Complex Assemblages, Complex Social Structures

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Rural Settlements in the Upper and Middle Thames Valley 100BC to AD100

By

Wendy A. Morrison

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To Richard A Wirling Jr, who chose to lay down his life's burdens before he had a chance to see this work completed.

To April Brooks, whom cruel disease robbed of a well-earned retirement.

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PREFACE

Late Iron Age and Early Roman Britain has often been homogenised by models that focus on the resistance/assimilation dichotomy during the period of transition. The main objective of this book is to examine the rural settlements of this period through the lens of Cultural Theory in order to tease out the more nuanced and diverse human landscape that the material suggests. This approach begins to develop new ways of thinking about the variability observed in rural settlement from the end of the Middle Iron Age (MIA) to the beginning of the 2nd century AD. The selected study area is the Upper and Middle Thames Valley. The book uses the grid/group designations of Mary Douglas' Cultural Theory as a tool to produce a more multifaceted picture of the period, exploring the assemblages of these rural settlements to understand the nature of the socio-political structures of the region, beyond the anonymity of tribal affiliation and the faceless economical dichotomy of high and low status.

The structure of the book is as follows: Chapter 2 summarises the state of play in the study of Late Iron Age and Early Roman Britain within the study area. The strengths and weakness of Cultural Theory, how it has been used in the past, and what role it has played in this research will be introduced in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents the dataset and the patterns observed, as well as why and how the types of artefacts examined are integral to the formation of the worldview of people. Chapter 5 offers interpretation of the data through the lens of the Cultural Theory model whilst Chapters 6, 7, and 8 place six case studies from the Upper and Middle Thames Valley under inspection and show in greater detail the potential of Cultural Theory as a tool for thinking about rural settlement variation.

This study re-characterises the rural Upper and Middle Thames Valley as a place where there was a wide variety of worldviews during the period of great cultural and socio-political transition of the centuries straddling the turn of the first millennium. It suggests that the varying success and longevities of these rural settlements may have depended upon the ability of their inhabitants to either change their worldviews or to find similarities in the new organisation of their world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the text of this book and may be not be familiar to all readers:

- **EIA:** Early Iron Age
- **ER:** Early Roman
- **HER:** Historic Environment Record
- **LIA:** Late Iron Age
- **LMIA:** Latest Middle Iron Age
- **LPRIA:** Late Pre Roman Iron Age
- **LR:** Late Roman
- **MIA:** Middle Iron Age
- **NMP:** National Mapping Programme
- **NMR:** National Monument Record
- **PAS:** Portable Antiquity Scheme
- **PRIA:** Pre Roman Iron Age
- **SMR:** Sites & Monument Record

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Our understanding of the transition from the Late Iron Age societies of Britain to the 'romanized' province of Britannia has itself undergone much transition in the last century. Although the past 30 years have brought the concept of Romanization from Haverfield's 'betterment' of a primitive people, there is still much that is not understood about the social structure of communities during this difficult time. Hingley (1984a) attempted to provide a model for Thames Valley societies in the form of Germanic Mode of Production, an economic tool for getting at the regional complexities seen in the archaeological record. Recently, this model has been challenged as being overly simplistic (Moore 2007a; Booth 2011), yet there has been little progress in finding a way to explain the variation both in responses to Roman Imperial entanglements and in the material assemblages left behind. I wish to address the problem by exploring the data through the lens of Cultural Theory, a method developed by anthropologist Mary Douglas in the latter part of the 20th century (1982a; 1982b; 1982c; 1996; 1999) and used to some effect within that discipline, as well as within sociology (although its most current field of use is that of marketing and Risk Management (Nuth 2007; Tansey and O'Riordan 1999)).

The main objective of this research is to begin to develop new ways of thinking about the variation in rural settlement from the end of the Middle Iron Age (MIA) to the beginning of the 2nd century AD. I believe that the use of Cultural Theory and grid/group designation can help us understand the variability in the material culture of LIA/ER Britain rural settlements, indicate greater variety in socio-political structures of people's lives, and produce a more complex picture of the period than the homogeneous anonymity of tribal affiliation and the faceless economical dichotomy of high/low status. In order to test if this is so, I have chosen as a study area the Upper and Middle Thames Valley.

1.2 Limits of the study area – space

The River Thames cuts an extensive swathe through the southern part of Britain. From its source in the Cotswolds to its wide lazy transects across Berkshire, before plunging through the Goring Gap and headlong out to sea, the Thames is a major feature in the Southern landscape. Conveniently (if somewhat arbitrarily) divided (like Gaul) into three parts ─ Upper, Middle and Lower─ it was decided to limit this study to the Upper and Middle, reasoning that the Lower Thames, the tidal part of the river, would have had different experiences, perhaps more coastal than riverine, that would change the nature of the assemblages. Rather than choosing the traditional upstream limit for the Lower Thames, at Teddington Lock, it was decided to terminate the study area at Staines, the tidal limit during the Late Iron Age /Roman period. Thus the region examined is that stretch of the Thames Valley which begins at the source of the river and continues to Staines, including an area approximately 10km to either side of the actual waterfront, and extending up major tributaries wherever the 10km buffer zone impinges on them. The reasoning behind selecting 10km was the estimated distance of easy day return foot travel to or from the water's edge, as estimated by studies of non-mechanised societies and their travel times (Amato 2004). This restriction creates, admittedly artificially, the semblance of an individual's 'home landscape'.

