

A STUDY OF THE
DEPOSITION AND
DISTRIBUTION OF
COPPER ALLOY VESSELS IN
ROMAN BRITAIN

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Review of Previous Research Concerning Roman Britain and Copper alloy Vessels

Introduction

The following report collects together data concerning copper alloy vessels from Roman Britain and relates this evidence to prevailing theories of consumption, identity and culture change in Britain during this time. The aims of this study are to collect a catalogue of copper alloy vessels from England and Wales, categorise them by form, typology, context, chronology and geographic distribution, offer interpretations concerning their cultural associations, manners of consumption, functionality and development over time before commenting upon their value as small finds material reflective of culture change more broadly within Britain during the Roman period. Copper alloy vessels from the Roman period in Britain have not been the subject of focused scholarly study for over 50 years and have never had a focused examination in English. This report not only rectifies this gap in the literature, but proceeds to directly apply this data analysis to the greater theoretical discourse of the development of material culture in Britain during the Roman period, thereby demonstrating the validity and importance of small finds studies to the larger historiographic and theoretical discourse. This is also the first study of copper alloy vessels in Britain to investigate depositional patterning across and between contexts, a research methodology which proves to be instrumental in understanding the use and consumption of this commodity in Britain as well as demonstrating the importance of understanding contextual circumstances in artefact studies more generally.

The study area is limited to England and Wales, excluding Scotland. This choice was made for two principal reasons. First, England and Wales were both part of the Roman provinces of Britain, while only portions of southern Scotland were temporarily incorporated and are therefore arguably more applicable to frontier studies as opposed to provincial studies. Secondly, England and Wales both participate within the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) while Scotland does not. The sheer mass of data that the PAS provided for this study¹ makes it an integral part of the research analysis, problematizing any seamless integration of material from regions that do not have a comparable system of data-collection and reporting. This issue must also be kept in mind when comparing data in this report with other areas of the Roman empire, as PAS data illuminates a great deal of rural settlement patterns and material consumption which is often not visible through other means of archaeological investigation.²

¹ Over a quarter of the objects in this study were reported through the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

² Moorhead 2013; Brindle 2011; Walton 2012.

This first chapter provides an overview of the development of academic theory concerning Roman Britain, so as to establish the intellectual background upon which this study is placed.

Review of Historiographic and Theoretical Debates

The synthesis of the material in this report is intended to be applicable to the greater historiographic study of Roman Britain. As such, it is of value at this stage to briefly outline the development of the historical narratives and debates concerning this timeframe. What follows is a brief synopsis of the development of the historical and theoretical debate concerning Roman Britain, which is by no means intended to comprehensively address the plethora of concerns of historiographic study over the 19th to 21st centuries, but rather reviews the most pertinent debates and theoretical approaches for understanding the material in this report.

While interest in the history and effects of the Roman period in Britain has existed since the Medieval period,³ what may be considered the inception of the 'modern' discussion of Romano-British history really begins with the writings of Haverfield, who outlines Classical civilization's cultural triumph over the indigenous cultures which they encountered.⁴ Haverfield views the Romans as having a civilizing effect upon the native populations which they conquered, though he admits varying levels of success in this endeavour depending on the social status and location of those involved, with the higher classes in the urban lowlands being more fully 'Romanized' than the peasant herdsmen of the highlands.⁵ Haverfield's overall concept of the civilizing effect of Rome on the people of Britain was also influenced by the contemporary theories regarding race and the civilizing effect of empire that were prevalent in his day,⁶ reminding us of how reflective historical research is of the time in which it is conducted⁷ as even much of the basic terminology used would be highly unacceptable today.⁸ The willing adoption of a higher form of civilization to replace a lower one is instrumental in Haverfield's theoretical construct, reflecting the colonial mind-set of 19th and early 20th century Europe and would likely have been agreeable to most of Haverfield's readers.⁹ This sentiment of consensual assimilation is shared by Collingwood, another prominent archaeologist of that

³ See Hingley 2008 for a detailed discussion of pre-modern Romano-British historiography.

⁴ Mattingly 2011, 38.

⁵ Haverfield 1923, 79.

⁶ Haverfield 1924, 175.

⁷ Gerrard 2013, 2-5.

⁸ Hingley 2005, 117.

