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Relational typologies, assemblage theory and Early Bronze Age burials

Chris Fowler

Abstract

This article argues that artefact types and typologies are kinds of assemblages, presenting an explicitly relational interpretation of typology grounded in a more-than-representational assemblage theory. In the process it evaluates recent approaches to typology, and the interpretations these typologies have supported, and compares these with approaches which emphasise materiality and experience. It then illustrates the benefit of drawing these two angles of analysis closer together within an approach grounded in a more-than-representational assemblage theory. Throughout, the discussion revolves around British Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age burials and types of artefacts commonly found within them. The core argument is that if used appropriately typologies are not constraints to the appreciation of distinctiveness, difference and relationality in the past, but can rather form an important tool in detecting those relations and making sense of different past ways of becoming.

Introduction

Artefacts are assemblages and so are types of artefacts. Typologies are assemblages too, albeit differently distributed in space and time. Typologies can be produced for things, features, buildings and places, each of which are themselves assemblages. At heart, typologies aim to capture a sense of how one artefact related to, and differed from, other similar objects that preceded it and followed it. Typologies are vital in identifying sequences of prehistoric activity over time, and in making sense of change and continuity. While not all prehistoric practices generated distinctive types of things, features or places, where types did occur their emergence and effects are deserving of study. In such cases, typologies can help in thinking about some of the relational properties of things, features or places: the efficacy one thing can have in relation to other things as it appeals to a broader assemblage; a type. But understandings of what a type and a typology are relate to how typology is used in archaeological interpretation. In this article I explore the extent to which typological approaches either do or can assist in addressing the issues raised by a more-than-representational approach which includes assemblage theory, and consider what such assemblage theory brings to the concept of the type and the use of typology. Throughout, I focus on types and typologies of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age burials in Britain and examples of artefacts found within them.

Problematic but indispensable: debates over typology

As to be expected for a subject so core to archaeology, there is a wealth of literature debating the uses and abuses of typology; Boozer (2015) summarizes the key points, with references to the wider literature. Typology is 'tyrannical': it reduces or even 'erases' differences, homogenizing diversity among artefacts into rigid schemes. This is an effect of the initial production of typologies out of a corpus of sites or artefacts, and the effect

becomes amplified when using those typologies to identify subsequent discoveries, or, I would add, to create syntheses of periods and regions. The process by which the typology was constructed can become concealed and removed from critical appraisal (*ibid.*), making something tentative and interpretive seem certain, and something complex seem simple (Gero 2007). Yet typology is indispensable: it is fundamental to building chronologies and understanding change over time, for instance. Both positions are, of course, tenable at the same time. Typologies are heuristic tools which are repeatedly revised to stay effective; they are the work of archaeologists, and they require work to produce and understand, but this is work *with* artefacts which in turn were produced as past people engaged with the things, materials and concepts in their worlds (cf. Sørensen 1997, 188).

Recently Marie-Louise Sørensen (2015) has called for a re-appraisal of typology in archaeology, arguing that 'the reasoning about why change[s] take place at all and why we see order within some objects are wide ranging, vague and generally unsatisfactory' (*ibid.*, 90). Studies that attempt to explain why specific types of things change or cohere do exist, however, and I will discuss some examples from British Early Bronze Age archaeology below. Recent theoretical approaches have also contributed to understanding how types emerge, particularly by highlighting the selective citation of previous acts (e.g. Jones 2007; Lucas 2012, 201), considering different traditions of practice that do and do not produce things that cohere into types (Robb 2009), or the configuration of assemblages that give rise to and sustain such types (Van Oyen 2015). In what follows I will illustrate why I think typology has a vital role in an approach grounded in what might loosely be called assemblage theory, and consider the extent to which typology can help in understanding why things emerge, cohere and change in the ways that they do. I will focus on examples from the British Beaker period/Early Bronze Age.