I have also taken the decision to exclude the larger urban settlements from the study, although of course their significance and relationships to the surrounding rural sites cannot be ignored. One could easily defend this decision based purely on the fact that the bulk of the populace lived in rural areas (Fulford 1982:404) and thus the 'hearts and minds' that would need to adapt to Roman influence would be found in the countryside, not the cities and towns. However, the rationale behind my decision is threefold: firstly that the amount of material from such places as Cirencester (*Corinium*) and Silchester (*Calleva Atrebatum*) is so prodigious as to be overwhelming, to the detriment of the study. Secondly, such sites, particularly Cirencester, have seen such fragmented excavation and exploration due to the piecemeal nature of urban development work, that stitching all the pieces together to form a contiguous picture of settlement would be a self-contained project and book on its own! Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly for my argument, (lest the other two reasons seem to be the mere shirking of difficult work), one of the main goals of this research was to identify variability of social structure and by extension, the self-identification of individual communities, relying

heavily on a framework involving worldview and self-perception (Chapter 3). Any singular worldview was likely to become blurred in a more urban setting. As Aristotle wrote in The Politics, 'A city is composed of different kinds of men; similar people cannot bring a city into existence'. The structure of the Roman provincial city had the potential to 'erode the display of human diversities' (Sennett 1994:114), shifting the nature of this 'melting pot' of individuals to an atmosphere where people begin to homogenise and relate their identity with the 'city' more than other affiliations.

1.3 Limits of the study area- time

To examine the period of transition, the decision was taken to limit the chronological scope of the study to a 200 year window spanning from 100 BC to AD 100. This time frame would be wide enough to see some 'bigger picture' patterns, but not produce an unmanageable amount of material. It might be argued that communities in the 2nd and 3rd centuries were still in a period of transition, but I feel that the time of most dramatic cultural adaptation will have occurred in the first few generations after AD 43. The choice to extend the time scale back to 100 BC is supported by the necessity of examining the impact of continental influence on PRIA society in the run-up to the Conquest. The dates offered are therefore roughly half a century before Caesar's contact to half a century after Claudius'.

It was not always possible to stay rigidly within the temporal guidelines, and so some assemblages were examined that stretch as far back as the Late Middle Iron Age (LMIA) and as far forward as the middle of the 2nd century. Unless the available brooch or ceramic assemblages were specific enough to provide a tighter chronology, most dates given are rather broad. The dating of sites and artefacts recorded in this study have been drawn from the published reports and archived records. Unfortunately, few of these resources are standardised in their terminology, but some attempt has been made to organise the sites within broad periods. The dating terms utilised in this book and the temporal brackets to which they apply may be found in Table 1.1.

Broad Period	Start	End	Referential usage
Pre Caesarean Iron Age	100 BC	55 BC	Before Caesar's landings
Late Iron Age	54 BC	AD 0	First 50 years of Roman contact
Very Late Iron Age	AD 1	AD 42	Run-up to Claudian invasion
Mid-1st century	AD 43	AD 70	from Claudius to post-revolt
Late 1st century	AD 71	AD 100	Final years of the 1st century
Early 2nd century	AD 101	AD 150	Beginnings of the 2nd century
LIA/Early Roman	100 BC	AD 150	Apparent continuous occupation

Table 1.1. Dating terms and definitions

Along the Thames, 158 rural sites have been selected, within a 10km corridor on either side of the river. These sites are those showing evidence for habitation within the selected temporal parameters of 100BC- AD100, although it will be appreciated that tight phasing is not always possible on such sites, and that there will of necessity be a bit of temporal 'wiggle-room'. The ceramic, glass, metal, and stone finds, along with the faunal remains and results from environmental analysis (where applicable) from these sites were entered into an Microsoft Access database so that queries produced from the program would highlight patterns which, when paired with the structural arrangements of the settlements, could help to suggest grid/group classification. This in turn, through the interpretive framework of Cultural Theory, will suggest the social structure of the communities to which the assemblages relate. I hope to show that the simple attribution of high and low status to sites is unhelpful, in that it stems from assumptions about taste and choice in the past that may not be accurate. The assemblages of households and the motivations behind the choices of the consumer are far more complex. By getting away from the simplistic idea of the high and low status rural settlement, and by questioning the perceived knowledge of tribal affiliations of these communities we can begin to think about individual societal responses to change. Communities would have tried to navigate the fog of transition in a variety of ways ─

imitation, hybridity, rejection ─ and these responses, and the severity of degree, would have depended upon the ways in which the individuals saw themselves and how they fitted into their world. This ability to analyse the worldview of communities based upon an examination of the objects they choose to surround themselves with is key to Douglas' Cultural Theory and I have made use of this to create a map of the Thames Valley which does not highlight tribal territories or separate rich farmsteads from the poor, but rather indicates the variety of worldviews held by the people of LIA/ER Southern Britain. This may help us begin to think about the region and this period in new ways and shed more light on the complexity of rural Roman Britain.

