

---

# TRAC Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference

---

[www.trac.org.uk](http://www.trac.org.uk)

## Paper Information:

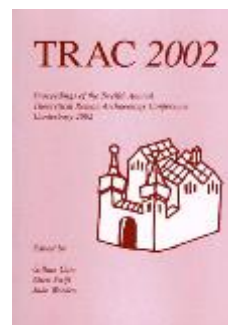
Title: Creolisation, Pidginisation and the Interpretation  
of Unique Artefacts in Early Roman Britain

Author: Gillian Carr

Pages: 113–125

DOI: [http://doi.org/10.16995/TRAC2002\\_113\\_125](http://doi.org/10.16995/TRAC2002_113_125)

Publication Date: 03 April 2003



## Volume Information:

Carr, G., Swift, E., and Weekes, J. (eds) 2003. *TRAC 2002: Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Canterbury 2002*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

## Copyright and Hardcopy Editions:

The following paper was originally published in print format by Oxbow Books for TRAC. Hard copy editions of this volume may still be available, and can be purchased direct from Oxbow at <http://www.oxbowbooks.com>.

TRAC has now made this paper available as Open Access through an agreement with the publisher. Copyright remains with TRAC and the individual author(s), and all use or quotation of this paper and/or its contents must be acknowledged. This paper was released in digital Open Access format in April 2013.

# Creolisation, pidginisation and the interpretation of unique artefacts in early Roman Britain

*Gillian Carr*

## *Introduction*

Recent advances in understanding identity in Roman Britain have explored concepts of creolisation (e.g. Hawkes 1999; Webster 2001), which improve upon earlier models of Romanisation by allowing the non-élite native voice to be heard within the complex mix of hybrid Roman and non-Roman identities and counter-cultures which made up Roman Britain. Creole material culture is seen as an ambiguous mix of native and Roman cultures, and often reflects the political inequality seen in the colonial situation. Creolisation as model for interpretation “allows the subjected people the ability to accept or reject in part the package of Roman material culture which was available to them” (Hawkes 1999: 90). It can manifest itself as a Roman-style artefact or practice incorporated into an indigenous sphere of everyday life, and used as part of a social practice which differed to the way in which it might be used as part of the ‘Roman’-style lifestyle (however it may have been defined).

How, then, are we to explain artefacts in Roman Britain which were entirely unique – items which do not appear to be hybrid mixes of either native or ‘Roman’-style material culture? In this paper, I return to the field of linguistics to explore a concept related to creolisation and creole languages; I propose to investigate the concept of ‘pidginisation’, and ‘pidgin’ material culture, and whether this will allow us insight into the interpretation of unique artefacts. Such an investigation is presented as a possible methodology for dealing with new questions, and is very much work in progress. Later in the paper, I will illustrate my argument with a speculative reading of a single grave: that of the so-called ‘Stanway doctor’ from Colchester, the only known (or assumed) grave of a healer from either Roman or, indeed, Iron Age Britain.

## *Creolisation in theory*

Creolisation theory has been put forward as a new model to replace ‘Romanisation’ as a way of understanding the processes at work in Roman Britain. As Webster (2001: 209) has argued, ‘Romanisation’ is a simplistic and outdated model which focuses on the capacity of individuals to find their own way of ‘becoming Roman’ (or not). It is presented as a civilising process, which was emulated at all levels of society. In her paper, Webster also explores other criticisms which have been levelled against ‘Romanisation’. Importantly, she does not doubt that some élites came to identify themselves with the values of Roman civilisation; but asks with what success ‘Romanisation’ operated at lower social levels.

Because ‘Romanisation’ is ‘simply another word for acculturation’, Webster argues that it promotes a one-sided view of cultural change, which is not what the archaeological record of Roman Britain reflects. ‘Romanisation’ does not allow for a two-way exchange of ideas; does not address the cultural mixes that made up Roman Britain, nor the localised choices or developments of counter-cultures.

Webster proposed that we apply the linguistic term 'creolisation' as a substitute for 'Romanisation'. Linguistically, creolisation refers to two separate languages which are blended together to produce a third. It can also be used socially and culturally, often in a colonial context, to explain the adjustments which two societies make when they come together to form a third. As we shall see, creolisation has also been used in other fields of archaeology.

Several aspects of creolisation make it suitable as a replacement for 'Romanisation'. Creole dialects are rarely a neutral mix of the languages of which they are made; they often reflect the social relations of domination seen in the colonial context. There is always a dominant language, which contributes most of the vocabulary (the superstrate), and a minority language (the substrate). Similarly, in the colonial situation in Roman Britain, we see (the dominant) Roman material culture prevalent on most sites; however, we should not make the assumption that material culture, which to us looks 'Roman', was necessarily always perceived as 'Roman' or used according to 'Roman' cultural rules. This ambiguity is another important feature of creole material culture. Yet another important characteristic of creolisation is that, just as the blended dialect involves two languages (one dominant and the other not), any creole artefact is also a politically non-neutral blended mix that allows us to 'hear the native voice' in the way that discussions of 'Romanisation' rarely acknowledge.

