated in a late Roman rhetorical school and was taught in the classical tradition by a *grammaticus* and then a *rhetor* (ibid: 47). Furthermore, he must have had an audience that had been similarly educated if the DEB was to be fully appreciated (ibid: 49-50). Thus, Gildas's literary and stylistic context is more closely related to late antique as opposed to early medieval (i.e. monastic) learning (ibid.).

As mentioned previously, these conclusions have implications for the dating of the DEB. Gildas must have received his education after the traditional date for the ending of Roman Britain. The question is, for how long was classical learning understood by, or available to, people living in Britain or on the continent, thus, how late is it possible to date the DEB? As described above, these questions remain largely unresolved.

Continuing this discussion of Gildas's literary style, it is interesting to note the work done by Howlett (1986; 1995). Howlett believes that Gildas adopted what is termed the 'Biblical style'. This form of composition is found in both the Old and New Testaments and employs a strict textual organization, to the extent that significant words in the text are placed within an arithmetically consistent structure (e.g. in the opening passages of Genesis (Howlett 1995: 33-45) and in the prologue of St. John's gospel (ibid: 45-49)). Howlett suggests that this reflects a desire to show all of God's creation to be an ordered whole (ibid: 54). This rigid Hebrew/Old Testament style survived when the Bible was translated into Greek and Latin, and was used by scholars in Britain as late as the thirteenth century. It is therefore clear that it was both appreciated and deemed important by these later Christian translators, copyists and authors. Howlett goes on to show how Gildas incorporated the Biblical style into the text of the DEB (Howlett 1995: 72-81). As mentioned above, that this style was used throughout the first millennium AD suggests that Gildas did not necessarily write immediately after the end of Roman rule in Britain.

There are three further observations to be made concerning Gildas's education and compositional style, aside to those relating to the dating of the DEB. First, the complexity of the DEB is such that a great deal of care must have been taken in its composition. It is therefore surely erroneous to attempt to identify Gildas's shortcomings as a historian or where he got his history 'wrong' (e.g. Thompson 1979: 206). Such a statement is a modern value judgement based on the expectation that historical sources contain 'facts'. Second, given that the DEB was composed as an internally consistent text, it is equally improper to extract the factual material from the fictional or purely 'rhetorical' (in a derogative sense) content of the DEB (e.g. Higham 1994: 203). Both these approaches, in effect, take little account of the stylistic aim of the DEB and devalue Gildas's abilities as an artful writer and gifted scholar. As described previously (Section 4.3.2), history and literature cannot be separated, and the DEB must be treated as a coherent whole. Third, despite Gildas clearly having a traditional late Roman classical education, the DEB is an overtly Christian work (see below). It is not a mixture of 'objective', precise classical history with 'merely' polemical or rhetorical religious themes. Gildas's religious viewpoint is embedded in all aspects of the DEB and provided the motivation for writing the text in the first place. For that reason that viewpoint must now be examined in some detail.

4.5.4.2 Salvation history

Although he may have had a classical education, the DEB is far more noticeably shaped by Gildas's Christian faith. This faith influenced Gildas's world view as well as how and why he discussed the past (his 'historical imagination' – Hanning 1966: 2). Being an educated Christian in the fifth or sixth century, Gildas was exposed to a long-established Judeo-Christian tradition of writing and interpreting history and how it relates to 'the present'. This tradition has been described as 'providential' or 'salvation history' and it plays an important part in the interpretation of the texts discussed here that were written by Christian scholars.

Salvation history originates in, and is evident throughout, the Old Testament. It stems from the belief that God is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent in both the past and the present. Furthermore, these attributes would be maintained in the future when people came to be judged; either at the end of their lives or at the end of time. God alone, therefore, has the power of salvation. If these divine attributes are accepted, then all events in human history can be interpreted as being influenced by Divine will. Thus, the Old Testament is not merely a chronicle of the past, but it is a 'record of God's dealings with man [*sic*], and especially with Israel, his chosen nation' (ibid: 6). It should also be noted that God's will was supposedly revealed to man through the Law (Torah). This was one of a series of covenants (or 'Testaments') ratifying the two-way relationship between God and His people: God maintained the world and Israel if they obeyed His Law.

These central tenets of the Jewish faith coalesced to form a specific view of contemporary events, the past and a specific approach to historical interpretation. If everything was God's will, then the numerous disasters that befell Israel must also have been. But why would God harm his chosen people? It was often concluded that His people had strayed from the Law and were therefore being punished. It was the prophets of the Old Testament who attempted to show their contemporaries the errors of their ways and how they had offended God, urging them also to reform and return to the path that led to salvation. In doing this, the prophets often used the past to demonstrate how God had protected or punished His people depending on how faithful they were to God and the Law;

> 'The prophetic intuition of Israel broke down distinctions between past and present, present and future, and caught up all history in a long, divinely-ordered arc through which God guided Israel. The prophets not only prophesied, they reminded: to them, what the Lord had done and continued to do was as important as what he could and would do in the future, for the Lord ruled over all time' (Hanning 1966: 6).

The past, as recorded in the Old Testament, was thus a precedent for interpreting the present and predicting the future. It acquired a specifically theological meaning (Croke & Emmett 1983: 2) and rhetorical value (Hanning 1966: 13). This theological emphasis also influenced the content of the scriptures since secular affairs were only recorded in the Old Testament if they related directly to what were believed to be acts of God (Hanning 1966: 15).

Old Testament authors therefore created an 'intellectual universe' with the scriptures at the centre (Cameron 1991: 6-7). As texts continued to be written in this style, each one added to the growing body of precedents for future authors, thus perpetuating and empowering this historical paradigm (Croke and Emmett 1983: 5). One additional and important point for the following discussion is that the Covenants were made between God and His people as a collective group. Individuality is not important in these histories. Of course individuals are named, but they often represent a wider collective group. The fortunes of named kings were tied to those of the nation (e.g. Israel) and prophets only spoke or wrote to highlight widespread sins and impending disasters if the nation did not reform. Indeed Jeremiah, whose two books of the Old Testament were often quoted by Gildas, was reluctant to speak out as an individual (Jeremiah 1: 6vv). Thus, the narratives of ancient Jewish history are essentially collective histories describing a national relationship with God (although it should not be forgotten that the books of the Old Testament were probably written by people belonging to a small, educated Jewish elite).

For Christians writing the epistles and the first gospels in the second half of the first century AD, Christ represented the new Covenant/Testament with God and a new means of salvation.

His life and teaching was seen as the new Law. Nonetheless, the idea that Christ was seen as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophesy undoubtedly encouraged Christian writers to present Christ and to narrate many episodes of the New Testament using terms that would not have been alien to Jews (e.g. Jesus as the Messiah – or *Christos* in Greek – whose coming was foretold by the prophets (e.g. Isaiah 11)). Thus, Judaic traits, as described above, were perpetuated in Christian literature from the gospels onwards, including terminology, literary form (e.g. 'Biblical style' – Howlett 1986) and modes of historical explanation (Hanning 1966: 6).

As the Christian church spread and enlarged, new situations were met with. The problems faced were twofold: How could the Church comment authoritatively on these situations and '[h]ow was it possible to speak of God at all, when by definition He could not be circumscribed in language?' (Cameron 1991: 157). To cope with such issues it became common practice to use scriptural allegory to interpret and describe contemporary events. God, His actions and how He influenced human life in the present could thus be expressed by reference to a source with unimpeachable authority – the Bible (Cameron 1989b: 164). As the scriptural interpretations became more numerous there developed an accepted canon of interpretation (although this often involved fierce intellectual debate and schisms within the church), and these works in turn became authoritative texts, which could also be quoted as precedents (Cameron 1990: 206). Thus, in the production of Christian historical texts;

> 'The weight is put on authority, preferably on a chain of authorities, and tradition is redefined as ecclesiastical tradition, its authority "proved" by recourse to approved citations' (Cameron 1990: 209).

Thus by later antiquity, Christianity had created a systematic and flexible world view as an integral part of its discourse (Cameron 1991: 8). It is important to note that in this context, the authority of a text was not contingent on the modern idea of 'facts' or 'objective truth', but rather on the deployment of specifically Judeo-Christian narrative and rhetorical techniques (Wheeldon 1989: 60). History, especially that recorded in the Bible, was central to this discourse as it demonstrated and proved the role of God in human affairs. It showed the operation of Divine judgement, and hence the means by which people could achieve salvation (or not). For all Christian writers, therefore, history was vital to their attempts to know God and to achieve salvation. All the history they needed was in the scriptures and the subsequent Christian histories and chronicles that adopted the same rationale (Croke & Emmett 1983: 8-9; Scott 1983: 170).

Despite early persecutions, the presence of this 'systematic world view' was crucial to the eventual widespread appeal of Christianity within the Roman Empire (Cameron 1991: 6).

Furthermore, the Christian historical imagination became an integral part of late Roman or late antique authors' attempts to interpret their contemporary situations;

> 'Christians of whatever background in the early centuries formed their discourse on and around the Scriptures, so that what they wrote could often turn into a counterpoint of biblical types and biblical phraseology' (Cameron 1991: 7).

It is in this context that we must place many late antique Christian historians' narratives concerning 'barbarian invasions'. It has been said that the struggle in late antiquity between paganism (be that in the form of the Roman past or 'barbarians') and Christianity was as much to do with the control of language and interpretations of the past as it was a political and social phenomenon (Cameron 1991: 123). Hence, when Christian writers describe 'barbarians' with a distinct sense of 'Otherness' and by using stereotypes – as was the norm amongst writers in the Roman world (see Barrett 1989; Rodgers 1998) – they are not simply describing the political realities of the day. They are also making statements as Christians who, by definition, deny the existence of other gods. The scriptures – their Judeo-Christian literary heritage and the basis of their historical imagination – were precedents used to support those statements.

Given that a great deal of late antique 'historical' literature was written by Christian authors, the extent to which we may be able to deduce political 'realities' from religious literature is an important question for modern scholars. There are many late antique/early medieval authors that could be used to illustrate the issues involved in tackling that question, for example, Salvian (Croke and Emmett 1983; Hanning 1966: 46-8), Gregory of Tours or Paul the Deacon (see Cameron 1991; Goffart 1988; 1989 for full discussions). Nonetheless, the Christian historical imagination is common to all of them meaning that biblical models provided the direct link between God's work in the past and in the present;

> 'Though not the only possible mode of expression, Christian discourse came in practice to be exactly that; it provided both the framework within which most people looked at the world and the words that they used to describe it' (Cameron 1991: 222).

In other words, the Bible for Christian authors was both the source and the proof of the veracity of their world view and their modes of expression. These accounts are therefore far from being neutral, objective records of a historical truth. We must be aware that a specific discourse was vital to the author's personal faith and to the narrative he wrote. As such it is impossible to judge the 'reality' of events without also considering the influence of the Christian historical imagination. This is certainly the case with Gildas's DEB.

4.5.4.3 Salvation history in the DEB

It was mentioned above that Gildas's education, the technicalities of his vocabulary and his grammar place him in generally the same intellectual context as other continental authors of late antiquity. It is also clear that Gildas exhibits many similarities in terms of historical imagination and his interpretation of contemporary 'damages and afflictions'.

> 'Eschewing heroic and pre-Christian legends, Gildas presented to his nation – and to those who came after – a systematic interpretation of the Christian past of Britain, as judged in the light of Rome, of the Saxons, and of the history of salvation' (Hanning 1966: 50).

As a salvation historian, Gildas's ultimate source of authority was the Bible, and there are a number of ways in which that manifests itself in the DEB. Firstly, Gildas clearly saw himself as acting in the manner of an Old Testament prophet and this shaped the migration narrative from the start (Higham 1994: 70; Howe 1989: 36; Sims-Williams 1983a: 2). His letter implies that he is almost alone in having recognized the contemporary afflictions of the Britons (e.g. the Saxons) for what they are – a divine punishment (e.g. 1: 15-16). He also states that he is reluctant to speak out on these matters (cf. Jeremiah). He justifies this view in the DEB by referencing the biblical past (see below) and goes on to state that the only way the Britons could achieve salvation in the future is through adherence to God's laws, including baptism and faith in God and Christ (1: 10).

Second, Gildas presents himself not only as a prophet, but also as a prophet to God's chosen people: the Britons. He refers to the Britons as a 'latter-day Israel' (26: 1), being tested by God through various afflictions to see whether or not they loved Him. Gildas's narrative also deals primarily with collective peoples or nations (apart from the five 'tyrant' kings that he names), such as the Romans, the Britons and the Saxons. Hence, both Gildas and the Old Testament prophets attempted to show the means of salvation to God's chosen, but sinful, people.

Parallels between the DEB and the Bible are further emphasized by the numerous scriptural allusions in Gildas's narrative. They are used to illustrate and support Gildas's views at every available opportunity (see Higham 1994 for a more detailed description and discussion). Those contained in the historical section of the DEB (Book I) will be highlighted here. Having referred to the 'general loss of good' (1: 1) in contemporary Britain, Gildas wrote how he turned to the Bible to make sense of his observations;

> 'I read how, because of the sins of men, the voice of the holy prophets rose in complaint, especially Jeremiah's, as he bewailed the ruin of his city in four alphabetic songs. And I could see that in our time too, just as Jeremiah had lamented, 'the city' (that is the church) 'sat solitary, bereaved; formerly it had been full of peoples, mistress of races, ruler of

> provinces: now it had become tributary'... I gazed on these things and many others in the New Testament as though a mirror reflecting on our own life' (1: 4-7).

Gildas subsequently drew heavily on the Bible. The Old Testament (especially Jeremiah and his *Lamentations*) was used to describe contemporary British society and the afflictions of the Britons while the New Testament was presented as a solution to those problems; that is to say, faith in God and Christ (Higham 1994: 79). The following will focus on the Old Testament parallels since the barbarian invasions concern us here and they constitute the ultimate British affliction.

Of particular relevance to Gildas are the passages by Jeremiah describing the sins of the Israelites and their king, Zedekiah;

> 'And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets...but you have not harkened, nor inclined your ear to hear... Therefore thus said the Lord of Hosts; Because you have not heard my words, Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, said the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all the nation round about, and will utterly destroy them... And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon for seventy years' (Jeremiah 25: 4-11).

Jeremiah goes on to relate how the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem, the city was destroyed, there was a famine and the priests and leaders killed or carried off to slavery in Babylon. Zedekiah himself was blinded and imprisoned.

There are a number of ways in which this story mirrors that found in the DEB. The British leaders and the 'proud tyrant' are likened to Zedekiah in their rejection of God and for being 'struck blind' in making the decision to employ the Saxons (22-3), the Israelite soldiers, like the Britons, were irresolute (19: 2), there was a famine in Britain (25: 1) and the physical destruction of Jerusalem is matched by the decayed British towns known to Gildas (24: 3) (Higham 1994: 69-74; Sims-Williams 1983a: 9).

The idea that an external ('barbarian') group of people were God's 'agents' on earth, punishing His people (Howe 1989: 59), is also paralleled by references to the Saxons in Gildas's narrative. Having described how the barbarians had 'burned almost the whole surface of the island', Gildas wrote that;

> 'So it was that in this assault, comparable with that of the Assyrians of old on Judaea, there was fulfilled according to history for us also what the prophet said in his lament: 'They

> have burned with fire your sanctuary on the ground, they have polluted the dwelling place of your name'. And again: God, the heathen have come into your inheritance; they have desecrated your holy temple'; and the rest' (24: 2).

These numerous, often explicit, references to Jeremiah suggest that Gildas had this book of the Old Testament open in front of him (Higham 1994: 74). It is clear, therefore, that the Bible was a key element in the formulation and composition of Gildas's historical narrative and imagination and of his interpretation of contemporary events.

4.5.5 The DEB: Factual history or biblically inspired fiction?

Many scholars have recognized the close relationship between the DEB (including the Saxon invasion passages) and biblical narratives (e.g. Dumville 1995; Hanning 1966; Higham 1994; Howe 1989; Sims-William 1983a). These are not new conclusions. However, following on from the theoretical introduction to this chapter, it is important to raise the issue of the relationship between historical 'facts' and the literary style of Gildas's text. What is the relationship between the facts that may be deduced from the text and the construction of what is essentially an impassioned sermon (Yorke 1993: 45)? This question has received very little critical attention even though it is of crucial importance for our understanding of the DEB and particularly the status we ascribe to Gildas's references to the Saxon or barbarian invasions.

The approaches adopted by Gildasian scholars have been conditioned by why they were looking at the DEB in the first place. As Lapidge and Dumville have pointed out in the preface to their 1984 edited volume (x-xi), the principal reason for scholars to be interested in the DEB was for what it might reveal about the *true* sequence of events regarding the invasions of Roman and barbarian peoples or the *real* date of the battle at Mount Badon or the *adventus Saxonum*. Thus, for example, we find Thompson arguing that (apart from St. Patrick's works which do not mention Saxon/Germanic invasions), the DEB 'is the only British literary source of authentic information about the history of Britain in the mid-fifth century' (Thompson 1979: 203). Higham has written about Gildas's biblical rhetorical style at some length, noting that this places certain limitations on textual interpretation. Nevertheless, he argues that the challenge facing historians using the DEB today 'lies in the difficulty of distinguishing *image* from *reality*' (Higham 1994: 203, my emphasis). Thus, he believes that 'the outline of events can be discerned through careful examination of Gildas's text' (ibid.). Similarly, regarding the *adventus Saxonum*, Higham wrote that Gildas;

> '...offered a highly rhetorical and condemnatory interpretation of the decision making process which brought the first Saxons into Britain, which almost obscures, under a wave of rhetoric, what was necessarily an essentially factual basis' (Higham 1994: 37).

Higham also has no doubts that the Saxons were responsible for the 'damages and afflictions' described by Gildas (ibid: 57). As for the biblical parallels in the DEB, he writes that;

> 'Gildas employed his Old Testament analogies to characterise Britain's 'afflictions' as he perceived them at the time of writing. In doing so, he focused on Jeremiah's Lament concerning the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians as his principal text, to the extent that one can only conclude that the analogy was a close one' (Higham 1994: 83).

Michael Jones (1996) also sought to bring together historical and archaeological evidence to help understand the end of Roman Britain and the fifth century. Like Higham, he claims that it is possible to extract genuine information from the DEB simply by removing the passages borrowed from the Old Testament (ibid: 52). Thus, although numerous publications highlight Gildas's geographical, temporal and intellectual context, many scholars still believe that the Saxon invasion of Britain was a real, factual event and that the DEB is proof of this. Yet in the light of the theoretical position set out at the beginning of this chapter this approach must be questioned for a number of reasons.

First, Frantzen (1990: 110) has highlighted the problems of forming generalized interpretations of a period from individual texts (the relationship between the DEB and other continental sources will be discussed at the end of this chapter), and says we cannot reduce the potentially huge number of perspectives of an event or time period to a single, all embracing 'truth'. Second, identifying such historical truths is to maintain a degree of faith in factual history. Yet all those historians who have noted that Gildas's aims in writing the DEB were primarily religious (e.g., Higham 1994; Sims-Williams 1983a & b) serve to highlight that he was not actually seeking to record history or facts in the modern sense. Third, to attempt to isolate certain facts within a larger text (e.g. stripping away the rhetoric and biblical allusion in the DEB to concentrate on the 'Saxon invasion') serves only to perpetuate the unrealistic division between the creative, literary narrative and the so-called facts of history. Gildas would not have recognized such a division – the DEB is a carefully composed, unified text (cf. Howlett 1986) – so how can modern scholars claim more insight than the original author?

With this in mind, it is interesting to note that 'the Saxon invasions' have generally retained their factual status, while other elements of Gildas's narrative – which are just as much a part of his Salvation History (i.e. they represent God's judgement or the sinfulness of the Britons) – have not been so preserved. For example, few archaeologists or historians believe that the Saxons really destroyed Britain 'from sea to sea'. Likewise, Gildas's references to plagues, famine and the two northern walls in the immediate post-Roman period have been questioned (Higham 1994; Sims-Williams 1983a; 1983b: 7, 13; Thompson 1979; Todd 1977). These ideas are dismissed as being due to mistakes made by Gildas (his 'historical howlers' – Thompson

1979: 206), his ignorance of earlier periods (Sims-Williams 1983a: 16), or are described as 'literary embellishments included for dramatic and rhetorical effect, rather than historical details' (Higham 1994: 24). Such opinions contradict the view of Gildas as a skilful, educated author trying to make a serious point to his contemporaries. They may instead reflect the cumulative effects of the Anglo-Saxon migration myth that has developed as a historical 'fact' from at least the time of Bede to the present day. Gildas was not simply recording facts as objectively as he could. Nor was he writing an entirely invented fiction. Yet rather than attempting to tackle these observations as 'problems', we should ask; how did Gildas interpret the past and the present? What was his context of writing? Why did he choose to record what he did in a particular way?

Finally, it is important to note that, as stated at the beginning of this section, Gildas is in an almost unique position as an observer of fifth-century Britain; indeed, he has been called a 'decisive witness' (Jones M. 1996: 142). As such, it is surely right that so much scholarship has been directed towards the DEB. Yet this also raises the ominous and teleological possibility that the DEB constitutes both the primary *source* of references to the Saxon invasions and also the main *proof* that these events occurred.

It must therefore be concluded that large sections of Book I of the DEB – including the descriptions of the 'Saxon settlements' – are so immersed in biblical rhetoric and imagery (as Gildas intended) that the 'reality' of such specific events cannot be recovered through conventional historical analysis. These 'facts' may be a product of modern scholars needing to use ancient texts (for want of other evidence) in order to 'know' about the past, rather than a function of Gildas attempting to record actual events. Yet if the DEB cannot necessarily be taken at face value, it also cannot simply be dismissed. Gildas was relatively close in terms of time and geography (compared to other sources for this period) to the ending of Roman Britain. Thus, while he may not record 'facts' in a modern sense, he does record a specific 'psychological moment of immense importance' (Sims-Williams 1983a: 29). Gildas knew something of the past (although from where he got this information we do not know) and that in the present the Romans were gone and the signs of *Romanitas* along with some of the ideas they brought with them were fading; including the cities and Christianity. Furthermore, those Christians who remained, along with contemporary leaders, were not maintaining the high moral values Gildas found recorded in the Bible. So how do the Saxon settlements fit into this psychological moment? There are two points to be made here.

First, it must be noted that 'the Saxons' was a generic and widely known epithet for those practising raiding/piracy in the North Sea region from the late fourth century (Wood 1990 – cf. the *Gallic Chronicle of 452*, the *Vita St. Germanus*). As will be discussed in more detail at the

end of this chapter, such raiding may well have occurred, but it clearly also became a tradition drawn upon by early medieval authors across Europe. It must be wondered whether in Gildas's historical imagination this tradition – or indeed knowledge of actual raids – was interpreted in the light of passages from the Old Testament and the past history of Britain (e.g. the Britons' ambivalent attitudes to the Romans). His biblical interpretation of the Saxons may have been supported in his mind by the state of the cities he knew about. The decline of Roman cities/towns, however, may have occurred long before the so-called *adventus Saxonum* (e.g. Faulkner 2000; Reece 1980). Did Gildas attribute long term urban decay to people that he and many of his contemporaries called 'Saxons' because seemingly similar events were often recorded in the Old Testament and were said to be the result of God's punishment of a sinful people?

As discussed above, we do not really know where Gildas was writing. However, for the second point it is important that he appears to have little specific knowledge of eastern Britain; the region where the barbarian invaders were supposed to have landed and then colonized. Thus, the following passage from the DEB may be significant;

> 'In just punishment for the crimes that had gone before, a fire heaped up and nurtured by the hand of the impious easterners spread from sea to sea' (24: 1).

It is interesting to note that here Gildas stresses the impiety (perhaps he believed them to be bad Christians or pagans) of those in the east of Britain. Could it be that Gildas's primary concern about the 'easterners' was to do with religion? Was the religious threat in the east, the contemporary urban decay and the tradition of Saxon pirates amalgamated into a powerful and emotional biblically inspired discourse in order to express those fears and to encourage his neighbours to maintain their Christianity? In the areas about which Gildas had no first hand knowledge paganism may never actually have been totally subsumed by later Roman Christianity. Indeed, the degree to which Christianity was practised in later Roman Britain has been notoriously difficult to assess, both historically and archaeologically (Petts 1999: 91). Additionally, it may have been that religious practices from northern Germany were being appropriated in eastern England; as witnessed by the emergence of so-called 'Anglo-Saxon' cemeteries in the eastern half of Britain. This could have been one aspect of the 'North Sea zone of interaction' (Carver 1990) around which people, material and practices moved in the fifth century (see Chapter Eight for full discussion). Gildas's work is also entirely consistent with other late antique sources written by Christians wherein non-Christians/pagans are described with a strong sense of 'Otherness' and as 'barbarians'.

4.5.6 Conclusions

To conclude, the aim of the above discussion was to achieve a more holistic, less positivistic understanding of Gildas's DEB; an understanding which highlights that Gildas was an active social agent, with his own faith, fears, educational background and way of making sense of the past and the present. However, such an interpretation means that we cannot use this narrative to discuss the Germanic settlement of eastern Britain with the same degree of certainty that has often been assumed in the past. While Gildas does record a highly significant psychological moment, this was done from a very particular point of view using a biblically-infused logic and form of words. Thus, when considering 'the Germanic migrations' it must be concluded that Gildas gave very few details about 'the Saxons'. For him, the afflictions 'they' brought to Britain were proof enough of their veracity – they were a force of nature. Did anyone ask where the locusts that plagued Egypt came from (Howe pers. comm.)?

4.6 The *Gallic Chronicle of 452*

Although it does not have the advantage of Gildas's DEB in being an insular source, the brief passages in the *Gallic Chronicle of 452* that refer to Britain were written at roughly the same time as the Saxon invasion of Britain is said to have occurred. For that reason this text has been considered important. Furthermore, the *Gallic Chronicle* appears to place the Saxon raiding, and ultimately domination of Britain, within a defined chronological framework. As will be shown below, it is the chronology of the *Gallic Chronicle* that has been the subject of the most prolonged and intensive debates. However, before turning to the passages that refer to Britain it is important to describe the document as a whole; when and where it was written, how and why it takes the form we now know. [N.B. The following will deal primarily with the *Gallic Chronicle of 452* since this document has been the focus of most scholarly attention. The *Gallic Chronicle of 511*, which has a similar chronology and similar information concerning Britain, has been used mainly in a supporting role, confirming the information in the earlier work (Jones and Casey 1988: 396)].

4.6.1 Geographical and religious context

We do not know who wrote the *Gallic Chronicle of 452*; the identity of the author has probably been lost since the ninth century (Muhlberger 1990: 136). However, the text of the chronicle has been used to deduce much about the context in which it was written and the individual who wrote it. Numerous references to Arles, Valence, Lérins and especially Marseilles in the text suggest that the chronicler probably wrote in southern Gaul (*Gallia Narbonnensis*) (Muhlberger 1983: 24; 1992: 32; Thompson 1979: 214; Wood 1992: 14) and may have been a monk (Jones and Casey 1988: 367). His religious views were mainstream for this area. He showed an interest in Provençal monasticism and had knowledge of the prominent churchmen of the region (Muhlberger 1983: 24). Furthermore, it appears that the author had relatively restricted

historical knowledge, as he seems to have known little about the church and events outside southern Gaul (Muhlberger 1990: 161, 165; 1992: 35)

Although his work included secular events, the author had forthright views on contemporary Christian issues, especially heresy. He condemned Pelagianism[1] and Arianism[2] in the strongest terms and also considered St. Augustine's doctrine of predestination to be heretical (Muhlberger 1983: 24; Wood 1984: 18). Furthermore, his view of emperors and other Imperial leaders was influenced by how pious he believed them to be and how successful they were against heresy and barbarians. As such, the chronicler clearly believed in a close link between the church and state (Muhlberger 1990: 192).

Little is known about the sources used by the chronicler (Burgess 1990: 192), although they appear to have been mainly ecclesiastical works and saints' lives, such as Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and Paulinus's *Life of Ambrose*. The author's knowledge of more specifically 'historical' texts was limited (Muhlberger 1983: 24; 1990: 152).

The Gallic Chronicler, therefore, had a specifically Christian point of view and was concerned with Christian issues when composing this text. The *Chronicle* highlighted the need for a strong church and pious leaders to fight against heresy and described the catastrophic effects of failure to achieve this ideal. The disasters related mostly took the form of barbarian incursions. Muhlberger concluded that;

> 'His approach to history was...that of a man concerned with the progress of true doctrine and the Catholic Church in the universal context of salvation history' (Muhlberger 1990: 160).

4.6.2 Manuscripts

That the *Gallic Chronicle of 452* was intended to be part of a salvation history in the Judeo-Christian tradition (see Section 4.5.4.2) is further emphasized by the manuscript context of this text. The manuscript housed in the British Museum (known as 'L') is believed to be the earliest extant version, since all the other examples appear to derive from it. In this text, the *Gallic*

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[1] Pelagius was a Christian ascetic monk who was born in Britain some time in the fourth century. In the late fourth century he left Britain for Rome. His teaching there emphasized morality, discipline, spirituality and free will, the latter of which diminished the role of divine grace in salvation. These ideas were opposed by Augustine and Jerome such that Pelagius was condemned and banished by the councils at Carthage in 416 and 418. He died in 418 (Eliade (ed.) 1987: 226-8).

[2] Arius was a Christian priest who was probably born near Alexandria around 250. He was a renowned preacher in Alexandria, but his theological views led him to be excommunicated by the bishop of that city in c.318. Arius denied the full divinity of Christ and hence Arianism asserted the primacy of the Father over the Son. Arius was also condemned and exiled to a western province by the imperial council of Nicaea called by the emperor Constantine. Nevertheless, Arianism continued to cause problems in the

Chronicle of 452 is one of a series of chronicles, linked together to form an extensive world history running from Abraham to AD 624. 'L' is believed to be a Carolingian copy of the ninth or tenth centuries (Jones and Casey 1988: 367; Muhlberger 1983: 24). In the extant manuscripts, the *Gallic Chronicle of 452* is a continuation (in terms of both form and chronology) of Jerome's *Chronicle*. Jerome wrote a history of the world from Abraham to the fourteenth year of the Emperor Valens (AD 378). After this, the Gallic Chronicler lists the events 'from the first year of the reign of Gratian as *Senior Augustus* (AD 378) to the second year of the joint reign of the emperors Valentian II and Marcian (AD 452)' (Jones and Casey 1988: 367-8). The *Gallic Chronicle of 452* is often falsely attributed to 'Prosper', even though there is, in the 'L' manuscript, a short extract of Prosper's chronicle covering the years 452 to 455. This is followed by Marius of Avenches' chronicle of 581, which is itself followed by Isidore's *Chronicle* to 615 and a brief and anonymous summary of Frankish history up to 624 (Muhlberger 1983: 24-5).

Understanding the manuscript context of the *Gallic Chronicle* has played an important part in reassessments of the value of this text as a historical source. A number of historians have drawn attention to the possibility that later Carolingian editors/copyists arranged the various chronicles to form the manuscript described above, and, to make the contents of the individual chronicles consistent, altered parts of the earlier texts (e.g. Bartholomew 1982; Miller 1978). The precise value of the chronology recorded in the manuscript has therefore been questioned.

4.6.3 Chronology

The chronological arguments that have taken place regarding this text are particularly complex, and there is no time here to describe them in detail. To summarize, it appears that complications have arisen for two main reasons. Firstly, the placing of the individual historical entries on the pages of the manuscript in relation to the year dates has caused confusion. Some entries cover two years (e.g. the second British entry – see below) and this has been used as evidence for interpolation by later Carolingian copyists (Bartholomew 1982: 269; Miller 1978; Muhlberger 1983: 27-8). Secondly, the year dates ascribed to individual entries are themselves problematic, since there are 'three distinct and irreconcilable dating schemes' (Jones and Casey 1988: 368) used simultaneously throughout the 'L' manuscript. The text lists imperial regnal years, Olympiads (each four years long and numbered from the beginning of the games in 776 BC) and years numbered from the birth of Abraham (believed to have been in October 2016 BC) (ibid.). Understanding these three chronological sequences has proven important because the choice of which scheme should be given priority affects the dating of the historical entries. After detailed analyses of the text and the dates, Miller (1978) argued for the credibility of the

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Church for several generations and it is said to have been transmitted to the 'Teutonic' tribes in the west in the sixth century (Eliade (ed.) 1987: 405-6, 412).

Abrahamic dates. Jones and Casey, on the other hand, claim that the imperial regnal years are the more reliable and accurate and that the other schemes are Carolingian additions (1988: 393, 395).

Whichever general scheme is thought to be the more trustworthy, historians have also highlighted a number of errors with individual entries in the chronicle. For example, the death of the emperor Arcadius in 408 (year XIV of his reign) is recorded in the *Chronicle* as having occurred in 406. Similarly, the fall of Carthage is recorded in 444 (year XXI of Theodosius) when the city actually fell in 439 (ibid: 377; also Muhlberger 1983: 29-30; Wood 1984: 17; 1992: 14).

Clearly there are major problems for modern historians seeking to use the *Gallic Chronicle* for dating certain events. Burgess (1990: 192) goes so far as to call the chronology 'a mess' and from the above it appears that he may well have a point. Opinions are polarized over the extent to which the *Gallic Chronicle* is reliable, although all authors argue that, with the correct interpretation, a reasonably accurate, 'true' chronology can be deduced. The validity of such deductions will be discussed below, however, it is important to highlight these debates as they have important implications for the passages that refer to Britain.

4.6.4 The British references

There are four references to Britain in the *Gallic Chronicle of 452*. The first two refer to Magnus Maximus being made emperor by his troops in Britain and his victories over the Picts and Scots (Muhlberger 1983: 30). The second pair describes the effect of the Saxons on fifth-century Britain, and these passages will be the focus of attention here. The references to Britain will be quoted with the adjacent entries, so as not to divorce them entirely from their original narrative context. The first entry comes from the sixteenth regnal year of Honorius (approximately AD 410);

> 'At this time the strength of the Romans was completely reduced [by a multitude of enemies] who were gaining strength. The British provinces were devastated by the Saxons. The Vandals and the Alans devastated parts of the Gauls; what remained the tyrant Constantine occupied. The Sueves occupied the greater part of Spain. Finally, Rome itself, the capital of the world, suffered most foully the depredations of the Goths' (quoted in Muhlberger 1983: 31).

The second entry is contained in the following list of events (the regnal years are of Theodosius II);

'XVII [AD 440] Deserted lands near the city of Valence were given to the Alans rule by Sambida.

XVIII [441] The Britons, having up to this time suffered various defeats and catastrophes, were reduced to Saxon rule.

XVIII [442] The Alans, to whom the lands of farther Gaul had been given by Aëtius the patrician for division with the inhabitants, subdued by warfare those who resisted them and, having expelled the owners, obtained possession of the land by force.

XX [443] Sapaudia was given to the remnants of the Burgundians to be divided with the inhabitants.

XXI [444] Carthage, having been captured by the Vandals with disaster and loss to all of Africa, threw off the power of the Roman Empire. From this time, indeed, it is possessed by the Vandals.

XXII [445] Thrace is wounded by an incursion of the Huns'

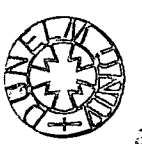
(quoted in Muhlberger 1983: 31-2).

4.6.4.1 The chronology of the British entries

Given the general problems with the chronologies in the *Gallic Chronicle of 452* outlined above, it is not surprising that the British entries have also been the subject of intense debate. Again, there is no space here to go into the complexities of these arguments (but see Bartholomew 1982; Burgess 1990; Jones and Casey 1988, 1991; Miller 1978; Muhlberger 1983), however, the conclusions summarized below represent the range of opinion that exists.

The first Saxon reference has been dated variously to 408, 409 and 411 (see Bartholomew 1982: 268-9; Jones and Casey 1988: 379-86). Miller and Bartholomew believe 411 to be the correct date for this entry. They assert that '410' is a Carolingian alteration done in order to link this event to the sack of Rome in that year (Bartholomew 1982: 269; Miller 1978). Jones and Casey (1988: 392), however, conclude that 410 is a correct calculation in terms of Honorius's regnal years and other scholars accept this date (e.g. Muhlberger 1983: 31; Wood 1984: 19).

Miller and Bartholomew also believe the second British entry to be a Carolingian interpolation, since it is spread over two years. Furthermore, Miller's rectification of the *Chronicle*'s chronology (based on the Abrahamic dates) places the second British entry in 445/6 rather than 441. The veracity of this calculation was, Miller believed, confirmed by it being close to one of the dates given by Bede for the *adventus Saxonum*. She therefore concludes that the entry was in fact created by Carolingian authors borrowing from Bede (Miller 1978: 317-18). Yet it should be pointed out that 445/6 was only one of a number of dates for the *adventus* given by Bede, who in turn based much of his work on Gildas. Additionally, as mentioned before, Jones and Casey (1988: 394) dismiss Miller's rectification (they believe the Abrahamic dates are a later



insertion) and call the resulting parallel with Bede's date an 'unfortunate coincidence'. They also argue that the 441 date is verified by the *Gallic Chronicle of 511* (ibid: 396).

While this discussion of single dates may seem a little pedantic, it is clear that these dates have been the touchstone for general conclusions concerning the value of the *Gallic Chronicle* as a whole. On the one hand Bartholomew (drawing on Miller's (1978) article) concludes that;

> 'The entry [441-2]...is not part of the original chronicle at all. So far from being a contemporary record of a genuine event, it is an unfortunate by-product of Carolingian scholarship. There are no fifth-century Saxons in the *Gallic Chronicle*...' (Bartholomew 1982: 270).

While on the other hand, Jones and Casey conclude;

> 'The *Gallic Chronicle of 452* thus provides a contemporary and reliable chronological framework for the primary phase of the Anglo-Saxon conquest. Within the span of a single generation, AD 410 – 441, the Saxon invaders moved from defeat to victory and the rule of a significant portion of Britain' (Jones and Casey 1988: 397).

Concerning the dates of the British entries in the *Chronicle*, the conclusion must therefore be the same as for the chronology of the source as a whole; different verdicts are possible depending on one's personal views and preferences regarding methods of interpretation. However, in order to form a more definite conclusion about this source and its relationship to fifth-century Britain it is important to also consider the information in the entries themselves as well as their narrative context and relationship to the aims of the chronicle as a whole.

4.6.5 Content and context

To begin with, it must be said that the British entries are rather vague and imprecise. This is not meant as a criticism *per se* – historical truth and accuracy are modern value judgements – but they are clearly less extensive accounts when compared to, for example, those of Bede and Gildas. Furthermore, the entries in question do not necessarily support views of the *adventus Saxonum* recently advanced by some scholars. As Burgess (1990: 192) has pointed out, attempts to clarify the exact dates given to the Saxon conquest of Britain in the *Gallic Chronicle* may be meaningless since many now believe the Germanic settlement was a long, drawn-out process. Similarly, Wood (1984: 19) believes that the *Gallic Chronicle*'s reference to the Saxon 'conquest' of Britain brings this source into conflict with Gildas's DEB which states that the Saxons were not initially conquerors but were employed by the Britons. However, this is to take the *Chronicle of 452* at face value.

There have also been differences of opinion regarding the information in the original form of the text. The main criticism that Burgess (1990) has of the article by Jones and Casey (1988) is that they seem to imply the source was originally perfect or that certain facts can be deduced from it if it is properly interpreted. Burgess argues that errors could have existed in the document from the moment it was written. Jones and Casey defended their original position (Jones and Casey 1991), although the idea of factual dates and events remained (cf. Jones and Casey 1988: 397 – quoted above). This, however, is a very polarized argument. While it is important to remember both the author *and* later copyists may have influenced the current form of a text, it is also necessary to consider how and why the *Gallic Chronicle* was written as it was.

As described above, the Gallic Chronicler was a Christian writing a salvation history with specific moral emphases from a viewpoint in southern Gaul. His references to Britain were employed in this context. For him, Gaul, and indeed the whole empire, was in a state of crisis. The late fourth-century entries in the *Gallic Chronicle* describe a relatively strong empire and since the chronicler saw a close link between church and state (Muhlberger 1990: 192), Christianity at this time was also secure. Theodosius I and Magnus Maximus were presented as pious leaders (despite the latter being a usurper) and this led to their success fighting against barbarians and heresy; twin threats which converged in the chronicler's fear of Arianism (Muhlberger 1990: 191-2; 1992: 32). However, throughout the early fifth century there had been only poor leadership and defeats leading to the slow dissolution of Gaul (Muhlberger 1992: 33) as heresy spread and barbarians over-ran the empire as a whole. The chronicler wrote that;

> '[Entry 138, AD 451] At this time the condition of the state appeared to be intensely miserable, since not one province was without a barbarian inhabitant, and the unspeakable Arian heresy, which had allied itself with the barbarian nations and permeated the whole world, laid claim to the name of Catholic' (quoted in Muhlberger 1983: 32).

As with Gildas, this quotation reveals a Christian author's close conceptual link between factors that endangered the Church (e.g. impiety, heresy, paganism) and 'barbarians'. It is in this context of imperial disasters that the chronicler placed the British references. In both entries, the brief comments on the situation in Britain form parts of longer lists of catastrophes affecting the empire. These entries reinforced a picture of widespread and fundamental decline (Muhlberger 1983: 30; 1990: 177-8; Wood 1984: 19; 1992: 14). Muhlberger concludes that;

> 'He [the Gallic Chronicler] has no profound interest in Britain and possessed few details about conditions there. He simply invoked the name of Britain to supplement his picture of a defeated empire in the process of disintegration' (Muhlberger 1990: 179).

Nevertheless, these references are not merely rhetorical adjuncts. It is interesting to note that in the first reference to Britain (c.410) the Saxons are said to be only raiding Britain, implying that the island was still a Roman province (Wood 1984: 3). Yet the second reference states that Britain had been reduced to Saxon rule. This implies that the chronicler (or his sources) recorded a change in attitude towards Britain over time. Hence, by the mid-fifth century it was believed – at least by one individual in southern Gaul – that Britain was no longer part of the empire (Muhlberger 1990: 179). It is also significant that the chronicler believed the Saxons had conquered Britain. Clearly the tradition that the Saxons were responsible for raiding and more significant incursions around the North Sea – as attested by Gildas and Constantius for example – had reached southern Gaul (Muhlberger 1983: 33).

4.6.6 Conclusion

To conclude, in the light of the above evidence and debates, how should the *Gallic Chronicle of 452* be interpreted without making insupportable assumptions or generalizations? Firstly, there are huge problems with the chronological schemes contained in the manuscripts. It appears that the perceived veracity (or otherwise) of the dates is largely a matter of interpretation and there is no reliable way to 'test' conclusions. Furthermore, the entries are themselves relatively vague and even if the dates are believed to be accurate, there is the question of whether these dates are relevant if a long-term migrationary process is envisaged.

Regarding the context in which the *Gallic Chronicle* was written, the conclusions can be more confident. Geographical considerations are clearly important. The text suggests the author had only very localized knowledge, indeed he appears to know very little about events outside southern Gaul. He also produced a specifically Christian interpretation of events, continuing a Christian world chronicle and making links between church and state, the piety of leaders and the fight against heresy and barbarians. In doing this, the text adheres to the principles of salvation history; the Saxons were one of many disasters that befell weak, impious imperial leaders.

Such observations turn what may appear to be an objective record of world history into quite a personal narrative. Indeed, Muhlberger notes that Prosper of Aquitaine (a resident of Marseille), another Christian chronicler, produced a different interpretation of Gallic history before 433 (before he was aware of Arianism) when compared to the Gallic Chronicler. Thus, Muhlberger has written that;

> 'Each inhabitant of Gaul experienced a different history, each had a different experience and different expectations of Roman power. Each passed through his or her own fall of the

> Roman empire – or, perhaps, missed the event entirely because it was of no personal relevance' (Muhlberger 1992: 36-7).

Like Gildas, the Gallic Chronicler recorded a significant 'psychological moment' but one that may have been quite personal and influenced by a specific geographical and intellectual context. Thus, using this source as the basis for generalization outside this context should be avoided. Regarding the statements made about Britain, these contextual conclusions undermine the value of this text. The Gallic Chronicler recorded a widespread tradition about events in Britain and this conformed to the tone and ethos of the narrative he was writing. As for the details of what was actually happening in Britain the chronicler probably knew almost nothing.

4.7 Constantius of Lyons: The *Vita St. Germanus*

Hagiographies were certainly not written primarily to record 'history' and nowhere in the historical sources that refer to fifth-century Britain are the problems of reconciling religious literature and authorial purpose with supposed historical 'facts' more acute than in Constantius's *Life of Saint Germanus of Auxerre* (or *Vita St. Germanus*, hereafter 'VG' (see Hoare (ed.) 1954)). As with the other sources for this period, the aim here is to assess the extent to which this particular text might be used as evidence for fifth-century Britain.

4.7.1 Constantius

Constantius is usually described as a priest of Lyons (his name is known from an inscription in a church in that city – Thompson 1984: 78; Wood 1984: 9) who dedicated his *Vita St. Germanus* to Patiens, bishop of Lyons (Thompson 1984: 78). However, while he was certainly a devout Christian and may have been a cleric, Thompson points out that we do not know his rank, and, compared to other places in Gaul described in the *Vita*, Constantius provides suspiciously few details about people and events when St. Germanus visited Lyons (VG 23. Thompson 1984: 78-9). Nevertheless, considering where he does seem to possess local knowledge (e.g. Arles, Alesia (ibid: 78)), he can be placed broadly in southern Gaul.

During his life, Constantius became a well-respected priest and poet – to the extent that he was called on in person to raise the morale of the people in Clermont during the Visigothic siege of the city (Wood 1984: 9). He was an educated man, able to write a carefully constructed narrative about St. Germanus (Wood 1984: 9). Yet it has also been suggested that he was predominantly concerned with, and wrote for, the educated and literate minority of fifth-century Gaul. The names Constantius records were all of wealthy townsfolk (Thompson 1984: 89) while the 'rustic poor' are described as 'a homogenous, undifferentiated, nameless mass...His readers were not interested in them as individuals' (ibid.).

Constantius included no dates in the *Vita St. Germanus*, although it was probably written at some point in the latter half of the fifth century in Gaul (somewhere between 480 and 490 but no later than 494 (Thompson 1984: 1) or between 450 and 494; probably 475-480 (Jones 1990: 1 n2)). Thus, the date of composition was at least several decades after the death of St. Germanus, which is usually said to have occurred around 445-448 (Thompson 1984: 55). Thompson, however, argues that 437 is more likely to be the correct date (ibid: 66). Given the amount of time between the death of St. Germanus and the composition of the *Vita*, it is necessary to consider the sources Constantius may have had available to write his hagiography. Very little is known about possible sources, and discussion usually revolves around hypothesizing about people who may still have been alive when Constantius was writing (e.g. Thompson 1984: 13). The great variation in the quality or specificity of the material recorded by Constantius has also led to much confusion regarding the value of the source (see below).

4.7.2 A summary of the *Vita St. Germanus*

The *Vita St. Germanus* begins with a dedication to Patiens, bishop of Lyons, and a preface in which Constantius describes his humility and modesty in writing the *Vita*. He asks that his readers should not 'scrutinize my words too closely... .' Constantius begins his description of Germanus's life by relating a few details about his youth, education and professional career. Germanus and his family were 'of the highest rank' and he therefore received a good education. Being a gifted scholar, he was able to become a lawyer and eventually 'when he was at the height of his reputation in the legal profession, the state promoted him to official rank by conferring on him the supreme office of *dux* and the rule over more than one Province' (VG 1). However, 'divine authority' and the demands of the country folk led to Germanus rejecting his career and becoming a bishop (VG 2). He adopted a life of preaching, extreme poverty and self-inflicted hardships. Having established Germanus as a well-known and respected bishop, Constantius relates how he performed a series of miracles and exorcisms, which gave the saint a widespread reputation for piety (VG 7-11).

There follows the description of Germanus's first mission to Britain. The Britons, we are told, were afflicted by the Pelagian heresy and sent a deputation to Gaul to ask for help in restoring the Catholic faith. A synod of Gallic bishops was convened and they decided to send Germanus and Lupus (another 'apostolic priest') to Britain (VG 12). During the sea crossing, demons caused a great storm to prevent the priests bringing salvation to Britain. Germanus apparently slept through this but his fellow travellers woke him at the height of the tempest and he succeeded in quelling the waves by pouring water on the sea and by prayer (VG 13) (this story is very similar to a miracle said to have been performed by Jesus – Matthew 8: 23-7).

On arrival in Britain, the two priests were met by large crowds and they set about preaching and working miracles (VG 13-14). During this time, Germanus and Lupus apparently did not encounter the Pelagians. Eventually, however, these 'teachers of perverse doctrines' entered into a disputation with the 'holy bishops' in front of a 'crowd of vast proportions.' The Pelagians spoke first; they 'took up the time of their hearers with empty words drawn out to great length but to little purpose.' Germanus and Lupus on the other hand spoke with 'floods of eloquence' about the scriptures and apostles. Thus, the 'revered prelates' won the day (VG 14). At the end of the disputation, a man of high military rank brought forward his ten-year-old daughter who was blind. Germanus cured her using his reliquary.

We are then told that the bishops visited the shrine of St. Alban. When returning from there, Germanus injured his foot and was forced to recuperate where it happened for a few days. There was a fire at the house where he was resting, but he refused to leave the house and remained unscathed, thus demonstrating the power of faith (VG 16).

The next event in Germanus's first mission to Britain is that which links this source to 'the Saxons'. Constantius relates that the Saxons and Picts 'joined forces to make war on the Britons'. The British soldiers felt themselves 'utterly unequal to the contest' and asked the 'holy prelates' for help. They came to the soldier's camp, and, because it was Lent, many were baptized and a temporary church was erected for Easter Day. Apparently the Saxons and Picts heard of this and planned to attack the unprepared worshipers. However, the Britons learnt of this plan from their scouts and Germanus took control, leading the troops into the field. The Britons surprised the attackers and, on Germanus's instruction shouted 'Alleluia' three times;

> 'The enemy were panic-stricken, thinking that the surrounding rocks and the very sky itself were falling on them. Such was their terror that no effort of their feet seemed enough to save them... Thus the British army looked on at its revenge without striking a blow, idle spectators of the victory achieved... the pious soldiery obtained the spoils of a victory from heaven. The bishops were elated at the rout of the enemy without bloodshed and a victory gained by faith and not by force' (VG 18).

After this, the bishops had a calm return voyage to Gaul with Britain 'rendered secure in every sense' (VG 18). Whilst in Gaul, Germanus became involved in a local taxation dispute and performed many miracles in various places (VG 19-24).

At this point Constantius records that a second mission to Britain became necessary due to the re-emergence of Pelagianism. Germanus returned, this time with a bishop called Severus (VG 25). They were met by 'the whole province' including a man called Elafius whose crippled son was cured by Germanus. Then 'the words of God showered upon them' and Germanus saw that

only a few Britons had fallen to Pelagianism; 'These were identified and formally condemned' then banished from the island. Constantius ends his description of the second British mission stating that;

> 'The effect of all this was so salutary that even now the faith is persisting intact in those parts. And so, with everything settled, the blessed bishops made a prosperous journey back to their own country' (VG 17).

The final chapters of the *Vita* relate Germanus's involvement in a conflict in Amorica, his travels around the cities and countryside of Gaul and Italy, all the time performing miracles. Whilst in Ravenna Germanus became ill and soon died. His body was taken to Auxerre and buried.

4.7.3 Critical assessments

Thompson, writing in 1984, thought it remarkable that so little attention had been paid to the *Vita St. Germanus* (Thompson 1984: vii). This lack of interest in the *Vita* is also evident today and is probably due to the intractable problems of reconciling 'fact' and fiction/allegory in the narrative. However, before discussing what might be called the literary issues, it is worth highlighting a number of cases in which events in the *Vita* appear to contradict information from other sources. Even before considering the inherent problems of hagiographic literature, these more traditional discussions of the *Vita* have led scholars to question the reliability of this text, especially concerning Britain.

As with other fifth-century sources, the *Vita St. Germanus* has been the subject of intensive debates regarding dating and chronology (see Jones 1990; Thompson 1984; Wood 1984 for full discussions). Wood has referred to Germanus's first British mission as 'the first clearly dated episode after 410' (Wood 1984: 6) and thus highly significant in a period when specific historical dates are few and far between. It is also important to recall here that it is during the first British mission that we are told the Saxons (and Picts) were raiding/invading the island. The confident dating of the event comes not from Constantius – for he provided no dates in the *Vita* – but from Prosper's *Chronicon*. An entry in this annal dates Germanus's first mission to 429 by way of a consular reference (Prosper also records that Germanus was sent to Britain as a papal representative (Thompson 1984: 80)). This date is widely accepted (Thompson 1984: 55; Wood 1984: 6). However, Jones (1990) has argued that the 429 date appears anomalous in relation to other sources (cf. Jones and Casey 1988; 1991). He argues that 429 clashes with the peaceful interlude for the Britons, which occurred between the *adventus* and the Saxon revolt, as described in Gildas, Bede and the *Historia Brittonum* (Jones 1990: 5). Jones's alternative is to suggest that the first mission was in fact much longer than is suggested by Constantius. In the

Vita, the 'Alleluia victory' happened at Easter (April 7 in 429 (ibid: 6)), and it has been suggested that Germanus must have come to Britain in the winter of that same year. Jones, however suggests that from the beginning of 429 until April was not enough time to fit in all the events and preaching hinted at in the *Vita*. Thus, he believes the first mission to have been much longer than Constantius implies. If the Alleluia victory was not in 429, but in the mid-late 430s the clash with the other sources is avoided (ibid: 7).

The date for the second visit of Germanus to Britain has also been debated. This time there is no date given in the *Vita* and Prosper does not record the event. Most scholars have dated the second mission to between 444 and 448 (Thompson 1984: 56). However, Thompson compares the dating derived from Constantius with that from other sources recording the imperial officials mentioned in the *Vita*. He concluded that Germanus actually went to Britain for the second time in 436 and died in Ravenna in 437. Once again, the hypothesis requires the acceptance that Constantius may be at fault. As with other sources (e.g. Gildas's DEB, the *Gallic Chronicle of 452*), the reliability of one chronological hypothesis or another cannot be confirmed, however, the above does illustrate potential inconsistencies between the *Vita* and other sources, and the general lack of faith in the accuracy of the source in question.

Leaving chronology aside, there are further examples of where narrative details in the *Vita* appear to contradict other sources. Firstly, Constantius's report of the Picts and Saxons joining forces to raid Britain has caused some comment. Thompson has written that;

> 'The working agreement between the Saxons and the Picts is remarkable. It is the only instance of such co-operation to have been recorded from the age of the migrations' (Thompson 1984: 44).

Thompson is also suspicious of Constantius's description of the events leading up to the first British mission by Germanus. Constantius states that a 'widely attended synod' of Gallic bishops urged Germanus and Lupus to go to Britain. However, no such synod is known from any other source and it may be that this meeting was a creation of Constantius (Thompson 1984: 79). Furthermore, Prosper does not mention the Gallic synod and records that it was Pope Celestine, at the instigation of the deacon Palladius, who sent Germanus to Britain. How could Constantius not know that the pope instigated this mission? Furthermore, Prosper wrote only four years after the event, while Constantius wrote fifty to sixty years after (ibid: 79-80). Again, the accuracy of Constantius's evidence is in doubt.

Thompson has also highlighted Constantius's assertion that after Germanus's second mission to Britain (i.e. late 430s or mid-440s) the faith persisted intact there until the time of Constantius's writing (470s-480s) (VG 27). Of course, the traditional view is that by the 480s/490s the

Germanic peoples had taken control and that Britain was a pagan country. Thompson believes that small pockets of Christians may have survived into the later fifth century, but Constantius implies that all areas visited by Germanus remained Christian (Thompson 1984: 84-5). Again, the 'facts' contained in the *Vita* are questioned in the light of traditional wisdom. Thompson explains this passage thus;

> 'As a eulogy of Germanus these assertions are legitimate by the standards of the hagiographers. As a description of south-eastern Britain in the decade 480-90 they are in all probability a travesty of truth' (Thompson 1984: 85).

There are further problems with the internal coherence of the *Vita*, particularly concerning events in Britain. Thompson has noted that Constantius was generally relatively precise when recording Germanus's travels; when the hagiographer refers to Gaul and Italy he 'is all but impeccable' (Thompson 1984: 23). He demonstrates knowledge of individual's names, official Roman titles, towns and other places (ibid: 11-13). Yet when it comes to Britain it is a different story. Thompson describes a 'mysterious and uncharacteristic vagueness in the language which Constantius uses when he speaks of Britain and its inhabitants' (Thompson 1984: 7). This can be seen from the very beginning of the British narrative with the unspecific reference to a 'legation' from Britain asking the Gallic bishops for help (ibid.). There is also the confusion as to the amount of time Germanus spent in Britain (Jones 1990), descriptions of people or officials (Thompson 1984: 8-9) and there are no geographical allusions other than that Germanus visited St. Alban's shrine (*Verulamium*) (ibid: 13).

Contrary to these observations, there is the fact that Constantius recorded the personal name 'Elafius', whose son was healed by Germanus on the second mission. Thompson states that 'there is no reason whatever for thinking that this is Constantius's own invention' (ibid: 4) and it might be suggested that Constantius did have a source of information regarding Germanus's visits to Britain. At the same time, if Constantius did indeed have such a source it must have been extremely limited and it is difficult to disagree with Thompson's conclusion about the British passages in the *Vita*;

> 'In my opinion...we are forced to the conclusion that the discrepancy between the British and non-British parts of the narrative is in fact to be connected with the difficulty of collecting information about what had happened in Britain...I find it hard to resist the conclusion – although this, too, is not without its difficulties – that Constantius gives us practically no details about Britain in the saint's time because he knew none' (Thompson 1984: 13).

4.7.4 Constantius as a hagiographer

These problems with the *Vita St. Germanus* have led many to question how and why Constantius wrote this work in the first place. He was, first and foremost, a hagiographer and hence his aim was 'to glorify his hero and to edify his reader: he had no ambition to write history' (Thompson 1984: 2). The many miracles performed by Germanus were central to this aim. Although they may seem highly unlikely (to say the least), in terms of glorifying Germanus they make every sense. They were intended to prove the saint's piety and faith in God and to communicate wider allegorical messages. The story of the storm encountered by Germanus and Lupus on the way to Britain for the first time is paralleled in the gospels and is an allegory for Germanus overcoming evil. It also appears to prophesize the success of the anti-Pelagian mission (Wood 1984: 10). The miracle of restoring the sight of the ten-year-old girl after the disputation with the Pelagians is another example;

> 'The girl, it seems, has become an allegory of Britain; the restoration of true doctrine is instantly paralleled by the restoration of true sight' (Wood 1984: 10).

The healing of the crippled son of Elafius at the beginning of the second mission makes a similar point. As in the storm, when Germanus survives the house fire it is a victory of faith over the elements;

> 'Constantius is primarily concerned with theology and not with narrative – the story demonstrates the importance of complete passivity before the will of God; as a result of this, safety is granted' (Wood 1984: 11).

Continuing this theme, how should the miraculous 'Alleluia victory' over the Saxons and Picts be interpreted? This story after all is the reason why the *Vita* is being discussed here in the first place. Thompson provides a relatively traditional interpretation of this 'event' (Thompson 1984: 39-46). He discusses the description of the possible aims of the invaders, military tactics, the ability of the Saxons to communicate with the Picts and the possible numbers of opposing troops. He also suggests that the implied knowledge the Britons have of the enemy's tactics suggests the two sides had met before (ibid: 43) and he wonders if the Saxons were testing the Britons, perhaps with mass-migration in mind (ibid: 46). Thus, Thompson clearly sees the Saxon raid as a 'fact'. Wood, however, emphasizes that question of allegory versus fact becomes acute in this section (Wood 1984: 11). He writes that '[t]here is scarcely a phrase in the whole section which does not contribute to the balance of factual detail and allegorical interpretation' (ibid.). For example, Easter is canonically the correct time for baptisms, yet the three shouts of 'Alleluia' clearly parallel the manner in which Joshua's troops destroyed Jericho (Joshua 6). As with the other miraculous episodes, this passage is best interpreted in terms of theology rather than historical reality;

> 'It is possible that there was a campaign against the Picts and Saxons in 429...but it would be rash to associate it with Germanus; Constantius's account of the Alleluia-victory is primarily an allegory about a bishop leading a people to true faith and therefore physical safety' (Wood 1984: 12).

As a final point, these miracles, and the allegorical interpretation of them, may also reflect the contemporary context and concerns of Constantius's time and place of writing. In the 470s/480s, Patiens (Bishop of Lyons) was noted for his efforts against the expansion of Burgundian power in Gaul and for famine relief. Constantius himself had been at the siege of Clermont by the Visigoths (Wood 1984: 12). The *Vita* itself would probably have circulated around Gallic bishops on its completion and, as the above quotation suggests, Constantius may have been concerned with the role of bishops and the relationship between church, state and general physical and spiritual well-being of the people. Wood has written that;

> 'The author and audience, therefore, might lead the historian to expect a work whose central concern was episcopal behaviour in a period of crisis, almost a handbook for bishops in the 470s and 480s' (Wood 1984: 9).

4.7.5 Conclusion

From the above discussion of the *Vita St. Germanus* it is clear there are major problems with this source as evidence for the fifth century. This holds true for those more traditional studies which focus on events in the narrative and their dating, as well as for those that highlight literary and authorial contexts. All these problems apply particularly to the British sections of the *Vita*. Yet Pelagianism was an issue in Britain and the rest of Europe, and it is also possible that people who became widely known (at least in ecclesiastical circles) as Saxons raided Britain at the same time and that there was cross-channel communication in the fifth century. However, as stated many times before, potential 'facts' and literary context cannot be divorced from each other. Hence, in this particular case it must be remembered that the Saxons occupy a relatively minor place in a narrative that was meant primarily to glorify St. Germanus and to be a guide for contemporary leaders. Furthermore, it was written forty to fifty years after Germanus's death and hundreds of miles away, by an author who appears to know little about Britain. The *Vita St. Germanus* is, for some questions, a valuable historical source, but in terms of evidence for the nature of specific raids on Britain on certain dates, or for the idea of migrations as a whole, it is severely lacking.

4.8 Zosimus: *Historia Nova*

Zosimus was a Byzantine Greek writer who wrote in a classical style, probably in Constantinople (Goffart 1989: 95, 99). Like several of the authors discussed in this chapter, we

only know about him through his surviving work. In this, there are hints about Zosimus's career and background, indeed the title of his text gives him an official rank; he may have been an officer in the Imperial civil service (Jones, M. 1996: 249), or a retired treasury advocate (Goffart 1989: 81). He wrote one extant work called *Historia Nova* (*Recent* or *New History*). Historians believe that, due to the careless assembly of the book, it was probably not completed at the time of Zosimus's death. The date of *Historia Nova* has been widely debated for many years, and Goffart (ibid: 89-90) has summarized these complex discussions. The arguments have been based on detailed analyses of certain passages in the text referring to Emperors, specific events and the attitudes expressed by the author. Most historians have dated *Historia Nova* to roughly the second half of the fifth century, although Goffart, drawing on other evidence and reinterpreting certain references, argues that 'the writing of the *History* almost certainly took place in the early sixth century, between 498 and 518' (ibid: 90. Also Wood 1984: 2).

Modern historians have attached a great deal of value to Zosimus's work (particularly regarding his British passages) because he incorporated earlier work by Olympiodorus of Thebes. Olympiodorus wrote a history covering the years 407-25 that may have been written soon after 425. This text no longer exists, although fragments do survive in other sources. The Olympiodoran text is also the source of Zosimus's Book IV, which includes the two passages relating to Britain (Bartholomew 1982: 261). Wood believes the distance between Zosimus and events in Britain is off-set by the latter's use of Olympiodorus (Wood 1984: 2; also Sims-Williams 1983b: 10). It is not clear where other passages of *Historia Nova* came from, and these might be presumed to be Zosimus's own views (Goffart 1989: 88).

4.8.1 The purpose of the *Historia Nova*

Goffart has discussed why the *Historia Nova* was written. He describes Zosimus as 'the first historian of Rome's fall' (ibid: 81) and argues that the author was the first historian to place himself explicitly in a post-Imperial world and to attempt to write a history that explained the reasons behind why the Empire declined and then fell;

> 'His purpose was unique and original...Zosimus deliberately related the history of the Roman Empire as a tale of decline and fall: "For just as Polybius narrated how the Romans acquired their sovereignty within a brief period of time, so I am going to tell how they lost it through their own blind folly within no long period of time" (1.57.1). Though he lived in a state that called itself the Roman Empire, Zosimus in his own mind already stood where Poggio, Gibbon, and we ourselves stand: in the age following the fall of the world empire of Rome' (Goffart 1989: 82).

Goffart argues that, in essence, the history of the later Roman Empire has been written in terms of decline and fall ever since.

How did Zosimus explain the fall of the Roman Empire? For the modern scholar of late antiquity, Zosimus appears to offer a great deal of evidence about the decline and fall; he discusses economic, administrative and military factors, as well as the role of barbarians (ibid: 84). However, the primary cause given by Zosimus was religious. Most historians believe Zosimus to have been a pagan (Goffart 1989: 85). However, Goffart also notes that he had much in common with Christianity, such as a love of piety and ancient, hallowed things. Zosimus may not have had allegiance to specific pagan deities, but is perhaps best described as a 'conservative' (Cameron 1993: 55; Goffart 1989: 85), devoted to a 'religion of culture', whereby many in the fourth century had nostalgia for 'old' gods, temples, rituals and festivals (Goffart 1989: 85).

It was this conservatism (also evident in the works of Procopius (Cameron 1993: 55)) that appears to have led Zosimus to lament the passing of the empire, describing a black-and-white picture of civilization under threat from outside (ibid: 192). He therefore asserts the need for defence, against barbarians in particular (Cameron 1993: 192). Given his reverence for the pagan past, it is not surprising that Zosimus laid much of the blame for the decline of the empire at the door of Christianity. It was this religion that brought to an end the old pagan rituals and he was highly critical of the Christian emperor Constantine, both for his failure to defend the empire (Cameron 1993: 49), and for his founding of Constantinople, which Zosimus hated. He called it an 'excessively great city', hugely overcrowded with people from all over the world, animals and houses (Cameron 1993: 15; Goffart 1989: 99).

4.8.2 Zosimus and Britain

It is in the context of writing a history of imperial decline that Zosimus referred to the situation in Britain. There are two passages that have been at the centre of debates on the ending of Roman Britain. The first is as follows;

> 'Gerontius...winning over the troops there (in Spain) caused the barbarians in Gaul to rise against Constantine. Since Constantine did not hold out against these (the greater part of his strength being in Spain), the barbarians from beyond the Rhine overran everything at will and reduced the inhabitants of the British Island and some of the peoples in Gaul to the necessity of rebelling from the Roman Empire and of living by themselves, no longer obeying the Roman laws. The Britons, therefore, taking up arms and fighting on their own behalf, freed the cities from the barbarians, who were pressing upon them; and the whole of Amorica and other provinces of Gaul, imitating the Britons, freed themselves in the same way, expelling the Roman officials and establishing a sovereign constitution on their own authority. And the rebellion of Britain and of the peoples in Gaul took place during the time of Constantine's usurpation' (Zosimus VI.5.2f, quoted in Thompson 1977: 306).

This passage has been discussed extensively in debates about the ending of Roman Britain. The events to which it refers must be dated to around 406 – the date when the barbarians are said to have crossed the Rhine – although Bartholomew (1982: 263) dates the rebellion described by Zosimus to 409. This passage introduces the idea that the Britons were pro-active in bringing to an end Roman authority in Britain because of the barbarian threat materializing across the channel and there have been a number of interpretations as to the nature of the revolt.

Dumville has written that Zosimus provides the only piece of evidence supporting the idea of a civil war in Britain (c.409). Even though there is no reference to fighting as such, it is suggested that the whole political basis of Romano-British society was overturned (Dumville 1977: 180). Michael Jones (1996: 108) also uses the above passage to support the idea that Roman Britain ended in a 'native revolt'. Thompson (1977; 163-7), argues that it was in fact a social and political revolt by the poorer classes against the Romanized government and aristocracy. As such, the rebellion described by Zosimus has also been compared to the so-called 'Bacaudic' rebellions in third-century Gaul (Jones, M. 1996: 170), in which dispossessed citizens who had been oppressed by rich, land-owning magistrates rebelled against authority. Others have been more cautious about making such a comparison (Wood 1984: 3).

A number of problems have also been raised regarding Zosimus's first description of Britain. Dumville (1977: 180) has written that it is difficult to believe that the rebellion was as widespread as is suggested by Zosimus (i.e. did *all* 'the Britons' take up arms and reject Roman law?). Michael Jones (1996: 109) also concludes that Zosimus conveys the idea of a generalized rejection of Roman authority, but questions the extent to which anti-imperial sentiment also implies the wholesale rejection of Roman social order. With regard to the reason for the revolt, the passages imply the barbarian threat across the channel was to blame. Sims-Williams (1983b: 10) rightly points out that Zosimus does not say to which ethnic group the 'threat' belonged. Nonetheless, at this point some scholars refer to the *Gallic Chronicle of 452*, which states that the Saxons were the threat (Bartholomew 1982: 263; Wood 1984: 2).

Bartholomew (1982: 263-4) also raises problems with the translation of the first British passage. He suggests that many have mistranslated the Greek verb that describes barbarians 'pressing upon them' (i.e. the British). The verb could also mean 'to be placed in' or 'stationed', and other Greek writers – including those describing barbarian troops being stationed in northern Italy – used the verb in this way. Zosimus could therefore have meant that the Britons freed themselves from barbarian troops belonging to the Roman army who were stationed in the cities. Bartholomew concludes;

> 'If troops of this kind were the victims of the British rebellion, Zosimus is not making a concealed reference to an invasion by Saxons, and the entry in the *Gallic Chronicle* will be of no relevance here' (Bartholomew 1982: 264).

The second reference to Britain occurs while Zosimus is describing the campaigns of Alaric against the cities of southern Italy. After the second siege of Rome in late 409, Alaric took all the cities of Aemilia except Bologna. This siege failed and Alaric moved to Liguria. Zosimus then writes;

> 'Honorius, sending letters to the cities in Britain ordering them to guard themselves, and rewarding the soldiers with gifts from the monies sent by Heraclian, Honorius was completely at ease having won the goodwill of the troops everywhere' (Zosimus VI.10.2, quoted in Thompson 1977: 315).

Although Zosimus does not date this event, it comes from part of the work relating to 410. Procopius also stated that Roman Britain ended in 410 (*Wars* 3.2.38). The passage has likewise been compared to Gildas's description of the Romans telling the Britons to defend themselves (DEB 1: 18) (Jones, M. 1996: 250; Wood 1984: 5-6). Wood concludes that the evidence for 410 is 'certainly not satisfactory' as the Gildas parallel does not, by itself, suggest this date, and Procopius may have adopted this date retrospectively given the situation in Britain at around this time (Wood 1984: 5-6). The ending of Roman Britain in Zosimus's narrative is also placed with the account of the sack of Rome (Cameron 1993: 37) and the loss of other cities to Alaric. Hence, this narrative context suggests Zosimus was attempting to create a general impression of an empire under threat rather than to relate a specific event that caused the severance of Britain from Rome. Furthermore, other contemporaries appear not to have interpreted events of this period as marking the end of Roman Britain (Wood 1984: 6); the church, for example, certainly had different attitudes to Britain (ibid: 25. Cf. Constantius's *Vita St. Germanus*).

It is not only the dating of this passage that has been disputed by scholars; its whole relevance to fifth-century Britain has also been questioned. Bartholomew (1982) has done this most explicitly, although the seventeenth-century editor of the Theodosian Code, Jacques Godefroy, or Gothofredus (ibid: 162) noted the same difficulties with this passage. Both point out that the Honorian letter episode comes in the middle of a passage about the hostilities between Honorius and Alaric in north Africa and southern Italy. Count Heraclian was holding Africa for Honorius (ibid: 261-2). As such;

> 'The reference to Britain is therefore an isolated fragment in an otherwise coherent account of the hostilities between Honorius and Alaric. It would be wise to view it with suspicion' (Bartholomew 1982: 262).

Gothofredus also suggested that 'Britain/*Britannia*' (in the Greek original) is a mistake (by Zosimus or a later copyist) and should in fact be read as *Bruttium*. This region at the 'toe' of Italy would have had huge strategic importance for Honorius as he attempted to keep open supply routes to Count Heraclian in north Africa (ibid: 262). Bartholomew believes that this conjecture;

> '...was ignored by generations of Romano-British historians, anxious as they were for facts' (Bartholomew 1982: 262).

This interpretation is perhaps supported by those who have noted the flaws and inconsistencies in Zosimus's writings (e.g. 'mixing up names and misplacing facts' - Wood 1984: 5. See also below). Thompson, however, has vigorously opposed the possibility of confusion over *Britannia/Bruttium* (1977: 315-16), using Zosimus's inconsistencies to support his ideas;

> '...the repetition of Honorius's name in one sentence is ominous. It suggests that when the historian began to write the participle clause about Britain he intended to bring in a new subject but changed his mind and went on with Honorius instead' (Thompson 1977: 315).

Thompson also believes that the letter being sent to 'the cities' of Britain supports the veracity of the first British passage; Honorius would have written to the vicar of the British diocese had he been able to (ibid.). While the double mention of Honorius may be grammatically worrying, the other evidence Thompson uses relies on a series of assumptions about how Roman Britain ended. Thus, given the narrative context of the passage, the argument put forward by Gothofredus and Bartholomew must be seen as a strong one, and cannot be dismissed out of hand.

4.8.3 Historian's attitudes to Zosimus

The above illustrates that modern scholars have a variety of attitudes to Zosimus and his work. These attitudes will now be discussed further in a more theoretical sense as they are a useful starting point for discussing Zosimus's authorial context, rather than simply the veracity (or otherwise) of what he wrote.

Some scholars appear to have a high level of confidence in the source in question. For example, Thompson asserts that the passage describing the Britons' need to defend themselves was unimpeachable. He states that '[a]s an historical event, this is not in question' (1979: 208). Similarly, Sims-Williams describes Zosimus as 'an excellent source' (1983b: 10) because he followed the account of Olympiodorus (see above and Thompson 1977: 308-9). The general use of Zosimus to debate events in fifth-century England also implies a certain level of confidence.

Yet many have also highlighted flaws in Zosimus's work. Thompson has admitted that 'Zosimus can often enough be a mutton-headed historian' (1977: 307). He also believes he can detect the mistakes in the *Historia Nova* and can deduce what Zosimus ought to have written to make his account more accurate (ibid.). Clearly, this reflects a positivistic/objectivist approach to historical sources and a belief that *we* can know the truth about the past and can judge earlier historians accordingly. Other historians have been less judgmental towards Zosimus, but have nonetheless noted potentially troublesome inconsistencies in the work. Wood contends that the *Historia Nova* may be a valuable source because of the use of Olympiodorus. However;

> '...even if he [Zosimus] did have a good source for Britain in 410, that does not mean he used his source accurately; Book VI of his *History*...is desperately muddled. For instance, Constantine asks forgiveness for the execution of Didymus and Verenianus in chapter 1, but the execution itself is not recorded until chapter 5, ominously enough the chapter which is crucial for the study of Britain' (Wood 1984: 2).

Goffart (1989: 88) describes another, similar case (in passages relating to Stilicho) to illustrate Zosimus's uncritical use of sources. He also believes that Zosimus may have had good sources for the third and fourth centuries, but that this past was only experienced through his books. For Zosimus the past was 'distant and hazy' (ibid: 95). Thus, given these opposing points of view, we have a situation in which, on the one hand, there is confidence in the *Historia Nova* as a source for fifth-century Britain, but on the other, there are quite clearly problems with the structure and composition of the text. This means that anything deduced from it must be qualified to some extent, especially, as we have seen, the passages relating to Britain.

Textual inconsistencies cannot be ignored, yet it is also important to contextualize source and to attempt to assess the influence of the author's contemporary situation. Zosimus was writing in the late fifth or early sixth century in Constantinople. His use of Olympiodorus is no greater guarantee of reliability since that author – being from Thebes – was hardly an eyewitness of fifth-century Britain. Furthermore, both were classical writers, whose modes of expression and historical concerns were no doubt influenced by their education (cf. Procopius).

But far from denying the historical veracity of Zosimus, his work may be eloquent about views that were current in sixth-century Constantinople. Here, the fall of the Western Empire was clearly a matter for concern for some people and the supposed loss of Britain was used by Zosimus to emphasize this point (Wood 1984: 24-5). Echoing this observation, it has been said that Zosimus's concern for the Western Empire came only through his use of Olympiodorus; otherwise he was only interested in his immediate context (Goffart 1989: 99). That others (in Constantinople?) agreed with Zosimus though has been suggested because the text of *Historia*

Nova appeared after Zosimus's death and he must therefore have had a sympathetic audience and supporters willing to 'publish' it (ibid: 88).

Hence, Goffart states that 'Zosimus speaks for a definable moment in the life of the Eastern Empire', employing certain (classical) modes of expression and theories of causation to narrate his fears. Cameron writes that;

> 'When Synesius in Cyrenaica, who lived with the bitter realities of provincial life for himself, says with tired resignation 'Pentapolis is dead', that is one thing; but when conservative historians like Zosimus and Procopius, who also tended to be the most vocal, fail to understand the depth of the structural change that had taken place, and prefer to lay the blame on moral factors or individuals, we should be fully aware how far such judgements have been conditioned by the nature of their education and cultural background' (Cameron 1993: 55).

4.8.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, it appears that the passages in Zosimus's *Historia Nova* referring to Britain, the rebellion there and the possible barbarian (Saxon?) involvement, must be treated, at the very least, with extreme caution. First, there are a number of problems and inconsistencies within the historical text written by Zosimus, especially in the passages where he refers to Britain. Second, Zosimus was writing at a certain time and place and his background may have led him to interpret and write about the world in a certain way. Among educated conservatives in Constantinople/the Eastern Empire in the late fifth/early sixth century there may well have been a tradition that Britain was lost to Rome around AD 410. However, that should not obscure the conclusion that this tradition cannot be used directly to help us understand the people and archaeology of fifth-century Britain.

4.9 Procopius

The writings of Procopius of Caesarea have been called 'perhaps the most exotic source for the question of Anglo-Saxon population' (Jones, M. 1996: 53). His work has, nevertheless, been important for historians and archaeologists attempting to shed light on events in fifth-century Britain.

4.9.1 The author and his background

The little we know of Procopius comes entirely from his own work. He was a native of Caesarea in Palestine, a Hellenic intellectual centre, and it was probably there that he received a 'standard secular education' (Cameron 1985: 6). It was a cosmopolitan city with a mixed population of Jews and Christians (ibid: 3-6). From his writing, it has been suggested that

Procopius belonged to, or at least had strong sympathies with, the upper class and possibly Christian landowners of the Eastern Empire. For example, in his *Secret History* he denounces the demands made on this class by the government (ibid: 6).

His education clearly allowed Procopius to reach a prominent position in the Imperial administration, since from AD 527 he seems to have been either accompanying General Belisarius on various campaigns or in Constantinople. As Cameron points out, one of Procopius's chief claims to authority is his personal knowledge of military and political events (ibid: 12). Despite this, however, we have no way of checking the information contained in Procopius's works as there are no other sources for the events he describes. Furthermore, his biography is vague in places and we do not know how much of his information was gained as an eyewitness, or if not, by what means he did receive it. As such, Procopius must have been editing and selecting information, at least to some extent, and his writings can never be treated as objective records of that period (ibid: 13-15; Wood 1984: 2).

4.9.2 The sources written by Procopius

There are three extant works by Procopius; *Secret History, Buildings* and *The History of the Wars* and historians believe that all three were written at roughly the same time. It also appears that *Buildings* was left unfinished; possibly interrupted by his death and this probably occurred soon after 554 (Cameron 1985: 11-12). Hence, the three works can be dated to the middle of the sixth century. These texts are important for being the main, if not only, source for the reign of the Emperor Justinian (AD 527-65). Procopius is therefore the major Greek historian of late antiquity and even for Byzantium as a whole (ibid: 3). Although he is clearly of much wider relevance to scholars of late antiquity, it is the passages in *Wars* that refer to Britain that will concern us here. These will be described, before setting them in the more general intellectual context of Procopius's work.

4.9.3 The British passages in Procopius's work

There are two main passages relating to Britain written by Procopius, and both of these come from *The History of the Wars*. This work is a secular history of military and political events. It consists of eight books that describe conflicts with a number of ethnic groups in various geographical areas (e.g. the *Gothic, Persian and Vandal Wars*). The first reference to Britain is in the 'origins' section at the beginning of *Vandal Wars I*. It describes the revolt of Constantine III in 407, and its suppression in 409 (Cameron 1985: 213). Constantine perished in 411, and Procopius goes on to relate that;

> 'The Romans were no longer able to recover Britain, but it remained from that time under tyrants' (Procopius, *Vandal Wars* I.2.38).

This passage has often been used (frequently in conjunction with Zosimus) to prove that the Britons successfully rebelled in around 409/410, and that this marks the ending of direct Roman administration on Britain (Jones, M. 1996: 115, 250; Thompson 1980: 506; Wood 1984: 2).

The second passage describing Britain is part of a geographical and ethnological 'digression' in the last book of the *Wars* (Jones, M. 1996: 53). This digression forms the background for a story of political intrigue surrounding the marriage of Radigis, prince of the Warni, and an Anglian princess. The description clearly shows how little Procopius actually knew about the islands;

> 4 'The island of Brittia lies in this [the northern] ocean, not far from the shore, rather about 200 stades away, approximately opposite the mouths of the Rhine; and it is between Britannia and the island of Thule.
> 5 Whereas Britannia lies towards the west opposite the extremities of the land of the Spaniards, separated from the mainland [of the Spaniards] by about 4000 stades, no less, Brittia on the other hand faces the rear of Gaul, the parts of it facing the ocean – clearly, to the north of Spain and Britannia.
> 6 Three very populous nations inhabit the island of Brittia, and one king is set over each of them. And the name of these nations are Angles, Frisians, and Britons who have the same name as the island.
> 8 So great apparently is the multitude of these peoples that every year in large groups they migrate from there [Brittia] with their women and children and go to the Franks.
> 9 And they are settling them in what seems to be the more desolate part of their land, and as a result of this they say they are gaining possession of the island.
> 10 So that not long ago the king of the Franks actually sent some of his friends to the Emperor Justinian in Byzantium, and dispatched with them men of the Angles, claiming that this island [Britain], too, is ruled by him. Such then are the matters concerning the island called Brittia' (*Gothic Wars* IV-X.20.8, quoted in Thompson 1980: 498-501).

Other references to Britain/Brittia also have a distinctly mythical quality. In another lengthy digression about Brittia (*Gothic Wars* IV.20.42ff) Procopius describes how the island was divided by a wall separating the temperate parts of the island from those that were uninhabitable. Yet he has no idea that the Romans built the wall (Cameron 1985: 214-15; Jones, M. 1996: 55; Thompson 1980: 507). Procopius also relates a passage that has been referred to as a 'ghost story' (Burn 1955: 259). The story states that Brittia was the home of dead souls, and that the inhabitants of an island off Brittia, 'instead of paying tribute to the Franks, acted as escorts of the dead' (Cameron 1985: 215). At night they rowed to Brittia but on the return journey their boats are lighter although no passengers were ever seen. Procopius, however, does not give it much credence, describing it as being 'just like a fairy tale', even though it was attested by 'countless people' (ibid.).

Finally, Procopius describes how in AD 537, Belisarius offered Britain ('long subject to Rome') to the Goths (*Gothic Wars* II.6.28), and in *Secret History* (19.13) we learn that 'Justinian had squandered money on subsidies as far afield as Britain' (Cameron 1985: 215).

4.9.3.1 Discussion of Procopius's British references

Clearly, within these passages relating to Britain/Brittia/Britannia there is, as Michael Jones has pointed out (1996: 53-4), a disconcerting mixture of fantasy and the plausible and no single statement is obviously valid. Yet each passage has been subjected to intensive analysis, and in doing so many historians have recognized the problems inherent in Procopius's text. Burn (1955: 258) believed that the 'vagueness' of Procopius's references to Britain demonstrate the complete communication breakdown between Britain and the Mediterranean world, while Wood argues that Procopius was not close enough to Britain for his account to be a primary source and we do not know from where his information came (Wood 1984: 2, also Cameron 1985: 13-15). Thompson describes Procopius's work as 'an extraordinary mixture of half-truths and wild exaggerations' (1980: 507), and notes that '[i]n the entire *History* he gives no hint that he knew of massive settlements of invaders in what had once been a Roman province' (ibid: 506). Likewise, it is noticeable that Procopius is confused about the geography of Britain. Thompson believes this to be a misunderstanding by Procopius (who was in fact describing Brittany – 1980: 501), while Jones believes that this demonstrates his general ignorance of Britain (Jones, M. 1996: 55).

Yet Thompson's assertion that these passages are composed of 'half-truths' is revealing; it implies that some degree of value may still be attached to elements of them. Indeed, he also believes that Procopius's information about Britain 'is of the first importance' (Thompson 1980: 498) for 'when do we next meet a Byzantine historian who knows as much about Britain as Procopius?' (ibid: 507). Many historians have attempted to distil evidence from this source in order to illuminate fifth-century Britain. This has often been done by seeking to reconcile Procopius's statements with those from other sources. For example, Stenton argued that the 'reverse migration' of the inhabitants of Brittia to Frankish lands is a plausible notion in the aftermath of the British victory at Mount Badon (as described by Gildas in DEB 26.1) and the subsequent restriction of land available for Anglo-Saxon settlement (quoted in Jones, M. 1996: 54). Similarly, the idea that Britain's post-Roman rule was by 'tyrants' is said to be supported in Zosimus (ibid: 250). Jones also believes that some passages may shed light on political and diplomatic relations that took place across the North Sea (ibid: 57, also Wood 1997: 48) and that the ships described (those said to carry 'the souls of the dead') might be used as evidence for marine transport (Jones, M. 1996: 93-4). The British passages by Procopius have also been

involved in archaeological debates over whether Frisians participated in the fifth-century migrations to England (e.g. Bremmer 1990; Myres 1948).

Thus, Procopius has been used in a variety of ways to help understand the Roman-Medieval transition in fifth-century Britain. However, is it methodologically correct (in the light of the theoretical position described at the beginning of this chapter) to try to separate the 'fact' from the 'fantasy'? The possible British references are only a minute fraction of Procopius's work as a whole and thus must be placed in the context of that work along with an understanding of the author himself.

4.9.4 Intellectual and geographical contexts

As mentioned above, Procopius received a classical/secular education, and of his three works, the *History of the Wars* (the text with most references to Britain) demonstrates this most clearly. Cameron called *Wars* a 'Thucydidean history' (1985: 45). This classical style is one reason why many scholars have treated Procopius as a 'rational' historian (ibid: 46), in the line of great Greek authors such as Thucydides, Tacitus, Herodotus and Polybius. Nevertheless, as with Christian salvation histories, the classical models for the text have implications for both its form and content. Being constrained by a tradition of historical writing going back a thousand years, Procopius's history includes little consideration of social, economic or religious issues. Rather, the emphasis is on military and political factors, high level diplomacy and personal relations between rulers, officials and generals (ibid: 150). Classical conventions precluded the discussion of politics *and* religion, and while there are some moral or religious passages, these issues are not seriously considered (ibid.).

Procopius's writing style, phraseology and vocabulary – his modes of expression and historical imagination – were also heavily influenced by classical texts. Indeed, the secular education system encouraged traditional approaches to writing by emphasizing the imitation of a fixed canon of classical texts. Originality was not valued (ibid: 33). As Cameron has written;

> 'It has often been pointed out...that Procopius seems to have taken whole episodes from Herodotus and Thucydides, on the strength of which he has been accused of importing sheer fiction into his own history. But as with the vocabulary and phraseology, this is part of a centuries old tradition in certain sorts of history writing. There was nothing new about what Procopius did' (Cameron 1985: 39).

Of particular relevance to the present study of transition in fifth-century Britain is Procopius's ethnographic evidence. Again, Procopius was heavily influenced by, and deliberately imitates, a long tradition of ethnographic writing going back to Herodotus and Hippocrates (Cameron 1985: 218). His writings reveal that he was 'no friend' of barbarians (unless they were royalty

or senior figures in the Byzantine army (ibid: 239)), and he employs stereotypes and general prejudices to describe them. For example, he links their supposedly typical characteristics with the climate of their homelands (ibid: 218). Thus, Procopius (as with many other contemporary writers, e.g. Gildas) has a homogenizing view of the people(s) living in Brittia/Britannia; he assumes they acted together and had the same motivations in migrating to the continent (Thompson 1980: 507).

Of course, Procopius was not merely expressing himself in a manner that reflects his classical education. As Cameron has again described, adopting certain modes of expression also meant 'the taking over of a whole conception of historiography with its attendant modes of thought' (Cameron 1985: 39). Given that we can never separate an author's expression and thought processes (ibid.), or the text from its context, it also implies that;

> '...the understanding of the classicism of Procopius is not a simple matter of peeling off an external layer. The phenomenon goes far deeper and is much more pervasive, right to the heart of Procopius's work' (Cameron 1985: 34).

Yet Procopius is not merely a classical throwback. His work demonstrates contemporary tensions between the traditional, classical ideas and the increasingly evident Christianization. For example, Cameron describes how, despite often being seen as a 'rational historian' (especially in *Wars*), Procopius regularly resorts to the miraculous as an explanation of events (ibid: 29). Similarly, in *Buildings*, he writes in the style of an orthodox Christian, stating that Justinian's choice of architect for the church of S. Sophia was due to divine inspiration (ibid: 30). Yet in other places, Procopius tried to show how Christianity was strange to him (ibid.). Thus, on the one hand, Procopius resisted writing an ecclesiastical history (of the sort that was emerging at this time, e.g. Eusibius, Gregory of Tours) and specifically selected classical modes of expression to do this; up-holding traditional/secular ideas – especially in *Wars* (ibid: 239). On the other hand, despite his classicizing narrative, he failed to keep Christian ideas out of his work (ibid: 266; Scott 1983: 170). To look only at *Wars* (the work with most references to Britain) is to look at the work that is most overtly classical; all three works together give a somewhat different and more complex picture (Cameron 1985: 265).

Cameron (1985) has therefore criticized earlier authors for not judging Procopius in an appropriate intellectual and social context. It is this mixture of influences and modes of expression that must be at the heart of any understanding of Procopius's works. For this reason Procopius is not a 'classical' writer (although in one work he did express himself using distinctly classical rhetoric), rather his work must be seen as the product of sixth-century Byzantium, and of an individual who had limited intellectual horizons and saw himself representing the small land-owning classes of the Eastern Empire (ibid: 263-4). Furthermore,

the three works together show that even his personal attitudes were not static; they changed through time and from one composition to the next, depending on his aim in writing (ibid: 263).

4.9.5 Conclusion

To conclude, Procopius's work has often been used as a source of historical facts, probably due to his classical, rational aura. Many have sought to integrate this source directly into their discussions of late antiquity, although others have noted the problems with Procopius's works and have been rightly cautious with it. Nevertheless, many have sought to deduce where he *might* be correct. However, Cameron (ibid: 46) has described Procopius's work as 'a subtle mix of the personal and the imitative, the traditional and the contemporary'. Furthermore;

> '...most previous readings of Procopius have been of the naïve kind that has as its main objective the digging out of nuggets of believable information. At this stage both the artfulness of Procopius and the cultural values that his work embodies need to be emphasized...he is not and cannot be the straightforward recorder of objective truth' (Cameron 1985: xii).

Thus, Procopius is a valuable and eloquent historical source but his work reflects the point of view of one individual living in the Eastern Empire in the sixth century.

These conclusions have important implications for our understanding of Procopius's references to Britain in the fifth century. He may well have had access to information that derived ultimately from people connected with Britain (albeit possibly sixth- not fifth-century Britain), as is suggested by the account of the Frankish embassy in Byzantium. Nevertheless, Britain was clearly distant and alien to Procopius, both geographically and conceptually. His description of the islands can be interpreted as being a product of the traditional, conservative, classical narrative written in a changing world. Procopius's account of the island and its people echoes the ancient classical tradition of historical and ethnographic writing and the Empire's loss of Britain was used as yet another example of the erosion of Roman rule, traditional values and social order. Those passages relating to Britain found in Procopius's works can therefore only be interpreted as elements of more extensive compositions written in a specific context. They are not unambiguous records of realities in fifth-century Britain.

4.10 Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*

Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (or *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* – hereafter 'HE'. Colgrave and Mynors (eds.) 1969) is perhaps the most influential source in British early medieval archaeology. Building on the work of Gildas, Bede provided a more ethnically, geographically and chronologically specific account of the fifth-century Germanic

migrations, listing the ethnic groups involved, their origins, as well as where and when they settled in England. Bede was, however, writing in eighth-century Northumbria, and the aim of this section is to assess the extent to which the context in which Bede wrote influenced his accounts of the fifth-century past.

4.10.1 Bede's life

In his *Historia* Bede tells us that on completion of this, his best-known work, he was fifty-nine years old. That was the year 731 (but see Goffart 1990 – below). He was therefore born in 672 or 673 in the area around the twin monasteries of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: xix). From the little we know of his life it appears that about the age of seven he entered the Benedictine monastery at Monkwearmouth and quickly became an outstanding monk and scholar. Indeed, he was ordained a deacon at the age of nineteen, six years before the canonical age (ibid: xx). During his life he became well known within the English church and state and wrote numerous books; a majority of which were exegetical biblical studies (Goffart 1990: 29; Hanning 1966: 72). He died in Monkwearmouth on the 25th or 26th May 735.