1.4 Structure of this book

I begin with an overall survey of the theoretical and research frameworks that have guided the study of the region for the past few decades (Chapter 2). The concept of romanization, already well-trodden territory, will also be briefly discussed to contextualise my research. Chapter 3 defines Cultural Theory and discusses the uses to which it may be put. Also introduced is the methodology to be used in the gathering and collating of the data and the techniques of analysis, as well as the rationale behind the creation of complex assemblages and how Cultural Theory, perhaps seen as a relic of the structuralist past, can be put to use in the interpretation of the varying nature of these assemblages.

Chapter 4 introduces the dataset and begins to set out the trends visible from such a heavily excavated region. Sub-sections explore the way that the changes in theoretical trends have altered the interpretation of various classes of archaeological materials and outline why looking at each of those types of evidence can help classify worldview. Chapter 5 explains how the sites were classified and what that grid/group designation can mean for the social structure of each type of settlement. These discussions are drawn from the wider body of site data, which has been superficially examined; the stage is set for the in-depth study of the case studies.

In Chapters 6 through 8, six very different archaeological sites from the Upper and Middle Thames Valley are placed under scrutiny, which show in far greater detail the usefulness of using Cultural Theory as a framework for re-thinking rural settlement variation. Where broad patterns could be disseminated from the entire Upper and Middle Thames valley region, specific details can be extracted from the better documented sites that form these chapters. It is demonstrated that the macro view for the region is substantiated in the micro view of the individual site. Chapter 9

concludes with some proposals for rethinking the LIA/ER socio-political structure in the Thames Valley and makes recommendations for further work along these lines, as well as critiquing the industry which is now providing so much of the data with which we must work.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

2.1 Introduction

The attempt to understand the process of transition and its effects in the LIA populace of Britain has generated an embarrassment of riches in terms of the sheer volume of writing on the subject. Yet in spite of all the speculation, generalisation, sweeping narratives, and synthetic explanations of historians and archaeologists alike, there is still no particularly convincing explanation for why some rural communities seem to have adopted Roman material culture at different rates and to different degrees than others. The simple explanations of opportunity, economy, and sheer rural stubbornness (i.e. passive resistance) will not do, as they are too monofocal and do not take into account the wide variety of individual responses that are likely during such a time of instability. The complexities of a society in transition deserve complex analyses and it is in this spirit that this book will examine the multiplicity of human reaction to cultural and political transition.

Encouraged by the possibilities hinted at by Sharples' (2010) examination of Wessex Bronze Age society in transition, which explores the relationship between people, their materials, landscape and artefacts on the one side, and their view of the world on the other, I will use the material assemblages to explore the differences between communities throughout the Thames Valley. These communities seem to produce heterogeneous responses to the ebb and flow of 'romanization', hybridisation, or whatever comparable term is current *en vogue*, but which really reduces down to simply being human in a changing world. Whilst agreeing with Gardner (2001:36) that to some extent the process of change and hybridisation continues for the entire length of Roman presence in Britain (and one might claim even beyond, as the reaction to the absence is at least as significant as the reaction to the presence of Roman influences), the main focus of this work will be the earlier stages of that contact.

This chapter first introduces the geographical characteristics of the study area before visiting the current state of research in the region, the theoretical approaches recently used as well as the traditional models of social structure within Late Iron Age and Early Roman southern Britain. Finally, there is a brief discussion of the thorny issue of the concept and terminology of 'romanization'.

