Fragmentation, Personhood and the Social Construction of Technology in Middle and Late Bronze Age Britain

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This article examines a range of practices involving the deliberate fragmentation of human bodies and objects in Middle and Late Bronze Age Britain. Focusing on evidence from settlements and mortuary sites, it is suggested that metaphorical links were drawn between people and things, and that productive processes such as potting and metallurgy provided potent metaphors for the construction of the human self. Building on these points, it is argued that current models which posit the rise of an ideology of the 'individual' during the Bronze Age may be inappropriate in this cultural context.

In this article, I would like to discuss the symbolic significance of fragmentation in Middle and Late Bronze Age Britain. The fragmentation of human bodies, houses and objects at the end of their lifecycles was a way of drawing attention to the social impact of death. However, deliberate breakage was not simply a symbolic act but was thought to facilitate transformation from one state to another. The processes of breaking and burning were seen as playing an essential role in the regeneration of life, with explicit conceptual links being made between death and fertility. Both human growth and technological production were thought of as a series of cycles of death and rebirth, with fragmentation, mixing and reincorporation as central components of these processes. Practices involving the intentional destruction of artefacts and the specialized treatment, re-use or deposition of these fragments allowed Bronze Age people to conceptualize the passing of time both within and beyond their own lifecycles. As such, the breaking of objects is unlikely to have played a role in funerary practices alone, but was no doubt an important element in a range of other rites of passage, perhaps including marriage and initiation into adulthood.

The importance of processes of fragmentation and recycling in contemporary technologies such as potting and metallurgy suggest that the production of objects provided central metaphors for the construction of the self and for the formation of social relationships in this period. This discussion will allow us to question traditional arguments for the rise of individualism in the Bronze Age. In Britain, as elsewhere in Western Europe, the appearance of single burials with rich grave goods is seen as a primary characteristic of the Bronze Age and these have often been contrasted with the poorly furnished communal burials of the Neolithic. Bronze Age mortuary practices are taken to indicate a concern with the expression of individual status and many scholars have argued for the emergence during this period of stratified societies in which social position was to some degree formalized through institutions such as hereditary chieftainships. In contrast, this article will re-examine the concept of the Bronze Age 'individual' and the power structures inferred by considering how notions of personhood during this period may have represented the self as an inherently fragmentary, fluid and relational entity. Not only does this fit well with evidence for the centrality of gift-giving within these societies but, as I hope to suggest, it also calls into question the existence of the kinds of formalized and static socio-political hierarchies that archaeologists have often proposed.

Settlement lifecycles

Let us begin by exploring the relationship between people and objects. During the British Middle and Late Bronze Age, analogies were drawn between human lifecycles and the lifecycles of other things and materials. Deliberate fragmentation was an essential
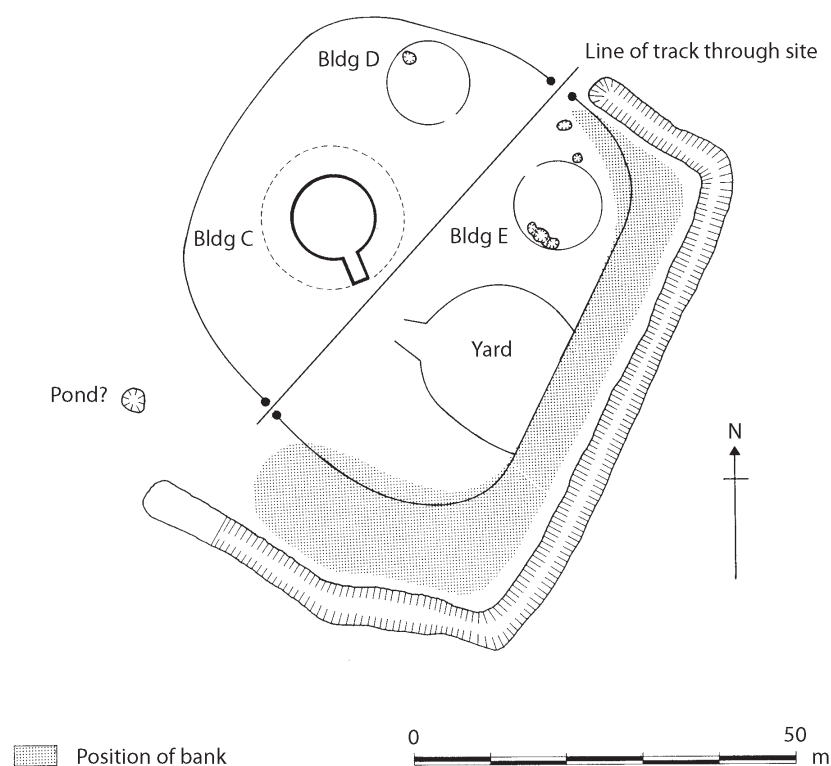
Figure 1. *Schematic plan of the settlement at Down Farm, Dorset. (After Barrett* et al. *1991, fig. 5.41.)*

element of this process, symbolizing the end of an object or person's life, and underlining the closure of the social relationships in which both human beings and material culture were enmeshed. Some of these linkages can be most clearly seen in the settlement record and it is here that our discussion will start.

During this period, settlements consisted of several post-built roundhouses (usually between one and five) accompanied by other structures or features, for example raised granaries, pits and ponds (Ellison 1981; 1987; Drewett 1982; Barrett *et al*. 1991; Fig. 1). These sites were frequently surrounded by banks, ditches or palisades, and some appear to have possessed elaborated entrances in the form of substantial gateway structures (e.g. Burstow & Holleyman 1957). It is generally accepted that each such settlement was occupied by a single household group. The presence of more than one roundhouse can be explained through evidence for the spatial differentiation of activities, with each site containing a main residential building plus one or more special-purpose structures (used, for example, for food preparation and storage, specific craft activities, or animal stalling) (Ellison 1981; Drewett 1982).

At many sites, there are clear indications of chronological depth. Over the years, buildings were constructed, refurbished and abandoned, fences erected and dismantled and ponds dug and infilled (Ellison 1978; Barrett *et al*. 1991, section 5.3; Russell 1996). Such sequences of construction can most convincingly be explained through reference to changes in the demographic, social and economic circumstances of the household over the course of its developmental cycle (Brück 1999; cf. Goody 1958; Moore 1986, 91–102). Household membership would have changed as individuals were born, married and died. Similarly, a newly-established household might not have had the social or economic resources to build ancillary structures for some years. In this way, the lifecycle of the settlement can be considered to have been connected at a practical level with the lifecycle of its inhabitants.

Event-marking deposits

There appears to have been a close symbolic relationship between the lifecycle of the settlement and that of its occupants (see Brück 1999 for full discussion). This is most clearly demonstrated by the presence of special event-marking deposits. One of the most interesting features of Middle and Late Bronze Age settlements is the frequency of finds that defy modern rationalist explanation. For example at Itford Hill in Sussex, a whole quernstone was placed on the base of a pit in hut E, while a carved chalk phallus was deposited in one of the postholes of the porch in hut D (Burstow & Holleyman 1957). Whole pots are frequently recovered from pits and ditches. Although these have traditionally been interpreted as storage facilities, in fact many are inverted or lie on their side. At Reading Business Park, Berkshire (Moore & Jennings 1992), several complete pots were found in ditches and pits, including a fine burnished bowl; again, the latter cannot easily be interpreted as a storage vessel. Animal burials are also frequent, for example the pregnant cow and pregnant sheep from the enclosure ditches at Crab Farm, Dorset (Papworth 1992).