4.10.2 Fifth-century migrations in the *Historia*

Before discussing the *Historia* as a whole, those sections of the text that refer to fifth-century Germanic migrations/invasions will be quoted. The text begins with a geographical description of the island (an idea perhaps taken from Gildas or other Christian and classical authors – Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 14) and an extensive narrative describing Romano-British history follows this. Bede's late Roman and sub-Roman history includes many references borrowed from Gildas, although other sources were also used. For example, Bede provides a name for the *superbus tyrannus* of Gildas's narrative, who invited the Saxons into Britain. Bede calls him 'Vortigern' (HE 1: 14), although this may be an equivalent translation of the title used by Gildas (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 48). Like Gildas, Bede says the troops came in three ships, however, he is far more specific in describing the geography and the participants involved with the Germanic invasions. In a now famous passage dated to AD 449 Bede described how;

> 'They came from three very powerful Germanic tribes, the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes. The people of Kent and the Isle of Wight are of Jutish origin and also those opposite the Isle of Wight, that part of the kingdom of Wessex which is still today called the nation of the Jutes. From the Saxon country, that is, the district now know as Old Saxony, came the East Saxons, the South Saxons, and the West Saxons. Besides this, from the country of the Angles, that is, the land between the kingdoms of the Jutes and the Saxons, which is called *Angulus*, came the East Angles, the Mercians, and all the Northumbrian race (that is those people who dwell north of the river Humber) as well as the other Anglian tribes. *Angulus* is said to have remained deserted from that day to this. Their first leaders are said to have been two brothers, Hengest and Horsa' (HE 1: 15).

As an aside, it is worth quoting another, similar passage in which Bede presents a slightly different picture concerning the origins of the Anglian and Saxon people in England (see Campbell 1982:31; Hines 1994: 50; Wood 1997: 41). This passage comes from a section that describes a priest called Egbert, who planned to embark on a mission of conversion;

> 'He knew that there were very many peoples in Germany from whom the Angles and Saxons, who now live in Britain, derive their origin... Now these people are the Frisians, Rugians, Danes, Huns, Old Saxons, and *Boruhtware* (Bructeri); there are also many other nations of the same land who are practising heathen rites to whom this soldier of Christ proposed to go' (HE 5: 9).

After the first ethnographic description (HE 1: 15), Bede went on to describe how 'these people eagerly crowded into the island' and became a 'source of terror to the natives' (ibid.). Clearly echoing Gildas's biblically inspired salvation history, Bede states that;

> 'To put it briefly, the fire kindled by the hands of the heathen executed the just vengeance of God on the nation for its crimes. It was not unlike that fire once kindled by the Chaldeans which consumed the walls and all the buildings of Jerusalem.' (HE 1: 15).

Again interpreting Gildas, Bede continues his narrative describing how the Britons recovered under the leadership of Ambrosius Aurelianus;

> 'Under his leadership the Britons regained their strength, challenged their victors to battle, and, with God's help, won the day. From that time on, first the Britons won and then the enemy were victorious until the year of the siege of Mount Badon, when the Britons slaughtered no small number of their foes about forty-four years after their arrival in Britain. But no more of this hereafter' (HE 1: 16).

Going back in time, Bede then describes the effects of Pelagianism on Britain and the mission of St. Germanus (HE 1: 17-21). Yet before resuming the historical narrative in the year AD 582 with the Gregorian mission to England (HE 1: 23), Bede briefly refers to the post-Mount Badon peace. He reiterates the failure of the Britons to learn from their previous afflictions – as described by Gildas – but goes on;

> 'To other unspeakable crimes, which Gildas their own historian describes in doleful words, was added this crime, that they never preached the faith to the Saxons or Angles who inhabited Britain with them. Nevertheless God in His goodness did not reject the people whom he foreknew, but He appointed much worthier heralds of the truth to bring this people to the faith' [i.e. St. Augustine] (HE 1: 22).

4.10.3 Interpretation of the *Historia*

The *Historia Ecclesiastica* is Bede's best-known work, and to a large extent, Bede's modern reputation as a scholar is based on it. It very quickly became the standard work of English history; indeed Bede was possibly the first 'English' historian (using the term *gens Anglorum* to describe the people of England (Reynolds 1985: 398, 401-2)). By 793 King Offa of Mercia owned a copy and the early sections of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* made use of it. The transmission of the *Historia* has also been very secure and does not present a problem for interpretation (Goffart 1988: 235). Bede's high reputation has continued into the modern era since, as Colgrave and Mynors point out, there is a great deal of pre-eighth-century history that we would know little or nothing about were it not for the *Historia* (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: xvii-xviii).

However, Goffart (1988; 1990) has argued that a great deal of work on Bede and the *Historia* has been rather one-dimensional. Many have seen Bede as a capable scholar and historian in the modern sense, and the *Historia* itself has been interpreted as a transparently ecclesiastical history preserving genuine early traditions (e.g. Jones, M. 1996: 57-9). This is clearly evident in the way archaeologists have used Bede's work. From the very beginnings of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, the *Historia* has been central to understandings of the fifth century (e.g. Kemble's reference to the 'Old Saxons' (1855a: 280)). Much of the ethnic terminology for the post-Roman period derives ultimately from this source (for a full discussion of such terminology see Reynolds 1985) and Bede's geographical and chronological statements have also influenced explanations of archaeological change (see Chapters Two and Six).

However, while Bede's text cannot be dismissed out of hand, many of these conclusions may be classified as taking a positivistic approach to history, in which the source is taken at face value. Walter Goffart has summarized how studies of the *Historia* have been influenced by this approach;

> '...Bede's goal has been defined by a simple, ironclad tautology: he wrote the *History* (so it is claimed) because he wished to trace the end of Roman Britain, describe the Gregorian mission, relate the synod of Whitby, and narrate all the other important episodes his work contains; it seems as though the *History* exists because Bede was determined to tell posterity everything in it that we love to read; fathoming why Bede laboured over the *History* calls for no greater effort, one might think, than to look inside it. Since the eighteenth century, medieval authors have been considered to be sincere, uncomplicated folk, expressing themselves without artifice or deviousness. The normal Bede fits comfortably into this schema... [He was] Ingenious and straightforward, impeccable in his research, transparently clear in his emphases... ' (Goffart 1990: 30).

Yet is such a tautological approach to Bede and the HE really defensible? Are his references to Britain in the fifth century really as straightforward as they might appear?

4.10.4 Archaeological reassessments

To begin with, it is worth emphasizing that many archaeological studies have shown Bede's geographical and ethnographic descriptions are not necessarily borne out by material evidence. In the earlier phases of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, many scholars based their research and interpretations on Bede's account. They sought to identify the distinct Anglian, Saxon and Jutish regions of England through distinctive material culture. However, this approach has been largely abandoned as many scholars recognize inherent problems with Bede's description and see the migrations as far less rigidly structured in terms of ethnic groups (see Chapter Two). Likewise, the idea that *Angulus* was entirely deserted has been questioned. Recent research has shown that although the settlement pattern in modern Schleswig-Holstein and southern Denmark may have changed and reduced in scale in the fifth to sixth centuries, the region was not completely abandoned (Gebühr 1998; Jones, M. 1996: 60). Finally, Bede refers to 'hordes' of Germanic invaders (HE 1: 15), whereas many archaeologists today prefer to think in terms of small-scale Germanic incursions and settlement (see Chapter Two) (although that idea still rests on a range of questionable archaeological and historical assumptions).

4.10.5 Sources

Turning to the *Historia* itself, it was written nearly three centuries after the supposed Germanic migrations/invasions and it is therefore necessary to discuss Bede's sources of information for the fifth century. These sources were, however, extremely meagre (Sims-Williams 1983b: 25; Yorke 1993; 1999). Yorke has suggested that the scarcity of sources for the sixth century and before may be due to later Christian authors' distaste for the pagan periods and the existence of a completely different intellectual tradition that had little use for earlier oral or written accounts (Richter 1994; Yorke 1999: 26).

Bede's primary written source for the fifth century was Gildas's *De excidio Britanniae* (other possible sources are discussed below). In using Gildas, Bede encountered two main problems. First, Gildas's narrative was almost entirely concerned with the sins and afflictions of the Britons rather than with the 'impious easterners' who Bede now believed were the ancestors of the English. Secondly, Gildas's narrative was chronologically very vague. He referred to only two datable historical figures (Magnus Maximus and Agitus/Aëtius) and gives an ambiguous indication of when he himself wrote (see Section 4.5.3.2). Bede clearly believed that the siege at Mount Badon took place forty-four years after the *adventus Saxonum* (HE 1: 16). However, as mentioned when discussing Gildas's chronology, there are a number of ways in which this

passage might be interpreted and why Bede chose this particular interpretation is not clear (Sims-Williams 1983b: 20). Concerning the dating of the *adventus* itself – as with all fifth-century chronologies – the arguments have been long and involved and may never yield an entirely satisfactory solution (after reviewing the chronological arguments, Sims-Williams wrote that he must leave them 'in despair' (ibid: 21)). Here, however, it is sufficient to note that Bede's dating of the *adventus* to AD 449 is 'surely a mere deduction from Gildas's placing of the letter to Agitus/Aëtius, with no independent authority' (ibid: 16-17; also Howe 1989: 55). The use of this date may well be significant as evidence for Bede's desire to narrate events within a chronological framework rather than as a historical reality (Howe 1989: 55).

Bede's use of non-Gildasian material in his fifth-century narrative has, like his dating scheme, been seen as an attempt to give the impression of a more precise account (Howe 1989: 54). This material – primarily names, places and royal origin myths – has been described as 'a few circumstantial details' (Jones, M. 1996: 57) employed as useful glosses on Gildas's narrative (Sims-Williams 1983b: 25). Some have hypothesized that many of these details came from early Kentish sources, such as Kentish royal genealogies (Jones, M. 1996: 59; Miller 1975; Sims-Williams 1983b: 21-2; Yorke 1993: 47), and these might have become available to Bede due to the early establishment of ecclesiastical administration in that area (Yorke 1993: 47). Such sources may have provided Bede with the names Vortigern, Hengest and Horsa. Jones states that they may well record genuine information from as far back as 600/650 (Jones, M. 1996: 59), however, many problems with the hypothesized Kentish sources have also been identified.

Firstly, genealogies which purport to refer to the fifth- or sixth-century origins of kingdoms and royal families could easily be later elaborations, adapted to meet contemporary political and social needs (Yorke 1993: 48). Secondly, when relating some of these traditions Bede himself demonstrated a certain degree of caution. For example, he wrote that the first two leaders of the Germanic troops 'are said' to have been Hengest and Horsa (HE 1: 15). Sims-Williams (1983b: 21) believes that Bede was therefore 'reporting a tradition without wholly endorsing it'. The figures named as Hengest and Horsa may have been only mythical figures, included to provide a narrative link between the continent and England (ibid: 23; Turville-Petre 1953-7: 289). Furthermore, the names of these leaders have a distinctly mythical quality. Hengest is the Old English word for a 'gelding' (and especially a pack-horse), while Horsa derives from the Old English for 'horse' (Turville-Petre 1953-7: 277). Horses may have been sacred animals in early medieval England (ibid: 278, cf. Hills 1998 on horse burials in England and Germany), however, having two brothers named 'horse' hardly validates the historicity of the tale. Additionally, the idea of 'founding twins' is also suspiciously mythical or poetic (cf. Romulus and Remus or Cerdic and Cynric) (ibid: 274; see also the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* section) but

may have been an important part of establishing an origin myth for a particular kingdom. As Yorke has written;

> 'Descent from a common ancestor was one of the ways in which new political units were given coherence in the Germanic world' (Yorke 1993: 48).

It remains to consider the source of Bede's passage referring to the identities, origins and settlement of the Germanic migrants (HE 1: 15). The origins of this statement are unknown. It may well be a simplification or schematization illustrating the perceived origins of the kingdoms in Bede's own day (Howe 1989: 61; Jones, M. 1996: 59-60; Sims-Williams 1983b: 24); a literary device employed by the elite and *literati* of the early English kingdoms in order to legitimate and unify those monarchies (Austin 1990: 16; Howe 1986: 60). Also, the two different, if not contradictory, versions of the statement may be a cause for concern. Did Bede believe either one to be 'correct', or was he just incorporating two out of many traditions in existence in eighth century England (Wood 1997: 41)? In conclusion, regarding Bede's possible sources of historical information, Sims-Williams has provided an effective summary;

> 'My conclusion is simple. Where Bede's sources are extant we should read and judge them for ourselves; where they are not extant, we should treat the traditions Bede reports with at least the reserve that he himself displays, probably with more' (Sims-Williams 1983b: 26).

4.10.6 Bede's political context

Although our knowledge of the sources used by Bede is somewhat limited, more is known about the eighth-century political context in which the *Historia Ecclesiastica* was written. Walter Goffart (1988; 1990) in particular has drawn attention to these issues.

As mentioned above, it appears that historians and archaeologists have often taken the *Historia* at face value; as a record of past events that relate primarily to the church in Bede's time (e.g. Harrison 1976: 17; Jones, M. 1996: 57). Bede himself has been placed in the long tradition of record keeping in Benedictine monasteries. He is said to have been a cloistered monk, an out of touch academic or 'a lonely intellectual locked in an elite minority community' (John 1989: 130, quoted in Goffart 1990: 32) with no taste for worldly affairs (Harrison 1976: 17). Furthermore, when closing the *Historia* Bede himself describes how his greatest pleasure was learning, teaching and writing (HE 5: 24; Goffart 1990: 39) and he calls himself 'a humble monk' (Goffart 1990: 39). The quality of his work and the precision of his language (Yorke 1999: 26-7) have undoubtedly led many to accept these views and thus to have faith in Bede as a historian.

However, these observations – while not necessarily incorrect – must not disguise other factors that suggest we should not take the *Historia* entirely at face value. First, this 'humble monk' was known to the abbot of Canterbury and his research assistant, a priest called Northelm who later became archbishop of Canterbury. He was also close to Bishop Egbert of York; close enough to dedicate the HE to Egbert's cousin, King Ceolwulf of Northumbria (Goffart 1990: 40). Bede clearly had lofty connections in the south of England, but it is perhaps in Northumbria where his royal and ecclesiastical connections were most influential on the content of the *Historia* (ibid.).

Goffart (ibid: 33) has called Bede a local historian and there were many others like him, writing on a variety of subjects, such as on the lives of prominent churchmen. Bede's *History* was, however, the most extensive of these Northumbrian works. Bede believed that between 705 and 729 the church was degenerate and unsuitable boy kings governed Northumbria. Yet in 729 the throne passed to a new royal family and Bede apparently marked this hopeful new beginning by writing the *Historia* which records a calm and serene Northumbria (Goffart 1988: 271-3; 1990: 40). The extent to which this political situation was one of the prime motivations behind Bede's authorship of the *Historia* is suggested by Goffart's reassessment of the dating of the text.

In the last paragraph of the *Historia* Bede states that he finished the work in June of 731 (HE 5: 23). Nevertheless, Goffart believes that this date may be the time from which Bede *wished* people to view his *Historia* and that it may actually have been completed anywhere between 731 and his death in 735 (Goffart 1990: 41). Goffart believes this to be that case since in the second half of 731 King Ceolwulf was the victim of an unsuccessful *coup d'état*. That Bede wished to preserve his hopeful and peaceful view of Northumbria by not relating local events after mid-731 is also suggested by the fact that he does record Charles Martel's victory over the Muslims in France. This took place in 732 (ibid: 41-2). As Goffart has written (1988: 328), Bede was not afraid to get his hands dirty on the issues of his time and he was not just an innocent academic, faithfully recording historical facts known to him.

Of course this consideration of the contemporary political context in which Bede wrote must not only influence our understanding of the near-contemporary events he describes in the HE; there are equally important implications for his references to the distant past – including the fifth century;

> 'The case of Northumbria suggests that the manipulation of the past, rather than a chaste fascination with it, animates the memory of a society' (Goffart 1988: 327).

This view concurs with Austin's assessment of Bede's role as an eighth-century historian. Bede was one of the;

> '...literate administrators who set about the task of writing the history of their political masters and thereby justifying their growing hegemonic power. For this reason, the histories were written in terms which rooted these early state-making heroes...in social groups of specific ethnic name, with the intention of projecting a mythical but potent image of cultural homogeneity to match the political unity they intended' (Austin 1990: 16).

Such observations mean that we must consider carefully why Bede referred to the migrations of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes; a point that will be discussed further below. However, while politics did shape the *Historia*, Bede was still a Christian monk, and that faith and background also influenced his work.

4.10.7 Bede's religious context

The close relationship between politics and religion in eighth-century Northumbria means that the HE was perhaps never likely to be simply an ecclesiastical history. Nevertheless, one of Bede's primary aims in writing his history was to describe the progress of Christianity and the church. Indeed, Goffart has written that Bede 'cared more about the Christian face of his compatriots than about their ethnic peculiarities' (Goffart 1988: 6). This Christian emphasis has important implications for our understanding of the form and content of the HE.

4.10.7.1 Bede and Gildas: Similarities

Perhaps the most important influence of his Christianity was that it allowed him to incorporate Gildas's narrative in terms of both 'historical events' and causation. Like Gildas, Bede was an author in the long tradition of Christian salvation historians;

> 'In turning to Gildas for information on the history of Britain before the Saxon conquest, Bede obtained not simply an historical account, but...an historical account of specifically Christian character' (Hanning 1966: 70).

Bede clearly agreed with Gildas that the Britons were sinful (Hanning 1966: 70; Howe 1989: 53) and that the Saxons were sent by God to punish them; the Saxons were 'God's agents' on earth (Howe 1989: 59). Like Gildas too, Bede's history of those who lived in the British Isles was a divinely ordained process of migration and conquest (Hanning 1966: 70; Howe 1989: 59; Yorke 1999: 27). Those who were deemed worthy enough to live there by the Almighty had all arrived from 'elsewhere';

> 'For Bede, as for Gildas, history is a drama played out on an island stage by those who cross the sea' (Howe 1989: 51).

Bede also explained that the five languages spoken in Britain compared to the five books of the Pentateuch (HE 1: 1). Thus, Divine Providence controlled the whole history of the British Isles, such that those who strayed from God's law or the Christian faith were never able to maintain their control of His island (Hanning 1966: 83); they were dispossessed and no longer fell under God's care and protection. Furthermore, His care and protection provided their only means of achieving ultimate salvation;

> 'The events in Britain are merely steps in the march of time towards its end, the final judgement; history does not, and must not, distract the reader's attention from eschatology' (Hanning 1966: 75).

Also like Gildas, Bede wrote using what has been called the 'Biblical Style' (see Section 4.5.4.1). He had to report events to the best of his ability so they could be interpreted 'correctly' and all could understand the means by which redemption could be achieved (Yorke 1999: 27). Yet although their shared faith and views of historical causation mean that the work of Bede and Gildas is in many ways similar, the contexts in which they wrote were not the same, and there are thus also many differences between the two authors.

4.10.7.2 Bede and Gildas: Differences

First, Bede's narrative style was different to that used by Gildas; he clearly made a conscious decision to omit the numerous biblical quotes found in the DEB (Hanning 1966: 73). The addition of specific names, places and dates has also been seen as part of Bede's attempt to write a more explicitly historical account to legitimize and add weight to his argument (Howe 1989: 55).

Second, while the general intellectual approach to history as well as much of the content of Bede's text was derived from Gildas, the context in which Bede wrote was very different. He was a Benedictine monk living in a rich, well-established monastery and writing for an 'English' king. In this context, Bede was no longer able to see 'the Britons' as God's chosen people, as Gildas had done. In fact, Bede presented a reversal of this situation;

> 'By accepting Gildas' testimony on the sinfulness of the Britons, he made possible a depiction of the Saxons not simply as virtuous heathens, ...but, from his eighth century vantage point, as the new Israel, chosen by God to replace the sin-stained Britons in the Promised Land of Britain' (Hanning 1966: 70).

As Bede wrote (HE 1: 22 – quoted above), the British lost their right to the island because of their lack of 'missionary zeal' and their failure to convert the Germanic invaders (Hanning 1966: 80; Howe 1989: 51). In this way, Bede could also explain why no new people had come to remove the English from the British Isles – by Bede's time the English had accepted God's law, had established a strong church and had become missionaries at home and abroad (Howe 1989: 51-2).

Thus, the various migrations and invasions which formed British history established a 'rhythm of repetition' (Howe 1989: 51) in Bede's narrative. History served as a cautionary tale to the English that only the pious could possess the island (ibid: 52) and that God's capacity for 'righteous violence' was ever present (the ferocious Saxons were just one example). Yet the fact that England was now ruled by Christian kings and had a strong church proved the finality and legitimacy of the contemporary situation. This is where Bede's local political and religious contexts merge. If there was a threat to Ceolwulf – the Christian king of Northumbria to whom the HE was dedicated – it must be countered and the legitimacy of a stable, Christian nation proven. Thus, Bede did not lament the barbarian conquest of Britain (ibid: 52, 58); the arrival of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes appeared to him to be the beginning of the process by which England became that stable, Christian nation.

4.10.8 Conclusion

Although Bede's narrative concerning the fifth century has been hugely influential on all subsequent scholars of the Anglo-Saxon origin myth (from the compilers of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* to modern archaeologists), it is hoped that the above demonstrates why the HE cannot be used at face value as a simple record of past events. Bede wrote almost 300 years after the supposed *adventus Saxonum*, in a very different social, cultural and political context. Furthermore, his sources of information for the fifth century may have been limited and of dubious historical reliability. Yet one of Bede's most important sources we do know about. Gildas's DEB allowed him to write a Christian salvation history of Britain, the English people and the English church. Goffart has also emphasized just how much the Northumbrian political climate in the early eighth century influenced the content of the *Historia*.

Hence, while it is not possible to say that the Germanic migrations in the fifth century did not occur, the fact that Bede narrated these 'events' cannot be divorced from his contemporary context. The description of the Anglian, Saxon and Jutish settlements as a historical explanation is indeed entirely consistent with the religious and political aims of the *Historia*. Thus, considering Bede's sources of information at the same time, it seems likely that this text tells us more about the political and religious views of the literate and elite in late seventh- or early eighth-century England and Northumbria than it does about the fifth century in eastern England.

4.11 The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is another later text which has been highly influential in debates about fifth-century England. Anglo-Saxon archaeologists in particular have often found its seemingly objective lists of dates, names and places extremely useful (see below). Hence, the degree to which it might be used to discuss the distant past has been the focus of much scholarly debate.

Although this source is here being referred to in the singular, there are in fact eight surviving Latin manuscripts (labelled A-H in Whitelock 1961), although the existence of other, now lost, examples has been hypothesized (ibid: xviii). These manuscripts were written/collated by various (presumably ecclesiastical) scribes across southern England, in places such as Abingdon, Canterbury, Worcester, Winchester and Peterborough. This southern (but especially West Saxon (Yorke 1993: 45)) bias is confirmed by the origin myths for Kent, Sussex and Wessex being described in the texts (Jones, M. 1996: 70). The earliest extant version ('A') is the so-called 'Parker Manuscript' given to Corpus Christi College in Cambridge by Matthew Parker (archbishop of Canterbury, 1559-1575). This document was being written up to the end of 891 (Whitelock 1961: xi). Thus, the *Chronicle* was in circulation from as early as 891-2 (Yorke 1993: 45). The latest versions ('E' and 'H') record events into the very early twelfth century (Whitelock 1961: xvii).

4.11.1 Passages referring to fifth-century England

The passages in the *Chronicle* that refer to the fifth century are as follows:

> '('E') (409) In this year Rome was destroyed by the Goths, eleven hundred and ten years after it was built. Then after that the kings of the Romans no longer reigned in Britain. Altogether they had reigned there for 470 years since Gaius Julius first came to the land.
> ('E') (418) In this year the Romans collected all the treasures which were in Britain, and hid some in the ground, so that no one could find them afterwards, and took some with them to Gaul.
> ('E') (443) In this year the Britons sent across the sea to Rome and begged for help against the Picts, but they got none there, for the Romans were engaged in a campaign against Attila, king of the Huns. And they then sent to the Angles, and made the same request of the chieftains of the English.
> ('A', 'B' and 'C') (449) In this year Mauritius and Valentinus succeeded to the throne and ruled for seven years. In their days Hengest and Horsa, invited by Vortigern, king of the Britons, came to Briton at the place called Ebbsfleet, first to the help of the Britons, but afterwards fought against them' (Whitelock (ed.) 1961: 9-11).

In the 'E' manuscript, the entry for 449 is much longer. It describes how more Germanic soldiers came to Britain following the initial wave because the land was good and the Britons were cowards. The entry then goes on to reiterate Bede's Germanic ethnography (HE 1: 15). Also in this passage, the Germanic leaders, Hengest and Horsa, are said to have been descended from Woden.

After these passages a long series of entries dated to the fifth and sixth centuries report various battles between the English and the Britons that took place across England. We are told that, in many of these battles the Britons were heavily defeated. In this section, further details about the early histories of Sussex and Wessex are recorded. It is said that Ælle and his three sons came to Britain in 477 with three ships, they landed at Selsea Bill and Ælle became the king of Sussex. Similarly, Cerdic and his son Cynric arrived in 495 with five ships and founded Wessex and in 501 Port and his two sons Bieda and Mægla came in two ships and landed in Portsmouth. The battles and settlements continued throughout the sixth century, until in 596 it is recorded that;

> 'In this year Pope Gregory sent Augustine to Britain with a good number of monks, who preached God's word to the English people' (In 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'E'. Whitelock (ed.) 1961: 14).

The migration period also plays a part in a number of royal genealogies recorded in the *Chronicle*. For example, in 597 Ceolwulf came to the throne of Wessex and his ancestry is traced back through time, via Cynric and Cerdic, to the Norse god Woden. The entry for 688 gives King Ine a similar ancestry. A far more elaborate ancestry was given to the West Saxon king Æthelwulf in the entry for the years 855-58. His lineage is traced back via Cynric and Cerdic to Woden, and further back to Noah, Seth and Adam, the first man created by God.

4.11.2 Interpretations

As with many of the other sources that refer to fifth-century Britain, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* has often been used as a simple record of past events with little or no critical assessment. Sims-Williams (1983b: 1-3) has described how, in marked contrast to the earliest Anglo-Saxon scholars (e.g. Turner, Kemble and Grimm) historians of the 'Oxford School' treated the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as a narrative detailing the events of the Germanic invasion and subsequent settlement (see also Chapter Two). Historians such as Guest and Green simply retold the events described in the *Chronicle* in vivid and evocative language. They 'presented the advance of the Anglo-Saxons, hewing their way through the dank forests, as the forward march of progress, civilization and English colonialism' (Sims-Williams 1983b: 3). Other historians were more reserved in their use of sources. Nevertheless, in Stevenson's study of the *Chronicle*, he concluded that;

> '...through the mists of song and tradition we may, I think, claim that we can discern the blurred outlines of real events' (Stevenson 1899: 46, quoted in Sims-Williams 1983b: 3).

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* has also influenced interpretations of archaeological evidence in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (e.g. Dryden 1882; Leeds and Harden 1936; Leeds and Shortt 1953; Read 1896) although Leeds' influential paper of 1912 showed that the distribution of saucer brooches at least could not be explained by simple reference to the *Chronicle*. Although few archaeologists now would date cemeteries simply by lifting dates from the source in question, the *Chronicle* is used occasionally to interpret material culture (e.g. Hawkes 1986).

4.11.3 Sources

The compilers of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* clearly drew on a number of sources in their codification of past and contemporary events. Whitelock (1961) believes these sources included an unidentified 'universal history', Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, a few northern annals, some genealogies, regnal and episcopal lists (ibid: xxii). However, when considering the value of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as a source for the fifth century a number of historians have asserted that particularly early versions of such sources are preserved within its pages. Stenton believed that the *Chronicle* was based on annals stretching back two or more centuries, and these recorded poetic traditions which in turn contained 'facts' (Sims-Williams 1983b: 3). Similarly, Michael Jones (1996: 69) maintains that the *Chronicle* drew upon earlier material (e.g. West Saxon records) dating to the mid-seventh and eighth centuries, although the entries for the fifth century must rest ultimately on oral traditions.

Recently, however, several historians have questioned such judgements. Yorke believes that an early date for sources incorporated into the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* cannot be assumed (1993: 46; 1999: 25) and Sims-Williams (1983b: 26-7) writes that there is no convincing evidence to show that the early annals go back to the sixth, seventh or even eighth centuries. The main problem with attributing possible sources to an early period concerns transmission. The problems here are both physical (did documents survive from much earlier periods?) and intellectual. Echoing the points made by Richter (1994) that were discussed in Section 4.3.2.6, Yorke has written;

> 'We...have to deal not only with the problem of how material travelled from a pre-literate period to the Anglo-Saxon written sources...none of which are earlier than the eighth century, but also with the question of whether a pre-literate Germanic

> society would have had the same concepts of preservation and presentation of historical information as one which had been introduced to classical and Christian traditions of record keeping' (Yorke 1993:45-6).

Thus, the division between the fifth and sixth centuries and the periods in which surviving records were first kept is not only temporal. It also implies a change in the medium used to recall the past as well as a potential change in how the past was expressed and conceptualized. The annalistic format of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, with 'events' being ascribed to a particular year, is also clearly a form of history that was only possible in written form. Given that such dating frameworks are unlikely in oral traditions, Yorke believes that the pre-literate oral accounts may have been adapted to the annal format as late as the ninth century. Furthermore, there can have been no use of 'AD' dates before the conversion (Yorke 1999: 25). As we shall see, this does little to encourage faith in the historical 'facts' recorded in the *Chronicle*.

4.11.4 Format

There are a number of interpretational problems that arise from a consideration of the *Chronicle's* format. First, the dating scheme may be of little independent value. Sims-Williams has pointed out that the landing of Hengest and Horsa is dated to 449 – as in Bede's *History*. As mentioned above (Section 4.10.5), this is based on a deduction from Gildas's potentially problematic reference to Agitus/Aëtius. Also, the use of regnal years by the compilers is 'confused and artificial' and there is a 'grave discrepancy' between the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the ninth-century West Saxon *Regnal Table* (Sims-Williams 1983b: 34-6). Hence, there is no evidence for a traditional chronology relating to the fifth and sixth centuries beyond poetic or biblical time-spans, such as 'thirty or forty winters'. Sims-Williams concludes that the chronology of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is very suspicious, but re-dating is impossible as so many 'events' are fictitious (ibid.).

These potentially fictitious 'events' have also received the critical attention of historians. Perhaps most significant for the present study are the problems that have been highlighted with the origin myths for the various kingdoms of southern England. Some of these legends were quoted above and it can be seen that they are highly formulaic (Jones, M. 1996: 70). They all describe a small war band arriving somewhere on the coast of England in three to five boats, under one or two leaders and possibly with the sons of the leaders. The names of the leaders (e.g. Hengest and Horsa, Cynric and Cerdic) also have a distinctly mythical or poetic quality and may best be interpreted as common ancestors who became vital components in the unifying origin myths of early kingdoms. Yorke has called such stories 'common narrative formulae' (1993: 47), and they are often found in European origin myths. Rome was founded by Romulus and Remus, Ibor and Agio were the original Lombards, while Ambri and Assi were the founders

of the Vandals. Turville-Petre calls these couplings 'Divine twins' or 'brothers' (1953-7: 274) (see also Section 4.10.5).

There is also a geographical element to these stories. Origin myths and royal genealogies include the idea of the divine twins leading 'a nation' across the sea (Howe 1989: 40) often from Germany or Scandinavia (Turville-Petre 1953-7: 289; Wolfram 1994). This implies that the idea of ethnic migrations was a powerful mythical symbol and vital to the demonstration of political legitimacy (Howe 1989: 29-30). Additionally, national ancestors were linked to place names;

> 'One device, found particularly in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, is the creation of ancestors out of pre-existing place-names so that Port is linked with Portsmouth and Wihtgar with the Isle of Wight; in both cases we are asked to believe that Germanic leaders arrived already bearing the Latin-derived names of the areas which they were to conquer' (Yorke 1993: 47).

These tales would appear to derive from oral story telling and cannot be taken as historical truth (Yorke 1993: 47); indeed the distinction between mythical and 'real' history did not exist in the non-literate world (ibid: 46).

4.11.5 The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in context

Although there are many interpretational problems with the form and content of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, it is also important to emphasize the contemporary context in which such a composition made sense. Yorke has described how the compilers (probably monks) were attempting to produce a 'world chronicle' in which West Saxon affairs were linked to Roman and New Testament history (ibid: 46). This specific aim involved the use of contemporary dynastic/political propaganda in the form of heroic traditions. As with Bede's history, this suggests there were close links between royalty and church institutions at this time (Sims-Williams 1983b: 41). This is again emphasized in the passages describing the arrival of Hengest and Horsa (who were part of the Kentish royal genealogy). They are said to have come ashore at Ebbsfleet; the same place where St. Augustine landed around two and a half centuries later (ibid: 29). Passages relating to the fifth century in the *Chronicle* also describe how the kingdom of Wessex was established through both Jutish and Saxon military endeavours. Given that King Alfred (871-899) – who was king when the early versions of the *Chronicle* were in circulation – claimed to be the son of a Saxon and a Jute, this text supported his claim to be 'the embodiment of his people' (Yorke 1993: 48; Sims-Williams 1983b: 30).

It is also interesting to note Michael Jones's (1996: 69) assertion that the struggle against Viking maritime attacks and settlement provides the immediate background for the early composition

of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. He argues that this provides an interesting perspective on the records which refer to the Anglo-Saxon settlement of England (also Howe 1989: 29). Again, long established traditions of people invading Britain from across the sea were given contemporary relevance and thus those traditions were both recreated and perpetuated.

4.11.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* – including the entries that refer to the fifth century – is a product of a specific temporal and geographical context (i.e. southern Britain from the ninth century). Regarding the content of the *Chronicle*, while it may incorporate narratives which were once oral traditions, we have no way of knowing how they were transmitted through time or how they were altered and arranged to meet specific contemporary issues. Additionally, the very format of the source is problematic;

> '...the annalistic framework of the *Chronicle* can only be regarded as a snare and delusion which has misled generations of readers into regarding it as a coherent work of history rather than as an artificial amalgam of heterogeneous traditions and inventions of varying and unverifiable accuracy' (Sims-Williams 1983b: 39).

As a final conclusion, I can do no better than to quote Barbara Yorke. Referring to the later sources for the fifth and sixth centuries, she writes that they are;

> '...of great value to anyone interested in the growth of Anglo-Saxon concepts of kingship and attitudes to the past...But they should not be used, as they frequently have been, to construct a precisely dated narrative account of the foundation of kingdoms in the fifth and sixth centuries. They are not in fact ideal points from which to approach the fifth and sixth centuries at all' (Yorke 1993: 48).

4.12 The *Historia Brittonum* (a.k.a. 'Nennius')

Like the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the *Historia Brittonum* includes passages referring to the fifth century but was first written/compiled in the ninth century. Also like the *Chronicle*, scholars seeking to understand this source are faced with numerous interpretational problems concerning its authorship, content, transmission and the sources it incorporates.

Uncertainties surrounding who actually wrote the *Historia Brittonum* are indicative of these more general problems. There are around thirty-five manuscripts of the *Historia* and most attribute authorship, anachronistically, to Gildas. However, since the sixteenth century, authorship has often also been attributed to 'Nennius'. The preface/prologue in five manuscripts was written by someone of that name (Dumville 1975/6: 78; 1977: 176). In one manuscript Nennius is said to be a ninth-century clerk (Hanning 1966: 93), in another, a disciple of Elvodog

(Elfoddw), a British clergyman who was partly responsible for reconciling the Celtic and Roman Christian orders (Jones, M. 1996: 112). However, the Nennian attribution may belong to Welsh recensions no older than the eleventh century (Dumville 1975/6: 78; Hanning 1966: 93). Dumville believes that the importance of the Nennian attribution is due to the fact that the preface seems to describe the author as incompetent (he did not try to write history but says he 'made a heap of all I have found' (in Morris 1973: 37)). This in turn suggests that the material in the *Historia Brittonum* was simply reproduced from earlier sources and is therefore of considerable historical value (Dumville 1977: 176-7). The problems with this approach to the *Historia Brittonum* will be discussed below. However, given that Nennius is only mentioned in later manuscripts the text must be assessed on its own merits (Dumville 1977: 177; Hanning 1966: 93).

Given that there are at least thirty-five different manuscripts written over a period of several centuries from the ninth century (Dumville 1975/6; Hanning 1966: 93) another issue facing historians is which version of the *Historia Brittonum* should be used? The contents of these vary widely and on occasions different manuscripts contradict each other (Hanning 1966: 91). Hence, when describing certain passages from the '*Historia Brittonum*' as a single source, it must be remembered that this is a generalized view. Nevertheless, historians who wish to use the most 'original' versions will concentrate on the earliest manuscripts; those of the ninth century 'Harleian recension' which has no known author (Dumville 1975/6: 94).

Whoever it was that wrote or compiled the *Historia Brittonum* (and there may well have been more than one author/compiler), the source is generally said to have been written in western Britain by 'British' as opposed to 'Anglo-Saxon' authors. Michael Jones (1996: 131) believes the work came from ninth-century Wales, perhaps from the court of Merfyn of Gwynedd. Dumville (1977: 190-1; also Hanning 1966: 95) also refers to the *Historia Brittonum* as a ninth-century Welsh source and states that it has narrative features similar to contemporary texts from Ireland.

4.12.1 The arrival of the Saxons

The sections of the *Historia* that refer to the fifth century are thought to derive from a number of different sources. Gildas was used extensively in descriptions of Roman Britain and the *adventus Saxonum*, but Dumville lists other sources: the chronicles of Prosper of Aquitaine and Isidore of Seville; a list of consular names extending to c.520 by Victorius of Aquitaine; accounts of St. Patrick; a *Liber Beati Germani* possibly written in the reign of Cadell of Powys (d. 808); a Welsh vernacular poem on Arthur and some English material dealing with the legend of Hengest and Horsa and their dealings with Vortigern and Vortimer (Dumville 1977: 177). Morris (1973: 37) also cites the possible use of a hypothetical *Kentish Chronicle* for events

between 425 and 460, a chronicle he believes was written not much later than the sixth century. A number of royal genealogies are also incorporated. These are part of the origin myths of the four 'races' said to inhabit Britain: the Irish, Picts, Saxons and Britons. One of the four origin myths for the Britons is presented in Chapter Ten of the *Historia Brittonum*. The founder of the Britons is said to be Britto or Brutus, whose ancestry is traced back to Anaeas and the sack of Troy. Brutus himself was exiled from Italy, Greece and Gaul for having killed his parents (members of the founding family of Rome), and he eventually ended up in Britain (Jones, M. 1996: 134). Another British origin myth traces Brutus's ancestry to Japheth, son of Noah (ibid.). Similarly, the Irish are said to be the ancestors of a Scythian noble and his retinue, expelled from Egypt after the Israelite Exodus (Howe 1986: 61).

The background for the Saxon origin myth comes largely from Gildas's descriptions of Roman Britain. The *Historia* lists nine Roman emperors who are said to have visited Britain, although these accounts are not historically accurate (Hanning 1966: 108; Jones, M. 1996: 138-9). Chapters 28 to 31 describe the relations between Britain and Rome after Maximus. The narrative describes how the Britons expelled the Romans after three times killing Roman generals. But in each case the Britons then requested Roman assistance in the face of Pictish and Scottish attacks. Continuing the historical narrative derived from Gildas, Chapter 31 describes the *adventus Saxonum*;

> 'It came to pass that after this war between the British and the Romans, when their generals were killed, and after the killing of the tyrant Maximus and the end of the Roman Empire in Britain, the British went in fear for forty years. Vortigern ruled in Britain, and during his rule of Britain he was under pressure, from fear of the Picts and the Irish, and of a Roman invasion, and, not least, from dread of Ambrosius. Then came three keels, driven into exile from Germany' (quoted in Jones, M. 1996: 139).

The narrative continues by describing the political intrigue involving Vortigern, his son Vortimer, and the leaders of the Germanic exiles, Hengest and Horsa. The *Historia* relates how by force, matrimonial alliances and political means the Germans increased their power and influence. This part of the narrative concludes with a section outlining the campaigns of Arthur (Hanning 1966: 108).

4.12.2 Interpretations

Although there are clear similarities between the above description of the *adventus Saxonum* and those found in other sources, there are also a number of differences. It has been noted that here the Britons are said to have lost their freedom under Roman domination and thus the anti-imperial revolts are justified; a markedly different attitude to that expressed in Gildas (Hanning 1966: 108; Jones, M. 1996: 138). Also, the three keels held exiles from Germany rather than the

mercenaries suggested by Gildas's narrative. While these observations about the content of the *Historia Brittonum* may be relatively uncontroversial, attitudes towards the value of this text as a source of information about the fifth century have varied widely.

As mentioned previously, the more positivistic interpretations may stem from the opinion that 'Nennius' was 'an incompetent oaf' (Dumville 1977: 176) and thus the *Historia Brittonum* can be regarded as a mere repository of earlier sources; simply and conveniently collected together in one place. For example, Morris has written that Gildas' narrative was amplified by a mass of later documents, of which the fullest and earliest (!) was that of 'Nennius'. He also believes the *Historia Brittonum* preserved genuine, unaltered traditions, incorporating a number of documents which are very important for fifth- and sixth-century history (Morris 1973: 37). It has also been said that such sources survived because they were popular and widely accepted. As Morris claimed of Gildas; 'He uttered what tens of thousands felt' (quoted in Jones, M. 1996: 140). It is perhaps telling that historians who have adopted this positivistic approach to construct their views of the fifth century (often including discussions of King Arthur as a genuine historical figure, *contra* Dumville 1977: 188) have used the *Historia Brittonum* with little or no critical discussion of that or any other source (e.g. Alcock 1971; Ashe (ed.) 1968; Morris 1973).

Other scholars have been more critical whilst retaining some degree of faith in it as a source for the fifth century. Michael Jones (1996) devotes a considerable amount of space to the *Historia* despite highlighting a number of interpretational problems. He notes that it is a highly composite work, made up of many separate elements of unequal historical value and of various dates (some, Jones believes, may be as old as the late sixth or seventh century). The narratives also exhibit 'a typical early medieval mix of fantasy and plausible detail' (ibid: 62). He does, however, state that the *Historia Brittonum* cannot safely be ignored, but must be used in association with other fifth-century sources (ibid: 42). Notwithstanding these reservations, Jones uses the *Historia* as a basis for discussing the numbers of Germanic exiles, settlers or warriors likely to have arrived in Britain. The text describes the arrival in Britain of a total of fifty-nine 'keels', and Jones uses other evidence (a reference elsewhere in the *Historia* and archaeological finds of early medieval boats) to arrive at a figure of sixty people per keel (ibid: 65). This gave Jones a total Germanic force of 3540 men [*sic*], enough, he believes, to conquer parts of Britain if they were 'picked warriors' (ibid: 66). Jones also extrapolates this figure to include the other invading tribes. He concludes;

> 'Allowing for the usually accepted ratio of 1:5 for warriors to general population in a migrating tribe, 25,000 to 35,000 for the overall Anglo-Saxon population is a reasonable guess' (Jones, M. 1996: 67).

The rest of the narrative also appears to emphasize small numbers of immigrants and implies that the Britons lost through the political intrigues and because it was God's will (ibid.). Nevertheless, these calculations rely heavily on the *Historia Brittonum* being seen as an objective and valid record of fifth-century events and it is also not clear how Jones deduced the ratio of warriors to general population.

As mentioned above, Jones also comments on the anti-Roman attitudes expressed in the *Historia Brittonum* as well as their contemporary (i.e. ninth-century) context. He describes how this is a somewhat surprising perspective on the past, given that ninth-century Wales was influenced by the 'Carolingian revival' on the continent and that many of the royal/national genealogies include Roman as well as biblical ancestors. Again stressing the value of the *Historia* for earlier periods, Jones believes that the antipathy towards Rome is not part of the immediate political environment of this source. Rather, he suggests it is a pre-ninth-century point of view, a view echoed in the texts by Gildas and about St. Patrick (ibid: 131-3). Jones concludes that;

> 'Despite differences in focus and various dates of composition, the early British sources are in accord in evincing a negative view of Rome that is more persuasive in its cumulative effect than in its constituent parts...Gildas is not slavishly incorporated in to the *Historia*, however, and "Nennius" has the best claim of all surviving works to represent the full development of traditional British attitudes toward *Romanitas* and the Roman past in that portion of the British population, literate and Latin-writing, who maintained their independence from barbarian invasion' (Jones, M. 1996: 142).

4.12.3 The *Historia Brittonum* and its ninth-century context

Other historians are have reached far less confident conclusions. Both Dumville (1977) and Hanning (1966) have drawn attention to the differences between the manuscripts that preserve the *Historia Brittonum*. However, regarding what it is possible to deduce from the texts themselves, they emphasize the importance of placing this source in its contemporary literary context. Dumville writes that;

> '...the Welsh literary sources of the ninth century and later tell us of personalities and seem to give us a simplistic view of politics, wars, and migrations of the period...Of other great issues they tell us – and purport to tell us – almost nothing' (Dumville 1977: 190-1).

He goes on to state that Gildas is as close as we can get to a historical source for the fifth century. Furthermore, recent attempts to use texts such as the *Historia* in order to discuss the fifth century in fact give us only a ninth-/tenth-century view of that period; not a fifth- or even twentieth-century view (ibid: 191-2). The author/compiler of the *Historia*, writes Dumville, was

struggling with inadequate sources. While he made a competent attempt to produce a coherent narrative, he nonetheless did this by harmonizing sources and did not simply incorporate pre-existing texts without alteration (ibid: 177). Hence, we cannot simply invoke the argument that the *Historia Brittonum* embodies a long-established tradition;

> 'This all too common excuse is by itself meaningless. What is 'tradition'? Whose tradition? Monastic, legal, craft tradition? And once we begin to ask questions of this sort, we are forced to ask ourselves about the process of transmission, with all the further questions and critical judgements which that implies' (Dumville 1977: 192).

Hanning also believes that the *Historia* can best be understood by situating it in its contemporary political, geographical and intellectual context. He describes how this source seems to utilize Christian and classical views of the past (cf. Gildas and Procopius) but also introduce specifically post-Roman national experiences that are entirely secular. These national feelings came through in the *Historia Brittonum* in, for example, the attitudes expressed towards the Roman past and the use of Arthur as a heroic figure (Hanning 1966: 94-5). Thus, the *Historia* embodies a mixture of Christian historical thought (particularly from the use of Gildas's text) and contemporary political trends in its narrative and the two cannot be separated. Thus, the *Historia Brittonum* reveals developments in, and challenges to, scholars' historical imaginations in the ninth century. Hanning believes that the clerical authors/compilers were 'attempting to reassert in ninth-century Britain the efficacy of the Christian theology of history as a moral approach to national history' (Hanning 1966: 120).

4.12.4 Conclusion

The *Historia Brittonum* is clearly an extremely difficult text to use for any form of historical enquiry. Yet it clearly implies that traditions about Germanic invasions/migrations in the fifth century were still known in western Britain in the ninth century and after. They were also thought important enough to write down even though sources for these traditions were scarce. However, this is not the same as saying the *Historia* itself can be used as objective supporting evidence for discussions about fifth-century Britain. More than 400 years separate this source from the fifth century (with all the attendant problems of textual transmission), and it has been shown that the narratives in the *Historia* – including those relating to the fifth century – were used to illustrate certain themes to contemporaries. Thus it must be concluded that the *Historia Brittonum* cannot be used as a source for the Roman-Medieval transition, only for how that period was viewed towards the end of the first millennium AD.

4.13 The continued use of the migration myth

In the previous sections a contextual approach was used to examine a number of historical texts that have commonly been used as sources of information about the fifth century in Britain. It should however be noted that interest in that period did not simply cease between the writing of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* or the *Historia Brittonum* and the nineteenth century, when the study of early medieval archaeology began (see Chapter Two). The following is not intended to be a detailed history of Anglo-Saxon scholarship in the intervening period since a number of other studies have already provided this (e.g. Horsman 1976; Lucy 1998; MacDougall 1982; Murphy 1982). Nevertheless, given that one of the aims of the current chapter is to show how the idea of Germanic migrations to Britain is an on-going discourse (see Section 4.3.2.3), a summary is necessary. This will further emphasize how the narrative of the Anglo-Saxon migrations is not necessarily more factual because of this continued use. Rather, that narrative constitutes a powerful idea that has been used in a variety of ways, in different contexts and for different reasons.

Before examining the use of the Anglo-Saxon migration myth in the second millennium AD, it is interesting to note briefly some other uses of this narrative that were broadly contemporary with some of the sources already discussed. For example, in 793, Alcuin wrote to Archbishop Ethelhard after the Viking attack on the monastery at Lindisfarne. He applied precisely the same interpretation to this event as Gildas did to the Saxon invasion, citing Gildas specifically. He stated that in order for Britain to remain prosperous and free from danger it would be necessary to prevent the establishment of a vice-ridden society (Howe 1989: 20). Similarly, in 1014 Bishop Wulfstan cited Gildas in a sermon that was meant to 'rouse the English from their moral sloth and to inspire them to resistance against Viking attacks' (ibid: 8).

Not long after Wulfstan wrote however, when the latest editions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the *Historia Brittonum* were perhaps appearing, the Germanic origin myth was beginning to disappear from the pages of history. It was largely replaced (in written documents at least) by what has become known as the Arthurian or Brutus myth. This was a specifically British story, popularized by Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of England* that appeared around 1136 (MacDougall 1982: 7; Lucy 1998: 5-6; Stein 1998). Geoffrey's history described how British origins could be traced back to Brutus, a fugitive from ancient Troy, who, after extensive travels, settled in Britain. This story has been interpreted as propaganda for the Norman-French ruling classes;

> 'Geoffrey's motivation in writing no doubt was a desire to provide an heroic epic in the origins and exploits of a people subdued successively by Romans, Saxons, Danes and Normans. By portraying the British as a once great people with extensive dominions he

> could at once raise their status in the eyes in the eyes of their new Norman overlords and suggest a precedent to the Norman kings in their imperialistic ambitions' (MacDougall 1982: 7).

Given that during the first half of the second millennium the Norman-French elite did not speak English, were allied to the Roman church and controlled the monasteries in which historical documents were written, it is perhaps not surprising that the English/Germanic myth was not written about at this time or for several centuries thereafter.

The Germanic origin myth remained forgotten (at least by those who wrote histories) until the sixteenth century. MacDougall (1982: 31) has called this period a watershed in English history, for it was during the Reformation that a specifically English past was rediscovered, a past that in the contemporary situation had a great deal of political expediency. The rift between the Roman church and Henry VIII meant that there was a need to establish a precedent for a specifically English church: what became the Church of England. At the same time, with the dissolution of the monasteries from 1536, pre-conquest documents preserved in monastic libraries became more accessible (if they were not first destroyed). Reformers collected and read these documents with a view to demonstrating that the English church was simply regaining its earlier, Saxon, institutional form, even though this usurped papal claims to the right of ecclesiastical sovereignty across Christendom (ibid: 38; Horsman 1976: 387-8; Lucy 1998: 6; Murphy 1982: 1-2). Matthew Parker (who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1559) was particularly influential in collecting these documents and it was he who instigated the study of Old English and began the publication of pre-conquest texts (MacDougall 1982: 38-40; Murphy 1982: 3).

During the seventeenth century, the time of the English civil war, Anglo-Saxon scholarship again acquired political overtones. However, the emphasis was less religious and more to do with legal rights. Anglo-Saxon documents were consulted in order to demonstrate the validity of laws and institutions that upheld the rights of freedom and self-government. Hence, some English authors began to assert their Teutonic ancestry when this appeared to coincide with their political views (MacDougall 1982: 55-70);

> 'Parliamentarians found in the Anglo-Saxons a historical base for their arguments; the supposed antiquity of Parliament and of English common law provided a rationale for opposition to royal pretensions' (Horsman 1976: 388).

Although classical scholarship was the focus of most academic endeavour, this emphasis on legal and institutional matters continued to occupy those interested in Anglo-Saxon studies throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century (Lucy 1998: 7). By the later 1700s, however,

an explicitly racial and nationalist attitude was emerging in the interpretation of the Anglo-Saxon past (Horsman 1976: 390-2; Lucy 1998: 7-8). As described in Chapter Two, it was in this context that Anglo-Saxon archaeology emerged alongside a renewed interest in Anglo-Saxon history; interest which – in academia at least – has continued to the present day.

Yet it was not only in England that the myth of Anglo-Saxon origins became a powerful political motif. In the United States during the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the twin narratives of the biblical Exodus and the migrations from Anglo-Saxon homelands were linked in order to establish a new, unified, distinctly American national identity (Frantzen 1990; Frantzen & Niles (eds.) 1997; Howe 1989);

> 'In 1776 Thomas Jefferson proposed that the seal for the newly declared United States of America should represent "the children of Israel in the wilderness, led by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night; and on the other side, Hengest and Horsa, the Saxon chiefs from whom we claim the honour of being descended, and whose political principles and form of government we have assumed"' (Howe 1989: 1).

In America today, however, Anglo-Saxon origins are not often claimed as part of national identity. In fact, interest in Anglo-Saxon or Old English literature and history is largely confined to a few academic institutions (see Frantzen 1990). Much the same can now be said for the idea of Anglo-Saxon origins in Britain. The current academic debates were discussed in Chapter Two, yet those debates today usually take place only among academics. As described in Chapter One, the Anglo-Saxon origin myth is rarely mentioned in contemporary popular and political contexts (a marked contrast to the so-called 'Celtic' identities (see James 1998; 1999)). Yet when this myth, the ending of Roman Britain or fifth-century England are discussed in the media (e.g. when archaeological discoveries are reported or on television programmes such as *Time Team* or *Meet the Ancestors*) it usually involves very simplistic, historically-based descriptions of the Britons being pushed westwards by settlers from Germany, the latter being easily identifiable by the weapons, pots, brooches and so forth, found in cemeteries.

A somewhat simplistic view of the migration myth is also being perpetuated today through the current National Curriculum. The history curriculum at Key Stage 2 (8-11 years) includes one unit entitled 'Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings in Britain' (National Curriculum 1999). This aims to be 'An overview study of how British society was shaped by the movement and settlement of different people in the period before the Norman Conquest' (ibid.). Furthermore, when learning about such periods, 'pupils should be taught about the social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of the societies studied in Britain and the wider world'. They should also consider issues relating to respecting different cultures, religions, ethnicities, nationalities and people from different regions (ibid.).

It is interesting to note that, as has often been the case in the past, there is a distinct socio-political emphasis in the discussion of the Anglo-Saxon migrations even when this is being taught to primary school children. Dean (1995) continued this theme in his textbook for Key Stage 2 history teachers. He writes that learning social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity;

> '...positively encourages teachers to dispel the myth of Britain as a pure Anglo-Saxon nation, and to emphasize the fact that British history over the past 2600 years is a tale of continual settlement by incomers. Britain is supremely a country of immigrants, from Celts to Bosnians. We are a hybrid nation, despite what Victorian propaganda would have us believe' (Dean 1995: 14).

It is perhaps ironic that teachers are being exhorted to promote the acceptance of a multi-cultural Britain by using historical approaches that are so intimately connected with racial stereotypes, racial theory and those same Victorian ideals (see Chapters Two and Three).

4.14 Discussion

This chapter, along with Chapter Two, has shown how the idea of Germanic invasions/migrations has been created and then maintained, forgotten and revived through time in a variety of different contexts and for many different reasons. The Germanic migrations, therefore, constitute a dynamic tradition – a discourse in which that idea constitutes a powerful historical narrative – which has existed from at least the sixth century to the present day. This long-term view is important since it contextualizes modern academic discussions about 'the migrations'. The other key aim of this chapter has been to contextualize the historical sources themselves that have been used by academics who study fifth-century Britain. Some general conclusions about these individual sources and how they might relate to each other will now be drawn, highlighting again the three different (but inter-related) types of context described in Section 4.3.2.

4.14.1 Geographical contexts

For all the sources discussed above it has been shown that where they were written does influence both their form and content. This is a significant observation for the present study because a number of the sources in question were not geographically proximate to Britain (e.g. the *Gallic Chronicle of 452*, the *Vita St. Germanus* and especially Zosimus and Procopius). In late antique/early medieval Europe both travel and hence communication would not have been easy, especially over long distances. It must therefore be accepted that the information received by these distant authors about fifth-century Britain was unlikely to have been first hand. Exactly how they did acquire this information is often poorly understood or entirely unknown, and, as we have seen, the authors were often quite vague or recorded very little where Britain was

concerned. If this is the case, the precise value of the information on fifth-century Britain cannot be deduced. The wide geographical distribution of the sources should also lead us to conclude, and indeed it has been shown, that events in fifth-century Britain were not in fact the authors' primary interest. Using these historical texts to discuss events and changes in fifth-century Britain – or more specifically in eastern England where Germanic people(s) are said to have settled at first – is therefore highly dubious.

4.14.2 Temporal contexts

Temporal contexts are also significant in our interpretations of the sources in question. Some were written in regions said to have been conquered by Germanic people (e.g. Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*), yet they were written centuries after this supposed event (as was the *Historia Brittonum*). The texts often record highly formulaic traditions of unknown origin (perhaps even from fluid oral traditions) that may have been included (and perhaps altered) because they had local, contemporary political resonances. Again, the value of these for debates about the fifth century must be questioned. Of course, some of the texts described above were written much closer to the mid-fifth century, for example the *Gallic Chronicle of 452* or the *Vita St. Germanus*. Yet as stated above, the authors of these sources probably lived some distance from Britain and their knowledge of the islands was therefore limited by geography.

The DEB, however, cannot easily be dismissed. Compared to the other sources, Gildas was relatively close to the 'Germanic invasions' both geographically *and* temporally; whenever or wherever he is believed to have written. It is for this reason that he has been called the 'decisive witness' (Jones, M. 1996: 142) for the period in question. Nevertheless, as described above, for Gildas the invasions still took place in 'the past' and he appears to have had little actual knowledge of eastern England (i.e. where he says the Saxons first landed and settled). Both these factors influenced what he wrote and an alternative understanding of his description of the *adventus Saxonum* was described in Section 4.5.5.

4.14.3 Intellectual contexts

Seeing as most of the sources discussed above were well removed in time or space from fifth-century England, to say they do contain valuable evidence about that context is to adopt the questionable approach of separating 'facts' from their literary context. Yet the preceding discussions have shown just how important it is to understand how and why these sources were composed as they were.

Some authors were clearly influenced by contemporary local or regional religious, political and social issues (although the extent to which their views were widespread is usually unknown).

For example, Gildas was concerned primarily about the sins of his contemporaries and what might happen if they did not regain a strong Christian faith, while Bede and the authors/compilers of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the *Historia Brittonum* were closely linked to the dynastic politics of early English kingdoms. The fifth-/sixth-century sources written on the continent suggest that the authors were apprehensive about the widespread erosion of Roman power and influence.

The content of the sources discussed here can also be seen to have been influenced by the use of certain modes of expression or the historical imaginations of the authors; the discourses of power within which they wrote and thus maintained. The Judeo-Christian historical imagination and the writing of salvation history appears to have been particularly significant. As Muhlberger has written;

> 'Those who wrote history in Latin in the fifth century were not interested in the detailed description and analysis of current politics and military affairs, nor in creating great works of literary history. Christians to a man, they were preoccupied by the sweep of history as a whole, because they saw it as the working out of God's plan for humanity. Recent events had meaning for them only in the context of salvation history' (Muhlberger 1990: 2).

Zosimus and Procopius are the exceptions here. Even so, the approaches they took in writing their texts – a late antique classical style – also structured their narratives in certain identifiable ways. For example, both these authors' descriptions of ethnic groups can be seen to have classical ethnographic precedents.

4.14.4 Summary

To summarize, by taking a contextual approach to the eight historical sources discussed above, it has been shown how it is methodologically unsound to extract presumed historical 'facts' from their literary context and to use them to make generalized deductions; especially where those deductions concern a distant time and/or place. This does not mean that the authors concerned were simply writing fiction. They may well have believed the information to be true and within the context of the individual narratives these 'facts' always make complete sense.

Yet if this conclusion can be accepted, it still cannot be denied that all the sources discussed here do refer to Britain's 'barbarian' raids/invasions/migrations in the fifth century; indeed that is why they have been included here. The aim of the following sections is to attempt to understand this phenomenon without assuming that they all simply record actual events.

4.14.5 The tradition and discourse of Anglo-Saxon migrations

From the above discussions of the relevant texts it is evident that scholars have often studied these sources together because of the passages referring to Britain in the fifth century. Yet this has often been done with the implicit assumption that there is a reality 'out there' that can be found if the correct methods are used to extract the factual information from the sources. Thus, when considering this group of sources as a whole, the aim appears to be to hamonize the individual pieces of information and to decide which source can best reveal a 'true' chronology; the 'real' political situation in fifth-century Britain or where the original authors made mistakes (i.e. "*we* can find the truth!"). As stated previously, this positivistic approach to history is theoretically questionable. To avoid using such assumptions, the following will return to the ideas about historical traditions and 'discourses of power' outlined in Section 4.3.2.3. Such traditions and discourses may be seen to operate over time and space, and the relevant source will be discussed by dividing them – very broadly – into two groups based on their geographical and temporal relationship to fifth-century Britain.

First we have those sources that were written in the fifth or sixth centuries on the continent. How was it that the Gallic Chronicler, Constantius, Zosimus and Procopius all recorded something about Britain and barbarian invasions? To answer this question, it is interesting to highlight a paper by Ian Wood (1990). He lists the many contemporary (or near contemporary) Roman/late antique documents that refer to Saxon raids in the North Sea. However, Wood points out that until the very end of the fourth century, it was Franks who were seen as the major threat to North Sea coastal regions and the Saxons dominated accounts only from the 390s (ibid: 94). Raiding and piracy may of course have been common in the North Sea region at this time. Nevertheless, as Wood has written, references to the Saxons from the 390s do not necessarily mark a shift in political realities with regard to the precise ethnicity of the raiding group, rather it marks a shift in perception on the part of the authors as well as a general imprecision in their use of ethnic terminology (ibid: 95). It may be, therefore, that there was a dynamic, changing *tradition* of Saxon/barbarian raids – which is not the same thing as the authors recording actual events – which was widely known across the European mainland in the fifth and sixth centuries. Furthermore, as we have seen, in several instances this tradition was written down (often with very few details) and became relevant because it appeared to support specific political or religious viewpoints, not simply because the authors were attempting to record historical facts.

Wood also states that the dynamic tradition of referring to and labelling North Sea raiders as specific Germanic groups continued at least until the time of Bede (ibid: 95-6). However;

> '...the *adventus Saxonum*, whatever it was, is scarcely noticed by 5th and 6th century writers; it is only Bede, interpreting Gildas, who transforms the 'Coming of the Saxons' into a major event in the emergence of England' (Wood 1990: 96).

This brings us to the second group of sources: those that were written in England but several centuries after the supposed Germanic settlements (i.e. Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the *Historia Brittonum*). The use of the Germanic migration narrative through time (up to the present) has already been discussed at some length, both above and in Chapter Two and it is enough here to recall that this narrative has been used as an emotive literary device in a huge variety of different political, religious and social contexts. Indeed, all the sources written later in the first millennium in England use the migration myth for particular, often political or dynastic reasons.

It remains to mention Gildas, who does not fit easily into either of the above groups since he was *relatively* close to the 'Germanic settlements' both geographically and temporally (as far as we can tell). Again, however, it has already been explained (see Section 4.5.5) how his description of the barbarian invasions of eastern Britain (a region unfamiliar to him) was strongly influenced by his biblical/Judeo-Christian historical imagination, his concerns about his contemporaries sins and also perhaps the aforementioned tradition of Saxon raiding in the North Sea region.

It can therefore be concluded that because the eight sources discussed here do mention – to a greater or lesser extent – 'Germanic' raids, invasions or settlements with regard to fifth-century Britain this is not necessarily a cumulative proof that they all record the same actual historical reality. Traditions of knowledge and ideas about what constitutes reality across time and/or space *could* have produced the same historical pattern. Hence, the historical sources in question are not necessarily proof that changes in eastern England in the fifth century were the result of people migrating from northern Europe.

4.14.6 Why migrations?

One final question for this chapter is, what is it about the migration narrative that has led it to be a feature of writers' historical imaginations from the fifth/sixth century to the present day? Of course, because this story has been used in so many different situations, the reasons why it has been drawn upon are mostly context specific. However, a few general observations can still be made.

First, a migration myth is inherently dynamic (Howe 1989: 6). It involves determined movements by people – often a few brave and enterprising warriors – into new regions. It may

also include the idea of conquest; turning over an established order to create something new. This may have been particularly important to those who, with the benefit of hindsight, adopted the myth to legitimize their people's ownership of, and dominion over, a kingdom (cf. Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*). Second, the migration myth is perhaps especially suited to Britain's situation as an island (cf. Howe 1989: 51, quoted in Section 4.10.7.1). All invaders/migrants must cross the sea to reach Britain, and this serves to increase the sense of determination in this act. The idea of people from elsewhere arriving in ships is also a strong, dynamic visual image; perhaps something that insular inhabitants have particularly feared, from the Viking and Norman invasions to the threat of invasion in the sixteenth century and the 1940s. Third, since Gildas wrote the DEB, the Anglo-Saxon migration/invasion myth has always been supported by – and perhaps partly created by – religious ideology (cf. the Old Testament, especially the Exodus and books of Jeremiah). The biblical themes were certainly one of the main reasons the myth was accepted and perpetuated by writers such as Bede, Constantius, Wulfstan and Alcuin. Thus, the myth of English origins and communal identity 'drew its strength from spiritual ideals rather than political realities' (Wormald 1983: 128, quoted in Howe 1989: 6). Fourth, from the middle of the nineteenth century, the myth became coupled to archaeological approaches that relied on the movements of people as an explanation for change (what was later called culture-history). The idea of migrations therefore retained a important place in English scholarship, even if the myth of English origins is now less well known outside academia. As we have seen (Chapter Two), debates about migrations or invasions have, through 150 years of research, remained at the heart of Anglo-Saxon archaeology.

Finally, all of the above demonstrate the power and flexibility of the migration narrative. Indeed its power and continued use today is partly due to the fact that it has been so flexible and widely applicable; it has thus become accepted as a natural and obvious historical and archaeological reality. Questioning the actual truth of the fifth-century migrations has never really been on the academic agenda. Nicholas Howe has written that;

> 'The longevity of an origin myth offers the most telling measure of its vitality and resonance, its continuing capacity to absorb and interpret experience' (Howe 1989: 4).

The Germanic migration myth appears to have very little resonance for most people living in England today (see Chapter One), even if it is taught in primary schools and occasionally mentioned in the media. Yet as we have seen, within the academic community migrations remain a key feature of research on the fifth century in Britain. Hence, where before clerics, dynastic chroniclers, worried Roman citizens, hagiographers and patriotic historians have kept this narrative alive, it is now mainly professional scholars – archaeologists and historians – who

do this. What these scholars rarely point out, however, is that the resonance and value of the migration narrative is held in place by the supposed authority (a discourse of power) of a strong scholarly tradition going back at least 150 years (Frantzen 1990: 102-3). Yet by noting again the intellectual context of people writing about the past it is possible to see how certain traditions of knowledge, truth and perceived authority can create historical 'facts'. Other approaches, however, may show the precise historicity of these facts to be illusory.

4.15 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that we must question the precise value of the extant historical sources when seeking to understand material culture change in southern and eastern England in the fifth century AD. However, the aim of this chapter has not been simply to dismiss those historical sources that refer to Britain in the fifth century and/or 'Germanic' raids, invasions or migrations. On the contrary, the intention has been to look at the eight sources in question in some detail and to show that they were mostly carefully constructed texts that give modern historians valuable insights into the late antique and early medieval past.

These conclusions are important for this study as a whole because they call into question many of the foundations of research about the fifth century. How do we know Britain was no longer part of the Empire in 410? Why do we date the migrations to c.450? Why are the people buried in cemeteries with certain brooch or pottery types referred to as 'Saxons', 'Anglo-Saxons' or even just 'Germanic' people? Traditionally, the answers to all these question are believed to be supplied by historical sources and it therefore follows that the value of many presumed facts about the fifth century must be carefully (re-)considered.

It is also important to point out that none of the above can be used to prove that migrations *did not* occur. It is just that historical sources do not provide independent proof that they *did* take place. The historical works pertaining to fifth-century eastern England provide us not with factual information of that time and place, but with a contextual history of mentalities and an indication of the creative capacities of the human historical imagination. This is an important conclusion on its own, but when also considering archaeological interpretation it is even more so. That is because post-Roman remains have always been interpreted in the light of historical sources. This returns us to the observation made in Section 4.5.5, that the use of history in fifth-century studies has been tautologous, since ultimately history provides *both the source and a primary proof* that the migrations took place. How we might avoid such tautology will be discussed in later chapters. However, the influence of this tautology will be emphasized still further in the following chapter, which deals with evidence used to support the migration hypothesis that does not come from cemeteries or burials.

CHAPTER FIVE



Other Sources of Evidence for Fifth Century England

5.1 Introduction

Much of the evidence traditionally used to support the idea of fifth-century 'Germanic migrations' to Britain comes from funerary contexts. For this reason, in the present study there is a great deal of emphasis on funerary archaeology, and indeed, the material analysed in the following chapters comes largely from cemeteries. However, funerary remains are not the only type of archaeological evidence available to archaeologists studying change and transition in fifth-century Britain. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to highlight other sources of information. This will enable a broader picture of transition period archaeology to be presented and will allow the funerary evidence to be placed in a wider context. Hence, any conclusions to be drawn in Chapters Eight and Nine will be formed in the light of all available evidence, and not only from one type of archaeological deposit.

This chapter will summarize the evidence and debates concerning language, place-names, the landscape, eco-environmental evidence, settlements and houses. Whether they are believed to indicate discontinuities *caused* by the migrations or continuities *in spite* of the migrations, it will be shown that these sources of evidence have commonly been discussed using the assumption that migrations (on whatever scale) took place. The validity of this interpretation will be discussed in each case, in the light of the available evidence and the issues examined in the previous chapters.

5.2 Language

However much historical and archaeological evidence for the Roman-Medieval transition may have been queried, the question that often still arises is 'But what about the change in language?' Before the fifth century, it is generally believed that people living in Britain spoke various 'Celtic' languages or Latin. Today, however, it is a truism that English is spoken across much of the British Isles and not Welsh (Gelling 1993; Hills 1990: 47; 1993b: 15). Hence, because philologists classify English as a 'Germanic' language – its form and vocabulary being related to other northern European languages, such as German and Frisian – it is perhaps not surprising that the origins of this linguistic change have usually been traced back to the Germanic migrations of the fifth century. In order to understand how and why such conclusions have been reached it is necessary, first of all, to investigate the theoretical methodologies employed by linguists and philologists.

5.2.1 The history and methods of philology

Although there had been scholarly interest in the relationships between languages since the sixteenth century, it was in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that historical linguistics began as a distinct discipline (Hannaford 1996: 14, 235; Hides 1996: 36-7; Malina and Vašíček 1990: 35). At this time previous classically derived understandings of language – for example perceiving it simply as a means of communication and expression (Hides 1996: 37) – were rejected by scholars. Instead, having noted contemporary language differences and drawing on the increasingly popular racial theories, language came to be seen as the 'soul of the nation' (Malina and Vašíček 1990: 46). Philology thus became a 'scientific' discipline and a subject in its own right (Hannaford 1996: 14; Hides 1996: 36-7) and, along with anthropology, history and eventually archaeology, one of the scientific means for understanding human origins and the past as well as for identifying and defining racial or national groups (Hannaford 1996: 14, 235; Jones 1997: 41-2).

German scholars were especially influential in the burgeoning field of historical linguistics. In order to investigate the relationship between languages, Franz Bopp (1791-1867) established the comparative method. This involved comparing words of similar form and meaning (known as cognates) in different languages. By analysing a range of words scholars hoped to deduce the degree of relatedness that existed between different languages (Malina and Vašíček 1990: 35). Building on their observations about modern and historically attested languages, scholars also attempted to trace linguistic origins further back through time, beyond the range of historical texts (Milroy and Milroy 1997: 73). This was achieved by comparing known cognates and then deducing the most likely original form of certain words. That the assumptions inherent in this method were valid could be seen, for example, in the case of Romance languages (e.g. French, Spanish, Italian) where many modern/historical cognates could be traced back to Latin words. As such, Latin was, and is, known as a proto-language for these modern languages.

Unlike the Romance languages, however, the Germanic proto-language is not known today and is not recorded historically. Thus, there is no direct evidence for what languages were spoken by people in Britain or in northern Europe and Scandinavia in the fifth century. However, philologists recognized that German and English became increasingly similar the further back in time they were traced (i.e. there are more similar cognates in Old English and Old German compared to the modern forms of those languages). Extrapolating from known words, scholars attempted to deduce the language of the prehistoric period; the common ancestor or proto-language of English, German and Frisian that was spoken before they all 'diverged'. This (hypothetical) language was, and is still, known as 'West Germanic'. It is believed to have developed from 'Common Germanic', along with North and East Germanic (Hines 1994: 55;

Robinson 1992: 1-6). This method of (hypothetical) linguistic reconstruction has been called linguistic palaeontology (Malina and Vašíček 1990: 59-60; Renfrew 1987: 14).

A complementary methodology was developed by another German, August Schleicher (1821-1868). In 1850 he proposed that language could be considered analogous to a natural organism. In his later work (clearly showing the influence of Darwin's contemporary publications) he suggested that language was like a genus, dialects were a sub-genus and the root of a word was a cell (Malina and Vašíček 1990: 44). Individual languages were therefore seen as entirely separate, drifting apart once they had diverged, rather like 'genetic drift' which eventually separates species of animals (Renfrew 1987: 102). Thus it was possible to conceive – and to represent pictorially – the relationship between languages in the same way as biological species, by using cladistic (branch) theory to create a dendrogram or family tree diagram (*Stammbaum*) (see Fig. 2) (Hines 1994: 54-5; Malina and Vašíček 1990: 44; Milroy and Milroy 1997: 73; Renfrew 1987: 101; Robinson 1992: 11. But see Moore 1994 for critique of cladistic theory). The *Stammbaum* was first proposed by Schleicher in 1862 (Renfrew 1987: 101).

Having reconstructed the relationship between languages in this way – as a linear series of divergences through time – linguists attempted to work ever further backwards in order to investigate ultimate origins of known languages: the roots of the family tree. Using the comparative method to facilitate linguistic palaeontology they hoped to define the origins of modern languages (such as English and German) as well as the single ancestral Indo-European language from which all the later divergences started: the *Ursprache*. That such a language may have existed was first suggested in the late eighteenth century (Malina and Vašíček 1990: 24; Renfrew 1987: 9)

Of course it was not sufficient for scholars to define and depict the relationship between languages, it was also important to establish what the nodes of the dendrograms represented in real terms; when, how and why did linguistic divergences occur? In linguistic palaeontology, especially outside the range of historical sources, there is no way of fixing these nodes in time or space (Renfrew 1987: 285-6). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was believed that archaeology could provide a solution to this problem.

Gustav Kossinna was probably the first scholar to describe an explicit link between archaeological cultures (*Kulturprovinzen*) and linguistic evidence and to use both to identify racial or ethnic groups (*Völke*) through time. For example, in 1902 he wrote a paper entitled 'The Indo-European question answered archaeologically' (Renfrew 1987: 15. See also Hides 1996: 41; Malina and Vašíček 1990: 62). Kossinna believed in the inherent superiority of certain racial groups and he claimed that the success of the *Germani* was due in part to their

superior linguistic, and thus intellectual, abilities. He also believed that the original Indo-Europeans were Aryan peoples who originated in northern Germany and Scandinavia (Hides 1996: 41; Malina and Vašíček 1990: 62). Such ideas about the relationship between language and archaeology were developed by other scholars, notably V. Gordon Childe (albeit without the explicit racial views) (Hides 1996: 41; Renfrew 1987: 15-17), and they can be seen as an important part of, what became known as, culture-historical archaeology.

As described in Chapters Three and Four, culture-historical archaeology has often involved very simplistic readings of historical sources and equated material culture distributions with distinct, historically attested ethnic groupings. Just as material culture was believed to reflect ethnic grouping, so too was language. Given that language, material culture and ethnicity were seen to be so closely related, material culture change and language change were attributed to the migrations or invasions of ethnic/racial groups. Hence the nodes on philologist's dendrograms – the points at which languages changed and split apart from the parent languages – were commonly seen to represent changes in ethnic populations.

5.2.2 Recent critiques of traditional philological methods

The above is an outline of traditional philological techniques, views of language and linguistic change. However, more recently, scholars have drawn attention to a number of problems and assumptions inherent in these methods and they have instead attempted to highlight and investigate the complexities of language change.

One significant trend has been the increasing importance of socio-linguistics. Rather than seeing language as simply reflecting ethnic identities, this approach emphasizes that 'language can function as a symbolic means of asserting speaker-identity and belongingness' (Milroy and Milroy 1997: 73. Also Anthony 1997: 27-8; Renfrew 1987: 112; Wardhaugh 1987: 2-3). For example, early historical records have often been used to show the differences between entire languages and to reconstruct entire prehistoric linguistic forms. Yet many have now recognized that language may be one way in which, for example, a specifically elite identity was created, or it may have been primarily a written language used mainly by scholars. How, therefore, do historically based linguistic models relate to the bulk of the population (cf. Geary 1983: 20; 1988: 8)? The social advantages and likelihood of bilingualism have also been noted (Geary 1983: 20; Renfrew 1987: 112). Furthermore, many other factors can also influence language change, such as geography, historical relations between social groups, education, economics and religion (Wardhaugh 1987: 18).

Such observations have led to reappraisals of methods for classifying languages and understanding language change. For example, it has been recognized that comparative methods

assume languages are separate, 'quasi-physical entities' (Milroy and Milroy 1997: 73). Yet it has now been acknowledged that it is too simplistic to state that there was a unified parent language from which two or more new languages split and that these then immediately lost contact and diverged separately (Renfrew 1987: 103-4). Indeed, Wardhaugh (1987: 1) has argued that languages are actually in a constant state of change. This in turn means that it is far too crude to represent the relationships between languages using a dendrogram; it tells us nothing about temporal or geographical realities (Renfrew 1987: 103; Robinson 1992: 12-13, 249) or whether two similar languages may have existed at the same time rather than one being descended from the other (Robinson 1992: 261-2). The comparative method itself has also been criticized. Linguists have shown how similarities between words used in different languages (cognates) do not necessarily imply the languages as a whole are related. Rather, the incorporation of loan words (e.g. the influence of Norman French on English) and linguistic innovations (e.g. for widespread technical innovations such as the wheel or metals) have been described as the 'enemies of linguistic palaeontology' (Renfrew 1987: 109-110). Milroy and Milroy summarized these trends, writing that;

> 'Assumptions about uniform language states have been replaced by an emphasis on variability; and assumptions about the separateness and distinctiveness of languages and dialects have given way to an emphasis on linguistic continua and recognitions that linguistic (as distinct from political) boundaries between linguistic varieties are normally unclear' (Milroy and Milroy 1997: 74).

Finally, the relationship between archaeology and language has also been reassessed. As Renfrew has noted;

> '...linguists have been willing to follow the archaeological orthodoxy of nearly a century ago, while archaeologists have taken the conclusions of the historical linguists at their face value, failing to realize that they were themselves based upon archaeological assumptions which had not been questioned, yet which were not in some cases justifiable' (Renfrew 1987: 287. See also James 1999: 81-3).

It is therefore now the case that linguists have questioned many of the normative approaches to their subject, while archaeologists have done the same, especially concerning the relationship between material culture and ethnic groupings (see Chapter Three). Scholars in both disciplines have also questioned the idea of monolithic ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups and have recognized that such approaches are the product of nineteenth-century scholarship. Although language *is* a common means of defining ethnicity (Renfrew 1987: 113; Wardhaugh 1987: 3-4; cf. Jones 1997: 100) it has been concluded that there is in fact no direct correlation between language, ethnicity and material culture (e.g. Higham 1992: 192; Jones and Graves-Brown

1996: 7) and this is due the complexities inherent in each of those phenomena. Thus, in using both archaeology and linguistics as sources of evidence for the past it is important to be aware of assumptions that have been employed previously and why they might not be wholly supportable.

5.2.3 Philology in Anglo-Saxon studies

This overview of historical linguistics has important implications for philology and the study of fifth-century England. To begin with, however, it should be noted that Anglo-Saxon scholars had described a link between material culture and language at least half a century before Kossinna did so (although such ideas did not crystallize as an explicit theoretical approach in the same way). For example, in 1855, Kemble commented on the importance of the urns found in England and in the Stade region of northern Germany, and in doing so he linked material culture, human biology (i.e. 'blood'/race) and language (Kemble 1855a: 280 – quoted in Section 2.3. See also Kemble 1839: ii; Roach Smith 1852: ix-xvii).

Philology continued to be an important aspect of Anglo-Saxon scholarship during the second half of the nineteenth century. It became one of the primary sources of evidence used by Germanist scholars in Victorian England, especially by the scholars of the popular and influential 'Oxford School' (see Freeman 1898 (1872): 23; Green 1885: 139; Stubbs 1874; 1906: 227-8) as well as by other scholars (Norman 1880: 97, 105; Palmer 1885: 186). Language was one way in which both the Anglo-Saxon race and its continental origins were defined. As mentioned previously, language was therefore seen as an important indicator of national identity, both in the past and the present. Stubbs called it 'the nearest approach to a perfect test of national extraction' (Stubbs 1874: 7). Partly because of the contemporary prevalence of English, scholars believed that the Germanic take-over of England in the fifth century must have been absolute, with the 'Celtic' natives being pushed westwards, enslaved or exterminated. Hence, English was believed to be an entirely Germanic language, with the former 'Celtic'/Latin language being attested only by occasional words (e.g. Freeman 1903 (1881): 97; Green 1885: 139; Stubbs 1906: 227). William Stubbs wrote that;

> 'Of the Germans of Germany and the English of early times it is scarcely necessary to speak, for whatever may have been the later modifications, the influence of Latin of the fifth century on the language of either must have been infinitesimal. No European tongue is more thoroughly homogeneous in vocabulary and in structure than that known as Anglo-Saxon: it is as pure as those of Scandinavia where no Roman influences ever penetrated, and no earlier race than the German left intelligible traces' (Stubbs 1874: 7-8).

Despite the certainty of scholars like Stubbs, it is interesting to note that these 'popular histories' (Palmer 1885: 178) were questioned by other researchers (e.g. Renan 1882,

reproduced in Woolf (ed.) 1996: 49; Wright 1852: 460-1). Palmer, for example, believed that English was wholly Anglo-Saxon, but;

> 'Still it appears probable that many Celtic words have survived the change, and become incorporated into it. Change of language, however, does not prove change of race. The Normans, although the finest and most powerful race of medieval times, changed their language *twice*: first to French when they settled in Normandy, and secondly to English when they had established themselves here' (Palmer 1885: 186).

Early in the twentieth century, archaeologists continued to include philological evidence in their general discussions of Anglo-Saxon material, drawing on the contemporary philological models that classified English as part of the 'West Germanic' group of languages (along with Frisian and German – Chadwick 1907: 62-4; Leeds 1913: 83). There were, however, some differences of opinion concerning exactly which of these languages were the most closely related. Chadwick asserted that Frisian and English were the closest (see also Bremmer 1990), while Leeds (1913: 83) stated that Frisian was related only to Kentish and that other English dialects could have come from almost any part of northern Germany. A few decades later, Jankuhn (1952: 15) argued that Old English originated in Schleswig and Jutland. Despite these questions about the precise details of linguistic relationships, the ideas established by Victorian scholars were retained. Linguistic differences were seen to be caused by the migration or invasion of defined ethnic groups, and the linguistic relationships between these groups were explained using theories summarized by 'family tree' diagrams. Conclusions resulting from these methods concerning the fifth century in England appear largely to have been taken for granted by Anglo-Saxon archaeologists since there seem to have been relatively few comments about language by such scholars, who, for much of the twentieth century, were concerned mainly with defining material typologies (see Chapter Two).

During the last decade or so there has, however, been something of a resurgence of interest in philology amongst Anglo-Saxon scholars (Hines 1990: 17). The resulting publications reveal quite a wide range of opinion concerning fifth-century linguistic evidence. On the one hand, a number of authors continue to see language as a good indicator of substantial ethnic change in the fifth century. For example, Martin Welch has written that;

> '...there are great dangers for those who accept the minimalist view of Anglo-Saxon settlement, for this view flies in the face of the combined available evidence from linguistic, historical and archaeological sources. The fact that modern English is a Germanic language derived ultimately from the Old English spoken by Anglo-Saxons cannot be lightly dismissed... If there were so few Anglo-Saxon settlers why did not British

> Celtic triumph? The obvious implication is that considerable numbers of Anglo-Saxons settled in southern and eastern England...' (Welch 1985: 13-14, quoted in Hines 1990: 17).

Similarly, Hamerow has argued that, as an 'unreformed migrationist', she does not believe that the shift to a Germanic language in England can be explained by referring to the migration of only a small, illiterate, warrior aristocracy (Hamerow 1993: 173). Modern philologists also continue to use what are often quite strikingly traditional interpretations of their evidence, writing linguistic history in terms of defined, historically attested ethnic groups and migrations (e.g. Green 1998, 1999; Robinson 1992; Thomason and Kaufman 1988; Wardhaugh 1987 – see below). Thus, despite the critiques of philology outlined above, early medieval archaeologists still refer to philology as one way (along with material culture) of demonstrating the effects of fifth-century migrations, while philologists use the testimony of archaeological evidence to maintain that English and other Germanic languages (especially Old Frisian and Old German) are closely related (cf. quote by Renfrew in Section 5.2.2).

Despite the continuity of these traditional ideas, a number of authors have questioned such approaches to fifth-century language change. Drawing on contemporary anthropological literature, Hills (1990: 47) has noted that language change can occur without migrations. She also points out that the replacement of 'British' languages may have taken a long time (cf. place-name evidence, Section 5.3.2). The long-established technique of linguistic palaeontology using back-projections from the earliest known historical sources has also been questioned. Hines notes that language between AD 400 and 600 is almost entirely unknown and that it is only really becomes possible to discuss this for the eighth to ninth centuries onwards (Hines 1990: 18; 1994: 55; 1998: 162; Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 265). In addition, it must be recognized that oral and written sources might be very different in their use of language and narrative (see Richter 1994 and Section 4.3.2.6). As we have seen in Chapter Four, many early medieval texts were *written* in specific ways for particular reasons. As such, the reconstruction of 'proto-languages' – the languages *spoken* by people living in the fifth century – from the earliest sources must be highly dubious.

There is a range of other problems with traditional understandings of language in the fifth century. Robinson (1992: 247; also Hines 1994: 55-6) has questioned the validity of the Germanic language 'family tree'. He states that the existence of a hypothetical proto-language called 'West Germanic' (from which Old English, Germanic and Frisian are derived) has always been doubtful. Furthermore, he argued that there may actually have been links between the (traditionally entirely separate) West Germanic languages, Old Norse and Gothic (Robinson 1992: 247). All of these observations undermine the normative, cladistic classification of fifth-century languages in northern Europe.

A number of recent studies have also been influenced by sociolinguistics. As we have seen, the idea of direct relationships between social groups, language and material culture has now been questioned by many scholars. This allowed Hines (1994: 56), for example, to argue that many different languages may have arrived in Britain with the fifth-century settlers and that any homogeneity we detect today may be due to a lack of solid linguistic evidence for this period. Homogeneity may also be due to the *convergence* of languages through time; an idea which again challenges the 'family tree' model in which divergence and inherited regularities are used to account for linguistic similarities (Hines 1990: 31; 1996: 266; Milroy and Milroy 1997: 74).

Nevertheless, while simple population replacement models have now been questioned, the relationship between linguistic and cultural processes must still be investigated. Hines has proposed a general, complex trend that he refers to as 'Germanization' (Hines 1990: 19; 1994; 56; 1996; 260), of which language change was just one part. This process he believes may have been quite widespread, leading to a linguistic continuum around the North Sea (Hines 1990: 30). Higham (1992; 192) has written that fifth-century language change may have been influenced by religion, ideology and secular patronage. He nonetheless believes that language change could have been instigated by the settlement of a Germanic elite in England (Higham 1992: 194-8. See also Anthony 1997: 29; Hodges 1989: 67). He argues that, in the context of radical social transformation, widespread language change could have occurred despite the relative difference in the sizes of the immigrant and British communities and despite our lack of knowledge about fifth-century Latin usage (Higham 1992: 196-8). Inevitably this model, by referring to a small immigrant population, cannot rely solely on the imposition of a new language. Higham, therefore, states that in many cases Britons were probably bilingual, adopting the English language (and culture) and eventually abandoning their native tongue (ibid: 194-5). Hines also stresses that the adoption of language is an important element in widespread language change (Hines 1994: 56).

5.2.4 Critique

The studies summarized above demonstrate that the traditional, combined views of language and population change discussed by nineteenth- and earlier twentieth-century scholars have been substantially revised. Nevertheless, it will be shown here that a number of key concepts from traditional linguistic studies have been retained, both by archaeologists and philologists and this means that migrations remain at the heart of research on language and linguistic change in the fifth century.

To begin with, it is clear that there is still general support for the idea that migrations were the catalyst for wide ranging changes in the fifth century, including language change. Hines, for

example, has written that that the complex process of 'Anglicization' or 'Germanization' only started with the Germanic settlements of the fifth and sixth centuries (Hines 1994: 54-5; 1996: 260, 266. Also Anthony 1997: 29; Higham 1992: 208). The migrationist approach remains even more explicit in recent work by philologists. Robinson (1992: 136) states that history and archaeology support the idea that the main Germanic influx into Britain occurred in the middle of the fifth century, and his narrative of this process draws directly on those of Bede and Gildas. Wardhaugh (despite beginning his book by discussing the potential complexities of language change and adoption) describes how the Celts arrived in Britain in successive waves no later than the sixth to seventh centuries BC, and that these people were eventually split up by waves of Germanic invaders crossing the North Sea in the fifth century. These invaders were also said to be influential in forcing the Romans to leave (Wardhaugh 1987: 64-6). Similarly, Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 265) describe how the English 'abandoned the continent' in the fifth century, planting themselves and their language in Britain. The authors back-up this statement by referencing Chadwick's 1907 publication! It therefore appears that the mutually supportive circular argument described by Renfrew (1987: 287 – quoted above) is still in place.

Second, while not wanting to dismiss migrations *per se*, the philological support for this supposed phenomenon in the fifth century is still heavily dependent on comparative philology. Hines (1996: 266) describes this as a 'very productive' method for understanding the early Germanic language forms. He also believes that we can reconstruct past linguistic systems using comparative philology, linguistic palaeontology and other 'scientific' linguistic techniques (Hines 1994: 55). Indeed, comparative methods remain fundamental to purely philological studies of Old English and its origins (e.g. Robinson 1992) as well as to other 'Germanic' languages (e.g. Green (1998; 1999) has used lexicographical evidence to plot the early medieval migrations of the Goths from the Baltic to the Black Sea). Nevertheless, as described above, many authors (even those who still continue to use such methods in practice – e.g. Robinson 1987; Wardhaugh 1992) have criticized these methods. Criticisms have focused on comparative philology's need to see languages as unified entities that split and then lose contact, and on the lack of temporal and geographical content in 'family tree' diagrams. If the central tenets of sociolinguistics are accepted, it must also be concluded that too many questionable assumptions are required for the comparative method to be a reliable method of historical research. Thus, using research based on comparative philology to help prove that fifth-century migrations to Britain took place is a flawed argument.

Third, an even more fundamental criticism is that many authors of recent research on this subject still rely on the idea that, in the past, there were defined and homogeneous languages that coincided with discrete ethnic groups. This homogenizing tendency is exemplified by Robinson's assertion that phenomena specific to one language must be omitted from

philological study as the aim is to show connections between languages and to order them in a systematic manner (Robinson 1992: 247). Such an approach is also present in early medieval archaeology. Language (and the scale of the migrations that may have led to language change and/or adoption) has now become an important issue in scholars' attempts to understand the interactions between distinct groups of 'Germanic/Anglo-Saxon incomers' and the 'native British' population. Hence, although a number of articles have emphasized the potential complexity of language change and ethnic interaction (e.g. Hines 1994: 57; Robinson 1992; Wardhaugh 1987: 64-6), normative approaches to ethnicity and language remain. Distinct ethnic and linguistic groups are still taken for granted; 'Britons' and 'Germanic settlers', each group with their own distinct language, are presented as an unquestionable fact of life in the fifth century. These approaches can be traced back to nineteenth-century theories and they have already been critiqued both above and in Chapter Three.