To summarise, Webster (2001: 218) argues that ambiguity and hybridity are an important feature of creolised artefacts, and that creolisation emphasises the fundamental power inequalities between coloniser and colonised. Creolisation also gives us an insight into the 'negotiation of post-conquest identities' to help us better understand the variety of cultural mixes which would have existed after the Roman conquest. Moreover, creolisation leads us away from understanding Roman Britain in terms of a polarised world of Romans and Britons, and of 'either / or', with no grey areas in between; by understanding that Roman Britain comprised a complex mix of heterogeneous creolised identities and newly created cultural entities we can move away from such polarisation.

### *Creolisation as a concept: criticisms and justifications*

*Creolisation* as a concept has different meanings in different contexts, including both the popular and the academic. The term 'creole' is used in Latin America and the Caribbean to refer to local born descendants of European families; in parts of the United States, the term refers to descendants of French families (Seymour-Smith 1986: 57). While it may be acknowledged that creolisation is often perceived to be associated with historically-specific processes in the Caribbean, creole languages are, in fact, found all over the world, from Haitian and Belizean creole to Swahili (possibly a creole made up of Bantu languages and Arabic). Pidgins, too, are geographically widespread, and found from Papua New Guinea (Tok Pisin) and Nigeria (Nigerian Pidgin) to China (China Coast pidgin). Creole languages are not *necessarily* (but often are) associated with the colonial context and slavery; in fact, it could be argued that English is (historically speaking) a creolised language itself. However, I would argue that the fact that creolisation is usually associated with the colonial context is part of its strength as a theory; it is a good tool with which to think and, with its associated concepts of ambiguity, political dominance and subjugation, it allows a more nuanced and informed study of the Roman period than the near-synonymous terms of 'hybridisation' or 'syncretism'.

### *Creolisation in practice*

Webster (2001) was not the first person to discuss creolisation or creole artefacts. James Deetz's *In Small Things Forgotten* (1977) discussed the role of houses and artefacts used by early nineteenth century African Americans at the black settlement of Parting Ways, Plymouth. The houses at the settlement were not unlike the simple Anglo-American vernacular houses of the nineteenth century, but built according to the African American mind-set in terms of the use of space. Deetz also discussed the African American use of Anglo-American artefacts, especially ceramics, and how they were put to use in functional combinations (or broken and deposited) according to African American rules and ritual practices. For Deetz, creolisation was the "interaction between two or more cultures to produce an integrated mix which is different to its antecedents" (1996 [1977]: 213). Ferguson (1992) also discussed creolisation in relation to African American archaeology, examining the role, use and perception of African American culture on slave plantations and communities of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Elsewhere and more recently, the concept of creolisation has been applied to Roman Britain, and to food and religion in particular. Hawkes (1999) discussed the cultural meaning of the consumption and preparation of food. She asked whether food habits changed during the Roman period; whether different food was consumed; or whether dishes were merely prepared in a different way. She found that native practices continued and new ingredients were adopted, and that what was cooked and eaten was a creolised 'fusion', neither wholly Roman nor wholly native.

Building on earlier work (e.g. 1997a; 1997b), Webster (2001) discussed the creolisation of Romano-Celtic religion, using the example of Santería, the creole religion of Cuba, which is a complex mix of American Indian survivals, Catholicism, and African influences. Santería is an example of religious syncretism, and represents an adaptation (and not an adoption) of religious beliefs and practices, and is part of a process of intercultural negotiation. Webster asked whether similar processes were at work in the iconography of Romano-Celtic religion. Taking examples of a series of deities (which, although depicted anthropomorphically, were not Graeco-Roman gods), such as the horse goddess Epona and the horned god Cernunnos, Webster suggested that such deities were not depicted in human form before the conquest, but that, post-conquest, they were depicted as humans associated with animals or in a semi-zoomorphic form. Webster argued that pre-conquest zoomorphic deities were depicted in a human form for the first time after the conquest, but as inseparable from the animals with which they were associated. Such deities as Epona and Cernunnos cannot be regarded as "Celtic" or Roman, because they were the products of the post-Roman negotiation between Roman and indigenous beliefs and iconographic traditions. They were creole deities. There was also a limit to their syncretism with Roman religion: both Epona and Cernunnos resisted being paired in a 'divine marriage' with Roman deities, and both rarely incorporated epigraphy.

