Characterizing Assemblages of Votive Offerings at Romano-Celtic Temples in Britain

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This paper explores the variation in assemblages from recent excavations of Romano-Celtic temples in Britain. Most temples in Britain are anonymous, and have little iconographic or epigraphic indication of the deity worshipped. Is it possible instead to use the assemblages of votive offerings to characterise the cults at these sites? Animal bones show clear evidence for selection, and at some temples with indications of the deity (e.g. Uley) can be linked to the god's animal attributes. Seasonal deposition also took place, probably at public festivals such as Samain or Beltain. Zonation of deposits is clearly seen, as at Chanctonbury and Hayling Island. However, temples linked to healing cults (e.g. Bath), have little evidence for animal bones as votive offerings or sacrifices, and it is likely that these shrines did not use animals as part of sacrificial rituals. Weaponry and miniature arms and armour are another important category, present at some temples, but not at others. This can be linked with the presence of specific suites of material (brooches, jewellery, 'ring money', etc) at temple sites, but appear to be distinctive to each site, and may reflect the localised nature of the deities at the majority of the temples discussed.

1. Animal bones at temple sites

Until the 1980s, scientific study of animal remains from Roman temples in Britain was rare, mainly because the majority had been excavated in the 19th and early 20th centuries, before the importance of ritual zoological material had been recognised. In recent years, however, several temple excavations have yielded significant assemblages of bones, which have been the subject of detailed analysis. These are the focus of this section, which aims to pick out the major characteristics of some of the assemblages and to draw some general conclusions about the nature of the ritual activity that led to their deposition. A fuller consideration of animal remains from both Romano-Celtic and eastern cult temples in Britain has been published elsewhere[1].

Before proceeding to examine the individual sites, it is necessary to give the general background for other types of site in Roman Britain. The indigenous dietary pattern in the Late Iron Age is largely one of high sheep percentages, particularly in southern Britain[2]. After the Roman conquest, the relative percentage of cattle and pigs increases, correlating with the apparent 'Romanised' nature of the sites. There is a gradient towards higher representation of cattle and pigs in the following sequence; rural settlements, villas, secondary urban centres, urban sites, military sites and legionary sites[3]. This appears to show that the urban, military and legionary sites had a distinct dietary pattern, probably derived from Gaul and Germany, which was emulated by social groups seeking to become more Roman. Dietary change was the result by the late Roman period, since the high cattle/high pig pattern eventually dominates all site types[4]. However, there was always a residual dietary pattern that reflected the pre-Roman sheep-dominated assemblages, since many rural settlements (i.e. non-villas) retained this pattern to some degree. In this respect, 'Romanisation' (or 'Gallicisation') of the diet was not complete, and as in other provinces, regional patterns persisted.

Comparison of this background data with the temple assemblages shows that most of the latter conform in general terms with the expected patterns for other sites in Roman Britain, but there is also a significant minority that is very different. This group has very high sheep/goat numbers, with few cattle and/or pig bones. Clearly, there has been deliberate selection of species at some of the temple sites, the exact nature of which will be explored below.

[1] King 2005; see also Green 2001, chap. 2 for general discussion of animal and human sacrifice.

[2] Hambleton 1998.

[3] King 1999, Table 3; 1984, 189–190.

[4] King 1984, 193–194.

Uley, Gloucestershire

This is a rural shrine in a high position on the Cotswolds, close to the Iron Age hillfort of Uley Bury[5]. The temple has a Late Iron Age and early Roman phase characterised by ditches and votive deposits. Later, in the early 2nd century, in phase 4, a Romano-Celtic temple was constructed in a loosely defined courtyard, enclosed by other buildings that were perhaps linked with pilgrimage to the site. The deity worshipped, according to the finds, was a Romano-Celtic equivalent of Mercury. By the late 4th century, phase 5d-e, the site was fully developed, but some of the ancilliary buildings had been abandoned. They were used as dumping areas for bones, and most of the deposition took place in this phase[6]. After a period of modification and abandonment in the late 4th-early 5th century, a putative Christian phase followed in the 5th-7th centuries[7].

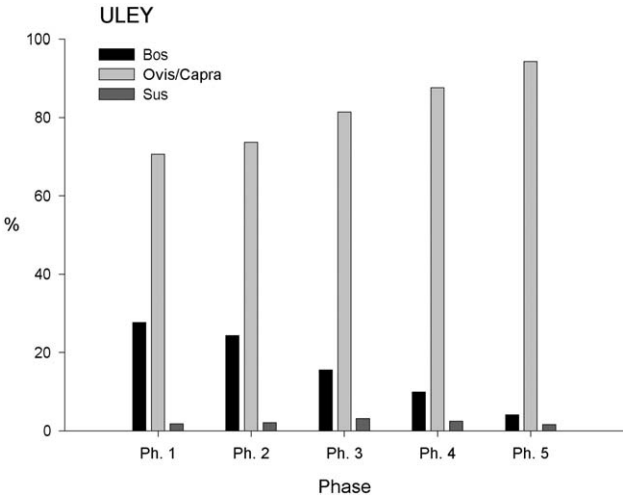

Fig. 1: Uley: bar graph of species representation by phase (data from King 2005, Table 2).

The very large assemblage of c. 230,000 bones is increasingly dominated by sheep and goat through time (Fig. 1), to the extent that some of the deposits have over 90% of these species by the mid 4th century[8]. As a corollary to this, ox decreases over time, which contradicts the trend generally observable for Roman Britain. A majority of the sheep/goat bones are in fact goat, at the ratio of four goats to one sheep, which is also very unusual for Roman Britain[9]. It is possible that this could represent animals specifically raised for offering at the temple. Analysis of the age-at-death of sheep/goat indicates a peak at Payne's stage C or D (Fig. 2), i.e. 6/12 or 12/24 months[10]. These are young but well developed animals, almost certainly selected deliberately. It is suggested by Levitan that slaughter/sacrifice was seasonal, in the autumn/winter following spring births or a year later. He also calculated that, on average, c. 150 goats per year were killed in order to form the assemblage, of which 80% could have been killed in the autumn[11]. Another element in the sheep/goat assemblage is the high proportion of males, and the removal of horns as a specific butchery pattern. Amongst the environmental samples of plant remains from the site, hay was a significant element, together with mineralised remains of coprolites, some of which may have been of caprine origin. As a result, the interpretation has been put forward that goats were kept on site (either temporarily or permanently) and provided with fodder[12].

Also significant at Uley is the high percentage of chicken, of which a high proportion is male[13], since it is one of only three temples in Britain with a good representation of this species. The excavators interpret this as being one of the attributes of the deity worshipped at the temple, since, amongst other evidence for Mercury from the site, parts of a statue, copper-alloy figurines and an altar to this god were found, depicted with his attributes, a ram and a cockerel[14]. One of the figurines was horned, which alludes to the ovicaprid attribute.