The geographical scale and perceived nature of these supposedly defined groups also influences the explanatory models employed. If a distinct group of 'intrusive' people are believed to have established themselves over a relatively wide area, either displacing or living alongside an equally defined group of 'native' people, then it is very difficult to discuss anything other than migrations to explain this change. The use of such broad, generalized and highly questionable approaches to ethnicity and language means that migrations will remain at the heart of both philological and archaeological understandings of the fifth century in Britain. Nevertheless, it will be recalled that Hines (1990: 31; 1996: 266 – see above) argued that many languages may have made up the North Sea dialect continuum and the seemingly widespread language groups we now discuss could be a result of language convergence and a paucity of written sources. Before mass communication, it does indeed seem likely that many local dialects would have existed within, perhaps quite small, geographical regions and that some people would have been able to understand neighbouring dialect speakers while for others this may not have been the case (of course, those involved with trading may have been competent in several different languages or dialects). Thus, the idea of large-scale language groups may have been completely meaningless to many of those speaking very local dialects in the fifth century around the North Sea (cf. localized burial practices in cemeteries – Section 3.4.11). Again, it must be concluded that to use generalized assumptions about relatively large scale, homogeneous ethnic groups in order to discuss language change serves only to perpetuate potentially questionable assumptions and a reliance on migration as an explanatory framework.

5.2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that there are many practical and theoretical problems with existing linguistic scholarship dealing with the fifth century in England, even when the complexities of language change have been emphasized by scholars. Furthermore, many of the assumptions

used by philologists can be traced back to nationalistic and racial theories prevalent in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries suggesting that they are far from being natural, unbiased means of understanding language. As such, it is argued here that language is another source of evidence that cannot be used as unambiguous evidence for the migration of people across the North Sea into eastern England in the fifth century.

Nevertheless, we cannot simply ignore the similarities between, for example, Old English, Old German and Old Frisian. In this context it is interesting to note what Hines has called a 'north-west Germanic dialect continuum' that he believes existed in the fifth century between the Rhine and Scandinavia (Hines 1990: 30). Although he states that this was disrupted by migrations, he also writes that it existed by the late Roman period and was re-established rapidly after the migration period and relates to the 'intense redefinition of group identities that took place in Germanic Europe between *circa* 200 and 600 AD' (Hines 1994: 57). Furthermore, he believes that language only became more 'nationalized' as kingdoms crystallized in northwest Europe (ibid.). This in turn suggests that large-scale, regional identities may not have existed before. These ideas complement those put forward by Carver (1990) and his concept of a 'North Sea zone of interaction' that will be discussed in detail in Chapter Eight.

5.3 Place-name evidence

Place-name or toponymical evidence has been described as indicative of historical and linguistic developments (Gelling 1984: 1) and it is another area of research drawn on by those seeking to understand the Roman-Medieval transition. As with linguistic studies, place-name research is a well-established and complex discipline and hence there is no space here to present an entirely comprehensive description and discussion of past and current research. As such, the following is a brief description of place-name studies and a discussion of some important themes relating to fifth-century Britain.

5.3.1 Background

The study of English place-names became a defined academic discipline in the first quarter of the twentieth century (Gelling 1993: 51) and from the outset it appears that migrations were a key feature in understanding the form and distribution of the names in question. Early students of place-names, such as Sir Frank Stenton and Dorothy Whitelock, have been described as belonging to the 'Germanist' school of English history (Gelling 1993: 53; Higham 1992: 198). Although they did recognize that some British place-names survived the Germanic invasions, it was believed that these belonged mostly to rivers, forests and hills (Gelling 1978: 19; 1993: 53). Hence, because they were primarily concerned with the English settlements, they gave these names very little consideration (Gelling 1984: 5), focusing instead on those names that related to habitation. These were assumed to be mostly Germanic in form. For example, Whitelock

(1952: 18, quoted in Gelling 1993: 53) wrote that 'no place-name supplies a certain instance of a British habitation name'. Similarly, in his study of Berkshire place-names Stenton wrote that;

> 'Oxford is only the most famous of many names in this quarter which carry a strong smack of the farmyard' (Stenton 1911: 19, quoted in Gelling 1984: 5).

Names ending in *-ingas* ('the people of X') or *-inga-ham/tun* ('the settlement of the people of X') were particularly important in this context (Copley 1986: 3-4; Gelling 1978: 106; Higham 1992: 198). They were designated 'archaic' and were believed to be the earliest Germanic place-names and were therefore used as the starting point for place-name chronologies (Gelling 1978: 15, 107).

When place-name research began, it was not regularly mentioned by contemporary archaeologists; historians (e.g. Stenton and Whitelock) appear to have done much of the work. However, place-names are now quite frequently mentioned in general publications on early medieval archaeology (e.g. Arnold 1997; Bremmer 1990; Higham 1992; Hines 1996; 1998; Jankuhn 1952; Myres 1986: 30-45) and as background information in cemetery reports (e.g. Boyle et al. 1995; Timby 1996). Despite this, it is still perhaps fair to say that place-name scholars have used archaeology more than archaeologists have used place-name evidence (e.g. Copley 1986; 1988; Dodgson 1966; Gelling 1978).

5.3.2 Reassessments of traditional approaches

Traditional, 'Germanist' understandings of place-names were not seriously challenged until the 1960s (Gelling 1978: 15; Higham 1992: 198-9). From then on there was increasing emphasis on place-names derived from Latin and British/Welsh/Celtic words – both habitative and topographical – and it became increasingly clear that earlier assumptions did not stand up to close scrutiny. By emphasizing those pre-/non-English place-names, researchers believed they could demonstrate an 'extended peaceful coexistence between the two peoples' (Gelling 1993: 51, 56; also 1978: 88).

Latin elements in English place-names are a relatively small, yet significant class (Gelling 1978: 87). They include terms such as *camp, ceaster, port, strœt* and *wic* (ibid: 66). Eccles-, or just Eccles itself, could also be noteworthy since it may derive from pre-English words denoting a Christian church. Those examples found in the north-west Midlands could derive from a Welsh term (see below), but those in the south-east may represent a more direct borrowing of the Latin term *ecclesia* (ibid: 82-3). Gelling believes that Latin was probably not spoken by most of the Romano-British rural population and hence these Latin words must have been adopted during contacts between the earliest settlers (possibly late Roman *foederati* troops) and the Roman

governing classes (ibid: 65-6) (an alternative to Leeds (1913: 83), who quoted the then contemporary philological view that Latin words in English were adopted when the Anglo-Saxon migrants had a 'temporary sojourn' in the Rhine area).

Scholars have also identified numerous place-names that 'are believed to have been acquired by English settlers from the Welsh-speaking people of the countryside' (Gelling 1978: 87). Such names include Lichfield, Pensax and, again, Eccles (ibid: 98-9). Other place-names may denote the settlements of Welsh/British people. The use of the term *wahl* (pl. *walas*) is a significant example, which can be translated in Old English as either 'Welsh' or 'serf'. This element can be found in names such as Walton, Walsall and Walcot (ibid: 93; Hines 1996: 261). Gelling has observed that there appears to be a greater number of surviving 'Celtic' place-names as one goes further north and west in Britain (Gelling 1978: 90; John 1996: 8). However, she has also written that there are parts of western Britain (e.g. Devon and Shropshire) where the scarcity of Celtic place-names is 'highly embarrassing'. Conversely, part of Surrey (ostensibly an 'Anglo-Saxon' area) has a remarkably high number of Celtic names (Gelling 1993: 51, 55). Celtic or pre-Celtic names are also common for major topographical features, such as rivers (e.g. Thames, Avon, Severn), hills (e.g. Malverns, Pennines, Cheviots) and forests (e.g. Arden, Wyre) (Gelling 1978: 90).

Although these 'Celtic'/British names have now been studied, a large proportion of English place-names are still believed to be 'Germanic'/Old English in origin. The traditional assumptions about these names have also been reassessed in the decades since 1960. Gelling has pointed out that theories which described *-ingas* names as being those used by the very earliest invaders were based only on a 'feeling' that they were appropriate for a migratory group and a belief that this type of name is well represented on the continent (Gelling 1978: 109). Furthermore, these names are actually only a small proportion of so-called 'Germanic' place-names. In Copley's list of 114 supposedly fifth-century names there are only sixteen *-ingas* names (14%). Furthermore, Copley found only three (1.5%) in 201 'sixth century' names (Copley 1986: 3; Gelling 1984: 3). While these statistics might possibly be significant, the attribution of specific names to the fifth or sixth centuries is problematic (see below).

There have been other critiques of traditional toponymical research. Perhaps the first major attack was by Dodgson (1966). Using distribution maps, he showed that *-ingas* and *-ingham* place-names had a remarkable lack of correspondence with the earliest post-Roman archaeological evidence (especially cemeteries) in southern and eastern England. Thus, rather than seeing the names in question as representing early Germanic settlement *per se*, he argued that 'the *-ingas* place-name seems to be the result of a social development contemporary with a colonizing process later than, but soon after, the immigration-settlement that is recorded in early

pagan burials' (Dodgson 1966: 19). Similar problems have been noted in studies of place-names ending in *-ham* (Gelling 1978: 112). However, as with Copley's work, Dodgson's ideas may be important, yet it should be noted that they still rely on a number of questionable assumptions (see below).

There are two further problems with the traditional understandings of English place-names. First, Gelling has asserted that insufficient allowance has been made for regional variation in place-name usage. This, should warn scholars against 'mechanically transferring any method of place-name analysis from one area to another. The vocabulary used differs in different parts of England for reasons that are not simply chronological ones' (ibid: 129). Thus, if the adoption and usage of certain place-names are likely to have been variable across both time and space, is it valid to use generalized models to explain place-name patterning or to 'plot' Germanic settlement across England using those names?

Second, as described above, the idea that certain place-name elements represent the earliest phases of Germanic settlement has been questioned. Problems with the traditional model continue when the chronology of place-name change is considered. Higham (1992: 200) quotes a study conducted by Cox, which used place-names recorded in English literature up to AD 731 (the date of Bede's HE). 224 place-names were identified of which 26% had definite pre-English elements; a far higher percentage than any later sample. Gelling (1978: 110-11) also believes that many place-names may not have been coined in the fifth century, and that supposedly 'archaic' elements may in fact have first been used between AD 600 and 700 (see also Hills 1993b: 15. Also Gelling 1993: 54-5; Higham 1992: 208). Hills extrapolates from these observations, describing how they appear to have important implications for language change. She writes that English did replace British, but it may have taken a long time to do so (Hills 1993a: 312). These studies suggest that many 'Germanic' place-names (and language) may have come into use long after the supposed Germanic influx of the fifth century (ibid.). They may also have come into use for a wide range of potential reasons and, hence, the occurrence of certain place-names is not necessarily the result of, or good evidence for, fifth-century migrations.

Although the studies described above do undermine many traditional, early twentieth-century views of place-names, many place-name specialists, historians and archaeologists still see this as a valuable source of evidence about early medieval Britain. Gelling believes that place-name studies are important because they challenge, what she calls, the 'lunatic extremes of opinion' which are possible in early medieval research (Gelling 1993: 51). On the one hand, that a majority of place-names changed from Celtic/British/Welsh to Old English/Germanic forms (Gelling 1978: 22, 63) suggests that there was a substantial settlement of Germanic people in

the fifth century. On the other hand, numerous pre-English place-names have also been identified. It might therefore be said that the task facing scholars is to reconcile this contrasting evidence.

5.3.3 Discussion and critique

This is a perfectly reasonable proposition, considering the approaches adopted by place-name scholars. However, although it is clear that many scholars today are quite judicious in their usage of place-names, it is also important to point out that discussions about place-names have taken place within a very specific theoretical framework.

To begin with, many of the issues discussed in relation to language change apply here also. The idea that distinct, homogeneous ethnic identities existed in the past is again a central feature of place-name studies. It appears that certain name elements – for example 'Celtic'/British or 'Germanic'/Old English elements – are believed to indicate the presence or absence of people who belonged to those ethnic groups (cf. the use of ethnicity in relation to material culture (Section 3.4.7) and language (Section 5.2)). Such approaches to ethnicity were questioned in Chapter Three.

Closely related to this view of ethnicity is the historically-derived idea of migrations. Even though scholars have now recognized that place-name changes may have taken place over relatively long periods of time for a variety of reasons, the idea remains that 'Germanic' names are intrusive, brought in – in the first instance at least – by Germanic settlers. Hence, migrations by defined ethnic groups provide the primary explanation for why Germanic place-names predominate in many parts of England. Due to the same understanding of ethnicity, 'Celtic' place-names in Surrey and a lack of 'Celtic' place-names in Devon and Shropshire are seen as anomalies. Objections to such views of ethnicity, history and migrations have been discussed in Chapters Three and Four.

It is also worthwhile considering the nature of the relationship between spoken language, history and place-names. Copley (1986: 9) has described how the first documentary evidence for a place-name may have been written down centuries after the name began to be used orally (the Domesday Book of 1086 is often the first record), and that early sources were probably written by monks living far from the place in question. Can it therefore be assumed that a village recorded in an early manuscript as having an Old English name was in fact inhabited by Old English speakers perhaps centuries before the time of the written evidence? Also, when did the usage of Old English begin in a particular place? Did *everyone* know a certain topographical feature by a particular name, be it in Latin, English or Welsh? Likewise, if a village was known as 'Walton', what did the constitutive element *walh* actually mean to people in the early

medieval period? Were the people there legally serfs or were they 'Welsh'? If the latter was the case and they were seen as somehow 'non-English', was that seen to be a racial/biological identity reflecting an actual familial line of descent, or did such understandings of people only begin with the racial-historical theorizing of the nineteenth century? It is therefore important to understand who it was that wrote the relevant manuscripts (cf. Chapter Four). Could it be that there was a certain amount of editing or standardization occurring in the composition of such documents, thus distorting our view of early medieval place-names and place-name terminology? Such questions must be answered when specific cases are being examined. Yet given that there is little consideration of possible personal identities or the contexts in which names were used/recorded in toponymical studies, it must be concluded that the process of place-name formation is actually very poorly understood (cf. Higham 1992: 203).

Finally, as with philology, circular and self-referential arguments involving other disciplines are also evident in place-name studies. For example, scholars have relied on direct, perhaps overly simplistic, interpretations of history and archaeology in order to understand toponymical evidence (e.g. Copley 1986: 9; 1988: 23, 25; Gelling 1993: 51). Similarly, using normative philological approaches, place-name studies rely on the belief that distinct 'Germanic' or 'Celtic' word-forms can be identified. All these assumptions have been questioned in this chapter, and earlier chapters. Additionally, in place-name studies there also seems to be a certain degree of uncertainty (or at least room for debate) as to what actually constitutes a 'Celtic' or 'Germanic' place-name. Gelling describes how one of her maps showing the distribution of English and Celtic names does not include names which some would argue should be there, and omits others which were previously considered to be 'Celtic' (Gelling 1978: 92; 1993: 51; also Copley 1988: 2). This again highlights questionable assumptions about ethnicity, as well as a degree of subjectivity in place-name classification.

5.3.4 Conclusion

As a final conclusion, it can be said that place-names cannot be used as a reliable source of evidence for fifth-century migrations. Place-name scholars have themselves highlighted a number of factors that would appear to undermine the validity of linking their evidence to such movements of people. Furthermore, when conclusions are made to that effect they often rely on a range of theoretically questionable assumptions.

5.4 Pottery studies

Alongside metalwork (examples of which will be discussed in detail in Chapters Six and Seven), pottery has been one of the principal classes of archaeological evidence used to investigate the 'Anglo-Saxon migrations'. However, the following will only be a brief synopsis and critique of how pottery studies have been used in fifth-century studies for two reasons. First, the study of metalwork – or more specifically brooches – will form the material component of the present study for reasons discussed below and in Section 6.3. Second, in early medieval archaeology, pottery studies have many themes in common with the study of metalwork (e.g. approaches to ethnicity (see Chapter Three), the roles of history (see Chapter Four), classification and chronology (see Chapter Six)) and there is no need to repeat those themes here when they will be discussed in more detail with regard to brooches.

5.4.1 Description

As with metalwork, much of the pottery that has been used in support of the migrationist discourse comes from funerary contexts where the vessels were deposited as part of a burial ritual. Some vessels were deposited in inhumations, although the most intensively studied ceramics come from cremations. These urns contained cremated remains collected from funeral pyres, including burnt human remains (mostly fragments of bones and teeth), charcoal and grave/pyre goods that are often burnt or melted (e.g. brooches, tweezers, beads, animal bones), indicating that they too had been on the funerary pyre. The cremation urns in question are usually fairly large and were hand-made in a variety of forms (see Figs. 3 and 4). They range from fairly open forms, often described as bowls, to tall, bulbous forms with relatively narrow, conical necks. The urns have varying degrees of decoration. Some are plain, with carefully smoothed, shiny surfaces, while others are decorated with incised lines, indentations and impressed shapes formed by stamps. Perhaps the most elaborate decoration is found on English *Buckelurnen* that Myres believed to be late in the insular, early medieval funerary pottery sequence (Myres's Group V. e.g. Myres 1969: 101). These are decorated with linear incisions, stamp marks and moulded clay protuberances known as bosses.

5.4.2 Early pottery studies

Urns that are usually dated to the fifth century have been found in cemeteries on both sides of the North Sea, some of which were made up of thousands of individual cremation burials (e.g. Westerwanna, Issendorf, Spong Hill[1]). Scholars have identified many close parallels between north German, Danish and English urns (e.g. Hills 1998; Myres 1973; Weber 1996; 1998a) and it is for this reason that ceramic studies have always formed an important component of fifth-

[1] N.B: In this chapters and the following chapters, if the names of cemeteries or other sites are given without a specific reference, the author/year references relating to the site in question will be found in Appendix Two. Full references can then be found in the Bibliography.

century archaeology and discussions concerning the Roman-Medieval transition in England. Indeed, it could be argued that Kemble's papers on cremation urns in England and Germany (Kemble 1855a and b) initiated the archaeological investigation of the Anglo-Saxon migrations (see Chapter Two).

Despite pottery being recognized as significant very early in the history of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, it was almost a century after Kemble's work before there was a concerted effort to make a systematic survey of early medieval pottery in Britain (although Plettke's work (1921), for example, was influential in Germany). J.N.L. Myres, writing in 1937, summed up the contemporary situation regarding pottery studies;

> 'It is...noteworthy that attention has hitherto been largely concentrated on the brooches and other metalwork, objects which in most periods are regarded as unusually difficult both to date accurately themselves and to use as dating evidence for associated finds, because the very durability and intrinsic value of the individual pieces tend to keep them in use over a great number of years. On the other hand, we are still without any scientific analysis of the forms and decoration used in Anglo-Saxon ceramics, although easily breakable artefacts like pottery have always been recognised for that reason as providing the most useful information of any category of archaeological material' (Myres 1937: 320).

Since the 1930s, Myres's work on English and continental pottery has dominated English early medieval ceramic studies. The results of his life's work can be seen in his 1969 publication and in his corpus of Anglo Saxon pottery (Myres 1977). His approach to archaeology was clearly culture-historical (Richards 1987: 22). For Myres, certain types of pottery and the distribution of those types represented ethnic groups and their movements. Although he was critical of the relevant historical sources (e.g. Myres 1986: 4-20) he nevertheless saw a close relationship between the historical narratives (especially Bede's) and the ceramic evidence (e.g. Myres 1977: 114). Thus, he argued that certain (pre-migration) types of Germanic pottery were found only on the continent while pottery types from the migration period could be found both on the continent and in southern and eastern Britain. Finally, there was a phase of elaborate, specifically English pottery (e.g. *Buckelurnen*), showing that the migrations had ceased (Myres 1969: 63-4).

Within this general framework, Myres proposed other ideas that are relevant to the present study. Firstly, his analysis of the pottery assemblage from Caistor-by-Norwich (Myres and Green 1973) led him to suggest a very early date for the beginning of his 'phase of overlap and controlled settlement' (Myres 1969: 62-83). Myres believed that continental urns dating to the third century (on the basis of associated brooches – but see critique of metalwork chronologies in Chapter Six) were paralleled by urns P15 and Y36 from Caistor. However, a more general consideration of continental types led him to argue that the earliest urns from Caistor were no later than the

second half of the fourth century (ibid: 71); still very early for evidence of migrations. In studying the English material Myres also believed he could identify vessels which 'however barbaric in form or decoration...[were] undeniably Romano-British or even 'Late Celtic' in feel' (Myres 1956: 16; 1969: 66-8). He interpreted this 'Romano-Saxon' pottery as evidence for the mixing of the two cultures (see Fig. 4).

5.4.3 Critiques and recent studies

Myres's work has been hugely influential. His ideas and dating frameworks for ceramics became even more integrated into understandings of early medieval archaeology when his opinion was sought during the publication of material from cemeteries (e.g. Mayes 1976; Welch 1975. Cf. Section 6.2.13 on the 'mutual validation' of classificatory schemes). There have, however, been criticisms of Myres's research. Morris (1974) described how his classifications were internally inconsistent and his dating frameworks rested on insupportable assumptions (e.g. his dating of the continental vessels subsequently used to date the Caistor-by-Norwich pottery and cemetery). The classifications in the corpus were also found to be subjective and hence very little use as a practical tool for classifying and interpreting new pottery finds (Hills 1979b; Richards 1987: 21-2). The 'Romano-Saxon' pottery hypothesis is now also regarded as highly questionable (see Gillam 1979; Roberts 1982). Richards has also argued that, contrary to Myres, the relationship between pottery and history should not be seen as simple or direct (cf. Chapter Four) and that Myres failed to take account of the symbolic elements of the ceramics he studied. Considering the ideas presented in Chapter Three of the present study, Myres's understanding of material culture and how it relates – or does not necessarily relate – to ethnicity must also be questioned.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the problems with Myres's work, no one has undertaken any general analyses of early medieval funerary pottery on a similar scale. Hence, although the general similarities between some continental and English pots are obvious, there is no way of knowing which types of Anglo-Saxon pottery can be paralleled on the continent. This, along with the volume of material that would have to be (re-)analysed, is the reason why pottery has not been used as a primary means of comparing English and continental archaeology in the present study (see Section 6.3.2).

There have, however, been a number of general studies (i.e. not just site reports) that have moved pottery research away from the purely culture-historical paradigm. Kidd's research on the pottery from the coastal regions between the Rhine and the Kattegatt between AD 350 and 650 aimed to use explicitly processual methodologies. Although he did not investigate material from England, his 1977 publication is useful since it highlights the fundamental flaws in traditional approaches to pottery studies. These flaws include the use of historical frameworks, typological approaches and artefact associations for dating (see Chapter Six). He argued that more use

should be made of C-14 dating and assessing the contemporaneity of pots by identifying stamp-linked vessels (also Hills 1994). Kidd (1977: 100) also argued that the role of craftsmen and trade must be considered if valid interpretations are to be produced. The absence of such considerations led him to question many previous pottery studies (ibid: 102).

An explicitly post-processual study was undertaken by Richards (1987; 1988) and although again he was not addressing the question of migrations *per se*, his work does have some bearing on this issue. Richards examined the form and decoration of Anglo-Saxon cremation urns and the human remains found in them in order to understand the symbolic relationship between the material culture and the deceased individual. He was able to identify regional variability as well as how certain forms of urn and types of decoration appeared to symbolize the age or sex of the individual buried in that urn (as deduced from skeletal remains). This demonstrates how it is overly simplistic to discuss a homogeneous 'Germanic' cremation burial rite (see also Williams forthcoming) and that the form of a cremation burial is not only an indication of the ethnicity of the deceased individual, other identities may also play a part. Although such conclusions are significant, it must also be pointed out that Richards concentrated on the relationship between the urns and the deceased individuals (e.g. ibid: 202-3), when it was the living that buried the deceased (see Section 3.5.4). Furthermore, his work does still refer to certain historically derived ethnic groups (e.g. 'Germanic', 'Angle', 'Saxon') and he argues that the urns may have symbolized certain social groupings (ethnic groups, age and gender groups – ibid: 203) through a 'material culture language'. The aim, therefore, was to translate that language 'in a fashion which would have been meaningful to the society responsible' (ibid: 193). The generalizing tendencies of such structural-symbolic studies as well as our abilities to 'read' material culture have already been questioned in Chapter Three. This was principally because we can never understand what objects may have meant to the individual agents who made/used them in the past and how that meaning may have changed through time and/or according to context.

It remains to mention the results of some recent work comparing assemblages from German cemeteries with examples from England. Weber (1996; 1998a) examined ten well-published German cemeteries as well as Caistor-by-Norwich and Spong Hill (both in Norfolk). His analysis of the pottery and grave assemblages using Cluster Analysis[2] is highly significant for showing that Issendorf (Kr. Stade) was statistically more closely related to the two Norfolk cemeteries than it was to the other German cemeteries. Thus, the burial practices as a whole employed by the people using these cemeteries were probably quite similar and hence there may well have been contact between people in those locations in the fifth century. Similarly, Hills (1993a) compared burials from Spong Hill to those from Bordesholm, Süderbrarup and

[2] Cluster Analysis aims to discover systems for organizing multivariate data into groups, where the individual observations that make up those groups all have common properties (Stockburger 1996).

Westerwanna in northern Germany (see Map 1). She found that the grave goods from Spong Hill had most in common with the assemblages from the cemeteries in Schleswig-Holstein (Bordesholm and Süderbrarup), while the pottery from Spong Hill had more in common with that from Lower Saxony (Westerwanna) (ibid: 19).

These observations must be taken into account when the conclusions of the present study are being discussed (see Chapter Eight). However, although Hills urged caution (Hills 1993a: 18), both Weber and Hills used their conclusions to discuss the wider question of 'the migrations'. Yet it is argued here that such generalization should be avoided. Parallels between small numbers of sites cannot account for the entire spread of 'Germanic' metalwork found across England (or even just in East Anglia) at this time. Hence, these specific examples should not be used uncritically in order simply to support the traditional model of migrations (on whatever scale) from northern Europe.

5.4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that some recent case studies involving the study of pottery (as well as the artefacts found in vessels) from funerary contexts have produced significant results in terms of our understandings of early medieval material culture around the North Sea. Nevertheless, almost all previous work examining pottery on both sides of the North Sea has started from the point of view that ceramic evidence reflects the movements of ethnic groups and the classificatory systems used have often been subjective. Hence, deciding to what extent those recent studies are representative of wider trends or whether the parallels (between, for example, Spong Hill and Issendorf) apply only to a few sites must await further research.

5.5 Landscape, environment and economy

The present study as a whole is a reassessment of the idea that changes in the archaeology of southern and eastern Britain in the fifth century are attributable to the migration and settlement of Germanic people from northern Europe. Given that there are clear differences when one compares, for example, the archaeology of the fourth century and that of the sixth century, it is perhaps not surprising that scholars have been concerned primarily with change, be that in funerary remains, building types (see below) or language. However, from the early 1970s, numerous studies of settlement, landscape, land use and the environment have revealed that there is also significant evidence for continuity in fifth-century England (for overviews see, for example, Rowley (ed.) 1974; Taylor 1983). This has important implications for our understandings of the period.

5.5.1 Traditional approaches

When scholars began to study the English landscape and its component parts (e.g. villages and fields) in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries they adopted a distinctly 'Germanist' approach. Gildas's apocalyptic description of death and destruction caused by barbarian invaders and plague suggested that the size of the British population must have been greatly reduced in the post-Roman period. Furthermore, scholars such as Sir Frank Stenton and W.G. Hoskins believed that when the 'land-hungry invaders' (Hoskins 1988 (1955): 38-9) came up the rivers of southern and eastern England they found land largely untamed or reverting to its natural state with villas overgrown and flood defences crumbling. Hence, the settlers would have taken over the land 'without much difficulty' (ibid.). These settlers, it was also believed, came over from the forests of Germany and settled in a similarly forested England, establishing nucleated villages in forest clearings. This idea has a long history; indeed it can be traced back at least to Montesquieu's work of 1750 (Curtis 1968: 11; Lucy 1998: 8). Hoskins (1988 (1955): 55), Other scholars also believed that these earliest villages could be dated to the settlement period on the basis of place-name evidence and the presence of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries (see Section 5.3.1).

The general view, therefore, was that the landscape was still in its original, mainly forested state at the end of the Roman period; there would have been a hiatus in what little previous landscape usage there was (due to population decline) and most land clearance began after the Germanic migrations and settlements. The 'English countryside' was believed to be just that. As Hoskins wrote;

> 'One would have expected the back of the task to have been broken after all this [prehistoric and Roman] activity, whereas in fact the Anglo-Saxons moved into a country that was generally still a wilderness, with almost everything yet to be done' (Hoskins 1988 (1955): 38).

During the last twenty to thirty years, views have changed. The conviction that the settlers were 'green wellied land-clearers' (Carver 1994: 5) living in newly established villages in forest clearings has now been abandoned and disproven. Indeed, in this field of study, the idea of migrations being the primary/sole cause of fifth-century change has been critiqued and largely abandoned (e.g. Rowley (ed.) 1974; Taylor 1983) (in contrast to many studies based on metalwork and burial evidence where such ideas appear to persist – see Chapter Two). This shift in thinking can be attributed to changes in archaeological practice (e.g. more 'off-site' archaeology and surface surveys, more excavations of rural sites, increasingly detailed excavations involving the recovery of sediments, faunal and botanical remains) and improving scientific techniques (i.e. the analysis of the recovered deposits). The following three sections will outline current evidence for the landscape, the environment and land use in the fifth century

in southern and eastern Britain and how this might influence our understandings of change, transition or continuity at that time.

5.5.2 Population, landscape use and eco-environmental evidence

To begin with, Gildas's description of slaughter and devastation has now been questioned for a number of reasons (see Chapter Four). Todd (1977) has also cast doubt on his description concerning the effects of plague on Britain. Furthermore, from a purely archaeological perspective, research has revealed that fifth-century England was not a wilderness, in fact large areas had been cleared of woodland since the Bronze Age, if not before. Roman landscape exploitation was also far more extensive and intensive than scholars such as Hoskins believed (Bell 1989; Dark 2000; Taylor, in Hoskins 1988 (1955): 40). It should also be noted that, when discussing population levels, early medieval cemeteries – the most conspicuous feature of early medieval archaeology – are unlikely to be reliable indicators. Although a large number of cemeteries of this period are know, the numbers of individuals therein cannot represent an entire population (e.g. infants and children are generally under-represented (Lucy 1996)).

These reassessments are significant, but how have scholars reconstructed the landscape conditions and population levels in fifth-century Britain? A variety of analyses are now available to archaeologists wishing to examine factors that may have affected the nature of the landscape and how it was used (or was not used) in the fifth century. These may also be an indirect way of estimating population levels (Higham 1992: 77).

First, it is important to note evidence pertaining to climatic conditions. Jones (1996: 186-243) and Dark (2000) have gathered evidence from a number of climate studies in order to build up a picture of long-term climate change in Britain. These studies involved the analysis of, for example, ice cores from the Greenland ice sheets (and the oxygen isotopes preserved in them), tree rings, lake deposits and evidence of bog formation. The information gathered suggests that early in the first millennium the climate in Britain was relatively warm and dry. However, from the fifth century there was a climatic downturn when Britain became, quite abruptly, cooler and wetter. These trends may echo pollen studies that have found that a great deal of marginal land was abandoned at this time (see below). It might also be wondered whether these trends played some part in creating the economic crises that afflicted late Roman Britain (see Section 8.4.1) and hence for some changes that we now detect archaeologically (e.g. the ending of coin usage, the abandonment of villas etc.).

Having said that, climate should not be linked in a simple or direct manner to political, social or economic changes. While it is interesting to note that climatic fluctuations on a similar scale did not occur again in Britain until the mid-fourteenth century (Jones 1996: 190), when they

constituted just one of many, often locally varied catalysts (including the Black Death) for major social and economic change at that time. This should warn us that significant change is unlikely to be understood by reference to any single, pre-eminent catalyst, be that migrations or environmental factors.

Pollen studies over the last few decades have also increased our knowledge of the landscape history of Britain. Vegetational sequences have been established mainly from the analysis of pollen preserved in bogs, lake sediments and in some archaeological features that have allowed undisturbed organic preservation (Dark 2000: 2). By analysing the different types of pollen (from trees, grasses, cereals etc.) it is possible to gain some idea of the vegetation present in the area around the waterlogged deposit. Of course, the complex problems of pollen dispersal, deposition, taphonomy and the relative representation of different plant species must be considered before conclusions are drawn (ibid: 4-5). Nevertheless, the amount of research now published means that some general conclusions can be drawn.

Pollen and other botanical evidence for the fifth century in England is minimal, although from the evidence available it appears that there was little change in the range of crops grown after the end of the Roman period (Dark 2000: 131-2). The question of whether agricultural systems changed at this time has, however, been widely debated since this affects our understanding of the ending (or otherwise) of 'Roman Britain'. Dark (ibid: 132-3) relates how a number of pollen analyses appeared to show that at the end of the Roman period there was general woodland regeneration. The evidence from the sites used in such studies was extrapolated to other areas and was thus interpreted as indicating a widespread collapse of Romano-British agricultural systems. However, the conclusions of these initial studies have now been questioned (Bell 1989; Dark 2000: 133-4). Dark has shown that of the pollen sequences indicating reduced agricultural activity between AD 400 and 800, half were in northern England, in areas of marginal land that were most likely to be affected by climatic change (see above). Furthermore, the fact that most good pollen sequences for this period are concentrated in northern and western Britain (where there are more bogs and waterlogged deposits and the disturbance caused by intensive agriculture was less) means that relatively little is known about landscape conditions in the south and east; the areas that were most 'Romanized' and where the 'Anglo-Saxons' are said to have settled.

Despite this bias, some conclusions about southern and eastern England can be drawn. First, there is some evidence for woodland regeneration and a reduction in farming. In Sussex and Berkshire, for example, this trend has been seen as a likely outcome of the ending of the villa economy, although in both cases cereals were still grown locally. However, in other places, especially in the Oxford region, there appears to have been little change in the Roman-Medieval

transition period although some arable land may have been used as pasture (Bell 1989; Dark 2000: 140-1). Thus, Dark concludes that 'south-east England exhibits a variable pattern of vegetational change after the Roman period' (Dark 2000: 142).

To summarize, it appears that eco-environmental evidence for fifth-century Britain gathered by archaeologists during the last twenty to thirty years does not support the views held by Germanist scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century. The idea of uniform changes that may be attributed solely to post-Roman migration and settlement must be abandoned. Instead, it appears that, although some general climatic trends are visible, in lowland Britain at least the effects of these are often likely to have been quite variable and localized. Hence, while there is some evidence for change there is also substantial evidence for continuity.

5.5.3 Settlements in the landscape

As with eco-environmental evidence, the study of settlements within the landscape has revealed a complex relationship between change and continuity. Considering the archaeological evidence, however, change is perhaps the most obvious trend. In the late Roman period, urban centres were still in existence (to some degree) and large stone-built villas were a major part of the rural landscape and economy (although they declined in number from c.350 – Millett 1990: 186, 223). Yet by the middle of the fifth century it is usually assumed that villas and urban centres were either derelict or no longer functioning as they had done a century before (e.g. Barton Court Farm (Oxon. – Miles (ed.) 1986), Orton Hall Farm (Cambs. – Mackreth 1996), Shakenoak (Oxon. – Brodribb et al. 1971-3) and *Verulamium* (Herts. – Branigan 1973)). The known early medieval rural settlements, (e.g. West Stow (Suffolk), Mucking (Essex), West Heslerton (North Yorks.) – see Section 5.6 for references), on the other hand, are relatively few and far between (compared to cemeteries) and traces of them are more ephemeral, as structures were built mainly of wood. Germanist archaeologists early in the twentieth century expected these early post-Roman settlements to be the forerunners of the later medieval highly agglomerated and planned nucleated villages. However, the two types of settlement appear to be quite different in terms of structural features and layout (although Powlesland (2000) has argued that West Heslerton was semi-nucleated) and most of the later nucleated villages are now believed to have been founded between the eighth and twelfth centuries (Taylor, in Hoskins 1988 (1955): 40-2).

While evidence for significant change in the character of settlements cannot be ignored, various studies undertaken during the last twenty to thirty years have highlighted a number of reasons why the archaeological evidence for settlement pattern change may not be as clear-cut as it appears. First, there are a number of problems concerning archaeological visibility that must be taken into account. In the Roman period, high status urban and rural sites (e.g. villas) are relatively well known. However, far less is known about lower status Roman-period rural

settlement (James et al. 1984: 201; Millett 1990: 224; Powlesland 1997: 102). Would the Roman-Medieval division be quite so marked if we could compare non-elite rural sites of the fourth century and before and rural settlements of the fifth century and after? Change between the Roman and early medieval periods is seemingly made all the more obvious given that in the latter period it is cemeteries that are the most archaeologically visible type of site and have been subject to the most research. Furthermore, given that post-Roman structures were usually built of wood not stone, pottery becomes very important in the identification of sites during surface surveys. Yet in the post-Roman period (or even from c.350), high quality, traded or specially produced pottery ceased to be made on an industrial scale (Fulford 1979). Furthermore, early medieval pottery is not very robust and decays very quickly in plough soil. Hence, early medieval material is often very underrepresented in surface surveys (Foard 1978: 366; Shennan 1985: 89). It is also worth noting that when early medieval pottery is found, dating it may be problematic and assumption-laden. For example, if it is *assumed* that there was a hiatus at the end of the Roman period, then – as has often been the case – the historical date of 'c.410' exerts a magnetic effect over the dating of pottery sequences. Some material that may in fact be later gets dragged backwards, towards the 'known' historical date (see Millett 1983; Whyman 1993 for full discussion and critiques). Taking all these factors into account it may be that the post-Roman hiatus is more apparent than real. As Esmonde Cleary points out, the post-Roman 'black hole' in archaeological evidence is partly due to our inability to identify the sometimes highly ephemeral post-Roman, non-cemetery sites (e.g. Poundbury, Dorset) (Esmonde Cleary 2001: 93; also Taylor 2000).

These potential biases are now quite widely recognized by researchers. Moreover, a number of detailed surface surveys (based especially on fieldwalking data) have now been published that demonstrate that tradition models of general post-Roman settlement abandonment may be unrealistic *(see Rowley (ed.) 1974 and Taylor 1983 for summaries and further examples).*

The survey of the parish of Great Doddington in Northamptonshire (Foard 1978) was one of the first to demonstrate that there may have been Roman-Medieval rural settlement continuity (Fig. 5). In Northamptonshire, the characteristic settlement pattern for the Roman period was isolated farmsteads and in six locations within the parish of Great Doddington concentrations (i.e. ≥10 sherds) of 'early Saxon' pottery were found. It was therefore suggested that these *might* represent farmsteads (ibid: 366-7). Foard argued that defining sites or identifying continuity with such minimal evidence was dubious. Nevertheless, the results did suggest that the Roman settlement pattern did not collapse completely in the fifth century; a pattern identified at other sites in Northamptonshire as well (e.g. Brixworth and Orton Hall Farm) (ibid: 369).

Similar trends were also observed as a result of a survey of the south Lincolnshire fens (Hayes 1988 – part of the much more extensive Fenland Survey Project). In this region, numerous Romano-British sites were known, and very few of these had 'Saxon' pottery on them (ibid: 324). However, although the water levels in the Fens rose after the fourth century, the survey did discover numerous early/mid 'Saxon' sites (as identified by pottery) on alluvial deposits north-west of Spalding where previously no such sites were known (ibid: 323). This suggests, not complete discontinuity, but a changing settlement pattern. At Shapwick in Somerset, it has again been discovered that a number of Roman sites were abandoned and the paucity of pottery prevents the easy identification of post-Roman sites. Nevertheless, some post-Roman pottery concentrations have been found (Fig. 6), and in this case it is also thought that particular field names may indicate the location of early medieval sites (Aston and Gerrard 1999: 23).

Finally, Taylor (2000) has shown that the early medieval settlement pattern in Cambridgeshire follows that of the preceding centuries, with settlements on low-lying land close to major rivers or tributaries (although fourth-century inundation of the Fens alters the earlier patterns there) (ibid: 145). Forty percent of early medieval sites in Cambridgeshire lie within 500m of fourth century sites and twenty-seven percent are on the same site. Nevertheless, actual stratigraphic evidence for continuity was found on only five sites (8%) and indeed thirty-eight percent of early medieval sites were more than two kilometres from a Romano-British site (ibid: 145-9). There was also found to be local variations in these patterns. For example, settlement was found to be denser in the Nene Valley compared to the south Cambridgeshire region (ibid: 116-7). The overall pattern was therefore described as one of 'considerable variation' (ibid: 149). Taylor also notes that many traditional approaches to landscape usage and settlement patterns in the Roman-Medieval transition period – approaches that sought to identify change and discontinuity – were based on questionable ethnic and historical assumptions (see Chapters Three and Four). These assumptions seemed to be proved correct when archaeologists concentrated on archaeologically highly visible sites such as cemeteries and villas. However, all the surveys discussed above would appear to support Taylor's alternative view that settlement mobility was the norm throughout the Roman and early medieval periods (see also Powlesland 1997: 102; 2000: 20) and thus abandonment is not solely a fifth-century phenomenon. Indeed, many 'Roman' sites on or near the Fens went out of use c.350 (ibid: 152). Taylor concludes that;

> 'Within the context of settlement mobility the relationship between fourth century and early Anglo-Saxon settlements becomes clearer. The apparent contradiction in settlement relationships where sites can exhibit either continuity of use, abandonment, later reoccupation or settlement shift is a pattern that might be expected to occur at any given moment' (Taylor 2000: 153).

It must be wondered whether similar research across England (and indeed northern Europe) would reveal similar settlement mobility within the context of highly localized variations. If this proved to be the case, the idea that there was significant and widespread settlement and landscape change in the fifth century and that the effects of migrations could partly explain this, would have to be reconsidered.

5.5.4 Faunal remains and animal husbandry practices

Regarding the use of animals in early medieval England (be they part of a pastoral economy or hunted animals), evidence is unfortunately somewhat limited. Indeed, very few sites with good faunal assemblages have been analysed and published for the pre-Norman Conquest period as a whole (Clutton-Brock 1976: 373; Crabtree 1989b: 1). At Mucking the bone preservation was very poor (Berg 1998) and the West Heslerton report is yet to appear (although the assessment of the assemblage is available (ibid.)). Hence, for the immediate post-Roman period, the only well excavated and published evidence comes from West Stow in Suffolk (Crabtree 1989a and b).

As the title of Crabtree's journal paper (1989a) suggests ('Sheep, Horses, Swine, and Kine: A Zooarchaeological Perspective on the Anglo-Saxon Settlement of England'), the interpretation used an explicitly migrationist framework, with the aim being to assess the impact of the Anglo-Saxon migrations on the animal husbandry at West Stow (ibid: 207). Despite this assumption and the fact that this is only one site (so generalizations are not possible) a number of interesting patterns were found.

In all periods represented on the site (Iron Age, Roman and early medieval), domestic species predominated; these included cattle, sheep, goat, pig, horse, dog and cat. The main changes were in the ratios of these species (ibid: 208). Sheep and goats were the most common group throughout, although there were a higher proportion of cattle in the Iron Age and Roman phases of the site. Crabtree believes there may have been a long-term trend away from the use of cattle (ibid: 209). There was also a decreased use of horseflesh in the post-Roman phases. These observations, Crabtree writes, are a contrast to continental evidence. On North Sea coastal sites, such as Feddersen Wierde (see Map 1), sheep are usually poorly represented and horses are quite common (Crabtree 1989a: 209).

Pigs are always the third most common species at West Stow, and this is again a contrast with continental evidence, where on migration period sites in Germany, Holland and southern Scandinavia pigs are poorly represented. Yet their numbers are highest in deposits that are believed to date to the earlier fifth century (i.e. the primary fills of SFBs/*Grubenhäuser*). Crabtree explains this by stating that pigs would have been ideal animals for colonizing settlers to use since they mature quickly and breed rapidly. Once cattle and sheep numbers were

established pigs would have become less important. Crabtree calls this use of pigs a 'tactical response' to the needs of the settling population and writes that this 'provides the *only clear evidence* for changes in animal husbandry practices that were a direct result of the Anglo-Saxon colonization of England in the early fifth century' (ibid: 210. My emphasis). The problems with such an explicitly migrationist interpretation need not be dwelt on here. Finally, Crabtree also notes that kill patterns (the ages at which animals were killed), butchery practices and animal size provide no evidence for significant changes in the fifth century. Also, evidence from Feddersen Wierde suggests that sheep goats and cattle were kept alive longer there, compared to West Stow (ibid: 210-12).

While these conclusions do appear to undermine traditional assumptions about Anglo-Saxon migrations and archaeological change, and aside from the assumptions about migrations, there are a number of problems with Crabtree's analysis of West Stow in relation to continental evidence. First, the proportions of species quoted for continental sites must be treated with some caution. This is because she does not mention the bone preservation conditions at the migration period sites she refers to in Germany and Holland. Yet, many coastal settlement sites are on sandy soils where bone preservation is extremely poor. For example, at Wijster only a few of the largest bones from cattle and horses were found (Es 1967: 574). Second, we must question the assumptions used to date the primary fills of *Grubenhäuser* and the animal bones therein to the fifth century. This appears to be based on the assumption that *Grubenhäuser* are 'Germanic' and must therefore provide an early fifth-century *terminus post quem*. Furthermore, the primary fills are presumed to have been deposited quite close to that date. However, more detailed considerations of site formation suggest that that deposits found in *Grubenhäuser* are rubbish that accumulated in the pits when they were abandoned and sometime after the features were dug and used (Powlesland 1997: 105; Whyman 1993). These issues will be discussed more fully in Section 5.6.2.

Considering the evidence available from faunal remains, it must be concluded that from the small amount of evidence available in England some interesting patterns have emerged. The animal bones from West Stow suggest that, despite it being one of the classic early 'Anglo-Saxon' settlement sites, there was no sharp break in the animal economy in the fifth century. It has also been argued that the husbandry practices there 'are quite unlike those seen in the continental Saxon homelands, especially in terms of species ratios' (Crabtree 1989b: 107). Nevertheless, it must be remembered that this is only one site, and the interpretation of the animal remains from it does not consider sufficiently the complexities of site formation and preservation. Therefore, deciding whether or not animal bones provide evidence of change or continuity in early medieval England must await further studies.

5.6 Houses types and settlements

Compared to the study of cemeteries, Anglo-Saxon settlement archaeology is a more recent development, although within the last twenty years or so more settlements have been excavated. Having already examined the ways in which extensive surface surveys have helped archaeologists begin to understand settlement and landscape dynamics, the aim of this section is to focus on the settlements themselves and, in particular, the main structural forms found on sites belonging to the period in question.

There are a few cases where stratigraphy suggests that certain structures (e.g. villas) continued to be used across the traditional Roman-early medieval period 'divide' (e.g. Barton Court Farm (Oxon. – Miles (ed.) 1986), Orton Hall Farm (Cambs. – Mackreth 1996), Shakenoak (Oxon. – Brodribb et al. 1971-3) and *Verulamium* (Herts. – Branigan 1973)), although the later occupations may have been different in character compared to what went before. Nevertheless, in more general terms, as soon as settlements were identified by Anglo-Saxon archaeologists it was clear that there were huge differences between what might be considered typically 'Roman' settlements (i.e. large planned urban centres and rural villas and farms with a variety of stone-built structures) and those of the post-Roman period (with less evidence of planning and smaller structures built mainly of wood). As will be seen, this seemingly clear division between the two periods as well as the nature of the dwellings was, initially at least, seen as further evidence supporting the idea of significant post-Roman changes. Hence, settlement evidence was another piece of information that could be drawn upon in order to illuminate the effects of migrations/invasions. In this section, the debates surrounding the interpretation of early medieval settlements and house types will be summarized. It will also be asked if these types of evidence are actually good indicators of the migration of people from the Continent to England in the fifth century.

5.6.1 The beginnings of Anglo-Saxon settlement archaeology

Anglo-Saxon settlement archaeology only really began in the 1920s and 30s with E.T. Leeds's excavations at Sutton Courtenay (see Map 1) on the south bank of the Thames in Berkshire (Leeds 1923; 1927; 1947). In the course of his excavations Leeds found a series of sub-rectangular pits cut into the river gravels (see Fig. 7). These, he believed, were early Anglo-Saxon, semi-subterranean dwellings that together formed a village. Earlier archaeologists had excavated similar features (Leeds 1923: 147, 189), although Leeds stated that they failed to realize the significance of their discoveries (ibid: 189).

The excavations at Sutton Courtenay continued throughout the 1920s and 30s and a total of thirty-three pits/dwellings were eventually discovered (Leeds 1947: 79). They contained a variety of artefacts, including sherds of ceramic vessels and loom weights, iron knives, nails,

flints and various broken bones and bone objects, such as combs, needles and pins. This mixture of domestic and craft-working debris has generally been matched by other, later excavations on Anglo-Saxon settlement sites (e.g. Dunning 1932 on Bourton-on the-Water (Gloucestershire), Hamerow 1993a: 314 on Mucking (Essex), Powlesland 1997: 104 on West Heslerton (North Yorkshire)).

5.6.2 *Grubenhäuser* and their interpretation

Since Leeds's excavations, these pits have always been recognized as a principal feature of early medieval settlements (Fig. 7, 11a and 11b). Today they are usually referred to by the German term *Grubenhäuser* (singular *Grubenhaus*), or are known as 'sunken feature buildings' ('SFBs'), and they have been found on numerous sites. However, there have been debates concerning the interpretation of these pits. First, what was their function? Second, where do they originate from and do they have any ethnic significance?

As for the first question, Leeds clearly had no doubts that the features he excavated at Sutton Courtenay were houses; the pits served as 'general living rooms' (Leeds 1923: 188) and the whole site was a village. Leeds also described how it was natural for these houses to produced more artefactual evidence for women than for men (i.e. pins, cooking pots, loom weights etc.), although the occasional crucible or hoe did point to men also being present (ibid: 188-9).

As an adjunct to these conclusions, it is interesting to note that, while some of the above interpretations might today be questioned in theoretical terms (especially those linking material culture to assumed gender roles), on the whole the excavation reports from Sutton Courtenay (Leeds 1923; 1927; 1947) are relatively free of value judgements concerning the 'houses' or the people who were presumed to occupy them. By contrast, Leeds's 1936 publication is far less neutral in describing the houses. He calls them primitive huts or 'hovels' (Leeds 1936: 21) and states that the Germanic people who used them lived in 'squalor and discomfort' (ibid: 26) having 'retained many of their primitive habits' (ibid: 21). It might be asked whether this noticeably more opinionated description is a reflection of a time when stressing the Germanic origins of England was perhaps less desirable. Indeed, the aim of Leeds's book as a whole was to emphasize the 'native' elements in Anglo-Saxon art and archaeology (ibid: 1-3). Lucy has drawn attention to the 'anti-German backlash' in British inter-war archaeology (Lucy 1998: 14) and Leeds's interpretations of *Grubenhäuser* may be an example of this.

By the immediate post-war period, the number of known examples of *Grubenhäuser* had increased and some archaeologists maintained the general interpretation of these features as rubbish-strewn houses. Lethbridge described how they showed no signs of cleanliness or order and the squalid conditions led him to declare that the owners must have 'lived like pigs in their

houses' (Lethbridge 1948: 47-8. Cf. Lethbridge 1927). However, in 1957 Ralegh Radford produced a paper that put the known English *Grubenhäuser* in a somewhat different light. He argued that two of the 'houses' from Sutton Courtenay were weaving sheds (due to the number of loom weights found in them), another was probably a pottery workshop, while four more had unusually shaped hearths and lumps of slag and these suggested industrial rather than domestic usage (Ralegh Radford 1957: 29, 36-7). This pattern, Ralegh Radford believed, was also echoed by the other English examples (ibid: 37). Thus, he concluded that, although some huts may have been used as dwellings, many served more specialized functions (ibid.).

Modern open-area excavations have revealed varying numbers of postholes around the pit features of *Grubenhäuser*, and this has led to debates about the methods employed to roof these huts (Arnold 1997: 39; Barford 1995; Dixon 1993; 1995; Powlesland 1997: 107-9). The idea that *Grubenhäuser* were in some way ancillary buildings on early post-Roman settlements, used for craft working and production, is now also widely accepted; especially given the accumulation of excavated evidence from sites such as Mucking, West Stow and West Heslerton (e.g. Esmonde Cleary 1993: 59; Hamerow 1993a: 10-19; 1994b: 171; Higham 1992: 123; Powlesland 1997: 104; 2000: 22; West 1985: 113). However, recent work, which has analysed the nature and formation of the deposits found in *Grubenhäuser* suggests that such conclusions need to be re-examined.

First, generalized interpretations of function may be too simplistic. Only one out of 119 *Grubenhäuser* from West Heslerton had any evidence of wear on the base of the pit, and most of the pits appear to have been cavities below suspended floors on which grain was stored and kept dry (Powlesland 1997: 106-7). Second, and following on from that, if the excavated deposits were primarily rubbish which accumulated after the *Grubenhäuser* had been virtually abandoned, then it follows that 'we have tended in the past to make too close a connection between the contents of the features and their supposed function' (ibid: 105. Also Whyman 1993). Hence, the material found in *Grubenhäuser* may not relate directly to their original function. Furthermore, if such features are dated using material deposited in the pits (e.g. the equal-armed brooch from Sutton Courtenay (Leeds 1923)), the dating of *Grubenhäuser* must also be questioned (see below).

The third main issue to be considered here concerns the origins and possible ethnic significance of *Grubenhäuser*. Leeds (1923: 185-6) compared the 'houses' at Sutton Courtenay to those of the poorer Frankish classes and the Germanic semi-subterranean houses referred to by Tacitus (ibid: 185-6). Ralegh Radford also noted that *Grubenhäuser* were found on the continent and he compared Sutton Courtenay with Warendorf on the Ems (although the latter site was dated to the 7-8th centuries) (Ralegh Radford 1957: 30-1). Since then, the occurrence of *Grubenhäuser* on

continental sites, especially those in north-western Europe (e.g. Flögeln, Midlum (both northern Germany), Vorbasse (Denmark) and Wijster (Holland)) has been noted by several scholars (e.g. Dixon 1982: 276; Hines 1990: 19; James et al. 1984; Zimmermann 1974) and this has led many to hypothesize how they came to be in Britain. For example, Higham has argued that, since *Grubenhäuser* were 'barely present' in Roman Britain they must have been 'introduced to Britain from the Germanic world in the fifth century' (Higham 1992: 123. See also West 1985: 121). Likewise, Hamerow has written that 'their Germanic pedigree has never seriously been questioned' (1997: 37).

There are, however, a number of reasons why such a conclusion might be criticized. First, there is the general theoretical problem with assuming that a structural feature can be used to infer the ethnic identities of those who made/used those features (see Chapter Three). Second, there may also be problems with linking *Grubenhäuser* to the supposed process of 'Germanic' migration and settlement. As described above, supposedly early fifth-century material found in the *Grubenhäuser* may have been deposited there as rubbish when the pits had been abandoned (not forgetting that the dating of early medieval pottery and metalwork is also questionable). It must be asked whether those pits were associated with the settlement period itself or were they initially used significantly before that time? Such questions become even more pertinent when material excavated from *Grubenhäuser* is considered. Was the material found in the pits, which was also used to date them, actually deposited as rubbish? With this in mind, it is interesting to note that in North Yorkshire both Romano-British and 'Anglian' pottery was found associated in *Grubenhäuser* at West Heslerton (Powlesland 1988: 143-6). Also in Kent, Romano-British and 'Anglo-Saxon' pottery – probably part of the same assemblage – was found in a *Grubenhaus* at St. Mary Cray (Hart 1984: 193. See Lucy (in prep.) for further discussion).

In conclusion, therefore, it may therefore be possible to question the whether *Grubenhäuser* should be linked to the idea of migrations, or whether they should even be seen as a specifically post-Roman or 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeological feature. Perhaps the material and deposits excavated from *Grubenhäuser* are actually a reflection of rubbish accumulation patterns on settlement sites or of practices relating to waste disposal (cf. the work of J.D. Hill (e.g. 1995a) on Iron Age pit deposits) rather than a reflection of how they were used as buildings and the identities of those using them.

5.6.3 Post-built structures

To return to Ralegh Radford's seminal paper, he noted that Leeds' excavations at Sutton Courtenay were not open-area excavations and that no consistent plan was made of postholes (Ralegh Radford 1957: 28). As mentioned previously, Ralegh Radford compared Sutton Courtenay to Warendorf in Germany (Nordrhein-Westfalen). Here, and at several other sites in

Germany (see above), *Grubenhäuser* were found alongside seemingly large post-built structures (with their ground plans attested by postholes) (Figs. 8 and 9). Thus, it was argued that the idea of 'pit-dwellings' being the normal house-type should be abandoned and archaeologists should take more note of postholes (ibid: 38), features that had clearly been missed at Sutton Courtenay. Furthermore, literary evidence, especially *Beowulf*, suggested that large wooden structures – 'halls' – were an important part of early medieval settlements and social life and must therefore have been a reality (ibid: 27). Indeed, Leeds had wondered why the 'primitive huts' he had excavated compared so unfavourably with the halls described in epic poetry (Leeds 1923: 147; 1936: 21).

Ralegh Radford's prediction that evidence for post-built structures would be found if archaeologists looked for it did indeed come true. Postholes forming the ground plans of houses have been identified at many sites in England dating from the fifth to seventh centuries with such structures have also now been excavated (see list of sites and references in Appendix 1 in James et al. 1984: 207-212. Also Hamerow 1993a (on Mucking, Essex), West 1985 (on West Stow, Suffolk) and Powlesland 1997; 2000 (on West Heslerton, N. Yorks.)). However, there has been some controversy concerning the origins of post-built structures found in England and the views adopted by individual authors reflect, to some degree, their perceptions of fifth-century change.

Much of this controversy arises because the structural forms attested by postholes in England appear to be different compared to those on the continent (Hamerow 1995: 15; 1997: 37). In Holland, Germany and Denmark – including the traditional 'Anglo-Saxon homeland' regions – the most distinctive type of post-built structure dating from the late Roman Iron Age to the Viking period is the longhouse (*Dreischiffigeshallenhäuse*) (Hamerow 1994b: 168) (although similar structures are known from as far back in prehistory as the Neolithic or Bronze Age (Dixon 1982: 276-7; Zimmermann 1974: 56)). These were long buildings (the fourth/fifth-century houses at Flögeln are up to 63.5m long (Hamerow 1994b: 168)) where the roof was supported by two internal rows of posts, giving the distinctive three-aisled arrangement of postholes (Figs. 8 and 9). At one end of this structure was a living area (often with a hearth), while at the other there was a series of cattle stalls. A central entrance area or cross passage divided these two sections. Longhouses were often associated with *Grubenhäuser* and/or various other structures interpreted as granaries or small workshops (Hamerow 1994b: 171) on sites that appear to have some regularity in their layout (e.g. the alignment of houses and enclosures). Settlements with longhouses have been excavated since the 1930s (Dixon 1982: 276) at sites such as Flögeln, Feddersen Wierde (both northern Germany), Vorbasse (Denmark) and Wijster (Holland). Some of these are *terp* (Dutch) or *wurt* (German) sites – dry islands in the low-lying North Sea coastal regions – and at Feddersen Wierde sea-level rises led to exceptional standards of timber preservation as the structures were waterlogged. Many of these sites were in use from

early in the first millennium until the sixth century or later (e.g. Flögeln (Zimmerman 1974), Feddersen Wierde (Haarnagel 1979) and Vorbasse (Hvass 1983)). Changes to settlement plans and longhouse construction and the abandonment of some sites in the fifth century have been attributed to agricultural or environmental crises (e.g. rising sea levels). This in turn has been seen as a potential catalyst for the migration of people from these areas to England (Hamerow 1994a: 173; 1995: 16).

In Britain, however, the earliest post-Roman settlements (e.g. at Mucking, West Stow and West Heslerton) are very different when compared to the contemporary phases of continental sites (Hamerow 1995: 16) (Figs. 10, 11a and 11b). There were no longhouses, few obvious enclosures and the houses were scattered. Also, these houses did not have cattle stalls inside and were generally much smaller (on average about 10-20m long and 4-10m wide (Hamerow 1994a: 191)). The roofs rested on posts set into the walls and hence they are known as 'wall-post houses' (Dixon 1982). There were often internal partitions and in the middle of each long wall there were opposing doorways. By the sixth to eighth centuries in England it has been said that such structures form a distinctive, geographically widespread building tradition (James et al. 1984: 198). Several scholars have discussed the apparent differences between the post-built houses on the Continent and those in England and have reached a number of different conclusions.

In his article entitled 'How Saxon is the Saxon House?', Dixon (1982) pointed out the differences between the main house types in England and those on the Continent (i.e. the complete lack of longhouses in England and the rarity of wall-post houses on the Continent (ibid: 277)). He argued that in order to understand the origins of the English types there was a need to investigate the under-represented and poorly understood Romano-British vernacular architecture. Dixon also argued that to attribute an object or building method to an invasion or migration it must be demonstrated that it existed in the 'homeland'. The evidence from insular settlements, however, emphasized the 'un-Germanness' of most English houses of the post-Roman period (ibid: 282) thus calling into question the relevance of migrations in the interpretation of house types.

This argument was, to some extent, countered by James, Marshall and Millett (1984). They claimed that English wall-post houses did have some elements in common with Continental longhouses, such as the opposing doorways in the middle of the long walls and the use of wattle wall panels (ibid: 201). Furthermore, the authors found that some insular buildings did have internal roof supports and that buildings of a size found in England are not that unusual on the Continent from the Iron Age onwards. In fact, they list a number of settlements that consisted almost entirely of this type of house (e.g. Grøntoft, Dorestad and Grubbenvorst) (ibid: 199).

Lucy (in prep.), however, has shown that it may be misleading to link all these supposed architectural parallels to the effects of fifth-century migrations. While some continental 'migration period' parallels are known for English wall-post houses (e.g. at Wijster), Lucy found that of the seven continental sites listed by James, Marshall and Millett only Grøntoft dated to the pre-Roman Iron Age (i.e. before the fifth century). As for the others, one was undated, one was late sixth century and the others were seventh century or later. Hence, the idea that the typical early medieval house type in England originated (to some extent) on the continent must be questioned.

James, Marshall and Millett (1984) also discussed the evidence for Romano-British buildings (ibid: 201-5). Like Dixon, they found that there was a general lack of evidence for Romano-British rural sites analogous to those later sites on which wall-post houses were found (ibid: 205). However, many of the known rural Romano-British buildings were said to be unlike the early medieval types; the former were usually fully framed with no earth-fast foundations and none had opposing doorways (ibid: 201-3). Nevertheless, a large number of these buildings did have similar ground plans to the early medieval types. They were also the same size and they had internal partitions at one end and no internal roof supports (ibid.).

James, Marshall and Millett concluded that the origins of wall-post houses were not wholly to be found in either the buildings of Roman Britain or the Germanic homelands (ibid: 205). On architectural grounds they considered the English early medieval post-build houses to be a 'hybrid' tradition, reflecting either the widespread survival of indigenous people in the post-migration period or their imitation of the fashions of the emerging Germanic elite (ibid:206).

Hamerow has written a number of papers that deal with the issue of early medieval settlement and house-type changes in north-western Europe (1994a; 1994b; 1995; 1997). Echoing James, Marshall and Millett (1984), she believes that structural forms found in England are also found on the continent (but see Lucy (in prep.)). She also believes that the differences between England and the Continent are more apparent that real. For example, she notes that even though there are no longhouses in England and settlement layout is often different, houses very much like the English wall-post type are found on the Continent (Hamerow 1995: 16). Hamerow also draws on Continental evidence for widespread changes to the form and structure of settlements and houses in the early medieval period. The longhouses were becoming shorter (Hamerow 1994b: 168; 1997: 40; Zimmermann 1974: 63) and increasingly sub-divided (Hamerow 1995: 14), there was a breakdown of the previously highly structured settlement layouts (Hamerow 1995:14) and there is evidence for widespread abandonment of sites (Hamerow 1994b: 178; Welch 1992: 34). Hamerow also quotes Zimmermann's work comparing English and Continental house plans. He found that the ground plans of English wall-post houses corresponded to the layout of the 'living

room' end of Continental longhouses in terms of entrance positioning, sub-divisions and wall types (Hamerow 1994a: 173; 1997: 39). It was also noted that, in later Continental houses, the central roof-supporting timbers were built closer to the walls, providing more open living areas, as with the English house types (Hamerow 1994a: 173). Because of these general trends on the Continent, Hamerow believes that in the early medieval period, the differences between English and Continental houses were less obvious than was previously thought and that the evidence from England may reflect more general changes in north-west European settlement in the fifth century (Hamerow 1995: 16).

Finally, as a result of his excavations at West Heslerton in North Yorkshire, Powlesland has written about the wider issues of early medieval settlement archaeology (e.g. Powlesland 1997; 2000). Like James, Marshall and Millett (1984), he argues that not enough is known about rural change in England between AD 350 and 450 for there to be a proper assessment of early medieval houses and that the antecedents of English post-built structures are as likely to be 'native' as Continental (Powlesland 1997: 103). However, he also notes that although a small number of Continental sites do have small post-built structures (cf. Hamerow 1995: 16; James et al. 1984) their plans and construction are 'somewhat different' to those found in England. For example, the structures found in England do not generally have hearths where their supposed Continental counterparts do (Powlesland 1997: 107). Powlesland goes on to state that 'the exceptional difficulties in dating material from this period make the tracking of influences in any direction speculative' (ibid. – cf. Chapter Six) and the traditional migration model involving defined groups of 'natives' and 'Saxons' is based on 'dubious historical and archaeological evidence' (Powlesland 2000: 20).

In conclusion, it appears that there are significant differences between post-built houses (and to some degree the settlements as a whole) found in England compared to those found on the Continent. As Hamerow has commented;

> 'The relative scarcity of 'wall-post' houses on the Continent and the virtual absence of houses with roof-supporting posts in England remains...a largely unresolved problem' (Hamerow 1994a: 170. See also West 1985: 112).

Furthermore, when it has been argued that there are similarities in the evidence from the two regions, it appears that that evidence is not altogether convincing (see Lucy (in prep.); Powlesland 1997: 107). It should also be pointed out that again much of this debate has involved relatively traditional understandings of ethnicity, material culture and history and hence also an expectation that migrations did take place. Archaeologists have often *expected* to find similarities between England and the Continent (see Hamerow quotation above) and have searched for the Continental origins of structures in England even though the weight of the

evidence appears to suggest significant differences (although the Romano-British background for post-built houses in England is also not that clear). This is another example of the degree to which migrations influence thinking amongst early medieval scholars. A less traditional perspective has, however, been proposed by Powlesland. He has argued that early medieval settlement change may be attributable to an on-going cycle of settlement shift, with a constant cycle of abandonment, change and re-location (Powlesland 2000. See also Taylor 2000 in Section 5.5.3). He also argues that;

> 'The emergence of the early Anglo-Saxon settlements need not be seen, in the light of a rural reversion, as anything more than a natural development within a newly established trade and economic base focused on northern Europe rather than on the Roman world' (Powlesland 1997: 104).

Similar ideas will be pursued in more detail in Chapter Eight.

5.7 Conclusions

The above categories of evidence have all been implicated in the discussion of fifth-century transition. Furthermore, in all cases, they have been discussed in relation to the migration hypothesis. Nevertheless, there are four themes that emerge from the foregoing sections that together suggest that none of these categories provide clear and unambiguous evidence to support that hypothesis.

First, some evidence does not support the idea that there was general, all-embracing change in the middle of the fifth century. For example, there are areas of England where pollen evidence points to the continued use of a cleared landscape, and it may well be that there was continuity regarding the long term settlement pattern dynamics as well as in some house building techniques (although some (e.g. Higham 1992) would use these patterns to suggest that the migrations were of a small scale – but see the third point below).

There is of course also evidence for significant change in the fifth century: the abandonment of villas, the appearance of 'Anglo-Saxon' cemeteries, the shifting of rural settlements, a reduction in the amount of pottery found archaeologically and so on. Secondly, it must however be asked if some of these perceived changes are all entirely attributable to an influx of 'Germanic' people (on whatever scale). Might they be more to do with on-going trends (as settlement/landscape evidence appears to suggest) and the ending of the Roman economy based on urban centres, villas, using coins and a professional administrative system (see Chapter Eight)? Climatic changes may also have played a part.

Third, in the discussions outlined above, perceived changes in certain forms of evidence have often been linked to 'the migrations' and the subsequent impact of unknown numbers of 'Germanic' immigrants on the 'native British' population (e.g. language, place-names, settlement evidence). However, as we have seen in Chapters Two, Three and Four, the theoretical assumptions regarding material culture, history and ethnicity required to make that connection developed in a particular socio-political context and they would now be questioned by many social scientists. Artefacts cannot provide a direct indication of the ethnic identities of those who used them (or were buried with them) and the historical sources available do not provide a simple, factual record of the fifth century in southern and eastern England. Hence, linking the categories of evidence presented in this chapter to the concept of migrations involves using a range of questionable assumptions.

Finally, it should also be noted that these common assumptions constitute a widespread, authoritative academic discourse in early medieval studies (cf. Section 4.3.2), a discourse in which ethnic dichotomies and the migrations are treated as a factual foundations on which to interpret the evidence. Hence, many seemingly diverse lines of enquiry are discussed with reference to the migration hypothesis. For example, philologists, historians, place-name scholars and bone specialists often explain patterns found in their evidence in terms of migrations because archaeologists have 'proven' that the migrations did happen. Yet at the same time, archaeologists continue to use migrations to explain certain material culture patternings because this explanation is backed-up by linguistic, toponymical and historical evidence. This mutual validation serves to perpetuate the idea of migrations across the whole spectrum of research now involved in early medieval studies. The strength of this paradigm becomes clear when it is noticed that evidence which does not support the idea of significant change is seen as anomalous or 'a problem' (e.g. Hamerow 1994a: 170 – quoted above) or is accommodated by proposing that the migrations took place on a very small scale (e.g. Higham 1992). The belief in migrations is thus retained, even if in an amended form. Yet if the individual sources of evidence are all questioned individually, recognizing where assumptions are made then the cumulative effect of diverse forms of evidence must be lessened to a significant degree.

It must therefore be concluded that – when examined individually – the testimonies of language, place-names, house types, settlement patterns, pottery, and so on, are not neutral, bias-free means of discussing the fifth-century migrations to England and proving that this event actually occurred. The wider implications of this conclusion will be discussed in Chapter Eight. However, as mentioned previously, funerary remains have been the most important single source of evidence in discussions about migrations. Hence, it is those remains excavated from cemeteries that will be used, in the following two chapters, to investigate the archaeology of 'the Anglo-Saxon migrations' in more detail.

CHAPTER SIX



Fifth-Century Brooches and the Anglo-Saxon Migrations: Background and Methods of Analysis

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters critiques of the various types of archaeological and historical evidence for fifth-century England have been presented. It has been shown that much of the evidence and many of the theoretical assumptions crucial to the creation and maintenance of this hypothesis can be questioned or interpreted in other ways. The aim of the next two chapters is to build on these critiques, using the alternative approaches also presented in earlier chapters to re-examine some of the actual archaeological evidence for the fifth century. In other words, the intention is to 'test' the material used to support the idea of migrations. Of course, this is not an attempt to use an explicit hypothetico-deductive methodology to understand the past 'as it really was'. Rather, the intention is to demonstrate that the questions being asked of the archaeological evidence determine the conclusions we draw from it and that by asking different questions it may be possible to obtain different understandings. If any new patterns emerge it may be possible to suggest alternative conclusions.

There will be two main sections in the present chapter. The first concerns the classification and dating of material culture implicated in debates about the fifth-century migrations. It cannot be denied that certain types of material culture (e.g. brooches, cremation urns) are found in northern Germany and eastern England and that migrations have usually been used to explain this distribution. The issue of *who* was migrating – usually seen as defined, historically attested ethnic groups – has been questioned in the previous chapters. Yet in order to attain a complete picture of the material in question and how it has been used to prove that the migrations took place, it is also important to consider how certain objects have helped to illuminate *when* supposed migrations are said to have occurred. Or, how have such ideas influenced our understandings of the time frame in which identifiable archaeological change took place? Obviously, historical sources have been influential here, and these will be discussed below. However, archaeologists have incorporated historical dates into a wider system of artefact classification and dating and this system will be the main focus of attention here. It is important to recognize potential practical and theoretical problems with these methods so that, when we consider alternative approaches to understanding fifth-century change (Chapter Eight), artefact dating methods and the idea that 'the migrations' are a clearly dated phenomenon are not taken for granted.

Building on the various critiques already presented, the second part of this chapter will outline how the material component of the present study will proceed and why a particular approach has been adopted. Broadly speaking, this will consist of a contextual study of a number of brooch types. These types have been identified as some of the very earliest 'Germanic' artefacts in England and therefore have been significant in attempts to establish the cultural background of the earliest 'settlers' and the date of the supposed migrations. The previous work done on the five brooch types to be used here and the details concerning why these types (or certain sub-types) have been selected as subjects for the contextual study will be presented in Appendix One. All these sections are essential background to the analysis of the brooches, the results of which are presented in Chapter Seven.

6.2 The classification, dating and chronology of Anglo-Saxon brooches

6.2.1 Introduction

It is important to discuss the dating of objects associated with 'the migrations' and/or material culture change because, as we shall see, labels such as 'mid-fifth century' are not necessarily simple, objective facts (the same goes for 'Germanic' or 'Anglo-Saxon'). Nevertheless, the classification and then dating of artefacts found during excavations has been one of the chief concerns for Anglo-Saxon archaeologists since the early 1850s (see Chapter Two). A majority of this work has been conducted using a typological approach to chronology, and this relies on a series of assumptions.

In order to produce a typology, artefacts are divided into distinct 'types' (i.e. items that possess 'a consistently recurring combination of attributes' (Richards 1987: 15)) on the basis of their form and/or decoration (e.g. cruciform brooch or equal-armed brooch). These types may also be sub-divided (e.g. Type Dorchester cruciform brooches, Type Nesse equal-armed brooches). However, types and sub-types are not just static classifications, they are usually believed to have chronological significance as well. To link typological classifications to chronology requires two further assumptions. First, it is expected that artefact types undergo gradual change through time (Kjeld Jensen and Høilund Nielsen 1997: 37). Individual types are said to evolve (possibly from other types) and to develop through various sub-types through time before reaching their final form and going out of use. In many cases, simple forms are believed to be early, while the most developed forms (often the most elaborate or 'degenerate') are said to be the latest (e.g. Fig. 29a and b). Second, it is expected that formal similarities reflect chronological proximity. For example, if two very similar brooches are believed to be of the same type, they will be given the same date. Furthermore, in many cases, the acts that saw those brooches deposited in a certain context (e.g. a burial rite) will also be said to have occurred at roughly the same time (although the 'heirloom factor' (see below) may be taken into account if

there is conflicting evidence). A number of typologies for different artefact types may also be linked when different types are found together (e.g. in closed contexts, such as graves). These seriations allow the formulation of chronological sequences based on a much wider range of material. It remains to point out that typologies and seriations are said to be 'relative' sequences until they are tied into 'absolute' or calendrical chronological schemes. Both relative and absolute dating methods will be discussed below.

Using typologies as the basis for classifying and dating artefacts has been fundamental to the practice of Anglo-Saxon material culture interpretation for at least a century. It is also important to note that such methods often appear to maintain historically derived ideas about migrations (e.g. by 'proving' that some objects found in Britain and on the continent belong to the 'migration period'). However, as mentioned above, such methods cannot be considered bias-free methods for determining actual dates. The following will describe problems – noted by many scholars – that do arise when these methods are applied. Furthermore, building on the ideas described in Chapter Three it will become clear that a range of insupportable theoretical assumptions are also required. Yet to begin with, it will be shown that typological approaches to the classification and dating of material must be understood as the products of a particular, late nineteenth-century, intellectual discourse. They are therefore not necessarily incontrovertible or the only way of understanding material culture.

6.2.2 The origins of the typological method

In 1836, the Danish antiquarian C.J. Thomsen had published his ideas for dividing prehistory into three 'ages'. This was the first attempt to classify ancient artefacts using a systematic chronological scheme. The comparative typological method was the next significant step in the development of archaeological chronologies. By sub-dividing artefacts using typologies it was hoped that the human past could be defined with greater precision. This approach has been called the most important theoretical development in archaeology of the second half of the nineteenth century (Malina & Vaŝíĉek 1990: 46).

In the later 1800s, one of the many ways in which the work of Darwin and others was influencing the study of the human past was through its promotion of empirical research; the search for internal patterns of order, taxonomy and a concern for the origins, development and history of humanity (Graves-Brown 1996: 82-3; Hides 1996: 37). This encompassed not only human beings, their origins, races and so on, but also the material products of human labour. All these aspects came together in the emerging typological/chronological classifications of archaeological material (Brooks 1994: 112). As Hides has explained;

> '...in the nineteenth century the notion of History – i.e. the depth of time and the coming to being of the knowable, empirical world – implied that the human past could only be articulated through an abstract or objective measure of the time of the past... The chronology offered a framework through which the successive phases of the transformation of material by labour could identify distinct epochs, and the societies which produced these technologies' (Hides 1996: 37).

It should also be noted that Darwin's work involved investigating species and the relationships between them. All members of a particular species were believed to be genetically alike with the same biological origins. These uniformitarian assumptions meant that general evolutionary models could be proposed, often summarized in the form of branch diagrams (but see Moore's (1994) critique of cladistic/branch theory). Linguists also adopted this technique as a means of representing the relationships between languages (see Section 5.2.1). Although artefact classifications have not been represented specifically in the form of branch diagrams, these ideas have had a profound influence on archaeological classification and dating. As will be shown below, archaeologists attempted to define the 'genetic' inter-relatedness of different artefacts, treating material types as species to which general rules of development and change could be applied.

Having previously been used in palaeography, the history of art and numismatics, typologies were first used to order archaeological material by H.O. Hildebrand in 1866. Hildebrand, however, did not present an explicit rationalization of his methods and the Swedish archaeologist Oscar Montelius was the first to clarify the aims and methods of typological analysis (Malina & Vaŝíĉek 1990: 46-7). His method for deducing how artefacts change through time from their physical properties was clearly influenced by evolutionary ideas;

> 'He took the simple functional form as a point of departure, which evolved further to create a series; in other words, genetically related groups. In the course of such evolution, attributes which were functional originally but had since lost their significance were retained, much as is the case in biological evolution. Such traits could then serve as features diagnostic of the age of artefacts: artefacts with characteristics which had lost their function being more recent than those which had fully functional characteristics' (Malina & Vaŝíĉek 1990: 46-7).

Brooch types, for example, were thus seen as 'genetically related groups' whose development proceeded in much the same way as biological evolution (ibid: 47).

Montelius's work was hugely influential in the archaeology of the Scandinavian Bronze Age. He studied the metalwork of this period in great detail (artefacts from closed grave finds being

the most useful), ordering the material into various types and sub-types. Different artefact types found associated in the same grave allowed him to establish the contemporaneity and thus the development of individual types and of the seriated sequence as a whole. Finally, external evidence (supposedly datable imported artefacts) allowed Montelius to produce absolute/calendrical dates for the typologies (Brooks 1994: 104-115). By 1885 Montelius had defined six periods within the Scandinavian Bronze Age, thus putting the 'meat on the bones' of Thomsen's less precise system (Malina & Vaŝíĉek 1990: 50).

This general approach became hugely influential outside Scandinavian archaeology as many archaeologists adopted the typological method as the standard means of ordering and classifying archaeological material. This was certainly the case for Anglo-Saxon archaeologists who, in the early 1900s had appreciated the limitations of the relevant historical sources and sought to add detail to these rudimentary narratives. Indeed, in 1913 Leeds wrote that earlier artefact studies had been unsystematic and 'not in keeping with the advanced ideas demanded by modern scientific methods' (Leeds 1913: 3).

6.2.3 Typologies and relative chronologies in Anglo-Saxon archaeology

Nils Åberg was one of the pioneers of the typological method in Anglo-Saxon studies, having been a student under Montelius. He was explicit in linking evolutionary approaches to archaeological classification, writing that typology was the application of Darwinism to the products of human labour (Malina & Vaŝíĉek 1990:47). Quoting Åberg (1930 – no other details given) Malina & Vaŝíĉek have described his understanding of typologies;

> 'Artefacts evolve as if they were living organisms, single objects are treated as individuals, typological series represents evolution at a generic level, and groups of typological series are akin to the branching genera which together comprise a family' (Malina & Vaŝíĉek 1990: 47).

Thus, in the early 1900s, many scholars examining 'Anglo-Saxon' objects used evolutionary models. Indeed, such was the emphasis purely on the evolution of artefact types that Montelius's method of cross dating by association has been, until relatively recently, largely neglected (see below).

The language of typological description also reveals the influence of evolutionary thinking. Individual brooch types were referred to as 'species' (Baldwin Brown 1915: 248), near identical brooches were called 'kin' (Kirk & Leeds 1954: 72), brooches with a mixture of decorative styles were labelled 'hybrids' (Lethbridge 1933: 159; Welch 1987) and typologically later examples of a certain brooch have been called 'descendants' (Brownsword and Hines 1993: 3). All these metaphors denote some form of biological relationship.

Brooches will be the subject of the analysis described in Chapter Seven and therefore they will be the focus of attention here. They have always been an important part of early medieval archaeology (especially before J.N.L. Myres began to study pottery in earnest) and this was no doubt due in part to the fact that they are often preserved in burials: the context in which brooches of the period are most commonly found. However, Leeds has described other reasons for why brooches have been so significant;

> 'Even in these early times the subservience of the feminine mind to the dictates of fashion is clearly perceptible, more especially in that most distinctive article of feminine attire – even far back in prehistoric times – the *fibula* or brooch. Even within the short period under inquiry this one object alone was subject to most radical alteration and development, sometimes in the form, sometimes in the decoration. Further, the evidence supplied by the women's graves proves the tribal instinct to have been at first immensely strong, and the diffusion of the various types should receive full consideration before the conclusions of history or the like are accepted as final' (Leeds 1913: 29).

Regardless of his decidedly non-gender-neutral language, it is clear that Leeds believed brooches could answer the important questions of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, namely those concerning historically attested tribal movements. Furthermore, the rapid changes in 'fashion' meant that brooches were particularly susceptible to detailed typological, and therefore chronological classification (also Brooks 1994: 106; Hines 1992: 81) For these reasons, Leeds and many other scholars (see Appendix One) studied brooches in detail and hence the chronology of the early medieval period in southern and eastern Britain rests primarily on brooches (Hills 1979a: 320).

6.2.4 The results of typological research

Since the early 1900s, many different, sometimes contradictory, typologies for early medieval metalwork have been produced. However, much of this work can be traced back to Bernard Salin. In his influential 1904 publication, *Die Altgermanische Thierornamentik*, he described a developmental sequence for 'Germanic' metalwork (including brooches) decorated with animal figures. He divided the decoration into three successive chronological groups; Styles I, II and III. This sequence, characterized by increasingly disjointed animal figures, has been seen as the basis for all subsequent Anglo-Saxon material classifications and chronologies. Shepherd has written that;

> '...his typological ordering, though frequently supplemented and discussed, remains the scale against which all subsequent analyses are suspended for inspection' (Shepherd 1998: 8. See also Brooks 1994: 86 and Fig. 12a).

Salin's work included brooch types from throughout Europe, but as the amount of material excavated increased scholars tended to specialize on one geographical area or one brooch type (Brooks 1994: 86).

In England, E.T. Leeds laid the foundations of Anglo-Saxon chronological research. He used Salin's work as the basis for his own material studies that focused on brooches found in funerary contexts in an attempt to illuminate the historical narratives (e.g. Leeds 1912; 1913; 1933; 1945). Following Montelius, Leeds described the importance of using grave goods associated by their deposition in the same grave as the basis for classification and dating. He described what could be achieved with such a method;

> 'From a correlation of associated finds some idea can be obtained of the dates at which any given cemetery began to be used and at which time it fell into disuse. In some localities it renders it possible to surmise an initial occupation by one tribe and its eventual dispossession by members of another; owing to the variations in the types of objects used for similar purposes among the different racial elements of which the immigrating Teutons were composed' (Leeds 1913: 25).

Yet Leeds also believed that a purely typological method could provide much useful information, especially for dating. For this, he described his methodology in simple terms;

> 'By taking a large series of objects of one particular type, it is possible to obtain some general conclusions as to the evolutionary process by which the particular type was developed' (Leeds 1913: 28).

Many other archaeologists who also adopted these methods could be discussed here (e.g. Åberg 1926; Baldwin Brown 1915; Smith 1923), as could the work done on numerous artefact types (e.g. square-headed brooches, wrist-clasps, spearheads, shield bosses and bracteates. See Lucy 2000a for summaries). However, rather than list examples here, the summaries of the work done on the brooches to be used in the present study will be sufficient to illustrate how such classificatory approaches and specific typologies began in the early part of the twentieth century, and have continued to be used and/or refined to the present day (see Appendix One).

6.2.5 Critiques of traditional typological analyses

Despite the all-pervasive influence of such typological analyses, archaeologists, especially in recent years, have become increasingly aware of limitations and assumptions inherent in these techniques. It is now widely recognized that a major problem with the earlier chronological studies in Anglo-Saxon archaeology was the total reliance on typology with little use of find

associations that might have been used to establish seriated sequences (*contra* Montelius and Leeds 1913: 28-9. See Brooks 1994: 111-12; Høilund Nielsen 1997: 93). By abandoning cross-referencing, Anglo-Saxon archaeologists were, in effect, relying solely on their judgements about the evolution of individual brooch types (Brooks 1994: 112). Indeed as early as 1937, Myres noted that the practice of assuming a typological sequence of artefacts also had chronological significance was dubious (Myres 1937: 318. Also Hills 1979a: 326; Hines 1992: 82). Thus, in recent years there has been a renewed emphasis on using artefact associations to generate seriated sequences and chronologies comprised of various types (especially with computer applications – see below).

A number of other problems with the typological method have also been described. To begin with, there has been little or no consideration of whether a date ascribed to a brooch relates to its manufacture or deposition (Hills 1979a: 326; Kidd 1977: 94). Hines's work is, however, an exception, since he stated that his typology of Great Square-headed brooches is one of production (Hines 1992: 86; 1997: 224). How such certainty is achieved nevertheless remains unclear. In most cases, there remains the possibility that the date of manufacture, and the date of deposition could be significantly different and hence any date ascribed to a particular brooch is actually quite ill defined (and that is the case for many of the dates suggested for the brooches discussed in Appendix One). This problem is amplified when more than one dateable object is considered, for example when using artefact associations to deduce seriations and chronologies. As Kidd's summary diagrams (Kidd 1977 – Fig. 13) demonstrate, with two associated objects to consider there are also two possible date ranges for each and the potential for error, or at least imprecision, is therefore doubled (ibid: 94).

Further problems arise if one artefact in a grave is believed to be significantly earlier than other objects in the same closed context. The idea that the early artefact might be an 'heirloom' has, for many years, been used by scholars to account for this phenomenon (e.g. Bidder and Morris 1959: 88; Hills 1979a: 326; Palm and Pind 1992: 75; Welch 1975: 88). How long an heirloom was used before deposition has sometimes been determined by the amount of wear on that artefact or the presence/absence of repairs (Kidd 1977: 94; Mortimer 1990: 144, 147, 157 etc; Sherlock and Welch 1992: 37). However, simply recognizing that an object may have been used for a long period of time before deposition does not prevent this factor being a significant problem in attempts to establish relative or absolute dates for objects and the contexts in which they were buried. Can we ever deduce accurately how long a brooch was used for before deposition? It is also worth noting that there is usually no discussion as to why certain objects might become heirlooms while others do not.

The language of material culture classification has also been somewhat vague, and this highlights the subjectivity of many typological schemes. Ethnic classifications are one example of this (cf. Chapter Three). Leeds stated that chip carving (*Kerbschnitt*) had a distinctly 'Germanic feeling' (Leeds 1913: 31) and that in one particular region the excavated artefacts had a 'Saxon tinge' (Leeds 1945: 83). Similarly, Mortimer has referred to the 'continental flavour' of the earliest English cruciform brooches. Chronological opinions have also been imprecise. Evison (1978a: 91) stated that a brooch must be early simply because it was silver (and therefore not 'degenerate'?) while Hawkes (1986: 73-4) asserted that some equal-armed brooches were early because they were more complex than others (although in cruciform brooch typologies the simple examples are believed to be the earliest, while the most elaborate examples mark the end of that type's evolution). Other brooches have been said merely to 'look' early (e.g. ibid; Hutchinson 1966: 14; Leeds 1945: 30). Some classificatory comments have also been distinctly anthropomorphic, leaving the reader with little understanding of why patterns may have emerged. Leeds described how various small-long brooches had 'fallen victim' to embellishments (Leeds 1945: 30) while some cruciform brooches were 'at home' in Saxon areas on the continent (Leeds 1933: 240). Likewise, Evison stated that a saucer brooch and a button brooch from Dover-Buckland were both 'wanderers from a Saxon area into Kentish territory' (Evison 1987: 48).

6.2.6 Alternative approaches: Recent trends in chronological analysis

It has been said that, during the last thirty years, archaeologists have been too preoccupied with theory, and this has been detrimental to chronological studies (Hines 1999a: vii; Høilund Nielsen 1995: 111). While the idea that 'theory' and 'chronological studies' are somehow separate cannot be endorsed, it does appear from the examples given above that critical appraisals of early medieval material culture studies have been few and far between and that common sense has been the prevailing rationale. In recent years, however, a number of authors have attempted to tackle some of the issues outlined above by putting the dating and classification of artefacts on a firmer, more explicit, methodological footing. John Hines and Karen Høilund Nielsen have been particularly prominent in attempting to do this.

6.2.6.1 Methods

Dafydd Kidd was perhaps the first to call for the principles of 'New Archaeology' to be applied to Anglo-Saxon chronological studies. He highlighted the influence of 'narrow historical interests' and emphasized the need for assumptions used in archaeological arguments to be made plain (Kidd 1977: 93). Subsequently, many researchers have described the need for methodologies, classifications and assumptions used in their construction to be 'explicit and rational' (Hines 1999a: viii) and rigorously applied (see also Brooks 1994; Høilund Nielsen 1997: 72; Mortimer 1990: 45-6).

In order to fulfil these aims, a number of technical and practical innovations have been introduced to Anglo-Saxon chronological studies. Perhaps the most important of these is the use of computers and computer applications that allow large numbers of assemblages (especially from graves) and individual artefacts to be sorted into relative chronological, seriated sequences. Correspondence Analysis is a popular example of this. It is a means of revealing the structure of a particular data set and testing the validity of seriations (see Kjeld Jensen and Høilund Nielsen 1997: 36-51 for a full description). The analysis is conducted by creating a two-axis matrix in which graves ('units') are plotted against artefact types ('variables') (see Fig. 16a and b). A perfect seriation – where objects and assemblages are ordered 'correctly', such that the gradual change through time is revealed – will result in a diagonal line of points within the matrix. The validity of this pattern can be tested further using a scattergram. A good seriation will result in a uniform, symmetrical parabola while a less prefect seriation will give a more distorted curve.

This, and other related methods such as Cluster Analysis (see Section 5.4.3), were pioneered in continental and especially Scandinavian archaeology, and are now beginning to improve understandings of associations in England also (e.g. Jørgensen (ed.) 1992; Hines et al. (eds.) 1999; Høilund Nielsen 1997). The application of techniques has not, however, been without problems. It appears that, in general, England has relatively few graves with more than one typologically significant artefact, compared to continental cemeteries (Hines 1999a: viii; Høilund Nielsen 1997: 93) and this limits archaeologists' abilities to produce good seriations. The increasing number of well-published, modern excavations is, however, improving this situation. Nevertheless, there are also a number of more fundamental theoretical problems with these methods and these will be discussed below (Section 6.2.9).

Other techniques have also been incorporated into recent attempts to establish chronological schemes. Pottery studies have included discussions of 'stamp-linked groups' as a means for establishing the contemporaneity of individual vessels (and hence, to some extent, their contents also). This method has been applied to both English (mainly Spong Hill as yet) and German material (Hills 1994; Kidd 1977; Weber 1996; 1998a). Mortimer and Stoney (1996) have also analysed the stamp marks on brooches. Brooch studies often now include chemical analyses of metal composition and manufacturing techniques in order to achieve a better understanding of the production process (metal recycling, trade, workshops etc.) as well as the possible contemporaneity of brooches (e.g. Brownsword and Hines 1993; Dickinson 1991; Hines 1997; Mortimer 1990; 1991).

6.2.6.2 Results

Although these new methods are certainly an improvement over earlier common sense approaches, they have not necessarily improved the clarity and accuracy of artefact chronologies. To begin with, Brownsword and Hines's (1993) study of square-headed brooch metallurgy shows that, although the general pattern is one of heterogeneity, reflecting the use of scrap or recycled metal in brooch production, some formally similar brooches also have similar (or exactly the same) chemical compositions. However, two brooches from East Anglia were found to be chemically almost identical (such that they must have been cast at the same time) while their ornamentation was 'conspicuously different' (ibid: 3). That these two brooches were probably contemporary was therefore 'a considerable surprise' (ibid.). Such conclusions must lead us to ask whether formal classification is in fact always a sound basis for absolute chronologies.