### *Creolisation and Pidginisation*

We have seen how the concept of creolisation has been successfully applied to material culture



and, specifically, the material culture of Roman Britain. However, to return to linguistics, the traditional interpretation of a 'creole' is that it is used to refer to any language which was once a pidgin, and which subsequently has acquired native speakers and is capable of becoming the mother tongue of a speech community (Todd 1990 [1974]: 2), although this simplistic definition is slightly problematic because of the observed blurring between the two language categories (Jourdan 1991; Todd 1990 [1974]: 65). A creole can develop from a pidgin in two ways: it can develop in multilingual areas where an auxiliary language is necessary to communicate; or it can occur where people are deprived of the opportunity to use their mother tongue, as was the case in the Caribbean during the slave trade, where slaves from the same area were deliberately separated in order to prevent plotting; the only language available to them was thus any European language they had picked up. Their children consequently learnt this pidgin as a first language and as their mother tongue, which is when it became a creole (Todd 1990 [1974]: 3). A pidgin is thus a "marginal language, which arises to fulfil certain restricted communication needs among people who have no common language" (Todd 1990 [1974]: 1-2). It is a language which is native to neither speaker, and lacks a stable and regulated structure and grammar; when it becomes a creole, on the other hand, it acquires a stable and regularised grammar. Pidginisation is a linguistic process that occurs when people who do not speak the same language come into contact, and also involves the simplification of language. The meaning of verbal communication is often reinforced by intonation, gestures and mime (Todd 1980).

Creole languages are often languages with grammar created by children who are exposed to pidgin (which may have interesting implications for the archaeology of children, if the concept of pidgin material culture can be applied to this subject). Pidgin languages are not always (although can be) long lasting; in fact, many pidgins are what is known as 'contact vernaculars' and may exist for only one 'speech event' (known as a 'restricted' pidgin; 'extended' pidgins are used for longer). Pidginisation is a process which characterises casual, sporadic or random contacts (Todd 1980). Since some pidgins serve a single simplistic purpose, they often die out; however, if the pidgin is used long enough, with the next generation speaking it as their mother tongue, it becomes a creole language. Usually, the vocabulary of the pidgin (like the creole) is drawn from the language of the dominant group and, if the contact between the interacting groups remains superficial, the syntax is uncomplicated; such a marginal pidgin is usually limited in time and space. It disappears when the contact that gave rise to it is withdrawn (Todd, 1980: 19).

Can we apply such concepts to material culture, and talk of 'pidgin' artefacts? If so, how can we define and recognise them in the context of Roman Britain? I would suggest that two properties of pidgin material culture are that they would occur at the very beginning of Roman contact – at a time when any 'creolised' material culture was being used for the first time, i.e., by the first generation. Second, it may still be at a very experimental stage – not yet tied down by a stable and coherent 'grammar' or form, i.e., it may not always occur in the same contexts. It is, perhaps, during this stage when we may also see unique items of material culture – pidgins which last for 'one speech event' and then die out and are not used by the next generation; or rather, artefacts which are individual, single, creative responses to certain situations.

It is also useful to think of the 'life-cycle' of pidgins. Hall (1962) is generally credited with such a notion. As outlined above, pidgin languages usually come into existence for a specific reason and then quickly go out of use. By becoming the native language of a group of speakers, i.e., by becoming creolised, a pidgin acquires a longer lease of life, and thereby becomes a

'normal' language (Hall 1966: 126). Thus, by applying the concept of pidginisation to the archaeology of early Roman Britain, we are adding an awareness of the time depth and change in material culture experienced by the first generations who lived through the initial period of Roman contact.

### *Case study: The 'Stanway Doctor'*

For the purposes of this paper, and of experimenting with and demonstrating the usefulness of the pidginisation metaphor to the archaeology of Roman Britain, I will explore the idea that the grave of the Stanway 'doctor' really was that of a healer, and that some of the other objects in the grave may have been related to healing. As part of this exploration, I will discuss some possible methods of medical procedure used by the healer. Although these obviously cannot be proved, I believe that such discussion and exploration is useful in the interpretation of the contents of the grave at Stanway. Although it must be strongly emphasised here that the assumed medical / healer status of the person buried at Stanway cannot be proved, there are certainly some intriguing and thought-provoking artefacts in the grave which are worthy of discussion. Just because the grave of the Stanway 'doctor' is unique, this does not mean that we should not try to interpret it; in fact, as I argue later in this paper, it is this very uniqueness that makes it suitable for interpretation using the pidginisation metaphor.

Finally, there are also problems with the use of the words 'doctor' and 'medicine' in understanding Roman Britain; as they are too 'presentist', the anthropological terms of 'healer' and 'healing' will be used instead, except, to avoid confusion, in relation to 'Roman medicine', for which a large literature exists.

Discovered in 1996 at Stanway, just outside Colchester, and dating to *c.* AD 50–60 (Crummy 1997a; 2002), the Stanway 'doctor' was among the dead at a funerary site of cremated high-status Britons who died in the later Iron Age and early Roman periods. The cremated bones were too fragmentary to determine the sex of the deceased (Crummy *pers. comm.*).

The burials at Stanway date from the late first century BC to *c.* AD 60 and overlapped the arrival of the Romans by a couple of decades (Crummy 1997b). They are part of a wider tradition of cremation in the south (e.g. the Westhampnett cemetery in West Sussex) and south-east (e.g. the cremations at King Harry Lane and Folly Lane in Verulamium) at this time. The richest high-status graves of this period, such as those at Welwyn Garden City and Lexden, clearly show evidence of 'Romanising' before the conquest.