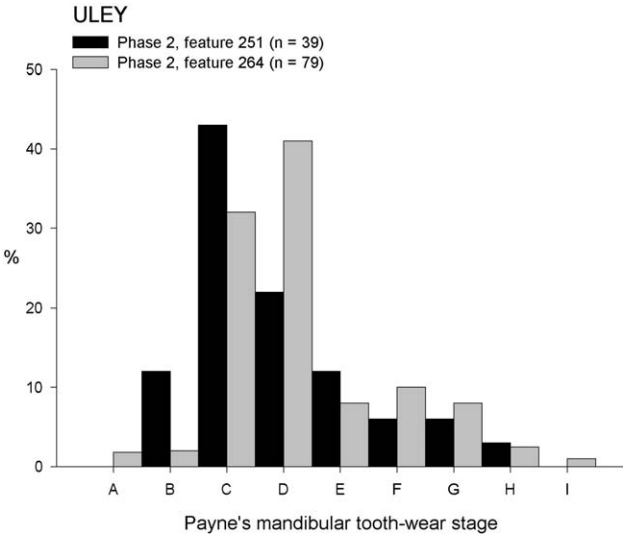

Fig. 2: Uley: bar graph of tooth wear stages in sheep/goat using Payne's method, for phase 2, features 251 and 264 (data from Levitan 1993, fig 190). Key: stage A, 0–2 months; B, 2–6 months; C, 6–12 months; D, 1–2 years; E, 2–3 years; F, 3–4 years; G, 4–6 years; H, 6–8 years; I, 8–10 years.

[5] Woodward, Leach 1993, 1–5.
[6] Woodward, Leach 1993, 10–11, 32–62, Fig. 9.
[7] Woodward, Leach 1993, 63–79.
[8] Levitan 1993, 257–260.
[9] Levitan 1993, 300. King 1978 discusses the usual ratios of Roman Britain: sheep being strongly dominant.
[10] For the ageing method, see Payne 1973; Grant 1982, 105.
[11] Levitan 1993, 300.
[12] Levitan 1993, 279, 300; Girling, Straker 1993, 251–252.
[13] Levitan 1993, 260, 300.
[14] Henig 1993, 88–95; Woodward 1992, 79.

Harlow, Essex

This site is a formally laid out Romano-Celtic temple on a small hill, that appears to have been an 'island' in a marshy area, linked by a causeway to firmer ground to the south. A small town stood nearby, which may have had a religious function linked to the temple[15]. A Late Iron Age shrine of uncertain appearance was succeeded in the late 1st century AD by the first temple and a wooden enclosure, with strong elements of axiality in its planning[16]. In a later phase, c. AD 200, the enclosure was rebuilt in stone with a large eastern courtyard containing an external altar. The site came to an end by the late 4th century.

Fig. 3: Harlow: bar graph of species representation by phase (data from King 2005, Table 3).

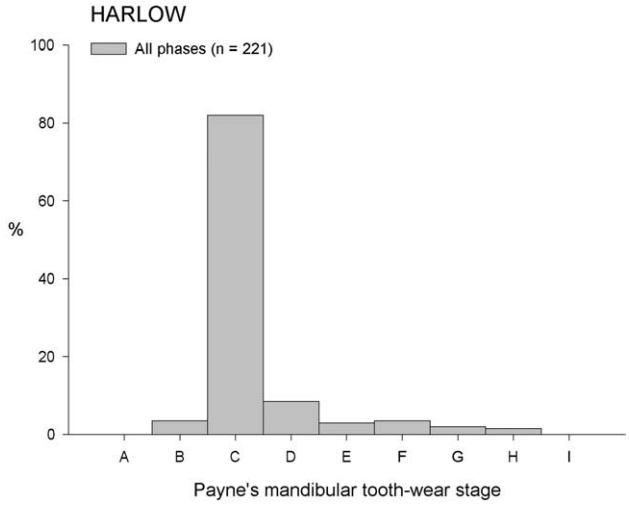

Fig. 4: Harlow: bar graph of tooth wear stages for sheep/goat using Payne's method (data from Legge, Dorrington 1985, Fig. 65). For key to stages, see Fig. 2.

Most of the c. 3600 bones came from the courtyard area, the majority being of Late Iron Age date[17] (Fig. 3). Like Uley, the assemblage is dominated by sheep/goat, but in this case almost exclusively sheep, with very little evidence for goat. The peak in the age-at-death graph is even more marked than Uley, being strongly in Payne's stage C (Fig. 4). This is interpreted as autumn sacrifice by Legge[18], who also gives data for a similar pattern for the temple at Great Chesterford. All parts of the sheep carcass were found on the site, but there was a predominance of mandibles and a relative lack of metapodials, the latter being interpreted as possible evidence for skinning[19].

Great Chesterford, Essex

A semi-rural Romano-Celtic temple was situated a short distance from the Roman small town of Great Chesterford, dating to the late 1st-4th centuries. It has yielded a large quantity of animal bones, mainly from nine pits or *favissae* in the periphery of the temple enclosure. As yet, the site is unpublished and quantified details on the bones are unavailable, but an interim paper has commented on the sheep assemblage[20].

A sample of 2949 bones from one pit consisted of over 99% sheep, no goat, 5 bones of young pig, 5 chicken and one bovine bone. The faunal remains had been dumped in a fresh state into the pit, and there was no evidence of surface exposure or canid gnawing. Two periods of slaughter were observed, at birth or shortly after and at 6–8 months, with no evidence for slaughter at any other age. Legge and Williams argue for autumn sacrifice for the 6–8 month group, and either spring sacrifice for the new-born lambs or later births killed with the 6–8 month group in the autumn. The age-at-death anaysis was based on a sample of 1011 mandibles, and it is clear that the deposit was dominated by mandibles and also lower limb bones[21]. The upper limb was very poorly represented, and was probably removed from the temple for disposal (and consumption) elsewhere. Legge and Williams make the observation that the right upper limb was better represented than the left side, possibly due to ritual selection in which the right shoulder was given to the priests, and was therefore retained on site[22]. In addition, extremities were rare, and it is possible that the lambs were

[15] France, Gobel 1985, 13, 135.
[16] France, Gobel 1985, 21–48; Bartlett 1987.
[17] Legge, Dorrington 1985.
[18] Legge, Williams 2000; see n. 11 above.
[19] Legge, Dorrington 1985, 124–127, Figs. 63, 64.
[20] Legge, Williams 2000, 153–157.
[21] Legge, Williams 2000, 155.
[22] Legge, Williams 2000, 156, citing Leviticus VII.32 and Exodus XXIX.22 in support of this.

skinned, and the phalanges removed with the hides. It is clear that Great Chesterford has a high degree of selectivity in sacrificial practices, if the results from the sample prove to be typical of the temple as a whole.