⁹ Lyons & Papadopoulos 2002, 5.

time. Considering ideas of colonial separation between coloniser and subjugated race that were evident in parts of the British Empire during this period, Collingwood was inspired to make the following statement concerning the Roman imperial experience in Britain:

‘There was no sharp distinction of race; the distinction of language did not matter; and the difference in civilization was not of such a kind that the Romans could be called civilized and the Britons savages...the Britons became Romans. They did not remain a subject race, held down by the Roman army. They became Romans in speech, in habits, and in sentiment.’¹⁰

Important to both of these historians is the difference between the ‘Celtic’ culture of the indigenous Britons and the culture which the Romans brought and that theoretically flourished under their rule. Both draw a clear distinction between the culture of the ‘Romanized’ Britons and the culture of those who lived outside of the sphere of Roman influence.¹¹ Both their perspectives on the development of culture in Britain are highly teleological and reflect a belief in the inevitability of triumph of a ‘high’ culture over a more ‘primitive’ one,¹² though Collingwood does state that the culture of Britain as a whole during this period ‘was neither merely provincial nor merely cosmopolitan, neither Celtic nor Roman simply, but a fusion of (the) two.’¹³ The concepts of Haverfield and Collingwood are clear reflections of the times in which they worked and have their roots in Hegel’s framework of ‘theodicy in history’, or the pre-determined course of history based upon design and the eventual rise of freedom and reason as fundamental aspects in human civilization, a view reminiscent of historic views of the role of the Roman empire dating all the way back to imperial Rome itself.¹⁴ This view is summed up well by Freeman in his critique of 19th century interpretations of imperial Rome when stating, ‘...the objective of imperialism, and the Romanization which followed it, has been variously seen as a combination of benevolent civilizing, economic advantage, and the cause of good government.’¹⁵

The intellectual tide began to shift away from such colonial models following World War II, developing throughout the latter half of the 20th century. The rise of post-colonial thought and changing perspectives on relations between the rulers and the ruled within a colonial context led to the development of arguments such as Legg’s ‘Perpetual British War’ between indigenous Britons and Roman invaders existing throughout the Roman period, referencing the surplus of soldiers regularly garrisoned in Britain and ‘frequent historical references’ to conflicts in the province to construct and justify his theory.¹⁶ This relies specifically on a concept of divided identities between

‘us’ and ‘them’,¹⁷ a very different model of identity in Britain from that proposed by Collingwood. Conversely, Frere saw the culture of Britain as being materially very much influenced by Rome, yet maintaining many of its pre-Roman features in its immaterial practice: ‘Outwardly it was Roman, inwardly it remained Celtic; yet it would be wrong to suppose an inner conflict between the two aspects.’¹⁸ This is not to say, however, that he felt that the adoption of some aspects of Roman material culture was at all superficial on the part of the inhabitants of Britain. Particularly pertinent to this study are his comments on the adoption of Roman dining equipment:

‘The great variety of plates, dishes, bowls and cooking vessels which were now available, far in excess of anything known in the Iron Age, and many of them of local British manufacture, bears witness to a complete revolution in manners. The widespread use of *mortaria* for preparing food similarly points to changes in diet, and the vast increase in amphorae shows that wine-drinking was now a luxury not confined to the houses of the aristocracy.’¹⁹

Millett introduced a more complicated and nuanced view concerning the development of power structures and the acceptance of Roman material culture. Neither adopting a model based upon complete assimilation nor a model of overt separation, Millett’s argument was based upon the willingness of the local aristocracy to take part in the new Roman system as a means of securing their own traditional hold on power as well as to facilitate the development of a greater level of authority. Millett sees the advent of Roman hegemony not so much as a dramatic shift in power structures so much as a re-organization of these same power structures in accordance to Roman systems and structures that precipitated an integration into the wider Roman political and economic world by these tribal elites. Millett specifically emphasises continuity between pre and post-conquest systems of governance and power structures in Britain, as well as the active participation by and benefits to the local elites, when he states:

‘The application of the system to Britain means that the incorporated tribal elites transformed themselves into the *decuriones* of the *civitates*. In this way they were rewarded by retaining power, control of their tribe and wealth, thus continuing a *de facto* hereditary system.’²⁰

The physical residue of this acceptance by the native aristocracy is evident in the architecture as well as the material culture, such as ceramic forms adopted following the conquest.²¹ In Millett’s framework, the fact that the local elites benefited in some ways from Roman-overlordship and desired association and incorporation

¹⁰ Collingwood 1932, 6-7.