The Stanway burials belonged to the period when the native stronghold of Camulodunum was at its most important. In all, there were five enclosures laid out in two rows at Stanway. The smallest (and earliest) seems to have been the nucleus of a small farmstead; the other four were funerary enclosures, and each contained funerary chambers. The burials within the chambers were high-status and are interpreted as having belonged to the 'ruling class'; a sign of their 'privilege' comes from the secondary burials inserted into the funerary enclosures (Crummy 1997b: 67).

The 'Stanway doctor' was one of at least seven of these secondary burials. Two of the other secondary burials also signified something about the identity of their occupants: one was buried with weapons and has been labelled a 'warrior', and the other was buried with an inkpot and is therefore presumed to have been literate. That the 'doctor' should be identified as such,

and understood as a practitioner of 'Roman' medicine, does not appear to be in question. Creighton (2000, 188), for example, suggests that the 'doctor' was either a Briton who learned classical medicine in Italy or was a relative of Augustus' physician. Crummy (1997a; 2002) also identified the 'doctor' as such, because the tools with which he or she was buried look similar to, although are not exactly the same as, (again, supposedly) surgical instruments found in Bavaria (de Navarro 1955, Figure 2) and Hungary (Ebert and Südhoff 1913, cited in de Navarro 1955, Figure 3). One of the Stanway instruments is also Roman in style, and is thought to have been imported to Britain (Jackson 1997) – perhaps from Gaul. Although one can only speculate that these were definitely used as surgical instruments (and the physical association of the imported instrument with the others suggests this may be the case, although once again we cannot assume that 'Roman'-style instruments were used according to 'Roman' cultural rules), they may have had another function. It is also possible that these tools had not been the property of the deceased.

Besides the supposed 'medical' instruments or 'instruments of healing', a range of other objects were also found in the grave. While some of these are not unusual in rich cremation graves of the late first century BC / early first century AD, others are entirely unique, and we may only speculate about their function.

The range of objects includes a set of eight iron and copper-alloy rods (currently interpreted as cauteries or possibly for use in divination, Crummy 2002; c.f. Carr 2002), and a strainer bowl (interpreted as for use in making infusions for healing, Crummy 1997a: 7; 2002; c.f. Carr 2002). Other items in the grave, which have not been linked to healing (although this can be questioned), and which were all carefully and deliberately placed in position (as were the possible surgical instruments), included a gaming board with glass counters, an amphora, a samian bowl, a ceramic flagon, a copper-alloy pan, three brooches and various fragments of wood and textile. These will not be discussed further here, except to note that most of the 'surgical instruments' were carefully placed across the gaming board, perhaps thus indicating and implicating its use in healing rituals, *if* we are to assume that the instruments themselves definitely played a role in healing.

The thirteen 'surgical instruments' proved to be extremely interesting; not only are they the earliest identifiable selection of possible instruments of healing from Britain, but all but one of them (the import), have no parallel in the Roman world, differing subtly from Roman types (Jackson 1997). Jackson (*ibid.*) suggested that their 'idiosyncratic' appearance could be explained by the fact that they were made in Britain, probably at an early date, as it was only around the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC / AD that Roman instruments began to acquire their relatively standardised form. Baker (2001) has warned us that we cannot assume a standardisation of medical practice across the Roman Empire, because it consisted of many different societies, which would each have had their own ideas about healing. Thus, the use of medical tools may have been adopted in different places in accordance with local understandings of the body, illness causation and healing. The 'idiosyncratic' shape of the Stanway instruments may well not have been perceived as such by the Stanway 'doctor'. It is also interesting to note that all of the instruments were discovered intact except for a 'surgical saw', which had been broken into five pieces and the fragments placed in a tight group near the centre of the gaming board. Anthropological studies, such as that by Moore (1982a: 91–106; 1982b), have taught us that deposition is inextricably linked to cultural values; Baker (2001: 58) has noted this possibility for beliefs relating to the pollution of medical instruments, which might have been considered polluted if, for example, they had been used in an unsuccessful operation, and so would have to be deposited in such a way as to keep them from 'infecting'

people or places. Although Baker did not consider the deposition of instruments within graves to fall into this category, such an interpretation might explain the condition of the surgical saw. It is possible that the Stanway 'healer' was not a healer at all, but a person who died after an unsuccessful healing ritual using the surgical instruments.

As mentioned earlier, a spouted strainer bowl was found in the grave, previously thought to have been used for straining alcohol such as ale, mead or some other native drink (Sealey 1999: 123–4). They are a later Iron Age / early Roman artefact, and their distribution shows that they were not Mediterranean types, but occur broadly in Britain, northern and central Europe (Sealey 1999: 122). A plug of organic material was found in the spout of the example from Stanway, which has now been revealed by pollen analysis to have consisted largely of the plant *artemesia*, although the species has not yet been determined (Crummy 2002).