Types and typologies as assemblages

My starting premise in what follows is that each of the following are assemblages, albeit assembled in different ways and at differing scales: an artefact such as a Beaker vessel; an artefact type, such as Beakers, or, at a more refined typological level, Short-Necked Beakers; a typology of Beakers; a burial; a type of burial, such as a crouched or flexed burial in a short cist oriented on an east–west axis; a typology of burials. For instance, a Beaker is an assemblage partly consisting of clay and elements such as crushed stone, slip, the traces of gestures in manufacture, marks left by a bone comb, and high temperature: an assemblage emerging from other, shorter-lived, assemblages that were involved in shaping and firing it in sequence of iterative events. In the process of its assembly it became something which has new properties emergent from that process. Each Early Bronze Age burial is equally an

assemblage consisting of varied components, and each deposit has similarities with and differences from other deposits that precede and post-date it.

A conception of assemblage deriving broadly from Deleuze has featured in archaeological deployments of actor network theory and in symmetrical archaeology, and has affinities with the concepts of meshworks and entanglements. Although there is not space to explore similarities and differences here, all come from a broadly more-than-representational, more-than-human, new materialist perspective (see Fowler 2013a, 21–48, 49–53, and references therein). An assemblage is a specific arrangement of diverse, heterogeneous, interacting components that has specific *effects*; an assemblage acts, and acts in a way that none of its components can without being in such a configuration. An assemblage has no single point of origin, nor a singular organizing principle, but results from multiple and successive relations, processes and events, and its properties and effects emerge contingently. Assemblages are not only arranged purposively by knowledgeable human beings, although knowledgeable human beings are important features of the assemblages archaeologists study. Assemblages occur at varying scales of space and time, intersect, and can bleed into one another. Assemblages are always in the process of becoming, yet are also definable entities. They are temporary, yet may be of very long duration¹. Societies or communities are assemblages of humans, things, animals, materials, practices, ideas, places, and so on (Webmoor & Witmore 2008, 65; Harris 2014, 88–91). A broadly Deleuzian reading of assemblages places emphasis on becoming, contingency, local difference, and how relationships give rise to things. It can draw out the relational properties of things, and identify when and in what way different properties of things emerged as effective in distinctive ways — e.g. form, lustre, durability, texture (see Conneller 2011).

The production of types as certain kinds of assemblages is of particular interest for the purposes of this article, and is closely interwoven with the production of each object in a series that we recognise as a type. Pots and burials are assembled through repeated acts that Lucas (2012, 201–2, 211) describes in terms of *gathering* in place as well as *citation* over time. Lucas (2012, 195–201) identifies recurrent citation as a fundamental process in assembling one thing in relation with others of the same type; the memory of how to assemble previous examples of that type of object is essential to each act of assembling (that memory being ‘distributed’, including among embodied techniques). Citing DeLanda’s Deleuzian approach (DeLanda 2006), Lucas presents an assemblage-oriented theory of types (or ‘serial objects’) which does not rely on the existence of a mental template which is then made material, nor a set of practical rules to be followed in making each thing. Instead, each thing in a series is produced in a reiteration of a past event, in the formation of a *similar*

productive assemblage. Thus, each pot is a new assemblage that is produced through an event that reproduces many features of a past assemblage and recalls a previous event: we could say that many similar constitutive relations are shared by each object in the series or type. In other words, there is an affinity in the historical processes that gave rise to the two similar objects. There is, I think, still room here to account for creative *bricolage* in relation to those recalled acts, given the right conditions, and to consider variation stemming from contingencies in the materials available and other circumstances of production.

Types emerge at varying scales, from All-Over Cord Beakers across large areas of Europe to recumbent stone circles local to Aberdeenshire. Types might fragment into sub-types over time, and new types might develop in juxtaposition with existing ones. Object types can also emerge in relation to one another, via specific ways of assembling. For instance, after Beakers were introduced to Britain and Ireland c. 2500-2400 BC a complex interplay of features can be observed in the emergence of new types of Beakers in relation to one another, and to other forms of pottery, including, after c.2150 BC, Food Vessels (Jones 2007, 125-40; Wilkin 2011, 30-1; 2013, 45-79) (Figure 1). Some such typological changes also related to types of burial practice and monumentality (e.g. Curtis & Wilkin 2012). Types are not ahistorical, unchanging or essential, but emerged under specific circumstances, and their properties and effects altered once those circumstances changed — for instance if the object type was adopted in a new area with different local assemblages of artefacts, materials, practices, beliefs, etc. Importantly, types of objects are internally varied — no two Beakers are the same, and what a useful typology does is to provide a tool for appreciating multiple relationships between any one vessel and any others in terms of both similarity *and* difference. The greater the magnitude and rate of the changes, and the more significant the element that changes, the more likely we are to say we are looking at a different type of thing (Sørensen 2015, 90; cf. DeLanda 2002, 64; Crellin 2013, 137 and Harris 2016 on 'phase transitions' among assemblages). Types are dynamic and relational, then, in varying ways, and it is important that uses of typology recognise this. But while I will concentrate on the efficacy of objects that stems from their existence as members of a type, this is not intended to overshadow the varied other ways a thing can be appreciated as an assemblage and as part of other assemblages. While being a member of a type assemblage, a Short-Necked Beaker also participates in other intersecting assemblages — a meal or a funeral, for instance — which rely on the existence of specific object types *to some extent*.