¹¹ Haverfield 1923, 79; Collingwood 1932, 48.

¹² Hingley 2004, 39.

¹³ Collingwood 1932, 94.

¹⁴ Whittaker 1997, 143-144; Hingley 2004, 64-67.

¹⁵ Freeman 1997, 27.

¹⁶ Legg 1983, 168-175.

¹⁷ Laurence 1998, 95; Grahame 1998, 159; Malkin 2002, 151-159.

¹⁸ Frere 1967, 342.

¹⁹ Frere 1967, 344.

²⁰ Millett 1990, 66.

²¹ Frere 1967, 343-345; Millett 1979, 35-48; Millett 1990, 157-174; Mattiungly 2011, 234.

within the Roman system would seem to be evident in the acceptance of many of the trappings of Roman material culture. Roymans offers similar perspective to Millett, using examples of the incorporation of tribal elites in Gaul within the system of the Roman auxiliaries as a means of maintaining pre-Roman customs of aristocratic martial achievement within an integrated Roman system of power. The adoption of sedentary agricultural values evidently played an important role in the construction of elite identity in *Gallia Belgica* during this time, as indicated by the representations by provincial elites of the Roman values of farming and agriculture on their funerary monuments.²² Woolf emphasises the allure that integration into Roman society likely had for many Gallic provincial elites, emphasizing the economic benefits of peace and the role that classical education and the notions of *paideia* and *humanitas* had on the development of Roman Gaul.²³ The work of Millett and others at the close of the twentieth century implies that there tended to be incorporation and compromise between the indigenous British and imported Roman cultures and power structures, with particular emphasis on the role of local elites in the process of the dissemination of Roman political and cultural influence.²⁴ While not as dramatic as Collingwood's comment that 'the Britons became Roman',²⁵ this model of indigenous acceptance and collaboration favoured by Millett *et al.* does assert that the Britons, or at least their elites, were receptive to adopting the Roman system as it was often to their own benefit. This sentiment is perhaps best summed up by Miles when he writes, 'Romanization does not represent a complete takeover of local cultures and languages which were used to articulate them. Rather, it was a process that involved appropriations by both rulers and ruled in the creation of new imperial narratives.'²⁶

This system of inter-cultural developmental exchange is also put forward by the creolization theory of Webster, in which she makes comparisons between Caribbean Creole cultures and the colonial environment of the Western Roman Empire in an attempt to understand how culture may have developed there. Her argument takes into account not only the presence of Romans and Britons, but also the diverse cultures from across the Empire which would have been present in Britain for military or commercial endeavours and how these cultures and peoples would have mixed. She characterises her views on inter-cultural syncretism thusly:

'First, no discourse is purely dominant or oppositional but is to some degree both, and that ought to be the starting point for any analysis of social action within the Roman hegemony. Second, where we do encounter acceptance of colonial concepts, beliefs and material

culture, that acceptance requires neither consent nor belief but is often a tactical obedience.'²⁷

There is a distinct difference between the syncretism of Millett and the creolization of Webster: Millett's requires the acceptance of the Britons of 'Roman' culture while Webster's view emphasises the existence of diverse cultural values competing with each other in a shared landscape, the coloniser and colonised in a sort of cultural negotiation as they both attempt to define and assert their own identities within the greater society.

It is the development of such theories of cultural multiplicity which has led to the terms 'Romanization' and 'Romanized' to fall out of favour with scholars during the final years of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century as this phrase was viewed as too simplistic to define the nuances of cultural development which occurred as a result of the interaction between Roman and indigenous cultures of the west, not to mention the cultural pluralism experienced across the entire Roman world, as well as being a term that may have inherent modern political prejudices.²⁸ In many ways, the 'Romanization' argument encapsulates the development of the theoretical debate within Roman studies in Western Europe over the past 20 or so years.²⁹ Much of this debate centres on how active a role the indigenous population played in 'joining in' on the Roman system, both culturally and politically, and how disenfranchised and subjugated the indigenous populations under Roman authority may have been. There also developed theories concerning the meanings and associations which may have developed concerning 'Roman' objects culminating in Barrett's assertion that there is a distinct problem with trying to understand relations between 'Roman' and 'native', as there is no clear definition of what either of these terms actually represents in terms of individuals or groups.³⁰

Currently ascendant, if not dominant, in current Anglophone studies on Roman imperialism, Mattingly's concept of Roman Britain is one of pure colonial exploitation and is developed principally from the current state of world affairs with 'the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the United States as a solitary superpower'.³¹ More to the point, his definition of 'empire' is the non-consensual rule of territories and peoples over a large landscape.³² His emphasis on imperial power being characterised as inherently non-consensual underscores his view of power relations and what the application of power structures means: 'Colonialism is essentially about the operation of power in situations that necessarily created or reinforced large inequalities within territories subject to

²⁷ Webster 1997, 181-182.