Although *artemesia* can be used for non-medicinal treatments, such as for flavouring drinks, all forms also have perceived medicinal properties: *Artemesia abrotanum* or southernwood, aids menstrual flow; *Artemesia cina* or santonica gets rid of worms; *Artemesia vulgaris* or mugwort is a digestive stimulant; and *Artemesia absinthum* or wormwood is good for indigestion, worms and fever (Hoffmann 1996). It would seem, therefore, that, as one of its functions, it is not impossible that the strainer bowl could have been used for boiling, straining and pouring medicines of some sort, or was used for a concoction made by pouring boiling water on herbs (Sealey 1999, 123).

The eight metal rods were round in section. Four were of iron and four were of copper alloy. There were two small and two large of each, and they were found in association with eight copper-alloy rings. The two terminals of the rods were also different: one end flattens and splay out into a triangular shape, and the other end is knobbed. Their function is unknown, although, as mentioned above, speculation has provided two interpretations: that they were either cauteries or 'divination' rods. Howell (cited in Crummy 2002), however, notes that there are no known *similar* Roman examples of cauteries (cf. Jackson 1990: 20, Figure 7), and that the form of the rods resembles much later sixteenth century examples. Crummy suggests that, if they were divination rods, they may have been cast on the ground and the resultant configuration of all eight rods 'read' by someone who knew how. He also suggests that just a few of the rods could have been somehow 'selected', and the composition of the selection interpreted. As three of the eight rods had been extracted and carefully placed on the gaming board away from the others, this, once again, implicates the use of the gaming board in a ritual which may have been used in healing.

### *Healing practices in Roman Britain*

Until recently, we have been content to assume that the native Britons would have seen the inherent 'superiority' of Roman medicine and, whenever they felt the need, would have visited the army doctor at the local fort (implied by Jackson 1988: 137), who practised a form of Roman medicine which was homogenous and standardised to that which was practised in Italy (implied by Davies 1970; Jackson 1988, 1990). Jackson (1988: 137) speculates, unsupported by archaeological evidence, that the work of military doctors would not have been restricted to soldiers alone and that, either on a formal or informal basis, people from the surrounding farms, villages and small towns may have visited the Roman forts for treatment. He also assumes that, in the long term, some of the military doctors would have become part of the



local community themselves after retirement from the army, and continued to practise in a civilian setting. In this way, the army was supposed to have spread Roman medical knowledge and techniques, but also collected fresh information from locals. However, Jackson also mentions that few surgeries or consulting rooms have ever been positively identified, so these assumptions are not backed up by archaeological evidence.

Baker (2001) was the first to point out the possibility that Roman medicine was not a homogenous, standardised system (before this, the assumption was that medical care was standardised), and might not have been understood or practised in the same way throughout the empire. This is based, in part, on Baker's observation that there are variations in the use of Roman medical inscriptions and depositional practices of instruments among units who used such instruments, which may be linked to different cultural perceptions of the body and of healing in general (*ibid.*: 63). Although surgical instruments may look *similar* throughout the empire, Baker (*ibid.*: 56) again warns us that they may not have been used in a similar manner, may have been used in conjunction with other tools (with which they may have been deposited, but which the excavator may not have mentioned, not regarding them as 'medical'), may also have had several functions, or may have changed their meaning and function throughout their life-span. It would seem that we are on shaky ground to categorise the Stanway 'healer' as one who had learnt Roman medicine, simply on the basis of his or her instruments – or even to necessarily categorise him or her as a healer.

Given that Roman medicine was probably not, then, a homogenous practice, and given that Roman soldiers came from all over the Roman empire and beyond, Baker (2001) argues that it was likely that, as military doctors in the army were able to retain some form of their cultural identities in military matters (suggested by Saddington's assertion that different auxiliary units may have been allowed to continue fighting in their own manner (1997: 496)), then it is possible that they could have retained other aspects of their society, including their traditional healing practices. Thus, it is possible that Roman military medics practised a form of healing which was based on their own cultural understandings of illness causation, treatment and healing.

### *The creolisation of healing practices*

How are we, then, to understand the Stanway healer? Why and how did he or she own such unique surgical instruments? While Jackson (1997: 1473) assumes that the healer had contact with Roman medical personnel and, 'presumably', an acquaintance with the precepts of classical medicine (even though the instruments are not the same as Roman types), we can question, at least, the latter assumption. If the instruments were made in Britain, we might presume that the 'doctor' might have *seen* Roman-style instruments before, or had at least heard a description of them, but only if we are to assume that he or she made them or had them made according to instructions as opposed to having acquired them in some other way, such as through trade. We should also bear in mind that the Stanway healer had other native tools, possibly for healing, including the strainer bowl, the rods, and possibly the gaming board. Why was there a mixture of native and 'Roman' styles?