Other conclusions from recent work amplify this point. Hines (1992: 86), for example, argued that Palm and Pind's seriations and phasing of 'female' graves (i.e. those with brooches) in early medieval England demonstrated, not a change in dress style through time, but 'the existence of alternative but concurrent fashions'. Likewise, in Mortimer's cruciform brooch typology, many of the different sub-types are shown to be broadly contemporary (Mortimer 1990: 177 – Fig. 14). Some have also drawn attention to the fact that brooch styles and certain features of brooch design sometimes exhibit marked regional or even local variations. While identifying regional patterns of material has long been a feature of early medieval archaeology (e.g. using such patterns to ascertain where 'Saxon' or 'Anglian' people lived), Høilund Nielsen believes she has shown just how localized such patterns might be. She wrote that;

> 'The computer analyses each showed in their way that concomitant material culture groups are to be expected even within small areas and within a single cemetery' (Høilund Nielsen 1997: 93).

Høilund Nielsen has also noted that ethnic, gender, age or status groups may influence material patterning and chronologies (Høilund Nielsen 1997: 93-4; also Hines 1992: 84), For example, at Spong Hill (Norfolk) 'male graves' (those where typological analysis was based on weapons types) were found to be slightly earlier than female internments (i.e. those where brooches were used) (Hills et al. 1984: 15). Similarly, Böhme found that his whole continental chronology was affected by women's graves (i.e. those with brooches) being generally earlier than male graves (i.e. those with belt-fittings). To solve this problem Böhme simply gave his phases dates which lay half way between the two gender-related phasing systems (Böhme 1974: 155. See Brooks 1994: 97). There have been similar difficulties relating cremations to inhumation-derived sequences (e.g. Böhme 1974: 155; Hines and Høilund Nielsen 1999: 89).

These observations are important because they are potentially highly problematic for chronological studies as a whole. This is because, as described above, typological/chronological analysis relies on the idea that similar artefacts (and the contexts in which they are found, unless one object is believed to be an 'heirloom') are broadly contemporary. However, these recent analyses show that other factors may interfere with this assumption and it may be that geography, status, gender, age and so on affect chronologies. In other words, many factors other than when a burial occurred influence the contents of a grave. This means that the ability of archaeologists to assign relative or absolute dates to artefact types (and the context in which they were deposited), wherever they are found, is severely compromised.

With all these factors to consider, how do archaeologists now attempt to produce chronological schemes for brooches? Addressing this question highlights the generally positivistic tone of recent publications on Anglo-Saxon chronological studies. Høilund Nielsen has written that;

> '...it appears that plurality of contemporary social groups combined with local variation blur the general picture, and make the rather simple idea of seriation more or less hopeless if these different groups cannot be sorted out and eliminated from chronological analysis' (Høilund Nielsen 1997: 91).

She does, however, offer a solution, writing that if such 'contamination' can be recognized then it can be eliminated and a 'pure' chronology can be deduced (ibid: 86);

> 'It is thus simply a question of methodology and an acceptance of the idea that it is possible, given the right method and the right selection of finds, to produce the chronologies' (Høilund Nielsen 1997: 72).

Similarly, Hines has commented that;

> '...in seeking to interpret the patterns of the past we have to take account of contextual factors that interfere with the chronological sequence and thus disguise it. Put the other way around, we may identify factors bending or distorting the chronological sequence and therefore read the former from the latter' (Hines 1999a: ix).

These may well seem logical ways to overcome a methodological problem. However, is it a realistic proposition to eliminate contextual distortions or contaminations from our understandings of material culture?

6.2.7 A reassessment of recent chronological studies

Although recent typological/chronological work is an improvement on earlier ill-defined, common sense approaches, there are a number of methodological and theoretical problems that undermine the conclusions that may be drawn.

It has been described above how, in recent publications, scholars have attempted to be explicit and rigorous in deciding how and why classifications and chronologies are formulated. Nonetheless, however clear and defined the typology and the methodology behind it, it has been recognized that there is still a certain amount of subjective judgement involved (Høilund Nielsen 1995: 120). Even if a typological/chronological sequence for artefacts and graves – produced using computer seriation packages and Correspondence Analysis for example – is believed to be wholly objective (e.g. Nørgård Jørgensen 1992: 6-7, n6), the typologies used to define the individual artefact types (e.g. which design element of a brooch is the most chronologically significant) remain highly subjective (Høilund Nielsen 1995: 125; Mortimer 1990: 44; Palm and Pind 1992: 53). This point is significant because if one method of classification is adopted in preference to another, it may potentially alter the position of that brooch in a typology and thus influence the results of seriations. This in turn may affect the absolute date ascribed to any individual brooch or grave. This fundamental problem has been recognized but not remedied.

Whilst discussing subjectivity in typological analysis, it is interesting to note a study made by Brooks (1994) as part of her research. It will be recalled that Hines (1999a: viii) stated that the typologies should be 'rational'. In order to question this idea of rationality and to highlight the subjectivity of material classifications, Brooks conducted a small experiment (1994: 63-6). Eighty-two students were given pictures of thirty great square-headed brooches to put into typological order. The results showed that a large majority classified the brooches by form rather than decoration. Conversely, the established typologies for this type (e.g. by Leeds, Leigh and Hines) relied on decoration with form playing only a minor role (Brooks 1994: 64-6). This echoes an earlier study in which six academics were asked to organize the same group of material. No two classifications produced by the subjects were the same (Hodson, Sneath and Doran 1966, quoted in Brooks 1994: 63). Thus, regarding typologies, whether or not methods are made explicit and computer processing is used, there is the uncomfortable possibility that objective, rational classifications are illusory and the material could easily be classified in other ways; as Hines has indeed admitted (1999a: viii). Typological studies are inherently subjective and describing methodologies as 'rational' and 'explicit' does not make them any less so. Moreover, this subjectivity affects the chronological location – be that relative or absolute – ascribed to any individual artefact.

Whether or not solutions can be found for these predicaments, there are other theoretical issues that go to the very heart of chronologies and classifications. These have not often been discussed in the recent literature on this subject although they are a logical progression from the theoretical position outlined in Chapter Three. The central theme here is whether modern typologies, seriations or chronologies are in any way related to the people living in the past and how they used and perceived material culture.

First, subjectivity may not only be an issue in modern scholarship; it must be asked whether those who made the brooches in the past had any conception of the extent to which they were making a specific 'type'. Richards (1987: 16-18) has noted that in non-Westernized societies, there may exist ideas about the appropriate form for certain types of pot, for example. Nevertheless, the extent to which those types have wider meaning, especially for those using the objects in different contexts after they were made, must be questioned. Richards concludes that;

> 'One cannot impose twentieth century western liberal conceptions of shape and design upon other societies without practising cultural imperialism' (Richards 1987: 18).

Such comments clearly present those working in this field with serious dilemmas. Computer applications may produce statistically valid or significant results, but in interpreting these results, their relevance for people in the past has rarely been considered (Lucy 1997b: 358). Should neat, uniform graphs produced by computers be a test as to the veracity of a particular chronological sequence even if factors relating to the social identity of those using the objects have to be omitted? These issues must be addressed if chronological studies are to be less assumption-laden.

Second, early medieval scholars have now recognized that geographical and social factors (e.g. gender, status etc.) may affect chronologies and when objects were made/deposited. Nevertheless, it has also been suggested that a chronology is 'real'; it is something that is 'out there', that can be found by the application of the right methods (see quotations in Section 6.2.6.2). Høilund Nielsen has even described the need to eliminate the social aspects of material culture usage in order to find real chronologies; indeed local patterns possibly reflecting gender, status and ethnicity in mortuary contexts have been called 'contaminants' (Høilund Nielsen 1995: 125). Yet if material culture is said to have become meaningful in the creation and maintenance of social practices – practices that may have had local variations and in which the meaning of objects was potentially fluid, context-specific and open to multiple interpretations (see Chapter Three) – then the idea that diverse spatial and temporal contexts can be linked by a single objective, uniform phenomenon (i.e. a classification or chronology) must be questioned. As Lucy has pointed out, those variations and 'contaminating' factors are in fact the most

interesting features of early medieval burials for archaeologists interested in the social use of material culture (Lucy 1997b: 358). Thus it appears that generalization and homogeneity have been sought at the expense of the variation and heterogeneity of people's lives in the past.

Third, there is the question of why material culture changes through time. There has been very little critical consideration of this in recent typological-chronological studies and the idea that material changes gradually through time remains important (e.g. Kjeld Jensen and Høilund Nielsen 1997: 37). However, the view of material culture discussed in Chapter Three and above has implications for this issue as well. While archaeologists cannot hope to discover the mental processes involved in material culture change (i.e. the thoughts of the individuals making, adopting, using, or abandoning certain objects), there is a need to examine the local contexts in which artefacts were used. Was material culture change as gradual and uniform as many appear to believe? Were certain practices maintained through time before being challenged or subverted using the available material conditions of social life? Was change uniform, or, as is more likely to have been the case, was there variation between different local or regional areas or even within a single cemetery?

6.2.8 Typologies and relative chronologies: Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be said that there are many theoretical and methodological problems with the typologically based approaches that have been used by early medieval archaeologists from early in the twentieth century. Those currently researching early medieval chronologies in Europe and Scandinavia have addressed many of these problems and some have been overcome. Nevertheless, fundamental theoretical difficulties remain regarding the use of generalized assumptions, the reification of 'chronology' and the way this conspires to eliminate people from the study of the past. If artefactual research has nothing to do with those who created and maintained past social practices, then it must be concluded that such methods are merely modern constructs; ever more elaborate schemes that maintain understandings of material culture that only began in the second half of the nineteenth century. To paraphrase Anthony Giddens (1984: 285), it appears that in traditional approaches methodological procedure has been mistaken for past human reality.

Although these conclusions may seem somewhat negative, the many practical and theoretical problems with the typological/chronological discourse in early medieval archaeology, past and present, cannot be ignored. The implications of these conclusions for the present study, as well as alternative approaches will be discussed at the end of this chapter. Before that, however, it is also important to examine how relative sequences are translated into absolute chronologies.

6.2.9 Absolute dating

Linking relative chronologies, in the form of typologies and seriations, to absolute or calendrical dates is usually achieved by providing, what Mortimer (1990) calls, 'chronological pegs' for certain points within a relative sequence. These 'pegs' often lie at the beginning and end of a typology or seriation, or at some points within the relative sequence. Absolute dates for objects believed to lie between chronological pegs are assessed by interpolation and estimations as to the degree of typological development.

The following discussion will describe the two main methods for deducing absolute chronologies or chronological pegs that have been used in Anglo-Saxon archaeology, although these methods are inter-related. First, dates have been ascribed to chronological sequences (and the artefacts of which they are constituted) by reference to historical texts. Second, archaeologists have adopted various forms of cross-referencing between individual brooches and types and other scholars' deductions about them. Brooks (1994: 85) has referred to this as 'mutual validation'.

6.2.9.1 Historical dating frameworks

The historical sources that relate to fifth-century England were discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Hence, it is sufficient here to recall that these sources are not necessarily objective records of events in eastern England in the fifth century. Rather, they must be interpreted as the products of an author who wrote in a particular social, religious, political and intellectual context and who employed certain modes of expression in order to convey his, and perhaps others', views. It was also shown in Chapter Four that historical dates have been the focus of intense debate and in many cases there is little scholarly agreement concerning textual interpretation (e.g. the dating and chronological evidence in Gildas's DEB and the *Gallic Chronicle of 452*). Historically based dating frameworks must therefore be treated with caution. But how have historical dates been used to date the archaeological remains of the period in question?

The use of historical sources to date Anglo-Saxon material culture has been somewhat ill defined. As described in Chapters Two and Four, from the early days of Anglo-Saxon archaeology scholars were, to a certain extent, critical of historical sources and aware of their limitations (e.g. Kemble 1849 (1876); Leeds 1913: 10). Nevertheless, early chronological studies were sometimes explicit in using historical dates to explain the patterning of material culture.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is one source that has often been used in archaeological interpretation. Leeds (1912) discussed saucer brooches in relation to the Battle of Bedford of

AD 571, as described in the *Chronicle* (even though he showed the historical dating to be of questionable value for understanding those brooches). The interpretation of the cemetery at Petersfinger was also based on this source (Leeds and Shortt 1953). The *Chronicle* remains an influential source for some early medieval archaeologists (e.g. Hawkes 1986), although others have also recognized that its chronological structure is of dubious reliability (see Chapter Four).

The texts written by Bede and Gildas have also been particularly influential in early medieval chronological studies. It is from these sources that the mid-fifth-century date for the *adventus Saxonum* is derived. Bede (HE 1: 15) dates the Germanic invasion to AD 449 and this may in turn be an interpretation of Gildas's passage describing the Britons' 'Letter to Agitus' (DEB 20: 1-2. See Brooks 1994: 91 and Section 4.5.3.2). For many years, AD 449 (or c.450) was accepted as the date of the *adventus* and therefore also as a *terminus post quem* for the absolute chronologies of 'Anglo-Saxon' material culture. For example, Leeds described the earliest equal-armed brooch in England (from Kempston) as dating to '±AD 450' (Leeds 1933: 241). More recently, Palm and Pind and Stilborg constructed chronologies for English brooches and weapons respectively based on computer seriations and correspondence analysis. These chronologies were divided into phases that began in AD 450 and proceeded in twenty-five year periods (Palm & Pind 1992: 74; Stilborg 1992: 43).

Kidd (1977: 93), however, has lamented the strong influence of this date in structuring Anglo-Saxon chronologies since to use it involves a simplistic view of the migration process based on a literal interpretation of historical sources. Millett (1983, also Whyman 1993) has also commented on the 'magnetic' qualities of such dates whereby dates for certain artefacts seem to cluster around these seemingly secure historical 'fixed points'. He wrote that, in fact, those dates are 'temporary fixed points', and their significance is subject to changes in historical interpretation (Millett 1983: 8). In the light of the discussions of Bede and Gildas in Chapter Four, this would certainly seem to be the case. For example, Bede's reading of the 'Letter to Agitus' is not the only possible interpretation, and the date he arrived at may be more significant as evidence for a desire for narrative precision than as an actual date (Howe 1989: 55). As such, it would appear that to use AD 449/c.450 as an absolute date is extremely dubious.

Yet from a relatively early point in early medieval chronological studies scholars realized that this date was not always helpful in the discussion of early 'Germanic' metalwork in England. This was due primarily to research by continental scholars who appear to have been less influenced by the AD 450 date (Brooks 1994: 92; Morris 1974: 228) (N.B. It should, however, be noted that Bede's description of the desertion of Angeln (*Angulus*) is said to have influenced chronologies there (e.g. Jankuhn 1952; Kidd 1977: 98)). Åberg, for example, argued that archaeological evidence pointed to the invasion having occurred between AD 400 and 450.

Similarly, although Leeds dated the earliest equal-armed brooch in England to around AD 450, he dated examples of another early type (the supporting-arm brooch) to '±400' and '±425' (Leeds 1933: 242). This abandonment of the 'AD 450' date in many recent studies means that the earliest 'Germanic' material in England is often dated to around AD 400. For example, the Dorchester cruciform brooch is believed to be a particularly early example of the type (see Section 6.4.5 and Fig. 30a) and one of the first purely 'Germanic' artefacts in England. It has been dated to 'the last quarter of the fourth century or around 400' (Kirk & Leeds 1954: 72). Others have dated it more generally to the early fifth century (e.g. Böhme 1986: 533-4; Mortimer 1990: 143; Reichstein 1975: 92-4).

Perhaps the most extreme archaeological argument put forward to reject the traditional AD 450 date has come from J.N.L. Myres's work on pottery; especially his publication of the Caistor-by-Norwich cemetery in Norfolk. Myres stated that the earliest urn from the site (P15) was buried before the late fourth century (Myres 1973: 43-4). Myres's dating methods have, however, been criticized by other scholars (Hills 1979b; Morris 1974. See Section 5.4).

Thus, it is clear that the use of the AD 450 date as a chronological peg or a *terminus post quem* for the beginning of many Anglo-Saxon chronologies is now quite rare (this is probably why Palm and Pind's (1992) historical overview at the beginning of their paper, and their use of the 450 date stands out as particularly traditional). This echoes general changes in views of the migrations, with many rejecting simplistic interpretations of historical sources and acknowledging the potential complexity of such a process (see Chapter Two).

Yet despite this shift away from a simple and direct usage of historical sources to date artefacts, there remains an ambiguous and selective relationship between archaeological chronologies and history. For example, even chronologies that do not use the 450 date as a starting point still rely heavily on historical information, referring to material as 'Anglian' or 'Saxon' as well as 'the migrations'. Additionally, Brooks has highlighted the practical problems that have arisen as a result of changing approaches to absolute dating. She writes that, while some scholars have recognized the problems associated with the 450 date and have rejected it;

> '...for other types of artefact, classified and dated before this realisation, the earlier chronologies remain in place. This has led to absurdities where the dating of some classifications begins at 450 and others pre-450 but all attempt to co-exist within the same framework...The dislocation between the two groups of chronologies cannot be solved by sliding those which assume an *adventus* of 450 bodily earlier, since then their end-points might be too early; or by stretching them to start earlier but still end where they currently do. The whole system should be re-appraised' (Brooks 1994: 93-4).

These observations make it clear that archaeologists must be cautious in their use of historical concepts or 'events' in order to interpret fifth-century artefacts. They must recognize how dates have been deduced and that many historical 'facts' employed in archaeological interpretation are actually contestable assumptions.

6.2.9.2 Absolute chronologies by 'mutual validation'

If early medieval scholars do not now rely so explicitly on historical chronologies how do they deduce absolute chronological pegs? In many cases, the attribution of specific calendrical dates to an artefact or an assemblage is done by what Brooks calls 'mutual validation' (Brooks 1994: 85-102). In other words, dates are inferred by comparing the artefact in question to the date given to similar artefacts by other scholars. Objects might also be dated by being associated with (e.g. in a grave) another artefact for which a date had previously been established. In this way, another scholar's chronological deductions become chronological pegs (of course, this may in some cases perpetuate chronologies that were originally based on historical sources).

In English early medieval studies, there are many cases where absolute dates have been ascribed to objects on the basis of another scholar's dating of similar artefacts. For example, Leeds wrote that;

> 'The very early Dorchester brooch, at one time deemed to be too early to be connected with the actual period of the settlements, is now regarded by Roeder as capable of being so treated, and gains in importance from that decision' (Leeds 1933: 241).

Although such referencing is now usually less simplistic, the general idea continues. In dating applied brooches from Mitcham (Surrey), Welch used Evison's chronology for 'Kempston beakers' (Welch 1975: 92), dates for pottery vessels published by Myres as well as Hawkes and Dunning's (1961) chronology of late Roman buckles (Welch 1976: 135). Likewise, the beginning of Mortimer's absolute chronology for cruciform brooches is based partly on Hawkes and Dunning's dating of a buckle found with the Dorchester cruciform brooch (c.AD 425) (Mortimer 1990: 143-4, 176. See Figs. 14 and 30a). Similarly, Mortimer placed the end of the cruciform brooch chronology in the first half of the sixth century; a deduction based on dates ascribed to grave goods associated with the latest cruciform brooches in the typology. These included a buckle plate dated by Leeds and Shortt (1953) and a square-headed/cruciform 'hybrid' brooch dated by Hines (1984) (Mortimer 1990: 146-8).

Dates deduced by other scholars are also regularly used in excavation reports. For example, Dickinson's report on the brooches from Berinsfield (Oxon.) referenced Böhme (1974) in dating a supporting-arm brooch (Boyle et al. 1995: 81). Evison (1994: 5) used Reichstein (1975) to

classify and date the cruciform brooches from Great Chesterford and Timby (1996) used Leeds (1945) to classify and date the small-long brooches from Empingham II. Hence, mutual validation is clearly leading to the perpetuation of certain classifications and dating frameworks within English archaeology as soon as the 'raw data' is published. Furthermore, in most of the reports mentioned above, the dates ascribed by others to particular brooches also contribute to the dating of the cemetery as a whole.

The practice of mutual validation is especially noticeable in the relationship between English artefact chronologies and those proposed by continental (especially German) scholars. For example, Leeds (1933) drew upon the work of Roeder, while Myres (e.g. 1969; Myres and Green 1973) used classifications developed by Plettke (1921. See Morris 1974: 226-7). The studies of cruciform brooches undertaken by Åberg (1926) and Reichstein (1975) have also been hugely influential (e.g. Hirst 1985; Mortimer 1990; Sherlock and Welch 1992), as has the more wide-ranging research by Böhme (1974; 1986. E.g. Boyle et al. 1995; Evison 1977; West 1985).

Many more examples could have been quoted, yet it is clear that mutual validation is generally accepted as a means for 'absolute' dating in Anglo-Saxon archaeology. This has continued in the most recent approaches to chronological analysis. In several cases, scholars have used recent continental work in order to provide absolute dates (Brooks 1994: 94), even if such dates are not necessarily accepted as more secure and reliable (e.g. Hines 1992; Høilund Nielsen 1997: 71). For example, Palm and Pind (1992: 71) used beads from 'dated' graves in the Alemannic cemetery at Schretzheim to date graves with similar beads at Sewerby in East Yorkshire (see below for critique of this method). Hines (1992: 88-9), stressed the need for caution in accepting these dates until there is some understanding of how the beads came to be in both places. Nevertheless, he has also linked graves in Cambridgeshire to continental chronologies (Hines 1999b). These examples illustrate Høilund Nielsen's assertion that;

> '...a correlation of the Anglo-Saxon chronologies to the continental chronologies, through Continental artefacts datable in both areas, is central to Anglo-Saxon absolute chronology' (Høilund Nielsen 1997: 91. See also Welch 1999).

As with typologies and relative chronologies, these absolute dates have thus been seen as generally applicable across large geographical areas, or as pegs on which to hang typologies as they develop through time. The problems with such generalized assumptions concerning material culture and its usage were described at the end of the previous section, and they apply equally here.

Additionally, the idea that artefact chronologies produced by continental scholars – or indeed any other scholars – constitute a reliable and independent authority for absolute dating that can be applied more widely must be questioned. To illustrate this point, it is worth describing Brooks's revealing discussion of Böhme's chronologies (Brooks 1994: 95-8). Böhme attempted to use coin-dated graves as the basis for his chronology, but found that there were too few coins in northern Germany – from where most of the Anglo-Saxon material is said to have originated – for this to be useful (see below for discussion of coin-based dating). Most of the relevant continental graves with coins are found along what was the Rhine-Danube frontier. Furthermore, with Gaulish coin production ceasing in AD 406, using these coins to date potentially later objects is bound to be somewhat imprecise (perhaps only providing a vague *terminus post quem* for the grave). Brooks goes on to demonstrate that in order for Böhme to date the brooches he used in his research (i.e. those in northern Germany), he had to rely on the work of previous authors such as Roeder, Genrich and ultimately Salin (ibid: 96, Fig. 12b). Böhme asserted that the validity of his chronologies was confirmed by an apparent agreement with Plettke's (1921) pottery chronology. Yet, as Brooks points out;

> 'This result is less surprising when it is realised that Plettke's datings were also dependent on Salin. Plettke had no independent method of dating his pottery and used grave associations to calibrate his chronologies with the scales already set up for equal-armed brooches by Salin (1894) and for cruciform brooches by Salin (1904) and Schetelig (1906) – and Schetelig in his turn had also based his chronology on Salin's. Therefore it seems premature to claim that Böhme had independently validated Plettke, and wiser to recognise that Böhme's chronologies also depended ultimately on Salin's' (Brooks 1994: 96).

This example clearly illustrates that many continental chronologies are not necessarily more secure that those in England. A great deal of scholarship in both places has been inherently self-referential, with authors using earlier chronological schemes without being critically aware of how they were originally constructed. Using earlier work as an authority may serve only to perpetuate assumptions and the value of such absolute chronologies must be doubted.

Some scholars have, however, recognized problems with simply using earlier work as the basis for computer seriations and correspondence analysis (e.g. Hines 1992; Høilund Nielsen 1997: 71). Nevertheless, continental chronologies continue to be used largely because there are more graves containing coins there as compared to England, and these are believed to provide more objective absolute dates. Such graves predominate in southern and western Germany (Hines 1999a: viii; Nieveler and Siegmund 1999: 5; Theune 1999), although some from Kent have also provided a useful 'stepping-stone' for linking continental and English chronologies (Høilund Nielsen 1997: 91). Again, it is believed that such chronologies have widespread significance. As Hines has written;

> '[In western and southern Germany] ...there is much greater scope for putting absolute-chronological calendrical dates to the relative-chronological sequences on the basis of either the inclusion of an identifiable coin with a *terminus post quem* in the assemblage or for dendrochronology. It is inevitable then that the German chronologies should appear to offer the yardstick to which other areas' schemes should seek alignment' (Hines 1999a: viii. Also Hines 1999b).

Yet Hines has drawn attention to the fact that the nature of inter-regional contacts is far from clear;

> 'The mechanisms for the diffusion and adoption of artefact-types across geographical boundaries can be various (e.g. commodity trade, gift exchange, prestige emulation, group migration, exogamy, travelling craftsmen etc.). ...these render it impossible simply to assume that the 'same' type of object is of the same date in any two areas in which it occurs' (Hines 1999a: viii. See also Hines 1992: 89).

If this is the case, then what relevance do continental coin dated graves have for English brooch chronologies? This would also appear to undermine any comparative dating methodology in which a non-local chronology is referenced or in which formal similarity is equated to chronological proximity. Furthermore, if it is seen to be necessary to eliminate 'contaminating' factors, such as local variation and the influence of social identities, in order to achieve a 'pure' chronology (e.g. Hines 1999a: ix; Høilund Nielsen 1997: 72, 86) then it is surely inevitable that any regional diversity will be suppressed and uniform chronologies will emerge.

Aside from the inherent theoretical problems associated with such generalization (see Section 6.2.9), the problem of deducing 'a date' for two associated artefacts must be remembered (Kidd 1977 – see Section 6.2.5 and Fig. 13), even if one of the artefacts is a coin. How old was the coin when it was deposited? How old was the brooch associated with it? How is it possible to define a date for the grave in question given these two, potentially large, date ranges? Furthermore, coins often provide only a very vague *terminus post quem* for a grave and may well have been used (although not necessarily for their monetary value) for decades after production and before final deposition (see White's (1990) discussion of Roman coins in 'Anglo-Saxon' graves); a point that was in made by J.M. Kemble as long ago as 1855 (Kemble 1855b: 310).

In conclusion, it can be said that with absolute chronologies the problems of generalization again apply. Historical dates and the inherently self-referential nature of many chronological

studies also influence the determination of absolute dates. All these factors must lead us to question the validity of many of the dates so far produced using such methods.

6.2.10 Summary and conclusions

To summarize, there are five main problems with the Anglo-Saxon chronological studies that have been raised in the preceding discussion. All, apart from the third point (which relates to absolute chronologies only), apply to relative and absolute classifications and chronologies equally.

1 – It has been described above how typologically based absolute and relative chronologies were a product of nineteenth-century evolutionary theories. As such, it must be concluded that these methods are not necessarily the only ways to understand material culture. Indeed, it is possible that such ideas were of little or no relevance to most, if not all, the people who used brooches in early medieval England.

2 – Despite the first conclusion, it is clear that typologically based approaches have become a central feature of early medieval archaeology. Some of the basic tenets of this approach have been questioned in recent years, although other fundamental assumptions have not (see below). Because many of the basic principles have remained unchallenged the study of early medieval artefacts (especially metalwork) has become highly self-referential and the work of other scholars is often used as an acceptable authority. These approaches serve to perpetuate methodologies and assumptions that may constitute an internally coherent discourse, but they fail to address many of the theoretical points made here.

3 – As described in Chapter Four and above, there are many problems with using historical sources to date archaeological remains. First, the sources themselves do not necessarily record factual dates and second, the relationship between history and archaeology is not simple or direct. Archaeologists need to be aware of the extent to which (potentially problematic) historical dates have become entangled with interpretations and classifications of material culture.

4 – There are problems concerning the value of using associations in closed contexts as a means for generating seriated sequences of artefact types across time and space. As Kidd (1977) has pointed out, seemingly clear associations in fact constitute a potentially large temporal range. Furthermore, the dates ascribed to either one of two associated artefacts may be problematic thus increasing the range of potential error.

5 – Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the generalizations and belief in uniform processes across time and space required to use typological/chronological methods are theoretically questionable. A typology or chronology cannot be unquestioningly applied to a variety of different contexts because this is to neglect entirely the people who used objects in social practices at different times, in different places and for different reasons. Formal similarity

cannot be equated to chronological proximity with any degree of certainty or precision and gradual typological change may be illusory. Hence, the whole idea of typological chronologies is undermined. Indeed, it must be asked whether a single, true chronology can ever be deduced; the recognition that local variations and social factors do influence artefact deposition again undermines this idea.

Aside from the above conclusions which refer mainly to metalwork and how it has been used to date funerary remains, it should also be remembered that there are just as many problems when it comes to dating settlement sites using early medieval pottery (see Chapter Five). These problems are principally to do with the fact that post-Roman pottery does not survive well archaeologically (Foard 1978; Shennan 1985) and because the dating frameworks often rely on a range of questionable assumptions concerning ethnicity and the interpretation of historical sources (Millett 1983; Whyman 1993). As such, the key conclusion of all the above sections is that where traditional dating methods are employed the fifth century appears to be a chronological grey area. We do not (yet?) have a clear, unbiased understanding of the time frame in which the identifiable archaeological changes occurred. This has important implications for how we might understand those changes, as will be seen in Chapter Eight.

Despite these fundamental problems with the theory and practice of Anglo-Saxon chronological research, chronologies and the question of dating cannot simply be abandoned; we still need to attempt to discover what was happening where and when (Esmonde Cleary 2001: 92). There are, however, alternative strategies for dating that do not rely on questionable practices and assumptions. Many of these have not been widely used in early medieval archaeology, perhaps due to the predominance of the more traditional methods discussed above.

It has been suggested that radiocarbon dating and dendrochronology should be used more extensively. These methods have already been used successfully in the dating of continental cemeteries with preserved wooden coffins (e.g. Hines et al. 1999), in the dating of an early medieval cemetery in Ipswich (Scull and Bayliss 1999) as well as for the dating of the fifth-century dyke systems in Cambridgeshire (Malim et al. 1996). Scull and Bayliss (1999) report that it is now possible to produce date ranges for the early medieval period of less than fifty years and with 95% confidence. Nevertheless, there have been problems elsewhere with the calibration of early medieval radiocarbon dates (C. Gerrard pers. comm.). Although not as accurate, thermoluminescence could also provide some dates for fired ceramics, such as cremation urns (D. Holland pers. comm.). To avoid generalized conclusions, these scientific techniques should also be used in conjunction with approaches that begin by analysing the very local and contextual usage of artefacts in individual cemeteries (e.g. Ravn 1999 on Spong Hill). This 'bottom up' rather than 'top down' approach would mean that artefact analysis was not

divorced from the contextual usage of objects in social practice and any general patterns that were eventually identified would be less attributable to modern generalizations and the search for uniform processes.

However, until there is far more intensive and extensive use made of these techniques, it seems likely that the established approaches will remain at the heart of Anglo-Saxon material culture studies. It must therefore be concluded that much of the received wisdom concerning the dating and classification of post-Roman material culture must be treated with caution. Considering also the problems with linking history and ethnicity to material culture, it is clear that we do not have a secure basis for understanding the hypothesized fifth-century migrations, both in terms of who was migrating and when this occurred. These conclusions have been summarized by Dafydd Kidd;

> 'Typologies and chronologies can be refined to the ultimate degree, but whether this brings us closer to, or removes us from, the reality of the past depends on whether our inherent assumptions are valid. I do not believe that we can proceed to refine chronologies usefully until their theoretical nature is established. Why should our arrangement of artefacts reflect what happened in the past?' (Kidd 1977: 102).

6.3 Data analysis: Methodology

Having described why the classification and dating of fifth-century material culture needs to be treated with caution, the remainder of this chapter and Chapter Seven will deal with archaeological evidence that has been particularly influential in debates about migrations in that period. The aim of this section is to demonstrate why a certain body of archaeological evidence was chosen to investigate and reassess the question of migrations as well as why it was analysed in a particular way.

Two factors determined the form of the archaeological analysis. The first was the need to address the normative model for material culture change in fifth-century England: that is to say migrations from the continent (i.e. the 'Anglo-Saxon homelands') to England. It was therefore necessary to compare the fifth-century archaeology on the continent to that found in England. Second, the analysis also had to take into account the theoretical approaches to archaeological interpretation described in Chapter Three. With these two requirements in mind, the present study began using a methodology that was later rejected. This methodology, and why it was rejected, will be described below as this is both revealing as to the nature of the archaeological evidence for the fifth century and it illustrates why the alternative approach was eventually adopted.

6.3.1 Method #1

A majority of the archaeological evidence for the fifth century (on both sides of the North Sea), especially that which has been implicated in debates about migrations, comes from funerary contexts and burials. In order to compare English and continental evidence therefore – and thus examine in detail the material often used to support the idea of migrations – the original aim was to evaluate cemetery assemblages from both regions that are now dated to the fifth century (the 'migration period'). In order to avoid generalized assumptions and in order to investigate local practices and material culture usage (see Chapter Three), a contextual analysis of the graves in these cemeteries was to be undertaken. The intention was to examine how each grave in the relevant cemeteries had been constructed, what the human remains revealed about the deceased individual (age, sex etc.), how the body had been interred, and what other objects (if any) had been deposited with the deceased. In this way, it was hoped that a detailed picture of the burial rites used by the communities burying their dead in a particular cemetery could be determined. Individual cemeteries would then be compared, noting any similarities or differences between English and continental cemeteries that may have appeared. It was hoped that this would provide some indication as to the similarity (or otherwise) of the continental and English 'migration period' cemeteries. Approaching the question of migrations in this way would mean that a consideration of practice and material culture usage was included, thus avoiding simple artefactual parallels that have been central to many previous studies. This methodology was, however, abandoned for a number of theoretical and practical reasons.

To begin with, the above approach requires complete cemeteries to have been both excavated and published to a very high standard in order for them to be useful. However, during the last 150 years, cemeteries now considered to have been in use in the fifth century have been subject to archaeological methods of highly variable quality. Some – mostly relatively recent excavations/publications – provide excellent data, including complete publication of each grave and a range of modern scientific analyses on bones and grave goods (e.g. Spong Hill and Liebenau). Other reports – mostly earlier ones – list only the most obvious or 'significant' artefacts found in a particular grave (e.g. Westerwanna, Caistor-by-Norwich), such as the cremation urns and brooches. It might therefore seem reasonable to include in the analysis only those cemeteries with high quality, modern reports. There is, however, a problem with this. There is a significant disparity in the numbers of well-excavated, recorded and published cemeteries on the continent as compared to England. Of the German sites, it would have been possible to examine, for example, Bordesholm, Issendorf, Liebenau, Schmalstede or Süderbrarup. Yet in England, there is only one cemetery excavated to modern standards that is commonly compared to continental (especially German) sites; Spong Hill in Norfolk (cf. Hills 1998; Weber 1996; 1998a). Other similarly important cemeteries in England (e.g. Caistor-by-Norwich, Lackford), were less well excavated and published. This may well reflect modern

research priorities and funding in these two regions and the fact that in many English cemeteries 'fifth-century' graves (i.e. often those with brooches believed to date to the fifth century) are often seen as the earliest burials in generally later cemeteries. Either way, it makes direct comparison of whole cemeteries problematic as we can never be sure if we are comparing like with like, or if Spong Hill is having a disproportionate influence on the English evidence.

Additionally, to concentrate solely on well-excavated and published cemeteries eliminates from the analysis many cemeteries that have been influential in debates about the archaeology of the fifth-century migrations (e.g. Borgstedt, Bremen-Mahndorf, Westerwanna, Kempston, Caistor-by-Norwich etc.). Furthermore, a number of sites that have produced significant fifth-century objects are not even definitely cemeteries; they may have been just a small group of burials (e.g. Anderlingen, Groß Gerau, Mildenhall, Trumpington). It is therefore clear that the evidence for fifth-century cemeteries in England and on the continent is highly variable, and the idea of examining whole cemetery assemblages is not sufficiently flexible to deal with this variability.

There are also problems concerning the statistical methods that would be required to compare whole cemeteries. Clearly, the graves that make up a cemetery could be described using a huge number of variables: the number of graves, the numbers of grave goods in graves, body positions, grave good positions, age, sex and so on. Extremely complex multi-variate statistics would be the only way to take into account all those variables whilst comparing entire cemeteries and also giving some form of clear numerical value or measurement to that comparison. Yet even if such analyses were conducted, the results would still be of very limited value. For example, it may be possible to produce a measure of statistical relatedness between cemeteries in England and on the continent. Yet having one or two cemeteries that seem to 'match' is no basis for generalization about material culture change in fifth-century England.

Furthermore, generalizing about whole cemeteries raises a number of theoretical problems with these methods. The most significant problem is with treating them as single, uniform archaeological entities. As described in Chapter Three, cemeteries must instead be seen as places to which members of a community returned through time to bury their dead. The understanding of the individual burial rites and practices involved may therefore vary from one individual burial/grave to the next as well as through time – even if there are commonalities in the archaeological remains that make it *appear* that a uniform burial rite was practised in that place. Thus, the idea of comparing whole cemeteries is, within the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Three, not entirely valid.

It is also important to consider what any conclusions drawn from this method would mean in terms of migrations as a catalyst for change in fifth-century England. It might be said that if

certain cemeteries on the continent and in England were found to be statistically similar, there would be a good case for claiming the community or individuals using the continental cemetery migrated across the North Sea. However, finding dissimilarity between cemeteries does not mean that migrations could be ruled out. It may be that we have not found the two ends of one particular community's migration route. Furthermore, many archaeologists today do not believe whole communities or populations migrated and prefer to think in terms of small sections of a population (perhaps young males or the elite) making journeys to specific locations (see Section 3.6.2). With this being the case, many archaeologists would not expect to find cemeteries in England and Germany that could be shown to be statistically similar.

6.3.2 Method #2 - the alternative

Given these practical and theoretical problems, it was necessary to abandon attempts to compare whole cemeteries. Chapter Seven, therefore, contains the results of analysis based on a different body of data and using a different methodology.

To ensure that comparable archaeological remains from England and the continent (focusing especially on the 'Anglo-Saxon homelands' of north-western Germany) were being examined, the analysis focused, not on whole cemeteries, but on a number of brooch types and the individual graves in which they were found. The types chosen were those found both in England and on the continent that the most recent typological/chronological analyses date to the fifth century (those types, and the details of how they conform to those criteria, are discussed in Appendix One). The brooches in question have therefore often been interpreted as being good evidence for the migration of people from one region to the other at that time (e.g. Böhme 1974; 1986; Hills 1979; Hines 1990; Scull 1998). It can therefore be said that the analysis undertaken was dealing with material that has been linked directly to 'the migrations'. Pottery was not used due to the problems outlined in Section 5.4.3.

It cannot be said for certain that the list of brooches in the database – those that conform to the above criteria – is entirely complete; given the time available for the present study no attempt has been made to ensure that every unpublished example was traced. However, the database includes all the published examples of the brooches in question (also some unpublished examples) that could be found.

Given that the aim was to examine burial rituals and how material culture was used as part of these practices (or at least as part of the final interment of the corpse) it was necessary to analyse, in as much detail as possible, the contexts in which the brooches in question were found. Thus, for each brooch, information was gathered from excavation reports concerning with whom it was buried (age, sex), how the brooch and the body were deposited

(cremation/inhumation, orientation of an inhumation grave, where/how the brooch and the body lay in the grave) and what was buried with the brooch and/or what adorned the body in the grave (associated grave goods). All this information, along with the name of the site on which the brooch was found and details about the formal classification of the brooch, were recorded in a Microsoft Access database. An example of the data form used to input the information (there being one form for each relevant brooch) can be seen in Figure 16.

When as much information as possible had been recorded for each brooch (with '?' indicating where information was unknown/unavailable) the data was analysed (the complete database can be found in Appendix Two). This was done primarily by comparing the English and continental brooches, examining the variables described above individually and attempting to identify patterns in the data using graphs produced in Microsoft Excel. This was done for the dataset as a whole, for the individual brooch types and, where numbers allowed, for sub-types. Also where numbers allowed, the statistical significance of the results (whether or not they could be caused by chance) was assessed using a Chi-squared test. The results of these analyses are presented and discussed in Chapter Seven.

The advantage of this methodology is that, building on the theoretical arguments outlined in Chapter Three, through detailed contextual analysis the burial practices conducted by people in the past that incorporated the brooches in question will come to the fore. This is a change from many previous approaches to the archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon migrations that have focused mainly on the objects themselves (although several authors have already adopted contextual approaches – e.g. Lucy 1998; Pader 1982; Weber 1996; 1998). It is hoped that the contextual analysis of brooches so closely linked to 'the migrations' will reveal new or more complex patterns and suggest that alternative means of understanding the material culture are necessary.

The second method proposed here is also flexible enough to accommodate the highly variable evidence for this period. For example, a brooch from a recent excavation will have a very complete data form, with all categories filled in. On the other hand, for brooches excavated some time ago it may only be possible to fill in a few categories. It is likely that categories such as sexing and aging from bones will be far less well represented than context of deposition (e.g. cremation, inhumation, settlement etc.) as the former is a relatively recent addition to cemetery analysis. Nonetheless, at least the poorly-excavated brooches are not being excluded entirely from the study; even brooches listed only as 'stray finds' have a role in illustrating the relative numbers of different types known in England and on the continent.

Before going on, it is important to point out that there are also some disadvantages with this approach. First, the cemetery as a whole plays no part in this investigation and that is to neglect

a significant context for the brooches in question. Yet this is nothing new. Any previous work on the migrations that has used specific brooch types in England and on the continent to prove the veracity of the migrations has also neglected the cemetery context of those brooches. In fact, as will be shown in Chapter Seven, the brooches in question are not very numerous and in all the cemeteries where they were found a huge proportion of graves do not contain brooches paralleled in both regions. It is even quite common for graves to contain no grave goods at all. This illustrates just how selective scholars have been when compiling archaeological evidence for 'the migrations' and how simple and limited artefactual parallels have been used to support broad generalizations about material culture change.

Second, it will become clear that this analysis involves the comparison of very broad geographical areas (i.e. 'England', 'the continent'). However, as stated previously, this is only an investigation of the data to assess whether it may or may not support a migration hypothesis or whether more complex patterns are present. It is not, therefore, an attempt to investigate what was 'actually' happening (see also below). That would require a detailed contextual analysis of every cemetery before any general conclusions could be drawn (cf. Chapter Three). Given those aims, it is difficult to know what other geographical regions could have been used. Modern political boundaries are of no relevance in the fifth century and regions such as 'the Elbe-Weser triangle' or East Anglia are also quite arbitrary – their relevance to people in the past is unknown. Böhme (1974) did divide the continental cemeteries he examined into those found to the north and those to the south of the Rhine. Again, it must be questioned as to whether the areas north and south of the Rhine can be considered unified regions (i.e. 'Free Germany' or imperial/formerly imperial lands). Also, using the Rhine as such a rigid division is dubious as it may have actually have been a regional focus of communication and interaction (see Geary 1988). It may therefore be more realistic to think of a Rhineland zone and that is just another region that, for the purposes of this analysis, is difficult to define. The following will, therefore, be simply a comparison of 'England' and 'the continent'. Nevertheless, some comments will be made concerning the geographical distribution of some of the patterns identified and hence whether the broad regions used in this study are entirely representative.

Finally, it must also be accepted that, by focusing only on certain brooch types, the analysis presented in Chapter Seven is to some degree conforming to the debate it is also attempting to scrutinize (e.g. by using Böhme's and others' brooch classifications to define the dataset used to investigate 'the migrations'). The implication of this is that the methodology and analysis proposed here can only be used as a critique of the migrationist discourse in British early medieval archaeology. It cannot provide evidence on which to build an alternative view of the past. Yet the aim of the present work as a whole is only to investigate that discourse; some alternative hypotheses will be presented in Chapter Eight, but there will be no attempt to

produce any definite conclusions concerning what was 'really' happening in the fifth century. As argued in Chapter Three, that would require a detailed contextual analysis of the dynamics of individual cemeteries and their local environs *before* any general comments could be made. That project is far to big for the present study which is only intended to be an initial step in the reassessment of fifth-century archaeology, dealing exclusively with the concept of migrations.

6.4 Fifth-century brooch types

The previous section described the methodology to be used in the contextual analysis as well as how and why it was decided upon. The brooches that will be used in that contextual study will be discussed in Appendix One. The types to be analysed are equal-armed brooches, supporting-arm brooches, applied brooches, saucer brooches, cruciform and small-long brooches (NB: Other brooches that might have been included here, *tutulus* brooches for example, will not be used, because there are too few examples in one or other of the regions for meaningful statistical analysis to be carried out). In Appendix One it will be shown that all of the types in question, or the relevant sub-types, are found in England and on the continent (especially in the so-called 'Anglo-Saxon homelands') and would – according to the most recent estimations by scholars – be dated to the fifth century. The appearance of each type (or sub-type) will be described, and there will also be a summary of the formal analyses and chronological deductions made by scholars who have studied the brooches previously. Those summaries will illustrate further many of the points discussed in Section 6.2 along with the fact that detailed contextual analyses have not previously been conducted on these brooches; brooches that are highly significant in the discussion of the 'Anglo-Saxon migrations'. References for the individual brooches analysed are given in Appendix Two. Those references are for either the original excavation publication for a particular brooch/site, or they are the earliest identifiable reference for a brooch. In the following chapter the results of the contextual analysis will be presented.

CHAPTER SEVEN



Results of Data Analysis

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, a methodology for reassessing archaeological material usually linked to the fifth-century 'Germanic migrations' to England was outlined. This methodology is consistent with the theoretical position described in Chapter Three. The methodology involves the contextual analysis of a number of brooch types that are particularly relevant for the present study. First, in the most recent typological/chronological publications they are dated to the fifth century – the time when the migrations are said to have occurred (indeed a number of examples have been described as the earliest Germanic objects in England introduced by migrants). Second, they are found both on the continent (especially in northern Germany – the traditional 'Anglo-Saxon homelands') and in England (where Germanic people are said to have migrated to, on whatever scale). Third, and because of these first two points, these brooch types have always been, and remain, at the heart of archaeological investigations of the migrations. These three points are addressed in detail with respect to the six brooch types in Appendix One, although it should also be remembered that many of the assumptions used by scholars in formulating these three conclusions have been shown to be theoretically problematic (see Chapter Six).

387 examples of the relevant types have been identified, 119 in England and 268 on the continent. In compiling contextual information on each brooch over a two-year period, ninety-eight different publications, dating from 1852 (Neville 1852; Roach Smith 1852) to 1998 (while Hirst and Clark's Mucking report and Tyler and Major's Springfield Lyons report are 'forthcoming') were consulted, and these referred to 125 individual find sites (see Map 1). Most of the publications were in English or German, although a few were in French or Dutch. The site reports and articles in archaeological journals came from university libraries in Durham, Newcastle, Cambridge and Kiel (northern Germany). As mentioned before, references will not be given here every time a particular cemetery or brooch is referred to. The relevant publications for each brooch are listed in Appendix Two, with the full reference given in the bibliography.

The presentation of the results will begin by comparing the English and continental brooch data using all the brooch types together. Following that, there will be a similar examination of each

of the six brooch types individually. The analysis may not be exactly the same in every case as sometimes there are too few examples of a particular type to make this worthwhile.

7.2 All brooch types

7.2.1 Numbers of brooches

Of the six brooch types used in the present study, a total of 387 examples were found. The numbers of each type are given in Figure 32, with cruciform brooches being the largest group (129 examples = 33.3%) and saucer brooches being the smallest (just 19 examples = 4.9%). Of the 387 brooches, 119 were found in England while 268 were found on the continent. As might thus be expected, Figure 33 shows that in all cases there were more examples of each type on the continent; with four types there were at least twice as many there. When considering these figures as percentages of the number each type of brooch per region (Fig. 34) it can be seen that the proportions are broadly similar, although in England, applied and cruciform brooches make up a slightly larger proportion of the assemblage compared to the continent.

As an initial point, it is worth highlighting that, considering the overall volume of evidence for the period in question (i.e. all those cemeteries in England and on the continent that are believed to date to the fifth century or to have fifth-century phases), this is not actually a large number of brooches. If there were substantial migrations, for which these brooches are direct evidence, or even small-scale/'elite' migrations that instigated wider changes, should not a larger number of exact material culture parallels be evident (even with due consideration of taphonomy and sometimes crude recovery techniques in the past)?

7.2.2 Contexts of deposition

Turning to the contexts in which these brooches were deposited (Fig. 35, Map 8), it can be seen that for most examples where this context is known, they came from burial/funerary contexts (230 out of 387 = 59.4%. Excluding stray finds, 230 out of 245 brooches came from burial/funerary contexts = 93.9%). Of those brooches found in funerary contexts, 144 were found in cremation burials and 86 in inhumations. Other contexts of deposition – where the brooches were found in settlements or bogs – were much less common. This reinforces the view that the material in question must be interpreted primarily as a constituent part of burial practice and attempts to use it to make broader generalizations will often be both practically difficult and theoretically dubious (see Chapter Three).

The large number of stray finds, where no specific context of deposition is now known, is very conspicuous (142 examples = 36.7%). As will be seen below, this factor affects many of the

following analyses, with the patterns noted in the data coming from relatively few examples. The large number of 'unknowns' means that the value of those patterns will remain uncertain. However, many of those stray finds probably did come from funerary contexts (they are often published in cemetery reports (as stray finds) or as having come from places where a cemetery is known to have existed), yet given the poor excavation, recording and publishing methods practised on some of the earlier cemetery sites it is often the case that no other information is available. While this means that many more brooches are likely to have come from funerary contexts, for the following *contextual* analysis they can only be described as stray finds.

When the brooches are divided into English and continental examples, the contexts of deposition reveal some interesting patterns (Figs. 36 and 37). To begin with, it is clear that in both regions stray finds make up a large proportion of the assemblages. The large number of continental stray finds is due to the fact that several large cemeteries, with many examples of the brooches in question, were poorly recorded and published in the middle decades of the twentieth century (especially Borgstedt and Bremen-Mahndorf). However, when seen as percentages of the total regional assemblage, the numbers of stray finds in England and on the continent are similar (39.5% and 35.5% respectively). Only small numbers of brooches came from settlement sites, although again the totals are nearly the same in both regions – six in England and seven on the continent. There are only two bog finds, both from the continent and both from northern Germany (an equal-armed brooch from Oberhausen (Kr. Oldenburg) and a cruciform brooch from Kantow (Kr. Kyritz)).

Statistically significant differences between England and the continent did however emerge when comparing the types of burial associated with these brooches. In England inhumation predominates over cremation (43 and 23 burials respectively), while on the continent the pattern is reversed, with cremation being far more common (121 cremations, 43 inhumations). As percentages, the English figures are almost an exact reversal of the continental figures. Using a Chi-squared test this pattern was found to be highly significant (at the 0.1% level). This level of significance was retained even when the stray finds were included in this test.

This pattern becomes even more pronounced when the influence of a few large, well-published cemeteries is taken into account (Figs. 38 and 39, Map 8). It was predicted in Chapter Six, that Spong Hill (Norfolk) could have a disproportionate effect on any analysis of English cemeteries, because so few other cemeteries that are comparable with continental examples have been well excavated. This has certainly proved to be the case when looking at the numbers of cremations in England. Of the twenty-three English cremation burials containing the

brooches in question, twenty-two came from Spong Hill. The only other example was Grave 26 from Abingdon (Oxon.). Therefore, without Spong Hill, all but one of the English brooches would come from inhumations.

A similar pattern can be seen on the continent, where the cemeteries of Liebenau (9 inhumations) and Issendorf (8 inhumations) together account for seventeen (39.5%) of the forty-three continental inhumations. Furthermore, of those continental inhumations not from Liebenau or Issendorf, five brooches are not from cemeteries as such, but from isolated groups of burials (e.g. Anderlingen (northern Germany, between the Elbe and Weser), Groß-Gerau (south-western Germany, on the Rhine)) and nine are from cemeteries away from the 'Anglo-Saxon homelands' of northern Germany (e.g. Sigy-en-Bray (France), Harmignies (Belgium), Gjervik (Norway)).

However, Liebenau and Issendorf – the cemeteries with most of the continental inhumations in this study – are both relatively modern and well published excavations. It might therefore be asked if earlier excavations of German cemeteries failed to find inhumations and if more recent excavations remedied this situation. To some extent, this must be a possibility, although it may not apply in all cases. The excavation techniques required to locate cremations (i.e. stripping large areas to reveal the traces of pits into which urns were placed) are just as likely to have shown inhumation grave cuts. Having said that, inhumations in sandy soils may result in very poor bone preservation, and that may have been a factor in creating the pattern described above. Nevertheless, in some cemeteries, inhumations certainly were found during the course of earlier excavations (e.g. Sahlenburg (Kr. Land Hadeln) and Nesse (Kr. Wesermünde)) and fifth-century inhumations were even found when prehistoric tumuli were the intended objects of archaeological enquiry (e.g. Anderlingen, Groß-Gerau). The differences between England and the continent with regard to burial types are therefore probably a valid observation. Also, Spong Hill, Liebenau and Issendorf may reflect localized patterns of burial practice – at least where the graves containing 'migration period' brooches are concerned.

Continuing the theme of localized practices, it should be noted that most of the cremations in question were of a type where the cremated remains (human bone, animal bone, pyre/grave goods and charcoal) were placed in an urn and buried. However, on the continent a different form of cremation is known, the *Scheiterhaufenplatz* (pyre-site) burial (Fig. 17). This method of cremation involved the deceased individual being burned on a pyre, with various grave goods, after which the pyre site was covered with sand thus burying the grave goods and human remains (in some cases, burnt remains were placed in an urn before the pyre-site was covered).

Archaeologically, these burials appear as burnt areas in which pyre goods and burnt remains are found, in or around urns and other pottery vessels (see Haßler 1999: 31-2 for full description). Haßler (1999: 29) states that this type of burial is only found at Liebenau. Indeed, twenty-two of the pyre-site burials containing the brooches being examined here were found at Liebenau, although one interment from Holßel (Ldkr. Cuxhaven) is also described as being a *Scheiterhaufenplatz* burial (Schön 1990/1991: 452). Very few pyre sites are known at all in England, and those that have been identified (albeit tentatively) were probably not used as *burial* sites (Lucy 2000a: 106).

It can therefore be concluded that, in general, the brooches found on the continent were most likely to have been used in a cremation burial ritual, and in England they were most likely to have been deposited in inhumations. Where this patterns does not hold, in England most of those brooches come from Spong Hill. On the continent, the cemeteries of Liebenau and Issendorf are similarly influential and a large number of the other inhumations are either not from northern Germany or are not actually from cemeteries *per se*. Of course Spong Hill, Liebenau and Issendorf cannot be treated simply as 'anomalies'. There would need to be more local, contextual analyses of high quality excavations in neighbouring, contemporary sites for this to be said with any degree of certainty. However, this analysis, showing that inhumation and different types of cremation rite can have local concentrations, does highlight the possibility that there were geographical variations in the practices using the brooches in question and that generalizations should be avoided.

7.2.3 Age

In a large majority of the cemetery reports used to compile the data set being analysed here, no indication as to the age of death of the individual buried with the brooch is given. That is reflected in the large number of 'unknowns' in Figure 40. This is no doubt due to the fact that the detailed analysis of skeletal remains is a practice that has only become a standard feature of cemetery reports relatively recently.

As far as is known, all the age determinations used here are based on the analysis of skeletal remains. However, the wording in some reports appears to suggest that this assessment was done using fairly simple estimations of bone size (e.g. Schuldt 1955b). This may not be very accurate. In other cases, detailed analyses of cranial morphology, teeth, epiphysial fusion and so on were certainly used (e.g. Spong Hill, Liebenau, Flögeln). It is also worth noting that, because 'age' is here being inferred from skeletal remains, this is only a biological age not a cultural determination. It is important to make this distinction because ideas about when an

individual becomes, for example, an adult are not fixed; they may vary over time and space. Hence, material culture cannot provide a simple, objective measure of this personal identity (cf. Lucy 1996 for a full discussion).

There are additional problems even when skeletal ages have been published. For example, many different ways of describing the age of an individual have been used in the reports consulted (e.g. child, adult, young, old, mature, aged etc.). Also, where numerical age estimations have been used, the age ranges are sometimes quite large (e.g. '20-80 years' – see Haßler 1983; 1994). Such wide estimations can often be attributed to the bones being very poorly preserved; a factor that is particularly acute in some cremation burials. Yet in order to deal with this huge diversity of age-related data, it was necessary to decide upon a standardized system of broad categories and attempt to fit the information from the cemetery reports into those classes (see Fig. 40).

The results illustrate clearly how little information there is concerning the ages of those buried with the brooches in question; the unknown category is the largest both in England and on the continent. The 'not applicable' category relates to those brooches found in bogs or settlements. However, aside from those two categories, it is also clear that most of the brooches where the information is available were buried with those who were biologically/skeletally adults (those of about 18 years or more) at the time they died. Infants, children/juveniles and adolescents are represented (indicating that the brooches were not buried exclusively with 'adults') although the numbers are so small it is difficult to draw any further conclusions. This pattern should, however, be treated with some caution since immature bones are smaller and less likely to survive either in an inhumation or especially in a cremation as they are more porous and have a higher organic content that more mature bones (M. Lewis pers. comm.).

7.2.4 Sex and gender

As with age, sex and gender is another problematic concept due to the variety of ways it has been dealt with. To begin with however, Figure 41 shows that again the 'unknown' category predominates. The resulting lack of evidence for the other categories will therefore limit the amount of confidence that can be placed in the conclusions to be drawn.

Furthermore, there are a number of theoretical problems that must be considered when interpreting those remaining categories. Figure 41 represents only what has been published on the brooches/graves in question – no attempt has been made here to infer the sex or gender of the individual in any of the graves. The problem with this information is that it demonstrates

how early medieval archaeologists have confused biological 'sex' and cultural 'gender' categories. In other words, grave goods that may have been used to construct a range of gender identities (and in this case, we can only hope to understand such identities in the context of funerary rites) have often been used to indicate the biological sex of an individual. Thus, it has been common practice for brooches to be seen as indicative of a 'female' burial, while weapons, for example, are believed to show that it was a 'male' grave. Yet biological sex and gender identities cannot be directly equated due to the dynamic and context-specific nature of gender identity (see Lucy 1997a for full discussion).

Figure 41 illustrates that in most cases the traditional, 'common sense' approach has been used to deduce the 'sex' of an individual, with this deduction being based on the nature of the grave goods. Thus, because brooches are a 'female' dress/burial costume accessory, there should be, and indeed are, no male graves when this approach has been used. However, using brooches in this way means that archaeologists have actually been discussing gender identities not biological sex. The fact that material culture may be used to construct gender identities but cannot be directly equated to biological sex is actually illustrated in Figure 41. When the sex of an individual has been deduced from skeletal evidence, again most of the brooches were found to have been buried with females. However, in three cases, the brooches were actually buried with males. The potential for error when attempting to sex individuals using grave goods can thus be seen.

It must therefore be concluded that this section of the contextual analysis tells us very little about sex or gender in the fifth century. The sex of only twenty-one individuals (18 females, 3 males) buried with the brooches in question is known. The remaining information presented in Figure 41 illustrates 1) how little attention was/is paid to matters of sex/gender by early medieval archaeologists (see the 'unknown' column) and 2) that questionable assumptions concerning the relationship between biological sex and cultural gender categories are evident in many site reports.

Such preconceptions continue today. For example, when examining the remains from Liebenau, Rösing (1994: 239) found that the skeletal evidence from grave N7/A2 suggested that the individual was male. However, given that a brooch and beads were found in the grave Rösing argued that to say the individual was actually female was a 'considerably safer' determination. Before any further conclusions can be made about biological sex and the construction of possible gender categories in the fifth century these two phenomena must be investigated without assuming the relationship between them is simple and direct.

7.2.5 Orientation of inhumation graves

The numbers of inhumation graves in England and on the continent with various different orientations are shown in Figure 42. The compass points on the X-axis relate to the head end of the grave. Again the numbers of unknowns is quite high, although the orientation of seven more continental graves would be known if the recent reports on Issendorf (Haßler 1994; Haßler et al. 1997; Weber 1996) showed which way round the skeletons lay in the graves marked on the site plans.

Nevertheless, from the evidence we do have, it appears that there are differences in the orientation of English as compared to continental inhumations. The English graves were mostly cut roughly west-east, with most being exactly on that alignment (14 examples). The continental graves on the other hand, are mostly commonly orientated south-north (also 14 examples), with the head at the south end of the grave. However, as can be seen in Figure 42, not all the graves conform to this trend.

7.2.6 Body and brooch positions

The discussion of how a body was laid in a grave and where the brooches in question were placed on that body applies only to inhumations. Those inhumations for which this information is known reveal a uniform pattern in England and on the continent. It appears that in all cases the body was laid supine (on the back) and extended, although arms were placed in a variety of different positions. The brooches were all placed somewhere on the upper part of the torso (or where that would have been if the bones had survived). They were described as being, for example, on the upper chest, near the neck, under the chin, at each shoulder, and so on (see Fig. 18). The lowest position for a brooch (a supporting-arm brooch from Grave P10/A2 at Liebenau) appears to be in the mid-chest area, at the centre of the grave.

This uniformity means that no further comments will be made below on this contextual evidence. However, it should be noted that the uniform pattern might have been produced partly for practical reasons, rather than because burial rites were particularly consistent across both England and the continent. The position of the brooches on the upper torso might also be evidence for how they were used to fasten clothing (see Owen-Crocker 1986). Also, if a decorated metal object was placed in an inhumation, it is likely the mourners intended it to be visible for at least some time. Brooches could not have been as visible if the body lay contracted or on one side. That is not, however, to suggest that when objects were used as part

of a burial costume they were used in the same way as in the dress of the living, or that that conveyed the same meaning to the mourners (cf. Chapter Three).

7.2.7 Associations – numbers of objects in graves

The types of object found associated with the brooches will be discussed in detail for each brooch type as the variety of objects is too great to deal with this looking at all the brooches together. However, an analysis was made of the numbers of objects found with the brooches in all graves (this includes only those graves where associations are known, hence there is no '0' category. To use '0' would be to confuse stray finds etc. with graves where a brooch was actually the only artefact recovered). Figure 43 shows that a majority of graves in England and on the continent with associations have between one and five objects as well as the brooch. There are, nonetheless, some differences between the two regions. More of the continental graves have one or two associations. Yet this may not be purely a reflection of past practices. It may be attributable in part to the large number of brooches found in large but poorly recorded continental cremation cemeteries. At these sites (e.g. Westerwanna, Borgstedt) there was little detailed analysis of the contents of the urns recovered, hence the reports often list only a description of the cremation urn and obvious grave goods (especially brooches). Fragments of objects, which were less visible in the burnt material in the urns, were presumably discarded or just ignored.

There are also some interesting patterns with regard to brooches that have been found together in the same grave (Fig. 44a and b). The table in Figure 44a lists all the brooch types that are subject to analysis here (across the top of the table) as well as all the types found associated with those subject types (down the left hand side). The numbers of brooches found thus associated are also divided into those found on the continent and in England. A simplified version of this table can be seen as a histogram in Figure 44b. This shows an aggregate of the relative numbers of the brooch types listed down the left hand side of Figure 44a and serves merely to highlight more clearly the patterns described below.

The clearest patterns in Figures 44a and b are as follows: Both in England and on the continent, applied, cruciform and small-long brooches were often found associated with another brooch of the same type. However in England, supporting-arm brooches were never found with other supporting arm brooches, while on the continent there are twelve cases where two examples of that type were found in the same grave. Although the number of examples is often quite small, some brooches associated with the types being analysed here were only found in England (e.g. annular, penannular, button and square-headed brooches), while other types were found only or

mostly on the continent (e.g. *Armbrustfibeln*, Nydam and *tutulus* brooches). These observations might suggest that, while there were some similarities with regard to the use of brooches as part of a burial costume when comparing England and the continent, there were also some clear differences.

7.2.8 Distribution

Map 1 shows the geographical location of the sites where the brooches in question were found. Several, fairly distinct agglomerations are noticeable in this distribution; these will be described here only. How such agglomerations might be interpreted or understood will be considered in the next chapter.

Perhaps the most conspicuous grouping of sites lies between the Rivers Elbe and Weser (the 'Elbe-Weser triangle'). In this region, several of the largest cemeteries, containing a huge amount of fifth-century material, have been found (e.g. Perlberg, Issendorf, Westerwanna etc.). Elsewhere on the continent (between the Weser and northern France and north of the Elbe) the cemeteries in question are more scattered. However, it can be said that the brooches in question are most commonly found in the areas that are traditionally said to have been the Anglo-Saxon homelands (following Bede).

In England, there are notable concentrations of sites around Cambridge, to the north-east of Cambridge, and in the Upper Thames Valley (near Abingdon). It must be wondered if this pattern is – to some degree – a result of the many excavations of 'Anglo-Saxon' cemeteries by Leeds and Myres, who were based in Oxford, and perhaps also by Lethbridge, who was based in Cambridge, especially in the first half of the twentieth century. There are also several sites grouped in eastern Kent, along the Thames and on the line of the Rivers Nene, Welland and Severn. It might therefore be wondered if those rivers, acting as routes of communication, influenced the distribution of the brooches in question.

7.3 Equal-armed brooches

When dealing with the individual types of brooch, it will become clear that in several cases the range of analysis that can be done and the certainty of the conclusions are severely hampered by the small number of examples. This is certainly the case with equal-armed brooches since only twelve are known in England and forty-five on the continent (Fig. 45). The small numbers are even more noticeable when discussing sub-types, with only one example each of Types Sahlenburg and Wehden being found in England. In both regions Type Dösemoor and Nesse brooches are the most common. The one example where the classification is unknown comes

from cremation 3126 at Spong Hill. This burial contained a small fragment of what was certainly an equal-armed brooch, although it cannot be assigned to a sub-type with any degree of certainty.

The patterns noted in the first section concerning contexts of deposition are, to some extent, repeated with equal-armed brooches (Fig. 46). First, there are large numbers of stray finds, especially on the continent. A few settlement and bog finds are also present. The burial rites incorporating equal-armed brooches again show that on the continent cremation predominates and in England inhumation is most common. There are however only four inhumations and three cremations in England and these do not provide not enough brooches to say whether the pattern is statistically significant (i.e. using a Chi-squared test – the same is true for most of the other types discussed below).

As for the ages of the individuals buried with equal-armed brooches, again 'unknowns' predominate and there are generally few age determinations (Fig. 47). Nevertheless, where the age is known it was mostly adults that were interred with this type of brooch. Much the same can be said for the sex/gender of those interred with equal-armed brooches (Fig. 48). As noted above, however, the use of grave goods to infer the gender of an individual shows that most of the brooches in question were buried as part of, what was possibly, a 'female' burial costume.

The discussions of the objects associated with the brooches in question will, of course, be based on those graves where associations are known (i.e. stray finds, settlement finds etc. are precluded). For equal-armed brooches, it should be noted that this means twenty-two continental graves have been used in Figure 49 but only seven graves from England. This discrepancy will inevitably affect the value of any comparisons. Some differences between English and continental examples are visible (e.g. with regard to the provision of, for example, beads, knives and other brooches in the graves). The value of this observation is, however, questionable. While 'other brooches' appear to be more common in continental graves with equal-armed brooches compared to those in England, as percentages the difference is not so marked (e.g. 4 'other brooches' in 7 English graves = 57.1%, yet 13 'other brooches' in 22 continental graves = 59.1%). Differences with regard to beads, knives and ancillary vessels would also be negated in this way. The small numbers of some of the artefact types also means that analysis by percentages would give the results only an artificial validity (e.g. one or two examples of an artefact type might end up being a seemingly large percentage of the total range of types). Nevertheless, there are clear differences with regard to cremation urns and metal

fragments. This can be attributed to the fact that most continental equal-armed brooches were found in cremations.

On the continent, equal-armed brooches are clearly concentrated between the rivers Elbe and Weser (Map 2). In England they are quite widely scattered across East Anglia and further south. This distribution does not support the traditional view that equal-armed brooches are typically 'Saxon' (and not, therefore, 'Anglian') objects (see Appendix One).

7.4 Supporting-arm brooches

There are twelve supporting-arm brooches known in England and thirty-four on the continent (Fig. 50). Type Mahndorf brooches are the most common in both regions. There is however one continental example – from Mahlstedt (Kr. Oldenburg) – in Böhme's *fundlist* of 'supporting-arm brooches of Type Mahndorf or Perlberg' (Böhme 1986: 568) which is referenced as a personal communication between Böhme and G. Wegner of Oldenburg. It has not been possible to trace any further information on this brooch (it is not mentioned in Wegner 1981) and therefore it is not known to which sub-type this brooch belongs.

Stray finds are again a large proportion of the numbers of supporting-arm brooches but there are three examples from settlements (Fig. 51). However, both in England and on the continent, most supporting-arm brooches were found in inhumations (although in England the number of supporting-arm brooches is very small). Six of the eleven continental supporting-arm brooches in inhumations came from Liebenau. Age and sex/gender categories are represented by very small numbers (Figs. 52 and 53), although, where the information is available, it appears that supporting-arm brooches were most often buried with adults and possibly as part of a 'female' burial costume.

There are potentially significant patterns with regard to 'other brooches'. It appears that in England supporting-arm brooches were rarely deposited with other brooches (this only occurred in two cases, both times with small-long brooches) (Fig. 54). However, on the continent, there were twelve cases of supporting-arm brooches being paired with another supporting arm brooch. This pattern was noted by Evison (1977: 129 – see Appendix One). It suggests that, when supporting-arm brooches were being used, the adornment of the corpse was different in England as compared to on the continent. When examining objects associated with supporting-arm brooches, the problem of the numbers of graves in England as compared to on the continent is again noticeable (6 and 26 graves respectively) and hence no firm conclusions can be drawn from Figure 55.

The distribution of supporting-arm brooches is much the same as that of equal-armed brooches both in England and on the continent (Map 3).

7.5 Applied brooches

Twenty-one applied brooches of the relevant types are known in England with thirty-two found on the continent (Fig. 56). The numbers of some applied brooch sub-types are quite small; Types Liebenau and Westerwanna have the most examples (15 each) while Type Jouswier has only two examples in total. Type Liebenau brooches are most common on the continent, while Type Westerwanna is the most numerous in England. There is also one brooch known only from Böhme's list entitled 'Type Krefeld-Gellep or Jouswier' (Böhme 1986: 568-9). This brooch came from an inhumation at Issendorf but is only referenced as a personal communication between Böhme and W. Janssen at Wurzburg. No trace of it was found in any of the excavations reports on this cemetery so which type it is remains unknown.

In England applied brooches are most often found in inhumations. The same is true on the continent, although more cremation burials with applied brooches also known there (Fig. 57). Again, with regard to age and gender, unknowns predominate but where the information is available, applied brooches were mostly buried with adults and as part of a 'female' burial costume (Figs. 58 and 59).

Regarding the other fibulae associated with applied brooches (Fig. 60a and b), it appears that both in England and on the continent it is quite common for applied brooches to have adorned the corpse in pairs. Thus, to some extent there were similarities in the practices involving applied brooches. However, on the continent applied brooches were also associated with other brooches not found with the English examples. This is most obvious with *tutulus* brooches (Fig. 19). Five applied brooches are associated with that type on the continent while in England the fragmentary remains of only one *tutulus* brooch is associated with a brooch in the database (from Grave B106 at Abingdon). Two other *tutulus* brooches are now known from Roman cemeteries in London (Cowie and Harding 2000: 177). However, it is worth noting in passing that Böhme (1974: 349) does list another example as having been found in Grave II at Dorchester (Dyke Hills). He references Kirk and Leeds's 1954 publication and their 'Tafel 5,B'. However, there is no reference to a *tutulus* brooch in this paper, nor is it figured. Indeed, the figures in this paper begin at 'Fig. 28'. It is therefore unclear as to where Böhme obtained his information on the 'Dorchester *tutulus* brooch'.

Figure 60a shows some differences between England and the continent in the grave assemblages associated with applied brooches. However, the small numbers of graves analysed and the minimal representation of some of the individual object types means that little can be deduced from the instances where differences between the two regions are evident.

On the continent, the applied brooches in question are again found mainly in the Elbe-Weser triangle (Map 4). However, they are also found at various coastal and riverine locations between the Ems and the Seine. In England they are found across the south of the country and in East Anglia, but with a small concentration in the Upper Thames Valley.

7.6 Saucer brooches

It is with saucer brooches that the problem of small numbers of brooches becomes most acute; of the relevant types, only nine are known in England and ten on the continent (Fig. 61). Hence, there are also very small numbers of each sub-type known. Furthermore, nine out of the nineteen examples are stray finds (Fig. 62). In England four out of six saucer brooches were found in inhumations, while on the continent three out of four came from cremations. Very little can be inferred from this considering the small numbers involved.

Nothing can be deduced from the age categories, as no estimations of skeletal age are available for the continental graves containing saucer brooches. Three English saucer brooch graves were found to be those of adults. Three English and one continental saucer brooch were buried with 'females' (based only on grave goods). In England, three saucer brooches were found in pairs, while there is only one example of this on the continent. The small number of examples again means little can be deduced from this and for the same reason no useful analysis is possible on the other artefacts associated with saucer brooches.

On the continent the few known saucer brooches are found mainly at the southern end of the previously noted Elbe-Weser group of sites (Map 5). Three other find sites are also known further to the south. The saucer brooches in question are widely distributed across southern and eastern England, with most of the relevant types being found south of the Thames.

7.7 Cruciform brooches

Cruciform brooches are the most numerous type in the present study with forty-three examples of the relevant sub-types known in England and eighty-six on the continent. It is not possible to here discuss the relative numbers of each different type in both regions because, as described in Appendix One, the English examples are all Mortimer's (1990) Type A brooches (within which

there are many small variations), while on the continent Reichstein's (1975) classifications have been used. The numbers of the continental types are nonetheless given in Figure 63.

As for the contexts of deposition (Fig. 64 and 65), it is clear that a large majority of the continental examples were found in cremations, while in England fourteen out of twenty-six examples came from inhumations. However, the twelve cruciforms (27.9% of the English examples) found in cremations in England all came from Spong Hill. Thus, excluding Spong Hill, the burial rites involving cruciform brooches are usually different on the continent as compared to in England.

Determining the ages of those buried with cruciform brooches is again hampered by the fact that, in both regions, for a majority of the graves in question this information is unknown (Fig. 66). However, where the information is known it is clear that in England and on the continent most cruciform brooches were deposited in graves with deceased adults. However, on the continent there are five graves where cruciform brooches were interred with a child/juvenile, while no such graves are known in England. Unknowns again predominate with regard to sex and gender categories (Fig. 67). Nevertheless, eight cruciforms were used as part of a 'female' gender category/burial costume and seven were buried in graves with female bones. The fact that one cruciform was buried with male bones should, however, warns us that biological sex and possible gender categories do not always coincide.

Turning to the objects associated with cruciform brooches (Fig. 68), the difference in the number of graves available for analysis in England and on the continent again prevents firm conclusions being drawn. However, the large number of cremations containing cruciform brooches found on the continent is clearly reflected in Figure 68, and there are also a number of object types found only on the continent or in England (e.g. pendants, coffins, needles/pins, coins, wrist-clasps). This *might* reflect differences in the grave assemblages associated with cruciform brooches.

There are perhaps more clear-cut patterns to be found when examining the other brooches associated with cruciforms (Fig. 69). It appears that in both regions, the numbers of cruciform brooches found in pairs is almost equal (although it should be remembered that there are twice as many cruciform brooches in total on the continent as compared to England). However, although the numbers are very small, there are no other known brooch types found both with English as well as continental cruciform brooches. It should also be noted that on the continent cruciform brooches are found with brooches that are unknown or very rare in England (i.e.

Armbrustfibeln, Nydamfibeln and *tutulus* brooches). Again, this suggests some differences in practices of adorning corpses when comparing those two regions.

The distribution of cruciform brooches on the continent does not maintain the pattern found with most of the previous brooch types (Map 6). Where other types were found mainly between the Elbe and Weser, the cruciforms in question are more commonly found north of the Elbe, in Schleswig-Holstein. It is therefore not surprising that, following Bede's ethnic description (see Chapter Four), cruciform brooches have often been seen as typically 'Anglian' items. This traditional view is perhaps echoed by the distribution of the relevant type in England. Here the earliest cruciforms are found in the supposedly 'Anglian' areas of East Anglia and as far north as the Yorkshire coast, but few are found further south in the areas traditionally said to have been inhabited by 'Saxon' people.

7.8 Small-long brooches

Twenty-two small-long brooches of the types in question are known in England and sixty-one on the continent (Fig. 70 and 71). The numbers of the four different sub-types show that in two cases (Forms Bordesholm-Haslingfield and Borgstedt-Rothwell) there are equal or almost equal numbers in England and on the continent. However, with Form Oldendorf-Issendorf and Type Liebenau-West Stow there are far more continental examples. In England only three brooches in total represent these types.

An examination of the burial contexts in which small-long brooches were found also reveals substantial differences between England and the continent (Figs. 72 and 73). Fifty percent of the English brooches were stray finds, but where the burial context is known most (7 out of 9) were found in inhumations. The two cremations were from Spong Hill. On the continent, however, only one small-long brooch was found in an inhumation grave with thirty-eight (62.3%) coming from cremations.

There are also differences in the ages of those buried with small-long brooches (Fig. 74). Here again, unknowns are the largest category in both regions. However, on the continent, twelve small-long brooches are buried with adults while there is only one such example in England. On the continent and in England, two examples were found with children/juveniles as well as with adolescents. Although the numbers are too small to be sure, this pattern *might* suggest that small-long brooches were buried with different biological age groups on the continent as compared to in England. Where the evidence is available, small-long brooches are most commonly found as part of a 'female' burial costume or with female skeletons (Fig. 75). Yet

the fact that two small-long brooches were found with male skeletons again demonstrates that brooches cannot be used to infer biological sex.

Considering the other brooches buried with small-long brooches (Fig. 76), it is clear that both in England and on the continent small-long brooches were often buried in pairs. However, there are no other similarities with other brooches associated with small-long brooches. The other two brooch types associated with the English small-long brooches are not found on the continent (swastika and penannular brooches), and those types associated with continental small-long brooches are not found with the English examples (cruciform brooches and 'three-circle brooches').

The predominance of continental small-long brooches being found in cremations is again reflected in Figure 77. Also, girdle hangers, pendants, toilet items, glass vessels and horse gear are only found with continental small-long brooches. However, some such differences represented by small numbers of objects is perhaps to be expected given that there are more than three times as many continental graves compared to English graves that can be analysed in this way.

The small-long brooches in question have been found on the continent mainly between the Elbe and Weser, although, like cruciform brooches, there are several find-sites in Schleswig-Holstein (Map 7). In England they have been found mainly in East Anglia and the east midlands, with some also known from further south.

7.9 Regional analysis

The foregoing has been largely a comparison of brooches found in England and on the continent. In Section 6.3.2 it was stated that using such broad geographical regions was not ideal although better alternatives could not be found. However, it is worth making a few comments about more localized patterns in order to further investigate the results already described.

Looking at the distribution of sites seen in Map 1, it is perhaps reasonable to identify two clusters of sites in regions that have particular relevance for traditional models of the 'Anglo-Saxon' migrations: East Anglia and the Elbe-Weser triangle (cf. Bede's description of the *adventus Saxonum* and the location of the Anglo-Saxon 'homelands'). From the above results, a number of observations can be made about the brooches found in these two regions. To begin with, for many of the types of analysis (e.g. of age, gender, orientation of inhumation graves

etc.) there would be too few well-recorded graves containing the brooches in question to make comparison worthwhile. However, with regard to contexts of deposition and type of burial it is clear that the previously noted pattern of cremation being more common on the continent and inhumation more common in England is exacerbated when comparing these two regions. The brooches in question were found in cremations only at Spong Hill in East Anglia, and cremation clearly predominates in the Elbe-Weser region (see Map 8). Of course, large numbers of cremations have been found in East Anglia (e.g. at Spong Hill, Caistor-by-Norwich, Markshall, Lackford etc.) and only a small percentage of the inhumations in the Elbe-Weser region (e.g. from Issendorf) have been examined here. Nevertheless, for the brooch types in question (i.e. those exactly paralleled in both regions, that have long been seen as significant proof of the Anglo-Saxon migrations) there is a clear difference between these two smaller regions. Thus, it may be concluded that the most significant result (both statistically and theoretically) of the present data analysis has not been compromised by examining primarily 'England' and 'the continent'.

7.10 Summary and conclusions

The patterns found during the contextual analyses of the 387 brooches have revealed a number of patterns, some of which are attributable to archaeological research methods and priorities during the last 150 years (e.g. the numbers of stray finds, the lack of age determinations, the deduction of sex from grave goods meaning that the number of biological males buried with the brooches is perhaps under-represented). Nevertheless, other patterns may pertain to past practices that incorporated the brooches in question. The following summaries relate to all the brooches examined and are also seen to greater or lesser extents when individual brooch types are studied separately.

1 – Considering the huge volume of fifth-century material found (mainly) in cemeteries in England and particularly on the continent (especially in the 'Anglo-Saxon' homelands of northern Germany), there are relatively few brooches that are dated to the period in question and are exactly paralleled in those two regions. This is an important observation because it may contradict the view that the brooches examined are a good evidence for 'the Anglo-Saxon migrations'.

2 – In most cases, we do not know the age of the individual buried with the brooches in question, although more recent cemetery reports do often include full skeletal reports. However, where the information is known it appears that most of the brooches were buried with adults. Yet this is not always the case, so it is not possible to generalize about the role of the brooches in the negotiation of age-based identities.

3 – Much the same can be said regarding sex and gender. Most authors of excavation reports have stated that the brooches were buried with females, whether they based that deduction on grave goods (i.e. jewellery) or skeletal remains. Nevertheless, the analysis has shown that using grave goods to infer sex – as opposed to a possible gender category that *may* have been negotiated using a particular burial costume – is highly dubious. This is because in a few cases the brooches were actually buried with individuals who were biologically male. Again, generalizing about the social role of the brooches can be seen to be questionable.

4 – There are general differences in the orientation of the inhumations found in England as compared to those found on the continent. In England most inhumations lie west-east, on the continent most lie south-north. However, not all graves conform to this pattern.

5 – The positioning of brooches with regard to the inhumed body, as well as the way the body was laid in the grave, reveals a uniform pattern. Where the skeletons were visible, they were all laid extended and on the back with the brooches somewhere on the upper chest. This probably reflects the way brooches were used to fasten clothing and the desire to have the brooch visible in the grave.

6 – Three problems were encountered when analysing the objects found in the graves with the brooches types in question. First, there is a huge variety of different items. Second, this meant that there were often very small numbers of those items making meaningful analysis difficult. Third, there were often substantial differences in the numbers of graves available to be analyzed in this way when comparing English and continental graves. Furthermore, the small numbers of items meant that comparisons using percentages would be meaningless. Some differences between England and the continent with regard to associated grave goods were visible, but larger samples would be needed to establish whether or not those differences were significant. Clearer results were however obtained when examining the different brooch types found together in individual graves (especially with supporting-arm and cruciform brooches). This suggests that, in some cases, there were differences between England and the continent in terms of the burial costumes (i.e. the practices involved with adorning the dead in the grave) that incorporated the brooches in question.

7 – With regard to the geographical distribution of the brooches, a number of distinct clusters are certainly visible. These will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Nevertheless, considering the Bede-inspired view of the Anglo-Saxon migrations, it is interesting that, although there are clusters of brooches between the Elbe and Weser in Germany and in East Anglia, there are also substantial differences in the burial rites that incorporate the brooches in those two regions (see below).

8 – Finally, and most importantly, the results of the analysis show there are statistically significant differences when comparing England and the continent and the burial rites that

incorporated the brooches in question. On the continent cremation predominated, while in England inhumation predominated over cremation to an even larger degree (see Map 8). Where this pattern does not hold true it was shown that a very small number of sites were influential (e.g. most English cremations came from Spong Hill and a large number of continental inhumations came from Liebenau and Issendorf). This is an important result because it suggests that – in terms of the burials using the brooches in question at least – there are significant differences or evidence for local variation between England and the continent at a time when it is usually said that the same 'people(s)' were using the same material culture in those two regions. As described in Chapter Three, this is not just a difference in the means of disposing of the dead; it suggests fundamentally different or variable attitudes to the conduct of burial rituals, to death and the relationship between the living and the dead.

In many previous analyses of fifth-century/post-Roman material culture found in England and on the continent, similarity and uniformity have been stressed, especially when considering material that was believed to be linked directly to the Germanic migrations. Of course the above analysis was based on only one type of material culture (i.e. brooches) and on objects associated, for the most part, with one type of social practice (i.e. burial rituals). Nevertheless, the above results are important because they show that within this dataset (one which has been so influential in discussing 'the migrations') difference and diversity of practice are in fact evident alongside some similarity or uniformity. Similarity in brooch types, often thought to reflect migrations, does not extend to how those brooches were *used*. Furthermore, local patternings (e.g. the number of inhumations and *Scheiterhaufenplatz* burial at Liebenau) are also evident, again undermining the relevance of generalizations – and that includes generalizations pertaining to migrations as an all-embracing explanation for change in the fifth century.

However, the present study does not allow us to say 'what was really happening' in the fifth century in England and northern Germany; too little contextual evidence is included here. It does, nonetheless, demonstrate that local, detailed, contextual analyses of cemeteries and the burial practices attested by them are needed before any broader conclusions are drawn. Having said that, a number of suggestions and possible lines of enquiry will be proposed and discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT



Alternative Approaches to Early Medieval Material Culture Change: A Question of Appropriation?

> 'Could a full history of Anglo-Saxonism be written, it would read as the story of a series of appropriations of greater or lesser magnitude. In such a narrative, what would be of most significance would not be Anglo-Saxon England "as it was," whatever that lost object of desire may have been. Instead, it would be the *idea* of Anglo-Saxon England, as that idea has been formed, transformed, consigned to oblivion, or reconceived anew during every successive era since the time of the Anglo-Saxons themselves' (Niles 1997: 208).

8.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, a range of problems were outlined concerning the idea that the archaeological character of early medieval England was, to a large extent, formed by the migrations of ethnic groups from the continent. These problems have concerned primarily scholars' interpretations and understandings of material culture, ethnicity and history. The need for alternative understandings has been raised by contextualizing the origins of traditional methods of interpretation (e.g. the link between ethnic groups and material culture as a product of nineteenth-century thought) and through the applications of alternative theoretical approaches to both archaeology and history. It is accepted that much of the foregoing has been somewhat negative, although it is hoped that the validity of this critique of the Roman-Medieval transition in England has also been demonstrated. Nevertheless, critiques are – on their own – no way to contribute to academic debate and alternative ideas must also be offered.

The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to draw together some of the themes discussed in previous chapters and to suggest alternative ways of understanding the archaeology of the period in question without relying on problematic assumptions. Yet it must again be emphasized that the following discussion is not an attempt to replace previous 'erroneous' opinions with a new 'correct' interpretation. Rather, the aim is to outline a number of ideas that might profitably be investigated in the future in order to re-examine the archaeology of the fifth century in England.

It must also be recognized that there are, nevertheless, some aspects of fifth-century archaeology that cannot be dismissed or ignored; there is evidence that needs to be explained that cannot simply be explained away (Fitzpatrick 1996: 246). First, as described in Chapter

Three, migrations cannot be ruled out as a potential influence on material culture patterning and change; they are a well-attested demographic phenomenon. The second point concerns the geographical distribution of the brooches analysed in Chapter Seven, as well as other types of material culture and social practices (e.g. pottery and cremation burial), which *are* found on both sides of the North Sea. The final point is the fact that there are clear and significant differences between, for example, the archaeology of the late fourth century and that of the early sixth century. Geographical and temporal factors will each be discussed in turn below. Before that, however, a more general theme must be discussed, one which is central to the alternative approaches to be presented below.

8.2 The appropriation of material culture

8.2.1 Background

Culture-historical methodologies rely on two principal mechanisms for change: population replacement through migrations or invasions and the diffusion of material or ideas from an external source (Shennan 1989b: 330). During the last twenty years or so, early medieval archaeologists have questioned aspects of these mechanisms (e.g. the scale of the migrations), although the idea of Germanic migrations in one form or another has been largely retained, receiving little fundamental critical attention. The preceding chapters have raised a number of problems with this approach. However, the point that must be made here is that the continued prevalence of migrationist approaches makes it inevitable that attention remains focused on external catalysts for change. Conversely, people who lived in Britain in the fifth century (without wanting to define them as a single ethnic group) have retained a remarkably inactive role in archaeologists' explanations for change. Either material culture change has been equated to population replacement, or, in small-scale/elite migration models, it appears that some form of passive acculturation of 'Germanic' material by the indigenous population is envisaged. This acculturation was prompted by the association artefacts had with Germanic immigrants who are presumed to have held a high social status, otherwise why should the 'Germanic' objects have been so desirable and thus widely distributed (cf. Higham 1992: 194)? This, however, is a circular argument; the artefacts have high status associations because they are widespread and associated with the Germanic elite, but the status of the Germanic immigrants is also demonstrated by the artefacts buried with them.

As an alternative, it will be proposed here that individuals may desire particular items of material culture to express something about themselves and thus seek to appropriate them. People do not use material culture only when it has been imposed upon them, nor should it be seen as a simple, one-dimensional process of emulation for a perceived advantage. Before

considering how this idea might apply to the early medieval period, it is necessary to define what is meant by 'appropriation'.

8.2.2 Theories of appropriation and consumption

The idea of material culture appropriations is not new. In 1956 Thomas Lethbridge suggested that the appearance of 'Germanic' brooches in England might be attributed to fashion and people acquiring a taste for such items (Lethbridge 1956: 114 – quoted in Section 2.5). Similarly, in 1989 Richard Reece stated that the decline in 'Roman' archaeological evidence and the appearance of 'Germanic' artefacts 'may be no more than a discontinuity of recognisable fashion' (Reece 1989: 235-6). Halsall, however, has since rejected fashion as an explanatory concept;

> 'It is important to recognize that change in the evidence, in its forms as well as the 'message' it conveys, is the result of deliberate thought by people at the time. Changes in material culture cannot be dismissed as 'fashion'. Fashion is only a description; it explains nothing' (Halsall 1995: 41).

Halsall raises a number of important points here. On the one hand he is correct; fashion, as a vague, impersonal and generalized explanation for material culture change is no better than terms such as 'influence', 'diffusion' or 'acculturation' (although that is not to say either Lethbridge or Reece perceived fashion in this way since they did not expand on their usage of that term). Halsall is also right to highlight the importance of individual thought and action when considering material culture change (see Chapter Three and below). Yet Halsall's reservations appear to lie with the term 'fashion' itself, perhaps because of its overtones of modern, consumer society and the perception of material culture as ephemeral and disposable. Yet fashion – or rather 'consumption' and 'appropriation', as it is now more commonly termed in academic discussions – has recently become the subject of greater interest and theoretical awareness in the social sciences.

Miller (1995: 1) has written that consumption, as a means of understanding social and material culture change, has 'suffered from extraordinary academic neglect'. He argues that this concept should instead be placed at the 'vanguard of history'. Recent interest in consumption has been attributed to the so-called 'rise of consumerism' in contemporary society (ibid.). Anthropological and sociological studies have noted how people living in today's western societies construct their identities through the goods they consume or appropriate. Indeed, the growing importance of consumption has also been seen as a key feature in the emergence of

'modern' societies (Matthews 1999: 189. See, for example, Jardine 1996 on the pivotal role played by consumption in Renaissance Europe – Fig. 20).

However, as an archaeologist, Matthews believes that the correlation of consumption solely with 'modern' societies is a 'mistaken deduction' (ibid.). He notes that ethno-archaeological studies of 'pre-modern'/non-westernized societies have also shown that material culture is used to construct personal identities and that people appropriate it for this purpose (ibid.). Without wanting to make direct ethnographic analogies, it can therefore be said that consumption may not be relevant only to modern westernized contexts but also to the study of people in the past. However, given that consumption/consumerism appears to have contemporary resonances, the more neutral term 'appropriation' will be favoured here (following Niles 1997). Whichever term is used, there are a number of themes raised by recent studies that are useful with regard to the attempts being made here to break away from simple, generalized explanations of change relying solely on external stimuli.

Niles (1997: 204-5) has written that 'long-term impersonal processes' such as acculturation and assimilation can only ever be partial explanations for cultural production, maintenance and change as those aggregate approaches 'dehumanize' consumption (also Miller 1995: 18). Recent studies have therefore emphasized the importance of considering individual social agents. Miller (1995: 2) has dismissed previous aggregate models of human behaviour as 'quite bizarre' and has stated that 'there is a spectre haunting the world today - the spectre of the flesh and blood consumer!' (ibid: 18). Niles has also asserted that appropriation is a personal decision. Furthermore, acts of appropriation are carried out by agents in specific contexts and can only be understood as such (Niles 1997: 205-6. Also Miller 1995: 51).

In many ways, therefore, appropriation can be considered as a social practice (see Section 3.3.1). It is always carried out by socially aware agents, but the reasons for any particular appropriation may be complex and context specific, involving a dialectic relationship between the individual and their socio-historical context. That context will in turn influence what is appropriated and why. Appropriation may be intentional; in some cases individuals may be able to give their reasons for acquiring items (in Giddens's term, a discursive act). But it may also be an example of practical consciousness; a non-discursive act by an individual who knows how to 'go on' in everyday life and to deal with new or changing situations as they arise. Finally, ideas, identities and practices cannot be separated from the physical/material manifestations of appropriation. People do not only appropriate 'things'; material culture is not *really* about identity (Miller 1995: 32). Rather, there is a dialectic relationship between the creation and maintenance of identities and practices and the material employed as part of this. Hence, people

do not appropriate objects alone, they are also taking on identities and ideas that are negotiated partly through material culture.