²⁸ Webster 2001, 216-217; Lyons & Papadopoulos 2002, 7; Mattingly 2011, 39.

²⁹ As may be witnessed developing in the annual installments of the *Proceedings of the Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference*, recently summarised in Heeren 2014, 159-161.

³⁰ Barrett 1997, 51.

³¹ Mattingly 2011, xvii.

³² Mattingly 2011, 75.

²² Roymans 1996, 61-72.

²³ Woolf 1998, 48-76.

²⁴ Mattingly 2011, 38-39.

²⁵ Collingwood 1932, 7.

²⁶ Miles 2000, 60.

exterior rule'.³³ This emphasis purposefully downplays any positive effects of empire, asserting that economic and social exploitation lay behind the motivations and practices of empire in all its incarnations throughout time.³⁴ He downplays the importance of native elites in the imperial process, stressing instead the importance of 'discrepant experiences' between different social classes across the empire.³⁵ Mattingly also emphasises the locals' subordinate role in the imperial administration and infrastructure to that of colonisers,³⁶ as well as the omnipresent and intimidating threat of force against those not willing to be compliant with the new system of authority which is inherent in imperial systems.³⁷ Most explicitly, he states: 'The Roman Empire was not run on altruistic lines: it developed mechanisms for the exploitation of land and people'.³⁸

Mattingly also attacks the theory of cultural or social integration by stating that the way land use and settlement has been traditionally approached by scholars directly impacts the conclusions that researchers are able to reach. Arguing that the emphasis placed on towns puts a bias into the understanding of how settlement actually occurred in Britain during this time, he states that what is represented is 'Roman Britain' as opposed to 'Britain in the Roman Empire', a distinction which characterises his view of how the territory and people of Britain were viewed and treated under Roman rule.³⁹ Mattingly's approach has struck a powerful chord among the contemporary scholarly community and epitomises a widely held view.

Within the greater historiographic and theoretical debate on Roman Britain, little space is given to the study of small finds, which is all too often regarded as a subsidiary study within the field.⁴⁰ Of the reports mentioned above, only in Millett and to a lesser extent Mattingly do small finds data play a significant role in the discussion and in both these cases it is used primarily as supporting evidence for landscape, architectural or other data. A recent publication by Gerrard also incorporates a great deal of small finds data into its argument, but its emphasis is focused principally upon Late Antiquity and does not cover the entire Roman period in as much detail.⁴¹ This is not to say that small finds have not been applied to the arguments of cultural development and identity in Britain during the Roman period. The work of Swift across objects of dining, grooming and personal adornment has also proved very influential in drawing the study of small finds into the general nexus of debate concerning culture change and adaptation during the Roman period in Britain.⁴² Another notable work that applies small finds data to

identity is Eckardt and Crummy's recent monograph on toilet instruments in Late Iron Age and Roman Britain, which illustrates specifically British trends in personal grooming such as the prevalence of nail cleaners in the province throughout the Roman period compared to other areas of the Latin West.⁴³ Walton's monograph on coin loss in Roman Britain brings this group of objects into the study of regional and temporal change in culture practice in the province, indicating varying acceptance and use of coinage as a means of monetary exchange from the Iron Age through to the Anglo-Saxon period.⁴⁴ Brooches have also received significant scholarly attention and their typologies are often used to track cultural movement and change in the Romano-British landscape.⁴⁵ The current study sits within this group of focused artefact studies.

Review of previous archaeological investigation relating to copper alloy vessels

While the previous section was concerned with the theoretical frameworks constructed within the academic community on how to view Britain during the Roman period, the present section will review the key archaeological investigations that form the foundation upon which the current study is constructed.