Hayling Island, Hampshire

Hayling Island has good evidence for a Late Iron Age temple of two phases[23]. In the Roman period, it was rebuilt in stone shortly after the conquest and continued until the 3rd century. In plan it closely resembles some of the circular temples of south-west Gaul, such as La Rigale or Périgueux. The temple was situated on a possible 'sacred' island that has little evidence for other Roman occupation, and may be linked with the client kingdom of the Regni, with its capital at Chichester (14 km to the east), and the 'palace' at Fishbourne, that has similar construction techniques to those used at the temple. It has been suggested that the temple commemorated the royal house, as well as being dedicated to a Mars-type god analogous to Mars Mullo[24].

Nearly all the c. 7250 animal bones from the occupation phases of the temple were scattered in the courtyard, and spatial analysis showed that there was a concentration in the south-east sector. This was also the case with other artefacts such as the iron, bronze and coins, and was probably a significant ritual practice, reflected elsewhere in round-houses in the southern British Iron Age[25]. In composition the bone assemblage was almost exclusively sheep and pig (Fig. 5). There were very few cattle bones, and the great majority of the sheep/goat bones were sheep[26]. It is possible that sheep and pig were the animal attributes of the deity worshipped at the temple, on the analogy of the Uley evidence.

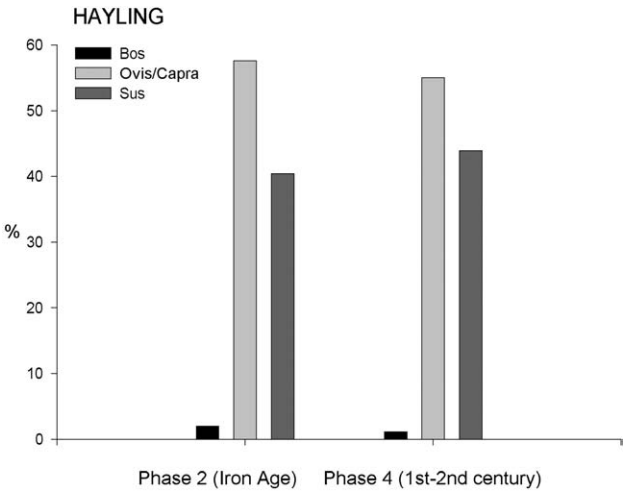

Fig. 5: Hayling: bar graph of species representation by phase (data from King 2005, Table 4).

The age-at-death pattern is also similar to Uley, in some respects (Fig. 6). For sheep in phases 2 and 4, the peaks at Payne's stage D are less marked, but nevertheless point to selection at the animals' full development, c. 12–24 months. The same applies to the data for pig, where peaks at stages C/D (7–14 and 14–21 months, using Halstead and Hambleton's stages) are clearly discerned[27]. However, the strong peak for sheep in phase 4 at stage F, representing fully adult animals of 3–4 years, is very different from Uley, Harlow or Great Chesterford, and demonstrates that adult or even relatively elderly animals were the usual votive offering at the temple in the early Roman period.

There was good evidence of selection of parts of the carcass for deposition (Fig. 7). For sheep, meat bones predominate (Fig. 7, groups A and B), but for pig there were high numbers of cranial bones, including specific deposits of mandibles (Fig. 7, group C). For both species there was a lack of extremities, despite sieving of many of the contexts, suggesting either joints of meat being brought to the site as offerings or ritual meals, or on-site sacrifices with careful spatial differentiation of deposition. If the latter took place, the extremities and, for sheep, cranial elements, must have been deposited outside the main temple area.

The site had a small number of horse bones, mainly of cranial elements. It is possible that they can be associated with the 30–40 human bones, plus parts of chariots, horse furniture, etc. A possible interpretation is that there was a scattered vehicle burial of Iron Age date that underlay the temple and was perhaps the reason for its foundation[28]. A final feature to note concerning the animal bone assemblage is the virtual complete lack of dog bones. The temple was enclosed in a clearly defined courtyard, and it was almost certainly the case that dogs could not gain access. This may be because the offerings in the courtyard were not to be disturbed once deposited, or that dogs were regarded as unclean at this particular cult site.

The Gallic architectural associations of the Hayling temple may also be reflected in the animal bone assemblage. The high percentage of sheep and pig is not seen at any

[23] King, Soffe 1994; 2001; forthcoming.

[24] King, Soffe 2001, 120–122. The temple to Mars Mullo at Allonnes (Sarthe) in fact presents several different characteristics from Hayling, including in the bone assemblage (see Brouquier-Reddé et al. 2002), so it seems unlikely that the cult at Hayling was actually Mullo, but rather a similar Mars-type deity. For La Rigale and Périgueux, see Horne, King 1980, 446, 490–491 (s.v. Villetoureix).

[25] King, Soffe 2001, Figs. 7.3–7.6, 117–118; Fitzpatrick 1994.

[26] King, Reilly forthcoming.

[27] See Hambleton 1998 for an outline of the stages and methodology. For Payne's method for sheep, see n. 10.

[28] King, Soffe 2001, 116.