In many cases, such deposits can be seen to mark out critical points in space, for example boundaries, entrances and corners. At South Lodge Camp, Dorset, small bronze artefacts were deposited in three of the four corners of the rectilinear enclosure ditch (Bar-

rett *et al*. 1991, fig. 5.13; Barber 2001). A bronze awl was recovered from the left hand posthole of the porch structure of hut 3 at Black Patch, Sussex (Drewett 1982), while at Harting Beacon in the same county, a human skull and two penannular gold rings had been placed in the butt ends of the enclosure ditch at the western entrance to the site (Bedwin 1979). Broken artefacts were used in similar ways. For example, at Springfield Lyons, Essex, the main entrances to the enclosure were marked out by two large dumps of mould fragments from the casting of bronze swords (Fig. 2; Buckley & Hedges 1987).

In other cases, the deliberate arrangement of artefacts in the ground suggests that deposition cannot be accounted for in purely functionalist terms. Pit V in hut I at Cock Hill, Sussex (Ratcliffe-Densham & Ratcliffe-Densham 1961), contained ten loomweights laid out in a straight line along the long axis of the base of the pit. At South Dumpton Down, Kent (D. Perkins pers. comm.), a small pit had been cut into the side of the ditch. Four palstaves had been placed on their edges and arranged in a fan shape on the bottom of this feature; directly over these was laid a slab of tabular flint. Further up within the fill of the pit, another palstave had been deposited, on top of which lay a bracelet and a fragment from a second bracelet.

We can suggest that many of these finds were event-marking deposits (Brück 1999). Archaeologists are familiar with the concept of a foundation deposit, but it is possible that similar acts were carried out at other critical points in the lifecycle of the house (or pit or settlement) and its occupants. Just as the birth, marriage or death of a human being would have been marked out through special ritual practices, so too the construction, repairing, remodelling and abandonment of buildings were celebrated by the placing of deposits that highlighted both temporal and spatial transformations (cf. Chapman 1997). Such practices are common where there is a close metaphorical relationship between the lifecycle of the settlement and that of its inhabitants (e.g. Blier 1987; Waterson 1990). We may suggest that, in the Middle and Late Bronze Age, houses were 'born' and 'died'. Similarly, they could be remodelled or their function could change, just as their human occupants' status could become transformed from childhood to adulthood or on marriage.
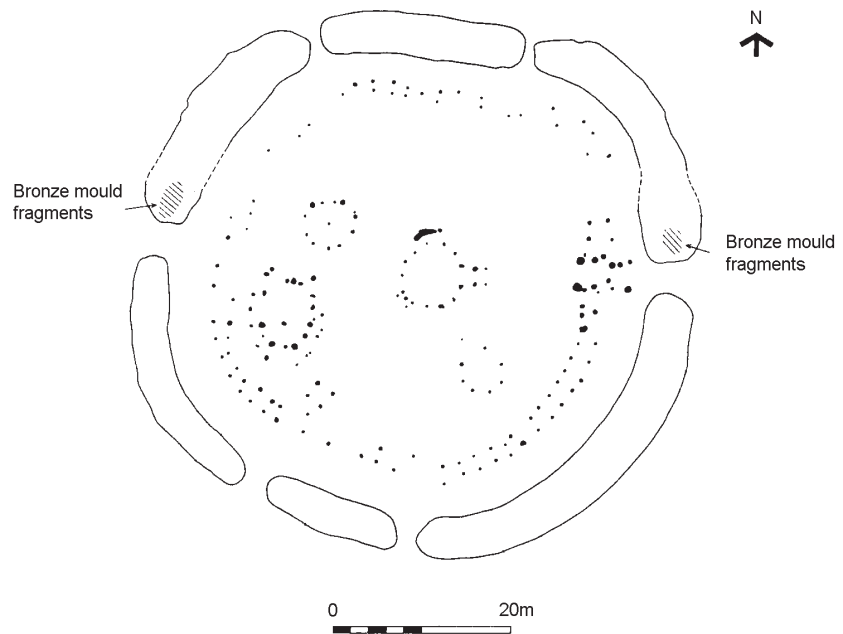

Figure 2. *Location of the dumps of mould fragments at Springfield Lyons, Essex. (After Buckley & Hedges 1987, fig. 5.)*

The commemoration of death

These arguments are best demonstrated by the treatment of the house at 'death'. The death of a house, which may have been linked to the death of an inhabitant, seems to have been a particularly significant event, with abandoned houses and the human dead being treated in a number of analogous ways. Before discussing this, however, it is worth considering the character of contemporary mortuary practices. During the Middle Bronze Age, and in parts of Eastern England during the Late Bronze Age, the normative funerary rite was cremation burial (Ellison 1980). Grave goods other than pottery are extremely rare but include artefacts such as bronze knives, bracelets and spearheads (Ellison 1980; Petersen 1981, 117). In some cases, for example at Kimpton in Hampshire (Everton 1981, 186), it has been suggested that the remains of the dead were deliberately crushed prior to deposition. Recent studies cast some doubt on this assertion (McKinley 1993; pers. comm.), although the nature of the cremation process itself can be seen to have a similar effect — the fragmentation of the human body. During the Late Bronze Age, the practice of excarnation seems to have become regular, with pieces of human bone being re-used in a variety of non-mortuary social practices (Brück 1995).

The treatment of the human dead can help us to interpret some of the practices surrounding the

end of a building's life. At a number of sites, special closing deposits were made on the abandonment of a roundhouse. Just as grave goods were occasionally given to humans on death, the deposition of objects such as the bronze blade and awl on the floor of hut 3 at Black Patch, Sussex (Drewett 1982), may have acted as a formal closure or a transformation of the relationship between the building (or its dead inhabitants) and the rest of the kin group. At Broom Quarry, Bedfordshire (Mortimer & McFadyen 1999; L. McFadyen pers. comm.), 9 g of cremated human bone was recovered from one of the porch postholes of the roundhouse (structure 5). On abandonment, approximately half of the posts in the central post-ring were removed and the postholes silted up. The remainder of the post-ring — an arc of posts to the south and southeast — was left *in situ*, as shown by the presence of post-pipes. The human bone was recovered from the only post in the porch structure to remain standing. The location of these fragments within the upper fill of the posthole suggested to the excavators that the bone had entered this feature very late on in the occupation history of the building. Furthermore, the nature of this fill was similar to that of a pit which had demonstrably been cut at the end of the construction sequence. Because the amount of bone is small, one could argue for accidental inclusion. However, the location of the deposit in the entrance-way to the roundhouse is significant and fits the general pattern for finds of human remains on settlement sites of this period (Brück 1995). Here, then, we can suggest that a token deposit of cremated human bone was made on abandonment of the roundhouse, infusing this moment with the imagery of death (Mortimer & McFadyen 1999).

One of the final acts that took place within the Broom Quarry roundhouse was the breaking and burying of the household's inventory of pottery (Mortimer & McFadyen 1999). Two pits, cut at the end of the chronological sequence, were filled with large freshly broken sherds, comprising parts of fourteen or fifteen vessels, which included both coarseware and fineware pottery, as well as a range of shapes and sizes. Although refitting of the pottery has not been undertaken at this particular site, such a study could prove valuable. For example, it would be of interest to consider whether all parts of these pots were deposited or whether certain fragments were retained for use or deposition elsewhere, either on-site or off-site. Similar events on other Late Bronze Age sites include a large dump of broken ceramics recovered from high in the fill of a ditch at Monkton Court Farm, Kent, interpreted by Macpherson-Grant (1994, 277) as a 'leave-taking' deposit, perhaps involving the deliber-

ate destruction of the settlement's set of ceramics on the abandonment of the site (see Turner 1998, 129 and Barber 2001 for similar practices involving the deposition of metalwork). At both Broom Quarry and Monkton Court Farm, destruction signified not only the 'death' of the household — the abandonment of the building or settlement — but also the ending of the social relationships created and sustained through the co-resident group. Similarly, at Trethellan Farm in Cornwall, the smashed and burnt fragments of a quern were discovered in the levelling layers of house 648 (Nowakowski 1991; for other examples, see Seager Thomas 1999, 41). Here, the death of a house was accompanied by the death of one of the objects central to the household's material and social reproduction. Like its user, it was burnt, broken and buried at the end of its life. At Penhale Moor in the same county, a roundhouse seems to have been symbolically killed by driving a spear into the ground inside it (Nowakowski 2001).