2.2 The Thames and her tributaries

The River Thames has flowed through what is now southern England for approximately 55 million years, albeit not always along the same course (Morigi *et al*. 2011). Carved out of the Jurassic limestone in the Upper extent, incised through the Chilterns, and descending into the great London basin, the river is fed and replenished by a host of tributaries all along its extent (Figure 2.1). Significant settlement activity has in particular been noted near the confluences of the Leach (Allen *et al*. 1993; Boyle *et al*. 1998; Miles *et al*. 2007), the Windrush (Allen & Robinson 1993; Hey 1996; Lambrick & Allen 2004; Booth & Simmonds 2011), and the Thame (May 1977; Yates 2007:40-1; Lambrick 2009). The valley floor, the gravel terraces through which the river has cascaded, and the confluences of the tributaries with the main river have all proved to be areas of human exploitation for the past 5000 years. The characters of the river and the surrounding geology are broadly similar between the Upper and Middle Thames, although gravels and floodplain alluvium are far more prevalent in the drift geology west of the Goring Gap (Figure 2.2). The gravel extends up to three kilometres in width on either side of the river in both the Upper and Middle parts of the valley, but is largely absent in the Goring Gap, where the river cuts through the chalk and greensand of the Chilterns. This lack of gravel marks the dividing point between the Upper and Middle Thames, which are usually considered to be separate entities (Booth *et al*. 2007:6).
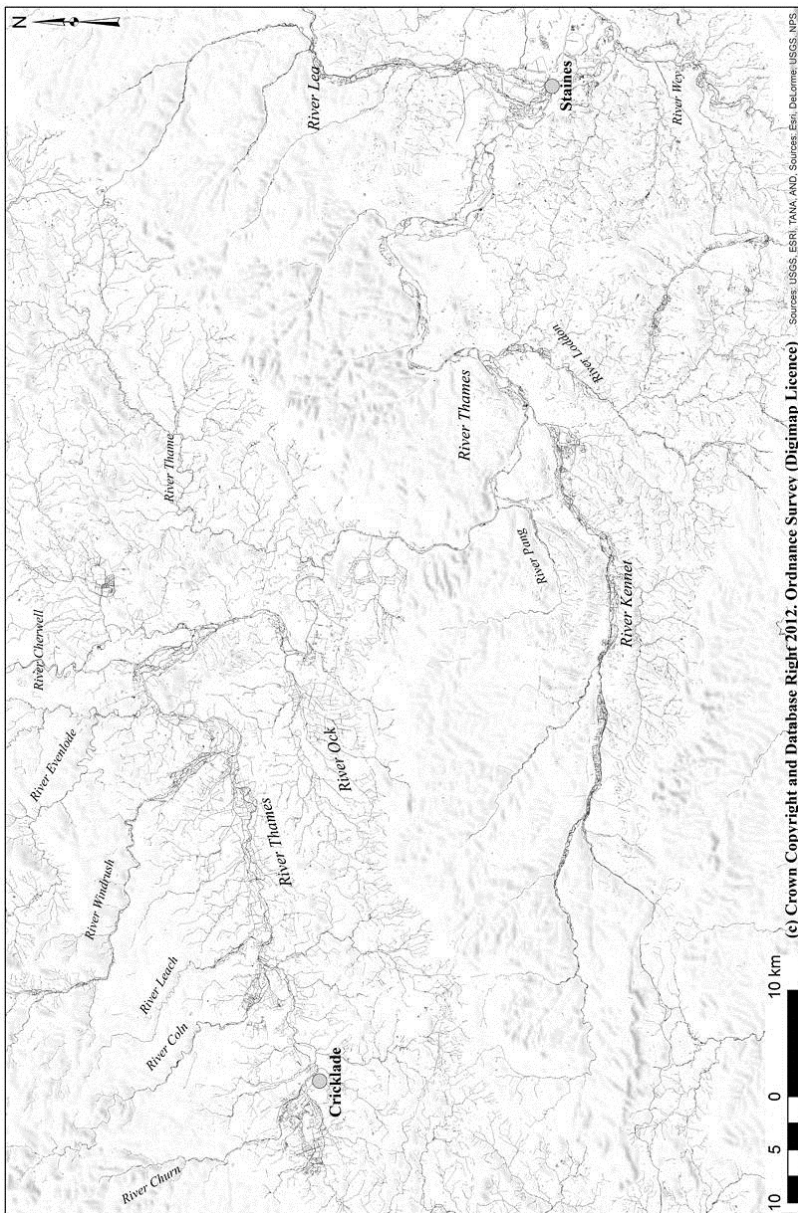
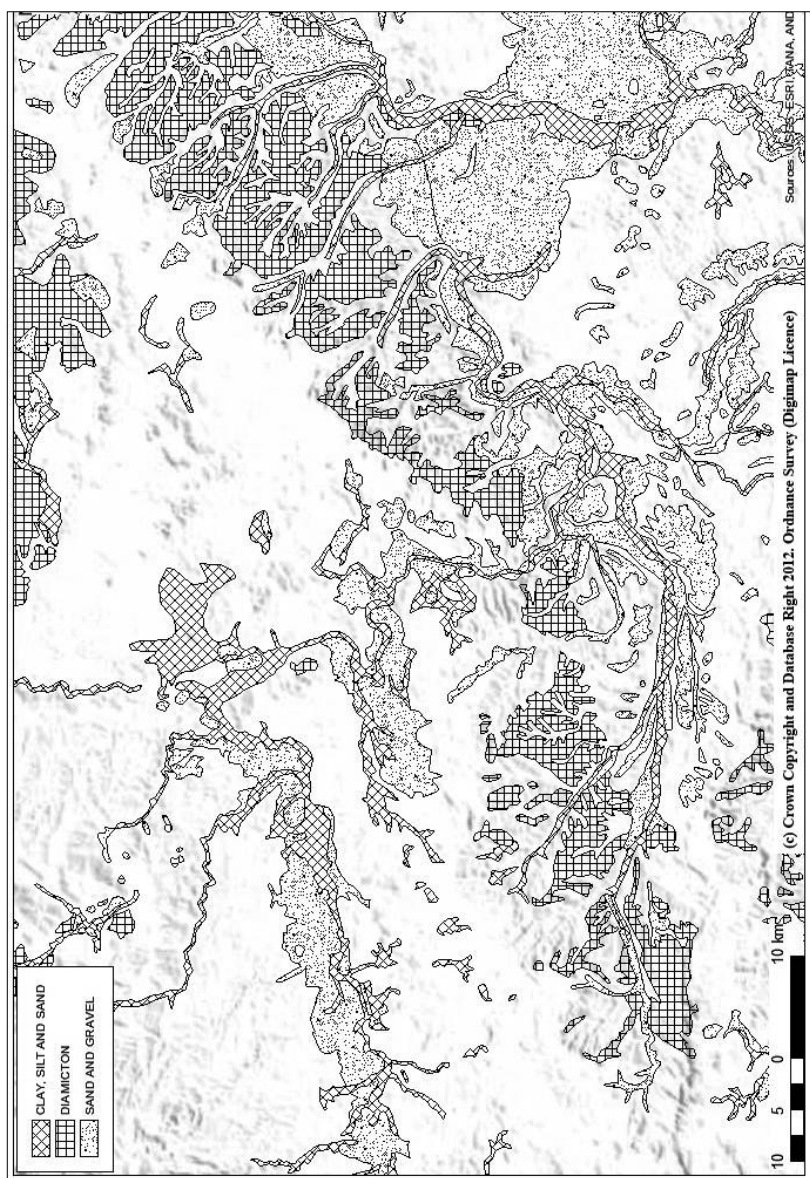Figure 2.1. Upper and Middle Thames Valley and her tributaries.