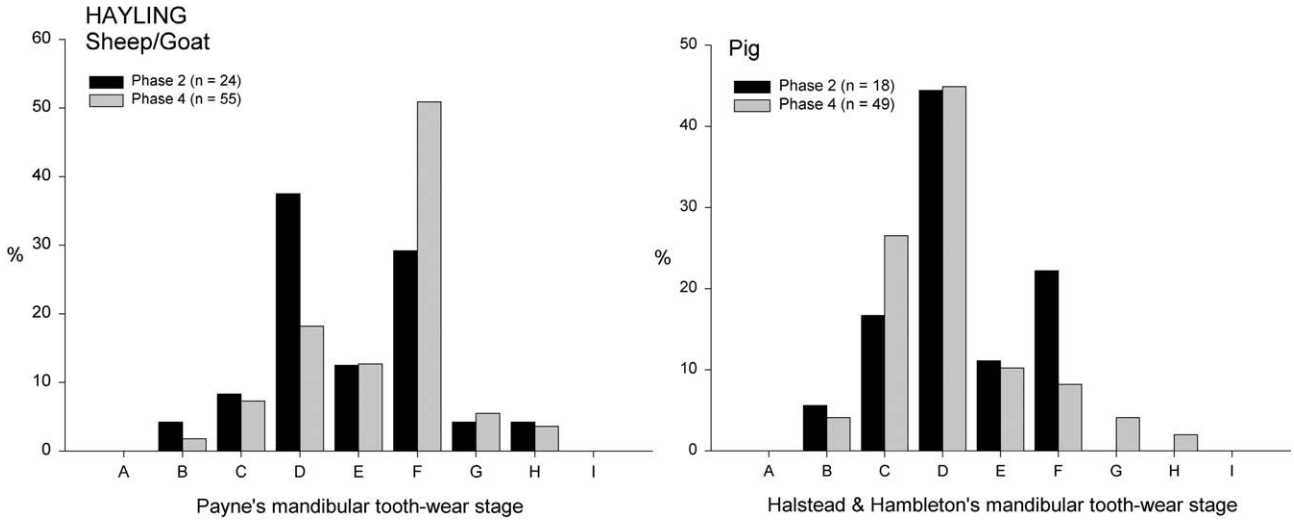

Fig. 6: Hayling: bar graph of tooth wear stages in sheep/goat using Payne's method, and pig using Halstead and Hambleton's method (data from King, Reilly forthcoming). For key to sheep/goat stages, see Fig 2. Key to pig stages: A, 0–2 months; B, 2–7 months; C, 7–14 months; D, 14–21 months; E, 21–27 months; F, 27–36 months; G, adult; H, old adult, I, senile.

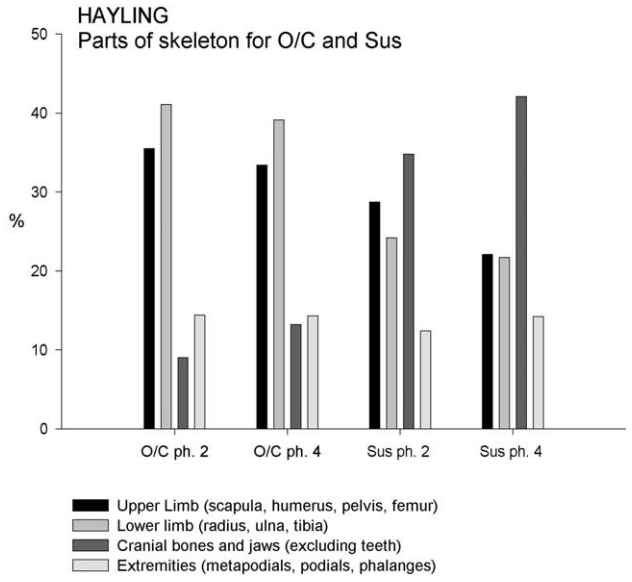

Fig. 7: Hayling: representation of parts of the carcass for sheep/goat and pig (data from King 2005, Table 5).

other British temple except Wanborough[29], and even there the relative proportion of cattle bones is higher. However, at Bennecourt (Yvelines), the Iron Age and Roman levels at the temple yielded an assemblage with similarly low proportions of ox but high pig and sheep/goat numbers, in this case with pig predominating[30]. A number of other Gallic temples also have an abundance of pig, therefore there may be a cultural link to Gaul in the Hayling bone assemblage[31]. However, the factor of selection for religious reasons alone may have been equally, if not more important.

Chanctonbury Ring, West Sussex

This site has been the object of two recent excavations, that have provided interesting evidence of structured deposition[32]. The site is within a small Iron Age hillfort, in an elevated position commanding distant views. In the Roman period the hillfort appears to have been converted into a temenos by the construction of a chalk wall along the rampart, and the fort ditch became a deposition zone for animal bones. Two temple structures were built in the mid 2nd century, one a standard Romano-Celtic temple on the highest point in the fort, the other an irregular polygon with a large eastern vestibule, situated just to the south of the main

[29] Nicolaysen 1994.

[30] Méniel, Desse-Berset 1999, especially Fig. 128. See also Dalheim, Lux (Schulze-Rehm 2000) for an assemblage with similar proportions of species to Bennecourt. Tintignac, Corrèze, has a predominance of ovicaprids, pig bones in lesser quantities and very few ox bones (Maniquet 2004, 102).

[31] See Lepetz 1996, 27–28, for discussion of temples in northern Gaul; and more recently, Bontron et al. 2002 (for Châteaubleau), Brouquier-Reddé et al. 2002 (for Allonnes), Fercoq du Leslay, Lepetz 2002 (for Ribemont-sur-Ancre), Magnan, Lepetz 2002 (for Meaux).

[32] Bedwin 1980; Rudling 2001.

temple. Both buildings lasted to the end of the 3rd century or slightly later[33]. The excavators link the site to a possible boar or pig cult in the Sussex (Atrebatic) area, evidenced by the large number of pig bones from the temple and the finding of boar figurines from several other sites in the region[34].

From an osteological point of view, the polygonal building is of greatest interest, as it contained 4874 fragments of pig bones, almost exclusively cranial bones, jaws and teeth[35] (Fig. 8). These represented a minimum number of 62 animals, and it is clear that the building was a repository for pig skulls, probably after the sacrifice of the animals on or near the temple site. The other parts of the carcass were minimally represented, and were probably consumed away from the temple.

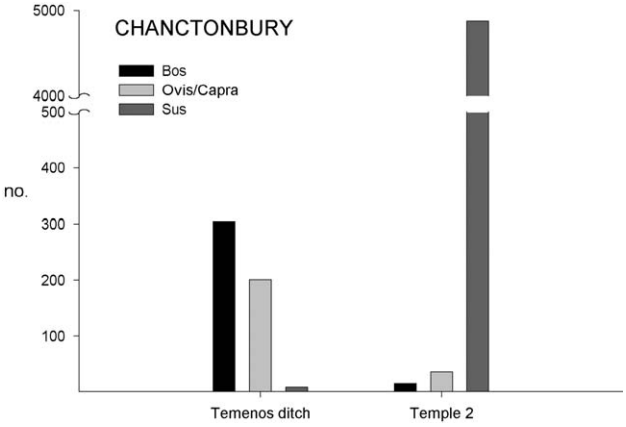

Fig. 8: Chanctonbury: species representation in different zones (data from King 2005, Table 7).

Elsewhere, pig bones were virtually absent, and there appears to be distinct zonation in the deposition of the faunal material. From the temenos (i.e. hillfort) ditch, a large number of ox and sheep/goat cranial elements were recovered, but few other parts of the body, and very few pig bones[36]. Inside the precinct just to the west of the main temple, a large deposit of oyster shells was excavated[37], whilst other areas appear to have relatively few bones, and a noteworthy lack of pig.

Chanctonbury has the best evidence from Britain for zonation of bone deposition[38]. Skulls were preferentially preserved at the temple; the other parts of the animals being consumed or disposed of elsewhere. Distinct zones within the site were used for different species – the temenos ditch for ox and sheep/goat, the polygonal building for pig, the area to the west of the main temple for oyster. In view of this, it seems that the polygonal building was some sort of sacred repository, and not necessarily a fully-functioning temple building in the sense that is usually ascribed to Romano-Celtic temples.