It is also interesting to note what happened to the actual structure of the house. In some cases, for example at Weir Bank Stud Farm, Berkshire (Barnes *et al*. 1995), the lack of post-pipes may suggest that buildings were dismantled, just as the human dead were fragmented, although the archaeological survival of post-pipes of course also depends on other factors. At Trethellan Farm, Cornwall (Nowakowski 1991), there is better evidence for the dismantling of buildings, with some postholes being filled with rubble and capped with stone slabs prior to the sealing and levelling of the house-sites with spreads of rubble, earth and occupation debris. Like their inhabitants, these buildings were 'buried' at the end of their lives. The three roundhouses at Mile Oak, Sussex, were burnt down (Russell 2002), perhaps evoking symbolical links with cremation, although the demonstration of deliberate firing of these houses requires careful argumentation. For the Neolithic and Chalcolithic of South East Europe, Stevanovic (1997) and Chapman (1999) have discussed a range of criteria for distinguishing accidental from deliberate house fires. Similar studies could provide interesting insights into the circumstances of house abandonment for the British Bronze Age, although these have as yet to be carried out.

Although other specific events in the lifecycle of a building and its inhabitants are less susceptible to archaeological identification, a number of intriguing finds can provide us with further insights into the marking of critical points in time. At Whittlesey in Cambridgeshire (M. Knight pers. comm.), two Late Bronze Age roundhouses each contained a single pit in which were found alternate layers of cultural

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material and gravel or clay. The cultural material comprised potsherds and the butchered remains of lambs, most of which were male. Knight suggests that what we are seeing here is the periodic (probably annual) consumption of animals surplus to requirements for the maintenance of the herd (M. Knight pers. comm.). The subsequent deposition of the remains along with the smashed vessels perhaps formed an annual event-marking rite over at least part of the life of the house (there are 21 such layers in one of the pits). This reminds us that at least some of the deposits recovered from Middle and Late Bronze Age settlements are likely to have been made at important points in the household's subsistence cycle. Indeed, this argument is emphasized by the metonymic qualities of finds such as animal burials, deposits of burnt barley and quernstones.

Similar practices to those which marked the death of a roundhouse can, unsurprisingly, also be traced at many Middle Bronze Age cemetery sites. While some burials were placed within a ceramic vessel, others were accompanied by broken potsherds. The evidence from Kimpton in Hampshire (Dacre & Ellison 1981) suggests that, in several cases, pots were deliberately smashed on the pyre or at the pyre-side. Sherds from the same vessel appear to have been subjected to differing degrees of burning, suggesting that these were not simply collected from nearby middens to accompany the dead. One cremation burial was surrounded by an arc of sherds which, when reconstructed, formed one side of a pottery vessel (Fig. 3). Plotting the location of individual sherds in the ground indicates that the pot had not broken *in situ* but had been smashed elsewhere and carefully collected for redeposition (Dacre & Ellison 1981). Here, both the dead and the pots that sustained them during life were burnt and broken (cf. Tilley 1996, 317–18; Chapman 1996; 2000b), symbolizing both the end of an individual's life and the termination of his or her relationships with others. In this particular case, the presence of only part of the smashed vessel raises interesting questions regarding the location of the rest of the pot. The site was well-preserved and was subject to total excavation, yet the remainder of this vessel was not recovered. Perhaps sherds were retained as 'tokens' to be stored, used or
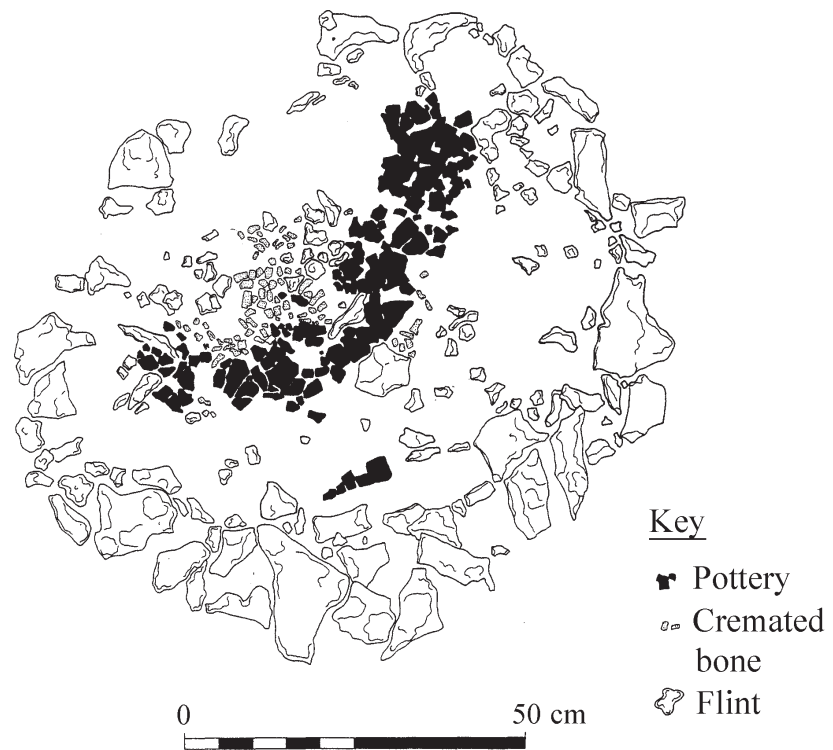

Figure 3. *Urn E30 at Kimpton, Hampshire. (After Dacre & Ellison 1981, fig. 7.)*

deposited off-site (Chapman 2000b). Here, it is worth recalling the incomplete pottery vessel which accompanied one of the cremation burials from the barrow at Itford Hill, Sussex. (I am grateful to R. Sands for reminding me of this example.) Analysis of the ceramics from this site and the contemporary settlement some 90 m to the south showed that the fabric of this vessel matched exactly that of a rimsherd recovered from the settlement (Ellison 1972, 110). It is possible that the rimsherd originally formed part of this pot but was retained as an heirloom (cf. Woodward 2002), a materialization of the ongoing relationships between the living and the dead.