These ideas have significant implications for understandings of material culture change. First, archaeologists may identify material culture that appears to be 'new' to certain places or specific contexts and there may indeed be situations in which it is necessary or desirable to appropriate previously unknown/unused objects (e.g. if other objects are physically no longer available). Nevertheless, the appropriation of 'new' material culture always takes place within the context of what went before, and to some degree this will transform the existing socio-historical context. Similarly, 'new' material culture may be appropriated to establish new identities, but it may also serve to maintain existing identities or practices. Hence, the significance of seemingly new material culture may not be entirely an innovation for those using it and therefore we cannot assume that 'new' material culture can be directly equated to new identities, social institutions or practices.

These observations have further implications for archaeological periodization. In traditional approaches, the change from one period to the next is seen to be marked by significant material disjunctions. However, if there is not necessarily a direct relationship between changing material culture and practices and identities, then using artefact change as a simple indicator of wider changes must be questionable. The contexts in which material culture change occurs will be important in determining the wider relevance of this change. This point will be discussed further below.

Through this discussion of appropriation/consumption it has been shown that we may acquire further insight into the dynamic processes whereby people (their identities, values, institutions or practices) and material culture can be understood equally as part of societal self-construction, objectification and change (Miller 1995: 54, 277). Generalized approaches that simply seek to explain change and/or continuity will be avoided as the emphasis is shifted to the on-going dynamics of individual and collective human social life.

How might these ideas influence our understandings of early medieval England? As has already been mentioned, social practice and appropriation must always be understood in a specific space-time context and both these aspects will be considered in turn below. The spatial context will be considered first. Geography is one type of physical constraint upon appropriation as objects, places and practices are not always available to everyone, everywhere (and indeed this may contribute to their perceived value/significance). Here, objects from fifth-century funerary assemblages (especially brooches) are the focus of attention and, as has been shown, these are

fairly widely distributed in southern and eastern England and on the continent. However, given that the idea of migrations has been questioned, how might these brooches have become distributed as they are; how did they become available for appropriation?

8.3 A North Sea 'zone of interaction'?

One particularly interesting idea is that which Martin Carver has referred to as a North Sea 'zone of interaction' (Carver 1990: 117 – Fig. 21). In discussing the possibilities for travel around the North Sea in the fifth to seventh centuries he wrote that there were a variety of 'linkages', including exchange, political emulation, ideological alliance and immigration (ibid: 119). He also described how North Sea crossings could have been made in sail- and oar-powered boats, either by moving in short stages always within sight of land ('coast-hopping') or by more direct routes ('blue-water' crossings). All journeys would have been easiest in summer, although blue-water crossings are thought to have been rare in the early medieval period owing to the inherent dangers of being out of sight of land (ibid: 124. See also Crumlin-Pedersen 1990).

Given that such crossings were feasible, Carver showed how an analysis of journey times might change our perceptions of communication around the North Sea periphery. The graphs he produced (Fig. 22) show journey times between Ipswich and places in England on foot or using carts (based on later medieval records), and between Ipswich and places in England and on the continent by sea (sailing and rowing) (ibid: 121). They show that, for example, walking/travelling by cart from Ipswich to York would have taken about fifteen days and to London about six days. Yet sailing to York would have taken two to three days and to Esbjerg (on the west coast of Denmark) less than six days. Helgö (Sweden) could have been reached in around fifteen days.

These results force us to reconceptualize the geography of the North Sea and the adjacent coastal regions. The use of maritime transport offsets physical distance thus altering our perceptions of which places were actually neighbours (ibid: 122). Carver believes that we should see the North Sea as 'a thoroughfare rather than an obstacle to creep around' (ibid: 119); a 'zone of interaction' (ibid: 117). These ideas are illustrated by Figure 23 (after James 1999). Abandoning modern cartographical conventions the map shows Europe and Scandinavia from the north-west. Britain no longer appears to be an island peripheral to the continent, but one side of a long coastline that almost encircles the North Sea.

As a brief digression, it is interesting to speculate when the North Sea came to be perceived as a divide that must be crossed rather than as a unifying geographical feature. In prehistory, the

Mediterranean, the English Channel between southern Britain and north-western Gaul and the Irish Sea have all been seen as facilitating contacts rather than preventing them (see below). Why not the North Sea also? Has the rise of nation states, state bureaucracy and modern cartographical convention (i.e. viewing the world on a north-south axis) contributed to Britain being perceived as a distinct entity, separate from the continent? If so, this must have occurred long after the fifth century AD.

Before going on, it should be noted that Carver does not link explicitly the above ideas to fifth-century change. Indeed, he states that the immigration of people from Denmark and northern Germany to eastern England at this time is 'well documented' (Carver 1990: 117). He cites Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* (HE 1: 15) and Böhme's (1986) archaeological research in support of this view (Carver 1990: 117). Carver also describes how dress items found in graves belonged to a distinctive ethnic costume (a *tracht*) and this ethnic specificity meant that such items were not suitable for trade or exchange (ibid.). Such understandings of history, archaeology and ethnicity have all been challenged in the preceding chapters and hence it is not necessary to eliminate the idea of a North Sea zone of interaction from our understanding of the fifth century. Furthermore, although not wanting to make specific cross-cultural comparisons, there are precedents from other archaeological periods that may support the idea of a North Sea zone in attempting to understand fifth-century material culture change.

There is, for example, the case of the Iron Age square barrows containing cart burials and La Tène metal work. These burials date to the fourth and fifth centuries BC and are found in northern France and East Yorkshire. Culture-historians believed that, on the evidence of these burials, people migrated from northern France to Yorkshire; a view supported by ancient historical sources that named the 'Parisii' as a group living in northern France and the 'Parisi' as a group from north of the Humber (Bevan 1999: 124; Collis 1999: 38). Although there are similarities between the cemeteries of the two regions (i.e. square barrows, cart burials, metalwork), the idea of migrations has now been rejected by scholars (Bevan 1999; Collis 1999; Stead 1979), because, for example, in East Yorkshire evidence for local continuity has been found in the pottery assemblages. Yet Bevan (1999: 124-5) does not rule out the possibility of contacts with distant places; he states that local populations did not live in complete isolation and some people could have travelled far beyond their everyday horizons. Hence, the practice of using square barrows has been attributed to local people selecting and adopting practices that they saw as relevant to their understandings of the world (ibid: 125).

It is also well known that in the Iron Age there were contacts between southern Britain and north-western Gaul, as attested by coins and amphora, for example. Matthews (1999) has

suggested that there may also have been an Irish Sea network involving the trading of less archaeologically visible goods, such as salt (ibid: 185-6). It is therefore interesting to speculate whether there were similar contacts around the North Sea in the fifth century. Higham (1992: 61) states that in the fourth century cloth (of which there would be few archaeological traces) was probably the largest export commodity from Britain. Also, it has been suggested that certain types of chaff-tempered pottery indicate that there were connections from eastern England to the coastal regions of Belgium and Holland in the 'migration period' (Hamerow et al. 1994; see also Myres's (1948) discussion of 'Anglo-Frisian' pots). Did such contacts simply cease in the fifth century, when 'the migrations' were in progress? Furthermore, we would not necessarily expect to find much evidence for such contacts, especially if it was not on a large scale. As Walsh (2000: 53) has pointed out, there is very little evidence for maritime trade around Britain in the Roman period, even though we know it occurred on a large scale. Have cemeteries – which are archaeologically quite visible – had a disproportionate influence on our understanding of fifth-century archaeology around the North Sea?

To summarize, it is proposed here that the idea of a 'zone of interaction' – proposed for various other places and time-periods – may also be a useful means of understanding North Sea contacts in the fifth century. This might also, therefore, be a way to explain the distribution of brooches as well as other types of material culture, without relying on the problematic idea of migrations. It would, however, be too simplistic to envisage this as 'migrations' simply being replaced by 'trade'; the discussion of appropriation presented above makes it clear that it is not just material culture that is appropriated. Rather, material culture may be intimately associated with the maintenance or re-negotiation or creation of identities, practices or institutions.

Before going on, however, there are a number of specific features of the known archaeological distributions that must also be addressed. These features concern the concentration of artefacts (including the brooch types examined here) in certain geographical areas (see Maps 1-7). First of all, there is the problem of accounting for brooches that are usually said to be very early examples being found in the Upper Thames region (i.e. not where early brooches would be expected if people were migrating from across the North Sea). Archaeologists have attempted to explain this occurrence for many years (e.g. Evison 1965; Leeds 1933), although all the explanations involved migrations in one form or another. Similarly, regarding the brooches discussed in the present study (see also Böhme 1974; 1986), it is noticeable that there is a distinct concentration of these types in the Elbe-Weser region of Germany, although they are less agglomerated in England. This distribution pattern may appear to challenge the idea of a general North Sea zone of interaction, and instead may seem to support Bede's geographical

description of tribal migrations (HE 1: 15) (although the context in which he wrote should be remembered – see Chapter Four).

In addressing these issues it must be stated that no definitive answer can be offered. However, there are three points that must be considered. First, it must not be forgotten that these patterns come mainly from funerary contexts. As described in Chapter Three, funerary rituals do not mirror the society of the living. Do the patterns we can now see reflect the appropriation of certain types of burial practice, or, even more specifically, the inclusion of certain brooch types in – sometimes quite dissimilar – burial rites (see Chapter Seven)?

Second, appropriation is, by its very nature, selective. As Bevan (1999: 125) has described when discussing the similar Iron Age square barrows in East Yorkshire and northern France, people may appropriate particular objects or practices that they see as being particularly relevant to their own lives. Likewise, there are specific parallels in burial practice and material culture between England and northern Germany in the early medieval period, although there are also local variations and differences (see Chapter Seven). Thus, there may well have been communication (in some form) between England and the Elbe-Weser region in the fifth century, but again, migrations are not the only explanation and selective appropriation may provide an alternative understanding.

Third, it must be asked why these groups of material have been singled out in the first place. This has happened because their distribution and chronological context appears to coincide with certain historical narratives. However, chronology and distribution are not entirely independent classificatory criteria (i.e. the distribution suggests certain brooches were contemporary with the migrations and *vice versa* – a circular argument) and many traditional chronological methods have themselves been shown to be suspect (see Chapter Six). Yet if the chronologies of these artefacts can be doubted, then we must ask if there were other types of artefact (other brooches, pots or even non-archaeologically visible items) circulating around the North Sea at the same time? Have archaeologists prioritized artefacts that fit the migration model? Would the Elbe-Weser concentration stand out less if our classifications were different? Certainly, a generalized view of all cruciform brooch types does show them to be distributed right round the North Sea (see distribution map in Reichstein 1975 – Fig. 24). It should also be remembered that to study objects that have traditionally been seen as ethnically or chronologically significant is to exclude a huge proportion of the graves in fifth-century cemeteries that do not contain such items as well as other, non-archaeologically visible goods that may have been exchanged. Potentially, this selectivity says more about modern academic concerns and methods than about the people burying their dead in the fifth century.

It can therefore be concluded that these features of fifth-century material culture distributions are not necessarily problematic for the ideas being proposed here. However, before any more definitive answers can be offered, future studies need to examine evidence in local contexts, rather than assuming that a general migrationary model applies and that certain types of material culture either support the model, are not contemporary or are 'anomalies'.

8.4 The temporal context of early medieval material culture change

As stated at the beginning of the chapter, it must be accepted that typically 'Roman' archaeological remains (e.g. villas, mass produced pottery, stone-built monumental architecture) were either no longer present or were not used as they had previously been by the fifth century. Furthermore, material culture paralleled in northern Europe and Scandinavia is found (most often in funerary contexts) from roughly this time onwards (although it should be remembered that the existing chronologies for this transition period, and thus the nature of the transition itself, are suspect – see Chapter Six). Having presented a possible alternative means of understanding the spatial distribution of fifth-century material culture in England and north-western Europe, it is necessary now to consider the temporal context for the changes in England; why did they occur when they did? In most cases, the appearance of 'Germanic' material culture in England has been attributed, to some extent, to migrations. Given that the idea of migrations has been challenged in the preceding chapters, how else might this temporal change be understood? To answer this question, it is necessary to consider the situation in England both before and during the fifth century.

8.4.1 The ending of Roman Britain

In Chapter One it was noted that a complete reassessment of change in fifth-century England would include both an investigation of the Roman background, as well as migrations. Of course, only the latter has been discussed in detail here since both are huge topics in their own right. However, in order to discuss why the changes in question occurred when they did, it has now become necessary to consider briefly the late Romano-British background.

Opinion concerning the ending of Roman Imperial dominion has changed a great deal since Edward Gibbon wrote *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1898 (1776-88)); no longer can this process be seen simply as one of barbarian hordes conquering a decadent Empire. Scholars are now aware that the decline of the Empire, and of Roman Britain, was due to an extremely complex web of circumstances, including widespread and local difficulties, long and short term trends, internal and external stresses. Furthermore, understanding these factors has been hampered by a growing awareness of the biases and limitations of the – sometimes

contradictory – contemporary historical sources (see Chapter Four) and the equally confusing issues of archaeological interpretation. As such, it will not be possible to offer here anything more than a brief discussion of this topic and there will also be no attempt to present a definitive answer concerning how and why Britain became divorced from the Empire. Rather, the aim is to raise a number of themes that may be significant for understanding change in fifth-century England.

Millett has stated that the ending of Roman Britain must be understood in the context of the Empire as a whole (Millett 1990: 132). For that reason, it is necessary to begin with the Imperial crisis of the third century, even though Britain was not greatly affected by this, remaining relatively peaceful and prosperous (Higham 1992: 47; Millett 1990: 132). In the third century, the Empire was beset by an increasing number of external threats (e.g. the tribes along the Rhine frontier and the Sassanian Persians) as well as internal and civil conflict (Jones, M. 1996: 159). The resulting political and economic turmoil prompted wide-ranging reforms by the Emperor Diocletian (Emperor AD 284-305) and the long-term effects of these did reach Britain.

The Diocletian reforms sub-divided the earlier Imperial provinces. *Britannia* was split into four or five provinces under the control of the Praetorian Prefect of Gaul. Britons thus lacked direct access to the Imperial court; a significant disadvantage when Imperial patronage was so important (ibid: 145-6). The resulting growth of the administrative system and the requirement that provinces should maintain their own armies also led to an increased tax burden and it was the poor who were most affected by this. Problems only increased when, in the fourth century, high inflation meant that taxes were collected and distributed to officials and troops in kind, with much being lost through spoilage during transportation (Higham 1992: 45-6; Jones, M. 1996: 161). The British and Imperial financial crisis also led to the decline in coin supply and usage in Britain. The last coins issued date to AD 395-402 (Millett 1990: 133).

Bureaucratic and economic pressures also led to social changes. It is probable that many of those who lived off the land they farmed became increasingly disaffected, and yet they had to seek the support and protection of powerful land-owners in order to survive (Higham 1992: 61-3; Jones, M. 1996: 168-174), thus reinforcing the latter's power and influence. Caught in between were the middle classes – the municipal gentry – attempting to hold together a disintegrating infrastructure. A.H.M. Jones noted the widespread 'decline of the decurionate' as early as the second century, along with the rising power and wealth of a small group of 'Imperial grandees' (Faulkner 2000: 22).

With such a variety of socio-economic pressures, it is perhaps not surprising that there were a series of usurpations and attempts to gain control of the western Empire originating in Britain in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. The usurpations of Magnentius (350-3), Magnus Maximus (383-88), Marcus, Gratian and Constantine III (406-11) led Britain to become renowned as a centre of rebellion (Snyder 1998: 18). Indeed, anti-British sentiments are quite common in the writings of contemporary continental authors and Jones argues that the work of St Patrick and Gildas show that these feelings were reciprocated (Jones, M. 1996: 108-143). However, the extent to which these rebellions and writings reflect general anti-Imperial resentment must remain a moot point.

Two other factors may also have contributed to a sense of crisis in later Roman Britain. First, contemporary authors recorded a number of barbarian raids. Ammianus Marcellinus records that in AD 360, 364 and 367 Britain and Gaul were raided by barbarians, including the Picts, Scots, Attacotti, Saxons and Franks (Snyder 1998: 10). While the narrative contexts of such descriptions must not be forgotten, raiding and piracy in the North Sea and Channel does appear to have been a well known phenomena (cf. Chapter Four). Depending on the extent of such activity, it is possible that raids would have undermined faith in the security of Britain's coastline. Second, Petra Dark (2000) and Michael Jones (1996) have shown that there may well have been a climatic deterioration during the late fourth century. This would have increased the severity of the agricultural, social and economic crises in Britain.

The above evidence has been interpreted in a variety of different ways by modern scholars. Traditionally, barbarian raids were seen as being significant in the ending of Roman Britain. More recently, however, it has also been suggested – based primarily on Zosimus's British passages – that there was a civil war (Dumville 1977: 180), a native revolt (Jones, M. 1996: 108), a peasant/tax-payers revolt (Thompson 1977) or that the elite landowners (Gildas's 'tyrants'?) gradually assumed control (Higham 1992: 74; Snyder 1998). Whatever cause, or series of causes, is believed to be the most likely, it is sufficient to here conclude that there were many long-term and short-term, local and Empire-wide factors that led to the ending of Roman Britain. These were not only features of high-level politics, but they may have affected many people living in late fourth and fifth-century Britain. It should also be said that, even if direct Imperial administration of Britain did cease in the early fifth century, possibly in AD 410 (see Zosimus's description of the Honorian Rescript) – although that date is not without its problems – Roman Britain did not simply 'end' there and then. It is clear that Britain was not entirely divorced from continental institutions from that time on (e.g. the Church's intervention to combat the Pelagian heresy as described in the *Vita St Germanus* and the possibility that

Gildas received his education on the continent (see Chapter Four)), making the political/institutional ending of Roman Britain appear to have been a more gradual process.

That the ending of Roman Britain is far from clear-cut is further illustrated by archaeological evidence, although the interpretation of that evidence is equally as contentious as the largely historically-derived evidence outlined above. In general, it is clear that in late Roman Britain urban centres decayed or changed their function, losing the previous investment in elite residences and monumental architecture. It appears that the elite may have based themselves in the countryside instead (Faulkner 2000: 20; Higham 1992: 58-61), building lavish villas, before these too were generally abandoned or allowed to decay. Financial crises also led to an abrupt cessation in the mass production and distribution of pottery and other typically 'Roman' consumer goods (Fulford 1979; Millett 1990: 133). What is more contentious is the timescale over which these trends occurred.

Some have focused on archaeological evidence for continuity through the late fourth and into the fifth century. For example, at *Verulamium* (St. Albans) and Wroxeter evidence has been excavated which appears to suggest that, to some degree, town life continued well into the fifth century or even longer (Branigan 1973; Faulkner 2000: 20; Millett 1990: 133). Also, the existence of elegant villas and luxury goods in later fourth century Britain is one reason why Guy de la Bédoyère (1999) has called this period a 'Golden Age'. Similarly, in western Britain it has been suggested that there was a continuity of Latin culture, Christianity, the Roman political systems and trade links with the Mediterranean (Dark 1994; Howlett 1986; 1995; but see Petts 1999). On the other hand, there is widespread evidence that villas and towns were declining by the end of the fourth century, if not before. Faulkner's survey of Roman buildings showed that in urban contexts, most civic buildings were erected between AD 75 and 150, with urban occupation reaching a peak by the early third century. Yet from around AD 325 'Romano-British towns faced terminal decline' (Faulkner 2000: 20). Villas and other rural sites have also been shown to be generally in decline through the fourth century (ibid: 20-1; Millett 1990: 133).

There will be no attempt here to argue which interpretation of the above evidence is 'correct'. Rather, it can be said that the picture emerging is one of complexity, where no one generalized model fits all the evidence. There is evidence for long-term and short-term, internal and external influences on different aspects of late Roman Britain. Remembering also the studies of landscape and settlement discussed in Chapter Five it is clear that some evidence indicates the continuity of earlier ways of life (and therefore possibly practices and identities), while other evidence suggests that people abandoned such things and may even have had reasons to

actively reject *Romanitas* and all that went with it. These observations have a number of implications for our understanding of the fifth century.

8.4.2 Reassessing the late Roman – early medieval 'transition'

First, as has been argued on several previous occasions in the present study, there is a need to question the overall applicability of generalized models concerning late/sub-Roman Britain. Can it really be said that, for example, a 'peasant revolt' effected everyone living in all areas of Britain at this time? Did sea-borne raiders affect the whole country? Did people living in Wroxeter perceive change in the same way as those living in/near *Venta Icenorum* (Caistor-by-Norwich)? Perhaps it is wrong to expect any single model to fit all the available evidence and archaeologists should anticipate and investigate local variation before generalizing. People living in fourth- and fifth-century Britain may well have had a huge variety of experiences of the ending of Imperial rule, depending on their status, where they lived, their religious beliefs and so on.

Second, the chronology of the so-called Roman-Medieval transition period as a whole (including the dating of archaeological remains) is far from secure. This was demonstrated in Chapter Six for the material most commonly found in cemeteries. Yet the studies by Millett (1983) and Whyman (1993) show that significant chronological problems are not confined to that context; the dating of pottery – which is so important in many non-funerary contexts – is also afflicted by a range of highly questionable assumptions. Coin-based dating is perhaps equally imprecise since the supply of coins ceased around the beginning of the fifth century. As mentioned in Chapter Six, the period in question is therefore something of a chronological grey area that would benefit from research involving high resolution scientific dating methods (see Section 6.2.14).

In spite of all these problems concerning the specific circumstances of the ending of Roman Britain it is possible to make some more positive comments. First of all, it is interesting to refer to ideas about the 'presencing' of Rome discussed by scholars dealing with Romanization (e.g. Barrett 1997; Revell 1999; Woolf 1998). It has been argued that an important element in the success of Romanization in the pre- and early Roman periods (especially amongst the urban elite in lowland Britain) was the way in which a distinctive Roman identity and ethos was integrated into the daily lives of people. This was facilitated through, for example, the building and usage of monumental public architecture, language, dress styles, pottery, glassware and so on. As such, Rome was not an abstract concept and Romanization was not a uniform process or *just* an elite, urban veneer. To different extents (depending on location, status, gender etc.) it became part of people's lived experience (Revell 1999: 53). Romanization was not, therefore,

just a one-way imposition of a political system. The widespread appropriation of material culture – to different degrees and for a variety of reasons – enabled ideas associated with *Romanitas* to permeate society and to presence Rome in the everyday lives of many people.

In the late fourth and fifth centuries we may be dealing with an inverse situation; the de-presencing of Rome. Towns, monumental architecture, villas, mass-produced pottery, glassware – material which, today at least, is seen as signifying *Romanitas* – must have become an ever-decreasing part of life, although the extent to which this occurred would have varied. Yet, as has already been stated, material culture is not simply functional or passively symbolic of pre-existing identities. The buildings people saw and lived in, the clothes they wore, the food they ate and what they ate off constitutes the material through which they lived their lives; how they understood the world, other people, themselves and the concept of the Roman Empire. If the archaeological and historical evidence is anything to go by, some (perhaps the elite or clerics) may have tried to maintain previous identities, practices and institutions, some found 'Roman' goods no longer available forcing them to use other objects, while others may have had good reasons to actively reject *Romanitas* and all that was associated with it. Either way, the widespread de-presencing of Rome and the material that was used to create and maintain previous identities, practices and institutions means that there may well have been a need for alternative forms of material expression. As Walter Pohl has commented, early medieval regional ethnogeneses were inspired partly by people ready 'to give up their ethnic identities that had lost their cohesion' (Pohl 1991: 46).

Here it is necessary to return to the idea of a North Sea zone of interaction. Could it be that as the idea of Rome and the material associated with *Romanitas* gradually disappeared people appropriated material that was available through North Sea contacts? Did the erosion of 'Roman' values and identities also lead people to adopt alternative ways of seeing the world, ways of acting and of identifying self and others; were 'Germanic' artefacts and practices appropriated to fulfil this role in certain social contexts (e.g. in funerary rituals)?

8.5 Discussion

Having proposed that it may be possible to understand fifth-century material culture change in terms of appropriation within the North Sea region at a time when previous sources of material were becoming unavailable or were out of favour, there are a number of points that must be emphasized and clarified.

1 – Although these ideas have been proposed in general terms, this does not mean that they worked like this in practice. Throughout the present study the value of generalized, uniform

approaches has been questioned. This critical approach arises from theories of practice and structuration which stress that we should not attempt to understand social 'structures' without also attempting to understand how individual social agents create, maintain and transform those structures whilst at the same time living within them (see Section 3.3.1). Of course, archaeologists have no way of recovering individual motivation or perception, and recognizing the results of agency is also often difficult. Nevertheless, such understandings of human social life should lead archaeologists to acknowledge the potential complexity and variability of the past and to recognize the limitations of general, de-humanizing approaches.

In this case, therefore, it should not be assumed that everyone, at the same time simply rejected *Romanitas*, 'Roman' material culture and practices in order to adopt objects circulating around the North Sea. Archaeologists should begin by examining how 'Germanic' material culture was used in specific contexts and they should be receptive to local patternings and circumstances. It might be interesting to investigate the relationship between the graves in a cemetery that have very early 'Germanic' brooches, and those that do not. What was the relationship between the cemetery and earlier or contemporary archaeological remains? Why are some early medieval cemeteries sited very close to Roman towns (e.g. Caistor-by-Norwich, Great Chesterford, Dorchester-on-Thames) while others were sited well away from obvious Roman centres, near rivers or prehistoric earthworks? Why was it that the region around Cirencester and Dorchester (possibly *Britannia Prima*), so affluent in the fourth century (e.g. large villas etc) and with marked concentrations of late Roman belt fittings, also sees a concentration of early 'Germanic' artefacts (cf. Corney 1999)? Addressing such questions may lead to a far more multi-dimensional understanding of archaeological change that takes into account the complex variety of people's lives in the past.

2 – This potential variability, along with the inherent inadequacies of many commonly used dating methods (see above and Chapter Six), raises a number of problems for the chronology of the period in question. It is certainly not possible to say that the appropriation of certain objects of practices began, across England at one particular time. For the moment at least, it is perhaps only possible to conclude that the chronology of the late fourth/fifth century is very poorly understood and local dynamics need to be investigated, and hopefully clarified, in the future.

3 – The third point is that some scholars have criticized studies that reduce the importance of migrations for their tendency to 'immobilism' (Härke 1998: 20) and their dismissal of the idea that people move, even though it is a well-attested phenomenon. Härke (1998: 20-1; also Hills 1993b: 15-16) believes this trend is largely attributable to modern social and political factors. However, the understanding of change being proposed here in no way rules out the possibility

that people can move; indeed the movement of material, ideas and people is an integral part of the concept of a North Sea zone of interaction. Yet that does not mean that 'migration' is always the appropriate term for describing that movement, as illustrated by the significant differences in the burial practices associated with English as opposed to continental fifth-century brooches (see Chapter Seven). Nevertheless, as described previously, Martin Weber's work (1996; 1998a) comparing north German and East Anglian cemeteries does indicate that in some cases migrations of communities (or parts of communities) might be envisaged (the relationship between Issendorf and Spong Hill appears to be particularly close). The conclusion must therefore be that it may be too simplistic to think *only* in terms of migrations or appropriations when discussing southern and eastern England in the fifth century. Again, it is necessary to investigate the complexities of the archaeological evidence at a local level first and without being trapped by seemingly authoritative, but rather one-dimensional academic agendas.

4 – It must also be stated that the ideas being proposed in this chapter should not be construed as defining or explaining a period of transition between two defined periods. To do so would be to perpetuate the periodization of the past. While labels such as 'Roman', 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'early medieval' are undoubtedly useful shorthands, their role in forming our understandings of the past has been questioned by a number of scholars.

It has been noted that periodization originates from a eighteenth-/nineteenth-century view of history as being a series of steps made by human societies (Courtney 1997: 9). Furthermore, these periods were constructed by scholars at specific times and for certain reasons. For example, the 'Industrial Revolution' was only studied as such from early in the twentieth century, the 'medieval' period was first defined in the fifteenth century as the time between classical civilization and the 'rebirth' of classical civilization in the Renaissance (another period!) (ibid: 10-11). The term 'Late Antiquity' was coined by Alois Riegl in 1889 to define that which was neither clearly 'Roman' or 'medieval' (Clover and Humphreys 1989: 3). Given that periods are largely constructs, periodization is largely a matter of definition and there are many ways to define a period, all of which will have problems, and will result in aggregate or generalized terms (Halsall 1995: 38-9).

Concerning the transition between periods, there is also the problem of teleology (the identification of a consequence as a cause (Moroney 1989: 21)). Moroney believes that this arises from biological historical models, where the past is seen to have a direction, described in terms of growth, development or decay (ibid.). Thus, scholars work on the principle that they 'know' the end result and therefore they aim to deduce what gave rise to that end result (Halsall

1995: 38). Again there is the problem of definition; how long was the transition, when was the final outcome achieved? Furthermore, continuity has, by definition, an ambiguous role in the identification of transition periods (ibid: 38-9).

Both periodization and understanding the transitions between periods also present problems when considering people in the past. The ages manufactured by historians may have had little meaning for contemporaries (Clover and Humphreys 1989: 3). Also, people in the past had no idea how things would turn out, it must therefore be dubious to identify the 'end product' (e.g. 'Anglo-Saxon England') and to see that as enough of an explanation for how and why people acted in a certain way up to that point (e.g. why people migrated or began using certain objects) (Moroney 1989: 24).

All these points illustrate how established academic paradigms may inhibit analysis, perpetuating ideas about the past that are in fact constructs (Bond and Gilliam 1994: 13; Courtney 1997: 9, 19). As an alternative to perpetuating generalized, aggregate approaches, Halsall (1995: 40) believes scholars should seek to understand the diversity and dynamism in society. It may then become clear, from the complexity of the past, that all points in history are points of transition (ibid: 39; Moroney 1989: 25).

In studies of the fifth century, migrations have been used to explain the transition from the Roman period in Britain to the medieval or Anglo-Saxon period; whether those migrations were seen as a single, catastrophic event or a more drawn out, elite take-over. Nevertheless, to prioritize the study of migrations in order to understand the fifth century is to focus primarily on change and transition and that is inherently teleological, arising from the periodization of the past. On the other hand, by examining the local, contextual usage of material culture it seems likely that more diverse and varied patterns will emerge (cf. Chapter Seven). It must therefore be conceded that changes in the fifth century may have been noticed by different people to greater or lesser extents or not at all. Furthermore, change may have happened alongside continuity; perhaps changes in burial practice were more evident than changes in other aspects of life. The advantage of the ideas proposed here (i.e. appropriations within a North Sea zone of interaction) is that apparent change and transition can be accounted for and understood alongside continuity as both contribute to the on-going dynamics of social life. The aim is to investigate how fifth-century people lived their lives, not to study generalized, uniform processes, the pre-eminence of which may be due to modern, teleological academic practice, rather than past realities.

8.6 Preliminary conclusions

To summarize, it has been shown in the previous sections that by discussing fifth-century material culture change in terms of theories of practice and appropriation through time and space it is possible to achieve an alternative understanding of the period in question. This approach certainly does not rule out the possibility of migrations and people moving around the North Sea (and elsewhere). Nevertheless, it is hoped that the ideas outlined here provide a way of thinking about this period without relying on questionable assumptions and generalized models. Instead, the importance of local contexts, variability and complexity has been stressed. The results of the analysis described in Chapter Seven illustrate that diverse patterns do exist in fifth-century archaeological evidence, and these need to be investigated, beginning with close contextual analysis rather than generalized, pre-formed ideas.

8.7 Fifth-century brooches

Having discussed the archaeology of the fifth century in the North Sea region in quite general terms, it remains to consider the brooches that have been the material component of the present study. It should be remembered first of all that such artefacts do not represent the entire range of fifth-century archaeological evidence. Rather, it is only really funerary remains (especially ceramics and brooches) that are found on both sides of the North Sea and thus would traditionally be seen as supporting the migration hypothesis. House types, settlements, eco-environmental remains, language, place-names and so on are far more ambiguous in this respect (see Chapter Five).

In many previous studies, the brooches discussed here have been interpreted primarily as indicators of ethnic identities and ethnic origins. Furthermore, due to typological deductions and their distribution, these brooches were believed to mark the very earliest phase of the Germanic migrations across the North Sea. Yet the foregoing chapters have described a number of problems with these approaches. These included the idea of defined, bounded ethnic groups, the methods used to date brooches, both in relative and absolute terms and indeed (in this particular case) the concept of migrations as a whole. The analysis presented in Chapter Seven has also shown that close contextual analyses of the brooches reveal patterns far more diverse and complex than a simple migration model allows. Perhaps most importantly, it should be remembered that there are significant differences between the burial rituals that incorporated these brooches in England as opposed to on the continent (especially in the regions usually described as the 'Anglo-Saxon homelands'). Furthermore, although some brooches had clearly been used before deposition a clear majority of those with known contexts of deposition were found in funerary contexts (93.8%). Given that in order to understand material culture context

is important, most brooches can only really be discussed as objects used during funerary rituals, and it therefore follows that they cannot be used directly to infer how people used them in everyday life (see Section 3.5.4). It is also clear that there are relatively few typically mid-fifth-century/'migration period' brooches – those used in the present study – in England that are also directly paralleled on the other side of the North Sea, even if there was an 'elite' migration. So how else could these brooches be understood?

As described in Chapter Three, material culture is not a passive reflection of ethnic identity, or any other single identity. It may in part be functional (e.g. brooches can be used to fasten clothing), but this cannot be separated from the role material culture plays in creating and maintaining social institutions, practices and identities; it is a form of non-verbal communication between individuals. Brooches may have been part of a 'visual identity' (Jundi and Hill 1998: 131). Hence, change in material culture – the appropriation of 'new' brooch types into particular contexts – may reflect, and contribute to, the re-negotiation of practices, institutions and identities. This was not necessarily limited to ethnic identity, but may also have involved changes in the expression of status, gender or age.

Given the situation in late fourth- and fifth-century Britain (see above), it would not be surprising if there were widespread changes in identities and the material correlates of these (in many different contexts and for many different reasons). The role of brooches in this can best be summed up by quoting from a paper by Jundi and Hill (1998). Their research focused on the huge increase in brooches in later Iron Age Britain; the 'Fibula Event Horizon' (ibid: 126). They concluded that in the context of rapid social change;

> '...personal identities became a more unstable and contested arena as old identities of gender, age group and 'tribe' were possibly challenged and replaced. Dress and appearance may have helped to create and signal new social differences, and became an arena that may have perpetuated more ways to exhibit social and cultural identities' (Jundi and Hill 1998: 131).

Of course, this may well have occurred in many different social contexts. Yet here it is only really possible to address how brooches were used as part of a burial costume and the identities that may have been ascribed to the deceased by the mourners. In order to reach more general conclusions about the possible role(s) of brooches outside funerary contexts and how these two contexts relate there must be more detailed, local, contextual analyses of cemeteries and their environs through time.

In conclusion, perhaps brooches should be interpreted, not simply as indicators of ethnicity, ethnic origins and hence migrations, but as one type of material culture that could have been appropriated to create and maintain practices, institutions and identities in a changing world. Such an understanding means that one should expect there to have been a huge variety of reasons for, and situations in which they were appropriated. Furthermore, the appropriation of 'new' brooch types may have occurred alongside continuity, thus contributing to the on-going dynamics of social life.

8.8 The appropriation of the Anglo-Saxon migration myth

The relevance of appropriation as a means of understanding both change and continuity in the past does not end in the fifth century. As has already been described in Chapter Four, there are a number of fifth- or sixth-century historical sources that were important in recording and/or creating the English migration myth (e.g. Gildas's DEB, the *Gallic Chronicle of 452*). It has been shown that these narratives cannot simply be dismissed, but also they cannot be interpreted adequately without a full understanding of their geographical, temporal and intellectual contexts. In seeking to describe and explain events the authors appropriated certain modes of expression (e.g. Judeo-Christian or classical) that were both concordant with, and a result of, their personal situations.

The appropriation of the myth of English origins continued thereafter. No doubt some form of the story was told and re-told by those who kept alive oral traditions in the early medieval period, although we can never know how or why it entered those traditions or to what extent it was known. What is clear is that it was a significant enough tradition to be appropriated by early historians. However, this was done at certain times and for certain reasons, when the myth became a powerful emotional symbol; a symbol that could be employed to legitimate royal authority (e.g. Bede's HE and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*) as much as to remind Christians of the consequences of their sins (e.g. Alcuin's and Wulfstan's interpretations of Viking raids (Howe 1989: 8, 20)).

Having been abandoned (by historians at least) for around five hundred years during the first half of the second millennium, the Germanic origin myth was re-appropriated by Protestant reformers seeking to prove the legitimacy of the nascent English Church. After the sixteenth century, the myth was used to demonstrate the purity and antiquity of the English constitution and, in the nineteenth century, of the English race. At this point, archaeologists too appropriated this narrative since it appeared to explain the patterning of the objects they excavated. Although archaeological understandings of the migration myth have been

significantly revised throughout the last 150 years, it can nevertheless be said that this idea has been maintained, or constantly re-appropriated, to the present day.

8.9 Conclusion: The continuity of the Anglo-Saxon migration myth

It is a truism of 'post-processual' archaeological theory that the same object can have a variety of meanings depending on context (e.g. safety pins (Hodder 1982: 203) or straw boaters (Pader 1982: 144)) and perhaps the same can be said of intellectual ideas and concepts. This may help us understand the continued appropriation of the migration myth. It is clear from the above that migrations are a powerful and emotive symbol. Yet this myth is also flexible enough for it to be used in a wide variety of situations and with resonances for a variety of authors and their audiences. The power of the historical myth was only enhanced by the archaeological support for it produced from the middle of the nineteenth century. It might therefore be argued that it was the methods of interpretation and the intellectual momentum the myth gained at this time which have enabled it to maintain its relevance to the present day; not as a 'myth' *per se*, but as a fact of the fifth-century past.

In Chapters One to Seven a series of problems with the idea of fifth-century migrations was outlined. The aim of this chapter has been to show that there are alternative ways to understand material culture change in fifth-century England and these ideas have drawn heavily on theories of appropriation. Alongside this, it is clear that 'the Anglo-Saxon migrations' have become a significant concept at certain times and for certain reasons. As such, it can be argued that fifth-century migrations are not necessarily a 'fact'; they are not an event or process that is 'out there' for archaeologists and historians to illuminate (*contra* Hines 1998: 164 – quoted in Section 2.8). Instead, this concept should perhaps be understood as revealing a dynamic history of mentalities and scholars today are part of the process that they themselves study (Niles 1997: 212). Thus, it can be concluded that the whole question of fifth-century migrations might best be understood as a series of meaningful appropriations (cf. ibid: 208). The migrations have been an intellectual commodity, a resource that has been appropriated and used at particular times and for particular reasons. At these times, various different groups of people (clerics, scholars, politicians etc.) have controlled the discourse to meet a wide variety of aims. At other times the myth has been rejected, presumably because it came to have little relevance for most people. Indeed today the narrative or discourse of early medieval history and archaeology is discussed – and therefore controlled – almost exclusively by scholars as the myth of Anglo-Saxon origins is not a significant part of popular consciousness (see Chapter One).

By being aware of this and through the close contextual analysis of archaeological remains, it is hoped that more detailed, less assumption-laden understandings of the fifth century will become

possible. Such understandings may then be less constrained by a subsequently powerful narrative and instead *attempt* to address the dynamics and subjectivities of the lives of people who lived in England in the fifth century.

CHAPTER NINE



Conclusions

In the preceding chapters the theoretical approaches to archaeological interpretation that have been used to create and maintain the Anglo-Saxon migration narrative have been assessed critically. In Chapter Two a brief historiography of 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology was presented. This illustrated that the archaeological investigation of post-Roman migrations to England began in a specific socio-political context. Furthermore, although scholars' views have changed a great deal through time, a number of ideas have always been, and remain, central to debates about the fifth century in southern and eastern England. In Chapter Three, a number of those key ideas were critiqued. It was shown why, in the light of recent theories developed by social scientists, the normative ideas relating to ethnicity, material culture found in funerary contexts and migrations were problematic. In Chapter Four, again drawing on recent theoretical developments, the historical basis of the Anglo-Saxon migration narrative was also questioned. Chapter Five covered a range of types of evidence that have often been used in discussions about 'the migrations' but which were not dealt with in the subsequent chapters. It was concluded that none of these types of evidence provide a clear indication that the migrations did take place; in all cases either the evidence was not clear cut and/or it had been interpreted using questionable theoretical assumptions.

The use of certain types of material culture (especially brooches) to define when the supposed migrations took place was reassessed in Chapter Six. In Chapter Seven it was shown that some of the material evidence (i.e. brooches) often thought to confirm that the migrations (in one form or another) did take place may not support this view when different methods of analysis are used. On the basis of these chapters it was concluded that, although it is highly likely that people moved around the North Sea in the post-Roman period, the relevance of migrations as the *only or principal* means of explaining material culture change in southern and eastern England in the fifth century must be questioned. Alternative understandings of the relevant archaeological evidence were, however, presented in Chapter Eight. It was suggested that material culture once thought to show that Germanic people settled in England may instead reflect appropriation made by people from around the North Sea in order to renegotiate or create identities when previous 'Roman' identities were being undermined. Having summarized the conclusions arising from the individual chapters, a number of general conclusions can now be presented, bringing together the central themes of the present study.

Several of the themes described in the foregoing chapters have been quite negative with regard to early medieval scholarship and the Anglo-Saxon migration narrative. First, while some evidence from the period in question cannot be disputed (e.g. the distribution of certain brooch types or the numerous, archaeologically attested changes that took place between c.350 and c.550), it is clear that many of the ideas that have been central to the discourse in question cannot necessarily be accepted as 'facts'. For example, the existence of distinct ethnic groups (Angles, Saxons, Germans, Romans, Britons etc.) must be doubted (at least in the fifth century). It is equally dubious to claim that such groups can be identified through their distinctive material culture remains. We must also question whether the available historical sources provide a relevant framework for the interpretation of archaeological evidence in southern and eastern England in the fifth century (e.g. regarding chronology and the identification of ethnic groups). Furthermore, such conclusions mean that the evidence used to prove that 'the migrations' were a historical 'fact' and an appropriate means of understanding post-Roman material culture change in England is not altogether reliable.

Second, by discussing the migration narrative as part of a *historical* discourse stretching back around 1500 years and as an *archaeological* discourse with its roots in the mid-nineteenth century, it has been possible to show that many of the presumed facts mentioned above only became 'facts' in specific contexts and for specific reasons. Their factual status is not a given, obvious attribute, it has been created and maintained by historians, archaeologists and others for a variety of reasons. It can therefore be concluded that with regard to 'the Anglo-Saxon migrations' historians and archaeologists have produced 'paradigms to explain that which they themselves have created' (Bond and Gilliam 1994: 13). This in turn suggests that when alternative ideas and approaches emerge they must be considered potentially equally as valid, even if they do not conform to opinions that have usually been dominant.

Third, it is clear that the English migration narrative is a large and complex edifice to tackle; indeed the present study has been only a brief re-assessment of that narrative. It has also been shown here that idea of migrations is (still) of the utmost importance and deeply ingrained amongst those researching fifth-century archaeology and history (see Section 2.7 for example). This underlines the opinion that – to paraphrase Stephen Shennan (1989a: 31) – we have a very small conceptual vocabulary for discussing archaeological change, especially with regard to fifth-century archaeology.

Despite these somewhat negative conclusions, it is hoped that the present study has also produced a range of positive ideas. To begin with, although the conceptual vocabulary for describing and understanding change in the fifth century may generally be quite small, Chapter

Eight is an attempt to begin to remedy that situation (even though only a limited range of preliminary suggestions were presented).

Second, the preceding chapters have highlighted how and why the idea of early medieval migrations of Germanic people(s) to England have achieved political, social, religious and academic significance at certain times and for specific reasons. This in turn has led to a clearer understanding of how and why that narrative originated and became a powerful discourse that has been maintained and changed through time up to the present day.

> 'Shaking off thousands of years of entrenched thinking, we have come to question the historical basis of the migration myth that the English have often told of themselves. ...Perhaps most significantly of all: through research into the historical roots of current scholarship, we have begun to conceive of Anglo-Saxon England as a process, not just a thing, and we have begun to see ourselves as part of the process we are studying, whether as the recipients or the victims of prior scholarly investments' (Niles 1997: 211-12).

It might be said, therefore, that by analysing the Anglo-Saxon migrations as an on-going discourse we are learning more about human ontology through time than we are about the fifth century itself. Are we thus cut off entirely from the fifth century? Will our understandings of that period always be influenced (or distorted?) by centuries of political, religious and academic rhetoric? To some extent this will always be the case. However, it is hoped that this study demonstrates that we need not be totally blind to those influences; we can become aware of when assumptions are being made and henceforward investigate other ideas (although those ideas – and the present study as a whole – may simply constitute another discourse with its own background, advantages, problems and assumptions which will, in time, be questioned (see Section 3.3.1)).

Third, when we do attempt to consider fifth-century archaeological evidence, the present study (especially Chapters Three and Seven) has emphasized, and to some extent demonstrated, the potential variety of human experience in the past. Even though much of the evidence from the fifth century, and much of the discussion in previous chapters, has involved only burial/funerary remains, it has been argued that these were probably the result of practices and understandings of those practices that varied across time and space. Differences of practice were certainly evident in the contextual analysis of brooches described in Chapter Seven (at least when comparing England and the continent – identifying more local variation must await further research). This potential variety suggests that the idea of migrations as a generalized explanation for change is likely to be far too restrictive and one-dimensional. Yet by investigating and recognizing such diversity we are at least *attempting* to consider the people who lived in the

past, rather than simply fitting the objects they used into a discourse created long after they were dead.

Leading on from this, the ideas presented in the above chapters mean that we may be able to think about the archaeology of fifth-century England in many different ways. We should perhaps consider how artefacts relate to identities or the expression of identities (e.g. age, status, gender, ethnicity); how they may have been used in dynamic, perhaps localized social practices; what the material remains might reveal about various long-term and short-term changes or continuities with regard to economies, land use, climate, material culture availability and so on and whether all the above have any correlation with contemporary trends on the continent (cf. Esmonde Cleary's (2001) call for a pan-European research agenda based on 'late antiquity' rather than the 'Roman to medieval' transition).

As a final point I will return to the issue raised in the introduction: the role of England and the English identity in early twenty-first-century Britain. It is perhaps fair to say that the conclusions of the present study do nothing to bolster the contemporary socio-political relevance of that identity. In fact it undermines an idea that has, in the past, been a unifying narrative for 'the English'. However, by highlighting the origins and history of the English identity – and the same would apply to Scottish, Welsh, Irish or any other ethnic identity – we may become aware of how and why such concepts became, and remain, powerful for some people. This implies that they require respect. Yet at the same time this should warn us against using those identities to legitimize national(ist) antagonism or even violence because, in the final analysis, they are a highly flexible and malleable form of 'truth'.

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APPENDIX ONE



Descriptions of Brooches Types used in Chapter Seven

Equal-armed brooches

Equal-armed brooches have been central to debates about the Anglo-Saxon migrations from the earliest typological analyses of fifth-century metalwork (e.g. Åberg 1926: 12; Leeds 1913: 91). The importance of this type with regard to the Anglo-Saxon migrations is due largely to the dates assigned to them and to their geographical distribution.

Description

Equal-armed brooches (Fig. 25, Map 2) are a form of bow brooch, with a large triangular headplate and a trapezoidal footplate above and below a central bow. This form is believed to be a development of the supporting-arm brooch (see below), specifically the supporting-arm brooch with a trapezoidal foot (Böhme 1974: 18). The earliest equal-armed brooches proper are those that are said to constitute Böhme's *Vorformen* (ibid: 16, Evison 1977: 130 – Fig. 25); a type with relatively simple decoration compared to the later, more elaborate equal-armed brooches (Fig. 24a). Later brooches are of varying sizes (see below) and were cast in bronze or silver. Many were also gilded. The reverse sides of the brooches are plain and some have evidence for a spring, pin and pin-catch assembly, although it is common for these not to survive. The front of the bow, head- and footplates were all used, to a greater or lesser extent, for decoration. This often consists of chip carving with both geometric and zoomorphic designs. Differences in decoration have been used to define the various sub-types of equal-armed brooches. It was also the decoration, as well as the distribution of equal-armed brooches, which was the focus of much attention when archaeologists began to see them as significant in the early 1900s.

Early research on equal-armed brooches

Equal-armed brooches have always been described as 'Germanic' items. More specifically, they were often seen to be a typical component of the 'Saxon' costume or burial assemblage (Hills 1979a: 315; Leeds 1913: 91). This is due to the distribution of the type both in England and on the continent. By 1913, English equal-armed brooches were known in Cambridgeshire (Haslingfield and Little Wilbraham) and Bedfordshire (Kempston) and both Leeds (1913: 91; 1923: 175) and Åberg (1926: 18) noted that the clearest parallels for these brooches came from the Hanover region of Germany. Leeds believed that the English brooches were not only

paralleled in northern Germany, but were also 'unquestionably manufactured there' (Leeds 1933: 241).

Many more equal-armed brooches have now been found in both regions. They are known from eastern and eastern central England and the Thames Valley (Gingell 1978: 98), while in Germany they are found mostly in the Elbe-Weser region (Evison 1977: 130) (see Map 2). This being the case, it was perhaps inevitable that these brooches would be linked to Bede's model involving the migration of Germanic people(s) from their homelands in northern Germany to eastern England. Hence, for many archaeologists, this distribution suggests that equal-armed brooches were clearly Germanic, Anglo-Saxon or even just Saxon objects.

Regarding the decoration of equal-armed brooches, however, there have been some debates concerning classification. Leeds (1913: 91) described the motifs on the brooches as 'semi-classical'. Likewise, Åberg (1926: 14) believed that they showed classical or provincial Roman influences as the chip-carved motifs on the brooches (e.g. scrollwork and running animals) are also found on late Roman metalwork, such as belt fittings (c.f. Hawkes and Dunning 1961). Archaeologists appear to have been at a loss to explain the mixture of 'Roman' art styles on 'Germanic' equal-armed brooches; Åberg even called this 'one of the most obscure problems of Anglo-Saxon archaeology' (1926: 16). A similar quandary has faced archaeologists discussing quoit brooches and the quoit brooch style of ornamentation (see Harrison 1997; 1999).

The full contextual analysis of equal-armed brooches was presented in Chapter Seven. However, it is interesting to note that in 1913 Leeds made a brief comment on the forms of burial rite associated with equal-armed brooches. Whilst discussing the problem of how to explain the large number of 'early' inhumation burials in England when the typically 'Germanic' rite of cremation predominated in northern Germany (see also Section 2.5) Leeds wrote that;

> '...while the equal-armed brooches so distinctive of Hanover have all except one been found with cremation burial, the three examples from English soil all come from inhumation graves' (Leeds 1913: 96).

Leeds (1933: 234) explained this anomaly, and the wider cremation/inhumation issue, by proposing that there was a rapid 'flight from cremation' after the initial invasions.

Fifth-century equal-armed brooches with continental parallels

Since these early publications, equal-armed brooches have remained an important element in the debates surrounding fifth-century change and migrations. Perhaps the most important

development in the study of equal-armed brooches in more recent times has been the establishment of a widely used classificatory system and dating framework based on a much larger number of finds. The work of Böhme (1974; 1986) has been particularly significant for bringing together both the German and English material. He built upon the early twentieth-century work of Plettke and Roeder (Böhme 1974: 14) in order to refine a classificatory system that is now used extensively (e.g. Boyle et al. 1995; Evison 1977; Gingell 1978). The equal-armed brooch sub-types to be used in this study are described briefly below (see also Fig. 25). These are somewhat generalized descriptions as not all examples of the types are identical (for a full description of the variations see Böhme 1974 or Evison 1977).

Type Sahlenburg

The Type Sahlenburg equal-armed brooches are decorated with chip-carved spiral decoration on both the head- and footplate. The inside edges of the head- and footplates have animal heads protruding from them, four of which have long necks, with two smaller heads at the base of the bow. They are all bronze or gilt bronze. The length of these brooches is a little over 3cm, while the width is around 5.5cm (Böhme 1974: 16-17; Evison 1977: 131).

Type Wehden

Type Wehden brooches have no animal head ornamentation but the inside edges of the headplate and footplate have wavy borders. Decoration on the front of the brooches includes various chip-carved motifs, such as spirals/scrolls and zigzags. Most examples of this type are cast from silver and their length is between 3.1 and 4.5cm, while the width is between 5.5 and 8cm (Böhme 1974: 17; Evison 1977: 131).

Type Dösemoor

Type Dösemoor brooches differ from those of Type Wehden by having animal friezes on the inner edges of the head- and footplates. These borders consist of naturalistic quadrupeds and sea lions with short and long ears, manes and winding tails. The backward looking animal motif (*rückblickenden Tieres motiv*) is also common on this type of equal-armed brooch. These animal friezes are a contrast to the sharply defined chip-carved scroll decoration on the front of the head- and footplates. The other edges of these plates are decorated with notched, zigzag or 'egg and rod/dart' borders. These brooches are either bronze or silver gilt and range from 4.5 to 6.6cm long and from 7 to 10cm wide (Böhme 1974: 17; Evison 1977: 131-3).

Böhme (1974: 17), like Leeds and Åberg, believes that the animal decoration on the edges of Type Dösemoor brooches is related to the animal friezes on late Roman chip-carved metalwork, such as belt fittings. He argues that the execution of the animal designs on equal-armed brooches and on belt fittings is sometimes so similar that the copying of late Roman models is

the only satisfactory explanation. Böhme goes on to assert that late Roman craftwork must have been imported into Saxon areas (ibid.).

Type Nesse

Type Nesse Brooches are the most elaborate form of equal-armed brooch. The characteristic feature is the continuous animal frieze around the edge of the head- and footplates. These motifs are also found on late antique chip-carved bronzes. As with the Type Dösemoor brooches, chip-carved scrollwork is prominent inside the borders. Some examples of this type also have perforated or openwork decoration around the head- and footplates (see examples from Westgarth Gardens, Suffolk and Collingbourne Ducis, Wiltshire). These are also the largest equal-armed brooches ranging from 5.6 to 7.6cm long and from 8.5 to 12.5cm wide (Böhme 1974: 18; Evison 1977: 133-4).

It remains to mention the plain, undecorated equal-armed brooch from Berinsfield, Oxfordshire. Both Evison and Böhme date this brooch to the second half of the fifth century (Boyle et al. 1995: 82). However, as no continental parallels are known and it is believed to be of insular manufacture, it was therefore not used in the present study.

The dating of equal-armed brooches

The dating of the above types remains a contentious issue. As with the other brooch types to be described below, the arguments pertaining to developmental chronology of the equal-armed brooch have become highly complex, reflecting changing views of migrations and fifth-century change as well as differing views of chronology expressed on the continent as compared to England. Åberg (1926: 14) wrote that the English equal-armed brooches dated to the second half of the fifth century. Yet in publishing the silver equal-armed brooch from Sutton Courtenay (Berkshire) Leeds quoted Salin, who dated this type to around AD 400, and Plettke, who believed them to be later, although not beyond the middle of the fifth century. As such, Leeds's equal-armed brooch from Sutton Courtenay, being what he believed to be a later form (Type Dösemoor) and in England, was dated to the second half of the fifth century; around AD 475 (Leeds 1923: 175). In 1933, Leeds drew on the research done by Roeder to date the Kempston brooch (Type Wehden) to around AD 450 and the Haslingfield and Little Wilbraham brooches (both Type Dösemoor) to around AD 500 (Leeds 1933: 241).

More recently, Böhme placed Types Wehden and Sahlenburg in his *Stufe* (phase, lit. 'step') II (AD 380-420) and the later Types Dösemoor and Nesse in *Stufe* III (c.AD 400-450) (Böhme 1974: 155-7). With a slight alteration, Böhme's 1986 publication of equal-armed brooches on the continent and in England placed Types Wehden and Sahlenburg broadly in the first half of

the fifth century, while Types Dösemoor and Nesse were dated to the second half of the fifth century (Böhme 1986: 568, 570).

Evison (1977: 136) notes that chronological schemes which date material to the very early fifth century clearly call into question the historically derived 'absolute' dates of AD 449/450 for the *adventus Saxonum*. Nevertheless, she has argued that equal-armed brooches may have been present in England from around AD 400, while the later 'degenerate' forms (such as the late Type Nesse brooch found at Collingbourne Ducis, Wiltshire) can be dated to the second half of the fifth century.

To summarize, it is clear from the above that the equal-armed brooches to be used in the present study are generally dated to the fifth century. All the sub-types to be used are also found both in England and on the continent.

Supporting-arm brooches

As with equal-armed brooches, supporting-arm brooches have been a significant item in discussions of fifth-century material culture since the early 1900s due to their distribution and dating (Map 3). They have also been seen as the prototype form for equal-armed brooches (Åberg 1926: 12; Böhme 1974: 18; Evison 1977: 130).

Description

The supporting-arm brooch is a bow brooch (Fig. 26a and b). At the top of the bow is a wide headplate or supporting arm, onto which, at the rear, is attached the brooch spring assembly. The spring is wound around a rod that is attached to the supporting arm by perforated lugs. At the base of the flat bow is the foot that may be slightly wider than the bow. The brooches are made of cast bronze. Decoration on supporting-arm brooches is minimal (with the exception of the elaborate types from Eastry and Riensförde – see below), consisting mainly of notches, horizontal and vertical lines and faceting on the bow and foot.

Past research on supporting-arm brooches

From early in the last century, archaeologists commented on the distribution of supporting-arm brooches. When he wrote, Åberg knew of only one English supporting-arm brooch (that from Kempston, Bedfordshire), however, he believed supporting-arm brooches to be one of the types that the Anglo-Saxons 'brought with them from their homes on the continent' (Åberg 1926: 12). The type is still more numerous on the continent than in England (Hills 1977: 24 and Chapter Seven). The twelve English examples are found in the south and east, while on the continent the thirty-two examples are found predominantly in the Elbe-Weser region of Germany.

Regarding the context of deposition of supporting-arm brooches, Evison states that they were worn by women, often in pairs and sometimes with other brooches. However;

> 'In England at Linton Heath and at Mucking grave 987 they occurred in women's graves with other brooches, but as all the English supporting-arm brooches have been found singly, it may be that the fashion was changed or that the hard times experienced in early settlement precluded replacement of one lost or broken element of a pair' (Evison 1977:129. C.f. Chapter Seven).

Ager (1989: 150) also associated supporting-arm brooches with the earliest female immigrants into England.

Fifth-century supporting-arm brooches with continental parallels

As with equal-armed brooches, the work of Böhme (1974, 1986) is now influential for the formal analysis of supporting-arm brooches in England and on the continent. Vera Evison (1977) has also written about the English examples. Several types of supporting-arm brooch are known on the continent, although not all of these are also found in England (see Böhme 1974: 10-13, 51-2). The brooches found on *both* sides of the North Sea are those that Böhme refers to as *Stützarmfibeln mit gleichbreitem, bandförmigem Fuß (ohne Achsenträger)* (ibid: 13-14). Böhme divides the main group into two sub-types; types Mahndorf and Perlberg (Fig. 26a).

Type Mahndorf

Type Mahndorf brooches have a wide trapezoidal supporting arm with grooved decoration. The bow and foot are decorated with vertical and horizontal grooves with faceted sides. The supporting arm on this type ranges from 2.5 to 3cm wide, while the length of the brooch is between 3.5 and 4.5cm (Böhme 1974: 13; Evison 1977: 128). In addition, a brooch found at Eastry (Kent – Ager 1989) and one from Riensförde (Kr. Stade – Böhme 1974) were also included in the database (Fig. 25b). Ager (1989) describes these as elaborately decorated and later (but still fifth-century) versions of Type Mahndorf brooches. They are included here because of that classification and because they are found on both sides of the North Sea.

Type Perlberg

Type Perlberg supporting-arm brooches are, in most respects, very similar to those of Type Mahndorf, although the group is less uniform. The main difference is that they have a narrow supporting arm, which in some is almost like a rectangular headplate. The width of the supporting arm is between 1.2 and 2.2cm (Böhme 1974: 14; Evison 1977: 128).

Supporting-arm brooches with three lugs

Varying slightly from Böhme's (1974) classification, a number of other brooches will be included here. These have a third lug in the middle of the supporting arm (Fig. 26b). All the brooches with three lugs that Böhme cites he places in groups described as *Stützarmfibeln mit Trapezfuß* (ibid: 10-13) or *Stützarmfibeln stabförmigem Bügel und Rechteckfuß (mit Achsenträger)* (ibid: 51-2), none of which are found in Britain. However, six brooches with three lugs have been included in the database for the present study. This is because, in describing the example from Mucking (Essex) (Grave 987), Evison acknowledges Böhme's classifications, but argues that 'its affinities in the matter of shape and decoration are much more with the supporting-arm brooch of Mahndorf type, from which it differs only in possessing a middle lug and a rather solid tubular pin catch' (Evison 1977: 128). The same applies for the similar example from Spong Hill in Norfolk (C3091) (ibid: 129). With this in mind, four other brooches from the continent were also included in the database; three from Flögeln (Ldkr. Cuxhaven) and one from Issendorf (Kr. Stade). All are very similar to Type Mahndorf brooches but have three lugs.

The dating of supporting-arm brooches

In 1923 Reginald Smith described the supporting-arm brooch as being among the earliest Anglo-Saxon relics known in England, and generally this view continues to the present (Smith 1923: 72). Åberg (1926: 13) believed the brooches dated to around AD 400 and Evison (1977: 129) supported this. However, Evison also argued that the English supporting-arm brooches developed slightly due to 'fresh details invented by insular craftsmen which did not percolate back to continental producers' (ibid.). English supporting-arm brooches are usually described as being manufactured in, or direct imports from, northern Germany (e.g. Åberg 1926: 12; Ager 1989: 150; Boyle et al. 1995: 81). Böhme (1974: 155) placed supporting-arm brooches in his *Zeitstufe II* (AD 380-420) or in the first half of the fifth century (Böhme 1986: 568). He believes that their use should be seen as continuing into the fifth century as they are found both on the continent and in England (Böhme 1974: 14).

To summarize, it can be said that the supporting-arm brooch types described above have always been seen as relating to the earliest stages of the Anglo-Saxon migrations. They are found in eastern England and northern Germany, and are dated to the later fourth century and the first half of the fifth century.

Applied brooches

Applied brooches (Fig. 27, Map 4) are one of two types of circular brooch found in fifth-century cemeteries on both sides of the North Sea. In appearance, applied and saucer brooches (see below) are very similar and both types have been important in fifth-century archaeology.

However, due to differences in construction, ornamentation and distribution they are usually discussed separately.

Description

In England, the name 'applied brooch' was coined by Reginald Smith early in the twentieth century (Leeds 1912: 160), while in Germany the name 'komponierte Schalenfibeln' was first used by Roeder in 1933 (Böhme 1974: 25). Both terms relate to the construction of this brooch type. The applied brooch is a composite brooch, formed by a backplate (made of bronze) to which the pin, spring and pin catch are attached. This backplate is the base to which another metal disc is applied; stuck to the backplate with some form of adhesive. The second plate, which forms the face of the brooch, is usually a thin gilt bronze disc decorated with various repoussé designs (see below). A circular strip, also of bronze, forming a rim is also evident on some applied brooches (Evison 1978a: 88, 97). Owing to the fact that two of the component parts of the applied brooch are made of thin bronze sheets or strips (the repoussé plate and the rim), it is quite common for these brooches to be badly preserved; often only the backplate remains (e.g. one of the applied brooches from Dorchester) (Böhme 1974: 25; Evison 1978a: 88, 96; Leeds 1912: 193). This is especially so when applied brooches are found among cremated remains, as is often the case with the German examples (Evison 1978a: 96; Leeds 1912: 193). This type of brooch ranges from 2.5 to 5cm in diameter, with most of them being between 3 and 4cm across (ibid: 97).

On the continent, applied brooches are fairly evenly distributed between the Seine and the Elbe-Weser region, although there is a marked concentration in the latter area. In England they are found predominantly in central southern and south-eastern England.

Origins

As with the previous brooch types, the applied brooch is generally believed to have originated on the continent and as such they have usually been described as distinctively 'Germanic' artefacts. Since they are also a common feature of fifth- and sixth-century cemetery assemblages in England, the type has been used to 'plot' the migrations. In his 1912 publication, Leeds attempted to define the actual typological origins of the applied brooch on the continent (ibid: 192-5). On his visits to northern German museums, Leeds noted that applied brooches were late in the German sequences, but early in those from England (ibid: 193). For Leeds, this phenomenon was further proof concerning when the migrations took place. He also concluded that;

> 'From its [the applied brooch's] association with other types and from the form of the urns in which it has been found, it is evidence that this brooch remained in use to the close of the

> fourth century and probably beyond. We have thus some reason to suppose that, so far as technique is in question, the applied brooch is earlier than the saucer' (Leeds 1912: 193).

Saucer brooches will be discussed as a separate form below, and it will be seen that this general idea of saucer brooches being a development of the applied brooch continues to the present.

There have been other, more recent discussions concerning the origins of the applied brooch. Böhme (1974: 25) argued that the *Vorform* for applied brooches was another type of disc brooch with examples known from Krefeld-Gellep on the Rhine. This had a flat baseplate with a deep pin catch, a silver and gilt applied disc, decorated with concentric wire and repoussé patterns. At the centre of the brooch was set a blue glass cabochon (also Evison 1978a: 90). In addressing the question of applied brooch origins, Evison (1978a) drew on the study of disc brooches from free Germanic areas of Europe made by S. Thomas (ibid: 89-100). Thomas identified six different types of disc brooch found in these areas (although apparently not all of them were actually discs (ibid: 89)). Only Type A brooches – those with flat applied plates – are found in England. Additionally, Type A was sub-divided into Series I-III. The brooches belonging to Series I have applied discs attached to the baseplate by rivets while Series III brooches are square or rectangular. Examples of these types are not found in England. Hence it is only Thomas's Type A, Series II brooches (with a decorated plate soldered to the baseplate) that are found in England (ibid: 89-90). Thus, in terms of continental applied brooch types, those types found also in England are very limited. This group includes brooches with various forms of decorations, mainly in the form of geometric motifs, such as the floriate cross (*'Ankerkreuzmotiv'*), stars and running spirals (see below for full discussion of the forms to be used in the present study).

Past research on applied brooches

The first major study of applied brooches in England was by Leeds in 1912. Leeds looked at both saucer brooches and applied brooches in his study, and further divided these types by way of their decoration. Some were classified as having zoomorphic (stylized animal) decoration (classified as Salin's Style I), while the other motifs Leeds called geometric forms (Leeds 1912: 160-1). He also believed that the distribution of these types and sub-types could be divided into geographical areas. He hypothesized a 'Western area' (cemeteries in the area where all the rivers flow south between the Thames and the Severn) and an 'Eastern area' (cemeteries in the area where the rivers flow into The Wash) (ibid: 161). In between these regions, Leeds suggested that there was a territorial barrier – a 'line of demarcation' – separating the two areas. Although he was cautious in his use of historical evidence, Leeds linked the erosion of this barrier and Germanic settlement further west with the Saxon victory at the Battle of Bedford in 571 (ibid: 184-5), as recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.*

Leeds's research contradicted the earlier view that applied brooches were a specifically West Saxon type (i.e. found mainly in the western area). He found saucer and applied brooches in both areas, although the saucer brooch was most common in the west, while the applied brooch was more prevalent in the east (ibid: 175). He also found that geometric designs predominated in the west, while zoomorphic ornament was more common in the east (ibid.). Leeds explained this pattern in terms of the differing nature of the settlements in the two regions (ibid: 184-191). The predominance of geometric decoration in the 'Western area' was attributed to the idea that these designs were native Romano-British in origin and this represented a much greater survival of natives among the Germanic invaders in the west compared to the east, where 'the Romano-British element had been in a large measure obliterated' (ibid: 189) (but see Leeds 1925 – below).

More recently, the discussion of applied brooches in terms of the movements of specific groups of Germanic peoples within England has largely been abandoned. However, given that applied brooches are found in England and on the continent they remain an important item in the discussion of fifth-century migrations. Research has continued by adding newly-found examples to the corpus, and especially by defining and redefining typologies and chronologies, both in England and on the continent (Böhme 1974; 1986; Evison 1978a and b; Kirk and Leeds 1954: 73-4; Leeds 1945; Welch 1975; 1976):

Dating

The brooches in Leeds's eastern area (which had continental parallels and mainly typically Germanic zoomorphic ornamentation) he believed were generally early; dating to before the end of the fifth century. However, as described above, Leeds claimed the east-west division in applied brooch/saucer brooch distribution persisted until 571 and the Battle of Bedford. This, he believed, tied in well with his view that no early brooches existed in the western area; most were sixth-century or later and reflected the survival of native/Roman art styles (Leeds 1912: 188-9). By 1925, however, further discoveries of brooches (especially the equal-armed brooch from Sutton Courtenay) led Leeds to revise his views. He now argued that archaeology and the early *Chronicle* entries were 'irreconcilable' (Leeds 1925: 104; also Leeds 1933) since 'it is archaeologically certain that the Saxons held the district immediately south and west of Oxford at least three-quarters of a century before the traditional date of the battle [of Bedford] in AD 571' (ibid: 105). Hence, some applied brooches from the western area with parallels in East Anglia could be placed along side equal-armed brooches and dated earlier.

Åberg (1926: 23) believed that the applied brooch was a development of the later sixth century; a deduction based on stylistic considerations. However, while some of the later zoomorphic

applied brooches may have continued up to that time, most scholars date the early forms to at least a century before Åberg's date.

The burials containing applied brooches found around Dorchester in the late 1800s are now significant for the discussion of the earliest examples of this type in England. A pair of bronze applied brooches (Type Jouswier – see below) were found in Grave III (Kirk and Leeds 1954: 69) and the authors note that a very similar brooch was found at the *terp* site of Jouswier in Holland (ibid: 73). Kirk and Leeds also quoted Roeder, who argued that continental applied brooches were developed from the second half of the fourth century (ibid: 75). However, in the case of the graves found around Dorchester, the mixture of 'Germanic' material (e.g. applied and cruciform brooches) and 'Roman' material (e.g. belt fittings) suggested to Kirk and Leeds that the artefacts were deposited before the 'true invasion period' (therefore early in the fifth century?) by *foederati* troops stationed in Dorchester (ibid: 74-5).

Böhme (1974: 25-6) dated his applied brooch *Vorformen* (see above) to around 300, or the early fourth century because it had similar decoration to other shield and disc brooches in middle and southern Germany that were dated to that period. An actual applied brooch (Type Westerwanna) was found with an equal-armed brooch in Grave 19 at Sahlenburg/Galgenberg thus dating the former to around 400 (see also Welch 1975 – below). However, Böhme believed that applied brooches appeared in England in the fifth century, even as late as the second half of the fifth century, since that is when the Anglo-Saxon cemeteries begin (Böhme 1974: 28) (NB: It should, however, be noted that this is a circular argument, since the early English cemeteries are themselves dated by those same brooches, along with historical sources).

On the basis of associated finds (dated by other scholars, hence 'mutual validation') and some coins found in the graves, Evison (1978a) dates almost all the continental applied brooches she describes to around AD 400 and rejects Böhme's view that 'such brooches found in England cannot be earlier than the second half of the fifth century' (ibid: 98). She believes that there *was* a Germanic presence in England earlier than 450 (ibid: 100) and hence arrives at a broad date-range for the English applied brooches;

> 'The brooches discussed above must all have been produced in the fifth century, one or two perhaps earlier. Some could have been buried as late as the beginning of the sixth century, but the contents of some graves suggest deposition before the middle of the fifth century...' (Evison 1978b: 270).

Others, however, have not accepted Evison's conclusions. Sonia Chadwick Hawkes has written that Evison 'tends as usual to date them indiscriminately early and assume most were imports' (Hawkes 1986: 81).

Welch wrote two papers (1975; 1976) dealing with the dating of continental and English applied brooches, especially those with star and floriate cross decoration from Liebenau and Mitcham. Inhumation Grave II/196 from Liebenau contained two applied brooches; one with a David's Star (Böhme's Type Rhenen, found only on the continent) and one with a floriate cross motif (Type Westerwanna). This, wrote Welch, demonstrated that these designs were contemporary (Welch 1975: 88). Additionally, Grave 18 in the Sahlenburg/Galgenberg cemetery contained a Type Rhenen brooch as well as a supporting-arm brooch which was dated by Werner to the second half of the fourth century, or the beginning of the fifth century (ibid: 88-9. See also Böhme 1974: 28). Grave 19 in the same cemetery also contained two floriate cross applied brooches as well as an equal-armed brooch that Welch dates to the beginning of the fifth century (ibid: 89) (These observations illustrate clearly the use of artefact associations and mutual validation in the construction of early medieval chronological schemes – see Section 6.2.13). Hence, considering also some English brooches with floriate cross decoration, Welch concluded that;

> 'As the brooches at Liebenau Grave II/196 and Galgenberg Grave 19 were probably deposited within the first quarter of the fifth century, there is no reason why the Mitcham, London, Guildown and High Down brooches discussed should not have been manufactured in England within the first half of the fifth century and been deposited in graves around the middle of that century' (Welch 1975: 91).

This conclusion is echoed in Welch's 1976 paper on a similar theme. Welch also argued that some of these brooches, along with other types from the Surrey and Sussex cemeteries are so closely paralleled in terms of their decoration that they may have been produced by a single workshop or even a single craftsman (Welch 1975: 91). This would seem to give rise to problems in discussing the relationship between brooches in England and very similar ones on the continent; does formal similarity suggest migration by the users, by craftsmen, or a copying of decorative motifs found in other geographical areas by craftsmen?

Applied brooches are therefore sometimes dated to the late fourth century (usually on the continent) but more generally to the fifth century. It remains to define precisely which types will be included in the database for the present study.

Fifth-century applied brooches with continental parallels

The list of applied brooch types analysed in the present study was based around Böhme's *Fundlisten* (1974; 1986) and used only those types that have examples both on the continent and in England (see Fig. 27). Some examples of those types that were not known to Böhme when he wrote were also included.

Type Westerwanna is an applied brooch decorated with a floriate cross or *Ankerkreuz* motif (Böhme 1974: 26, 350). Type Krefeld-Gellep has a chip-carved, five spiral ornament on the applied plate, while Type Jouswier also has a five spiral motif, but in the form of a central Catherine Wheel or 'whirligig' (Kirk and Leeds 1954: 69) design, surrounded by two rings of dots (Böhme 1974: 26, 351). The applied plates from Type Mahndorf brooches are decorated with four stylized animal heads that form a cruciform pattern in the middle field. Around the animal heads are concentric notched bands and an 'egg and rod' frieze (ibid: 27; 351). The last type to be included here is Böhme's Type Muids. These brooches are decorated with three backward looking animals with projecting tongues, a lock of hair from the neck and three-pronged tails. This type of animal decoration is also found on late Roman chip-carved bronzes (ibid: 27, 351).

Böhme's Type Liebenau brooches must also be described here. Like those belonging to Type Krefeld-Gellep, Type Liebenau brooches are decorated with a five spiral pattern. However, in this case, the decoration is not on an applied repoussé plate, rather, they are faced with a cast appliqué decorated by chip-carved motifs (*gegossene kerbschnittauflage*). This type will be classified as an applied brooch in the database as they are made in two pieces and are not fully cast, as with 'proper' saucer brooches. They are significant since they are believed to be a technologically intermediate form between the earlier applied brooch and the saucer brooch (see below).

To summarize, it has been established that applied brooches, similar in both form and decoration, are found on the continent (where they are believed to have originated) and in England. Furthermore, although there may be arguments over the precise dating of this type, those found in England are generally dated to the fifth century and are associated with the early stages of the migrations from the continent.

Saucer brooches

Although saucer brooches appear to be very similar to applied brooches (Fig. 28, Map 5) (indeed some types even have the same decorative motifs, e.g. five spirals), in terms of both construction and chronology the saucer brooch is said to be a later development of the applied brooch (Dickinson 1993: 11-13; Evison 1978a: 88; Hawkes 1986: 81; Leeds 1912: 193). There are around 600 examples now known in England (Dickinson 1993: 13), although, as will be shown below, not all of these can be included in the present study and far fewer are known on the continent.

Description

It is the construction of the brooches that constitutes the main difference between applied brooches and saucer brooches. Saucer brooches were cast in one piece. To do this a wood, bone, or wax model would have been shaped and carved with the required design. This would then have been encased in clay to form a mould into which the metal (alloys of copper with varying amounts of tin and zinc) was poured (Dickinson 1993: 34-6). The front face of many saucer brooches is also gilded (MacGregor and Bolick 1993: 42). Cast saucer brooches vary a great deal in size; they range from 2.4 to 8.2cm, although the average size is 4 to 4.5cm (ibid: 13-14).

There are many different types of decoration found on cast saucer brooches; Dickinson has classified eighteen different styles. However, these have often been divided more simply into geometric and animal/zoomorphic motifs (e.g. Boyle et al. 1995: 77; Dickinson 1993: 15; Leeds 1912: 160-1). As with applied brooches, nearly all the geometric motifs are believed to have originated from late antique metalwork styles, via the use of those styles on applied brooches (Böhme 1974: 28; Dickinson 1991: 41; Leeds 1912: 164). These decorative motifs include stars, floriate crosses (similar to the *Ankerkruezmotiv* found on applied brooches) and running spirals. The latter is the most numerous geometric motif, making up twenty-five per cent of Dickinson's corpus. Half of these are five spiral motifs (Dickinson 1993: 17). Five-spiral saucer brooches have been particularly influential in deducing cross-channel material parallels and these will be discussed in more detail below. Brooches with six to ten spirals are also known in England but these are believed to be later developments (Evison 1987: 48). Zoomorphic motifs are also common on English cast saucer brooches, and many of these designs have been classified as belonging to Salin's Style I. Style I is found on forty to fifty per cent of cast saucer brooches (Dickinson 1993: 23) and may also be seen as a slightly later form of decoration when compared to geometric examples (Dickinson 1993: 23).

Some comments have been made regarding the context in which saucer brooches have been found. It has been noted that they as are usually found in pairs near where the shoulders or upper chest of the deceased would have been in the grave. This has been used to infer that they secured a *peplos* style dress at the shoulders (Dickinson 1993: 38; Owen-Crocker 1986). Furthermore, where skeletal analysis has been possible, it was found that saucer brooches were buried with women, usually late adolescents or adults (ibid.) (contexts of deposition are discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven).

Past research on saucer brooches

Before recent studies of saucer brooches included considerations of context, metallurgy and construction (e.g. Dickinson 1991; 1993), scholars focused on the distribution and relative numbers of saucer brooches in attempts to interpret them. Leeds was the first to discuss this type

specifically (along with applied brooches). His paper of 1912 showed saucer brooches as being distributed across southern central and south-eastern England, with a concentration in the Upper Thames area. Of course, since 1912 many more saucer brooches have been found, adding detail to the distribution. However, it has been said that, despite almost a century of research, the general outline of this pattern has not changed a great deal (MacGregor and Bolick 1993: 42 – c.f. maps in Dickinson 1991 and 1993). As described above, Leeds (1912) explained the predominance of saucer brooches with geometric decoration in what he called his 'Western area' (compared to the many applied brooches with zoomorphic decoration in the east) with references to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the date of the Battle of Bedford (AD 571) as well as the differing nature of the settlement in eastern and western England.

Dickinson (1993: 11) notes that since Leeds's work early in the twentieth century (slightly revised in Leeds 1933; 1945), no similarly comprehensive and published account of saucer brooches had been produced until her own research started. Although the explicit ethno-historical models have generally been abandoned, the saucer brooch is still seen as a significant item of early Anglo-Saxon jewellery that is important for our understandings of the migration period in England (ibid; Böhme 1974; 1986; Evison 1981: 137; Hawkes 1986: 81). As such, much of the more recent work on saucer brooches has been to do with drawing attention to newly discovered examples, noting stylistic parallels between brooches and refining classifications and chronologies (e.g. Evison 1981; Dickinson 1991; 1993).

Origins

The studies referred to above have often included discussions on the origins of saucer brooches. As mentioned above, the saucer brooch is believed to be a development of the applied brooch and this view has changed little since Leeds's paper of 1912. The main problem regarding the origin of the numerous English saucer brooches was that these types were very scarce on the continent. As Leeds commented;

> 'It must have struck anyone interested in this period as strange that we should possess in England a fully developed brooch-form for which no continental prototype can be adduced, whereas the history of all other forms known from Anglo-Saxon graves can be traced to continental sources' (Leeds 1912: 192).

However, he went on to describe how he did find applied brooches (albeit examples that had been burnt in cremation pyres) in the museums of northern Germany. Thus he concluded that the applied brooches were earlier than the saucer brooches and the evolution of the latter 'was in [the] process of becoming a realized fact at exactly the point at which the migrations to England were beginning' (Leeds 1912: 195). Hence, the full development of the form and a majority of the examples are to be found in England. Since then, a few more examples of fully cast saucer

brooches have been found in northern Germany (e.g. Type Alphen – see below) but they remain rare. They have been found mainly between the Elbe and Weser and in the cemeteries on the Rhine. Furthermore, applied brooches with decorative motifs in common with saucer brooches have also been found (e.g. the five-spiral motif) including those made with applied foil discs (e.g. Type Krefeld-Gellep) and with cast appliqués (e.g. Type Liebenau). For these reasons, Dickinson believes the continental cast appliqué brooches are pivotal in the technological evolution of the saucer brooch and in the development of the five-spiral motif, both of which became much more common in England (Dickinson 1991: 43; 1993: 17). Evison echoes this view, writing that the numerous applied brooches on the continent and few saucer brooches – with many more of the latter found in England – point to the applied brooches being earlier than the saucer brooches (Evison 1978a: 97). Additionally she suggests that the cast saucer brooch may represent an attempt to make a more robust version of the applied brooch, as the latter type is often found damaged or incomplete (ibid: 88). Although the chronology of this process has been debated (see below), this general model for the origins of English saucer brooches appears to be widely accepted (Böhme 1974: 28-31; 1986: 551; Evison 1981: 137; 1987: 47-8; Hawkes 1986: 81).

Dating

Dating the development of the saucer brooch and its appearance in England has, however, been more controversial. Leeds's (1912) opinion was based on historical sources and Salin's classifications of decorative styles. Salin placed the beginnings of Style I zoomorphic ornamentation around AD 450 (Leeds 1912: 161), although many would now place this in the later fifth century (see Dickinson 1993: 15, 23). Böhme dated certain late antique decorative styles to the last third of the fourth century and when these were found on saucer brooches he dated those items to c.400. He also dated the brooch from Altenbülstedt to the late fourth or early fifth century on the basis of the associated grave goods (Böhme 1974: 30). The more numerous English examples he dated to the second half of the fifth or into the sixth century, although few can actually be securely dated to the fifth century (ibid.).

Evison has given saucer brooches with five spiral decoration a generally earlier date. She wrote that types with this ornamentation were 'not made later than the middle of the fifth century' (Evison 1981: 137; also 1987: 48). This view has been rejected by others (e.g. Dickinson 1993: 17; Hawkes 1986: 81). Dickinson believes that the origins of the saucer brooch (i.e. the time at which cast appliqué brooches gave way to fully cast saucer brooches) can be pinpointed in time to the middle decades of the fifth century (Dickinson 1993: 17). However, as for the bulk of the examples she writes that '[t]here are few graves with brooches of the English Main Series (i.e. not the very earliest brooches – see below) which can provide conclusive evidence for burial within the fifth century' (Dickinson 1991: 55).

It is clear, therefore, that only the earliest saucer brooches are generally dated to the fifth century. It remains to define which brooches fall within the criteria for the present study. In examining research done on these brooches it became apparent that the most recent and comprehensive studies of English saucer brooches (i.e. Dickinson's papers) and those studies that also included continental material (i.e. Böhme's work) were not entirely compatible. The present study, therefore, will only deal with those types of saucer brooch that both Böhme *and* Dickinson would date to the fifth century and are found in England and on the continent.

Fifth-century saucer brooches with continental parallels

As described above, continental applied brooches with five spiral decoration on applied cast appliqués are believed to be the fore-runners of the fully cast saucer brooches. The latter are rare on the continent and those also with five spiral decoration belong to Böhme's Type Alphen (Böhme 1974: 28-30, 353). Dickinson also gives Böhme's Type Alphen (Fig. 27) as the example of fully cast continental saucer brooches with five-spiral decoration (Dickinson 1991: 44).

Problems arise when we turn to the English parallels. Böhme lists a large number of English, fully cast saucer brooches and many of these are also mentioned by Dickinson. However, Dickinson (whose work is more comprehensive and up to date than Böhme's) suggests that only those five-spiral brooches that belong to her 'Primary Series' can be exactly paralleled on the continent and certainly dated to the fifth century (see Dickinson 1991: 48, 55; 1993: 17). There are only six brooches in Dickinson's Primary Series to date (Dickinson 1991 and pers. comm.). Two are actually cast appliqué brooches (Type Liebenau), which leaves only four English saucer brooches with five spiral decoration that are fully cast, have exact continental parallels and are certainly dated to the fifth century. Even so, Dickinson admits that whether the Primary Series brooches were made on the continent or in England remains a moot point (Dickinson 1991: 48).

There are three other saucer brooch designs (Fig. 27) that are paralleled in England and on the continent and are dated to the fifth century although the origins of these types are not as well understood (Dickinson 1993: 17-18). First, there is Böhme's Type Altenbülstedt, cast saucer brooches decorated with a type of floriate cross or scroll motif (Böhme 1974: 30, 353). Type Otterstedt has, what Böhme calls a 'double egg and rod frieze', giving the impression of a rosette pattern (ibid.). Lastly, Type Harmignies brooches are decorated with a seven spiral motif. These are also found both in England and on the continent and therefore will be included here. It should however be pointed out that most saucer brooches with seven spirals are found in England (Böhme 1974: 30; Dickinson 1993: 17) and – in contrast to the normative model in

which stylistic influences are usually said to have come with migrants from the continent – this led Dickinson to argue that the continental Type Harmignies brooches listed by Böhme were probably exports from England (Dickinson 1993: 17).

To summarize, the fully cast saucer brooches to be used in the present study will be drawn from those belonging to Böhme's classifications listed above, as well as from Dickinson's Primary Series of five-spiral brooches. This does of course force the omission of a huge majority of the English saucer brooches, however, these types do not necessarily fall within the criteria of this research since they do not have certain continental parallels and are not definitely dated to the fifth century.

Cruciform Brooches

Cruciform brooches have been one of the most widely debated types of fifth-century metalwork (Figs. 29-30, Map 6). The type has always been central to discussions concerning the chronology of the Anglo-Saxon migrations as well as the nature of the links between eastern England and north-western Europe and southern Scandinavia in the fifth century. However, despite the huge amount of research conducted on cruciform brooches their dating and classification remain contentious. Furthermore, some of the brooches that fall under the general heading of 'cruciform brooch' cannot be included in the present study; some are not found both in England and on the continent and many are usually dated later than the fifth century. As with saucer brooches, there are difficulties in deciding which brooches should be included in the present study but the decisions made here will be based on the most up-to-date surveys of the type currently available.

Description

The cruciform brooch is an ornamented safety pin (Mortimer 1990: 2) or bow brooch, made of cast bronze/copper alloys. It consists of a rectangular headplate, to which is usually attached an ornamental top-knob and the spring/pin assembly at the rear. On later examples, the side-knobs are also attached to the headplate, although on the simple, typologically early examples, the side-knobs are attached to the end of the spring assembly and are often missing. Below the headplate is the bow, and at the base of the bow is the foot with a pin-catch on the back. Beginning with some of the very earliest examples, the foot is decorated with what is usually described as a horse's or animal's head (or a 'pike's head' – anon. 1863). These are the main features, and this basic form was developed by the elaboration of these elements or by the addition of others, such as protruding lappets at the top of the foot (Leeds 1945: 69). However, as we shall see, only the simple, typologically earliest examples will concern us here.

Past research on cruciform brooches

Cruciform brooches are believed to have developed from fourth-century 'Nydam brooches' found in northern Germany and southern Scandinavia (Mortimer 1990: 151; Reichstein 1975: 11, 103). However, in the early 1900s some believed that the type was a development of the Roman crossbow brooch, while others argued that the origins of the type lay with types used by pre-migration Goths of southern Russia. These brooches were said to have influenced brooch styles in East Prussia, the Baltic regions, Denmark and Sweden from around AD 200 (Baldwin Brown 1915: 259; Smith 1923: 23-4).

One of the earliest discussions of cruciform brooches was written by Godfrey-Faussett in 1876. He called these 'hammer shaped brooches', rejecting the 'cruciform' label on the grounds that it does not describe their shape very accurately and they have nothing to do with Christianity (Godfrey-Faussett 1876: 301). Also, in contrast to many of the studies that would follow, his interpretation of these brooches was purely functional;

> 'The shape is the most simple and natural possible, and has clearly no connection with any sentiment, nor is it intended to represent any other object whatsoever. It is simply a shield to the pin, widening and narrowing with the shape of the pin and its adjuncts' (Godfrey-Faussett 1876: 301-2).

The first detailed study of what were by then always known as cruciform brooches was by the Norwegian scholar Haakon Shetelig in 1906. His book, *The Cruciform Brooches of Norway*, classified the brooches by comparing various elements of their construction, especially the headplate and foot (Hines 1984: 246; Mortimer 1990: 37). He discussed brooches from Norway, Sweden and Denmark and how they were related to those found on the continent and in England (Hines 1984: 244-6, Reichstein 1975: 11). Basing his chronology on the work of Salin (Brooks 1994: 96), Shetelig wrote that the earliest cruciform brooches were to be found in the bog deposits at Nydam in Schleswig and that these dated to the later fourth century. The important 'prototype cruciform' (Baldwin Brown 1915: 261) found at Dorchester-on-Thames (Fig. 30a) he dated to no later than AD 400 (ibid: 262). The brooches found in England and Denmark with side-knobs attached to the spring assembly he believed belonged to the fifth century, while the brooches found in England, Norway and Sweden with cast side-knobs belonged primarily to the sixth century (ibid: 261). Shetelig's chronology also influenced early typological work in England (e.g. Baldwin Brown 1915: 262; Leeds 1913: 76; Smith 1923: 25).

Åberg published the most influential and widely used classification of English cruciform brooches in 1926 (Figs. 29a and b). In English scholarship in particular, his system of five groups of cruciform brooches quickly became the standard means of classification (e.g. Leeds 1933: 239-41). It has also been used by the authors of quite recent cemetery reports (e.g.

Davison et al. 1993; Green et al. 1987; West 1988). Åberg's classification paid particular attention to the form of the foot (the animal head terminal), headplate and the knobs adjacent to the headplate (e.g. Åberg 1926: 33-5). The earliest brooches (also those with most significance for the present study) belong to Åberg's Group I. They have been found in northern Germany as well as on a number of Dutch *Terpen* sites. Examples have also been found in England and these are the same as the continental examples although the form of the pin catch may be different. Later English Group I brooches had broader headplates and more elaborate animal head designs below the bow (ibid: 34-5. C.f. Mortimer 1990: 108 and below). Åberg (1926: 35) wrote that the chronology of this early group could not be decided by associated grave finds, and as such, typology was the only option. He used English and Scandinavian material to date the earliest Group I brooches to just before the mid-fifth century, while the majority of this group belonged to the mid-fifth century (ibid: 35-6). Group II brooches were dated from around AD 500 to the mid-sixth century. They feature half-round knobs and the animal head foot has more developed or exaggerated nostrils (ibid: 36-8). Thus, it is only really Åberg's Group I brooches that would fall within the bounds of this study.

The next major contribution to the cruciform brooch debate, using both English and continental material, was that published by the German scholar Joachim Reichstein in 1975. He built on a long tradition of cruciform brooch research by the likes of Roeder, Genrich and Schuldt in Germany, and his classifications were based partly on those established by Genrich in the 1950s (Mortimer 1990: 39; Reichstein 1975: 14). Reichstein's extensive and detailed research placed the individual brooches into various *Typen* on the basis of their overall form rather than individual features (Mortimer 1990: 39). However, he was unable to classify quite a number of the brooches in the catalogue, and these he described as '*Einzelformen*'. Reichstein's types were placed into chronological phases (*Stufen*), and were further sub-divided by being described as *ältere, jüngere* or *späte.*

Since its publication, Reichstein's work has been criticized. Mortimer questioned the clarity of the typological categorisations (e.g. Mortimer 1990: 38, 40) and she also argued that to classify brooches by overall form, not individual features, made it difficult to assign new brooches to Reichstein's types (ibid: 39). Additionally, while Reichstein concentrated on cataloguing every Scandinavian and continental cruciform brooch, his coverage of the English examples was incomplete (ibid: 40). Mortimer has also described how Reichstein's Norwegian and continental chronologies were based on artefacts associated in graves. However, in England the chronologies were hampered by there being few similar 'chronological pegs' (ibid: 41).

Despite these perceived problems with Reichstein's work, it remains an important classificatory system, especially for the continental material, and a useful catalogue of cruciform brooches.

Reichstein's publication will therefore be used to deduce which continental cruciform brooches are comparable to the English examples.