Folly Lane (Verulamium), St Albans, Hertfordshire

Folly Lane lies just outside the Iron Age *oppidum* and Roman *municipium* of Verulamium, alongside the Roman road to Colchester. It is located on a low hill overlooking the town, and probably played a significant role in the religious life of the citizens[39]. The site was originally used for a wealthy aristocratic or royal burial of Late Iron Age date, c. AD 35–55, placed in a large pit within a formal enclosure [40]. A Romano-Celtic temple of normal form was constructed in the Flavian period just to the west of the burial pit, so that the open-air altar on its east side would overlie the burial itself[41]. The temple continued in use to the 3rd century. Just to the south of the temple enclosure were a number of shafts, dated mid 2nd–3rd century, which almost certainly had a ritual purpose[42].

There were c. 14,000 animal bones from various parts of the site[43] (Fig. 9). Some of them may not be ritual in nature, especially the large pit AET which more closely resembles

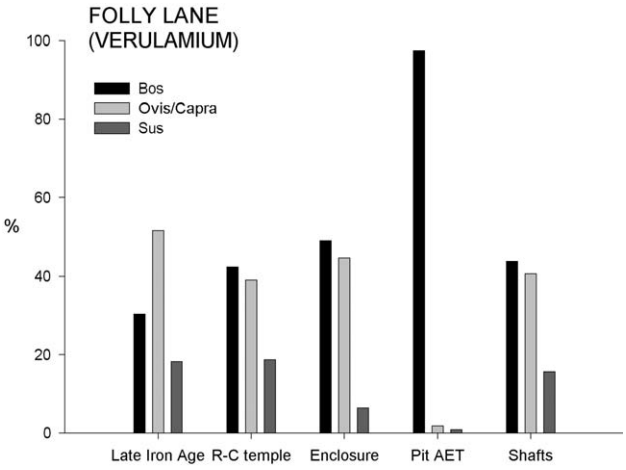

Fig. 9: Folly Lane, St Albans: bar graph of species representation by phase (data from King 2005, Table 12).

[33] Rudling 2001, 77–78, 118; Bedwin 1980.
[34] Rudling 2001, 115–118. One of the boar figurines comes from a shrine at Muntham Court; Green 1976, 220.
[35] Sibun 2001.
[36] Bedwin 1980, 219–220.
[37] Bedwin 1980, 177; see also Somerville 2001.
[38] However, similar zonation is seen at some of the Gallic sites, e.g. Fesques (Méniel 1997).
[39] Niblett 1999, 70–71, 408–417; 2001, 59–60, 71; Haselgrove, Millett 1997, 286.
[40] Niblett 1999, 17–64.
[41] Niblett 1999, 64–72.
[42] Niblett 1999, 83–88.
[43] Locker 1999.

a military-style deposit of broken-up cattle bones for soup or glue, than a ritual deposit as found at other temple sites[44]. The relative proportions of the species represented at Folly Lane are not unusual for secular sites in Roman Britain, and it may be the case that the ox, sheep/goat and pig bones are the remains of meals left by worshippers and visitors to the site, probably coming from the town of Verulamium immediately adjacent.

One aspect of the assemblage does stand out, however, namely the high representation of chicken, horse and dog bones. Numbers of horse are high in the ditch of the ceremonial enclosure and the shafts, where cranial and vertebral elements dominate. These may be sacrificial deposits, perhaps linked, in subsequent ritual practice at least, to the regal status (and hunting associations?) of the Iron Age burial. Chicken percentages are highest in phase 2, the Late Iron Age mausoleum itself, when the number of bones in total is quite low: they may represent offerings, including a chicken foot, at the time of the burial[45].

Bath, North Somerset

Probably the best-known religious site in Roman Britain, Bath is a little disappointing in terms of its animal bone data. Excavations in the temple precinct produced c. 16,000 bones, mainly from levels above the floors of the courtyard. Period 5, 4th–6th centuries, yielded the greatest number. In nearly all respects, the assemblage seems to be typical of non-religious sites in the late Roman period, and Grant concludes that the bones are probably domestic refuse rather than the remains of ritual activity[46]. The late date of the assemblage coincides with maintenance of the temple complex, but also its gradual decline and decay[47]. Unlike earlier periods, i.e. the temple's *floruit* in the late 1st–3rd centuries, material was being allowed to accumulate within the precinct, which suggests that the use and deposition of faunal remains was not important or encouraged when the temple was in full operation. Only with the decline of the site did practices change, and the period 5 "domestic" assemblage accumulate. This may represent remains of meals, etc., left by visitors to the cult centre.

Discussion

The main conclusion to be drawn from this review of Romano-British temples is that some sites had a significant element of selection in the species chosen for sacrifice and ritual consumption. At temples such as Uley, Hayling, Harlow and Great Chesterford, animal sacrifices were probably an important part of the rituals, and the animals carefully selected. Indeed, it is possible that temple flocks and herds were maintained for this purpose, especially in the case of Uley, where the unusually high numbers of goat stand out in a province dominated by sheep rather than goat husbandry. Alternatively, the catchment area for the temples may have been extensive, so that worshippers from a large territory contributed animals for sacrifice. This would imply a form of pilgrimage to these sites, and indeed their location, often in elevated positions or on islands, would support this. Pilgrimage also suggests specific dates or festivals for worshipping at the temples, a notion that is supported by the age-at-death evidence from sites such as Uley, Harlow and Great Chesterford. The autumn, and to a lesser extent spring appear to be favoured, and may, of course, correspond to *samain* and *beltain* respectively[48].

Most of the temple assemblages consist of fragmented and butchered bones, probably the remains of sacrificial meals following acts of ritual slaughter and offering. Some sites, such as Chanctonbury, have crania and mandibles in significant numbers, however, and this can be interpreted as ritual deposition of important parts of the animal. Some of the temples also have evidence of specific acts of ritual deposition, e.g. Henley Wood, Bancroft.

The pattern of selection shows some similarities between temples, as discussed above, but the local nature of each temple's rituals is also an important factor, as borne out by the differences apparent between the graphs for each site, and also the specific details of deposition recorded at many of the temples. A traditional or accustumed set of sacrificial practices appears to have become established at several of the temples, in such a manner that, once in place, there is little change thereafter, and each site takes on its own characteristics. The continuity over long periods at sites such as Uley, Harlow and Hayling is noteworthy.

At other temples, animals perhaps had a lesser role in the rituals, and there is little evidence of selection. This seems to have been particularly the case at healing shrines, where

[44] See King 1978, 225 and Van Mensch 1974 for discussion of this type of deposit.

[45] Locker 1999, 342–344.