Although objects other than pottery rarely accompany burials of the period (but see McKinley's discussion (1997, 130, 132) of evidence for pyre goods), grinding equipment is occasionally found. The rubbing stone or grinder found 'jammed under the rim' of an inverted urn in the Knighton Heath cemetery, Dorset, is one such example (Petersen 1981, 56). The upper portion of this urn had been destroyed prior to excavation and it is not known if it originally contained a burial. It is therefore difficult to provide a firm context for the deposition of the rubbing stone. It may have belonged to one of the individuals buried in the cemetery or it could have been used to prepare a
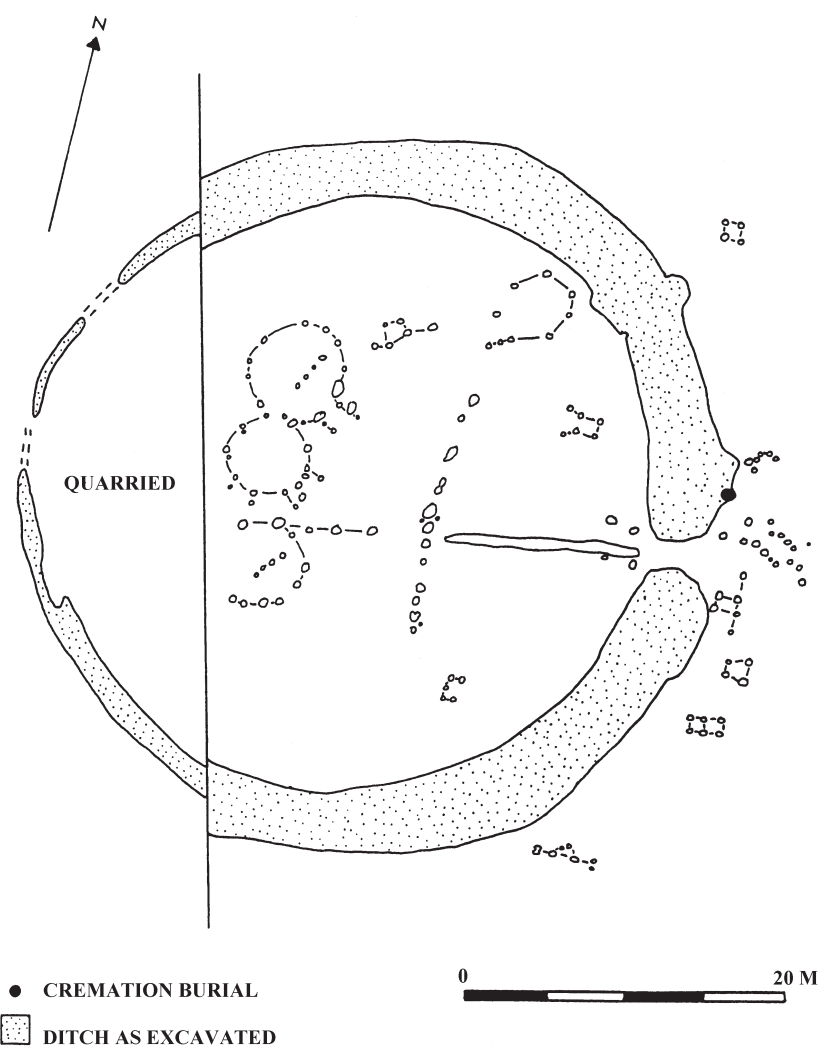
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ships linking people with houses and with particular categories of object meant that the characteristics of artefacts such as pots formed potent metaphors for understanding what it meant to be human. No doubt we can also suggest that the social practices in which houses, pottery and quernstones played a role provided ways of thinking about social relationships and of coping with such processes as biological and social ageing (cf. Fitzpatrick 1997).

Fragmentation and regeneration

The process of fragmentation did not simply symbolize death, however. Rather, there is much to suggest that both broken artefacts and the dead were seen as a source of fertility and new life during the Middle and Late Bronze Age.

First, we may note the existence of a conceptual link between death and other states of transition, with the remains of the dead being used to help people think about and understand various types of social and spatial transformation. The deposition of human remains in the Late Bronze Age (Brück 1995) provides good evidence for this. During this period, the normative mortuary rite for the majority of people is archaeologically invisible, but it may have involved the exposure of bodies. Fragmentary and disarticulated pieces of human bone — in particular skull fragments — are found in a variety of contexts, including settlement sites, wet places (for example, rivers, lakes, bogs and waterholes) and caves. The finds from settlement contexts tend to come from what may be interpreted as 'liminal' locations, notably boundaries and entrances (Fig. 4). In other words, human remains were being used to draw attention to and mark out the point of transition from inside to outside, from one state to another. The same interpretation may be applied to wet places and caves; both may have been thought of as boundary or liminal locations in some sense, perhaps between socio-political groups or between the world of the living and that of spirits and ancestors. The use of human remains in such contexts is hardly surprising. Death is the ultimate transition

QUARRIED

● CREMATION BURIAL

▨ DITCH AS EXCAVATED

0   20 M

Figure 4. *Location of the cremation burial found at Mucking North Ring, Essex. (After Bond 1988, fig. 3.)*

funerary meal for the mourners. However, it is tempting to suggest that it might have been used for the crushing of human bone, although there is no direct evidence to suggest this (note also McKinley's reservations (1993) concerning evidence for the deliberate crushing of bone prior to deposition).

Both the practices surrounding the abandonment of houses and the treatment and deposition of objects such as querns and pots suggests that these may have stood in a metaphorical relationship with human bodies (cf. Tilley 1996, ch. 6; 1999; see Brück 1999 for further discussion of anthropomorphic imagery in relation to Middle Bronze Age roundhouses). It is possible that houses, pots and quernstones were at some level considered to be 'living' entities themselves, although the practices documented here do not necessarily imply this. Whatever the case, the sets of symbolical relation-

and, as such, human bones were used to symbolize other structurally similar points in space and time.

Next, let us trace the links made between death and fertility. To begin with, we may examine the treatment of objects which have come to the end of their use life and which archaeologists would normally identify as refuse. Contrary to expectations, however, broken objects were often used and deposited in special ways in the Middle and Late Bronze Age, challenging modern value-judgements of such 'rubbish' (cf. Hill 1995; Chapman 2000a). Refuse was frequently employed to mark out points of transition in space, notably boundaries and entrances. For example, at Springfield Lyons in Essex, the main entrances to the enclosure were marked out with dumps of clay mould fragments for the production of swords (Buckley & Hedges 1987; Fig. 2). Similarly, at Weir Bank Stud Farm, Berkshire (Barnes *et al*. 1995), the refuse deposits recovered from the ditched field boundaries were largely concentrated at their butt ends, drawing attention to the corners and entrances of particular parcels of land. This suggests that broken artefacts did not simply signify the end of life but, like human bone, symbolized transformation from one state to another — in these cases from inside to outside a settlement or enclosure, or vice versa.

Broken artefacts also form part of many votive deposits, indicating that they were enmeshed in a very different system of values to those which inform our own treatment of refuse. We have seen above how objects were deliberately destroyed on the death of a person or a house. However, broken objects may also have been used in a variety of other ritual practices. For example, at Runnymede, Surrey (Needham 1991, 110), a pit in Area 6 contained large parts of a single horse skeleton, the forelimbs of which had been crossed. Over this lay a neatly inverted hearth, beside and below which were large potsherds including pieces from a fineware bowl. At Monkton Court Farm, Kent, a quern fragment had been placed on the base of a pit and at its centre (Perkins *et al*. 1994, 248). The quern was surrounded by a ring of eight hammerstones. Above this was a deposit of large sherds representing the *in situ* breakage of a large coarseware jar. Anthropological studies have pointed out that ritual practices often surround states of transformation (Van Gennep 1960; Turner 1969); rites of passage such as initiation, marriage and death are obvious examples. In the Bronze Age, the breaking of objects and the use of fragmentary artefacts in ritual acts such as those described above no doubt made symbolic reference to the social transitions effected by such rites, signifying not only a change in state but the ending and replacement of old sets of social relations with new ones (cf.

Chapman 2000b). Interestingly, the recovery of dumps of mould fragments at Springfield Lyons from the primary silts of the enclosure ditches indicates deposition in the early stages of the site's existence rather than on its abandonment, underlining again the association between broken objects and new life (Needham 1987, 12). As Bourdieu (1991, 117–27) points out, however, the life-course stages marked out through such practices should not simply be seen as direct replacements of one another with neat beginnings and endings. For example, the deposition of broken ceramics on abandonment of a settlement would have made reference to earlier stages in the lifecycle of that site through the very use of fragments of its history. Furthermore, by retaining parts of such vessels for use elsewhere after abandonment (refitting of sherds could elucidate such practices), the life of that site would have been carried out of the past and into the future, linking stages in the lifecycle of its inhabitants in an interlocking organic process (Chapman 2000b).