The English cruciforms to be used in the present study are some of those that were analysed Catherine Mortimer (1990). The aim of her thesis was to rectify the deficiencies with previous classifications of English cruciform brooches by producing a new typology that incorporated all the known English cruciform brooches (Mortimer 1990: 14-15 – Fig. 14). This typology was based firstly on overall brooch form and size, with further detail being added by noting variations within specific design elements (e.g. the foot, headplate etc.) making up the individual brooches (ibid: 45). Using this methodology the brooches were split into five broad groupings (A, B, C, D and Z), each with a number of sub-types referred to by a numerical figure.

Fifth-century cruciform brooches with continental parallels

As mentioned previously, this study will use only those brooches that are both dated to the fifth century and found both in England and in the traditional 'Anglo-Saxon homelands'. This is where difficulties arise in using the two most recent classifications of English and continental cruciform brooches, that is to say those by Reichstein (1975) and Mortimer (1990). Reichstein does not discuss all the English cruciform brooches, and his typology is ill defined and difficult to apply to brooches he does not specifically discuss. However, Mortimer's thesis deals mainly with the English material, although the continental parallels for the brooches are discussed. As the present study is focused on material culture change in fifth-century England, it was decided to derive the cruciform brooch section of the database from Mortimer's study, and then to decide which continental types (as defined by Reichstein) were the most closely related to these in both form and chronology.

Given the criteria laid down for this study, only Mortimer's Type A brooches will be used (Fig. 30a). These are defined as brooches with simple foot forms, small headplates and a circular cross-section to the top knob. Type A1s are the simplest, while A2s and A3s have wider headplates and a simple animal head motif on the foot (Mortimer 1990: 108). The reasons for this choice are as follows. Mortimer writes that;

> 'There can be no doubt of the continental flavour of English Type A brooches. Indeed, it should be noted that many Type A brooches are not just typologically similar to continental examples, but they are identical and most likely are imports' (Mortimer 1990: 175-6).

Similarly, Mortimer's study of production techniques and organization confirms the general similarities between England and the continent in the earliest stages of cruciform brooch

production (i.e. in the fifth century) (ibid: 308). The chemical content of these brooches was shown to be similar (ibid: 397). It is however interesting to note that there are still 'a number of points of disparity' between the fifth-century cruciform brooches from the two regions. Three out of six English Type A3 brooches have hollow backs to their bows when all the continental cruciform brooches have solid bows, the pin catches on A1 and A2 brooches are not as long as the continental examples, and '[t]he English brooches are all rather smaller than the continental examples' (ibid: 307).

The close parallels between English and continental brooches do not apply to the brooches of Type B onwards (Fig. 30a), even though general similarities can still be observed (ibid: 163). Mortimer writes;

> '...it is possible to select the continental brooches which would look least obvious amongst a collection of English type B brooches; Reichstein's Typ Achlum and some of his Typ Krefeld-Gellep. These still stand out as 'un-English' to the attuned eye...Hence import seems unlikely for most English type B brooches' (ibid: 163).

Similarly, Mortimer believes that;

> 'After the earliest period of cruciform brooch production, it is always a simple matter to distinguish English brooches from continental ones' (ibid: 176-7).

The dating of these brooches in England relies on the burial found at Dorchester-on-Thames (Kirk & Leeds 1954), which has long been seen as significant in Anglo-Saxon archaeology (e.g. Baldwin Brown 1915: 261; Reichstein 1975: 92-4 – Fig. 30a). Mortimer used this burial;

> '...to provide a chronological peg for forms which were commonly found in England and which provide a basis for the development of later English forms, i.e. Type B brooches' (Mortimer 1990: 143-4).

Having considered the typological arguments relating to the material from this grave (e.g. Hawkes and Dunning's (1961) dating of a late Romano-British buckle), Mortimer concluded that 'the starting point of our relative chronology should be put in absolute terms in the first few decades of the fifth century' (ibid: 144). Brooches on the continent related to English Type As can also be dated to the first half of the fifth century (ibid: 156).

Given the above conclusions, Mortimer's English Type A brooches will be used in the present study. However, due to the differences in the classifications and the remit of Mortimer's and Reichstein's work, it was found to be somewhat more difficult to say which continental

brooches paralleled this group. Given that is was not possible to see each brooch 'in the flesh' in order to make this decision, the following is best guess as to which of Reichstein's continental types match most closely – in form and date – Mortimer's Type A cruciforms (this selection was made with the assistance of Catherine Mortimer who has seen many of the relevant continental examples). The continental types chosen belong to Reichstein's *Typen* Dorchester, Groß Seimß, Pritzier, St. John's College and Hjelmhede (Figs. 30b and c). Another early/simple type found on the continent is the *Typ* Witmarsum. However, Mortimer believes that 'there are no English brooches whose form could be mistaken for the true *Typ* Witmarsum form' (Mortimer 1990: 160). According to Mortimer (1990 and pers. comm.), other brooches that Reichstein parallels in England and on the continent are not exact parallels.

This choice of cruciform brooches does however mean that some of Mortimer's Type A English brooches were also classified by Reichtein as, for example, *Typ* Midlum or *Typ* Witmarsum, yet those types are not being included in the continental data set (see Appendix Two). Within the remit of the present study nothing can be done about this, and it demonstrates the inherent subjectivity of typological classification and that no single classification can satisfy two scholars (c.f. Chapter Six).

To summarize therefore, the cruciform brooch types to be used in the present study are those English examples belonging to Mortimer's Type A, and those continental examples belonging to Reichstein's *Typen* Dorchester, Pritzier and Groß Seimß. All these are found in England and on the continent (especially north-western Germany) and are dated to the fifth century.

Small-long brooches

Description

The small-long brooch (Figs 31a and b, Map 7) is perhaps the least intensively studied brooch type being used here. It has also been called the most modest of the 'safety-pin' brooches (MacGregor & Bolick 1993: 124). The construction of the small-long brooch is similar to that of the cruciform brooch. They have a headplate formed in a number of different styles (see below), behind that is the spring and pin assembly. Below the headplate is the bow at the base of which is the foot, also found in various different forms. They are all made of cast bronze.

Past research on small-long brooches

Small-long brooches have not always been seen as a separate identifiable form. In the early years of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, small-long brooches discovered during the course of excavations were often published as 'cruciform brooches' (e.g. Hief 1916; Read 1896). Indeed, some have described them as cheap imitations of the cruciform brooch (Bidder & Morris 1959; Leeds 1945: 8).

Since there has generally been little interest in the small-long brooch, the brief discussion of the type by Salin became important. Salin (1935 (1904): 73) stated that this type probably originated under the influence of *Armbrustfibeln* (especially the arrangement of the headplate – Fig. 29a) although he could not say if they belonged to the same family. These conclusions were endorsed by Plettke and were also quoted by Lethbridge (1931: 21). However, Lethbridge did point out a fundamental problem with using Salin's classification to date English examples. He wrote that 'some of the forms which Salin placed early in the series are found in England with late cruciform brooches and other ornaments' (ibid.).

The next author to deal specifically with the small-long brooch was E.T. Leeds. In 1945 he published what is still the most extensive discussion of the type. This paper was intended to redress an imbalance in the study of Anglo-Saxon metalwork. Leeds argued that a great deal of time and effort had been devoted to the study of the 'richer and more pretentious' material, but the conclusions drawn from this would remain incomplete until account had been taken of the 'less spectacular classes of ornament' (Leeds 1945: 2). For this reason Leeds examined the small-long brooches, which he claimed occurred 'chiefly in the poorer graves' (ibid: 3). Leeds also believed that these 'less conspicuous' objects were particularly helpful for understanding the process of migration (ibid: 5). His 1945 paper proposed a typology for small-long brooches based primarily on the shape of their headplates (see Fig. 31a). The main small-long brooch types were trefoil-headed, cross-potent, cross pattee, square-headed, and those with a lozenge foot. Each principal type also had a number of derivative types. The names of these types were derived from heraldic terminology (ibid: 5-6)

Small-long brooches occur both in England and on the continent, and Leeds dealt briefly with the latter before classifying and discussing the English examples in detail. Based on the work of authors such as Salin, Shetelig, Åberg and Plettke, Leeds identified continental brooches belonging to the cross-potent derivative and cross pattee classes, as well as some with lozenge-shaped feet (ibid: 6-8). Therefore, not all the types known in England were also paralleled on the continent. Leeds noted that;

> 'They [small-long brooches] are so much a feature of English Anglo-Saxondom that it is astonishing to find that they are seemingly quite scarce in the districts from which the invaders came' (Leeds 1945: 5).

The dating of small-long brooches has always been somewhat vague. Morris wrote that they 'defy historical classification', and while the ancestry of some elements can be determined the dates remain obscure (Bidder & Morris 1959: 97-8). This confusion is perhaps reflected in the range of dates that have been attributed to these brooches. Lethbridge quotes dates for the

brooches and items associated with them from the fifth century to the late sixth century (ibid.). Leeds's view is similar. He quotes the 'early' continental parallels from east of the Elbe in Germany as well as the association of some small-long brooches with Åberg's Group IV cruciform brooches in order to date the brooches in question to the late sixth century or beyond (Leeds 1945: 80).

Fifth-century small-long brooches with continental parallels

The most recent study of small-long brooches was that conducted by Böhme (1986). His classification identified two main forms of small-long brooch, and within each group were a number of other sub-types (Fig. 31b). All of these brooches Böhme dated to the second half of the fifth century. However, not all the sub-types are found in England and on the continent, and only those types that are found in both places will be discussed here.

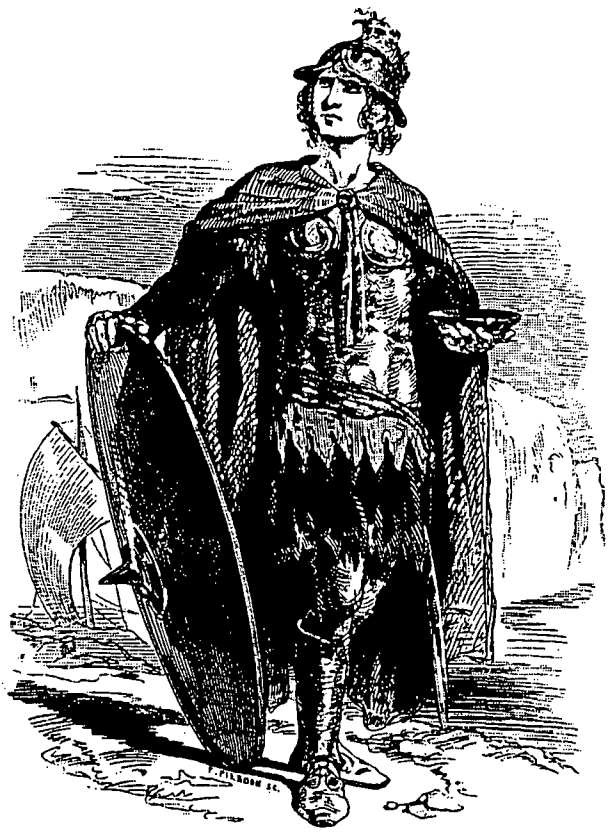
The first group comprises of bronze small-long brooches with 'gelappter' headplates that sometimes also have punched holes. The bow is decorated with ribbing to give a 'caterpillar' effect (which Böhme sees as a typically early feature (ibid: 556)), while the foot is a stretched trapezoidal shape (ibid.). Böhme refers to these as Typ Liebenau-West Stow. Only one of this type is known in England (from West Stow in Suffolk), and the majority are found on the Weser and in the east of the Elbe-Weser triangle in Germany (ibid: 554). Böhme describes these as the oldest small-long brooches in northern Germany. Nevertheless, he also believes that the small-long brooch form originated in the middle Donau region. From here the style spread into the whole of the Merovingian row-grave area as well as to the Niedersachsen and Mecklenburg urn grave region by the mid-fifth century. Yet despite originating further south, Böhme believes that it is in northern Germany that the first genuine small-long brooches are found (ibid: 555-6).

Forms Borgstedt-Rothwell and Bordesholm-Haslingfield also have 'gelappter' and/or punched-hole headplates. However, the feet are trapezoidal or spatulate and the bows are smaller and faceted, not ribbed (ibid.). Both these forms are far more widely distributed in England (north of the Stour-Severn line), as well as in the 'Anglian' areas of northern Germany (ibid: 557).

The second main group of bronze small-long brooches identified by Böhme are those with semi-circular headplates. Only one sub-form of this type has parallels in both England and on the continent, and that is Form Oldendorf-Issendorf. In England, these brooches are known only from West Stow in Suffolk and High Down in Sussex, although they have a more extensive distribution in the Elbe-Weser region of Germany. They are characterized by having a semi-circular or flattened semi-circular headplate with three ornamental knobs. The bow is long and ribbed and there is a stretched rhomboidal foot. Again, this type is dated by Böhme to the middle or second half of the fifth century, dates that are confirmed by associated grave goods

found with some examples in England and Germany (ibid: 557-8). Other brooches with semi-circular headplates belong to Forms Mahndorf-Mahlstedt and Pritzier-Perdöhl, but Böhme gives no English parallels for these types.

To summarize, the small-long brooches to be used in the present study are those that have been classified by Böhme as belonging to the fifth century that are also paralleled in England and on the continent. That is to say Forms Borgstedt-Rothwell, Bordesholm-Haslingfield and Oldendorf-Issendorf as well as Type Liebenau-West Stow.



An Anglo-Saxon Chieftain, A.D. 449.



An Anglo-Saxon Chieftain, A.D. 1849.
Illustrations from *The Anglo-Saxon* 1:3 (London, 1849).
Reproduced with permission of the Newberry Library, Chicago.

Figure 1 – After Frantzen and Niles 1997.

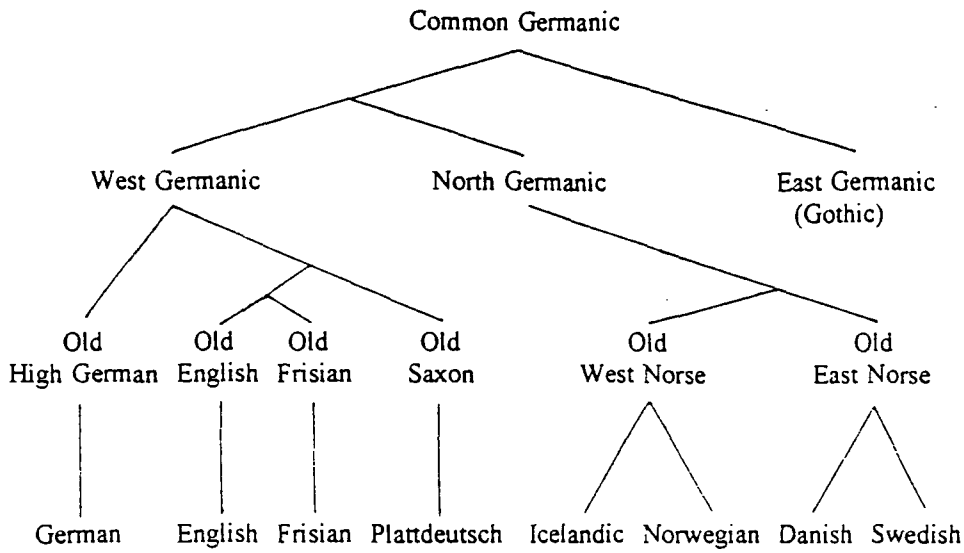


Figure 2 – A simplified version of the Germanic language 'family tree' (after Hines 1994).

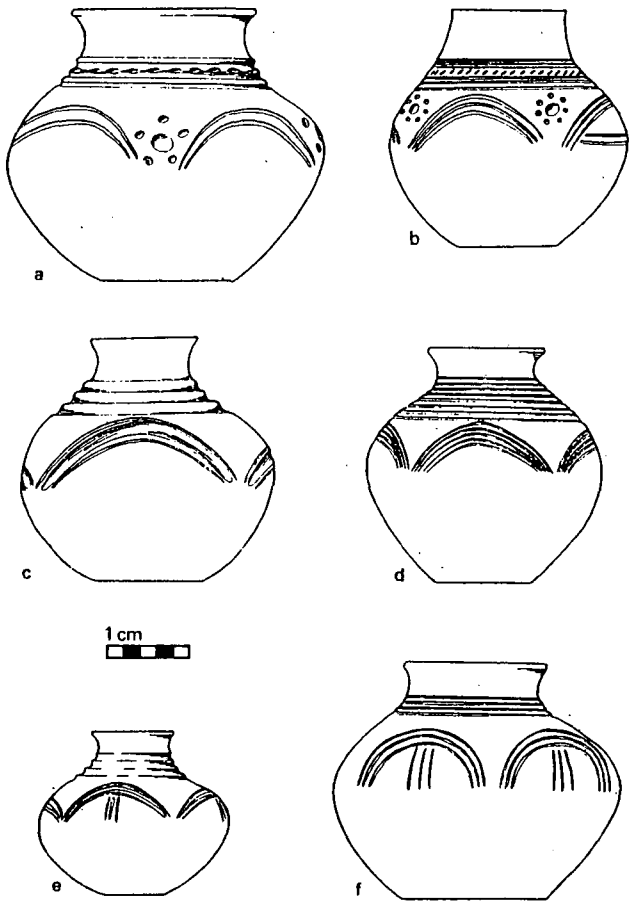


Fig. 5. Saxon *Stehende Bogen* pottery

a Zuidlaren. *b* Caistor, Norfolk.
c Westerwanna. *d* Little Wilbraham, Cambs.
e Westerwanna. *f* Elkington, Lincs.

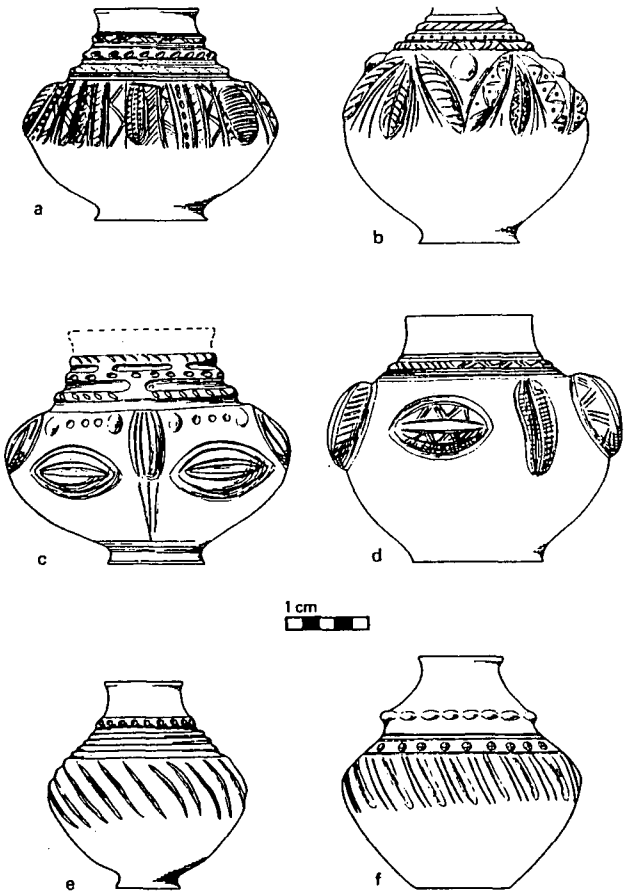


Fig. 6. Saxon *Buckelurnen*

a Westerwanna. *b* Sandy, Beds.
c Blumental. *d* Luton, Beds.
e Perlberg bei Stade. *f* Rushford, Norfolk.

Figure 3 – After Myres 1986.

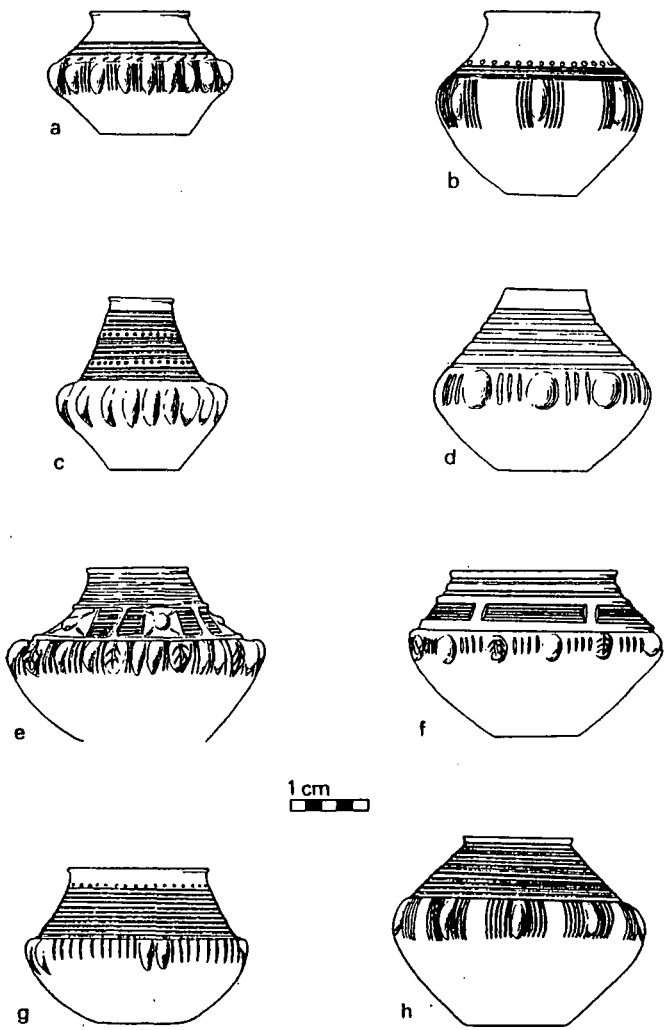


Fig. 3. English and continental pottery of Anglian types

a Bordesholm. *b* Loveden Hill, Lincs.
c Borgstedt. *d* Caistor, Norfolk.
e Hammoor. *f* Caistor, Norfolk.
g Borgstedt. *h* Newark, Notts.

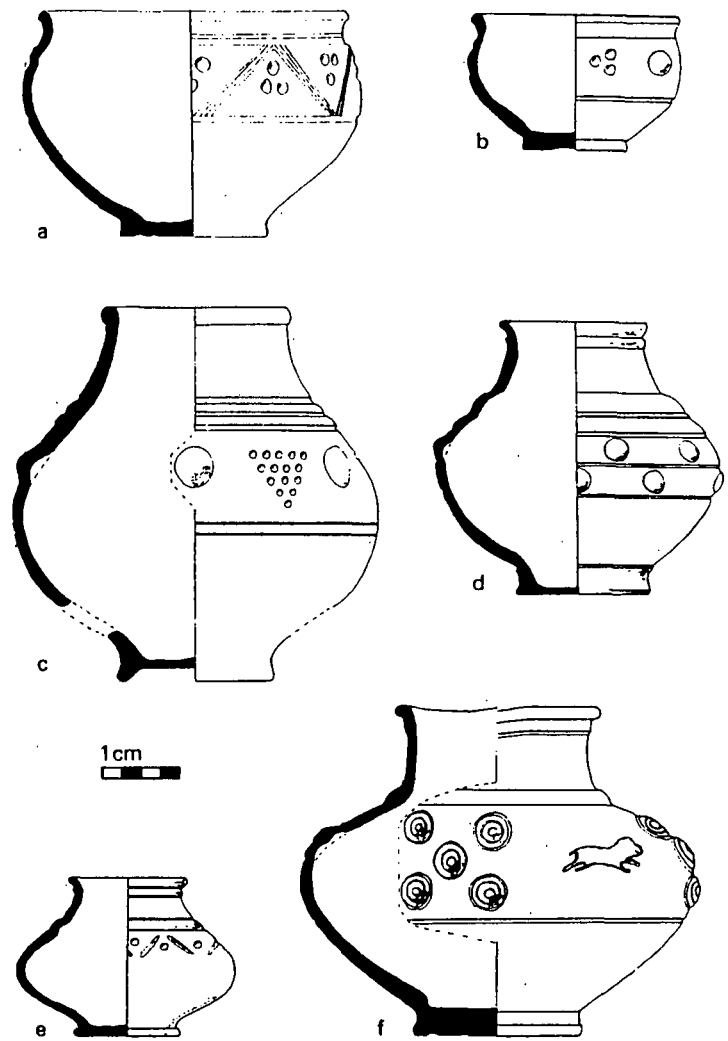


Fig. 7 Romano-Saxon pottery

a Water Newton, Hunts. *b* Highsted, Sittingbourne, Kent. *c* Harston, Cambs. *d* Chesterford, Essex. *e* Colchester, Essex. *f* Timworth, Suffolk.

Figure 4 – After Myres 1986.

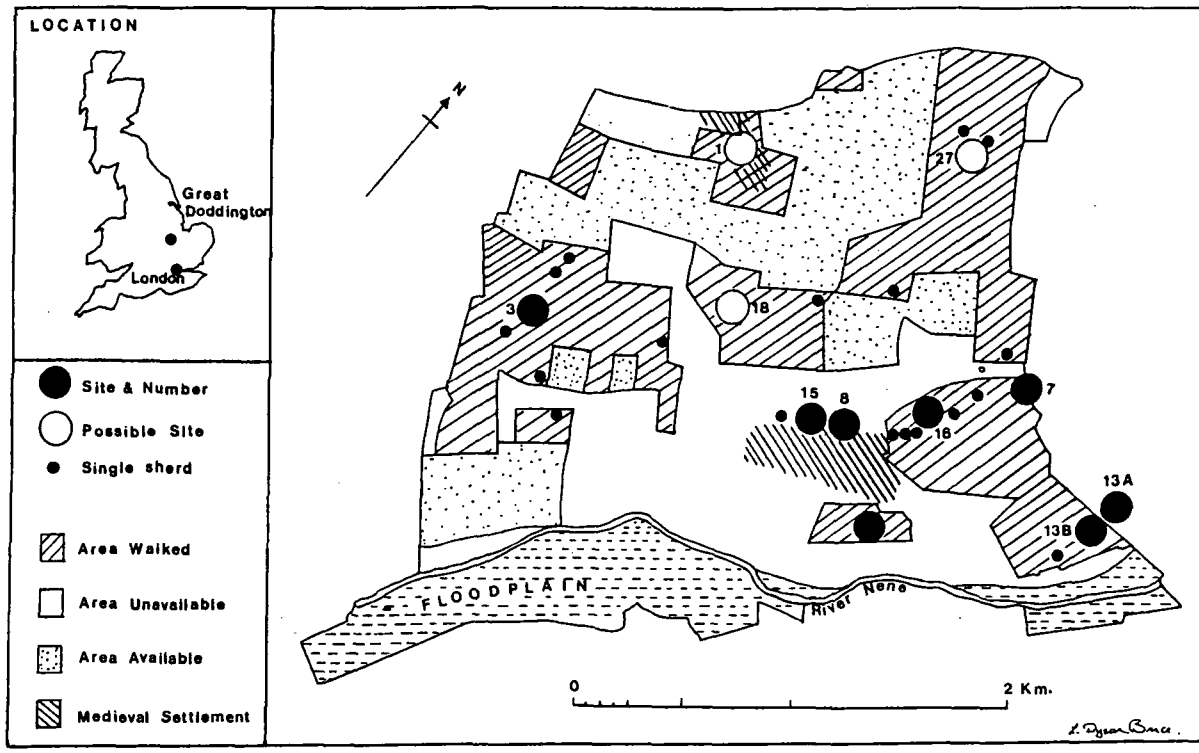


Figure 5 – Map of the parish of Great Doddington (Northamptonshire), showing the distribution of 'Anglo-Saxon' material found during a surface survey (after Foard 1978).

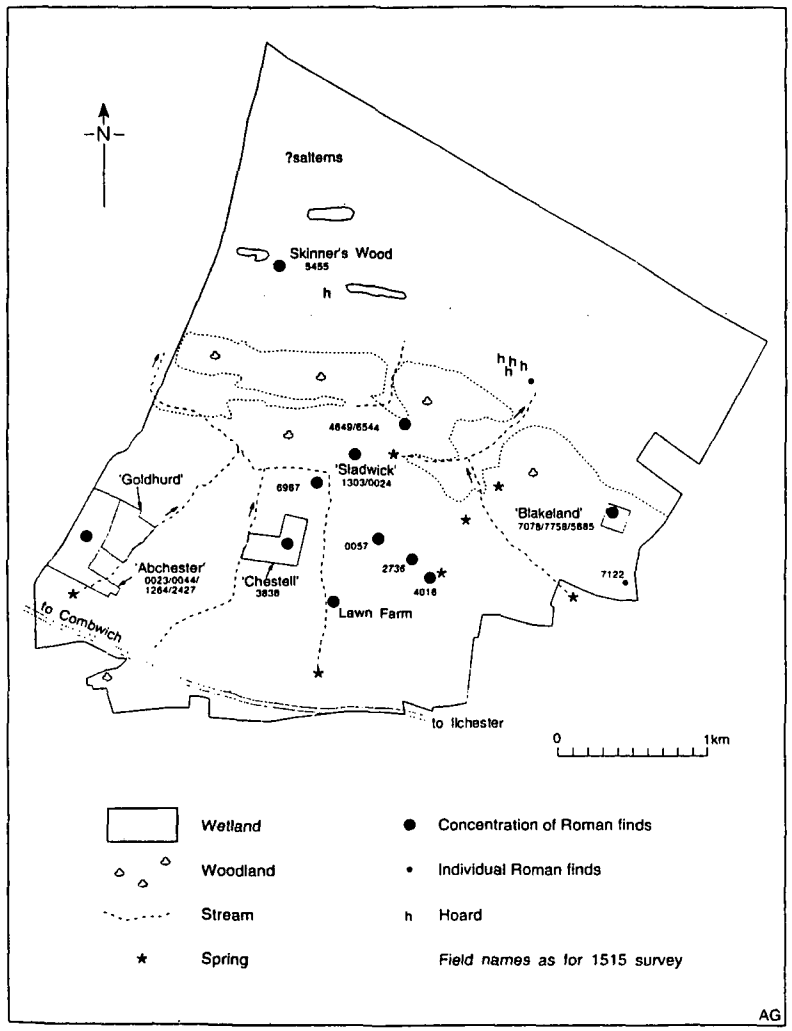


Fig 9. The Roman landscape

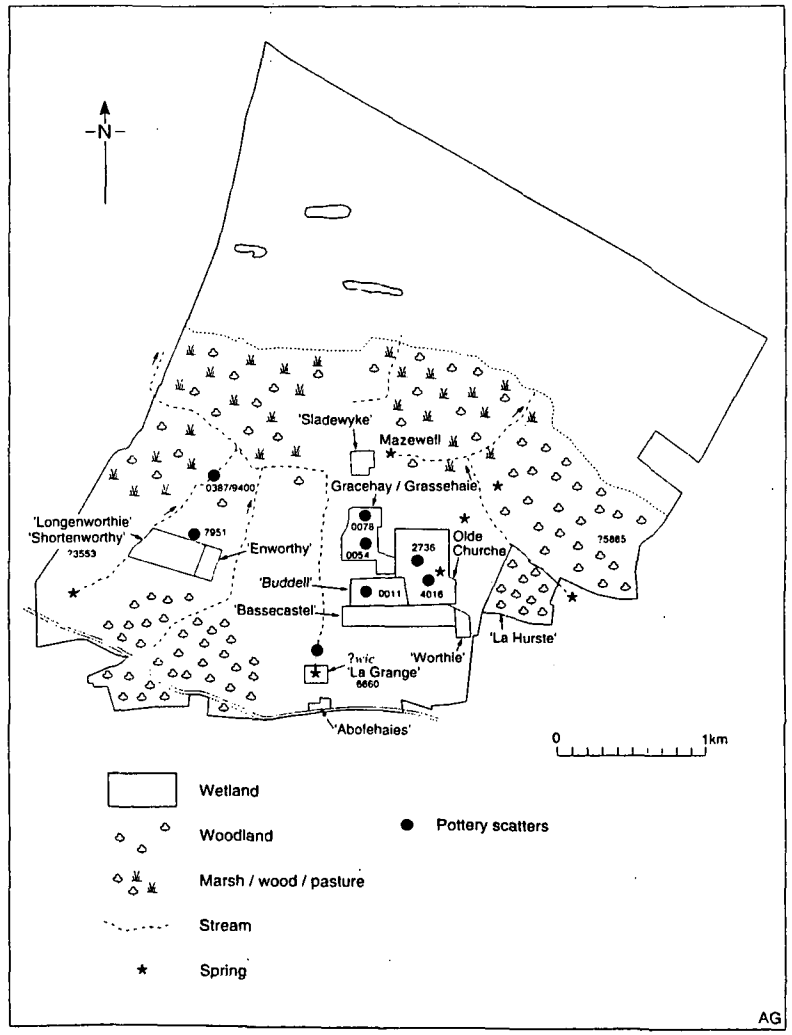
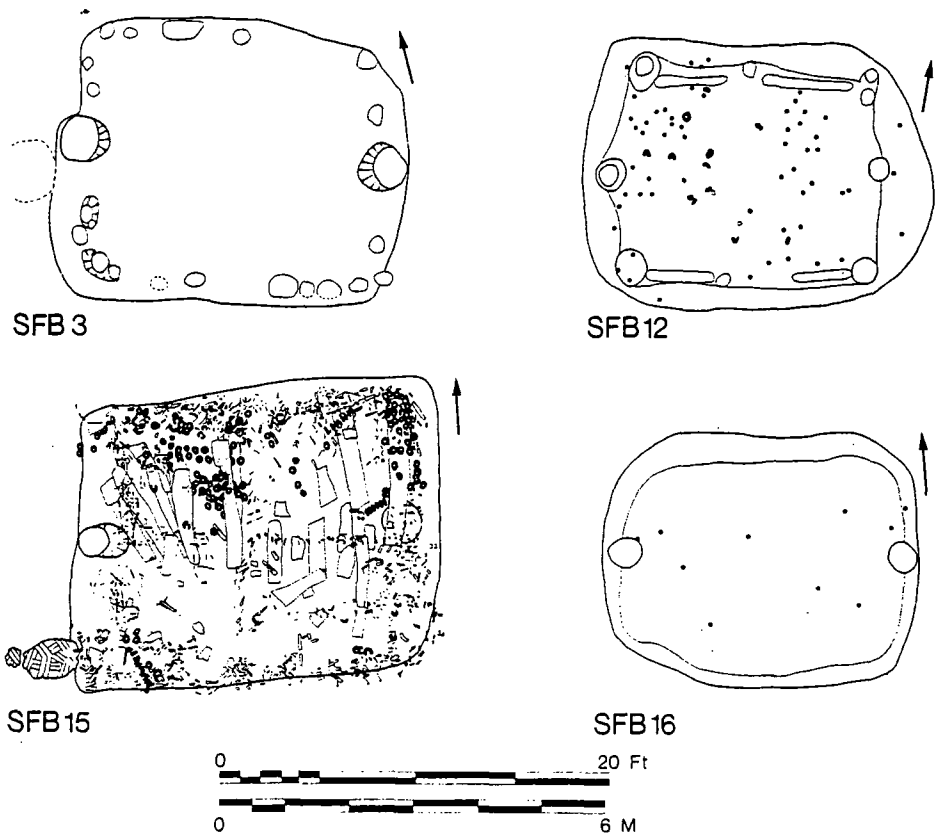


Fig 11. The early medieval landscape

Figure 6 – Roman and medieval surface finds from Shapwick (Somerset) (after Aston and Gerrard 1999).



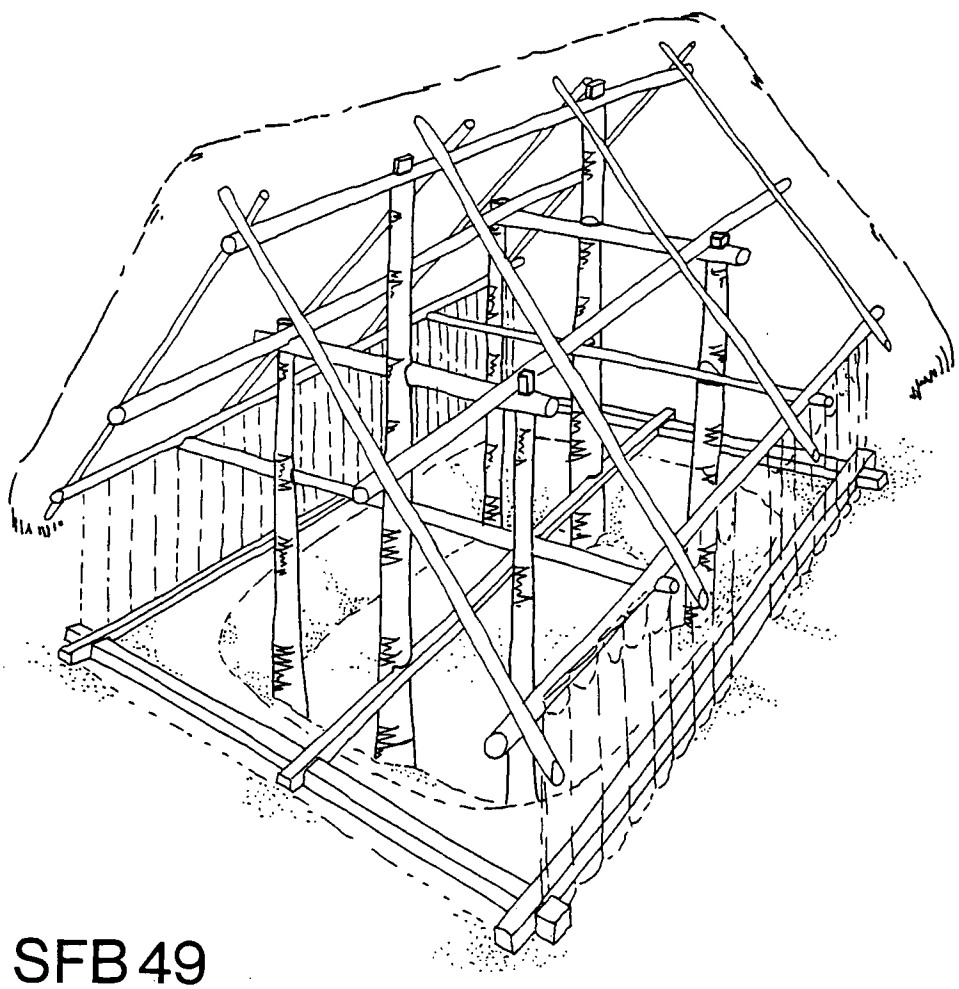


Figure 7 – Excavation plans and a possible reconstruction of *Grubenhäuser* found at West Stow (Suffolk) (after Welch 1992).

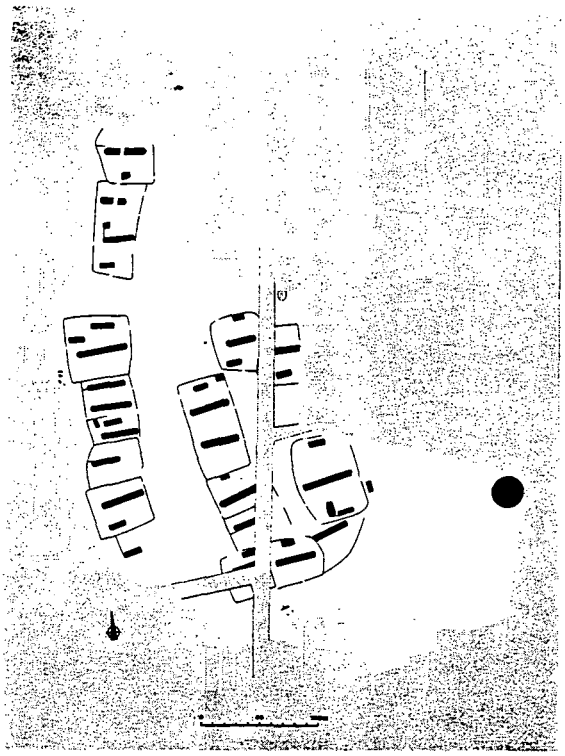


Fig. 5. The village in the 4th century A.D. The black dot indicates the position of the cemetery.

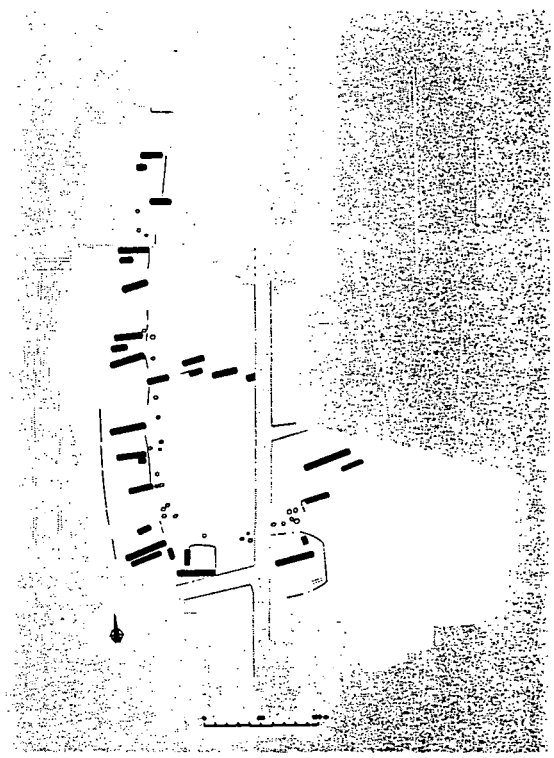


Fig. 6. The village in the 5th century A.D.

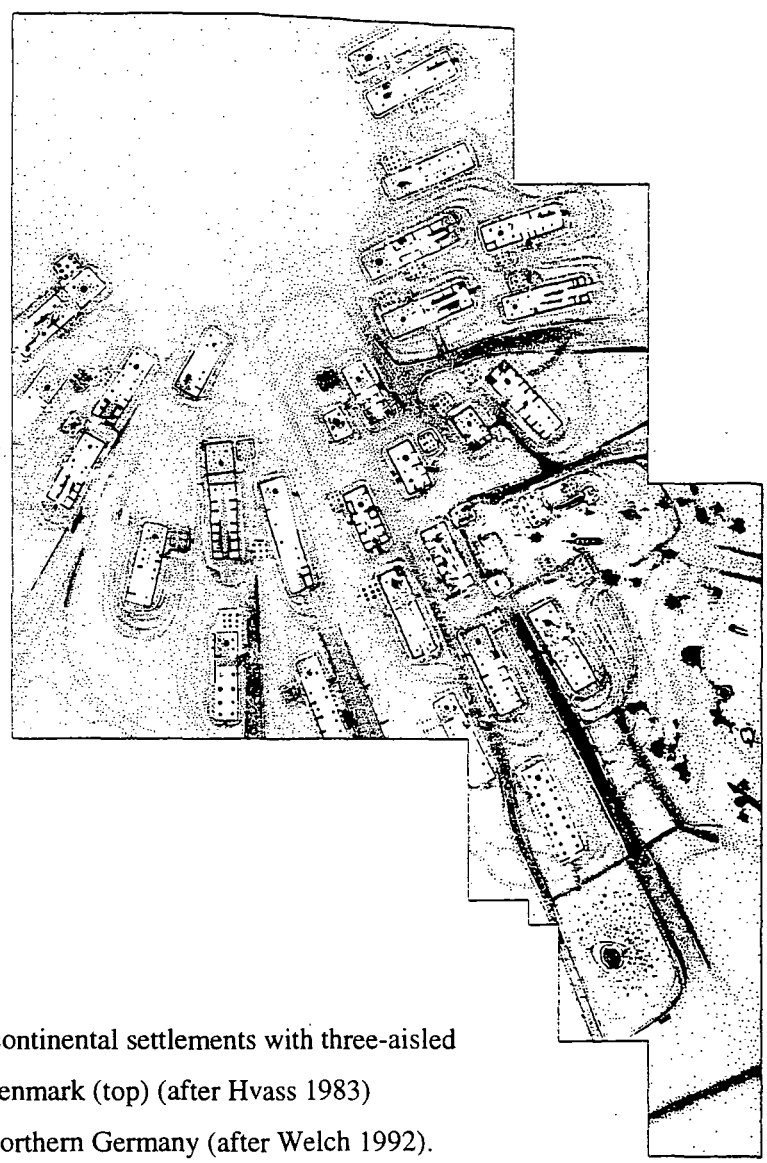


Figure 9 – Site plans of continental settlements with three-aisled longhouses. Vorbasse, Denmark (top) (after Hvass 1983) and Feddersen Wierde, northern Germany (after Welch 1992).



Figure 10 – Reconstructions of post-built structures at West Stow, with a reconstruction of a *Grubenaus* in the background (after West 1985).

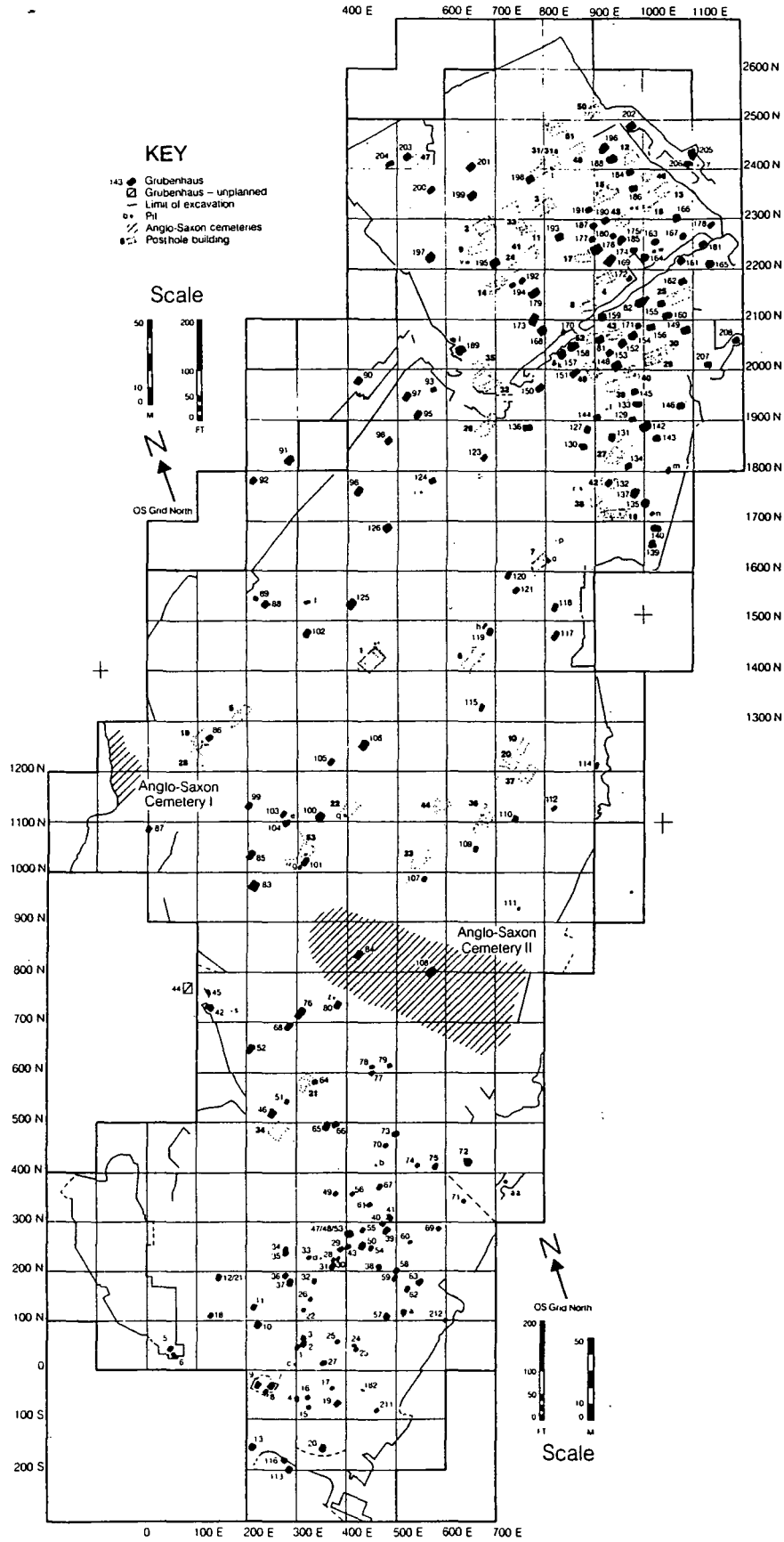


Figure 11a – Site plan of the early medieval settlement at Mucking (Essex), showing the location of *Grubenhäuser* and post-built structures (after Hamerow 1993a).

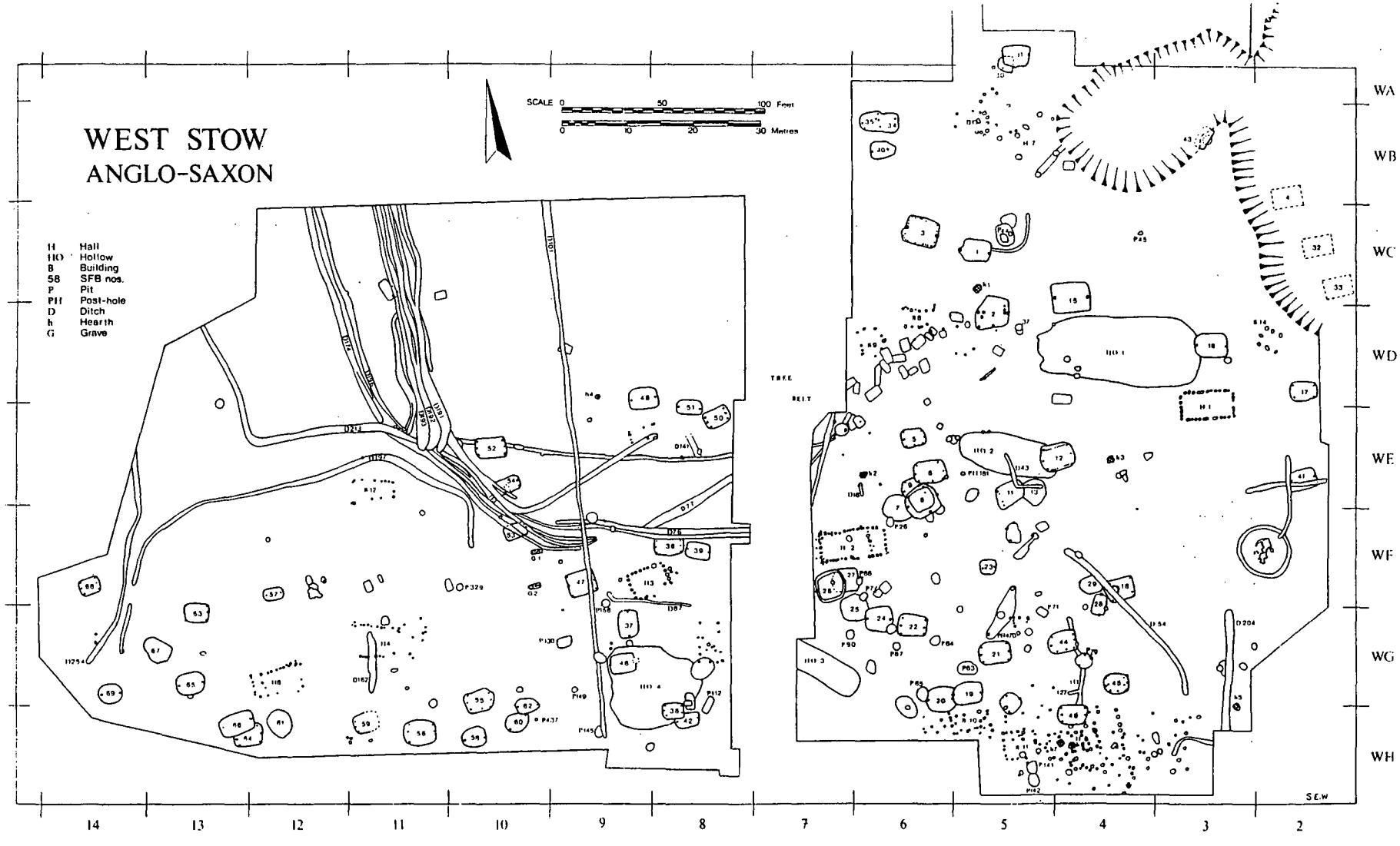


Figure 11b – Site plan of the early medieval settlement at West Stow (Suffolk), showing the location of *Grubenhäuser* and post-built structures (after West 1985).

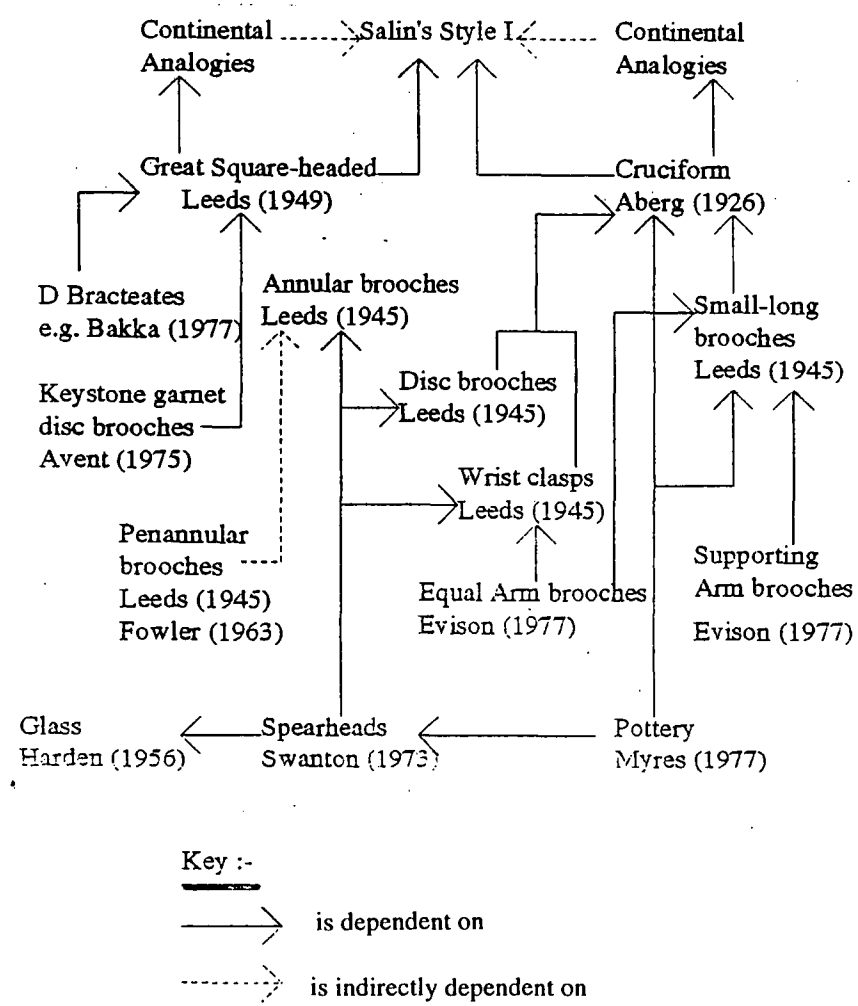


Figure 12a – Interdependence of chronologies of early Anglo-Saxon artefacts (after Brooks 1994).

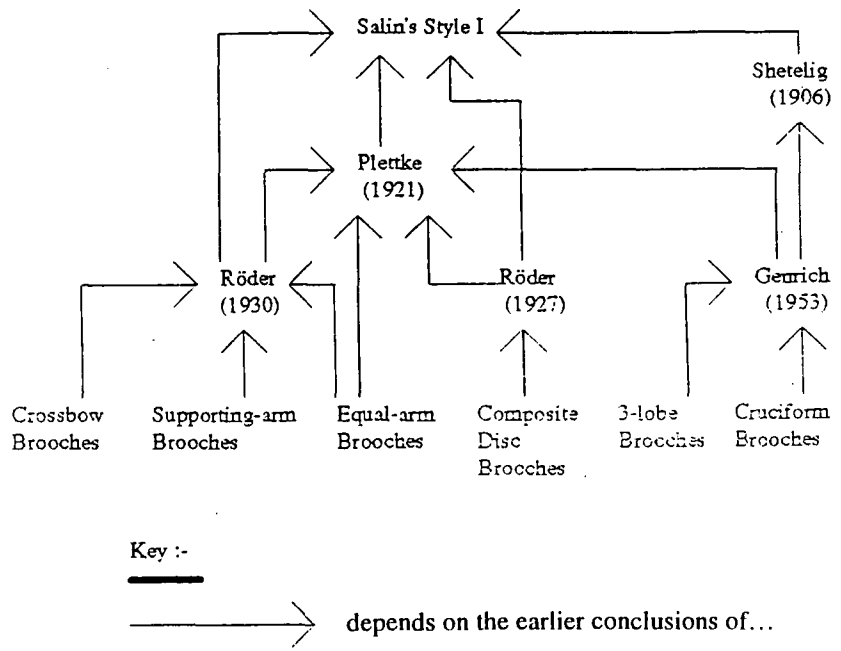


Figure 12b – Dependence of Böhme's chronology of brooches from womens' graves on earlier chronologies (after Brooks 1994).

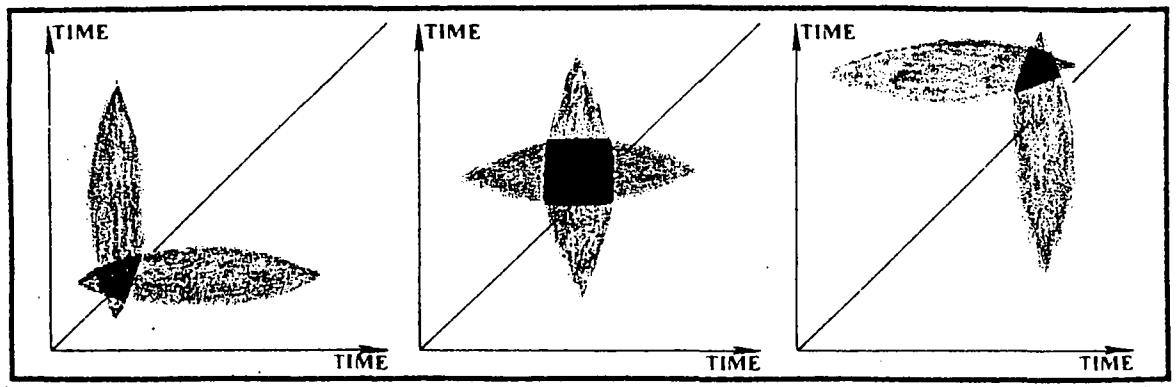


Fig. 1. Schematic representation of the potential date range of an archaeological association of two objects. The 'battle-ship' represents one possible distribution in time of each object in its early, common, and late phase of deposition. Each shape remains constant in its relevant vertical or horizontal time position; date changes along the oblique axis (absolute date of association), dependant upon at which phase of each object's development the association takes place.

Figure 13 – After Kidd 1977.

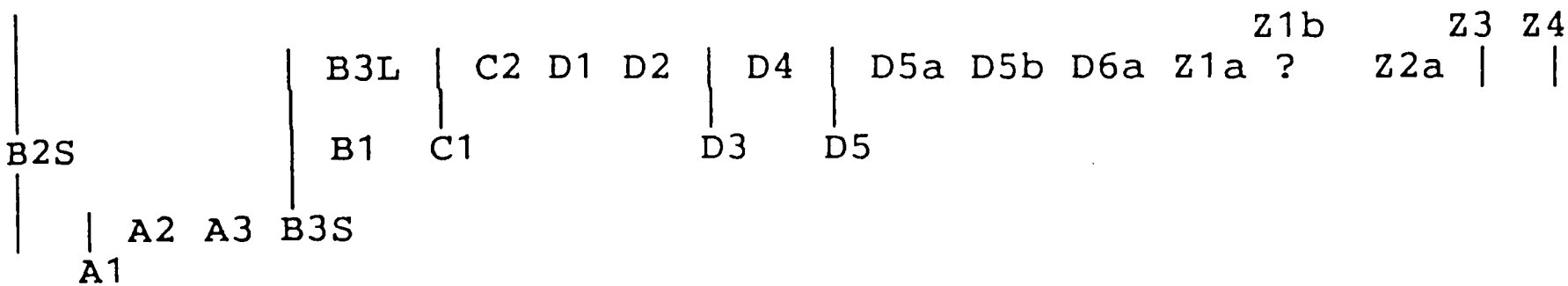


Figure 14 – Mortimer's cruciform brooch typology. The brooch type on the lowest line is dated by Mortimer to the early fifth century, while the penultimate line is dated to the late fifth century or the first half of the sixth century (after Mortimer 1990).

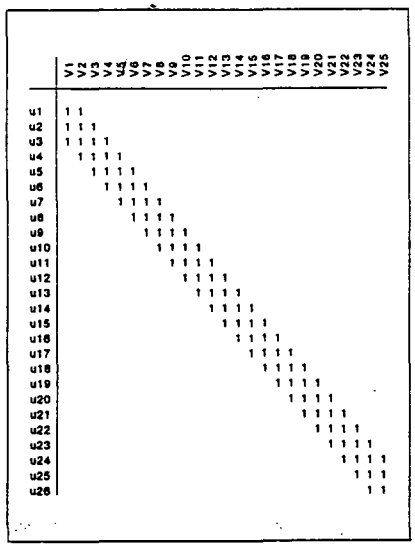


Fig. 5: Matrix of nearly perfect seriation.

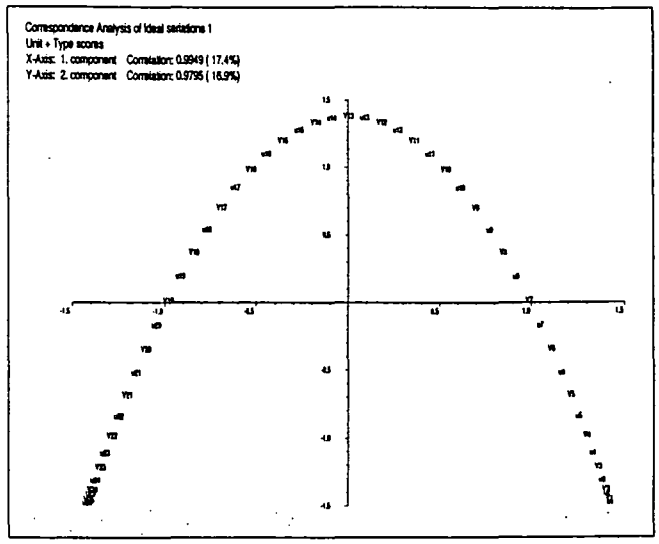


Fig. 6: Scattergram of Correspondence Analysis of the matrix in Fig. 5.

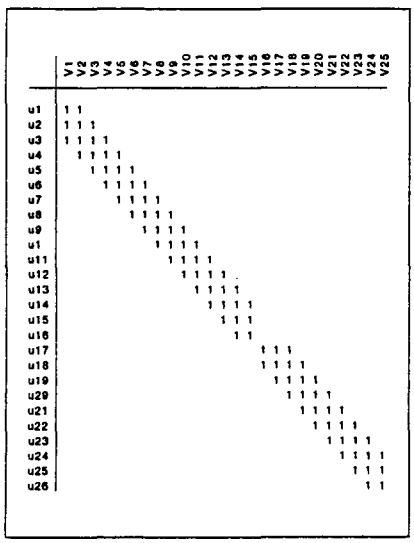


Fig. 7: Matrix of the nearly perfect seriation consisting of two entirely separate sub-sets.

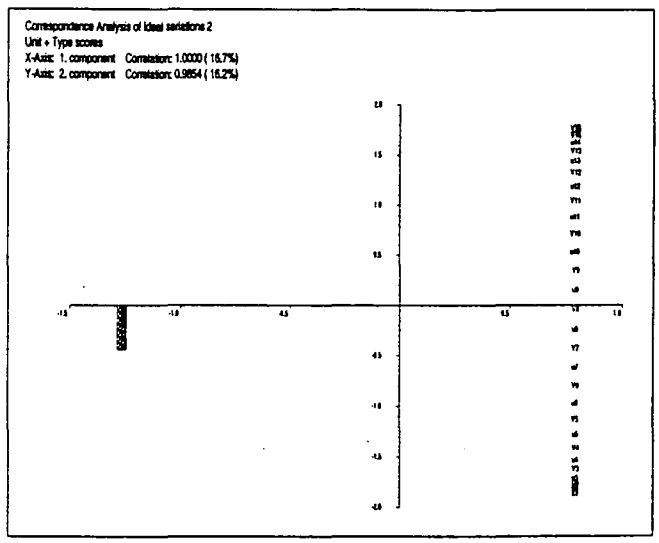


Fig. 8: Scattergram of Correspondence Analysis of the matrix in Fig. 7.

Figure 15a – Examples of graphs and matrices used during Correspondence Analyses (after Kjeld Jensen and Høilund Nielsen 1997).

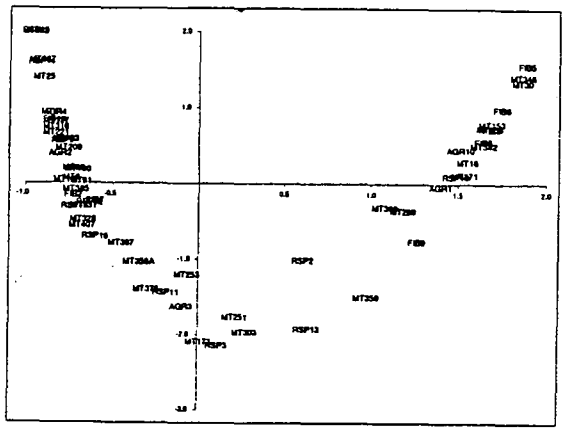


Fig. 9: Correspondence Analysis of the female graves from the Morning Thorpe cemetery. Only brooches and clasps are included. Grave 371 is also included.

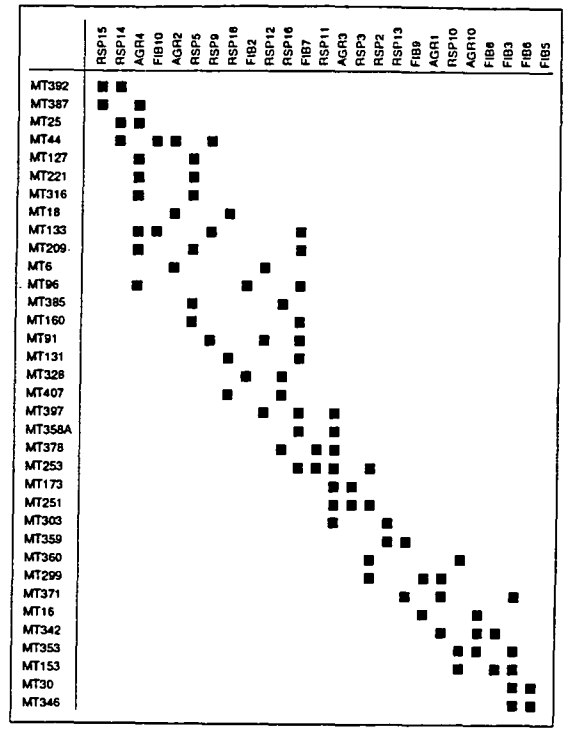


Fig. 10: The female graves from the Morning Thorpe cemetery sorted according to the first axis of Fig. 9.

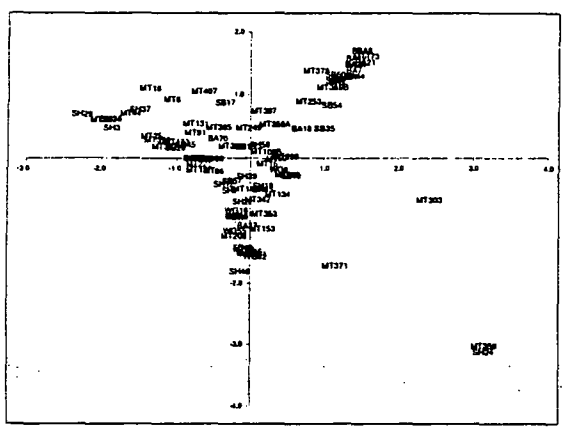


Fig. 11: Correspondence Analysis of Anglian female graves. Morning Thorpe 371 is included.

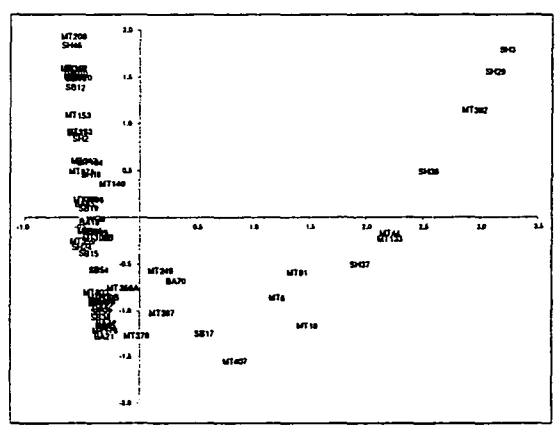


Fig. 13: Correspondence Analysis of the Anglian female graves from Fig. 11 after the omission of problematic units and variables.

Figure 15b – Examples of graphs and matrices used during Correspondence Analyses (after Kjeld Jensen and Høilund Nielsen 1997).

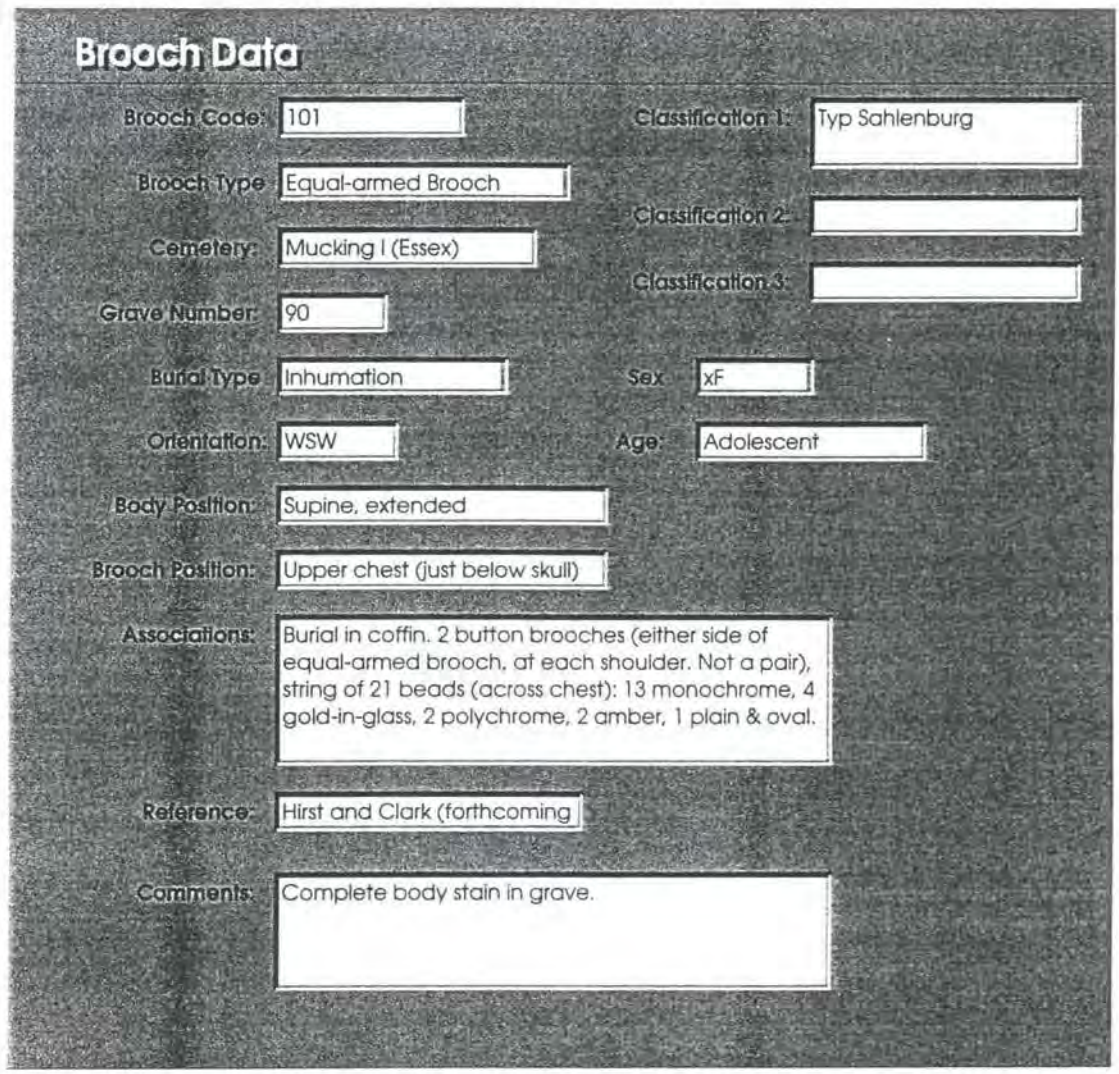


Figure 16 – An example of the Microsoft Access data form used to store information about the brooches analysed in Chapter Seven.

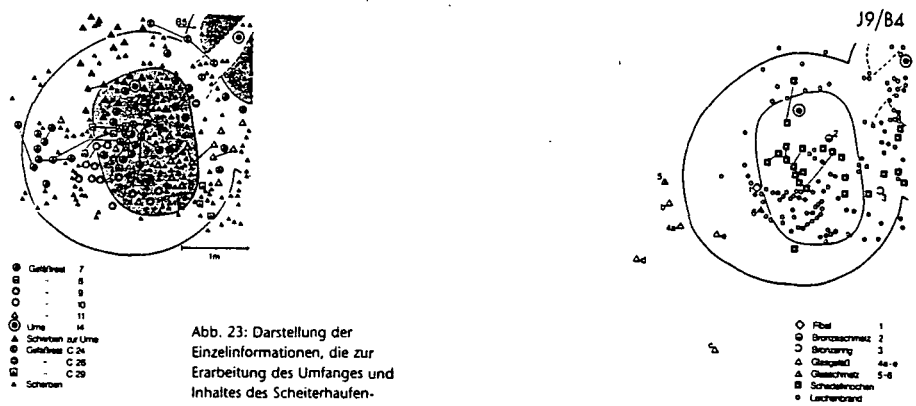


Abb. 23: Darstellung der Einzelinformationen, die zur Erarbeitung des Umfanges und Inhaltes des Scheiterhaufengrabes J9/B4 führten. Oben rechts setzt ein weiteres Scheiterhaufengrab an (n. E. Cosack 1982).

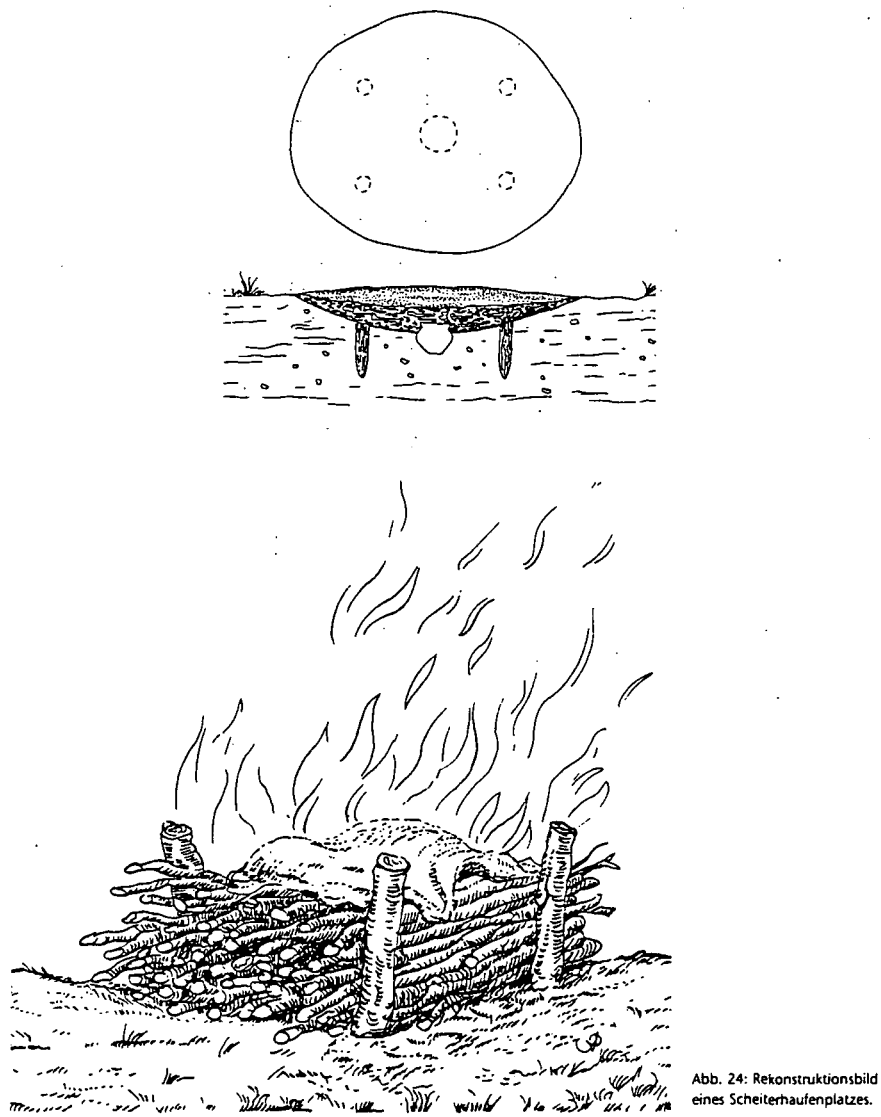
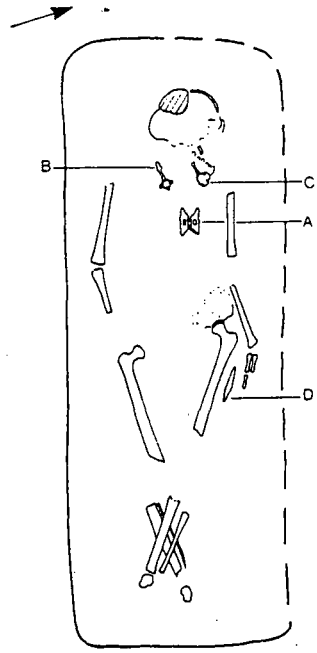
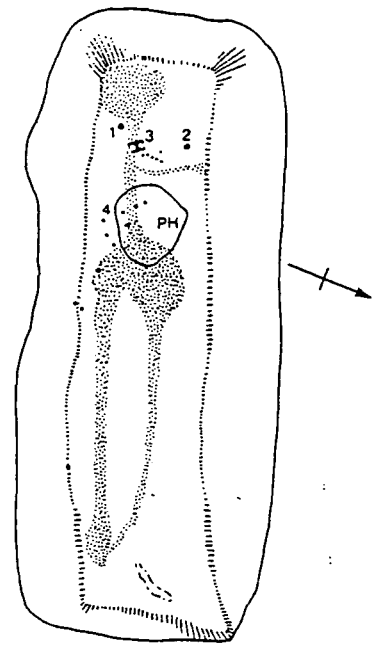


Abb. 24: Rekonstruktionsbild eines Scheiterhaufenplatzes.

Figure 17 – Excavation plans and reconstructions of *Scheiterhaufenplatz* burials (after Häßler 1999).

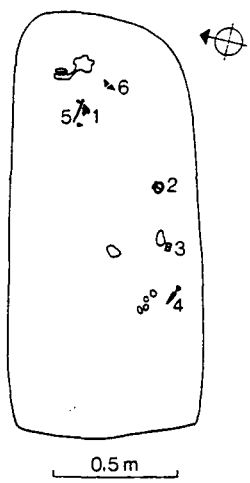


Grave 55 from Westgarth Gardens (Suffolk).
'A' is an equal-armed brooch (after West 1988).

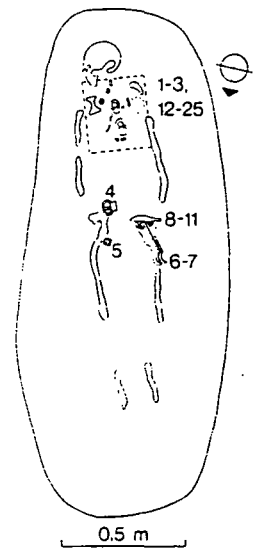


Scale 1:24

Grave 90 from Mucking (Essex) showing the 'shadow' of the skeleton. The equal-armed brooch is object No. 3 (after Hirst and Clark forthcoming).



Grave J11/A2 from Liebenau. The supporting-arm brooch is just below the jaw (No.1) (after Häßler 1985).



Grave P10/A1 from Liebenau. The supporting-arm brooch is just below the skull (after Häßler 1990).

Figure 18 – Excavation plans of inhumation graves, showing the positioning brooches on the body.

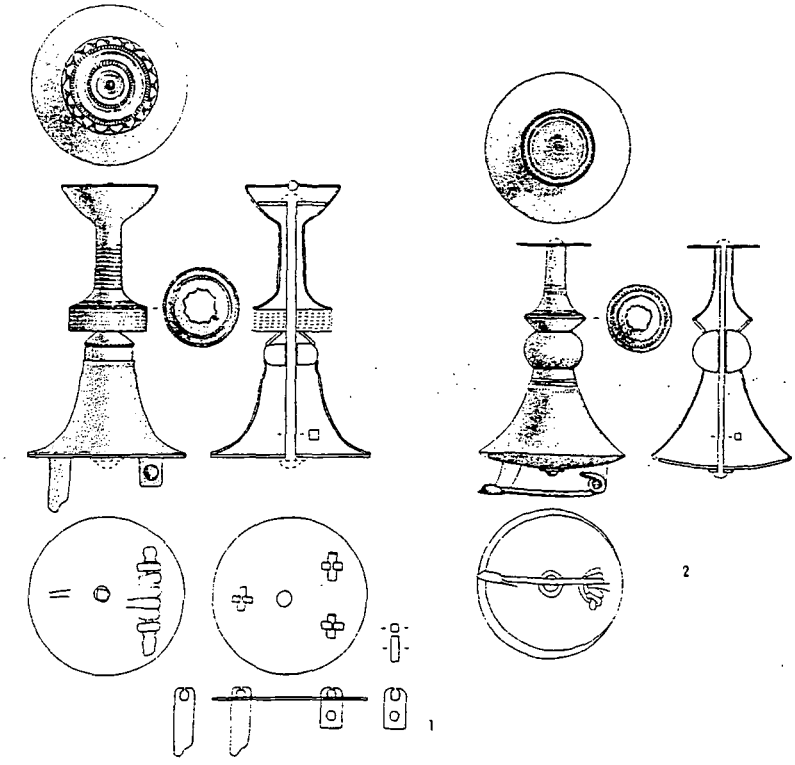


Figure 19 – *Tutulus* brooches (after Häßler 1994).



Figure 20 – The Arnolfini Marriage (J. van Eyke, 1434).
'This is not a record of a pair of individuals; it is a celebration of ownership – of pride in possessions from wife to pet, to bed hangings and brasswork' (Jardine 1996: 15).

'Early Renaissance works of art which today we admire for their sheer representational virtuosity were part of a vigorously developing worldwide market in luxury commodities. They were at once sources of aesthetic delight and properties in commercial transactions between purchasers, seeking ostentatiously to advertise their power and wealth, and skilled craftsmen with expertise to guarantee that the object so acquired would make an impact' (ibid: 19).

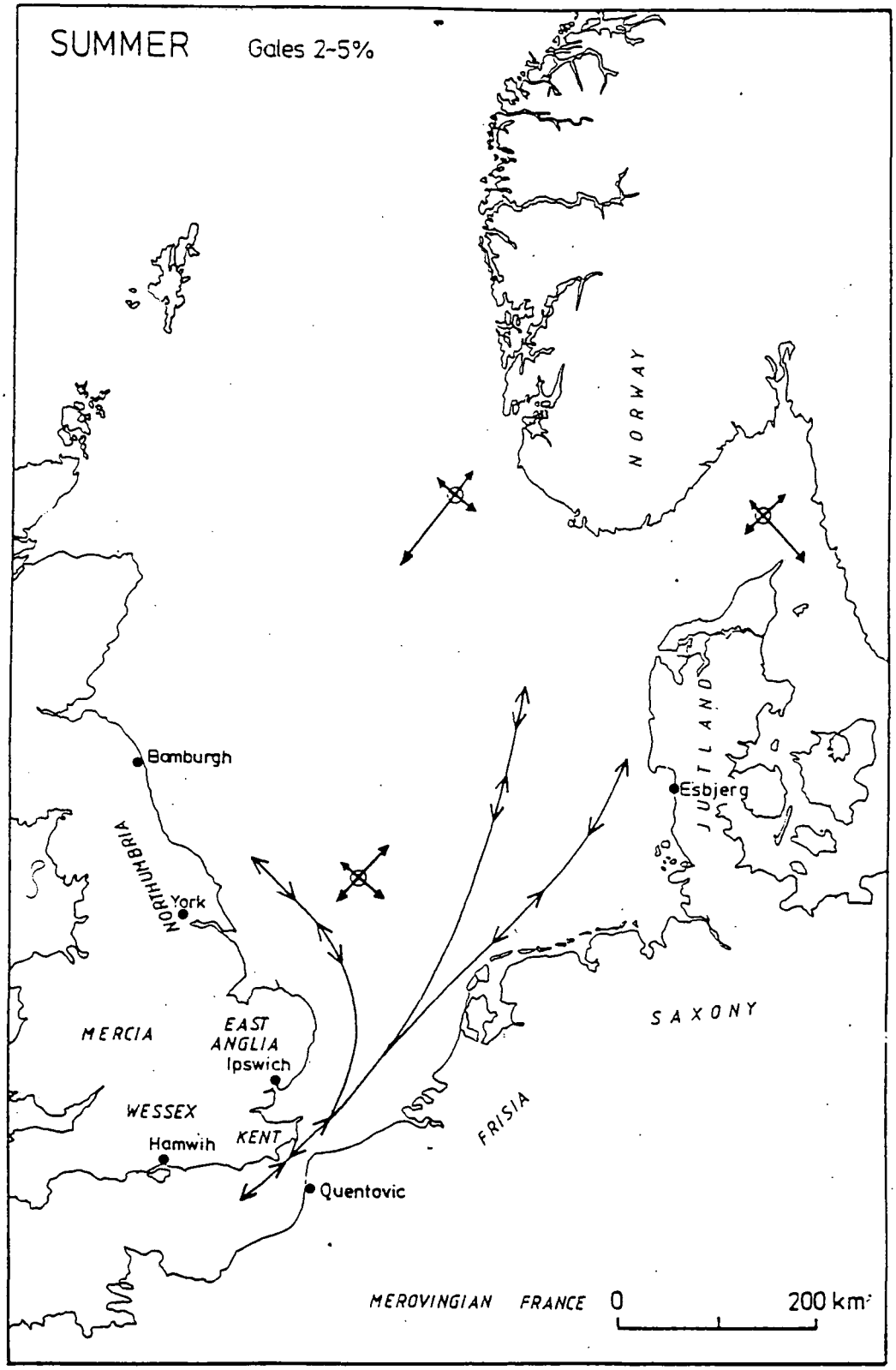


Figure 21 – Map of the North Sea region showing tidal streams and dominant winds (after Carver 1990).

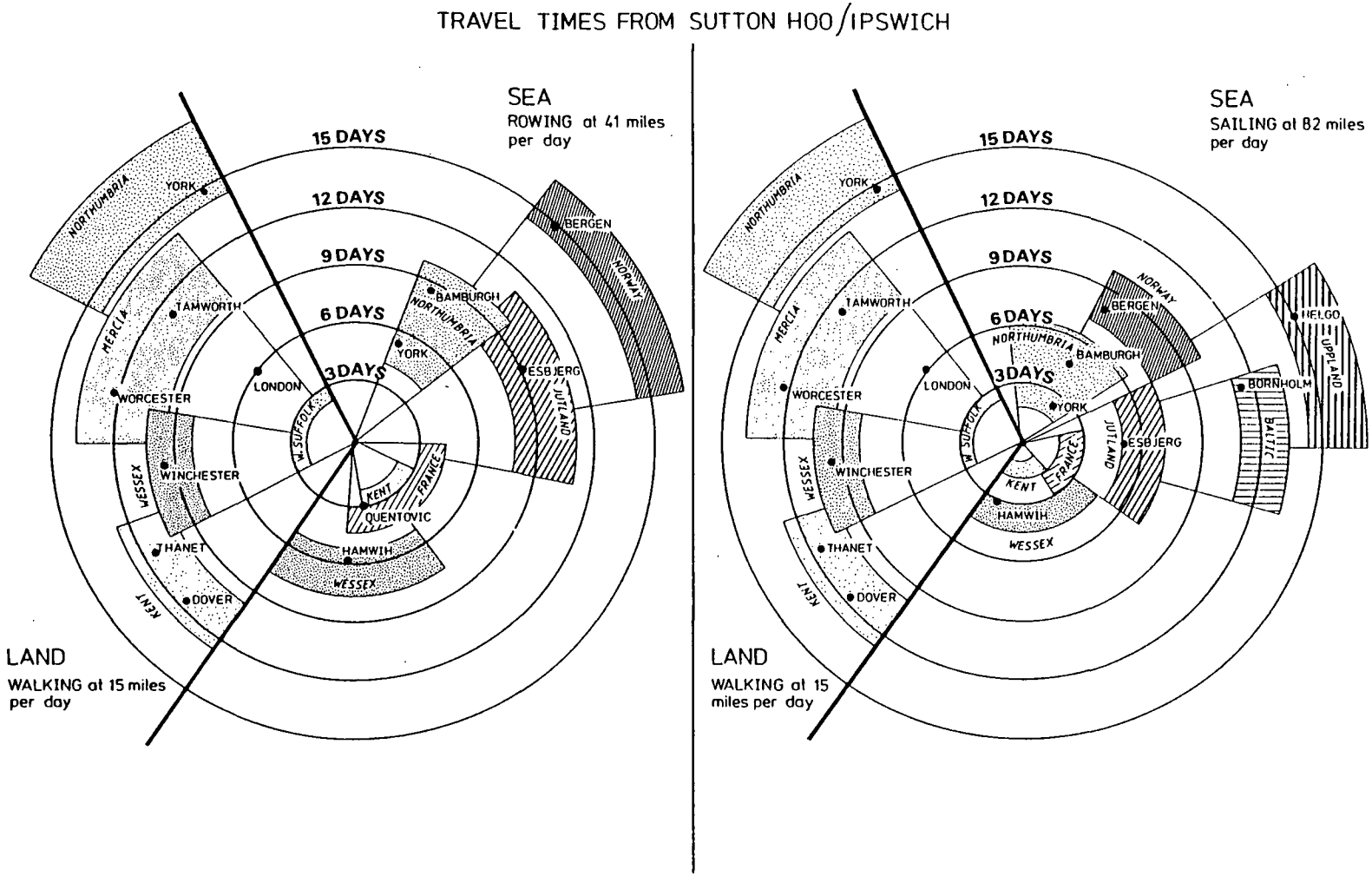


Figure 22 – After Carver 1990.

2. Europe as seen from the Atlantic archipelago. The conventional map of Europe (fig. 5) shows Ireland and Britain as peripheral to the continental land-mass, but to the people who have dwelt there, the islands have of course been central to their own universe. To greatly varying degrees, their inhabitants have looked inwards, towards each other, or outwards, across the seas towards adjacent peoples.

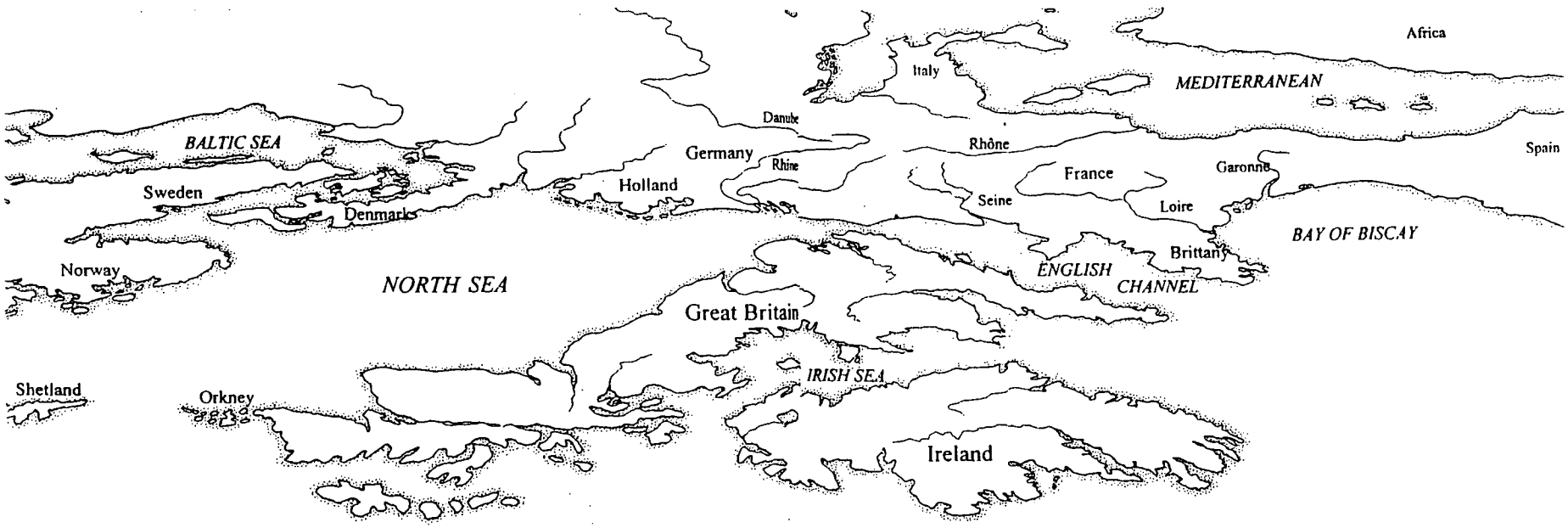


Figure 23 – Map of Europe as seen from the north-west (after James 1999).