The principal starting point for the study of copper alloy vessels in Britain is Eggers' 1968 article on the subject. While principally serving as a catalogue, Eggers offers some discussion of the contexts of these objects as well as highlighting some trends in their deposition, such as grave goods and aquatic deposits.⁴⁶ Though ambitiously expansive in its scope, much of the data in Eggers' article comes from military contexts, particularly from Hadrian's Wall and the frontier forts of Wales. This has been seen as a result of a depositional bias in the material, as it could be expected that the army was more inclined to use Roman material than the indigenous population or that their material practices might be representative of the importation of other customs from elsewhere in the Empire.⁴⁷ Also, there are notable omissions in Eggers' catalogue as well as discrepancies between his report and other reports of certain objects, which put extra importance on the cross referencing of objects in the catalogue during the process of data collection. Nonetheless, the data collected by Eggers in his study is extensive and proves invaluable to the foundational work on this subject.

In 1971, Kennett published a complimentary article to Eggers' which focused specifically on Late Roman copper alloy vessel assemblages in Britain. His study is comprised of six assemblages across Britain, which he inventories and offers brief descriptions of before outlining his theories in their manufacture and possible deposition.

³³ Mattingly 2006, 13.

³⁴ A similar opinion of the imperial process in Roman Britain may be found in Hingley 1982, 17-52.

³⁵ Mattingly 2011, 206-236.

³⁶ Mattingly 2006, 355.

³⁷ Mattingly 2006, 90.

³⁸ Mattingly 1997, 134.

³⁹ Mattingly 2006, 357.

⁴⁰ Cooper 2007, 35-53; Johns 2007, 29-34; Swift 2007a, 18-27.

⁴¹ Gerrard 2013.

⁴² Swift 2007a; Swift 2007b; Swift 2009.

⁴³ Eckardt & Crummy 2008, 69-72.

⁴⁴ Walton 2012.

⁴⁵ Collins 2010, 64-74; Mackreth 2011; McIntosh 2011, 155-182; Gerrard 2013, 198-203 & 221.

⁴⁶ Eggers 1968.

⁴⁷ Cool 2006, 179-180.

Importantly, he identifies several forms using accepted classifications for continental examples, which are further discussed in Chapter 2 concerning typologies. Kennett's article is principally a catalogue with some chronological explanation; it does not attempt to make associations between vessels and how they may have been used together or functioned. His work nevertheless is invaluable in developing the understanding of the repertoire of British vessels as well as indicating how these vessels may be related to trade and the economy of the province.

Though it does not deal directly with Britain, another important study by Eggers to consider when developing an understanding of Romano-British copper alloy vessels is his study on Roman vessels found beyond the northern boundaries of the Empire in Free Germany.⁴⁸ His classification of vessel types is extensive and proved to be highly useful for this study, as it is widely used and referenced within the scholarly community. Radnoti's work on Roman copper alloy vessels in Pannonia is also a useful interpretative catalogue of material with much comparison of vessel forms across the empire and proposals on production centres for specific vessel types.⁴⁹

The two catalogues of copper alloy vessels in the museum collection of Nijmegen are useful resources for the understanding of the repertoire of copper alloy vessels from the Roman period and they are often referenced by scholars for comparisons when describing copper alloy vessels from excavations or museum collections.⁵⁰ Though they prove to be a large sample group, the uncertainty of the context for many of the pieces in the first volume severely limits their usefulness to understanding their function and their relation to other objects. Den Boesterd additionally provides a very useful synthesis of the previous (predominantly German) scholarship of copper alloy vessels in the introduction to her volume,⁵¹ which remains the principal source for identifying dates, function and place of manufacture in English scholarship. Also, as a collection of continental material it proves useful for comparison with the data-set developed in this study and helps to orient it within the wider western Roman world.

Tassinari's catalogue of material from Pompeii is also a key text in understanding copper alloy vessel material; additionally, she provides a discussion of their possible functions as well as methods of manufacture.⁵² She also includes information on findspots, when such information is known. Of course, the objects in her catalogue would have all been manufactured prior to the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE and her catalogue is therefore only directly coeval to the first few decades of the Roman period in Britain. This is, however, some of the most comprehensive evidence available to us for the variety of vessels used at an urban site during the Roman period and must be utilised

as far as possible without falling into the assumption that inhabitants of Britain invariably viewed material culture in the same way that Pompeians did. Tassinari also has a further catalogue of copper alloy vessels from Gaul which proved highly useful for comparative purposes for this study, especially as the material within it covers a chronological span more closely comparable to the Roman period in Britain than the material from Pompeii.⁵³