I would suggest we can understand archaeological work with past objects as a similar process of assemblage, which can repeatedly reproduce and instantiate typologies, and can revise and reconfigure them (cf. Alberti & Marshall 2014). Like types, typologies are

assemblages, produced through archaeological intervention *with* the enduring remains of past activities (and that intervention involves a whole host of apparatusⁱⁱ and actants). Each typology that emerges has multiple points of origin (in events producing the type of thing in question during the prehistoric past, subsequent events that affect the survival and recovery of artefacts, contemporary archaeological practices, etc), and each unfolds contingently and relationally over time. Typologies may translate some of the enduring relationships constituting artefacts (e.g. size, shape, decoration), while leaving others out (e.g. weight, fabric, colour); the apparatus used repeatedly in producing records of artefacts play a crucial part in the process (Fowler 2013a, 32, 66; Jones 2001). Typologies are therefore archaeological attempts to grasp the presence of past types; types which have some reality prior to the efforts of the archaeologists. An archaeological typology is a different assemblage to a type, then, but to operate it must articulate well with the features of past things that were significant in their membership of a type. As noted above, assemblages can bleed into one another over time and the existence of one assemblage can be instrumental in the emergence of another. Objects of specific types endured from the Early Bronze Age to be found by farmers, quarry workers and antiquarians, and those objects played a role in shaping the methods and theories of archaeology, including typology. The legacy of past processes by which pots were produced ('individuated' in Deleuze's terms) has — in part — shaped the more recent process by which archaeological typologies are produced. Yet typology also involves specific theoretical stances about what a type actually is, how being of a type involves a certain kind of efficacy, and how types of things come into being, although sometimes these stances have been left too implicit.

Types of objects unfolded historically, emerging, becoming more or less coherent, more or less exclusive, over time. A recent example lies in Van Oyen's (2015) discussion of the emergence, maintenance and loosening of Roman *terra sigillata* as a restrictive category which had clear force, tracing the changing assemblages that kept it becoming what it was. While some objects are produced as part of clearly-defined types, not all are: Robb (2009, 336–9) identifies the making of Italian Neolithic figurines as a tradition of practice which did not draw on distinct types, for instance. Equally, some recent studies of British Neolithic and Early Bronze Age architectural practice have illustrated the contingent, fluid ways that sites emerged from many engagements with a range of substances, forms, things and bodies (e.g. Gillings 2015; Pollard 2013; Gillings & Pollard 2016; Richards 2013). Expecting such sites to rigidly conform to typology may overlook the significance of engaging with the distinctiveness and materiality of such places, of transforming and maintaining them, and attendant ways of becoming. The issue requires further discussion, but some level of typological identification is arguably still involved in such analyses; the forms of things, features and places may rely to

greater or lesser extent on citation of previous forms; forming a type of practice and place strongly or very weaklyⁱⁱⁱ. I am not at all arguing, then, that types are *always* the most important aspect of assemblages to attend to, that typologies must always be produced, but rather that the emergence of the phenomenon of a strong or clear type requires some explanation *within a broader relational approach*.