More direct evidence for conceptual links between death and fertility can perhaps be seen in the use of midden material as fertilizer during this period. Gingell (1992, 155), for example, has noted the presence of pottery sherds in field boundaries and lynchets on the Marlborough Downs and has linked this to the practice of spreading domestic refuse on the fields. Pryor (n.d.) has excavated an extensive area of dark earth at Welland Bank Quarry in South Lincolnshire, in which ard marks coeval with the formation of the soil were preserved. Pryor interprets this deposit as the result of middening activities and argues that this area of the site served both for refuse disposal and as a rich soil for the growing of crops. Material which was dead in one sense thus came to form a source of life and fertility. On the Shetland Islands, Middle and Late Bronze Age houses were sometimes set into pre-existing middens (Downes & Lamb 2000). Here, life could grow in and out of death. Parallel cases are known of Scottish Iron Age houses built on or into Neolithic tombs (Hingley 1996). In other cases, refuse was deposited around the walls of the houses, the expanding midden symbolizing the growth and development of the household group (Downes & Lamb 2000). The enormous midden sites of the southern English Late Bronze Age can perhaps be interpreted in a similar way (McOmish 1996; Needham & Spence 1996, 242–8). The curation of refuse at sites such as Runnymede in Surrey (Needham 1991; Needham & Spence 1996) and Potterne in Wiltshire (Lawson 1994) provided visible evidence of animal ownership, high levels of craft production and substantial consumption of food, pottery and other artefacts. Here again,

refuse symbolized the vitality and productivity of the social group. Discussing the metaphorical connections between life and death in the Bronze Age, Parker Pearson (1996) refers to these monumental middens as 'hoards of fertility'.

The sets of ideas discussed above may help us to understand the presence of human remains in midden contexts in the Late Bronze Age (Brück 1995). Although many of these fragments may have been dumped as part of an undifferentiated mass of refuse, others seem to have been carefully deposited as part of event-marking or place-marking rites. At East Chisenbury, Wiltshire, for example, a piece of human skull had been placed on a prepared surface within a large midden and a fragment of sarsen stone and several potsherds arranged around this (Brown *et al*. 1994). Elsewhere, refuse within the enclosure ditches surrounding settlements includes significant concentrations of human remains, particularly in and around the entrances to these sites (Brück 1995). This suggests that there were conceptual links between human bone and refuse, the ambiguous — and perhaps even dangerous — nature of each being underlined through their association with moments of crisis and transformation. If refuse, conceived of as dead objects, was seen as a source of life during the Late Bronze Age, then similarities in the treatment and deposition of human bone could indicate that this material was likewise considered a source of fertility.

The idea that life was thought to emerge out of death is supported by much other evidence. For example, analogies may have been drawn between cremation and cooking (see also Williams 2004). Middle and Late Bronze Age sites often produce large quantities of burnt flint (e.g. Holleyman & Curwen 1935; Barrett *et al*. 1991, 161). It is widely accepted that at least some of this material represents cooking waste. The hot flint is thought to have been used as a means of heating water or other liquids in pottery which could not itself have stood direct heat from a hearth. Like human bone, the flint shattered and fractured on burning; it became brittle and often acquired a marked bluish-white tinge. Once 'cooked', both food and burnt bone were placed in ceramic containers. If such analogies were indeed drawn in the Bronze Age, then the likening of cremation to cooking — the latter so clearly a life-giving activity — is surely significant. Indeed, Williams (n.d.) has noted the use of layers of burnt flint to cap Middle Bronze Age barrows, such as that at Itford Hill in Sussex (Holden 1972). In this way, the finality of death was negated through its juxtaposition with a material redolent of productivity and growth. Here, we are reminded of the visual

similarity of such barrows to contemporary 'burnt mounds' (A. Jones pers. comm.), mounds of burnt flint that are thought to have been the product of cooking or feasting activities.

Grain was also treated in the same way as the human dead. Cereals were parched, ground and cooked to be made edible (but note that not all varieties needed parching), while seed corn may have been stored in pits before planting. Weeds of cultivation and processing waste often seem to have been used as tinder (e.g. Clapham 1999, 53). Thus, the processes used to treat the dead (heating, crushing and burying) can be seen to provide life-giving nourishment when applied to grain, drawing out and enhancing its positive and productive aspects. Given this set of metaphorical associations, it is perhaps unsurprising that burnt grain sometimes forms part of event-marking or place-marking deposits; the deposits of burnt barley from pits at Itford Hill and from Black Patch, both in Sussex, are two such examples (Burstow & Holleyman 1957; Drewett 1982). The metaphorical connotations of such a material would remind those taking part in the rite that they were witnessing not only the end of one phase in life (for a person or settlement, or perhaps in the agricultural cycle) but also the beginning of a new stage (cf. Williams 2003).

Similar ideas may have underlain the use of grog and burnt flint as tempering agents for pottery (see also Williams 2004). The use of grog temper meant that the breaking of a pot facilitated the birth of another; potsherds were crushed and added to clay which was then fashioned into a new vessel (Morris, E. 1994, 38; Brown 1995, 127; cf. Cleal 1995, 192). E. Morris (1994, 38) suggests that the incorporation of old pottery into new vessels was a means of maintaining continuity with the past. Similarly, flint was burnt and broken and used as temper. At least some of the burnt flint may have been produced in the course of cooking food and, as such, it may have been endowed with life-giving qualities. Here again, the activity of grinding (burnt flint, potsherds, grain and possibly human bone) can be seen to be closely associated with the process of transformation. In such a context, quernstones must have been redolent with the symbolism of death and rebirth, which may explain the presence of grinding equipment in so many event-marking deposits (Brück 1999; Seager Thomas 1999, 43). Examples include complete quernstones placed on the bases of pits in huts A and E at Itford Hill, Sussex, and in a posthole of a roundhouse at New Barn Down in the same county (Burstow & Holleyman 1957; Curwen 1934). As noted above, grinding equipment also occasionally accompanies Middle Bronze Age burials,

although it is not known what materials were crushed using these objects.

All of these strands suggest a conceptual link between death and rebirth, with fragments of the dead being seen as a source of new life (see Fitzpatrick 1997; Hingley 1997; Williams 2004 for related ideas applied to later periods). In every case, it was the processes of burning and breaking which facilitated the renewal of life; where the treatment of the human dead is concerned, this could mean that the process of cremation itself was more important than the act of burial, a point which may explain the relative lack of offerings in the grave itself even where these appear to have accompanied the body on the pyre. The existence of a set of ideas linking death to the regeneration of life is perhaps unsurprising and in many societies, mortuary rites are themselves associated with imagery of fertility and rebirth (Bloch & Parry 1982). Where life is thought of as a limited good, only when one person dies can another be born. Thus, life and death are thought of as linked in an endless series of transformative cycles. The finality of death is denied and it is harnessed for the good of society. For the Middle Bronze Age, these ideas may perhaps be visible in the frequent concentration of cremation burials around the south side of contemporary barrows (M. Wysocki pers. comm.). The referencing of the diurnal passage of the sun linked death permanently to life and to the cyclical rebirth of the day (cf. Parker Pearson & Richards 1994; Fitzpatrick 1997; Oswald 1997; Owoc 2002).

Indeed, as Downes (1999, 28; following Bloch & Parry 1982) suggests, the use of cremation rather than inhumation may indicate that death was seen as a process of transformation rather than either an end in itself or a simple extension of life into a parallel universe (see also Oestigaard 1999; Williams 2004). In societies that practice cremation, the multi-stage nature of the rite often means a longer and more symbolically charged liminal phase than where simple inhumation burial is the norm (Barrett & Needham 1988). As such, the structure of cremation rituals means that they fit well with Van Gennep's model of rites of passage (1960) in which three separate stages (separation, liminality, reincorporation) facilitate transformation from one state to another. Indeed, both the multi-stage nature of the cremation process and the use of fire make it an effective means of removing the dead from the living and reconstituting them as a source of new life (Downes 1999, 28; Williams 2004). Again, however, it would be simplistic to view the transformative process as a series of entirely separate stages and states (cf. Bourdieu 1991, 117–27). Each

stage presupposes the existence of the others through the use of objects or materials referencing past, present and future and, as such, the links between stages are not broken but reconstituted as idealized collective memory. The dead are indeed transformed, but this transformation is built on to and out of already established identities. The use of domestic storage vessels to hold the cremated bone and the retention of some of the cremated remains for use or deposition outside of the cemetery context (see below) provide two examples of this referencing process.