Cool's recent work is the most comprehensive archaeological study of the subject of dining in Roman Britain to date and is the foundational text for any current study of the subject.⁵⁴ The scope of evidence is wide, including osteological, archaeo-botanical, and literary sources in order to develop an understanding of the various developments in British dining practice during the Roman period. When she discusses dining-ware as a source of evidence, she utilises grave good assemblages as her principal (though not only) source for discussing them, which could have biased her interpretation as grave contexts are ritual environments and not necessarily representative of the normal use-life of an object. Cool makes the notable observation that from the Late Iron Age to the Roman period there is a decline in the use of jars and large communal dishes and the adoption of individual sized bowls and plates in the ceramic record, this she attributes to a greater acceptance of Roman dining in much the same way as she does with the differentiation between cooking and dining vessels.⁵⁵ This is a very useful observation and was valuable for reference when comparing copper alloy vessels over time through the Roman period. As the majority of her study was concerned principally with ceramics and glass, there is not a great deal on copper alloy vessels specifically to be gleaned from the pages as there would have been both cultural as well as practical differentiations between the utilization of earthen ware as opposed to copper alloy vessels,⁵⁶ though some critical discussion of vessel use and context is offered and is cited in the following discussion. Additionally, Cool's over all observations are useful for comparison with this project's findings concerning copper alloy vessels.

Lee recently published a detailed investigation on the production, use-life and deposition of pewter vessels in Roman Britain. One of his most intriguing observations is that prior to the 3rd century CE, London seems to have possessed a near monopoly on the distribution of pewter tableware whereas after 200 CE it begins to appear in respectable quantities outside of this city, particularly in *civitas* capitals.⁵⁷ This he ascribes to the increase in supply of this alloy through increased production and recycling as well as a shifting trend in elite fashion as pewter replaced ceramic and silver in some forms of vessels. This is plausible and further research in the distribution patterns of these materials comparatively could help to further

⁴⁸ Eggers 1951.

⁴⁹ Radnoti 1938.

⁵⁰ den Boesterd 1956; Koster 1997.

⁵¹ den Boesterd 1956, XIX-XXXI.

⁵² Tassinari 1993.

⁵³ Tassinari 1975.

⁵⁴ Cool 2006.

⁵⁵ Cool 2006, 54.

⁵⁶ Cool 2006, 47-50; Hurcombe 2007, 109-118 & 190-208.

⁵⁷ Lee 2009, 75.

clarify this theory. It is also worth noting that there is an uneven distribution of forms among pewter vessels, particularly that cups seem under represented as a whole among the finds.⁵⁸ It would appear that these smaller forms were more often constructed of glass or ceramic. This is a healthy reminder that different materials could have different uses and significance attached to them and that materials are not directly comparable across forms and functions. A vessel may be chosen to be constructed out of ceramic, glass or metal based upon the design and function of the vessel as opposed to the social status of the buyer and the cultural capital invested in different materials.⁵⁹ This proves important to remember when considering objects composed of a specific material, such as copper alloy.

Allison's work on the household assemblages in Pompeii is of particular use in this study as her approach incorporates material culture studies and uses domestic small finds as a lens with which to understand the larger culture concerned.⁶⁰ In these works, Allison develops groupings and associations between objects from Pompeian houses, a context which gives us a rare collection of assemblages of household items in their 'original' location, ready for 'normal' everyday use. While these reviews and collections are of great use in developing our understanding of how individual vessels may have related to each other and what one might expect of a vessel assemblage from an elite household, the use of her material also has some important limitations in its applicability to our study. The geographic difference between Italy and Britain may have had a much larger effect on what equipment might be present than simply the willingness of one group or another to absorb or adapt the practices of another culture group. As a brief example of how the geographic and cultural landscape could have led to differing patterns in the use of copper alloy vessels in these two areas; Pompeii itself was a colony of Rome which was established over a previous Greek colony in an Oscan speaking part of Italy, and therefore was itself something of a palimpsest of cultures.⁶¹ Also, as Pompeii was a maritime Mediterranean city, it might be expected that a comparatively large amount of fish and other seafood was consumed at this city as opposed to more land-locked centres. This would be more a reflection of the functionality of available food sources and less subject to the influence of outside cultures. As it so happens, it does not appear that fish was consumed on any great scale in Britain during the Roman period.⁶² Climate itself also likely played a part in how social customs, such as dining and bathing, may have been performed. As Allison herself suggests, there could have been great variability in how different items would have been used in different parts of the Empire.⁶³