Figure 2.2. Soils of the Upper and Middle Thames (Booth et al. 2007:4-5)

The waters of the Thames have carved their legacy into the landscape, but the river alone has not caused all of the changes to the valley. During the time span covered in this book, the Thames valley experienced drastic hydrological changes as a result of the intensification of agricultural activity by the end of the Bronze Age and into the Early Iron Age (Allen *et al*. 1997:118). By the Middle Iron Age, the permanent water table had risen significantly and flooding events were common; this was followed by more dramatic seasonal flooding and extensive alluviation in the Late Iron Age and for most of the Romano-British period (Lambrick 2009:33). Although the climate itself during the period from 150 BC to AD 400 was warmer and drier than previously (Lamb 1981:56), the persistence of flooding, erosion, and alluviation suggests that the environment was undergoing changes, in part almost certainly driven by anthropogenic action, which had significant impact on the lives and the landscapes of the inhabitants of these riverine settlements.

The presence of the gravel terraces and their related free-draining soils has encouraged the use and settlement of the region for millennia. These same gravel resources are also the instruments of their own destruction; a source of material since antiquity, the region has seen an exponential increase in the intensity of extraction since the beginning of the industrial era, culminating in wholesale stripping and quarrying in the later 20th and early 21st centuries. Although attention was called to the danger to archaeological remains posed by such intense extraction in the 1960s and 1970s (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments 1960; Benson & Miles 1974; Gates 1975), Taylor (1972:112) expressed concern that there was so much destruction happening to archaeological sites that there would be few sites left to record by the year 2000. Happily, and in large part due to the formation of rescue units in the 1970s and the institution of Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning (PPG16) in 1990, this prediction proved to be incorrect. In fact, the glut of information that has been derived from these sources presents us now with an unrivalled opportunity to investigate large geographic areas with massive amounts of detailed data. This bounty is not without its pitfalls, the flood of information leading to the danger of 'drowning in data' (Thomas 1991). Apprehension about the ability to keep up with publication and dissemination has been (Cunliffe 1990) and continues to be a point of valid concern (Bradley 2006; Cunliffe 2011a:11), and not one restricted to the Thames Valley region. Whilst there exists some optimism (Bradley 2006: 10-11; Cunliffe 2011b:204) about the future of commercial archaeology's input to the research community, many of the sites that are only now being published were excavated decades ago; all the hindsight in

the world cannot correct for poor practices and partial recording. However, despite the limitations that such instances put on the quality of some of the data, there is still such abundance that the Thames Valley is the perfect location to examine the variety in settlement assemblages.

2.3 The LIA in the Upper and Middle Thames Valley

The serious study of the Iron Age in the Thames valley goes back to the investigations of Stephen Stone (1857) in the mid-19th century, although there had been plenty of antiquarian notice of the region prior to that (Gibson 1695; Hearne 1711). The involvement of founding contributors to the discipline of archaeology such as Pitt-Rivers (Lane Fox 1870), Rolleston (1884) and Leeds (1931) continued through the end of the 19th and into the 20th century, and a host of local societies were established (Levine 2003:45-7) which examined, amongst other periods, the pre-Roman remains of the Thames. The 20th century saw the introduction of aerial photographic survey in the region and the free-draining soils of the gravel terraces permitted pioneers such as Riley (1942;1943) and Allen (1938;1940) to record vast tracts of the archaeological landscape that were visible as earthworks and cropmarks. With the development of regional-based assessments of archaeological potential, the Thames Valley, particularly the upper part, began to be seen as an excellent location to 'investigate settlement variation and interrelationships' (Hingley 1984a:53).