Even with this important caveat in place, advocating the usefulness of typology may seem to fly in the face of relational approaches, particularly Deleuzian ones. DeLanda (2002, 49-65) outlines Deleuze's main objections to typological thinking: that it relies on ideal essential types which are then manifested in each example of that type within a measurable normative range. He does not question that patterning occurs within 'populations', but presents a different basis for understanding this patterning. Deleuze argues that entities exist in 'heterogeneous populations' which change over time — entities individuated through largely shared historically-specific ways of becoming — rather than as exemplars of an eternal archetype. Rather than expecting normative conformity and needing to explain change, diversity and change is expected and its channelling into narrower patterns requires explanation. Following Deleuze, Normark (2010) also argues that typological thinking always relies on the idea that each specific thing is an instance of an ideal or general type; copies of a model (ibid. 132-3). In his call to focus on 'heterarchical populations of emergent assemblages ... with emergent properties' (133) he suggests adopting a *topological* approach to archaeological remains which attends to changing intensities, orientations and connections (ibid., 145) rather than extensive dimensions such as length, height or width. This is intended to highlight the fact that each thing is in a process of becoming, and that the type it belongs to (the 'universal singularity') is historically mutable within a range, beyond which it loses what he calls its "essence" and ceases to be the same kind of thing^{iv}. I agree with these authors that it would be wrong to think of types as ideal forms then 'made' in 'real' objects, and this is *not* the view of what a type is that I am proposing here. Like these authors I consider that types consist of heterogeneous populations which change, and that the nature and direction of that change needs to be explained in terms of many different factors and interactions. I agree with Normark's further criticism of approaches to typology that are strictly dendritic rather than rhizomatic (i.e. allowing for different 'branches' to (re)combine). However, rather than rejecting types *a priori* in archaeological analysis I think it is more productive to explore what could lie behind the patterning we see, to understand the significance of the emergence of any type, the implications of a restricted compared with broad type, an intensive or dispersed type, and so on, and consider the ways any type was effective. Therefore, rather than rejecting the terms type and typology because of how they have historically been understood and proposing new terms, I here argue for using an

approach grounded in assemblage theory in order to revitalize understandings of types and typology. In this perspective types have no eternally unchanging ideal existence and no essence^v, and consist of constituent populations of things which each arose from a *similar* iterative process in the past (from which that type, as well as each object, was co-emergent)^{vi}.

Typology has long been used to trace relationships between past things, and as a basis for arguments about the processes giving rise to those changing types; the relations by which artefact types emerge, persist, change, and subside. In what follows I will explore how typologies, and the arguments to explain them, have been assembled in studies of Early Bronze Age ceramic types, then burial types. I will also consider what is gained by treating types as assemblages in the way that concept is framed by the broad assemblage theory outlined above.

Typologies and interpretations of Early Bronze Age pottery and burials

David L Clarke built a specific understanding of assemblages into his 'analytical archaeology' (Clarke 1968)^{vii}, and drew on the concept in his seminal typological analysis of British Beaker pottery (Clarke 1970). Clarke's Beaker typology compared the material dimensions of each object, particularly form but also decoration and material (the ceramic fabric). Clarke (1970, 33) explains that he started by developing an 'integrated scheme of beaker classification in which the individual traits were treated as being roughly equal in importance', followed by a 'second category of classification ... which allocates differing degrees of importance to different traits'. He then acknowledges the difficulties in determining what is important^{viii}, and presents this as grappling with a complex set of linked assemblages:

'Each beaker represents an assemblage of characteristics, each contemporary assemblage of beakers displays a limited spectrum of motifs, styles, shapes and fabrics. Each assemblage system is linked in space with those of related groups, and in time with both the ancestral assemblages and later derivative assemblages. This pottery aspect itself correlates with equally complex systems of fluctuating material associations, burial rites, settlement patterns and geographical distribution. All these variables combine to distinguish social groups and social traditions, for varying periods of time, before the same characteristics are diluted and reassembled in unfamiliar 'new' traditions. It is these slippery assemblages and the social traditions they represent, that we are trying to precipitate from the mass of beaker data.' (Clarke 1970, 33)