One of the most important aspects to Allison's work is her research perspective; Allison examines the objects as evidence of domestic consumption.⁶⁴ She seeks to compare these objects to where they are found in relation to their architectural surroundings as well as with other objects in order to develop a better understanding of how these objects may have been used or related to one another.⁶⁵ As Allison states:

'Few studies use provenance artefact assemblages to better understand the consumption of Roman material remains. A lack of concern for specific artefact contexts in the published finds catalogues from quite recent excavations makes such studies extremely difficult to pursue.'⁶⁶

The most recent publication directly concerned with copper alloy vessels in Roman Britain is the volume edited by Breeze which deals with a specifically Romano-British tradition of enamelled copper alloy vessels and other objects.⁶⁷ The various papers in this volume deal with objects included in the data-set of this study as well as offering insight into the distribution and cultural significance of this group of objects more generally. Understandably, this volume is regularly referred to in this report when dealing with enamelled vessels in Britain and also proved useful in characterising how vessels may more generally be used as objects of cultural consumption and corporate identity as these vessels reflect a merging of cultural traditions into a new art form.⁶⁸ The recent Breeze volume is also the only study of copper alloy vessels in Britain thus far produced to devote considerable attention to decoration and how it may reflect function and identity. While previous work has used decoration on copper alloy vessels as supporting points to wider arguments of art and decoration in the province during the Roman period,⁶⁹ decoration has not featured largely in the study of Romano-British copper alloy vessels themselves.⁷⁰ This is one of the gaps in the research that this current study also sought to rectify.

These above sources form the basis of current understanding of copper alloy vessel use in the western empire and in Roman Britain. Though a comprehensive synthesis of this information to offer a unified understanding of copper alloy vessels has not been established prior to this study, a negotiation of theories harvested from these previous authors did characterise the basic consensus of scholarly opinion at the inception of this project. A brief summary of this broad understanding is offered below in order to

⁵⁸ Lee 2009, 63.

⁵⁹ Hurcombe 2007, 109-118.

⁶⁰ Allison 1992; Allison 1999; Allison 2004.

⁶¹ Malkin 2002, 151-181; Beard 2008, 26-52.

⁶² Cool 2006, 104-105.

⁶³ Allison 2004, 61.

⁶⁴ Allison 2004, 4.

⁶⁵ Allison notes that it appears that most dining may have taken place in or near the garden areas of the house and that this may also reflect seasonal dining practice here as some believe that the eruption of Vesuvius took place during summer (2004, 132).

⁶⁶ Allison 2004, 6.

⁶⁷ Breeze (ed) 2012.

⁶⁸ Künzl 2012, 9-22; Hunter 2012, 98-105; Breeze 2012, 107-111.

⁶⁹ Henig 1995.

⁷⁰ Toynbee 1964, 317-327 being a notable exception.

‘set the scene’ for the reader and put into perspective the contribution of the current report to the scholarship.

Current understanding of Copper Alloy vessels in Roman Britain

Current understanding of copper alloy vessels in Roman Britain is dependent largely on continental literature, the principal authors being Eggers, Radnoti and den Boesterd. These three authors remain the principal sources for finds researchers, providing much of the basis for statements in finds reports on manufacture, origin and dating for this material. There remains no consistent terminology beyond Eggers’ typology for labelling copper alloy vessels, which itself is not universally applied across the literature. Den Boesterd’s synopsis of vessel function and origins remains the basis for most English scholarship on the matter, especially as she provides a synthesis of much of the German scholarship on the subject. Additions and supporting material have been incrementally offered piecemeal in the meantime, but these three authors form the principal basis of what is currently understood and believed about copper alloy vessels across the Western Empire, including Roman Britain.