Early on, syntheses of the region were attempted (Frere 1961; Denington & Morgan 1966; Harding 1972; Cunliffe & Miles 1984) which, with varying degrees of success, opened up discussion about the various models which might be used to understand the complexity of the period, which had been freed of the overly simplistic culture/invasion explanations of the earlier part of the 20th century (Hawkes 1959; Clark 1966). At the heart of the new model were the core/periphery dichotomy and the redistributive power of the core elites (Champion 1989; Cunliffe 1991:130). These models of the Iron Age (Cunliffe 1974; 1984; Haselgrove 1984) have in turn begun to be challenged (Hill 1993; 1995; Creighton 2000), with some attempting to replace the hierarchies of the traditional model with egalitarian, communal societies (Sharples 2010; Moore & Armada 2012:48). Of course the danger here is replacing one set of generalisations with another. Moore and Armada write:

'the divergence between areas where hierarchical models have been challenged, and where they have not, broadly reflect those archaeologists and disciplinary frameworks who regard ethnography and anthropology as

helpful and those that argue instead that social models should be based on the evidence in classical texts' (2012:46).

The past four decades have seen the region explode with new information but also with new ways of thinking about the way societies may have worked. A new series of syntheses of the Upper and Middle Thames has emerged in recent years (Booth *et al.* 2007; Lambrick 2009; Morigi *et al.* 2011), incorporating many of these new ideas. These volumes amalgamate the data from the region and present it in a format meant to appeal to both a public and a scholarly audience; spawned from a single corporate machine, the undertaking has had such a long gestation that they are, as Bradley writes of all syntheses, 'out of date immediately' (1996: 38). Nonetheless the Lambrick and Booth volumes will likely be the definitive influence on studies of the region for some time to come.

One of the more significant of these new lines of thought has been in the area of settlement form and spatial analysis to reconstruct communities and their organisation (Clarke 1972; Hingley 1984a). The simplistic economic function of households or smaller communities as suppliers for hierarchical elite were challenged by the recognition of the household as a social unit (T. Moore 2006:83-5). Hingley offered essentially small isolated self-sufficient social units with individual households forming the basic complete productive unit, and suggested that these individual households controlled their own means of production (Hingley 1984a; Hill 1995a; Stevens 1996:40). This blend of anthropological kinship models with Marxist economic observations permitted a shift in focus onto the individual and possible variety in communities (Lang 2008:53).

Against this backdrop of often heated discussion concerning LIA social organisation has been another equally charged debate about the degree of influence the Continent had on social and change. Whilst many retain the idea that social change was driven by contact with Continental ideas and goods (Haselgrove 1982; Cunliffe 1988; 2005), others have offered that such changes were largely motivated from within (Willis 1994; Creighton 2000; Hill 2007). The Upper Thames Valley in particular has been seen as maintaining a conservative PRIA tradition for far longer than those regions with direct Continental contacts (Haselgrove 1986a:85). Not all contact need have resulted in material imports; Allen (2000:32) has suggested that the disappearance of large storage pits on settlements may be the result of rising powerful elites, modelling themselves on continental examples of taxation, removing the need for storing great surpluses at the settlement level.

Certainly, PRIA southern Britain was no stranger to foreign commodities or cultural influences crossing the Channel from Gaul and the wider world.

Trade had been passing back and forth over that stretch of sea for millennia (Cunliffe 2001; 2004; Bourgeois & Talon 2009; Needham 2009). Closer to the period in discussion, the traffic in objects and ideas is also highly likely to have included the re-location of some Continental peoples to the shores and interior of southern Britain in the form of a group that we must assume, thanks to Caesar and Roman nomenclature, were a Gaulish entity known as the Belgae (regardless if that is a term they would have used to describe themselves or not!). The history of the Belgic presence as an observable archaeological event is a long and convoluted one, and will not be elaborated upon here (but see Cunliffe 2005:6-10). The main point is that although cultural contact with new ideas and transformative technologies (the rotary quern, the potter's wheel) had been going on for some time, none had such an apparently jarring effect as direct contact with the Roman military and administrative machine.

What is clear is the fact that sweeping generalisations (e.g., the Upper Thames was a conservative region) no longer hold up in the face of so much new information. Homogeneity of settlement structure has now been called into question (Haselgrove 1995; Moore 2006; Barrett *et al*. 2012), although no single satisfactory model for the variability has been put forward. The LIA of southern central Britain and, by extension, the Thames Valley in particular may not be understood by only viewing the entire area as one region but rather by also looking at the 'sub-regional or local level' (Barrett *et al*. 2012:443). At such levels, Haselgrove suggested the personal nature of power could 'go far towards explaining the observed variability of British sites' (1995:86). Although there do appear to be regional trends, there is also sufficient variation to suspect that there were significant social and cultural differences between communities (Haselgrove 2004:19).