Clarke's view that assemblages 'represent' 'social traditions' differs from understanding society as an active assembly of people, things, materials, and so on. Yet some of what Clarke says here chimes with elements of recent assemblage theory — his emphasis on working across different scales of assemblages, for instance, and the way that he perceives not just assemblages of things, but also of characteristics. He

acknowledges that his typology emerges out of his detailed analysis (ibid., 34), his work with the pots and the motifs they bear, which seems to have started with experimental, trial-and-error exploration of similarities and differences. He introduced a concept of “‘extra-fictile^{ix}” traits, features as relevant to the classification of the beaker as its shape or decoration’ (Clarke 1970, 263), thereby appreciating that relationships not encapsulated by the physical Beaker are nonetheless fundamental to what it is. He lays out his starting assumptions — largely to do with cultural diffusion and the initial appearance of Beakers from different parts of the Continent — and accepts that these structure his whole typology (cf. Hill & Evans 1972). They also inevitably shape his final interpretation of why Beaker pottery changed (Lanting & van der Waals 1972). We could say that he was effectively shaping the assemblage ‘Beaker pottery of Great Britain and Ireland’ as he worked, and the ideas and techniques involved played a key part in the shape of that assemblage as it unfolded and became published. This assemblage took shape through Clarke’s interaction with the enduring remains of past relationships between hands, combs, clay, etc, that gave rise to the forms of the pots and their decorative elements thousands of years ago, with contemporary theories and methods, and a host of other factors.

After Clarke’s analysis, other mechanisms were invoked in explaining the adoption, spread, or development of Beakers as a type of artefact. Lanting & van der Waals (1972) presented an alternative typology suggesting that after the arrival of the earliest types with people from the Continent regional changes within Britain developed indigenously. Competitive emulation of prestigious persons and things — ‘keeping up with the Joneses’, desiring the new, exotic, and/or difficult to produce — has also been postulated as playing a key role in the spread of Beakers and rates of change in artefacts generally (e.g. Bradley 1984, 46–73, pp. 72, figure 4.2). Brodie (2001) considered the movement of female potters as possible explanations for the spread of Beaker pottery (cf. Needham 2007; Shepherd 2012, 277). Re-analysing the vessels, Boast (2002) both identified the production process for Beakers as clearly standardized yet also highlighted the *bricolage* involved in Beaker variation over formal typologies^x, while Needham (2005) presented a new typology and a new explanation for the patterning it identified. He stressed that some Beaker types were more internally varied than others. He offered a different explanation for the initial appearance of early Beakers (through migration) compared with the later widespread adoption of successor types of Beakers (emulation of prestigious persons), and much later decline and rare ‘nostalgic’ use of Beakers. Rather than relying on one explanatory mechanism to explain the entire ‘Beaker phenomenon’, Beaker pottery, and burial practices that emerged after its introduction to Britain, Beaker pottery can therefore be seen as repeatedly becoming through different social

histories. Curtis and Wilkin (2012) incorporated changes in Beaker types within a rich multi-dimensional study of regional trends in burials, artefact types and monumental architecture in eastern Scotland c. 2500–2200 BC, explaining divergent as well as shared local traditions in terms of differing degrees, kinds and scales of interaction over time. Neil Wilkin also developed a ‘contextual typology’ in both his ground-breaking PhD thesis on Food Vessel pottery (2013, 27–31), and his research on Scottish Beaker burials (Wilkin 2011). He draws on the concept of *habitus* to underline the knowledgeable actions of those producing the pots. His contextual approach situates each Food Vessel alongside others, considers how it articulates with burial practice, associated objects, and contemporary pottery of differing types. Wilkin’s analyses were also directed at detecting the extent to which (and ways in which) Food Vessel typologies were contextually *meaningful* (Wilkin 2013, 29–30). Wilkin and I have also collaborated in analysing similarities and differences between different types of burial practices, and the types of artefacts and sites involved, in north-east England and south-east Scotland, which we have interpreted in terms of changes in the scale, density and character of social relations which also extend in different geographical directions in different periods (Fowler & Wilkin 2016). Millson (2015, 105) has closely examined Beaker fabric, form and decoration in the same region and suggests that Beakers from upland areas in south-east Scotland were more likely to adopt elements of Food Vessel design than those elsewhere in the region. These approaches increasingly identify shared practice at varied and changing scales, and most of them argue that these are foundational to group identities at certain scales and/or indicative of social networks of varying kinds. They discuss large-scale trends (e.g. Needham 2005; Wilkin 2013; Wilkin & Vander Linden 2015) and local histories in relation to and as part of those trends (Curtis & Wilkin 2012; Fowler & Wilkin 2016; Millson 2016; Wilkin 2011; 2013).