Did the healer want to be able to cater to ordinary Britons and 'Romanised' élites / Romans alike? Was s/he trying to impress fellow natives with selected new techniques? Did the healer make them to resemble what s/he thought were the quintessence of Roman-style medicine, or

were the instruments used in native rituals of healing in a way that 'made sense' to the healer, and not in the manner for which they were intended (or rather, for which a doctor in Rome might have used them)?

I would suggest another reason: the healer decided to make a deliberately ambiguous statement by using a cultural mix of both native and Roman-style (to the eyes of the healer, but perhaps not us) surgical instruments. Perhaps the aim was to allow the patient, spectators and, later, the mourners, to see what they wanted to see: Roman or native-style tools of healing. As we have seen, Webster (2001: 218) argues that ambiguity and hybridity are important features of creolised artefacts.

Webster argues that creole material culture can be drawn on to different degrees according to context – and can be imbued with different meanings in different contexts. I would suggest that this is precisely what we are seeing with the medical tools of the Stanway healer. S/he could have used the instruments in different ways in different contexts, sometimes emphasising the 'Roman'-style aspect of healing (whatever that may have been), and sometimes using the tools according to a set of values which were principally 'native' (however we may define this), depending on the identity or preferences of the patient. As Webster discusses, creolisation is frequently a process of *resistant* adaptation, as links with the past are often maintained in opposition to the dominant culture; but it can also serve to negotiate or adapt 'Roman' styles to serve indigenous ends. The Stanway medical tools, both those of native and (to the eyes of the healer) Roman-style, could have been used to treat everyone, although this does not mean that their use was politically neutral; they would have been used by the healer to make a statement about his or her identity, which could have varied, depending on context and patient.

Given that the indigenous Britons of the early post-Conquest period would have been unlikely to know anything about the theory or practice of Roman-style medicine, but may conceivably have seen Roman-style instruments, it would have been easy for the Stanway healer to combine the use of the tools with indigenous concepts of illness and healing, and to use them, as far as possible, in native healing ceremonies, imbuing them with a certain meaning – or, alternatively, s/he may have ignored them, emphasising the use of the indigenous tools instead.

Some indigenous élites, and certainly Roman soldiers, would have more experience of 'Roman'-style medicine (or at least, experience of medicine practised by a 'Roman' military medic from the local fort, which was not necessarily the same thing at all), through having visited doctors in the past or through having had the instruments used on their own bodies. When treating these kinds of people, the Stanway healer may have used the instruments in an entirely different way, perhaps playing down the use of the indigenous tools, such as the divination rods and, perhaps, the gaming board, and emphasising the use of the (to the eyes of the healer) 'Roman'-style instruments, perhaps using the strainer bowl to make infusions with imported rather than native herbs (although we do not know whether the artemesia was imported as we do not know its exact species), and utilising a different set of concepts of healing. This is not to imply that the healer had read the Hippocratic Corpus or had any training – s/he could have picked up different concepts of illness causation by talking to Romans, and perhaps 'bluffed' his or her way through a healing session, perhaps by letting the patient do most of the talking, and by picking up on certain expressions and concepts which could then be used on other occasions. As mentioned earlier, Baker (2001) suggests the possibility that even the medic in the Roman army may have practised a form of medicine that used many of their own traditional concepts (even when using 'Roman'-style medical instruments), depending on where they came from in the empire; thus, the use of familiar Roman-style instruments alone

could well have been enough to convince the patient who had already had some exposure to this form of treatment.

### *Creolisation or pidginisation?*

One of the group of artefacts within the grave of the Stanway healer is problematic, and it is difficult to see them in terms of creolisation because of their uniqueness. The 'divination rods', as I have mentioned, are not found anywhere else in Britain or the continent. Although it is possible that other examples may one day be found, how are we to understand such unique artefacts, other than as creative individual responses to unique situations? I would suggest that there is another way in which we can understand them; a way in which such creativity is taken into account: and that is by considering them as 'pidgin' artefacts.

Above, I suggested that pidgin material culture has three characteristics which might enable us to identify it. First, it would occur at the very beginning of Roman contact, at a time when any proto-'creolised' material culture was being used for the first time, i.e., by the first generation; second, that they would still be at a very experimental stage – not yet tied down by a stable and coherent 'grammar' or form, i.e., not always occurring in the same contexts. Third: it is, perhaps, during this stage when we may also see unique items of material culture – pidgins which last for 'one speech event' and then die out and are not used by the next generation; or rather, artefacts which are individual, single, creative responses to certain situations.