The interpretation of broken objects in bronze hoards

The above discussion of the symbolic significance of breakage has some interesting implications for the interpretation of broken bronze objects in hoards. Fragmentary bronzes have been found in both dryland and wet contexts. Where the finds come from wet places, such as a river, lake or bog, they are usually interpreted as votive deposits — sacrifices to gods or ancestors which could not be recovered by those who offered them (e.g. Burgess *et al.* 1972; Needham & Burgess 1980; Barrett 1985; Bradley 1990). In many parts of Europe, including Britain, there is an inverse relationship between the deposition of hoards in wet contexts and the presence of rich grave goods in burials (e.g. Kristiansen 1978; Bradley 1990). It has therefore been suggested that the deposition of bronzework in rivers, lakes and bogs may in some cases result from the deliberate destruction of a person's belongings on death (Jope 1961, 321; Ehrenberg 1980, 10; Bradley 1990).

The presence of broken bronzes in dry-land contexts is usually explained in a very different way. Hoards containing fragmentary artefacts have long been interpreted as smiths' or founders' hoards (e.g. Evans 1881, 458–9; De Mortillet 1894, 338). Here, the broken bronzes are interpreted as 'refuse' (scrap metal) awaiting recycling. However, there are several problems with this suggestion (see also Bradley 1990, 26; 2005, ch. 5; Turner 1998; Barber 2001; Needham 2001). If bronze was simply being collected for recycling, one might expect such hoards to contain the full range of bronze types produced within a region. This is not the case, however (Barrett & Needham 1988, 136). Rather, certain types appear to have been excluded from deposition in these hoards, being found instead in other contexts, for example rivers or burials (cf. Verlaeckt 1998).

Recent research on patterns of fragmentation in British and Danish dry-land hoards have also produced some interesting results (Turner 1998; Verlaeckt

1998; Maraszek 2000; Bradley 2005, ch. 5). These studies show that different bronze types were fragmented in specific ways and that certain parts of the broken artefacts were excluded from deposition. Turner (1998, 81–2) notes that a number of socketed axes in Late Bronze Age 'scrap' hoards were completely crushed, an act which she argues would have served no particular purpose if such hoards were simply collections of metal for recycling. She points out that the crushing of an axe closes its mouth so that a new haft could not be inserted and argues that this was a symbolic means of ending the life of the object. She also notes other instances where the mouths of socketed axes were closed through insertion of fragments of bronze into the socket (Turner 1998, 88). Finally, we may note the careful arrangement of broken objects in some dryland hoards. The broken bracelet fragment from the South Dumpton Down hoard (D. Perkins pers. comm.) described above is one good example.

The contents of supposed founders' hoards cannot therefore be satisfactorily explained in functionalist terms. Indeed, a number of Continental scholars have suggested that the broken artefacts in such hoards might in fact have been ritually destroyed (Worsaae 1866–71, 64–8; Hundt 1955, 99–100; Müller-Karpe 1958, 34; Nebelsick 1997; Verlaeckt 1998). Here, I would like to explore some possible reasons for the deliberate deposition of broken bronze artefacts outside of wet contexts (see also Barber 2001). In many societies, metalworking is seen as a magical activity because it is associated with the transformation of rock into metal and, through recycling, of one object into another (e.g. Welbourn 1981; Herbert 1993; Budd & Taylor 1995). In the Bronze Age, copper ore was taken from the earth and then crushed and sorted prior to smelting and casting. Recycling of bronze objects involved the cutting, mixing and remelting of 'rubbish' to form new artefacts with new use-lives. The whole process of metalworking was thus redolent of the symbolism of transformation and rebirth (Herbert 1993; Hingley 1997; Jones 2002; Williams 2004). Of course, the process of transformation involves the transgression of boundaries — a potential source of danger (Douglas 1966). Smelting and casting are therefore often surrounded by secrecy and taboo (Welbourn 1981; Budd & Taylor 1995; Hingley 1997) and metalworking may be accompanied by ritual practices facilitating the transformative process, just as ritual plays a role in rites of passage for human beings.

If metallurgy is all about transformation from one state to another, then materials such as casting debris and broken items awaiting recycling could have symbolized the process of change in general (cf. Chapman

1996; 2000b). For example, fragmentary bronzes may have been deposited as a means of metaphorically marking out liminal states, or points of transition in space and time (Turner 1998, 122, 129); their deposition may therefore have occurred in the context of a range of ritual practices unconnected with metalworking (cf. Needham 2001). It is therefore hardly surprising that broken bronzes and metalworking debris should be found in contexts such as the enclosure ditches surrounding settlements (e.g. the hoard at Petters Sports Field, Surrey: Needham 1990) and in caves (for instance at Covesea, Grampian: Benton 1931; Shepherd in press). Turner (1998, 129) points out that the apparent deposition of the Petters material in the upper levels of the ditch just before this feature was deliberately infilled indicates that the hoard was deposited on the abandonment of the site. The presence at Covesea of fragments of children's skulls, some of which had been pierced as if for hanging on display (Shepherd in press), may indicate the enactment there of rites surrounding human death and/or initiation into adulthood. On the other hand, ritual was no doubt also an integral part of metal production owing to the potential danger of the transformative process and the votive deposition of scrap material may therefore have been seen as an essential step in the successful production of bronze (cf. Worsaae 1866–71).

Bronze Age technology and the production of the self

At this point, it may be useful to explore the similarity between the processes of bronze and pottery production and the construction of the human subject (see also Hingley 1997; Turner 1998, 127–8; Jones 2002). Bronze was transformed from one state to another through the process of fragmentation and the medium of fire; copper ores were crushed, smelted and cast, old bronze objects broken and remelted. The production of pottery included a similar set of activities. Preparation of both clay and tempering agents involved grinding and mixing, and the pot was then fired to transform it into a usable artefact. Like bronze, broken pottery could be recycled as a tempering agent for new vessels. In his discussion of British Iron Age material, Hingley (1997) also notes structural similarities between the production of metal and the processing of plant products, a point of relevance to this argument.

As we have discussed above, fire and fragmentation were also media of transformation for the human self. The cremation of the body on death is the most obvious example but, at other points in the lifecycle, the breaking and deposition of artefacts that stood in a metaphorical relationship with the human body (for

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example pots) would have achieved the same purpose (Chapman 2000b). The structural similarities between the treatment of the human body and contemporary technologies hint that the process of biological and social growth among humans was thought of as a series of cycles of death and rebirth mediated by rites of passage, such as initiation or marriage. In each case, the breaking and/or burning of bodies or objects facilitated the destruction of the old social persona and the birth of a new one. We may therefore suggest that technologies such as metallurgy and potting acted as metaphors for the production of the self. Similarly, they may have provided people with the resources to understand and conceptualize the formation and dissolution of social relations. For example, human reproduction may have been seen in a similar way to the production of pottery and metalwork, involving the mixing and combination of substances and qualities. If so, then the contribution of both parents and their respective descent groups may have been acknowledged as important, hinting at a bilateral element to the kinship pattern. Parallel to the way that marriage involves the breaking up of one family group to form another, it is possible that technological processes such as potting and metallurgy could have provided metaphors for the formation of new household and kin groups.