[46] Grant 1985, 164–169, 172, microfiche 3, frames D2–3. Henig (1989, 224) considers the bone assemblage to be votive in nature, on the basis of the preponderance of female ox bones, linked to the female deity, Sulis-Minerva. However, most cattle assemblages are dominated by female remains, where this can be ascertained (because of the nature of cattle herd structure and husbandry), so there may not in fact be any ritual significance to the assemblage.

[47] Cunliffe, Davenport 1985, 66–75, 184–185.

[48] See Henig 1982, 218–219; Green 1986, 15, 74; Isserlin 1994. A large deposit of animal and human bones at Gordion, Galatia, has been interpreted as a *samain* ritual on the basis of the age-at-death data for the animals; Dandoy et al. 2002, 48–49.

any animal sacrifices would probably have taken place in locations away from the areas used for healing humans. The two main healing shrines in Britain, Bath and Lydney[49], have little evidence for deposits of animal remains. Any animal remains present are more likely to represent meals consumed at the temple and its precincts. As such, they may also have had a ritualistic association, but to a lesser extent than temples where animal sacrifice was a significant component of the ceremonies.

2. Artefacts at temple sites

An important element of Iron Age and Romano-Celtic temples, and one where recent archaeology can make a significant contribution, is that of deposition. Studies by Ann Woodward on this artefactual material, and by Hilary Cool on the comparison of finds assemblages generally have opened up this area much more[50]. It can be seen that many temples, despite being of a common form architecturally, have highly localised assemblage assemblages, reflecting the local nature of their cults.

Ritual objects

If we turn to ritual objects from the temple sites, including figurines, altars and other paraphernalia of the cults, the picture is variable, as was the case for the animal remains. The absolute numbers of objects vary enormously from one site to another (Fig. 10), as is exemplified by a comparison of Hayling Island with Uley[51]. Certain categories dominate on individual sites, for instance, miniature figurines at Lamyatt Beacon[52], and curses at Uley. Ritual equipment (head-dresses, rattles and sceptres) used by priests is very rare, but is best seen at Wanborough, where remains of several staffs or sceptres and five head-dresses were found[53].

These considerations also apply to sacred spring sites (Fig. 11), especially Coventina's Well, which is dominated by inscribed and uninscribed altars, and Bath, which is dominated by *paterae* and curses[54]. There are very few finds from Bath, other than from the spring (except of course, for altars and monumental sculpture from the precinct)[55].

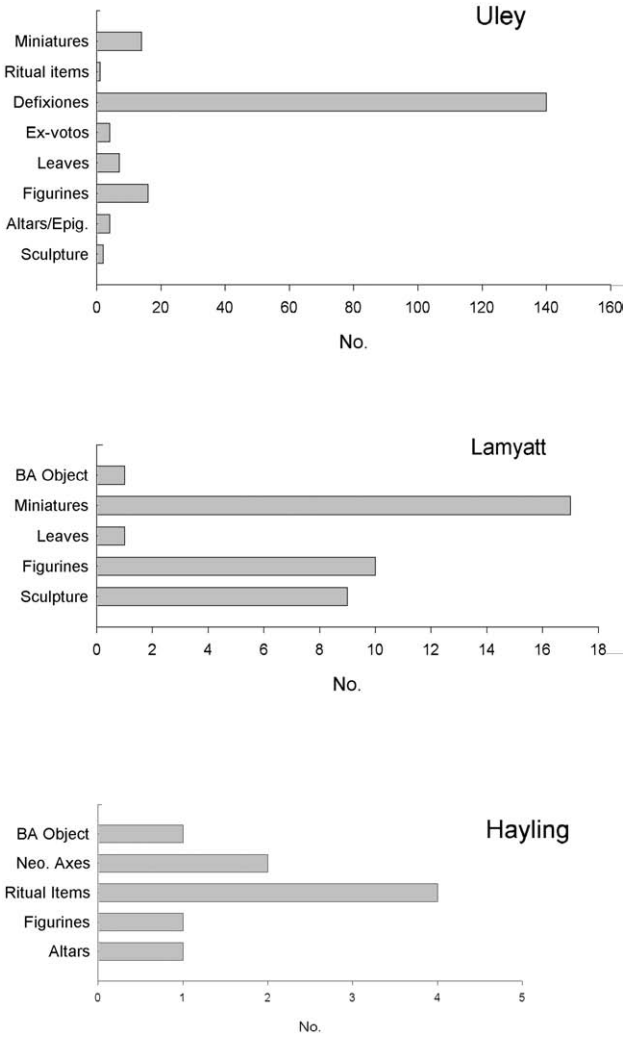

Fig. 10: Bar graph of ritual items from Uley, Lamyatt Beacon and Hayling Island temples (source: author).

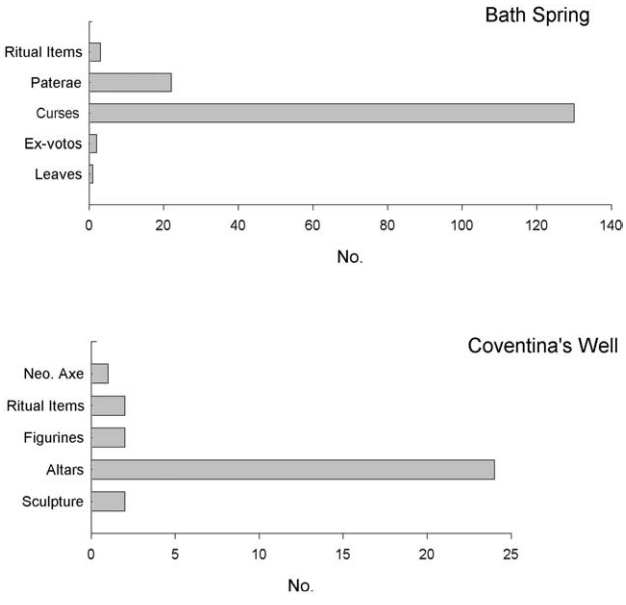

Fig. 11: Bar graph of ritual items from Bath Spring and Coventina's Well (source: author).

[49] For Bath, see n. 46 (above). For Lydney, see Casey, Hoffmann 1999 for recent work and a re-assessment of the earlier excavations.

[50] Woodward 1992, 66–78; Cool, Baxter 2002.

[51] Hayling Island: King, Soffe forthcoming, chap. 7. Uley: Woodward, Leach 1993, chap. 6–8. For a general survey of religious artefacts in civilian Roman Britain, see Green 1976.

[52] Leech 1986, 274–281.

[53] O'Connell, Bird 1994, 93–121.

[54] Coventina's Well: Allason-Jones, McKay 1985, 13 ff. Bath: Cunliffe 1988.

[55] Cunliffe, Davenport 1985, 136–142.

In general there also seems to be an increase through time in ritual objects, so that late Roman sites such as Uley often have more of this type of artefact than early sites such as Hayling Island. This reflects the growth in Roman material culture and also perhaps shows a greater presence of individual offerings and rituals.