2.4 Early Roman Upper and Middle Thames Valley

The Thames Valley has been integral to the study of Roman Britain, not least because of the significant role of the river as a major route-way into the hinterlands of southern central Britain. The region is also criss-crossed with a network of LIA trackways which in many cases are made more substantial in the Roman period (Taylor 2007:66; Booth 2011). The Upper Thames Valley has produced a wide range of aerial photographic and excavated evidence for Roman-period rural settlements and extensive agricultural use for the period (Miles & Jones 1979; Miles 1984; Allen *et al*. 1993; Fenner 1994; Boyle *et al*. 1998; Henig & Booth 2000; Holbrook 2006; Miles *et al*. 2007). A variety of factors such as the nature of the

soils, woodland cover, intense development, and flying restrictions have impeded the recovery of comparable evidence for much of the Middle Thames (King 2004:358; Booth *et al*. 2007: 10), yet there is still a growing body of excavated evidence for that region (Jefferson 2003; Framework Archaeology 2006; Carew *et al*. 2006; Hayman *et al*. 2012; Allen *et al*. forthcoming).

Many settlements in the Upper and Middle Thames underwent reorganisation in the second half of the 1st century; this reconfiguration will have been carried out by the inhabitants themselves, and so reflects to some degree personal choice, a factor which must be significant (Smith 1978; Rippengal 1993: 93). Although 'native-type settlements in the Upper Thames Valley during the early Roman period are often identified by the presence of rectangular enclosures' (Meadows 1999:62), in reality, any distinction between very LIA and early post-Conquest settlements is difficult to see in the archaeology; it has even been suggested that the Roman conquest is 'archaeologically invisible on the gravels' (Lambrick 1992: 105). This in many ways should be seen, given the past experiences in the study of Roman Britain, as liberating rather than confining. Without the framework of an historical narrative, the material evidence can begin to speak for itself.

When Hingley pointed out (1989: 4-5; 1990c:76) that the focus of Romano-British settlement studies was concentrated on villas as opposed to rural settlement, he was correct for the time. Like a man searching for lost keys under a lamppost, archaeologists were seeking to understand the character of Roman Britain in the villas, not because the answer was necessarily there, but because it was where the light was being shed. This imbalance in evidence and excavation was also lamented by others (Miles 1989: 115; Millet 1990; Branigan 1991: 92; Clarke 1998: 28). The introduction of PPG16 (described earlier in the text) inadvertently redressed this inequity by providing a glut of rural settlement data. Yet the same model —distinguishing the settlements by apparent wealth (Hingley 1990c:75) —was often being employed.

A noticeable difference between the Upper (particularly the extreme upper end of the river and its related Cotswold uplands) and Middle Thames Valley is the paucity of villa establishments in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Robinson proposed that a high population density along with a fossilised system of land use prevented later development of large scale villas (1992a: 60). Conversely, Hingley (1984a; 1988: 95) has argued that the Upper Thames Valley was inhabited by social groups whose more egalitarian arrangement created ties to the community at large which diminished the attractiveness of Roman-style settlement organisation in

the decades after the conquest. Although based at the time upon examinations of cropmarks and a few rescue visits, subsequent intense fieldwork has not proven Hingley's model to be incorrect *per se*. Excavations have demonstrated that there was probably much more distinction between settlement organisation in the region (Allen 2000: 13-4; Henig & Booth 2000: 105; Miles *et al*. 2007; Powell *et al*. 2007; Powell *et al*. 2009). Yet the strength of Hingley's argument lay in positing a landscape not solely dominated by hierarchical social structures with a uniform desire to adopt Roman-influenced practices.

The survival of rural settlements on the Thames Valley gravels has been attributed by Fulford to the degree of romanization (1992:27-9); he observes that sites without visible signs of a romanizing influence on settlement structure were those which were established in the earlier Iron Age and which did not survive into the 2nd century, whilst sites which were established in the LIA survived and showed evidence of embracing romanized material. Fulford does indeed raise a valid question: why do some settlements survive, indeed thrive, after conquest and why are some abandoned? However, his generalisation based upon chronology and degree of romanization carry a danger of making the argument circular. A more nuanced model is required to seek the answer (see Chapter 5.2.1).

2.5 Romanization – the on-going debate

'The Roman Conquest was, however, a Good Thing since the Britons were only natives at the time.'
(Sellar & Yeatman 1930:11)

If there is only one constant in archaeology, it is that each age of scholars rushes in a new theory to discredit the old. Gibbon's vision of the Roman Empire was torn down in 1912 by Haverfield, who wrote of Rome's past:

'The old theory of an age of despotism and decay has been overthrown, and the believer in human nature can now feel confident that, whatever their limitations, the men of the Empire wrought for the betterment and the happiness of the world' (1912:9-10).