Copper alloy vessels would appear to have been unusual commodities in pre-conquest Britain⁷¹ and their advent in the archaeological record may be seen to a greater or lesser extent as a sign of Roman influence much in the same way as *mortaria* often are.⁷² Throughout the Roman period, vessels are seen largely as import commodities, with Italy and Gaul being the principal areas of manufacture,⁷³ though some objects seem to have come from as far away as Alexandria.⁷⁴ The principal exceptions to this rule are the Rudge Cup type pans and other enamelled vessels discussed in Breeze’s recent volume⁷⁵ and Late Roman hanging basins, such as the Irchester bowl, believed to have a British origin.⁷⁶ Exact provenance of manufacture centres is not an immediate concern of this study, especially as the theories of provenance are often based solely on stylistic grounds that are difficult to substantiate empirically. This may best be illustrated by vessels from the river deposit at Neupotz that are believed to be from a workshop in Gaul,⁷⁷ but match very close in form and decorative style copper alloy vessels from Pompeii and elsewhere that are believed to be of Italian manufacture.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, stylistic similarity with objects elsewhere in the Roman world does prove to be useful for analysing culture change and adaptation; this decorative or art historical approach therefore features much more prominently in the discussion of this report and in its conclusions than do theories concerning manufacturing centres.

⁷¹ Eggers 1968, 67-69; Carver 2001, 2-3, 27 & 37.

⁷² Carver 2001 32-34; Cool 2006, 42-43.

⁷³ den Boesterd 1956, XIX-XXX.

⁷⁴ Radnoti 1938, 14-25; den Boesterd 1956, XIX-XX; Kennett 1971, 137-138.

⁷⁵ Breeze (ed) 2012.

⁷⁶ Kendrick 1932, 161-184; Kennett 1971, 147-148.

⁷⁷ Bakker *et al.* 2006, 62-183.

⁷⁸ den Boesterd 1956, ix-xx; Tassinari 1993, 17-24.

Theories on vessel function applied to this material are almost exclusively based on the work of den Boesterd and it is indeed difficult to offer a discussion of this without simply paraphrasing her treatment.⁷⁹ Den Boesterd’s influence is perhaps best demonstrated in regards to a vessel type she refers to as a ‘bath saucer’,⁸⁰ which has come to characterise the understanding of this vessel type’s function despite there being little supporting evidence outside of an example found in the Forum Bath at Pompeii.⁸¹ She describes other handled pans as ‘sauce pans’ and asserts that they were used mostly for the serving of wine.⁸² An accepted amendment to this is a specific variety of handled pan,⁸³ which Nuber has convincingly argued was used for ritual ablutions associated with sacrifice and burial.⁸⁴ The terminology for these various vessels which resemble modern day frying-pans is confused in the scholarly literature, with terms like ‘sauce pan’, ‘skillet’, *trulla* and *patera* being used interchangeably in the literature without any consistency between authors.⁸⁵ Discrepancy in how some terms are used in the literature has led to a loss of clarity in the reporting of copper alloy vessels. Some have argued that a *patera* has a handle,⁸⁶ while others contend that a *trulla* has a handle and that a *patera* inherently lacks one.⁸⁷ These debates in the literature are fuelled by ancient documents making passing references to these objects, such as RIB 2415 and Vindolanda Tablet 596, which are not conclusive. This has led to a muddled and confused terminology in scholarly usage. This report proposes a new terminology for these vessels and a new framework within which to consider them, as discussed in Chapter 2. At present, to help clarify the confused state of the terminology, Figure 1.01 illustrates some the more common ways that handled and un-handled pans have been described.

There has been no collective discussion of vessel function in English since den Boesterd and comments about possible vessel function are dispersed in the literature, often as side-notes or supporting statements to other studies. Cool makes a convincing argument that Eggers type 128 & 128a jugs may be considered as having been used predominantly for water due to lime-scale residues and artistic representations.⁸⁸ While Pompeian contexts inform us little more than copper alloy vessels are generally associated with kitchen and dining gear, Allison has shown a plausible relation between Eggers type 98-104 vessels, often referred to in the Italian scholarship as *pasticcerie*,

⁷⁹ den Boesterd 1958, XIX-XXX.

⁸⁰ Tassinari 1993 11110-12400; den Boesterd 1958, XXI; Künzl 1993, 381-382.

⁸¹ Kohler-Németh 1990, 81-82.

⁸² den Boesterd 1958, XIX-XXI; Carver 2001, 15-22 & 32-33.

⁸³ Eggers 154-155; referred to in this report as Handled Pan 1, see Chapter 2.

⁸⁴ Nuber 1973, 1-232.

⁸⁵ Compare Toynbee (1964, 317-327), Henig (1984, 131 & 193) and Philpott (1991, 25) on their usage. Boon (1988, 525) attempted to argue for a consistent definition for these terms, but the use in present literature remains confused.

⁸⁶ Henig 1984, 131, 193.

⁸⁷ Boon 1988, 525.

⁸⁸ Cool 2006, 137.