Other artefacts

Far more common on temple sites than the ritual items are deposits of ordinary objects, for instance rings, brooches and military equipment. There are fewer differences between sites than is the case with the ritual artefacts. Some temples have large quantities, but when converted to percentages, the general impression is of great similarity (Fig. 12). Some sites such as Hayling Island, have more military and hunting equipment. Others have more tools, for instance, Coventina's Well[56]. Personal items dominate, and probably represent what the worshippers were able to offer to the deity. There seems to be no major ban on the deposition of any class of artefact.

One hypothesis of the general range of objects found at temple sites, is that votive deposition may reflect the nature of the deity worshipped. Using Nina Crummy's functional classification scheme[57], a preliminary analysis only partly supports this, however. For instance, Uley is dedicated to Mercury, but in fact has about the same quantity of hunting and military items on it as Hayling Island, which is dedicated probably to Mars. At all the temple sites, personal items predominate, such as brooches, pins and rings.

Another significant deposition practice at Hayling Island was that many of the artefacts were deliberately broken or bent, including several of the coins[58], and in addition, spearheads were often reused or sub-standard. The action of breaking or bending artefacts can be interpreted as indicating that the objects were 'killed' in an act of dedication to the deity by rendering them useless[59]. Whether or not this is the most appropriate explanation, it is clear that the high concentration of artefacts of many different classes indicates that objects, vessels and animals were brought to the site, 'sacrificed' in some form to the deity, and the physical remains left as votive offerings. These offerings appear to have been regarded as inviolate, as reflected in Caesar's reference (*BG* VI,13) to the heaps of spoils in the territory of the Carnutes, and were left in and around specific locations in the temple enclosure, to be disturbed and redeposited again and again in subsequent acts of votive deposition.

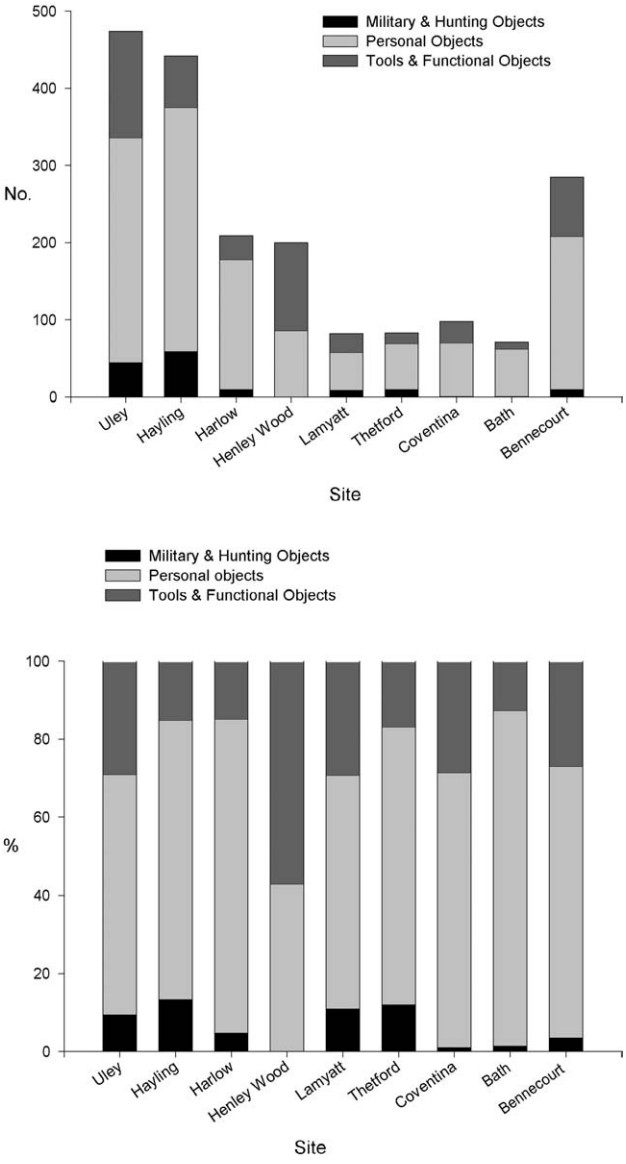

Fig. 12: Object assemblages from religious sites in Britain, and Bennecourt in Gaul. Above: numbers of objects; below: percentages (source: author).

3. Zonation

Lastly, let us look at the aspect of zonation, for which recent excavations have provided some very interesting evidence. At Hayling Island, we have a clear distribution of artefacts in the southeast corner of the courtyard[60]. Several classes of artefact show this zonation. The coins (Fig. 13A) tend to be clustered near the entrance to the outer enclosure, between the outer and phase 2a (1st century BC) inner en-

[56] Allason-Jones, McKay 1985.
[57] Crummy 1983.
[58] Briggs et al. 1993, 2–3; Kiernan 2001.
[59] Webster 1986, 132; Green 2001, 24.
[60] King, Soffe 2001, Fig. 3.