Early Bronze Age burials have also been studied typologically. Clarke (1970, Appendix 3) presented statistical results for different modes of burial in which each of his Beaker types was present, considering multiple dimensions such as orientation, type of grave (e.g. pit or cist), placement of vessel around the body, and so on. Alexandra Shepherd (nee Tuckwell) studied crouched burials at round barrows in Yorkshire, categorising body-side positioning, orientation, line of sight, sex, age, the positions of arms and legs, the positioning of grave goods and of any ‘accompanying’ skeletal remains (Tuckwell 1975). She presented overall results, and separate results for burials with Beakers, Food Vessels, bronze awls, bronze daggers, other artefact types, and double burials. She identified a degree of coherence among Beaker burials that was ‘adopted in part’ by Food Vessel burials, and other elements that were ‘used indiscriminately or altered’ in the latter, particularly in the differential orientation and body-side positioning of male and female adults (Tuckwell 1975, 113). A

typology of burials emerged in which we could refer to LESM/RWSF burials (left-side, head to east, south-facing males; right-side, head to west, south-facing females), and variation from that. Rise and fall in an emphasis on the funerary differentiation of certain men and women during the late third millennium BC can be observed through this approach. Ceramic typology is important to this analysis, but the burial typology allows comparison across burials with other kinds of artefacts or no surviving artefacts. More recently, Shepherd has identified selective use of types of contemporary Beakers with male and female burials in north-east Scotland (Lanting and van der Waal's Steps 3/4 and 5 respectively), including in local pairs of burials, and other uses of similar yet slightly differing Beaker types, sizes and/or decorative elements in paired burials in Yorkshire (Shepherd 2012). She argues that the selection of what kind of Beaker to make and bury illustrates 'the exercise of choice from among synchronous styles and forms' (ibid., 273)^{xi}.

These explanations for typological change and coherence are *largely* social, political, economic (particularly in terms of access to materials and knowledge about those materials), geographical and historical. These interpretations are important, convincing, and satisfying to a large degree; yet there is a limit to how far such explanations get us to the extent that they rest on a concept of the social where society means human beings, and everything else is treated as media through which social relations and meanings are negotiated (cf. Harris 2014; Webmoor 2007; Webmoor & Witmore 2008; Witmore 2007). They usually trace contextually-meaningful social relationships^{xii}. The generation of human identities is certainly one way that artefact types are effective. But as important as they are, these explanations do not exhaust the phenomena being investigated; shifting to a wider relational perspective in which more is made of the emergent properties and effects of assemblages of things, people, places, ideas and so on, opens up further dimensions for appreciating historical patterning in the past. The typological and synthetic work mentioned above is, I am arguing, crucial to interpreting Early Bronze Age realities, and meaning and identities are certainly among the features of those realities that were assembled. Yet coherence in, and contrasts between, Early Bronze Age artefact types placed in graves, or burial practices, can only *partly* be explained in terms of decisions about kinship, inter-marriage, affinities with exchange partners, desire for improved social standing, decisions to relocate, joining a particular religious community, negotiating gendered identity, and other relations conventionally identified as social. Existing approaches that present detailed, highly-effective analyses of typology generally do not attend much to the material *effects* of the burial practices or material culture investigated.

Metaphor, citation, memory, effect

By contrast, interpretations of Early Bronze Age objects and burials that focus on experience, memory, metaphor and effect generally pay less attention to the significance of types (even when using typology to provide sequence or identify, for instance, already-old objects within deposits). Some of these studies focus on particularly evocative examples, or a single site, and it is less clear how those sit within broader emergent patterns at larger scales. Such studies often focus on the meaning or significance of specific arrangements of things and materials in practices at mortuary sites, and of patterns in the life cycles of people and things compared (e.g. Brück 2001; 2004a; 2004b; 2009; Last 1998; Lucas 1996; Thomas 1991). These, too, are important and sophisticated studies. While it might be argued that a shift from an explanation referring to the production of social relations and identities through practice, symbolism and metaphor to one that interprets arrangements of things, bodies and places as *manifestations of social/material relations with specific effects* is a subtle shift (cf. Harris 2016), I would suggest that greater emphasis still needs to be placed on the effects that funerary assemblages, and the assemblages they incorporated, had (cf. McFadyen 2007 on the effects of monument construction practices).