Even half a century after Haverfield, these ideas were hard to change; the Romans were still considered to have 'improved the lot of the Britons' (Frere 1967: 342). The Roman Empire was in many ways archetypal, and often forms a 'cognitive model' (Woolf 2001) for understanding both pre-Roman and subsequent empires. Although the benefits of empire are

almost always more heavily weighted on the side of those who rule, there are undoubted attractions to many of those who willingly collaborate and who become incorporated into the ever-shifting, all-consuming mass that is an empire. At the heart of the debate was the issue of *humanitas* - that 'set of ideals to which all men might aspire' (Woolf, 1998), the very virtue of being Roman which carried with it 'moral and cultural obligations' (Woolf, 2001). Therefore, it was incumbent upon the Romans to shine this light of civilisation upon all the less fortunate and barbaric lands, 'recruiting them to an empire in which they now had a share' (Woolf, 2001). It is no coincidence that this view of Roman cultural contact bears a similar theme to the 'White man's burden' philosophy of the late 19th century.

For over a century, this model of glorious Rome civilising the barbaric world was a plausible one. However, by the late 1980s, a sea change in Roman studies was to occur; just as Haverfield had discounted Gibbon, a host of scholars were prepared to undo Haverfield's vision. Fuelled in part by a post-colonial and post-imperial perception of the modern world, some archaeologists began to rewrite the definition of romanization (Millett 1990a; 1990b; Whittaker 1997:149; Freeman 1993; Woolf 1998). In this new view, to varying degrees, the indigenous populations had more of a hand in the romanization process; it is important to note that the actual view of 'romanization' had not significantly altered. Others began to argue for a re-assessment of the term (Hingley 1989; 1991; 1993; 1994; 1997; 2000; Clarke 1996; Cooper 1996; Barrett 1997; Mattingly1997), replacing a concept deemed 'intellectually lazy' (Mattingly 2006:xii) with more complex concepts such as identity and resistance to domination. Some even postulated that the term Romanization should be removed entirely and replaced with words like 'creolization[1]' (Hawkes 1999; Webster 2001), 'globalisation' (Hingley 2005a), and 'hybridization' (Carr 2002; Redfern & DeWitte 2011).

Far from the view of the beneficent Empire, scholars now were discussing the agency of the native elite; cultural incorporation may often have begun by some well-placed individuals as a placatory form of imitation, but reached the masses as a 'residue of the years of occupation' (Morkot 2001:240). The lure of *humanitas*, whether a sincere gift of Rome, or as a pretext (Hanson 1997), also proved to be a strong motivator, for who would not want to appear, as Woolf wryly observed, 'cultivated, enlightened, and humane' (1998:55)? Economic benefits were equally

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[1] Webster's use of creolization focussed only the under-privileged, which can be just as misleading as focussing only on the elites.

likely influences for change; entrepreneurial craftsmen who now had access to wider markets might tailor their products to be more pleasing to the larger imperial customer base. After a period of occupation and sustained contact, Britons might actually have felt that the 'new' styles belonged to them as well. One would be advised to remember that the term 'Roman' serves to identify material that was used in Britain during the time of Roman administration, not material that was Roman in origin (Freeman 1993:444; Cooper 1996:86; Jones 1997:36). The material culture of 'conquered populations' has begun to be seen as remaining indigenous even when adopted from and adapted to external elements (Hingley 1996:42). Similarly, if new products were consumed, but used in 'non-Roman' ways, can they no longer be considered 'Roman' artefacts? Consumption of Roman products does not necessarily equate to the consumption of those products in a Roman manner [2](Woolf 1998:176; Miller 1997).

   Although new approaches to the study of Roman Britain have begun to re-write the way we think about romanization, for many, it still seems to be regarded through the 'trickle-down' economic model, in which elites acquire Roman goods which eventually saturate the market to the point that the 'plebs' can also experience these products. A paucity of such goods on a given site has often been explained as native resistance (Carr 2002; Mattingly 2006; Hingley 1997) whereas rapid changes in the assemblage of a site are explained by acculturation (Millett 1990a; 1990b; Fulford 1992). Even the view of romanization as the saviour of the savage has still not entirely faded from the discourse:

> 'During late prehistory, progressive economic forces were at work, even while a regenerative, recurrent worldview was maintained. The economic changes were not reflected in social expression through material culture until the end of the Iron Age. The newer progressive view could be equated with Romanization' (Wilson 2008:309).

   The problem with seeing romanization as a deliberate process is that it allows archaeologists and others to treat a very significant transition as a mechanical procedure:

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[2] Miller offers an ethnographic example of an exotic import (Coca-Cola) to Trinidad, where the product goes through a transformation from an emblem of Americanization to one of localisation, a transition through which it has lost most of its foreign connotations and attributes.