Technology and social relations

The analogies drawn between the construction of the human subject and the production of materials such as pottery or bronzework have something interesting to tell us about Bronze Age technology. Archaeologists often think of technology as the application of a universally-valid set of functionalist rules enabling people to deal efficiently with their natural environment. However, this view has been challenged by a number of writers across the social sciences (e.g. Lemmonier 1986; 1993; Pfaffenberger 1988; Budd & Taylor 1995; Dobres 2000). These authors argue that technology is inextricably bound up with social conditions — indeed that technology is the realization of social and political relationships. Not only do these shape the distribution and availability of resources but, more fundamentally, it is social conditions that generate the technological problems requiring a solution, determine which of these is seen as more or less 'critical', and define an 'appropriate' or 'effective' solution. The values, aims and rationales on which such judgements are based are in themselves cultural constructs.

Moreover, technology can also be thought of as the enactment of people's ideas about the world. Peo-

ple's understanding of materials and substances, and their notions of the relationship between cause and effect, clearly have an impact on technological processes. At the same time, these too must be understood as interdependent upon social conditions. Humans and the material world are linked through a complex web of metaphors which enables people to understand and conceptualize social relationships. Unsurprisingly, these metaphorical links invest the material world and its constituents with meanings which affect the way people feel they can use particular artefacts and substances (Sillar 1996). The natural world does not simply provide a neutral array of resources for humans to utilize as best they can. People do not work with a 'real' environment, outside of history, but with their understanding of it as constituted through a particular cultural tradition.

The complex interplay between technology and society helps us to understand the similarities noted above in ways of treating both humans and artefacts. In many societies, a basic central set of concepts and metaphors is deployed as a means of thinking about a range of different phenomena. The model of the 'machine' in modern Western European thought provides a good example. In the Bronze Age, the idea that life and death were linked in an unending series of transformative cycles through the processes of fragmentation and burning provided not only a way of understanding processes of biological and social growth but may even have furnished the conceptual tools essential for the smelting of metal out of rock. Indeed, it may be no coincidence that the production of metalwork in Britain appears to have intensified around the same time (*c*. 1700 BC) that cremation became the normal mode of treatment of the human dead.

Concepts of the self

The ways in which human bodies and artefacts were treated and deposited during the Middle and Late Bronze Age provide interesting insights into contemporary conceptions of the self. Intriguingly, these do not always sit easily with widely accepted arguments for the rise of individualism during this period. The appearance of single burials with grave goods has long been taken to distinguish the period from the preceding Neolithic. This interpretation is perhaps most famously captured in Renfrew's (1974) characterization of Neolithic and Bronze Age societies respectively as group-oriented and individualizing chiefdoms. However, it is possible that the projection into the past of a bounded, autonomous self — the in-

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dividual — may be anachronistic, based as it is on the Enlightenment concept of the person. I would argue that the above discussion of the role of fragmentation in the construction of the Bronze Age subject requires us to question many of the assumptions surrounding the rise of individualism during this period. Before treating this issue, however, I would like briefly to contrast the concept of the individual as it exists in our own society with other ways of thinking about the self.

In the modern, Western world, the human individual is conceived of as a bounded, stable and independent entity, existing prior to and above the social relations into which it enters. The notion of an autonomous and transcendent self consciously shaping its own destiny can of course be traced to the radical individualism and liberal political theory of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (e.g. Mauss 1985 [1938]; B. Morris 1991; 1994, 16). Many societies, however, have a more socio-centric or relational conception of the person. The complex, kaleidoscopic web of social relationships in which a person is embedded is seen to constitute a major portion of his or her identity and selfhood (e.g. Read 1955; Fajans 1985; Ito 1985; Strathern 1988; 1993; B. Morris 1994). Furthermore, one's personal history is an essential component of self identity. In other words, people, places and events that may be spatially and temporally distant form an important part of the human subject; part of one's self therefore always lies outside of one's own physical body (Strathern 1988; 1991; 1993). As such, the person is not a bounded, synchronic entity but an inherently fluid and contextual realization of relationships with other beings, things and places (cf. Butler 1990; Broch-Due & Rudie 1993; Brah 1996; Probyn 1996).

Marriott's study (1976) of Hindu society provides an interesting example. Here, the person is not thought of as an indivisible bounded unit. Rather, persons are seen as inherently 'dividual'. They are made up of an amalgamation of elements that is constantly fluctuating because they 'absorb heterogeneous material influences ... [and] also give out from themselves particles of their own coded substances ... that may then reproduce in others something of the nature of the persons in whom they originated' (Marriott 1976, 111). This continuous mixing and separation of elements occurs through such processes as parentage, marriage, trade, feasts, the exchange of services and ideas and other inter-personal contacts.

Returning to the evidence from Middle and Late Bronze Age Britain, I would like to argue here that there is considerable evidence for the existence of a more socio-centric conception of the person during this period. Beginning with the treatment of the dead, Middle Bronze Age cremation cemeteries provide good evidence for the relational construction of social identity. The careful positioning of burials relative to preceding interments was one way of defining the identity of the deceased person, with relationships of descent and affinity being expressed through the spatial location of the grave cut (cf. Barrett 1991; Mizoguchi 1993). The barrow at Itford Hill, Sussex (Holden 1972), for example, had a primary burial in a central position, with secondary burials concentrated around the southern arc of the mound. At Chitt's Hill and Ardleigh in Essex (Crummy 1977; Brown 1999), linear arrangements of ring-ditches may express concepts of genealogical succession, while at Bromfield in Shropshire (Stanford 1982), the Middle Bronze Age flat cemetery consisted of a distinct arc of cremation deposits. Such details underline the importance of inter-individual relationships in the construction of social identity.

Although the overall proportion of multiple to single interments is relatively low, multiple cremations are present at many sites. The author's calculation of an average of *c.* five per cent of burials from Middle Bronze Age cemeteries as multiple interments agrees with McKinley's figure (1997, 130) from her survey of cremation burials of all periods. Such deposits usually comprise two or three individuals (e.g. Petersen 1981; Clarke 1991), although they can contain fragments of up to nine people, as for example at West Overton G19 in Wiltshire (M. Wysocki pers. comm.). McKinley (1997, 142) has pointed out that the majority of multiple deposits consist of an adult or subadult with one or more children (e.g. Dacre & Ellison 1981; Dodwell 1998), again underlining the importance of relational aspects of social identity (in this case perhaps kinship; interestingly, the adult individuals can be either sex).

Variation in the weight of cremation burials also provokes interesting questions. Middle Bronze Age cremation burials vary considerably in weight and adult individuals can be represented by anything from well over a kilogram of burnt bone to a few tens of grams. McKinley (1997, 137) argues convincingly that this cannot be accounted for by post-depositional factors alone. Furthermore, she describes how considerable quantities of cremated bone are often recovered from pyre sites and deposits of pyre debris, suggesting that not all of the cremated bone was collected from the pyre for burial. This indicates that it was ideologically acceptable to fragment and disperse a human body, suggesting that, unlike the modern Western individual, the person may not have been considered

a unified and transcendental whole but consisted of a number of separable parts. Indeed, the preference for cremation in which flesh is removed from bone could be read in a similar way. It also hints that the boundaries of the self may not have coincided neatly with the boundaries of the physical body in the way that they do for people in our own society.

Turning to the actual social practices that lie behind such 'token' burials, various possible scenarios can be posited, although I shall focus on two in particular here. Where factors such as soil acidity can be discounted, archaeologists have often interpreted the size of the burial as reflecting the degree of care with which the burnt bone was collected from the pyre (e.g. Dodwell 1998). If so, then the size of cremation burials may relate directly to social status. This idea is substantiated by McKinley's observation (1997, 142) that cremation burials in primary positions within Bronze Age barrows generally produce a greater weight of bone than those in other contexts. One can, of course, envisage other explanations — token deposits may have been the result of a tradition of distributing the burnt remains among several different groups of mourners (M. Wysocki pers. comm.). Williams (2004) points out that similar practices are well-documented for the Roman world and McKinley (1997, 138) mentions ethnographic analogies from nineteenth-century Aboriginal Australia. According to this scenario, the more complex and extensive the web of social relationships in which the deceased was embedded, the more dispersed his or her remains would become after cremation. Here, the size of the cremation deposit might be inversely related to status.