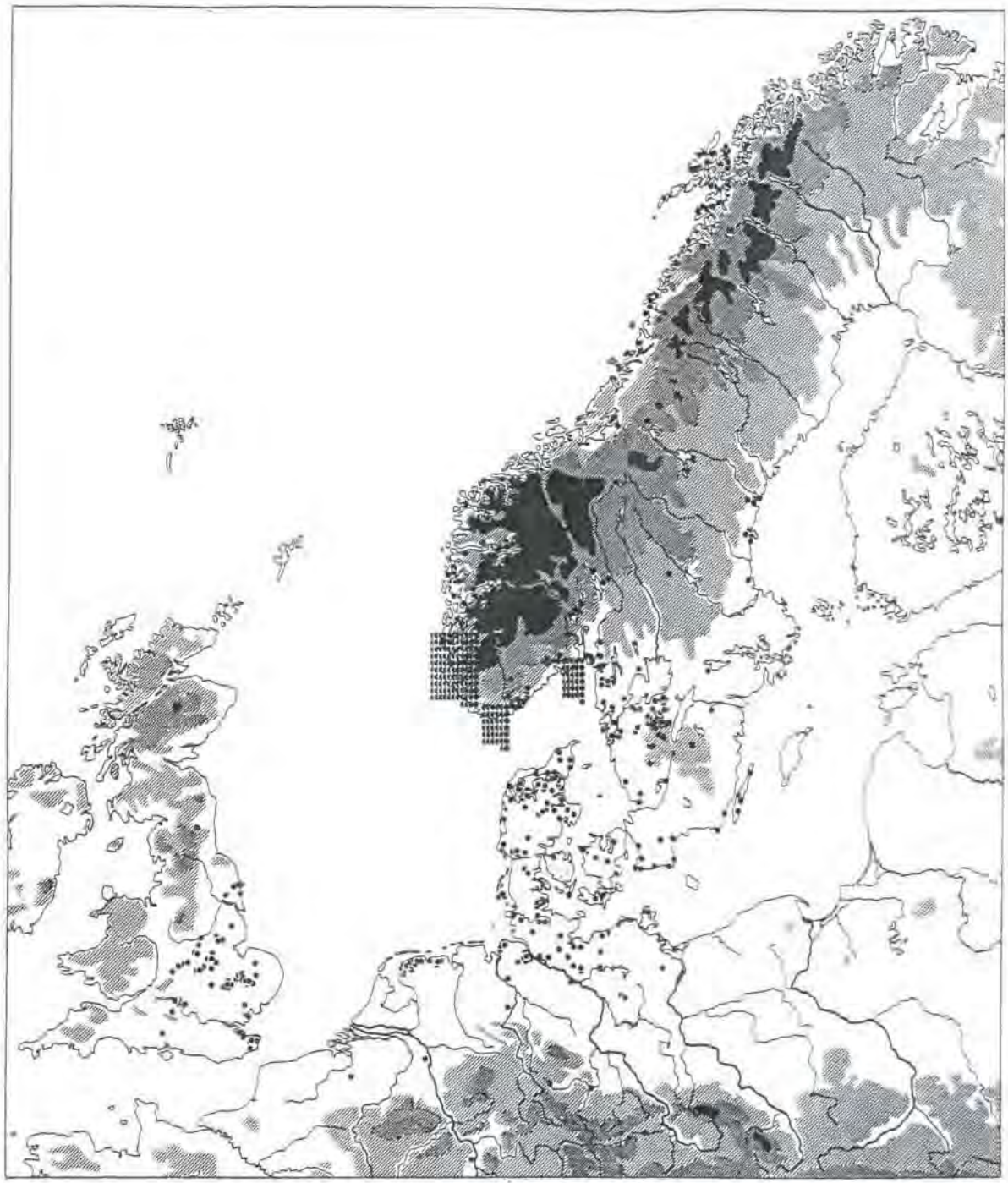


Figure 24 – Distribution map of all cruciform brooch types discussed by Reichstein (after Reichstein 1975).

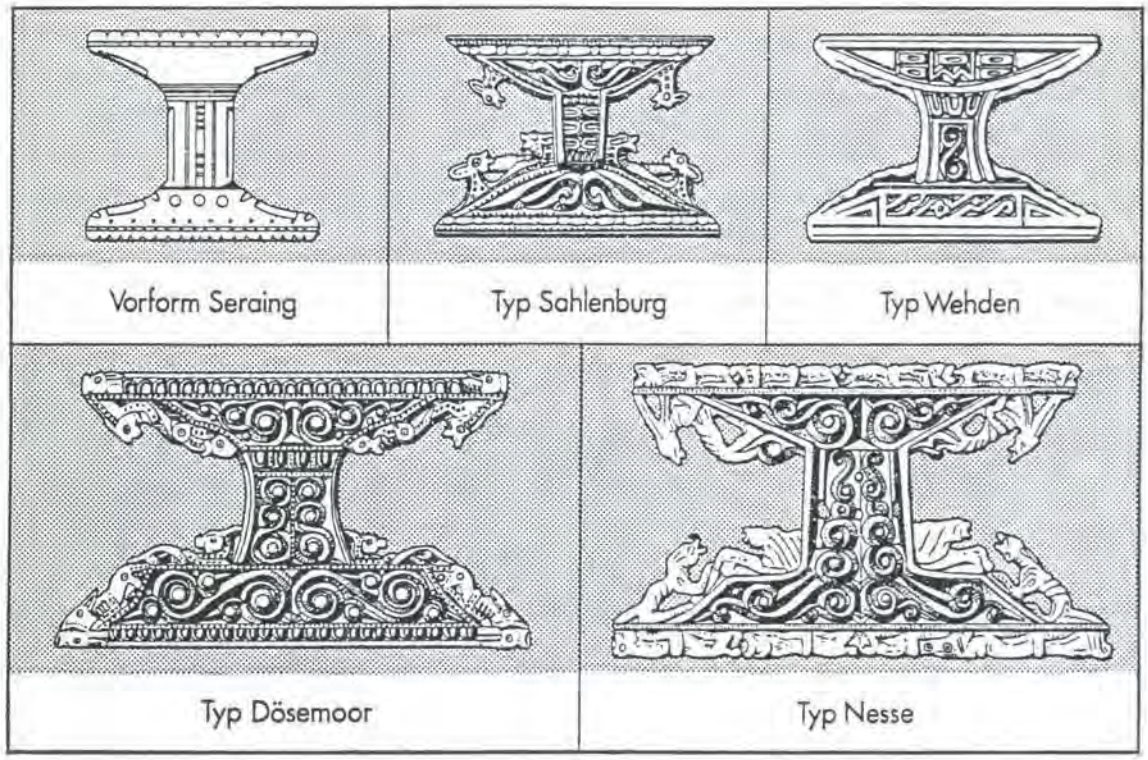


Figure 25 – Equal-armed brooch types (after Böhme 1974).

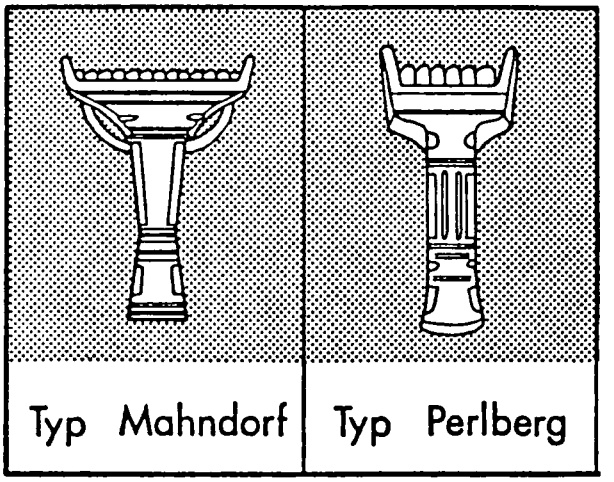


Figure 26a – Supporting-arm brooch types (after Böhme 1974).

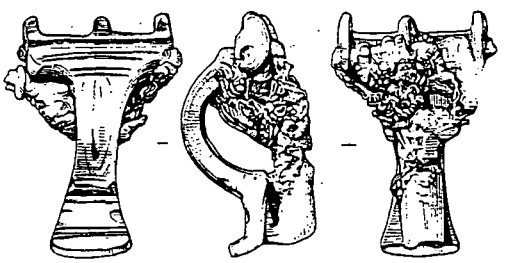


Figure 26b – Supporting-arm brooch with three lugs from Grave 987 at Mucking, Essex (after Hirst and Clark forthcoming).

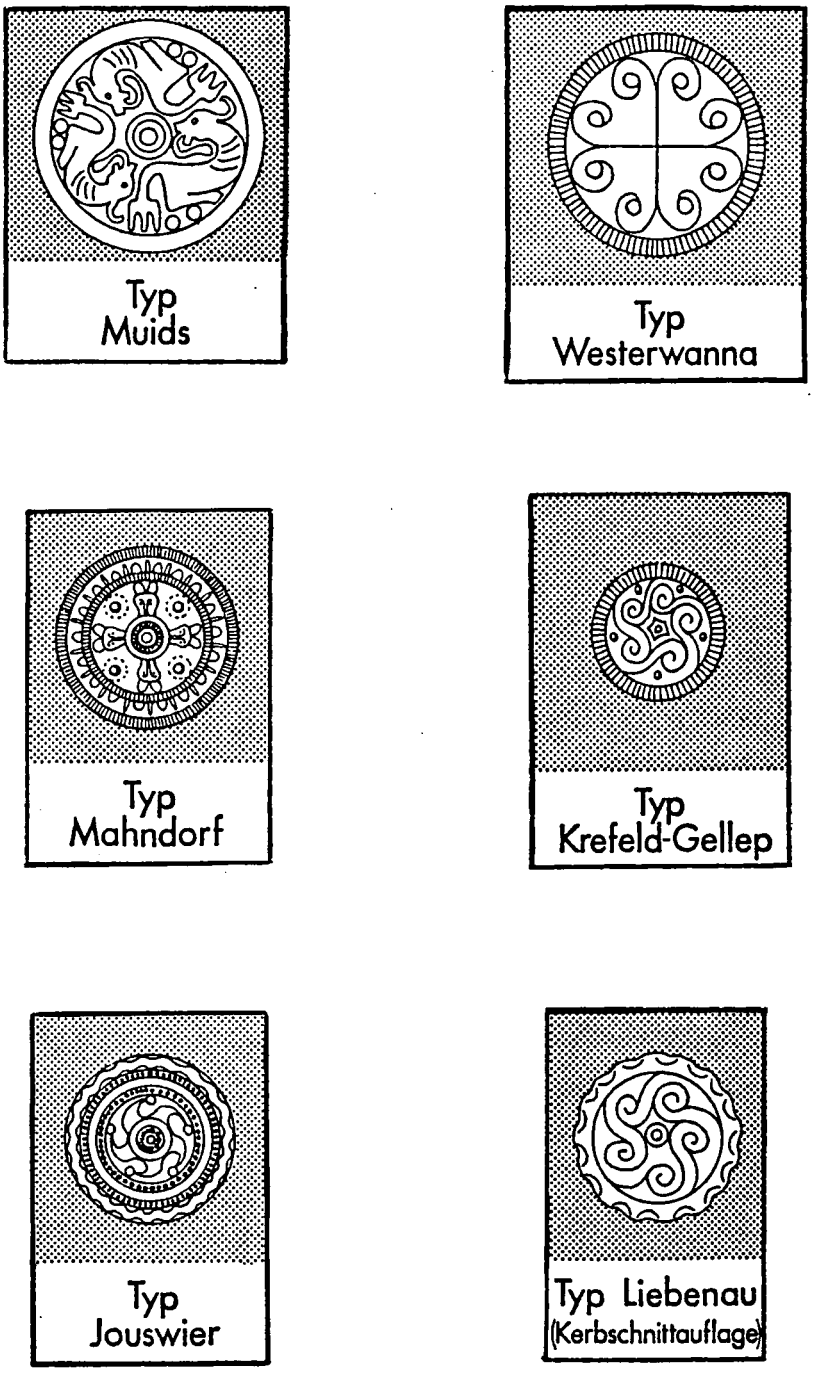


Figure 27 – Applied brooch types (after Böhme 1974).

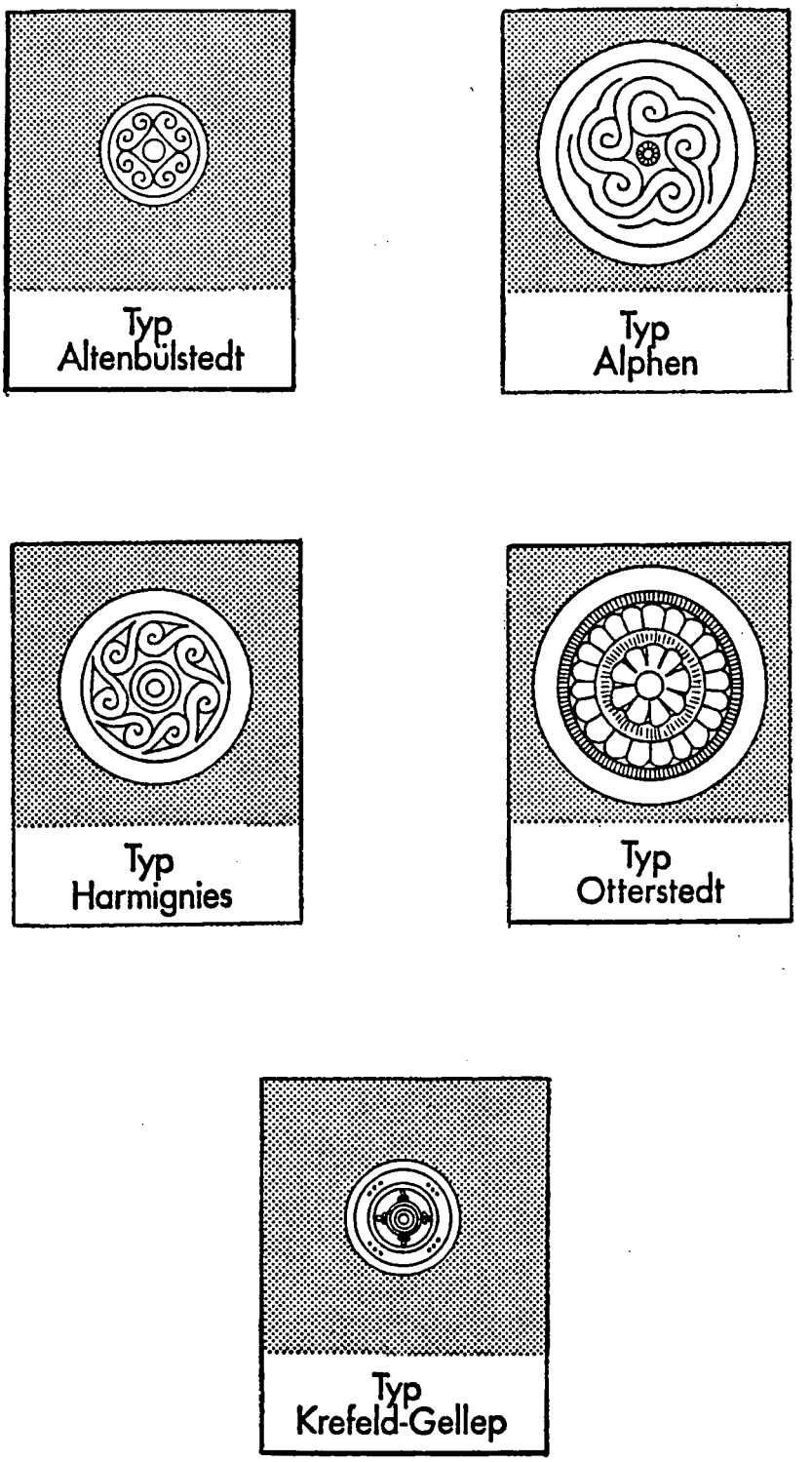


Figure 28 – Saucer brooch types (after Böhme 1974).

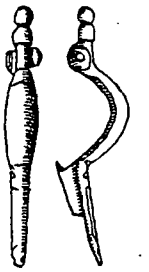


Fig. 44. Br. 2/3.
Mildenhall, Suff.
(Fox Pl. 33: 1.)

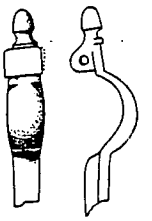


Fig. 45. Br. 2/3.
Trumpington, Cambs.
(M. Camb.)

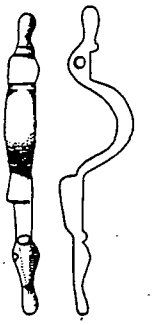


Fig. 46. Br. 2/3.
St. John's, Cambridge.
(M. Camb.)

Group I

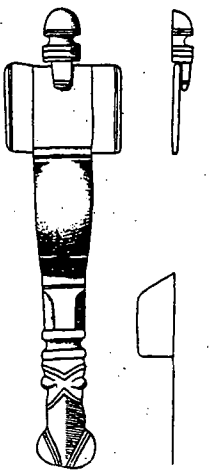


Fig. 56. Br. 2/3.
Islip, Northants.
(M. Northampton.)

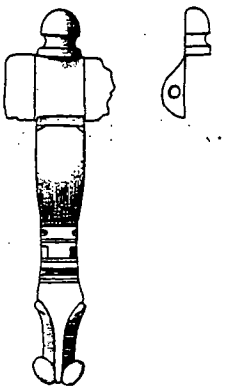


Fig. 57. Br. 2/3.
Sleaford, Lincs.
(Br. M.)

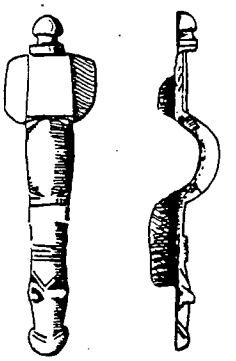


Fig. 58. Br. 2/3.
Lakenheath, Suff.
(Fox Pl. 33: 3.)

Group II

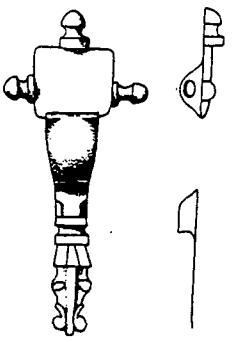


Fig. 63. Br. 2/3.
Barrington, Cambs.
(M. Oxf.)

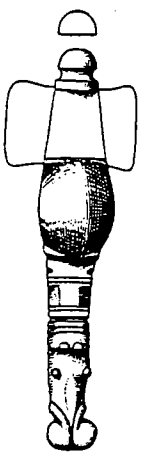


Fig. 64. Br.
East Shefford, Berks.
(M. Newbury.)

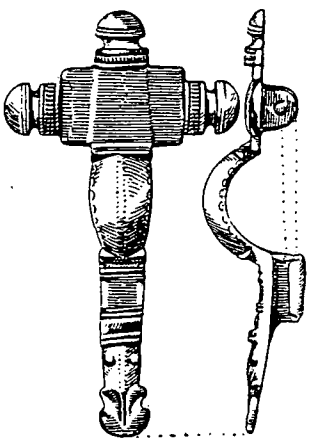


Fig. 65. Br. Not quite 2/3.
Malton, Cambs.
(Br. M. Guide fig. 16.)

Group III

Figure 29a – Cruciform brooches, illustrating Åberg's typology (after Åberg 1926) (The scales given do not apply here).

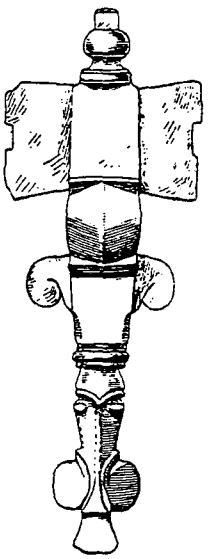


Fig. 71. Br. 2/3.
Kenninghall, Norf.
(Br. M. Guide fig. 17.)

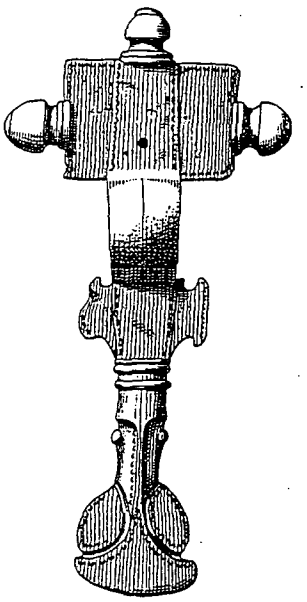


Fig. 72. Br.
Cambridgeshire.
(Salin fig. 462.)

Group IV

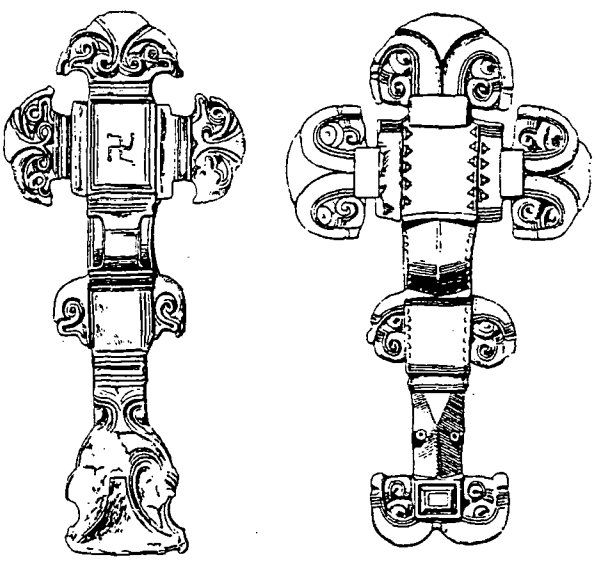


Fig. 34—35. Br. 2/3.
Sleaford, Lincs.
(Br. M. Guide fig. 18—19.)

Group V

Figure 29b – Cruciform brooches, illustrating Åberg's typology (after Åberg 1926) (The scales given do not apply here).

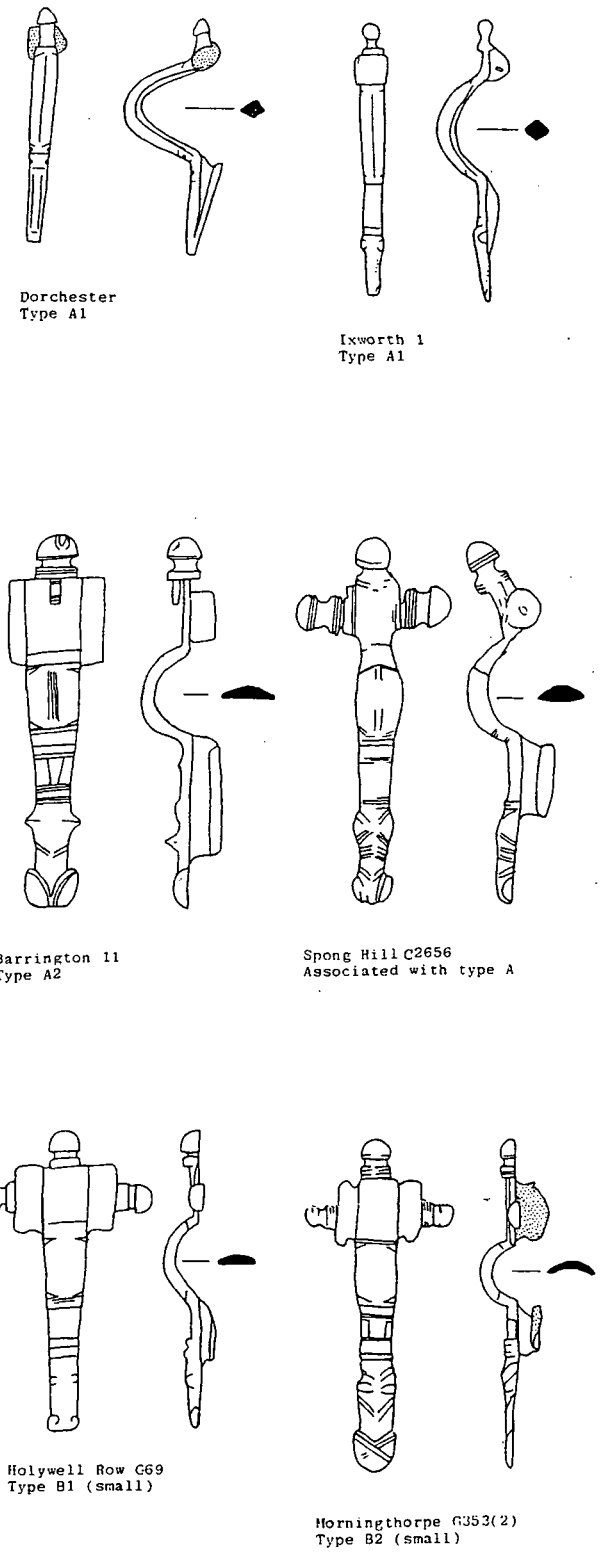
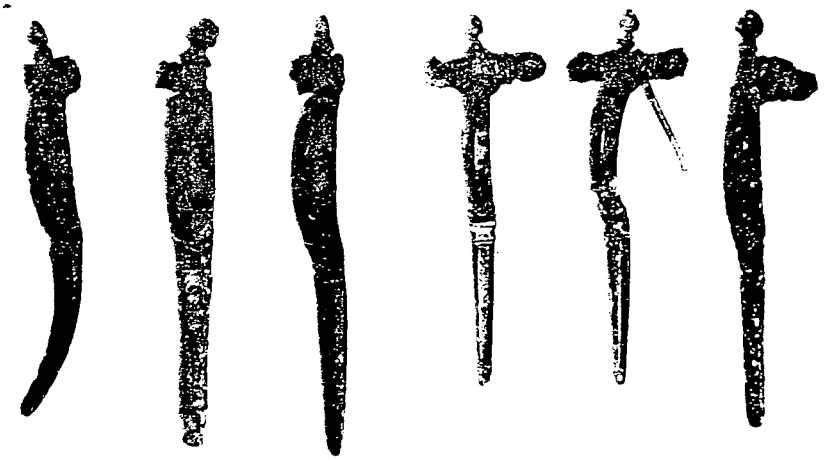
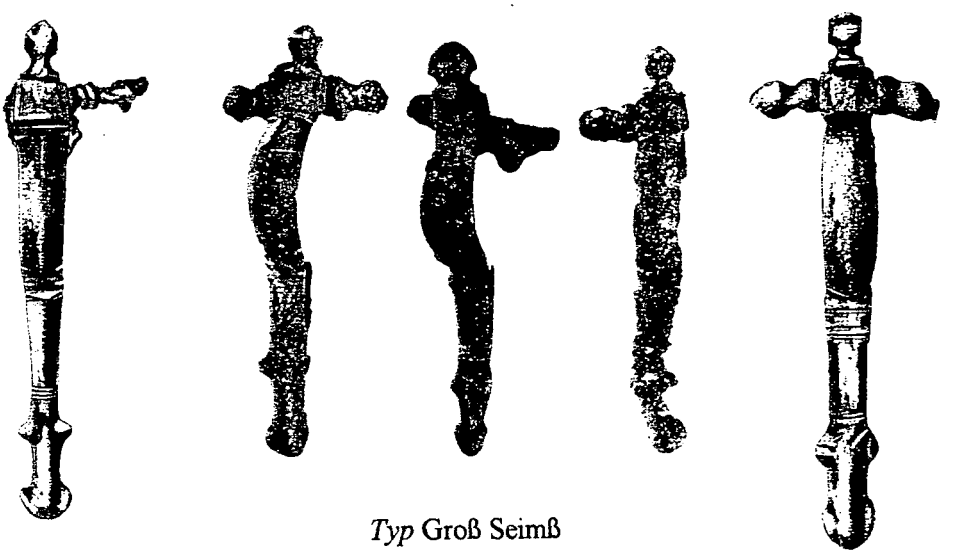


Figure 30a – Examples of cruciform brooches classified by Mortimer as Type A and Type B (after Mortimer 1990).

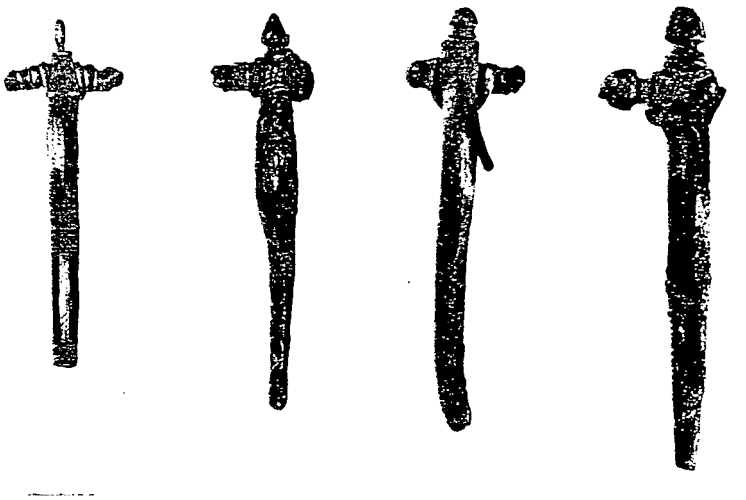


Typ Dorchester

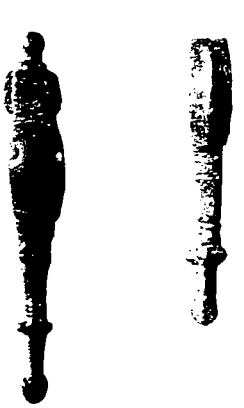


Typ Groß Seimß

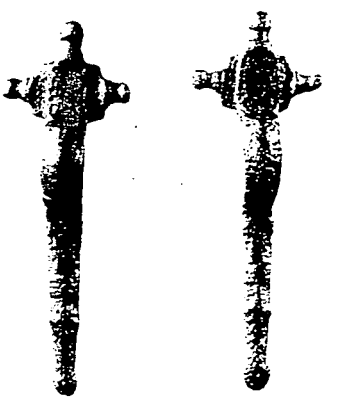
Figure 30b – Continental cruciform brooches, as classified by Reichstein (after Reichstein 1975).



Typ Pritzier



Typ St. John's College



Typ Hjelmhede

Figure 30c – Continental cruciform brooches, as classified by Reichstein (after Reichstein 1975).

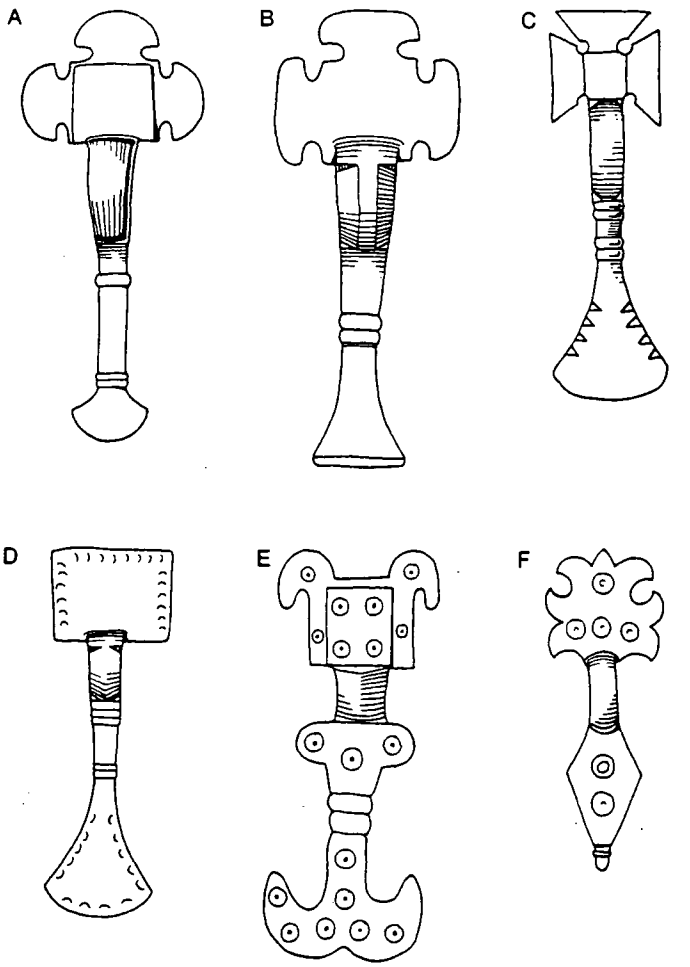
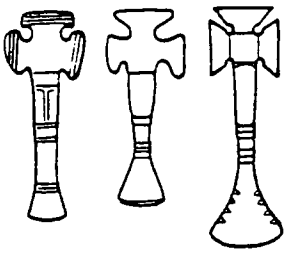
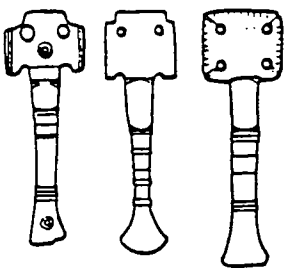


Fig. 2.6. The different forms of small-long brooch, as classified by Leeds: (a) trefoil-headed, from Stapenhill, Staffs. (after Leeds 1945: fig. 4c); (b) cross-potent, from Darlington (after Leeds 1945: fig. 8c); (c) cross-pattée, from Linton Heath G94 (after Leeds 1945: fig. 13b); (d) square-head (plain), from East Shefford (after Leeds 1945: fig. 18d); (e) square-head (panelled) from Holywell Row G37 (after Leeds 1945: fig. 22g); (f) brooch with lozenge foot from Barrington A (after Leeds 1945: fig. 23b). Scale 1:1.

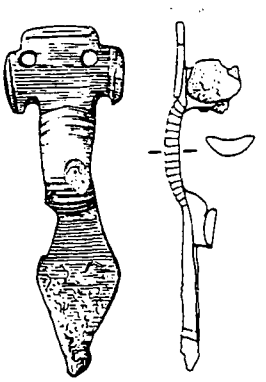
Fig. 31a – After Lucy 2000a.



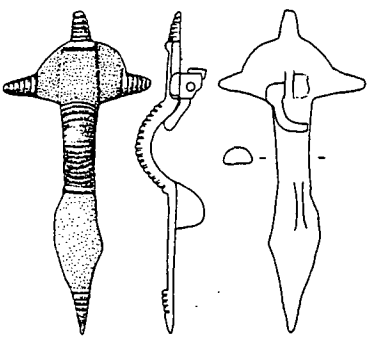
Form Borgstedt-Rothwell
(after Böhme 1986).



Form Bordesholm-Haslingfield
(after Böhme 1986).



Type Liebenau-West Stow
(after Häßler 1990).

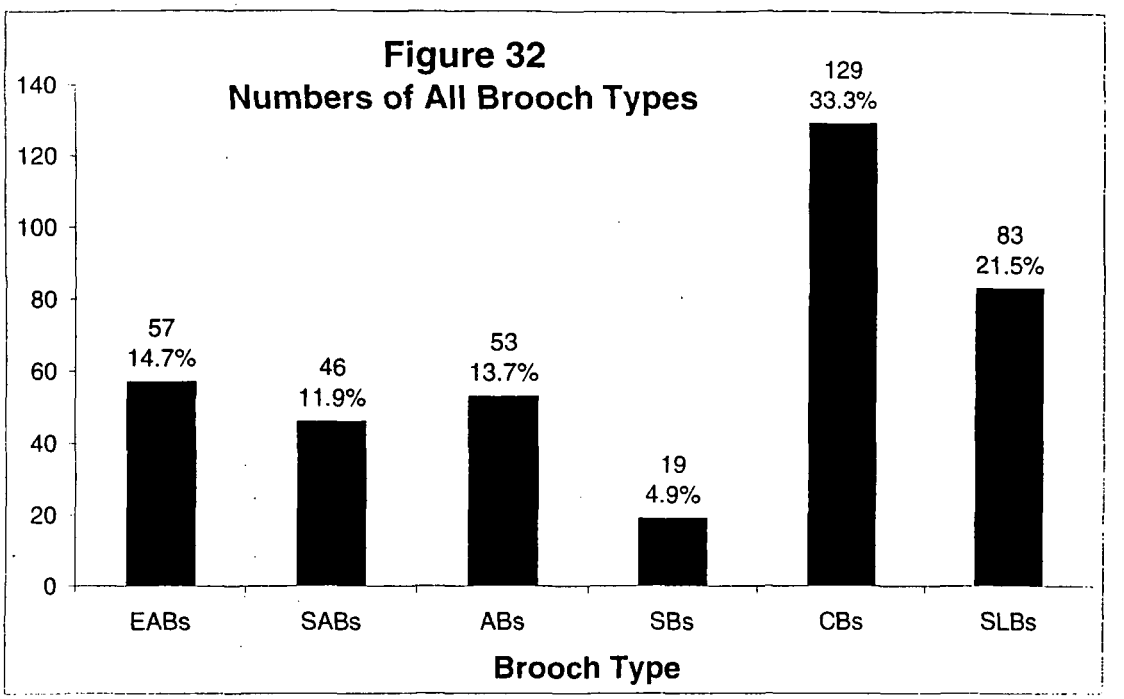


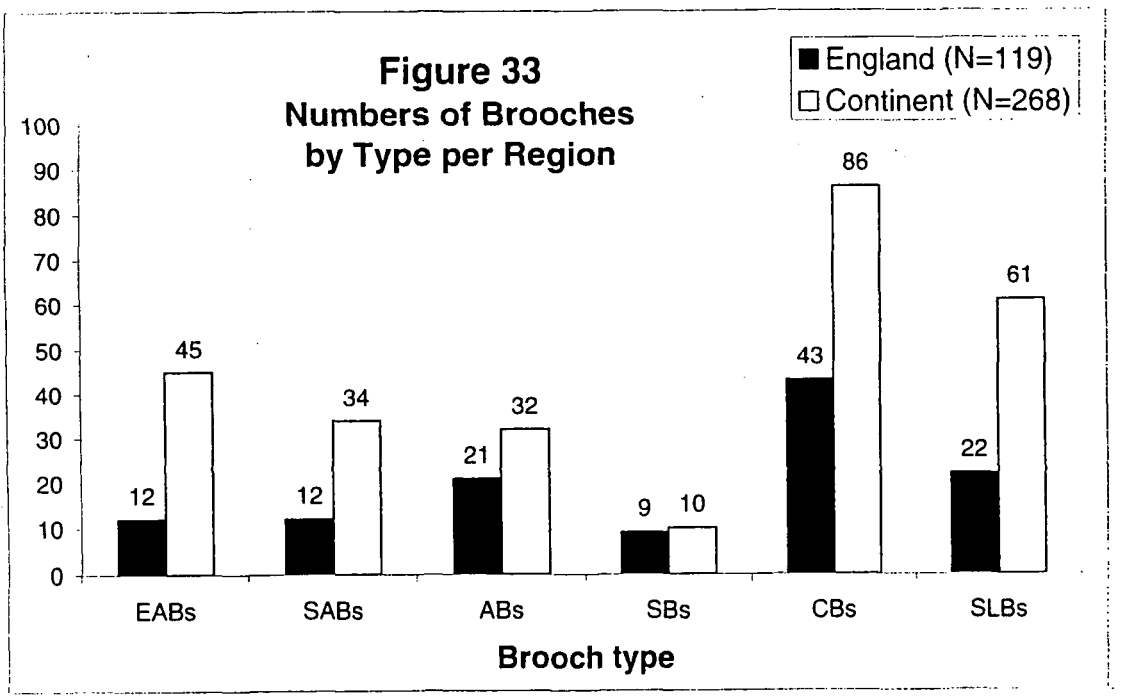
Form Oldendorf-Issendorf
(after Häßler 1994).

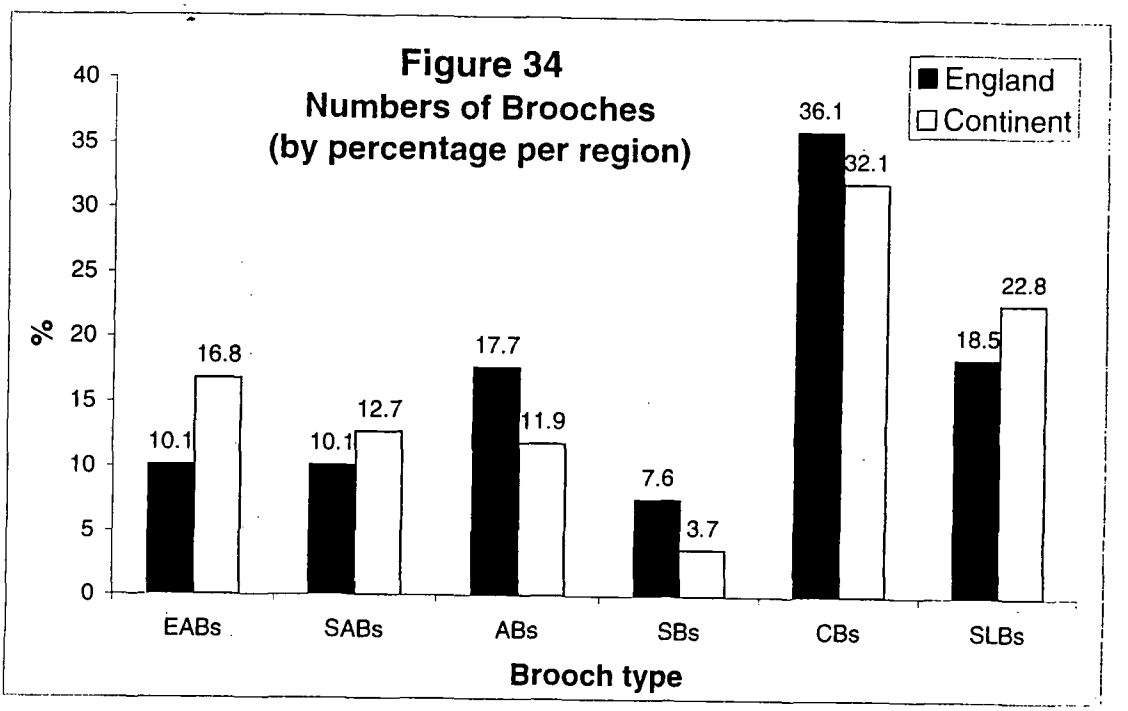
Figure 31b – Small-long brooch types

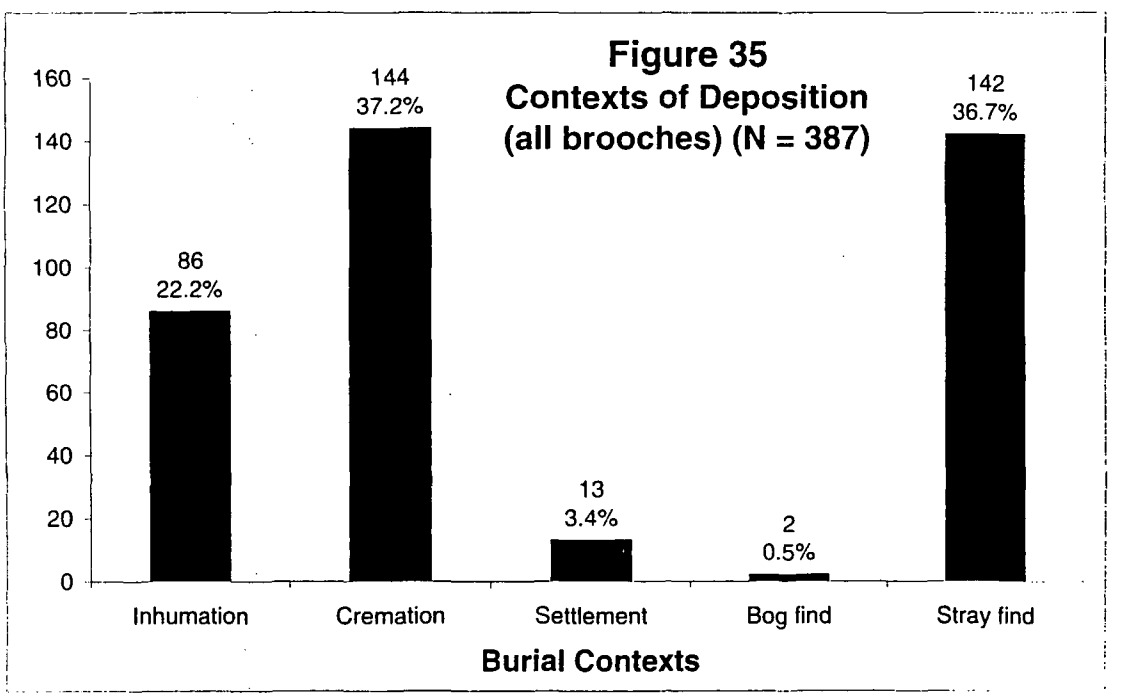
Abbreviations used in Graphs and Tables

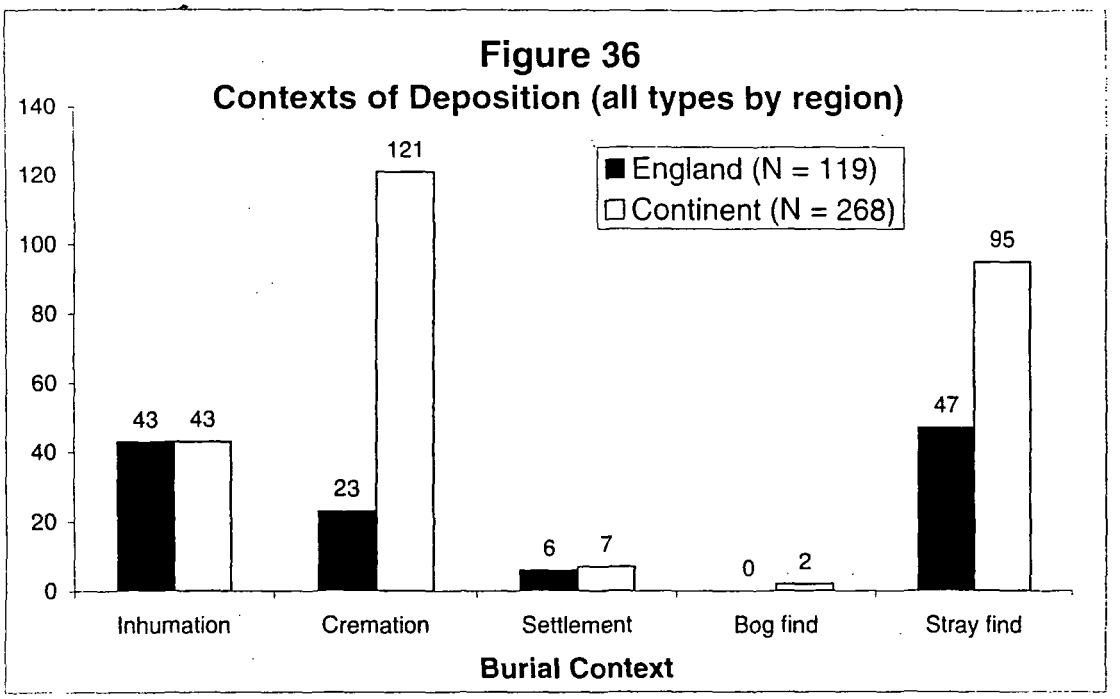
EAB	Equal-armed brooch
SAB	Supporting-armed brooch
AB	Applied brooch
SB	Saucer brooch
CB	Cruciform brooch
SLB	Small-long brooch


Figure 32
Numbers of All Brooch Types
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
57
14.7%
46
11.9%
53
13.7%
19
4.9%
129
33.3%
83
21.5%
EABs
SABs
ABs
SBs
CBs
SLBs
Brooch Type


Figure 33
Numbers of Brooches
by Type per Region
England (N=119)
Continent (N=268)
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
12
45
12
34
21
32
9
10
43
86
22
61
EABs
SABs
ABs
SBs
CBs
SLBs
Brooch type


Figure 34
Numbers of Brooches
(by percentage per region)
England
Continent
%
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
10.1
16.8
10.1
12.7
17.7
11.9
7.6
3.7
36.1
32.1
18.5
22.8
EABs
SABs
ABs
SBs
CBs
SLBs
Brooch type


Figure 35
Contexts of Deposition
(all brooches) (N = 387)
160
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
86
22.2%
144
37.2%
13
3.4%
2
0.5%
142
36.7%
Inhumation
Cremation
Settlement
Bog find
Stray find
Burial Contexts


Figure 36
Contexts of Deposition (all types by region)
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
England (N = 119)
Continent (N = 268)
43
43
23
121
6
7
0
2
47
95
Inhumation
Cremation
Settlement
Bog find
Stray find
Burial Context

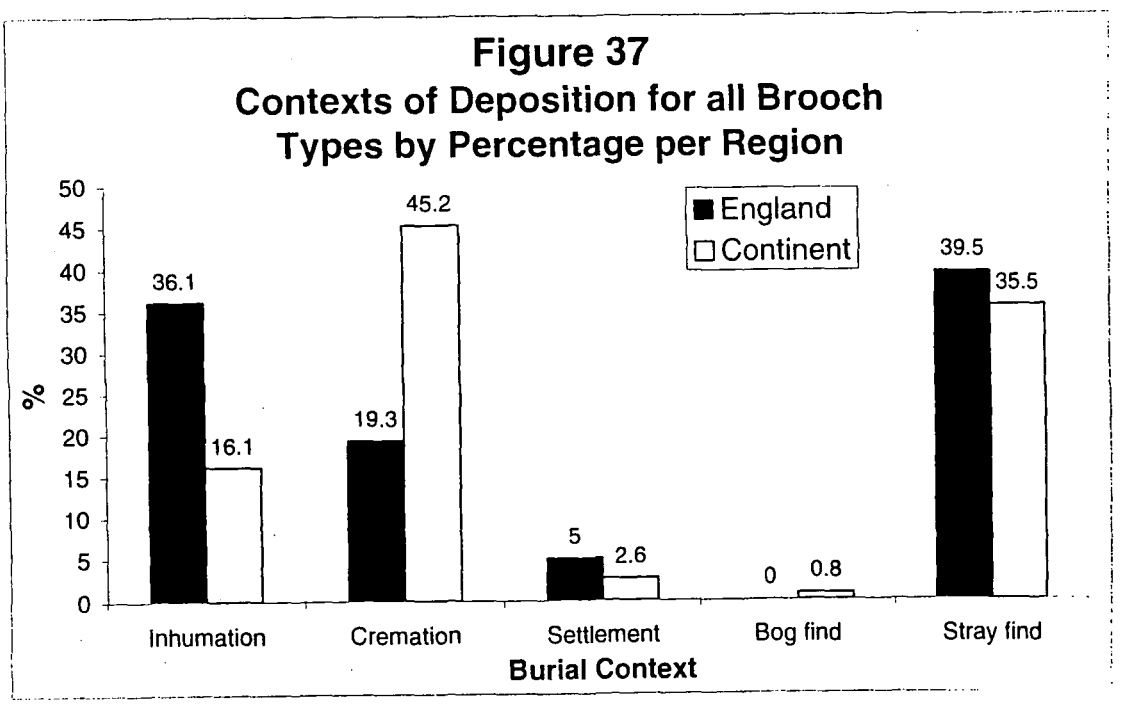

Figure 37
Contexts of Deposition for all Brooch Types by Percentage per Region
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
%
England
Continent
36.1
16.1
19.3
45.2
5
2.6
0
0.8
39.5
35.5
Inhumation
Cremation
Settlement
Bog find
Stray find
Burial Context

Figure 38

Contexts of Deposition (without Spong Hill cremations, Liebenau and Issendorf inhumations)

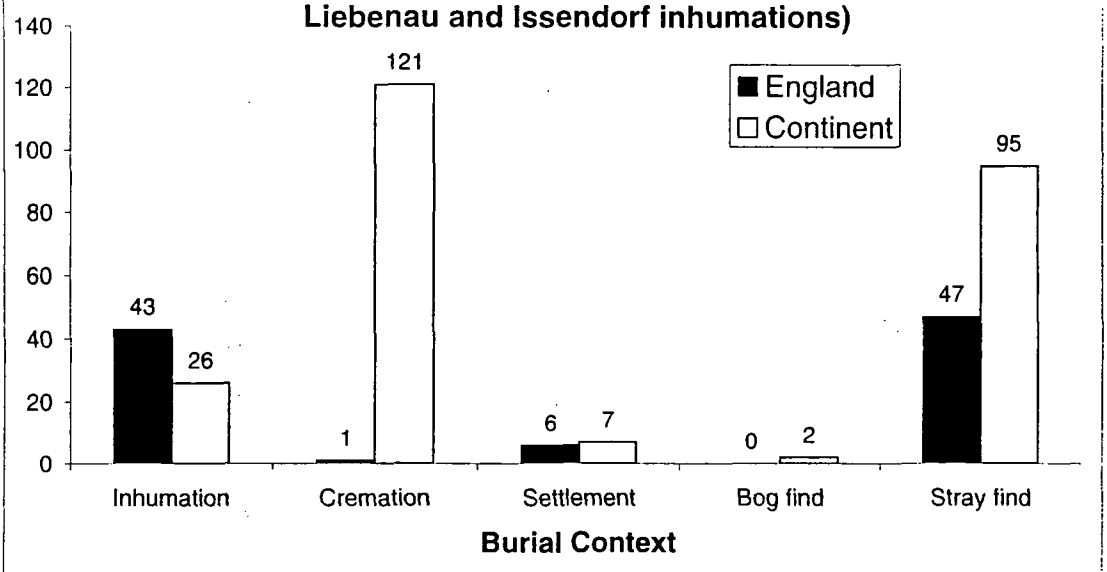
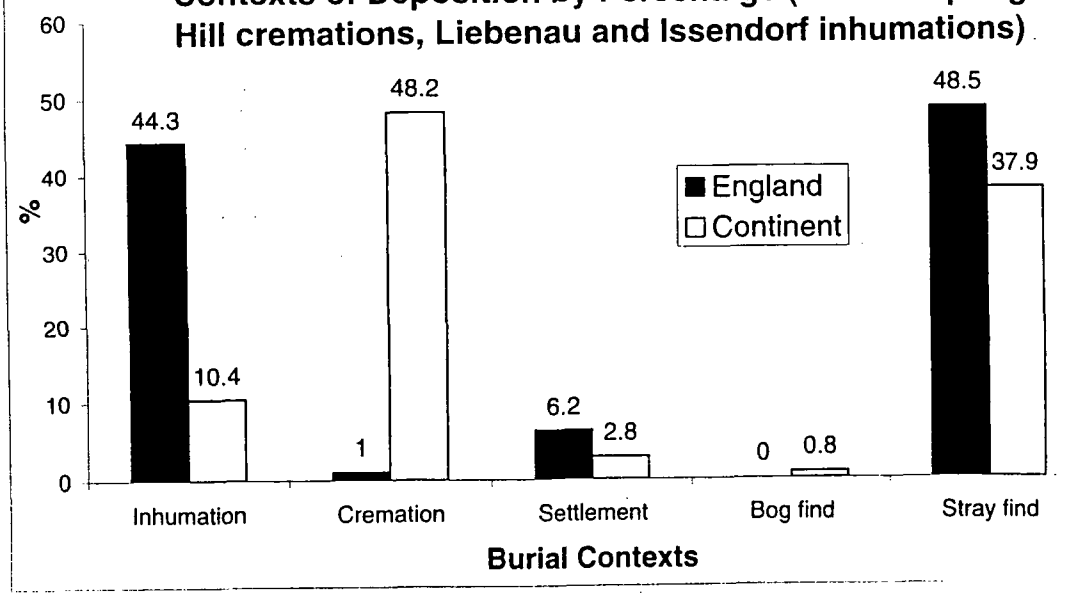
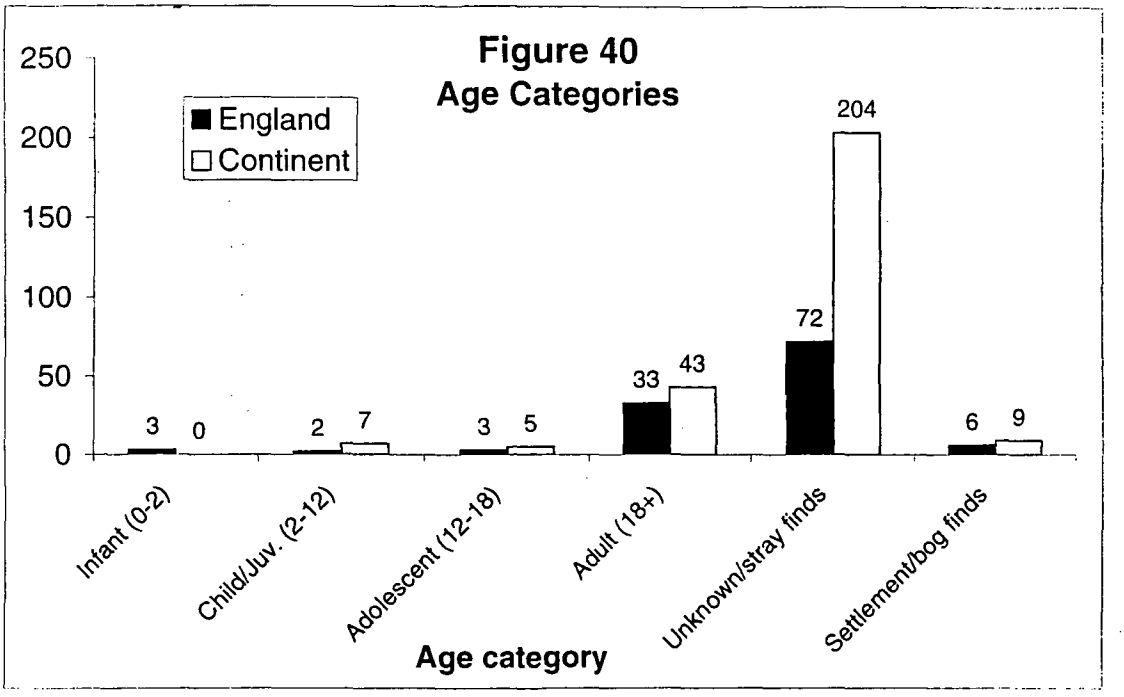
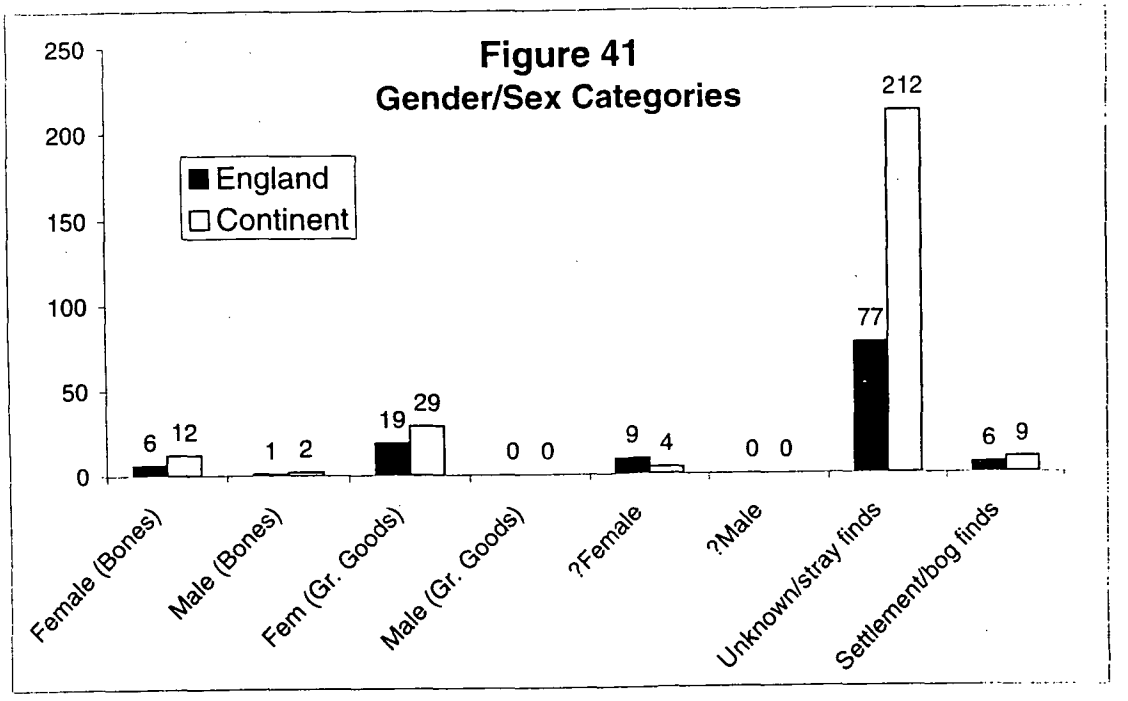


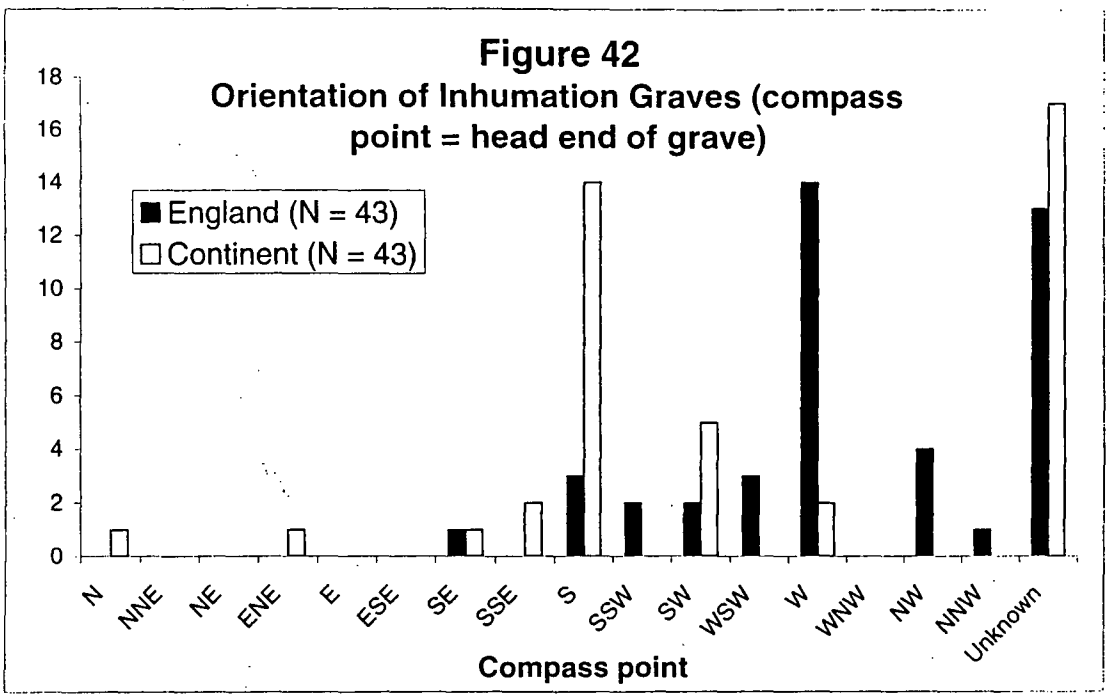
Figure 39

Contexts of Deposition by Percentage (without Spong Hill cremations, Liebenau and Issendorf inhumations)




Figure 40
Age Categories
England
Continent
250
200
150
100
50
0
3
0
2
7
3
5
33
43
72
204
6
9
Infant (0-2)
Child/Juv. (2-12)
Adolescent (12-18)
Adult (18+)
Unknown/stray finds
Settlement/bog finds
Age category


Figure 41
Gender/Sex Categories
England
Continent
250
200
150
100
50
0
6
12
1
2
19
29
0
0
9
4
0
0
77
212
6
9
Female (Bones)
Male (Bones)
Fem (Gr. Goods)
Male (Gr. Goods)
?Female
?Male
Unknown/stray finds
Settlement/bog finds


Figure 42
Orientation of Inhumation Graves (compass point = head end of grave)
England (N = 43)
Continent (N = 43)
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
N
NNE
NE
ENE
E
ESE
SE
SSE
S
SSW
SW
WSW
W
WNW
NW
NNW
Unknown
Compass point

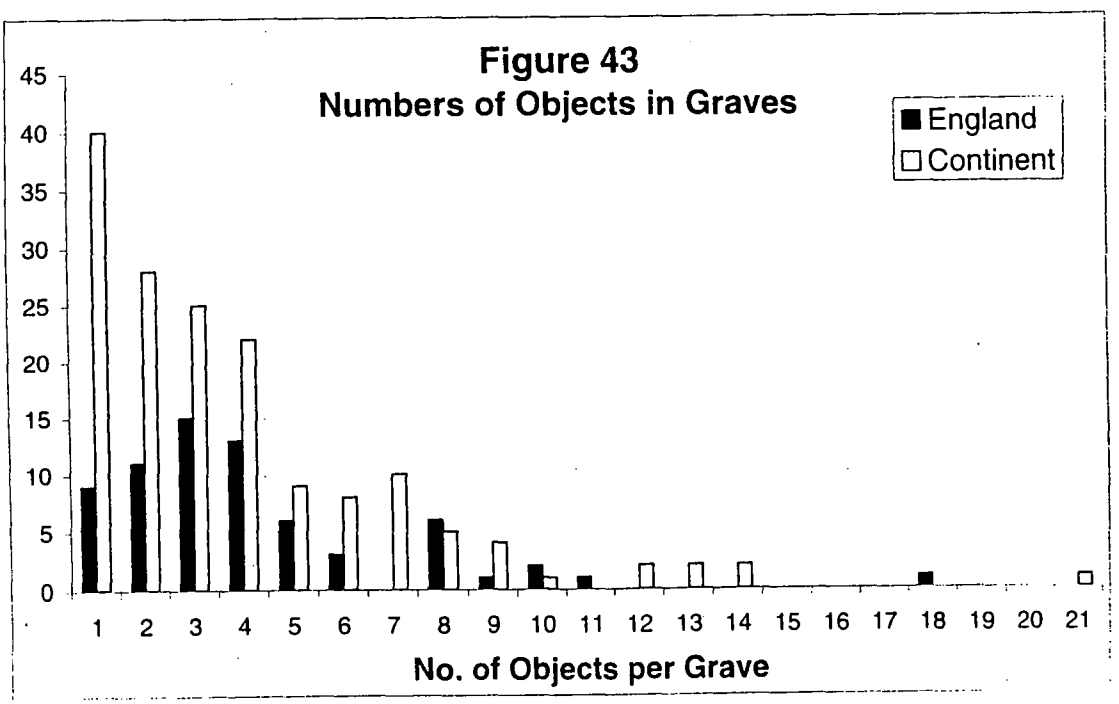
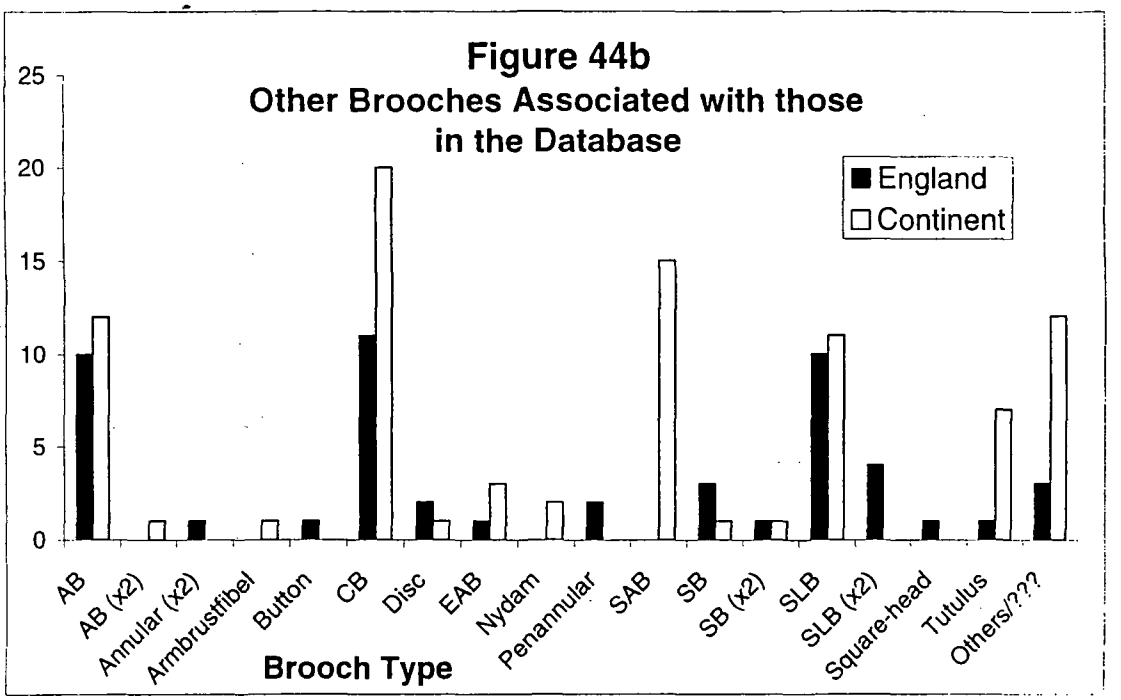
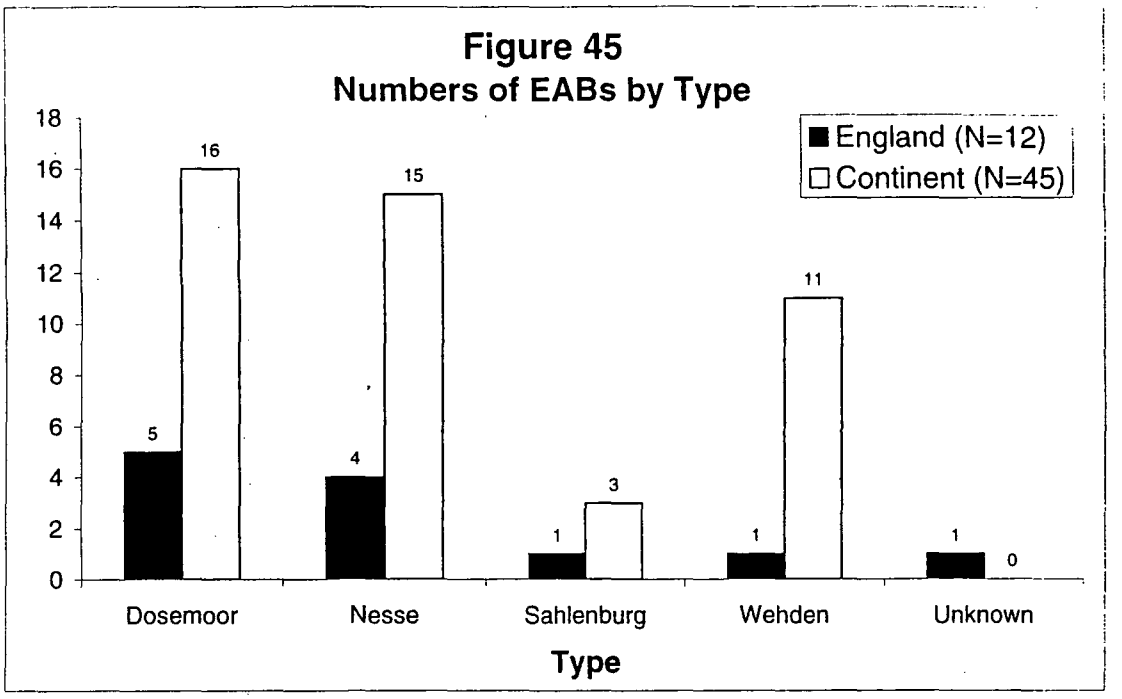
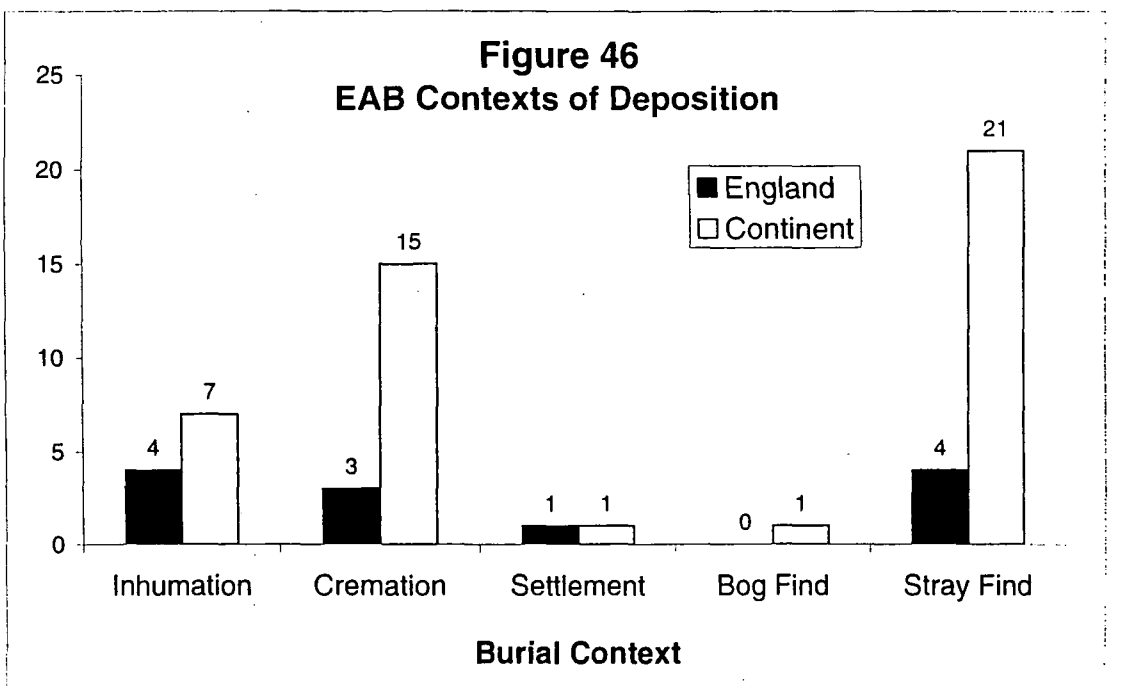

Figure 43
Numbers of Objects in Graves
England
Continent
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21
No. of Objects per Grave

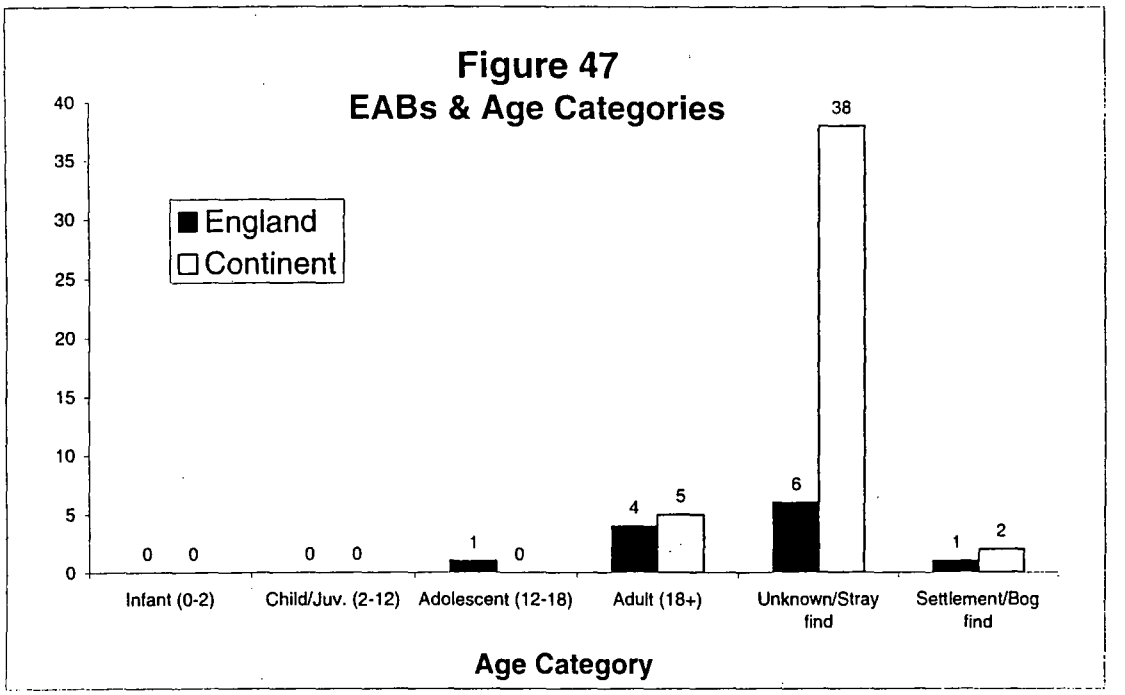
Figure 44a
Brooches found associated in the same grave

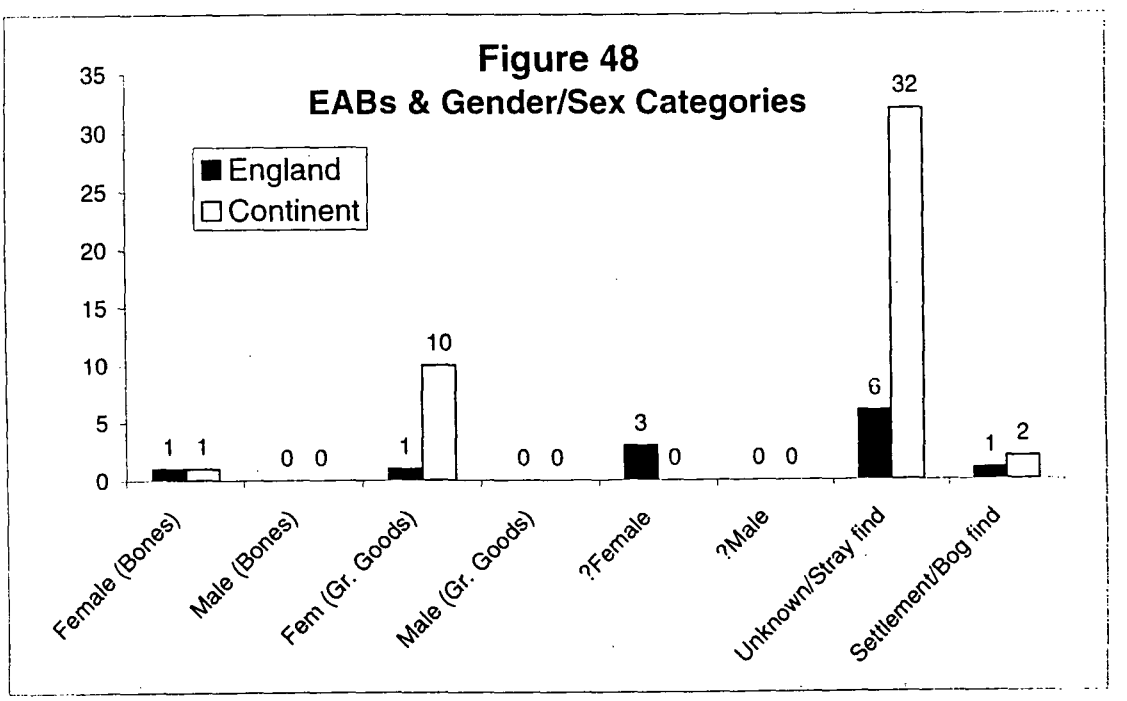
(Continental brooches in shapded column →)	EAB		SAB		AB		SB		CB		SLB	
AB	1	1	0	3	9	7	0	0	0	1	0	0
AB x2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Annular x2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Armbrustfibel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Button Brooch	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CB	1	3	0	3	0	1	0	0	10	11	0	2
Disc Brooch	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
EAB	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Nydam brooch	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Penannular brooch	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
SAB	0	1	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
SB	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0
SB x2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SLB	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	7	9
SLB x2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Square-headed brooch	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
***Tutulus* brooch**	0	0	0	1	1	5	0	0	0	1	0	0
Other type or unknown	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	5	2	3

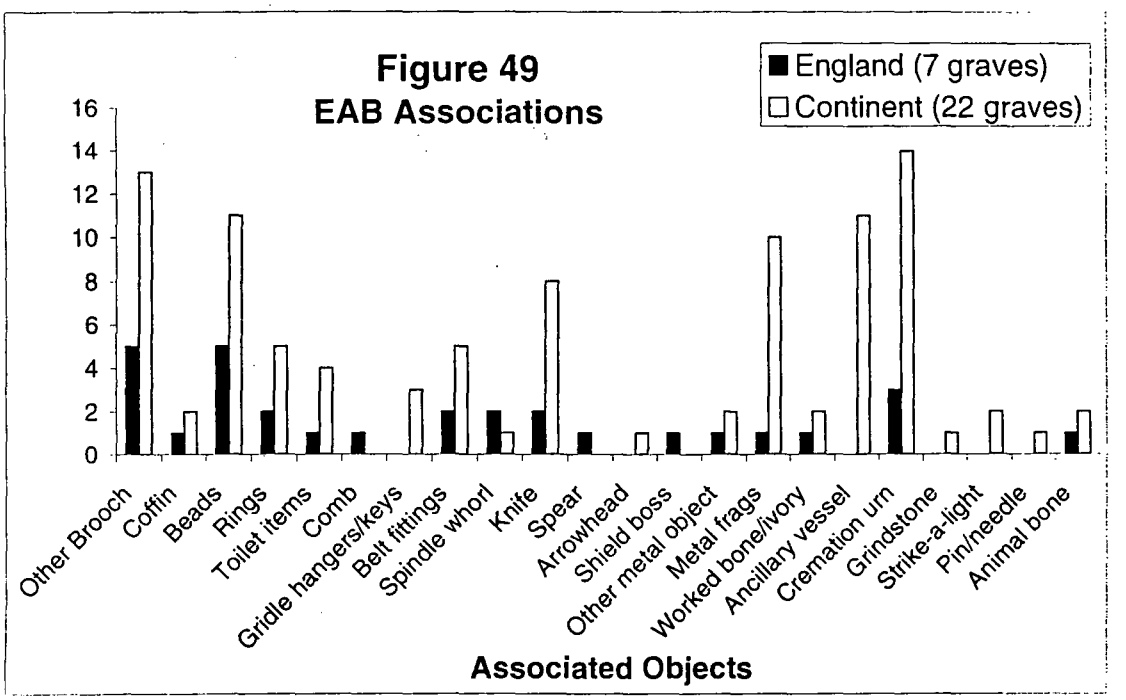

Figure 44b
Other Brooches Associated with those in the Database
25
20
15
10
5
0
England
Continent
AB
AB (x2)
Annular (x2)
Armbrustfibel
Button
CB
Disc
EAB
Nydam
Penannular
SAB
SB
SB (x2)
SLB
SLB (x2)
Square-head
Tutulus
Others/???
Brooch Type

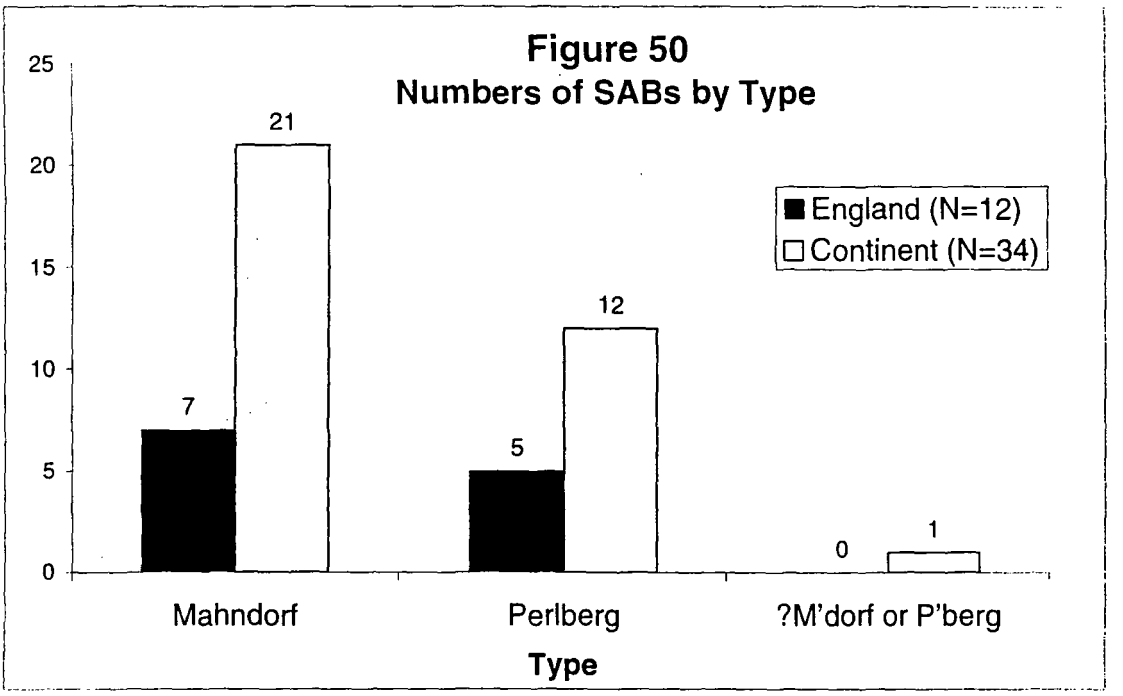

Figure 45
Numbers of EABs by Type
England (N=12)
Continent (N=45)
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
16
15
11
5
4
3
1
1
1
0
Dosemoor
Nesse
Sahlenburg
Wehden
Unknown
Type

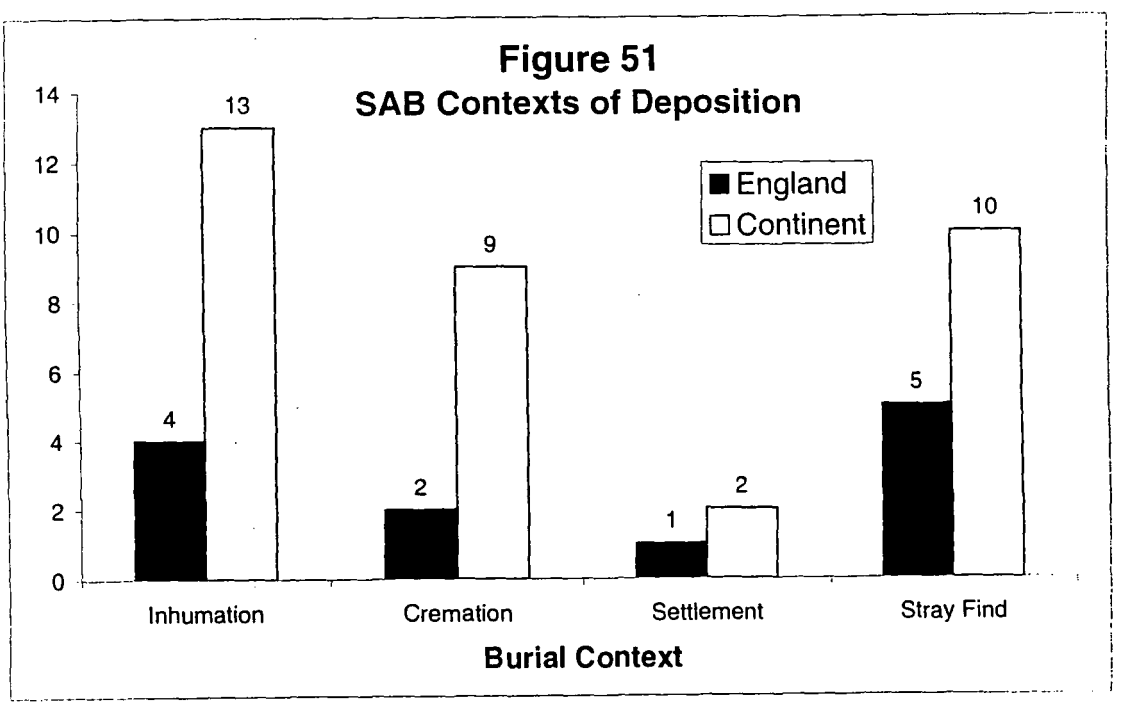

Figure 46
EAB Contexts of Deposition
England
Continent
25
20
15
10
5
0
21
15
7
4
4
3
1
1
0
1
Inhumation
Cremation
Settlement
Bog Find
Stray Find
Burial Context

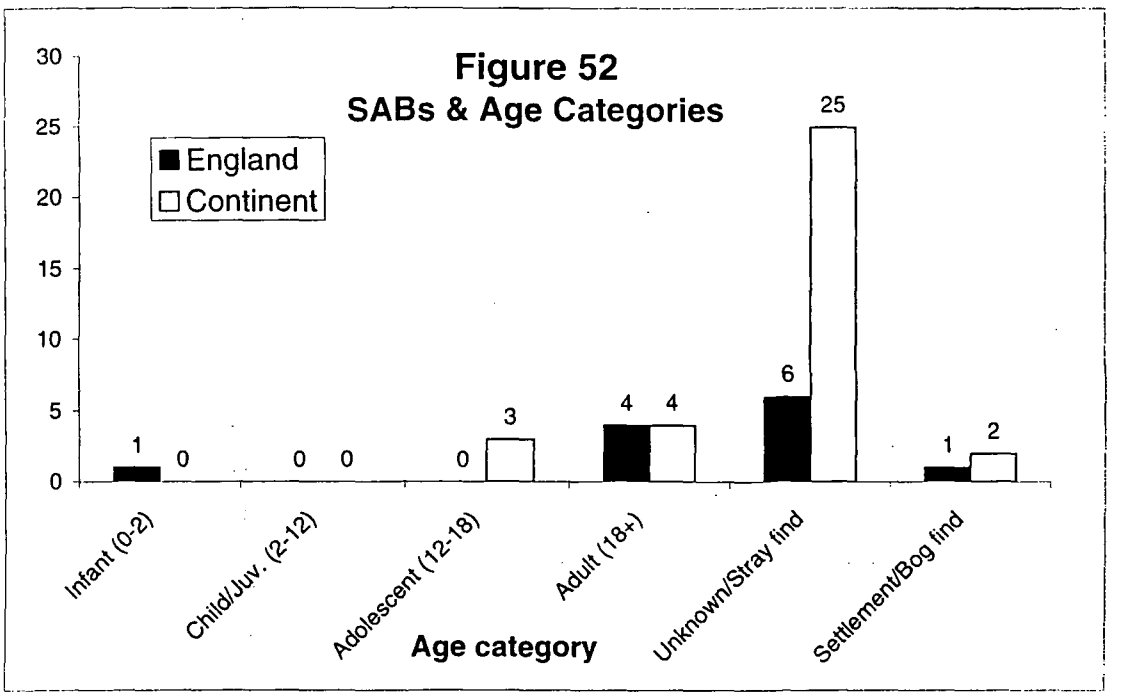

Figure 47
EABs & Age Categories
England
Continent
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
0 0
0 0
1 0
4 5
6 38
1 2
Infant (0-2)
Child/Juv. (2-12)
Adolescent (12-18)
Adult (18+)
Unknown/Stray find
Settlement/Bog find
Age Category


Figure 48
EABs & Gender/Sex Categories
England
Continent
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
1 1
0 0
1 10
0 0
3 0
0 0
6 32
1 2
Female (Bones)
Male (Bones)
Fem (Gr. Goods)
Male (Gr. Goods)
?Female
?Male
Unknown/Stray find
Settlement/Bog find


Figure 49
EAB Associations
England (7 graves)
Continent (22 graves)
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
Other Brooch
Coffin
Beads
Rings
Toilet items
Comb
Gridle hangers/keys
Belt fittings
Spindle whorl
Knife
Spear
Arrowhead
Shield boss
Other metal object
Metal frags
Worked bone/ivory
Ancillary vessel
Cremation urn
Grindstone
Strike-a-light
Pin/needle
Animal bone
Associated Objects


Figure 50
Numbers of SABs by Type
25
20
15
10
5
0
21
7
12
5
0
1
England (N=12)
Continent (N=34)
Mahndorf
Perlberg
?M'dorf or P'berg
Type


Figure 51
SAB Contexts of Deposition
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
13
4
9
2
2
1
10
5
England
Continent
Inhumation
Cremation
Settlement
Stray Find
Burial Context


Figure 52
SABs & Age Categories
England
Continent
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
1
0
0
0
0
3
4
4
6
25
1
2
Infant (0-2)
Child/Juv. (2-12)
Adolescent (12-18)
Adult (18+)
Unknown/Stray find
Settlement/Bog find
Age category