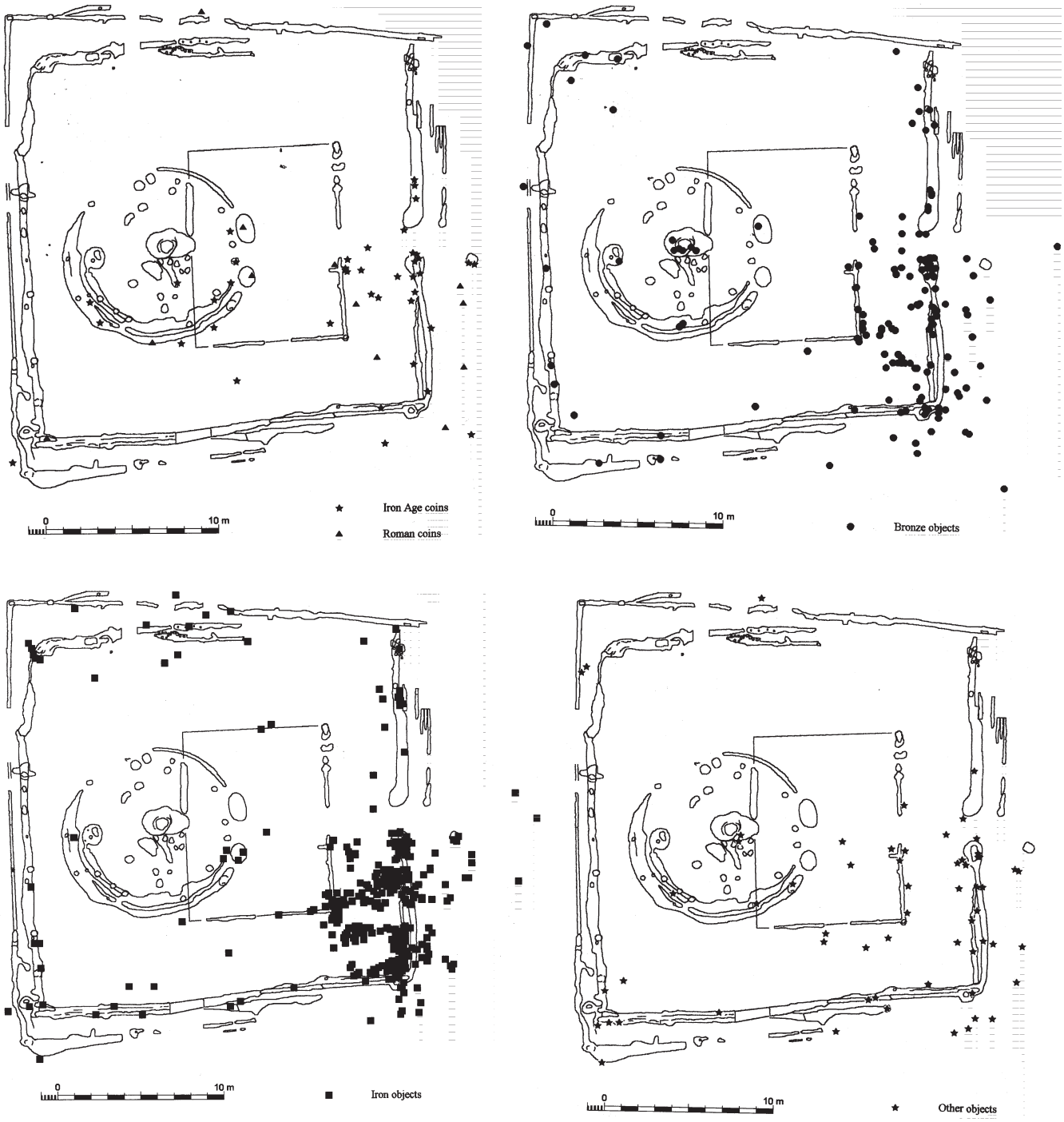

Fig. 13: Deposition of objects at Hayling Island, Iron Age phases. A: coins; B: bronze objects; C: iron objects; D: other items (from KING, SOFFE 2001).

closures and in features associated with the phase 2b (early-mid 1st century AD) circular structure. Amongst these are a couple of Roman republican coins from the circular structure and a 'hoard' of four coins of the Carnutes and two of the Aulerci Eburovices (all dated to mid 1st century BC) found together in a deposit within the south-east corner of the inner phase 2a enclosure[61].

Fibulae, items of personal adornment and other bronze objects such as rings and edge binding (Fig. 13B) are located in approximately the same zones as the coins, except in the case of the phase 2b circular structure, where they tend to be found in the central pit rather than the circular gullies. The pit yielded pieces of bracelet, rings, fibulae, parts of a mirror and other dress items, which is probably a depositional bias of deliberate votive significance, relevant in particular to the period when the pit was infilled towards the end of phase 2b (mid 1st century AD). Another concentration of bronze finds consisted of fibulae located adjacent to a mudstone block to the west of the south entrance terminal.

The iron work (Fig. 13C) clearly demonstrates that the south-east part of the outer enclosure, particularly on its eastern margin, was considered a focus for deposition. The great majority of the iron objects are small unidentifiable fragments, but also of significance are nails (associated probably with wooden artefacts now decayed) and spear-heads and knives. There were also two broken pieces of 'currency bar' from Iron Age levels (Fig. 13D). Of note is the human bone, which is located adjacent to the south-east and south-west corners of the outer enclosure and also in the main south-eastern deposition zone within the enclosure.

Deposition, therefore, was on the south side, i.e. the left-hand side for worshippers approaching the temple from the entrance on the east side. This zonation may perhaps be linked with allusions by Poseidonius (quoted in Athenaeus IV, 152D) to Celts paying respect to the gods by turning to the right, apparently indicating a spatially significant element to ritual practice[62]. If Poseidonius is taken literally, it could be that sacrificial actions took place on the right-hand (northerly) side of the enclosure, whilst the deposition of the votive remains took place on the left-hand side. Clearly the act of deposition was important during the making of votive offerings, and for Hayling Island (but not all Iron Age temples, e.g. Gournay) the locus of these actions was mainly in a particular south-easterly zone within the enclosure. Interestingly, a south-easterly concentration of artefacts was also detected within the large 7th-5th century BC round-house at Dunston Park, Berkshire, suggesting that this type of zonation also had its counterparts in everyday life[63]. The organisation of space on both domestic and ritual sites in central southern Britain may have had similar symbolic referants through much of the Iron Age and Roman period, and as such, is worthy of detailed further investigation to elaborate on this hypothesis.

One interesting parallel to the situation at Hayling Island, is that the temple precinct at Bath has the sacred spring positioned in the south-east corner in exactly the same sector of the site as the concentration of finds at Hayling. Nearly all the artefact deposition at Bath contemporary with the main period of use of the temple, was in the spring. It may well be the case that the temple at Bath was positioned so that its precinct had the spring in the south-east corner, so that this corresponded with something of cosmological or ritual significance in terms of the zonation of the rituals carried out on the site[64].

4. Conclusion

The importance of faunal and artefactual deposition at religious sites in Roman Britain has been amply demonstrated by the evidence from recent excavations. This is underlined when the temples of Roman Britain are put into a longer-term perspective. In the Iron Age, temple sites are extremely rare until the 1st century BC, so that the evidence for animal sacrifices and offerings tends to take the form of structured deposits in pits within hillforts and elsewhere. These continued into the Late Iron Age and early Roman period in ways that are only beginning to be recognised and explored. At the same time, Romano-Celtic temples emerged as a distinct architectural form, possibly, but debatably linked with Graeco-Roman influences coming into north-west Europe[65].

The practice of animal sacrifice and votive deposition at the temple sites becomes established with the emergence of the temples themselves, and we have what are probably new rituals becoming visible in the archaeological record. These form part of the range of features that make Romano-Celtic religious forms different from those of the Iron Age, and which apparently make many aspects of Iron Age religion detectable for the first time.

[61] Briggs et al. 1993, catalogue numbers 143–148.

[62] Webster 1995, 460.

[63] Fitzpatrick 1994.

[64] Cunliffe, Davenport 1985, 177–184. A parallel for the Bath arrangement is found at Les Bolards, Nuits-Saint-Georges (Côte-d'Or), where a well or puteal is located on the south side of the paving leading from the precinct entrance to the temple (Pommeret 2001).

[65] See Fulford 2001; Green 2001, 39–47; Millett 1995; Hill 1995, esp. 102–105; King 1990 for discussion of these issues.

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