It is difficult to prove this suggestion archaeologically, although there is some evidence in favour of such a proposal. For example, at Kimpton in Hampshire, a series of cremation burials and associated pyres was excavated (Dacre & Ellison 1981). It was noted that the pyres contained much less residual cremated bone than one might have expected given the relatively small size of most of the cremation burials (the mean weight of the burials was 322 g: Everton 1981, 185). The authors therefore suggest that a large proportion of the cremated bone must have been taken off-site (Dacre & Ellison 1981, 162; cf. McKinley 1997, 138 on similar evidence from the Middle Bronze Age cemetery at Linga Fold in Orkney). Similar practices involving the dispersal of the remains of the dead seem to have occurred during the Late Bronze Age (Brück 1995). During this period, excarnation appears to have become the normative treatment for the dead and fragments of human bone were circulated for re-use both as amulets (pierced and shaped pieces of

human bone are known from sites such as Reading Business Park, Berkshire: A. Boyle pers. comm.) and in a range of non-mortuary ritual practices (Brück 1995). The dispersal of human bone during the Late Bronze Age may suggest that the self was thought of as comprising many different parts, each element constituted through a unique set of relations with particular people, places or events.

The importance of gift exchange in the Bronze Age may also support these arguments. It has long been recognized that gift exchange was an important mechanism of social and material reproduction during this period (e.g. Rowlands 1980; Kristiansen 1998 and many others). Mauss's classic discussion (1954) of the inalienable nature of the gift reminds us that it is a primary feature of gifts that they carry something of their original 'owner' with them. Such objects are often described as having 'biographies' comprising the chain of hands (and places) through which they have passed (e.g. Kopytoff 1986; Weiner 1992; Thomas 1996, ch. 6; Tilley 1996, ch. 6). If objects bear traces of past 'owners', then this suggests that part of the self may be located outside of the body in artefacts which, through the social practices in which they are utilized, play an important role in the construction of social identity. Of course, gifts also ensure reciprocal rights over resources, an important safety-net for societies based on subsistence agriculture (Halstead & O'Shea 1982). In the modern Western world, exclusive land rights focus on single bounded 'territories', a set of ideas closely paralleled in contemporary conceptions of the person. In other societies, however, people often possess a range of rights over several different parts of the landscape (e.g. Sheddick 1954; Nayacakalou 1971; Hoben 1973). In areas of the Andes, for example, when fields are in crop they 'belong' to those who planted them. However, when the same fields are in fallow, they may be used by the whole community for grazing (Godoy 1991). In the Bronze Age, the dispersal of rights over resources across large areas of land through alliances with kin and neighbours may have been paralleled by a conception of the person as an unbounded and fragmentary being stretched across space and time. The network of social relationships through which such reciprocal rights were constituted was perhaps reflected in the distribution of human remains among the mourners at a funeral.

Finally, as we have seen above, Bronze Age technology often involved the mixing and recombination of elements, as for example in the recycling of bronzes and the use of grog tempering in pottery manufacture. Artefacts contained fragments of older objects which in turn incorporated traces from the more distant past.

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These traces provided artefacts with genealogies, imparting meanings carried out of the past into the present (Chapman 2000b; Woodward 2002). We have already discussed the close links between technology and the production of the human subject. We may therefore suggest that human beings too were thought of as carrying traces of events, places and people distant in spatial and/or temporal terms. Conversely, parts of people lived on in other combinations after death (most obviously in their descendants). Another point of relevance here is Maraszek's demonstration that socketed axes from Late Bronze Age 'scrap' hoards often appear to have been deliberately cut into two halves (Maraszek 2000). However, it is rare for both the mouth and the blade from a single axe to be deposited in the same hoard, indicating that socketed axes too were spatially dispersed on death (see also Bradley & Ford 2004). Clearly, it is hard to account for this in purely functionalist terms. Here again, objects and people were treated in similar ways. It would be interesting to know where the missing parts of such objects were deposited — or whether these were remelted; only rarely have such cross-site matches been identified (Bradley & Ford 2004).

Power and hierarchy in the Bronze Age

The presence of rich burials and high-status settlements has encouraged many archaeologists to construct static hierarchical models for Bronze Age society, with specific individuals (chiefs, village heads, farmers, etc.) located at particular levels in the social hierarchy. The above discussion of concepts of the self, however, suggests a more complex picture. Here, I want briefly to explore the implications of a 'dividual' conception of personhood for power relations during the period.

In cultures with a more socio-centric conception of the self, the power to act is derived from the social context in which a person is situated. Agency is located not simply within bounded human bodies but within the wider set of social relationships that make up the person (Ito 1985; Strathern 1988; 1993). In such a context, the attainment of power cannot be achieved without socially-conferred approval (Bourdieu 1977, 40, 195; B. Morris 1994, 111). Moreover, a more fractured or relational conception of the person will affect the degree to which it is seen as possible to influence other people's actions. Because the self is always spatially and temporally dispersed and is not solely located within the human body, it is never possible to wield total control over a person. As one moves from context to context, social identity and social status

are continuously challenged and reconstituted. Thus, social power is not something that someone possesses or wields. Rather, it is a property of particular events, immanent within the socio-political nexus at certain moments but displaced and redirected in others (Foucault 1980).

For the British Middle and Late Bronze Age, there is a range of evidence (fine metalworks; rich, well-defended settlements and the like) that indicates the existence of status differentials within this society. However, the kinds of static hierarchies that have so often been constructed for the Bronze Age may perhaps be questioned, although this is not to suggest that there were no 'chiefs' or no constant elements to personal identity. Rather, if the self was not seen as a bounded, unitary entity but was constructed within a network of relationships with others, then the attainment and maintenance of power was not something which was achieved by the 'individual' but was facilitated by those others with whom a person's life was intertwined. The practice of gift exchange can help illuminate this point. By giving gifts, people acquired rights over the resources of kin and neighbours. Deploying such resources for personal ends required the agreement of those others who shared rights over these. Within such a context, the idea that a single person could have held complete control over a piece of land (a political territory) seems simplistic, given that others are likely to have had various types of claim on that land. In a similar way, if the person was thought of as a 'dividual' entity, and if parts of the self were seen as dispersed outside the human body in other places or times, then one might argue that it would have been difficult to wield complete control over that person; people would always have had the resources to reconstitute themselves in other contexts. Hence, we might argue that power in the Bronze Age constantly needed to be maintained and negotiated; it was never static or complete, but varied in direction, location and intensity from context to context (cf. Rowlands (1980) and Kristiansen (1998) who suggest the existence of highly competitive and fluid systems of ranking during at least parts of this period).

Conclusion

In this article, I have attempted to show how the idioms of fragmentation, transformation and regeneration were central cultural metaphors through which people conceptualized the passage of time, the production of food and other categories of material culture, and the creation of social agents. Metaphor was used to explicate the cultural universe of Bronze Age

people in a way that linked together such different social practices as house construction, the manufacture of bronze and the treatment of the dead. Pots, quernstones, bronzes, houses and humans were subjected to processes of fragmentation and reincorporation that suggest that life was thought to emerge out of death. The dispersal of the human body on death hints that Bronze Age concepts of the self may have been radically different to the notions of individualism so often envisaged by archaeologists for the period. We have suggested that the person was thought of as a fractured and relational entity interpermeated with other selves and containing traces of past places, people and events brought together in novel combinations. Clearly, this has implications for an understanding of both social reproduction and social transformation. As such, both people and objects can be thought of as materialized memory, where memory is neither fossilized nor static but a constant productive process. The practices documented richly illustrate people's use of material culture to structure and understand their social world. The challenge for us is to interpret the subtle interplay of people and things through which the Bronze Age universe was constructed.

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