The concept of 'pidgin' artefacts helps us to understand the uniqueness of the Stanway healer. Although I would expect many 'pidgin' artefacts to date to the pre-conquest period, during the time of first Roman contact, I would not rule out the period of conquest or immediate post-conquest to be the date of others. Having been buried in AD 50–60, the Stanway healer is still young enough to be considered part of the first generation of Britons who lived through the conquest. Were the 'idiosyncratic' surgical instruments 'pidgins', which later went on to become the 'creoles' seen in other parts of the country, albeit rarely, and in a modified (or more Roman in style) form? Could the 'divination rods' be understood as 'pidgins'? They are certainly unique, and no version of them has been seen in any later period, although it is always possible that earlier or later versions were made of wood. Was the gaming board an example of a pidgin artefact which had yet to be grammatically 'tied down', regulated and made stable – which might be why this is the only example of one in a context possibly associated with healing (although we cannot know for sure whether it was used as part of the healing ritual); other examples all appear in rich graves which (we assume) were not associated with healers or healing equipment, which may be their 'grammatically stable' context.

Linguistically, the boundary between pidgins and creoles is now understood to be blurred (Jourdan 1991), so that some pidgins and creoles may exist simultaneously in the same socio-linguistic niche, thus reflecting the fluid nature of individual and collective praxis and agency (*ibid.*: 189); thus, we should not be surprised to see pidgin and creole material culture in the same context for the same reasons.

### *Creolisation, identities and alternative readings*

Creolisation involves, by its nature, a discussion of hybrid identities. In order to discuss those identities we need to label them, which inevitably leads to descriptions of 'Romans' and 'natives'. These categories are, however, problematic, as discussed elsewhere (e.g. Cooper 1996; Barrett 1997; Freeman 1993; Hill 2001; Hingley 1997). Roman Britain comprised a mixture of hybrid (or might we label them 'creolised?') identities, cultures and counter-cultures. The terms 'native' and 'Roman' imply two opposing homogeneous, static and monolithic groups with an internally homogeneous material culture; the archaeological record shows that this was obviously not the case. Additionally, as Hill (2001: 12) reminds us, identity is not fixed at birth – it can and does change.

Any 'Roman' material culture imported to Britain was itself probably not 'purely Italian', but rather a hybrid mix. Indeed, when discussing the 'Roman' identity of Britain, Reece states that it "became more Gaulish, more Rhinelandish, more Spanish, a little more Italian, a very little more African, and a little more Danubian" (Reece 1988: 11). Thus, when we discuss the surgical instruments of the Stanway healer, we should not necessarily see them as 'Roman' or 'Roman-inspired'. They may have been traded from Gaul (or elsewhere in the empire), perhaps also inspired from others which may have once been inspired by a 'Roman' source. In fact, rather than imagining that the Stanway healer (or other Britons) saw the group of artefacts in the grave as a combination of 'native' and 'Roman' tools, it is entirely possible that, to them, these objects reflected a network of cultural interactions. As James (1999: 92) argues, the British élite were part of a wider political and cultural European circle of peers, with whom they allied, intermarried and shared an ideology and lifestyle. To follow this argument, rather than seeing the instruments as something 'Roman', 'foreign' and 'them-not-us' – something that the healer had to use or not use, depending on context and customer, it is possible that all of the artefacts in the grave represented part of this network of interactions and trading of which the healer (assuming his or her status was that of an élite, judging from the apparent wealth of the grave) was a part. However, this combination of origins for the contents of the Stanway healer's grave can also be seen as a creolised mix. For the purposes of this paper, I have preferred to focus on the interpretation of the contents of the grave in terms of 'creole' and 'pidgin' material culture simply as a way of exploring the way we understand unusual and unique material culture.

### *Conclusion*

In death, the Stanway healer was buried with at least some of his or her tools of healing. Different mourners may have recognised different goods in the grave as tools of the trade, depending on their own identity. The flexibility or ambiguity of the grave goods would have allowed the spectator to see what it was appropriate for them to see, the Roman-style or indigenous tools of healing. The grave itself was a mixed context in that we, as archaeologists, are not seeing the instruments as they were used in daily practice, although their positioning in the grave can suggest certain associations and meanings. We do not know when or for what the tools were used, or with what words and gestures they were accompanied. We do not know if we have recognised the full range of artefacts connected with healing within the grave, or whether the healer possessed other instruments, which were not consigned to the grave; it is



certainly possible that organic objects in the grave have perished. We do not even know the process(es) of selection of grave goods. What we can suggest, however, is that the healer chose to maintain indigenous practices whilst simultaneously adopting aspects of the dominant material culture as a way of negotiating and making a statement about his or her identity in the early post-conquest period; something that patients were perhaps also doing by choosing the Stanway healer to be their medical practitioner.

Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge

### *Acknowledgements*

Many thanks are owed to Philip Crummy and Paul Sealey for advice on, and discussion of, the Stanway 'doctor'; to Patty Baker, for commenting on this paper and curbing the excesses of my imagination and over-enthusiasm; to Ralph Jackson, for liberal use of his yellow highlighter pen; to Jane Webster, for her positive feedback; and to Simon James, for suggesting alternative interpretations and for his support of the idea of 'pidginisation'. However, any errors in the opinions and theories expressed remain my own.