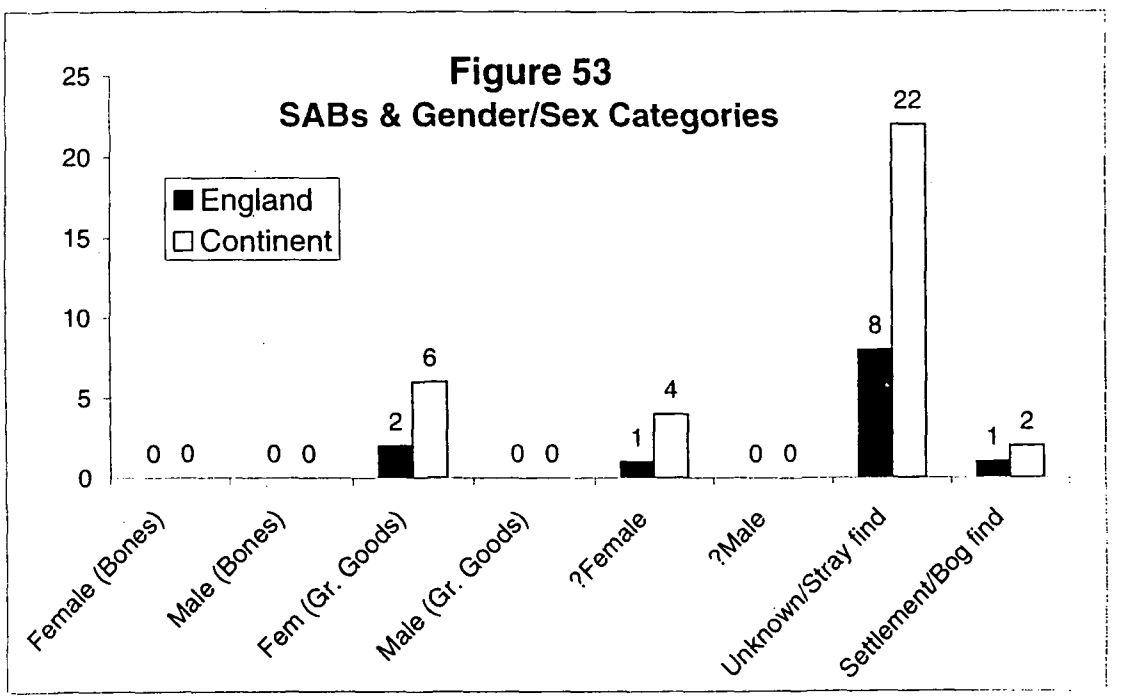
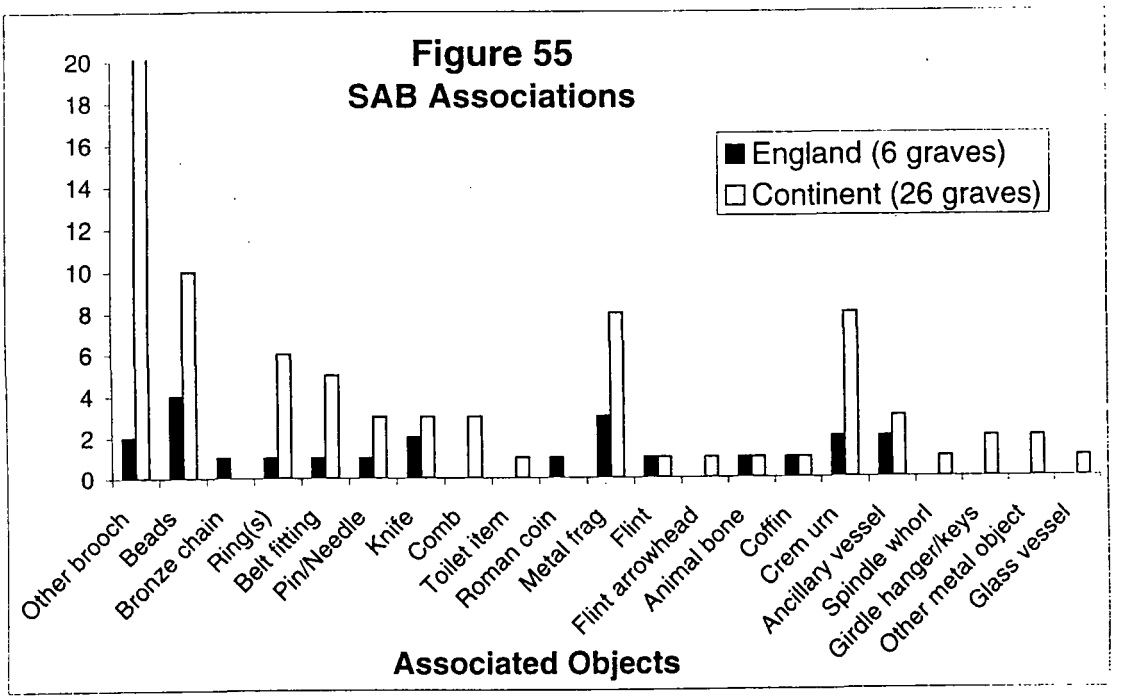
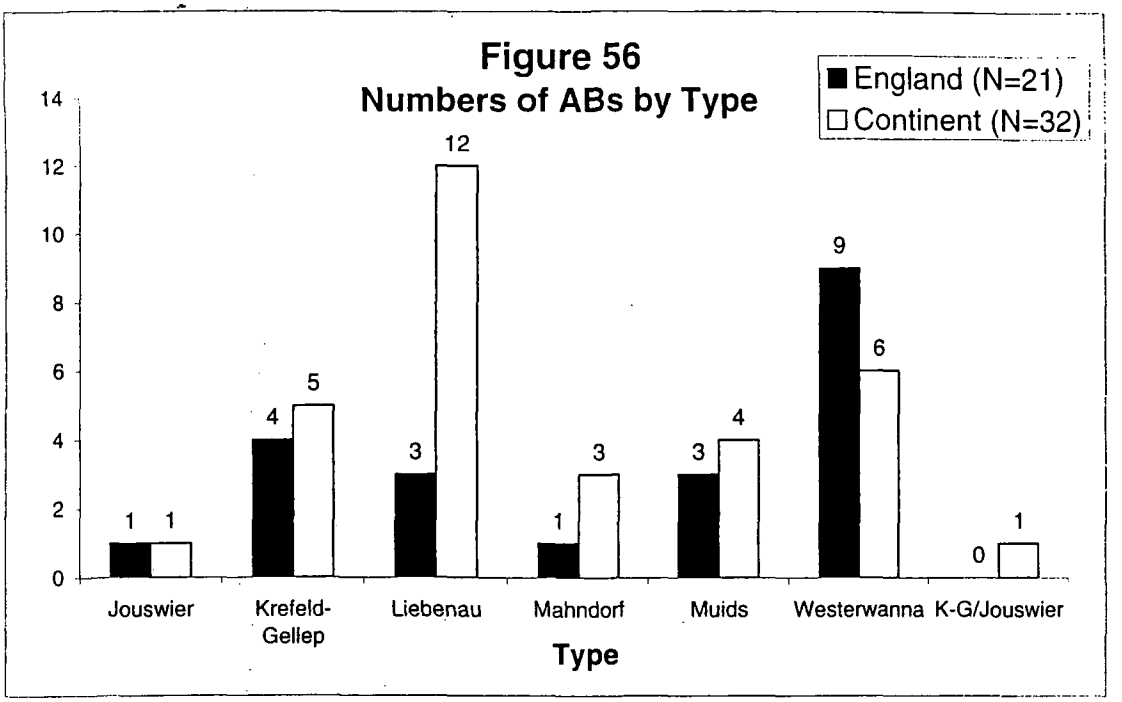
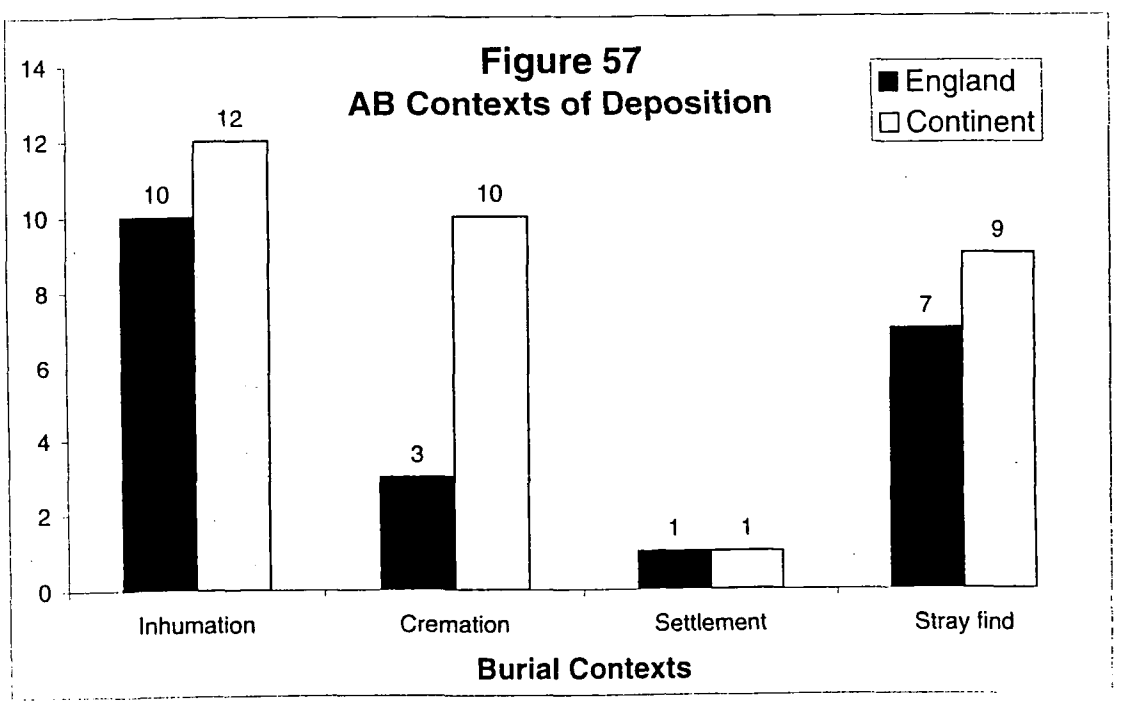

Figure 53
SABs & Gender/Sex Categories
England
Continent
25
20
15
10
5
0
0 0
0 0
2
6
0 0
1
4
0 0
8
22
1
2
Female (Bones)
Male (Bones)
Fem (Gr. Goods)
Male (Gr. Goods)
?Female
?Male
Unknown/Stray find
Settlement/Bog find

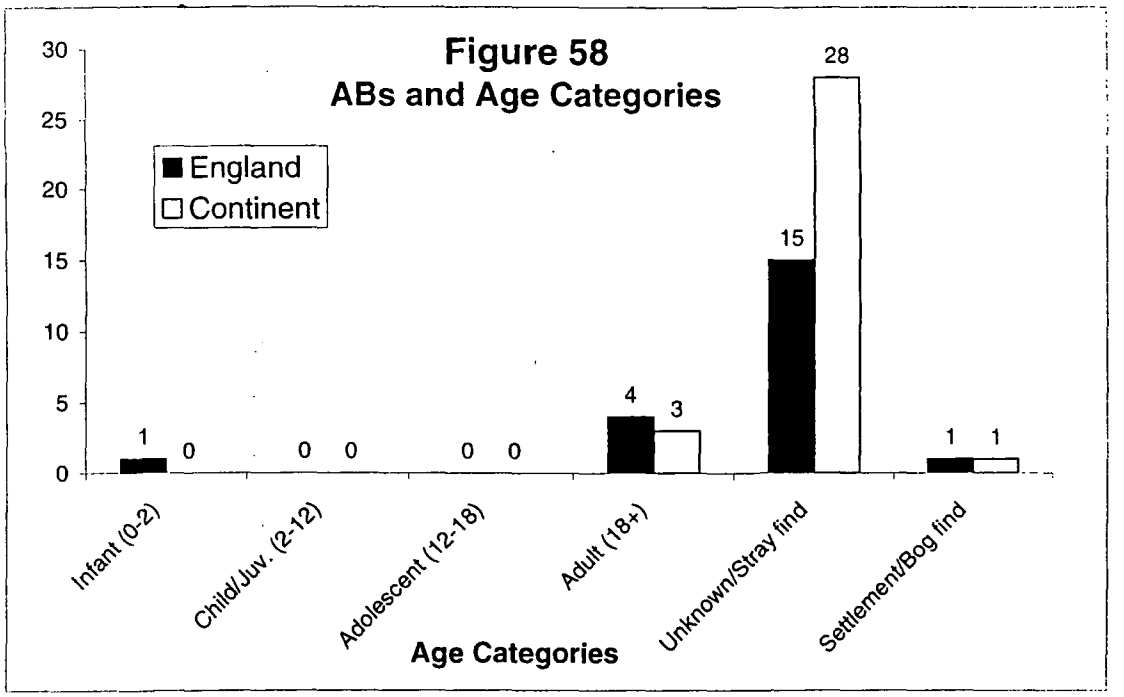
Figure 54
Other brooches found associated with supporting-arm brooches

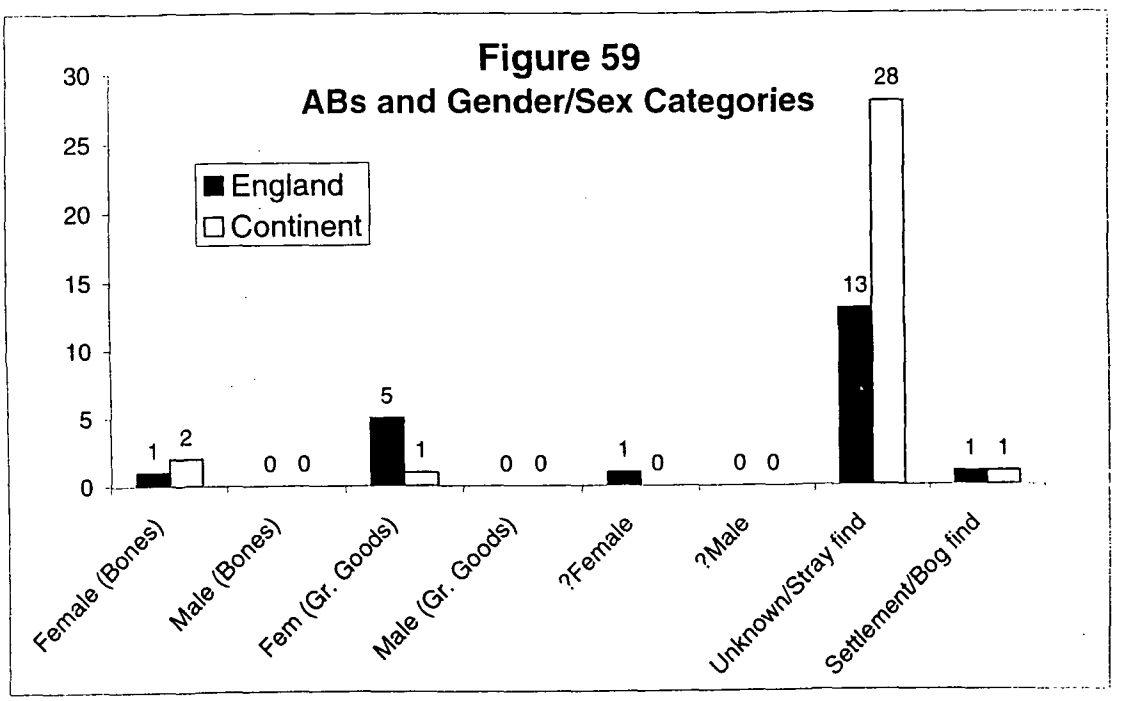
Brooch type	England	Continent
SAB	0	12
AB	0	3
CB	0	3
Disc brooch	0	1
EAB	0	1
SLB	1	0
SLB (x2)	1	0
***Tutulus* brooch**	0	1
Unknown type	0	1




Figure 56
Numbers of ABs by Type
England (N=21)
Continent (N=32)
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
1 1
4 5
3 12
1 3
3 4
9 6
0 1
Jouswier
Krefeld-Gellep
Liebenau
Mahndorf
Muids
Westerwanna
K-G/Jouswier
Type


Figure 57
AB Contexts of Deposition
England
Continent
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
10 12
3 10
1 1
7 9
Inhumation
Cremation
Settlement
Stray find
Burial Contexts


Figure 58
ABs and Age Categories
England
Continent
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
1
0
0
0
0
0
4
3
15
28
1
1
Infant (0-2)
Child/Juv. (2-12)
Adolescent (12-18)
Adult (18+)
Unknown/Stray find
Settlement/Bog find
Age Categories


Figure 59
ABs and Gender/Sex Categories
England
Continent
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
1
2
0
0
5
1
0
0
1
0
0
0
13
28
1
1
Female (Bones)
Male (Bones)
Fem (Gr. Goods)
Male (Gr. Goods)
?Female
?Male
Unknown/Stray find
Settlement/Bog find

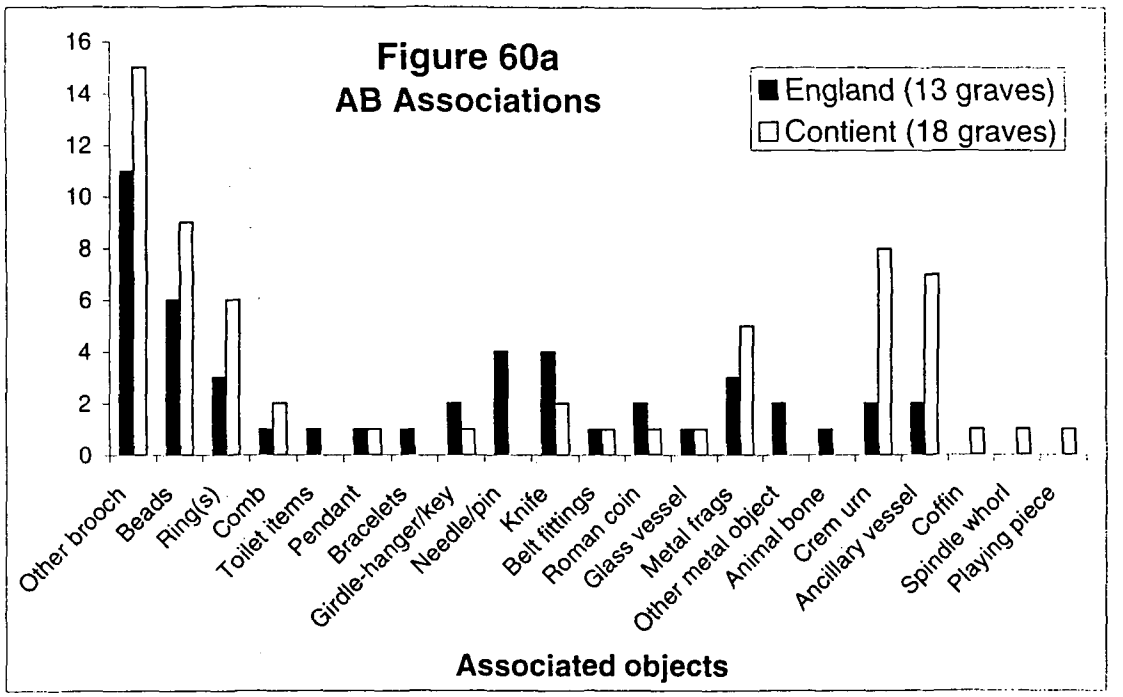
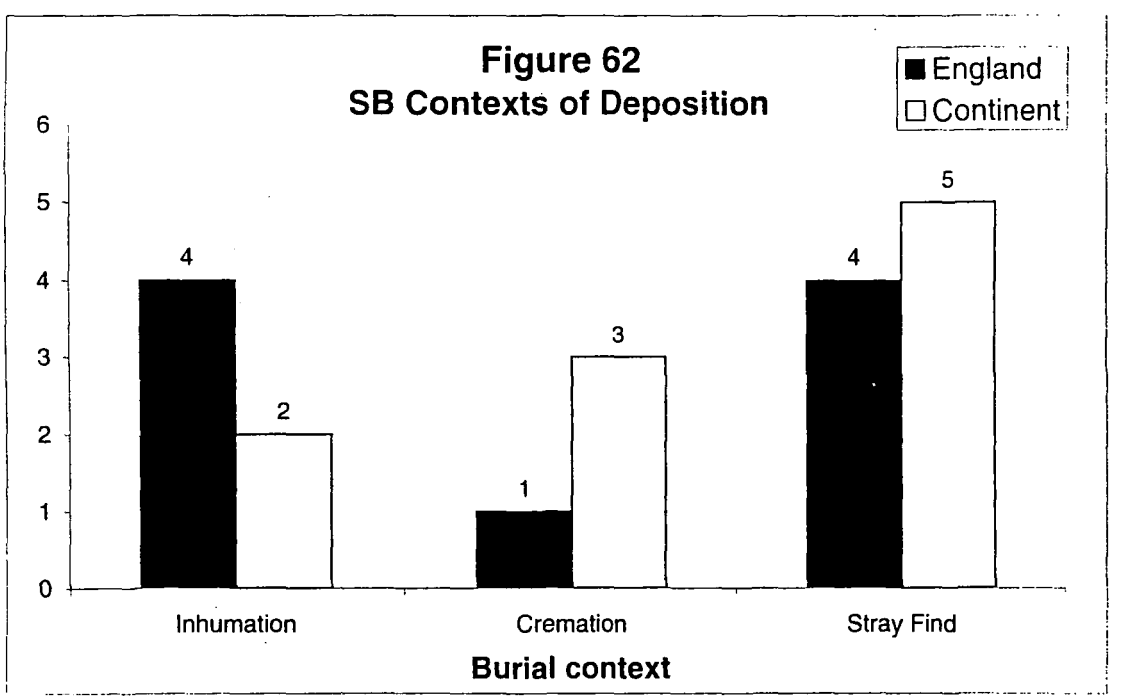


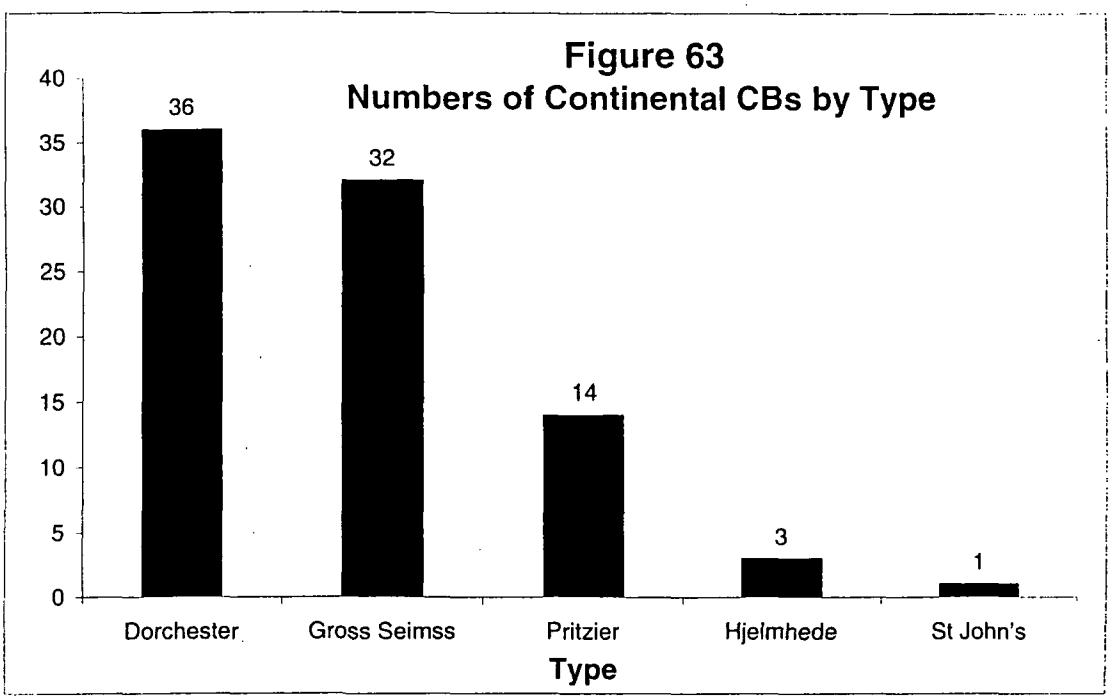
Figure 60b
Other brooches found associated with applied brooches

Brooch type	England	Continent
AB	9	7
CB	0	1
EAB	0	2
SLB	1	0
***Tutulus* brooch**	1	5

Figure 61
Numbers of saucer brooch sub-types

Type →	Alphen	Altenbulstedt	Harmignies	Otterstedt	Totals
England	2	2	3	2	9
Continent	5	2	2	1	10




Figure 63
Numbers of Continental CBs by Type
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
36
32
14
3
1
Dorchester
Gross Seimss
Pritzier
Hjelmhede
St John's
Type

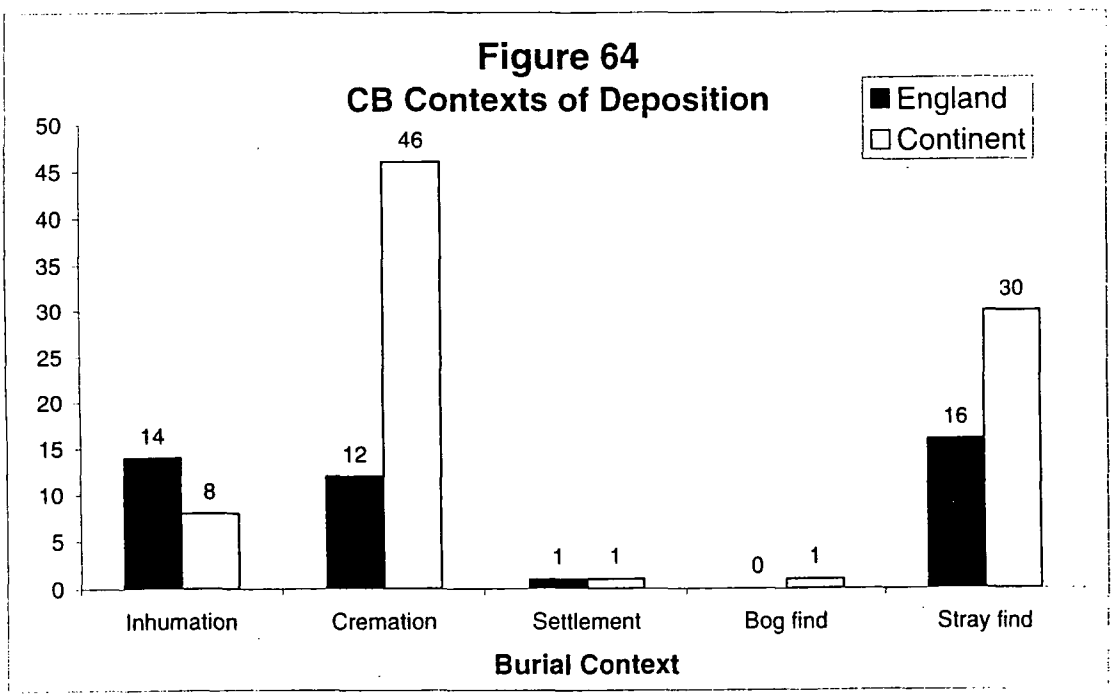

Figure 64
CB Contexts of Deposition
England
Continent
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
14
8
12
46
1
1
0
1
16
30
Inhumation
Cremation
Settlement
Bog find
Stray find
Burial Context

Figure 65
CB Contexts of Deposition by Percentage per Region

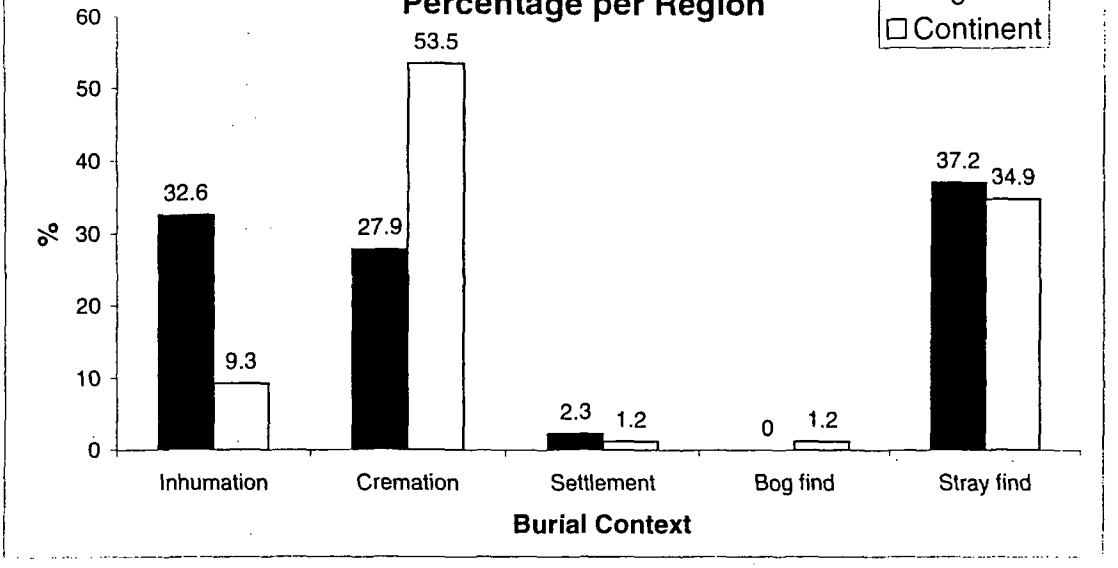
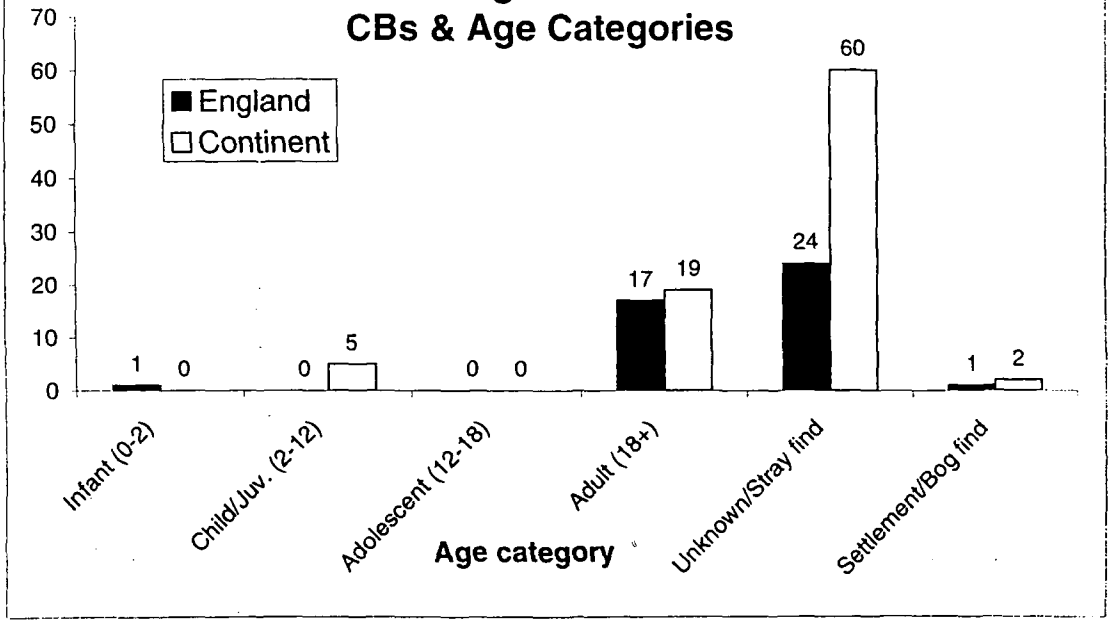
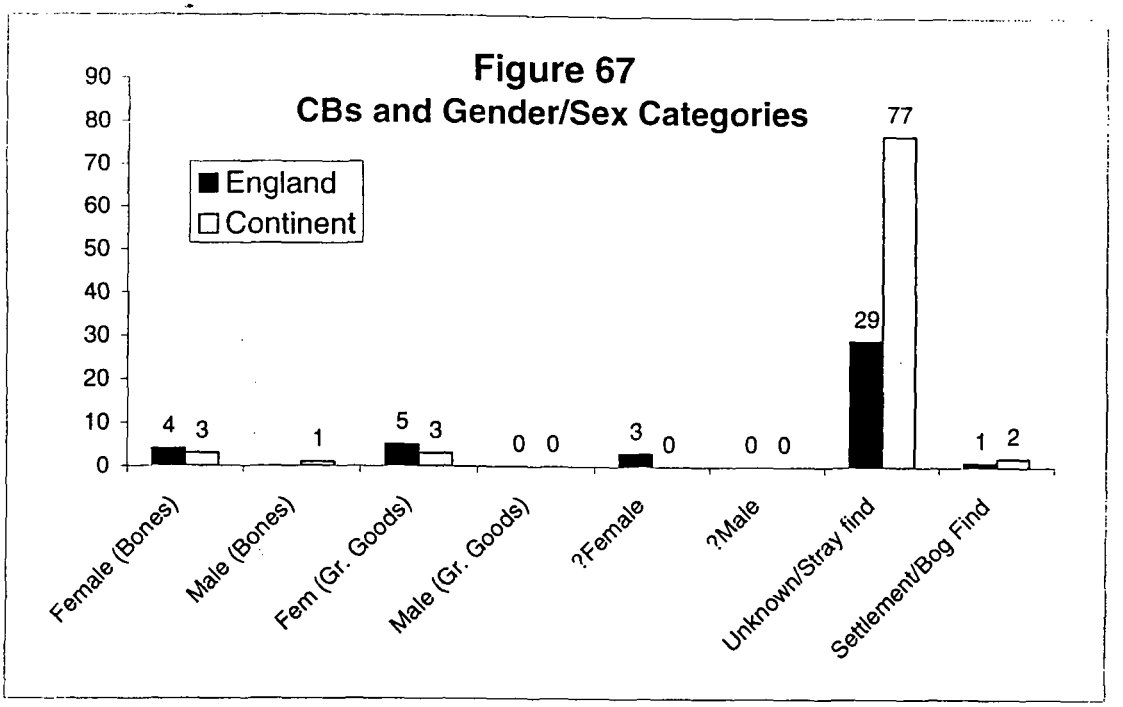
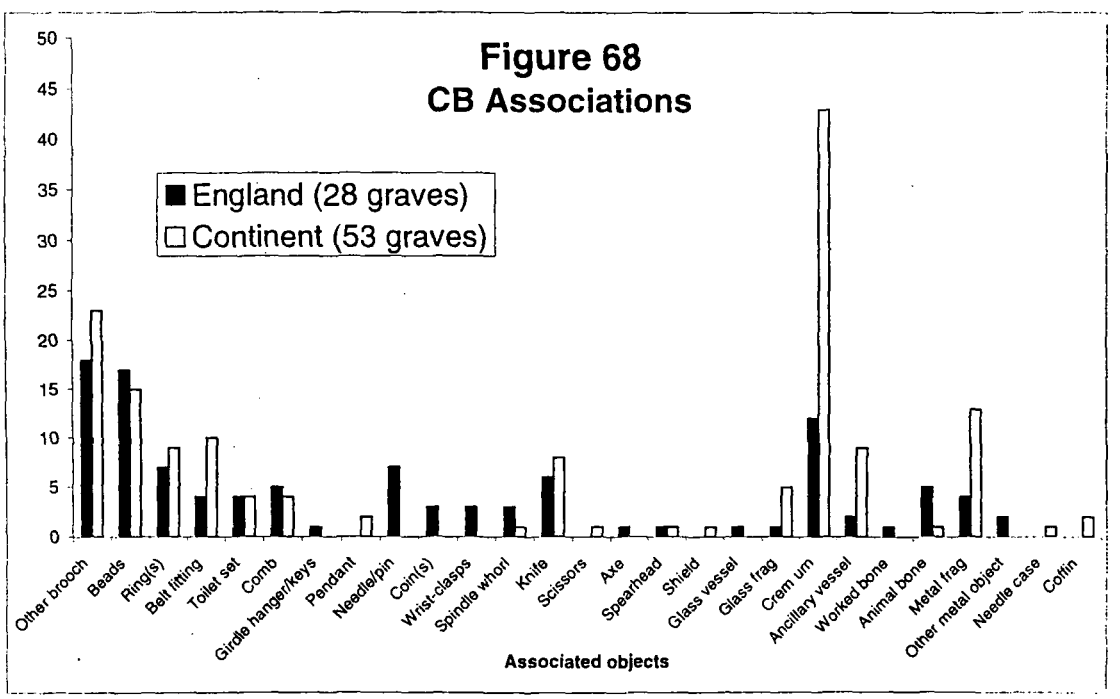
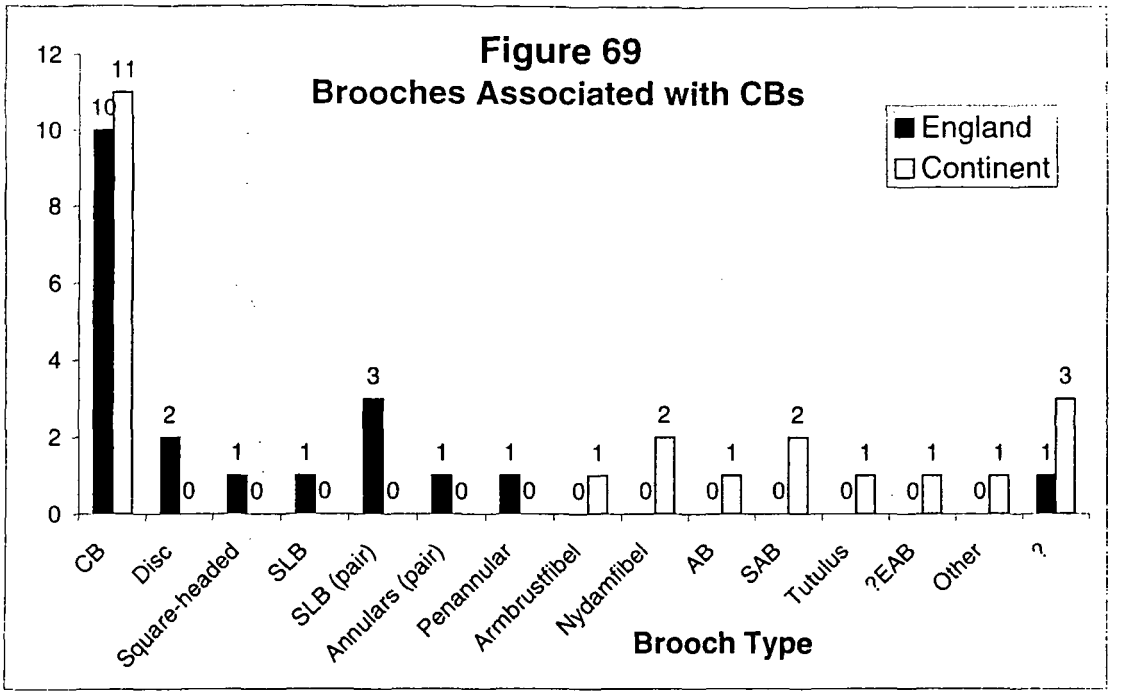


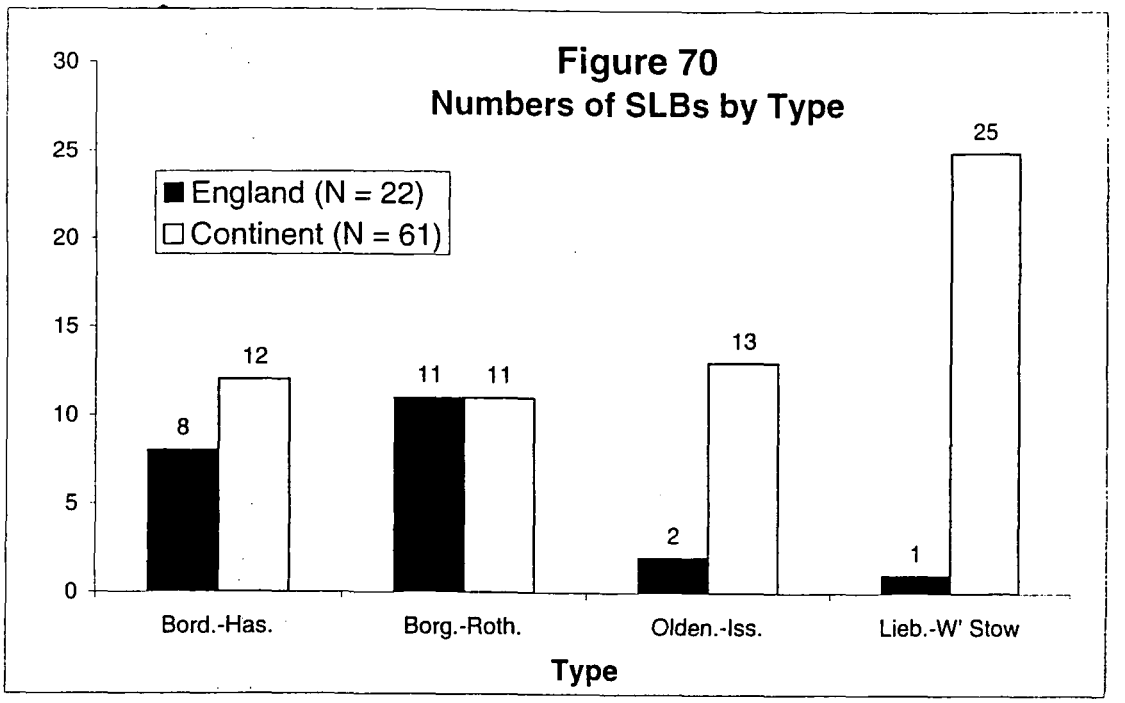
Figure 66
CBs & Age Categories

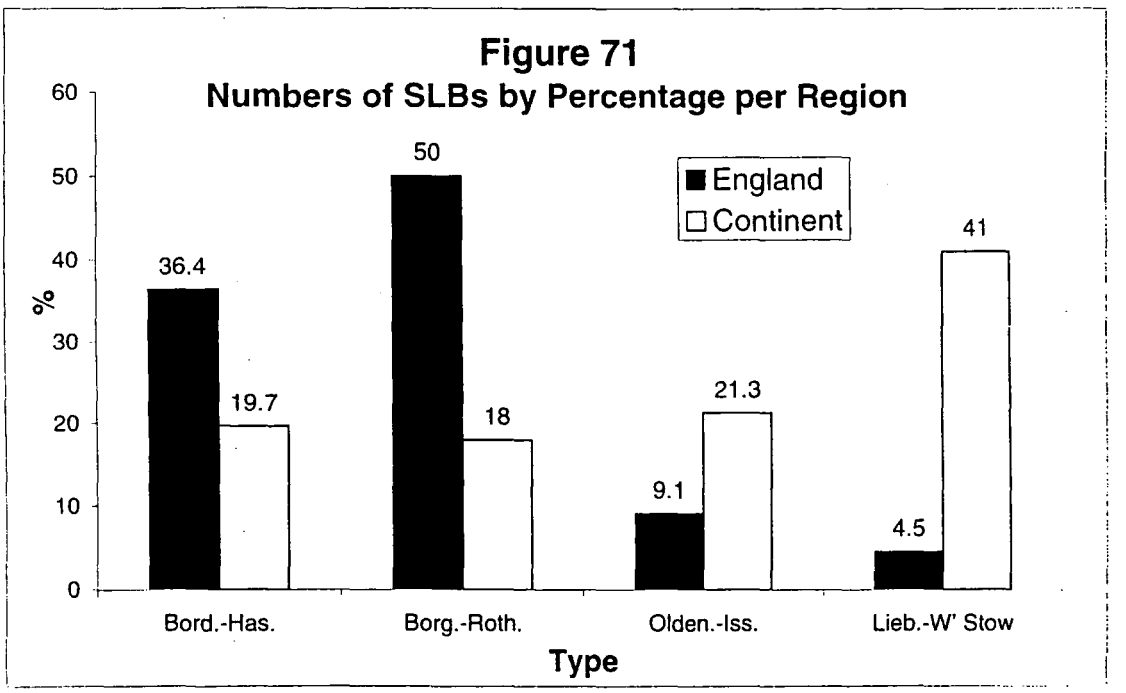


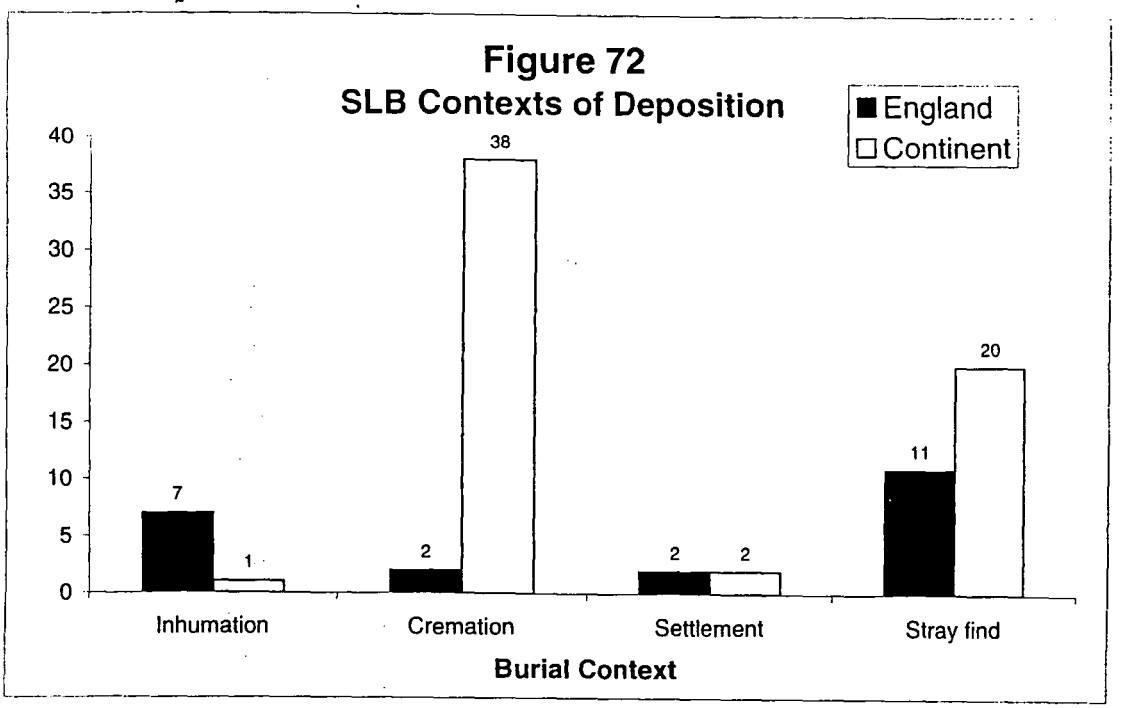

Figure 67
CBs and Gender/Sex Categories
England
Continent
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
4 3
1
5 3
0 0
3 0
0 0
29
77
1 2
Female (Bones)
Male (Bones)
Fem (Gr. Goods)
Male (Gr. Goods)
?Female
?Male
Unknown/Stray find
Settlement/Bog Find

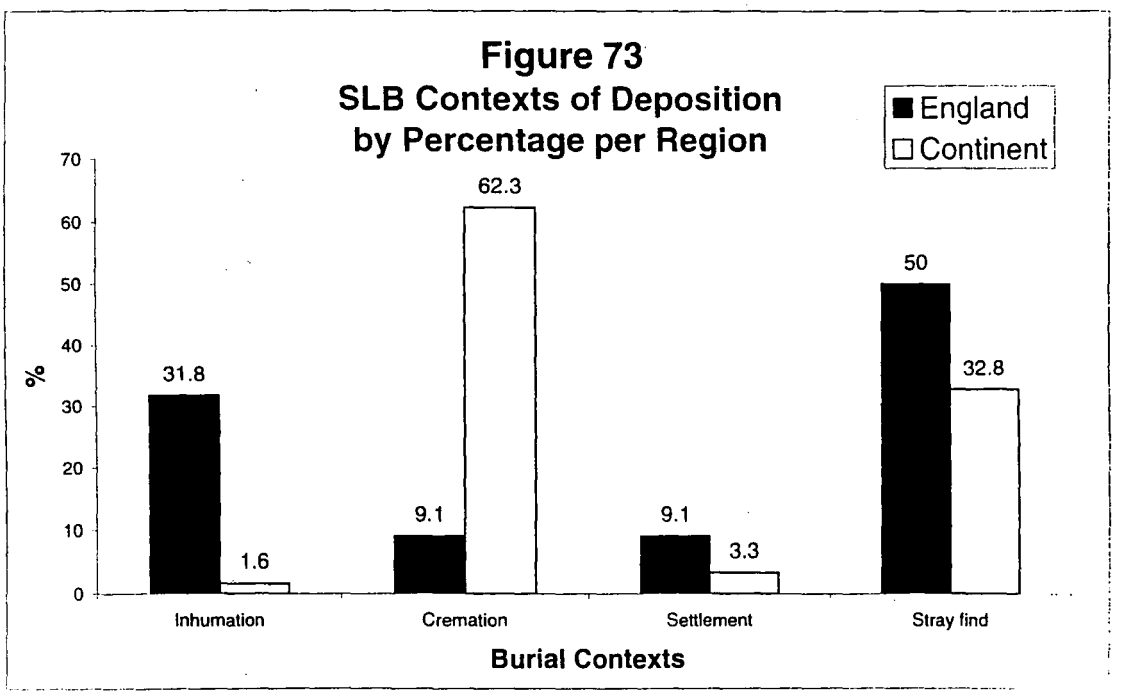

Figure 68
CB Associations
England (28 graves)
Continent (53 graves)
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
Other brooch
Beads
Ring(s)
Belt fitting
Toilet set
Comb
Girdle hanger/keys
Pendant
Needle/pin
Coin(s)
Wrist-clasps
Spindle whorl
Knife
Scissors
Axe
Spearhead
Shield
Glass vessel
Glass frag
Crem urn
Ancillary vessel
Worked bone
Animal bone
Metal frag
Other metal object
Needle case
Coffin
Associated objects

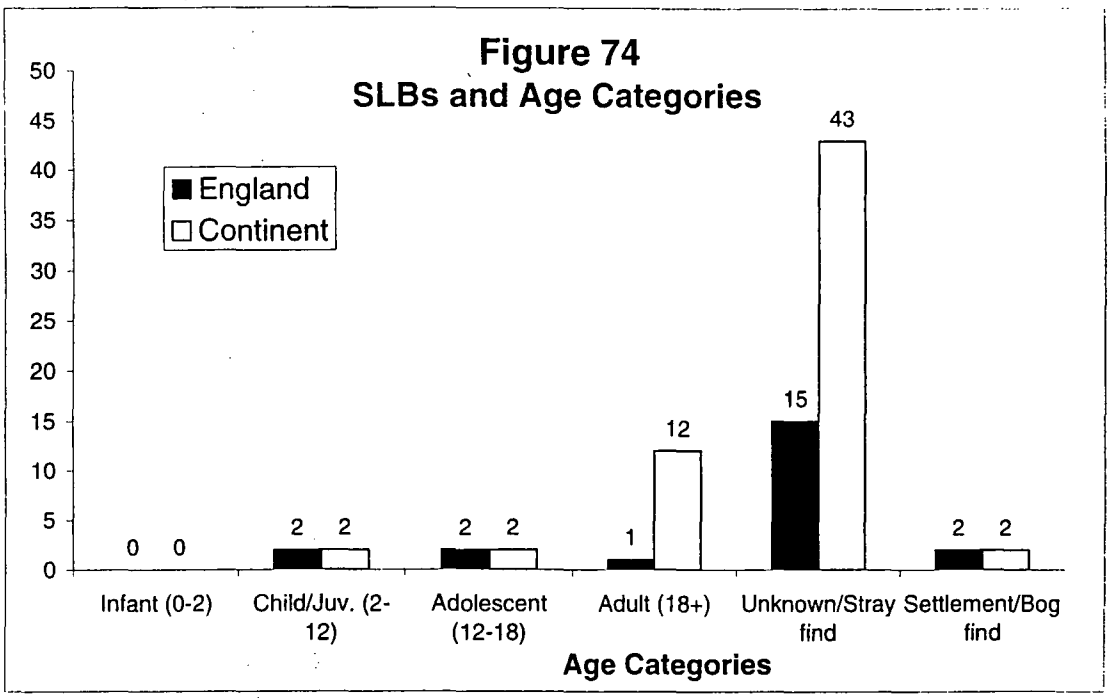

Figure 69
Brooches Associated with CBs
England
Continent
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
11
10
2
0
1
0
1
0
3
0
1
0
1
0
1
0
2
0
1
0
2
0
1
0
1
0
1
0
1
3
CB
Disc
Square-headed
SLB
SLB (pair)
Annulars (pair)
Penannular
Armbrustfibel
Nydamfibel
AB
SAB
Tutulus
?EAB
Other
?
Brooch Type


Figure 70
Numbers of SLBs by Type
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
England (N = 22)
Continent (N = 61)
8
12
11
11
2
13
1
25
Bord.-Has.
Borg.-Roth.
Olden.-Iss.
Lieb.-W' Stow
Type


Figure 71
Numbers of SLBs by Percentage per Region
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
%
England
Continent
36.4
19.7
50
18
9.1
21.3
4.5
41
Bord.-Has.
Borg.-Roth.
Olden.-Iss.
Lieb.-W' Stow
Type


Figure 72
SLB Contexts of Deposition
England
Continent
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
7
1
2
38
2
2
11
20
Inhumation
Cremation
Settlement
Stray find
Burial Context


Figure 73
SLB Contexts of Deposition
by Percentage per Region
England
Continent
%
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
31.8
1.6
9.1
62.3
9.1
3.3
50
32.8
Inhumation
Cremation
Settlement
Stray find
Burial Contexts


Figure 74
SLBs and Age Categories
England
Continent
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
0 0
2 2
2 2
1
12
15
43
2 2
Infant (0-2)
Child/Juv. (2-12)
Adolescent (12-18)
Adult (18+)
Unknown/Stray find
Settlement/Bog find
Age Categories

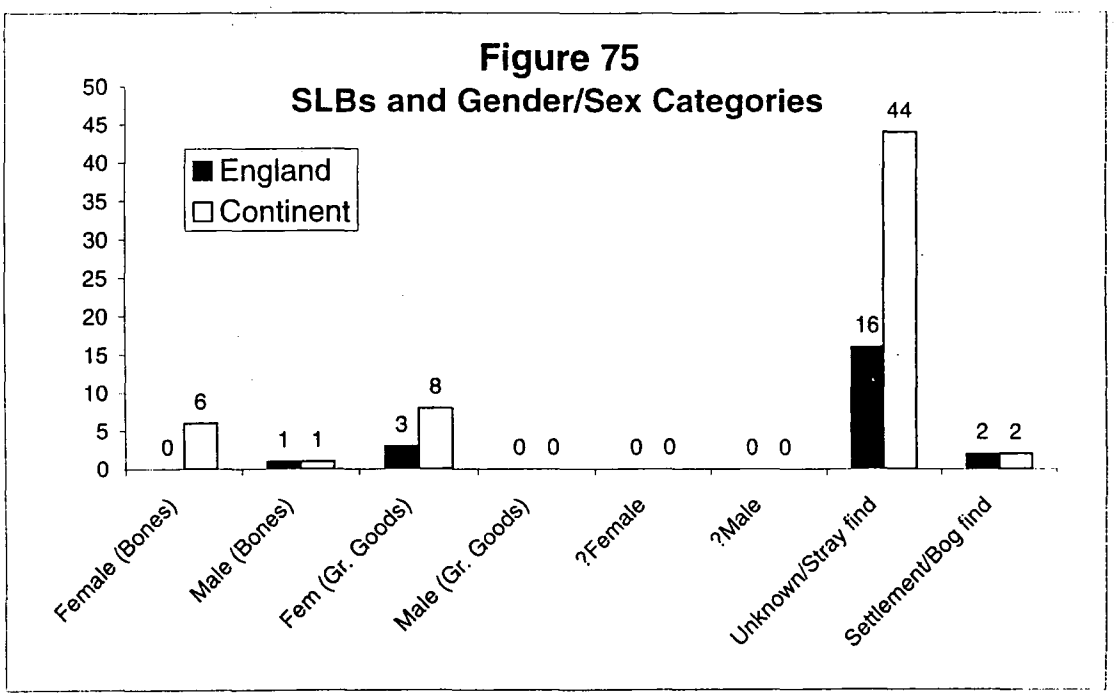
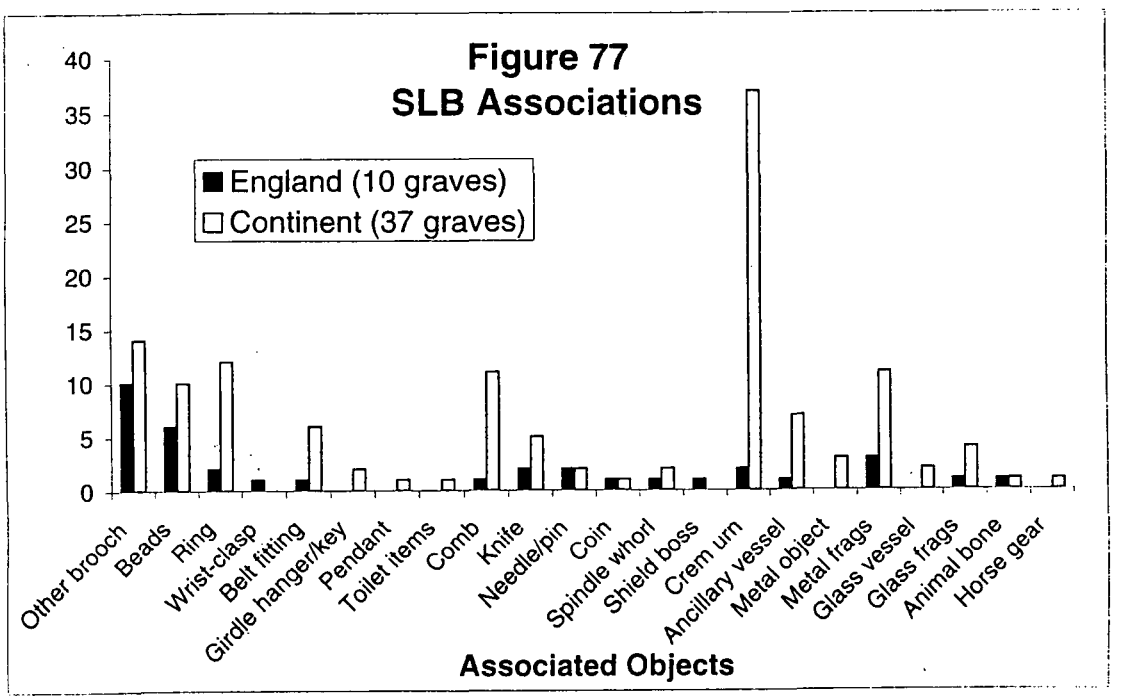

Figure 75
SLBs and Gender/Sex Categories
England
Continent
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
0
6
1 1
3
8
0 0
0 0
0 0
16
44
2 2
Female (Bones)
Male (Bones)
Fem (Gr. Goods)
Male (Gr. Goods)
?Female
?Male
Unknown/Stray find
Settlement/Bog find

Figure 76
Other brooches found associated with small-long brooches

Brooch type	England	Continent
SLB	7	9
CB	0	2
Penannular brooch	1	0
Swastika brooch	1	0
'Three-circle' brooch	0	2
Unknown type	1	1



Key for Map 1

◈ ◈ ◈

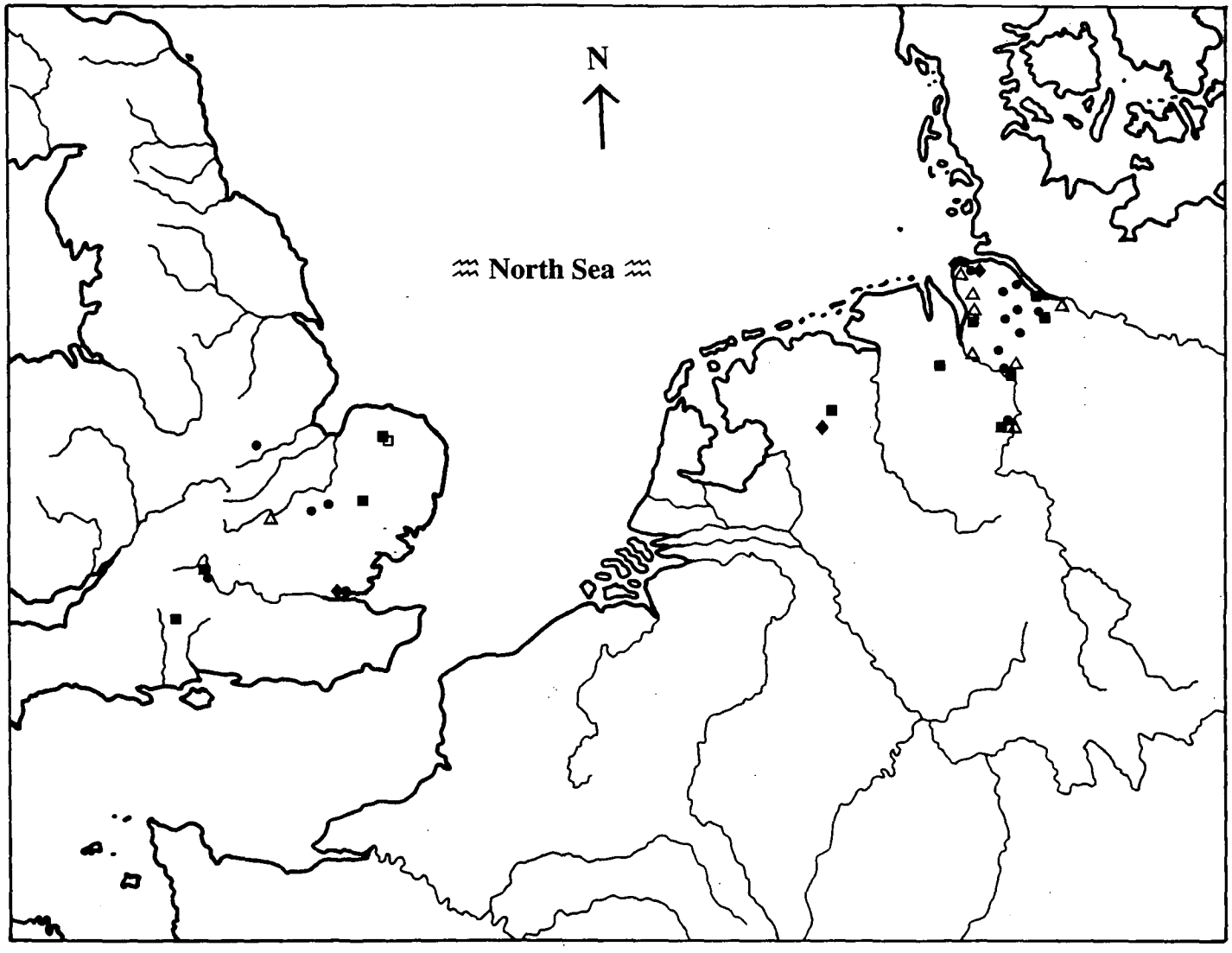
Cemeteries/Sites used in Analysis in Chapter Seven

Number (see Map 1)	Cemetery/Find Site	Modern Country
1	Alden (Prov. Drenthe)	Holland
2	Abingdon (Oxfordshire)	England
3	Almenum (Prov. Friesland)	Holland
4	Alphen (Prov. Nord-Brabant)	Holland
5	Altenbülstedt (Kr. Bremervörde)	Germany
6	Altenwalde (Kr. Bremervörde)	Germany
7	Alveston (Warwickshire)	England
8	Amesbury (Wiltshire)	England
9	Anderlingen (Kr. Bremervörde)	Germany
10	Baginton (Warwickshire)	England
11	Barrington (Cambridgeshire)	England
12	Berinsfield (Oxfordshire)	England
13	Bifrons (Kent)	England
14	Billingsgate (London)	England
15	Bliedersdorf (Kr. Stade)	Germany
16	Bordesholm (Kr. Rendsburg)	Germany
17	Borgstedt (Kr. Eckerförde)	Germany
18	Bremen-Blumenthal (Bremen)	Germany
19	Bremen-Mahndorf (Bremen)	Germany
20	Bretton (Cambridgeshire)	England
21	Brixworth (Northamptonshire)	England
22	Broadway Hill (Worcestershire)	England
23	Caistor-by-Norwich (Norfolk)	England
24	Colchester (Essex)	England
25	Collingbourne Ducis (Wiltshire)	England
26	Daudieck (Kr. Stade)	Germany
27	Dorchester – Dyke Hills (Oxfordshire)	England
28	Dösemoor (Kr. Stade)	Germany
29	Driffield (Yorkshire)	England
30	East Shefford (Berkshire)	England
31	Eastry (Kent)	England
32	Ejlskov (Fünen)	Denmark
33	Empingham I (Rutland)	England
34	Feddersen Wierde (Kr. Wesermünde)	Germany
35	Flögeln (Ldkr. Cuxhaven)	Germany
36	Frilford (Oxfordshire)	England
37	Girton (Cambbridgeshire)	England
38	Gjervik	Norway
39	Glen Parva (Leicestershire	England
40	Glentham (Lincolnshire)	England
41	Granstedt (Kr. Bremervörde)	Germany

42	Great Chesterford (Essex)	England
43	Groß-Seimß (Kr. Grevesmühlen)	Germany
44	Groß-Gerau (Kr. Groß-Gerau)	Germany
45	Grubbenvorst (Prov. Limburg)	Holland
46	Gudme (Fünen)	Denmark
47	Guildown (Surrey)	England
48	Hammoor (Kr. Stormarn)	Germany
49	Harmignies (Prov. Hainaut)	Belgium
50	Haslingfield (Cambridgeshire)	England
51	Hastings (Sussex)	England
52	Heeslingen (Kr. Bremervörde)	Germany
53	Hiaure (Prov. Friesland)	Holland
54	High Down (Sussex)	England
55	Higham (Kent)	England
56	Hitzacker-Neu-Dotzingen (Kr. Luchow-Dannenberg)	Germany
57	Hjelmhede	Denmark
58	Holßel (Kr. Wesermünde)	Germany
59	Holywell Row (Suffolk)	England
60	Howletts (Kent)	England
61	Icklingham (Norfolk)	England
62	Issendorf (Kr. Stade)	Germany
63	Ixworth (Suffolk)	England
64	Jouswier (Prov. Friesland)	Holland
65	Kantow (Kr. Kyritz/Ruppin)	Germany
66	Kempston (Bedfordshire)	England
67	Klein Meckelsen (Kr. Bremervörde)	Germany
68	Korup (Fünen)	Denmark
69	Krefeld-Gellep (Kr. Krefeld)	Germany
70	Langen (Kr. Wesermünde)	Germany
71	Liebenau (Kr. Nienburg)	Germany
72	Linton Heath (Cambridgeshire)	England
73	Little Wilbraham (Cambridgeshire)	England
74	Long Wittenham (Oxfordshire)	England
75	Loxstedt (Kr. Wesermünde)	Germany
76	Luton (Bedfordshire)	England
77	Mahlstedt (Kr. Oldenburg)	Germany
78	Midlum (Kr. Lehe)	Germany
79	Mildenhall (Suffolk)	England
80	Mitcham (Surrey)	England
81	Morning Thorpe (Norfolk)	England
82	Mucking (Essex)	England
83	Muids (Dèp. Eure)	France
84	Nassington (Northamptonshire)	England
85	Nesse (Kr. Wesermünde)	Germany
86	Oberhausen (Kr. Oldenburg)	Germany
87	Oenigstedt (Kr. Verden)	Germany
88	Oldendorf (Kr. Stade)	Germany
89	Orpington (Kent)	England
90	Otterstedt (Kr. Verden)	Germany

91	Pakenham (Suffolk)	England
92	Peißen (Kr. Steinberg)	Germany
93	Perdöhl (Kr. Hagenow)	Germany
94	Perlberg (Kr. Stade)	Germany
95	Pritzier (Kr. Hagenow)	Germany
96	Quelkorn (Kr. Verden)	Germany
97	Rahmstorf (Kr. Harburg)	Germany
98	Rhenen (Prov. Utrecht)	Holland
99	Riensförde (Kr. Stade)	Germany
100	Rothwell (Northamptonshire)	England
101	Rudstone (Yorkshire)	England
102	Rugby (Warwickshire)	England
103	Sabow (Kr. Schönberg)	Germany
104	Sahlenburg (Kr. Land Hadeln)	Germany
105	Sarre (Kent)	England
106	Schmalstede (Kr. Rendsburg)	Germany
107	Sigy-en-Bray (Dèp. Seine-Maritime)	France
108	Spong Hill (Norfolk)	England
109	Spornitz (Kr. Parchim)	Germany
110	Springfield Lyons (Essex)	England
111	St. John's College (Cambridgeshire)	England
112	Süderbrarup (Kr. Schleswig)	Germany
113	Sutton Courtney (Oxfordshire)	England
114	Tolkwade (Kr. Schleswig)	Germany
115	Trumpington (Cambridgeshire)	England
116	Waben (Dèp. Pas-de-Calais)	France
117	Wallingford (Berkshire)	England
118	Warnow (Kr. Bützow)	Germany
119	Wehden (Kr. Wesermünde)	Germany
120	West Hendred (Oxfordshire)	England
121	West Stow Heath (Suffolk)	England
122	Westerwanna (Kr. Land Hadeln)	Germany
123	Westgarth Gardens (Suffolk)	England
124	Zweeloo (Prov. Drenthe)	Holland
125	Wijster (Prov. Drenthe)	Holland

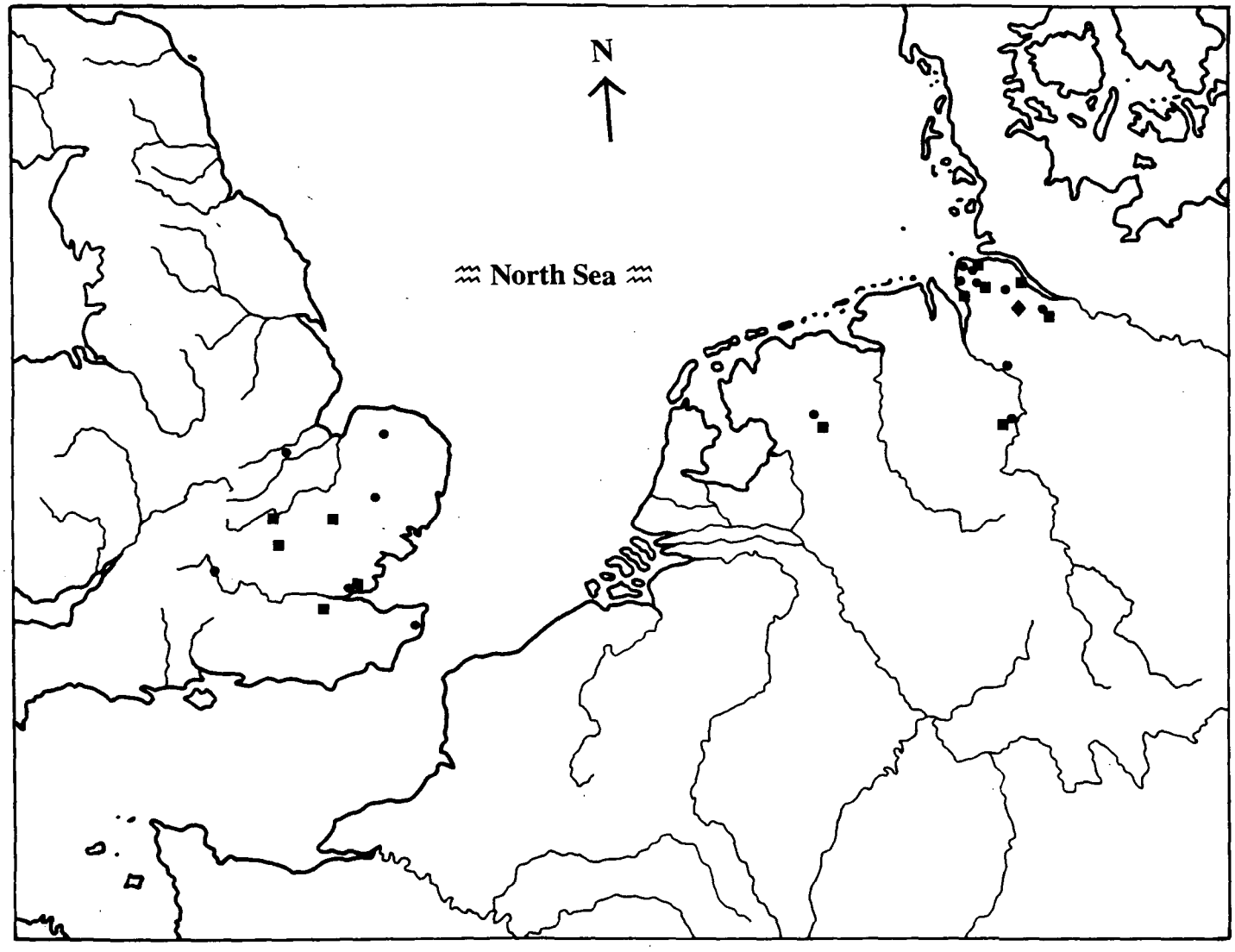
Map 1



MAP 2
Equal-armed brooches

- ● Type Dösemoor (21)
- ■ Type Nesse (19)
- ◆ Type Sahlenburg (4)
- △ Type Wehden (12)
- □ Unknown (1)

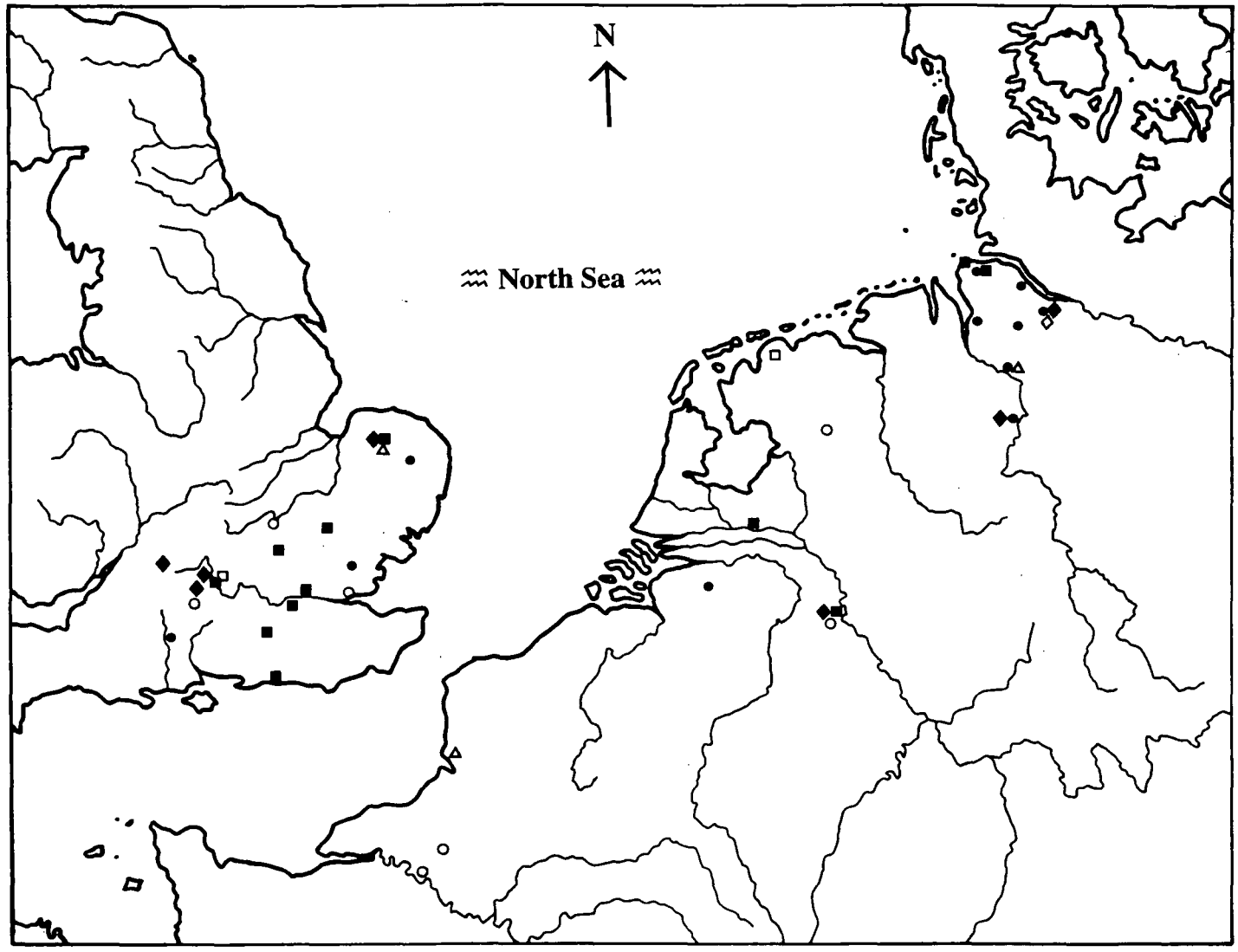
(Figures in brackets are the total number of each type of brooch)



MAP 3
Supporting-arm brooches

- ● Type Mahndorf (28)
- ■ Type Perlberg (17)
- ◆ ?M'dorf or P'berg (1)

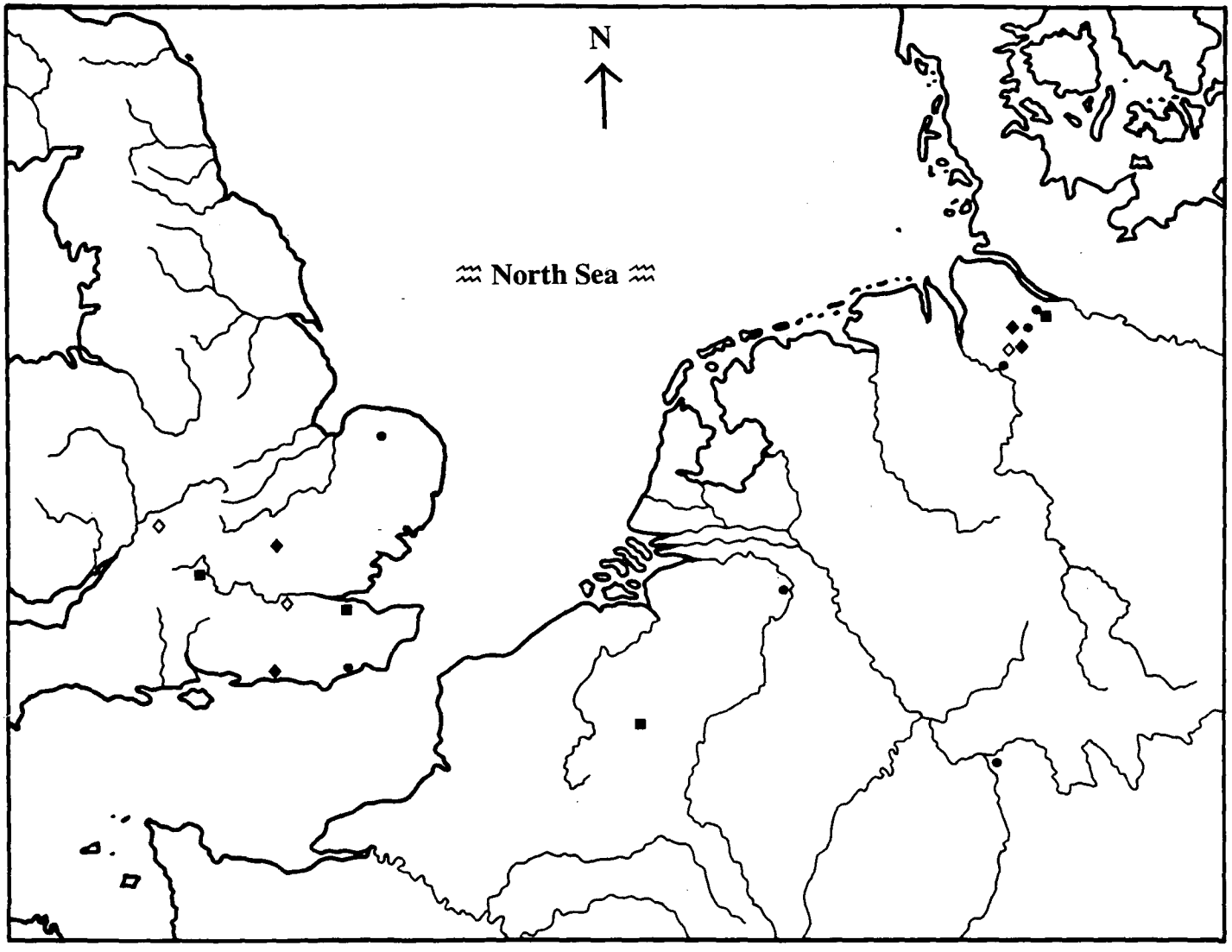
(Figures in brackets are the total number of each type of brooch)



MAP 4
Applied brooches

- □ Type Jouswier (2)
- ◆ Type Krefeld-Gellep (9)
- ● Type Liebenau (15)
- △ Type Mahndorf (4)
- ○ Type Muids (7)
- ■ Type Westerwanna (15)
- ◇ ?K-G or Jouswier (1)

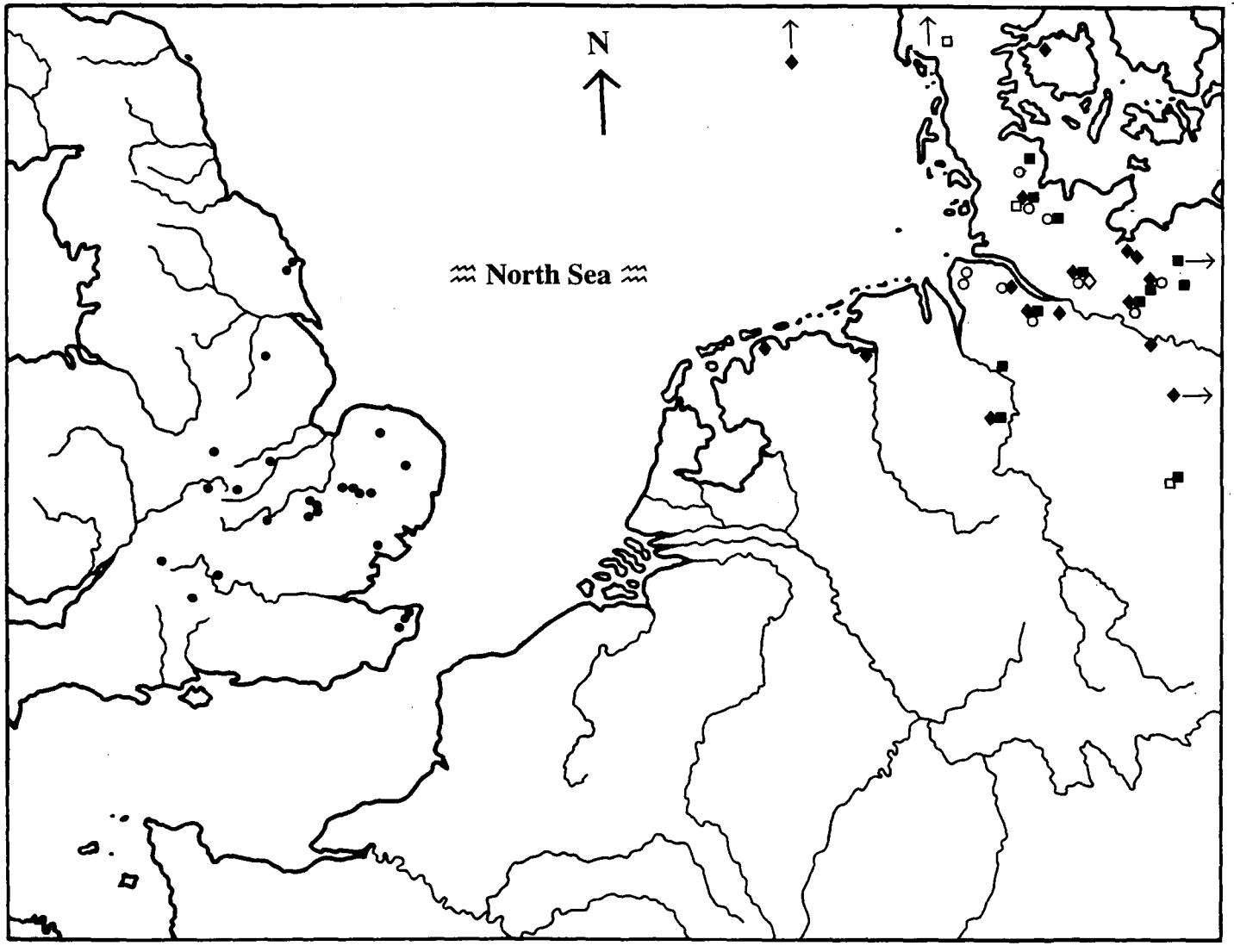
(Figures in brackets are the total number of each type of brooch)



MAP 5
Saucer brooches

- ● Type Alphen (7)
- ◆ Type Altenbülstedt (4)
- ■ Type Harmignies (5)
- ◇ Type Otterstedt (3)

(Figures in brackets are the total number of each type of brooch)



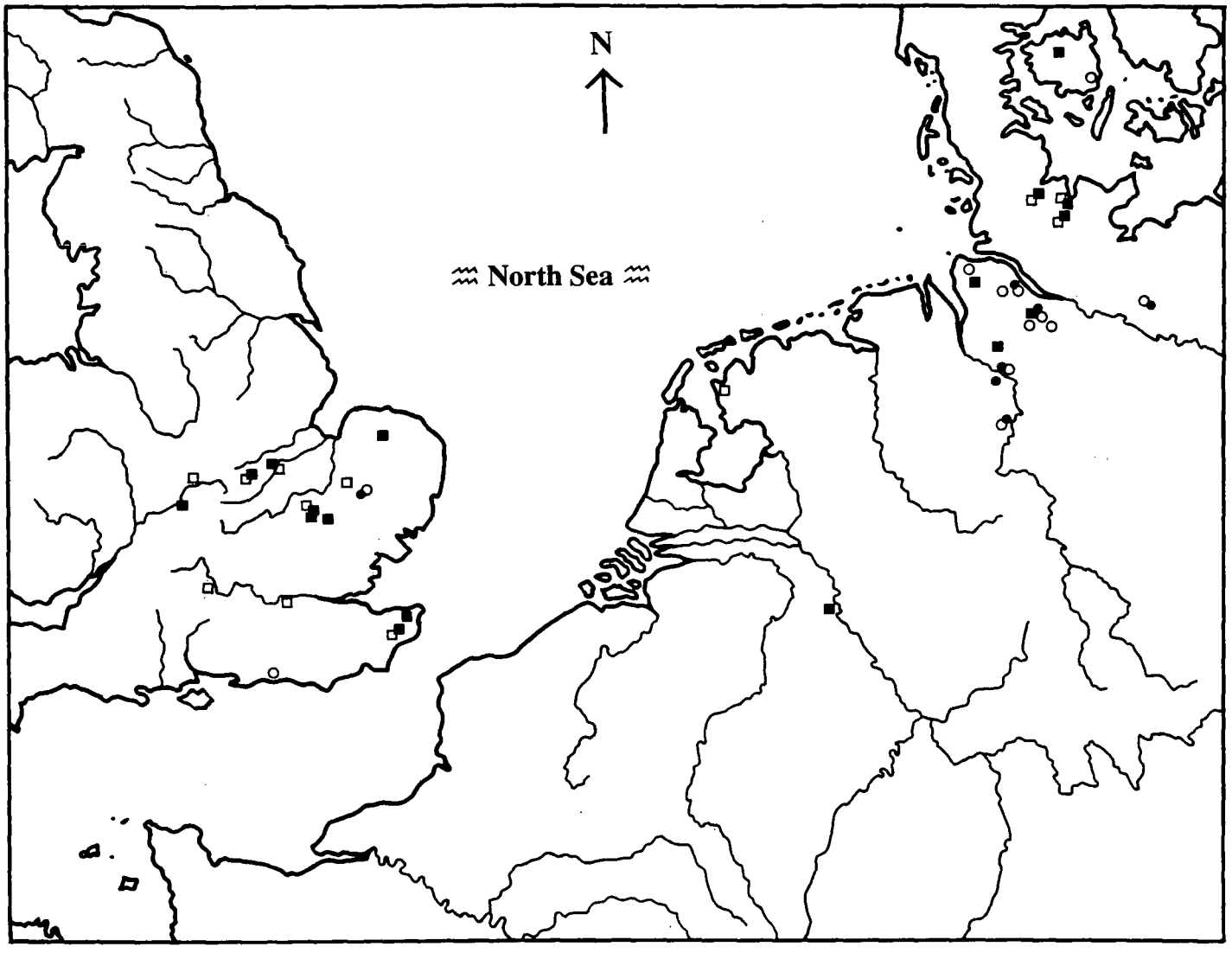
MAP 6
Cruciform brooches

- English Type A (43)

Continental types comparable with English Type A brooches:-

- Type Dorchester (36)
- Type Groß Seimß (32)
- Type Hjelmhede (3)
- Type Pritzier (14)
- Type St.John's College (1)

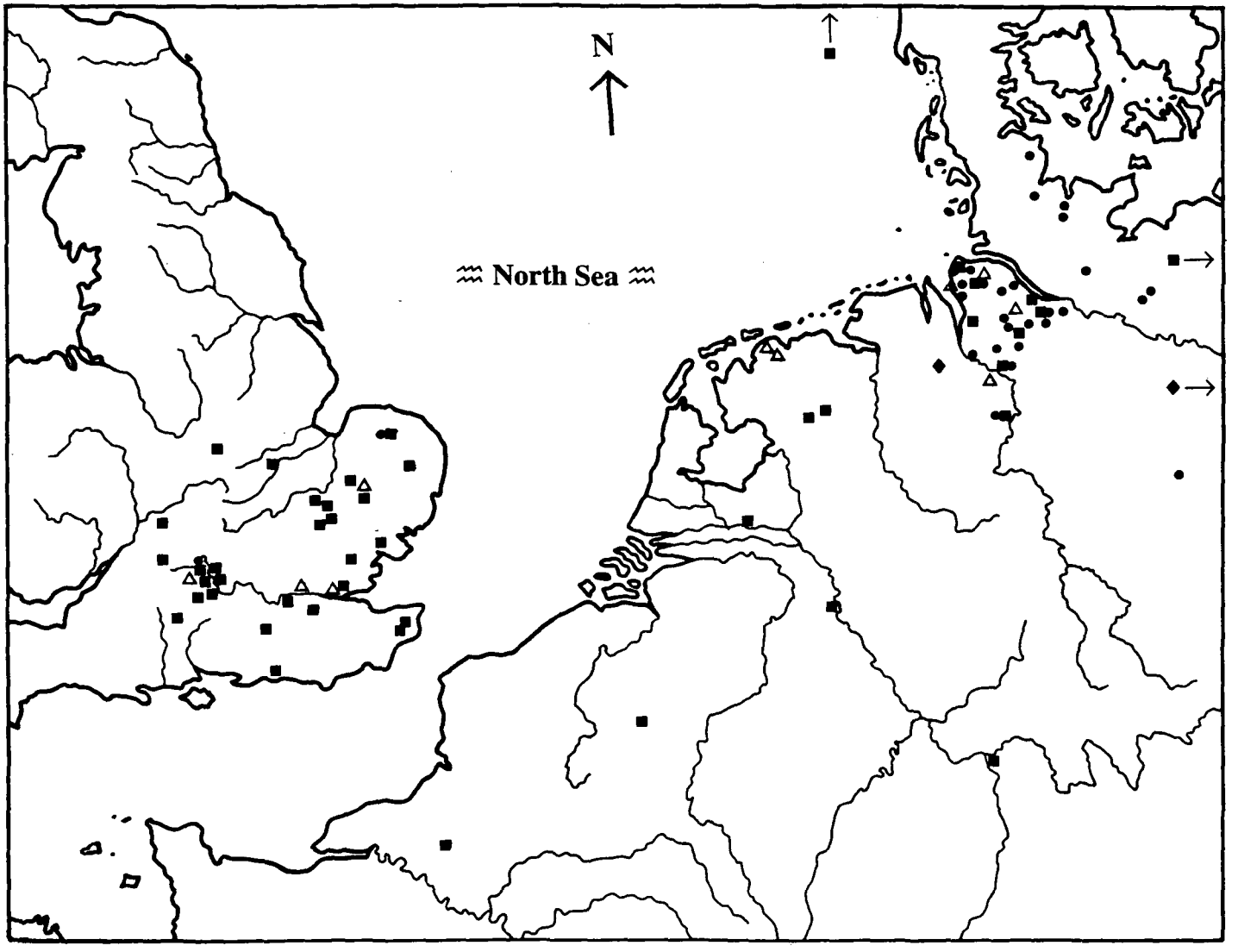
(Figures in brackets are the total number of each type of brooch)



MAP 7
Small-long brooches

- □ Form Bordesholm-Haslingfield (20)
- ■ Form Borgstedt-Rothwell (22)
- ● Type Liebenau-West Stow (26)
- ○ Form Oldendorf-Issendorf (15)

(Figures in brackets are the total number of each type of brooch)



MAP 8

Distribution of the different contexts in which the brooch types analysed were deposited (not including stray finds)

- ■ Inhumation
- ● Cremation
- △ Settlement find
- ◆ Bog find