### *Bibliography*

- Baker, P. 2001. Medicine, culture and military identity. In G. Davies, A. Gardner and K. Lockyear (eds.) *TRAC 2000: Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, London 2000*. Oxford: Oxbow Books. 48–68.
- Barrett, J. 1997. Romanization: a critical comment. In D. J. Mattingley (ed.) *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism*. Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement 23. Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology. 51–64.
- Carr, G. 2002. A time to live, a time to heal and a time to die: healing and divination in Later Iron Age and early Roman Britain. In P. Baker and G. Carr (eds.) *Practices, practitioners and patients: New approaches to medical archaeology and anthropology*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.
- Cooper, N. 1996. Searching for the blank generation: consumer choice in Roman and post-Roman Britain. In J. Webster and N. Cooper (eds.) *Roman Imperialism and Post-Colonial Perspectives. Proceedings of a symposium held at Leicester University in November 1994*. Leicester: Leicester Archaeology Monographs No. 3. 85–98.
- Creighton, J. 2000. *Coins and Power in Late Iron Age Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crummy, P. 1997a. Britain's earliest doctor? *Rescue News*, 73: 7.
- Crummy, P. 1997b. *City of Victory: the story of Colchester – Britain's first Roman town*. Colchester: Colchester Archaeological Trust.
- Crummy, P. 2002. A preliminary account of the doctor's grave at Stanway, Colchester, England. In P. Baker and G. Carr (eds.) *Practices, practitioners and patients: New approaches to medical archaeology and anthropology*. Oxford: Oxbow Books. 47–57.
- Davies, R. 1970. The Roman military medical service. *Saalburg Jahrbuch*, 27: 84–1–4.
- Deetz, J. 1977 [1996]. *In Small Things Forgotten: an archaeology of early American life*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Ferguson, L. 1992. *Uncommon Ground*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution press.
- Freeman, P. W. M. 1993. 'Romanization' and Roman material culture. Review of M. Millet's *The Romanization of Roman Britain: an essay in archaeological interpretation*. Cambridge 1990. *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 6:438–445.

- Hall, R. A. 1962. The life cycle of pidgin languages. *Festschrift De Groot (Lingua 11)*: 151–156.
- Hall, R. A. 1966. *Pidgin and Creole Languages*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Hill, J.D. 2001. Romanization, gender and class: recent approaches to identity in Britain and their possible consequences. In S. James & M. Millett (eds.) *Britons and Romans: advancing an archaeological agenda*. York: Council for British Archaeology Research Report 25.
- Hawkes, G. 1999. Beyond Romanization: the creolisation of food. *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology*, 10:89–95.
- Hingley, R. 1997. Resistance and domination: social change in Roman Britain. In D. Mattingly (ed.) *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism*. Journal of Roman Archaeology supplement 23. Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology. 81–100.
- Hoffman, D. 1996. *Complete Herbal: a safe and practical guide to making and using herbal remedies*. Shaftesbury: Element Books.
- Jackson, R. 1988. *Doctors and Diseases in the Roman Empire*. London: British Museum Press.
- Jackson, R. 1997. An ancient British medical kit from Stanway, Essex. *Lancet*, 350:1471–1473.
- James, S. 1999. *The Atlantic Celts: ancient people or modern invention?* London: British Museum Press.
- Jourdan, C. 1991. Pidgins and Creoles: the blurring of categories. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 20:187–209.
- Moore, H. 1982a. *Space, Text and Gender: an anthropological study of the Marakwet of Kenya*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- de Navarro, J. M. 1955. A doctor's grave of the Middle La Tène period from Bavaria. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 21:231–247.
- Reece, R. 1988. *My Roman Britain*. Cirencester: Cotswold Studies 3.
- Saddington, D.B. 1997. The 'politics' of the auxilia and the forging of auxiliary regimental identity. In W. Groenman van Waateringe, B. L. Van Beek, W. J. H. Willems and S. L. Wynia (eds.) *Roman Frontier Studies 1995*. Oxford: Oxbow Monograph 91. 493–6.
- Sealey, P. R. 1999. Finds from the cauldron pit. In N. R. Brown (ed.) *The Archaeology of Ardleigh, Essex*. Chelmsford: Heritage Conservation, Essex County Council in conjunction with Scole Archaeological Committee 1999, East Anglian Archaeology Report No. 90. 117–24.
- Seymour-Smith, C. 1986. *Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Todd, L. 1980. Pidginization and Creolisation. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 1: 19–24.
- Todd, L. 1990 [1974]. *Pidgins and Creoles*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Webster, J. 1997a. A negotiated syncretism: readings on the development of Romano-Celtic religion. In D.J. Mattingly (ed.) *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism*. Journal of Roman Archaeology, 165–84.
- Webster, J. 1997b. Necessary comparisons: a post-colonial approach to religious syncretism in the Roman provinces. *World Archaeology*, 28.3:324–38.
- Webster, J. 2001. Creolizing the Roman Provinces. *American Journal of Archaeology*, 105: 209–225.