Jones' work focuses on the efficacy of making, using, destroying and depositing material culture in generating memory; ways of assembling experience, memory, place and time (e.g. Jones 2001; 2004; 2007; 2012). He draws out connections between 'networks' of things across contexts and across types of things and places by studying the reiteration of decorative motifs (Jones 2007, 79-80). Typology and context play a role in these analyses: for instance, his study of the interplay between characteristics of Grooved Ware and Beaker pottery from Orkney and Ireland, and artefacts deposited in Early Bronze Age burials and hoards, starts with citation, then moves on to considering contexts of use in order to appreciate 'citational fields' (ibid., 125-40; 144-61). Jones traces the efficacy of types of motifs, types of traits, rather than object types, often at a local scale. This is useful, just as tracing typological relations is useful, but Jones does not carry out thorough regional analyses of typological patterns and this restricts the range of relations that can be appreciated (cf. Wilkin 2013, 26). I do not think we are faced with an either/or choice between tracing citation at the level of traits or tracing types as assemblages: we can do both, and think about the effective properties of types as they cohered, changed and dissipated. We can trace multiple relationships between objects, considering the different ways in which each trait is effective in the repeated emergence of other past assemblages (including people, things and places). Much of this requires considering how each assemblage, each gathering of things, bodies, smells, sounds, images, cites or recalls past assemblages, and the extent to which it derives from a similar 'productive assemblage'. Experiential factors

need to be considered in understanding the formation of types and the movement of traits across types, and typologies therefore need to be considered in exploring the assembling of past events.

The efficacy of types

...a unit of analysis possesses an analytical reality if it can be shown to have emergent qualities, in other words, if we can understand some patterning in the past by looking at it in terms of that unit of analysis rather than its component parts or any larger formation it contributes to. (Robb 2009, 334)

Typologies of burials can attend to multiple relationships within and between assemblages (including the assembly of the Beaker and the assembling of the grave): in this way differences within the assemblage of burials as a whole can be detected. We can suggest that other elements of mortuary practices (e.g. whether or not to cremate the deceased) acted recursively on the types of things selected for placement in burials: relationships *between* the kind and size of pot (say) and these other dimensions of the burial are inseparable from the relationships *comprising* the pot and the burial. If there are significant correlations between other multiple dimensions of each burial that includes a certain type of object then an effective and clearly-defined assemblage is repeatedly iterated as a type, as with LESM/RWSF Beaker burials in parts of northern Britain. Not all burials do conform to such types and within such types there are varying ranges of similarity between burials: but this allows us to trace how and when clear, restrictive types emerged and dissipated and how and when diversity increased and decreased. The kind of assemblage-based approach I am arguing for aims not only to understand change in terms of many varied factors, including social ones (in the conventional sense of the word), but also to attend to the changing affordances of materials, the legacies of past actions (cf. Hodder 2012, 193), the impact of sequences of contingent events, and the unfolding composition of place: what burial practices cumulatively *did and achieved*. I am not saying existing studies do not do this at all, just that more needs to be made of it in studies focussed on typology, and more needs to be made of typological patterning at differing scales in studies focussed on the generation of past worlds, experiences and effects. An assemblage-based approach provides a way to draw these together. I will illustrate with a very brief discussion of the career of short cists, drawing on my recent work in north-east England (Fowler 2013a; 2015) and, in collaboration with Neil Wilkin, further burials in south-east Scotland (Fowler & Wilkin 2016). I refer the reader to those sources for details.

The emergence of Short-Necked Beakers c. 2300–2100 BC coincided with the emergence of a short cist as the predominant type of burial feature in the north of Britain: a rectangular box on average around 1m long formed of stone slabs and built in a pit. Localised types of burial practice involving Short-Necked Beakers and short cists can be identified. In south-east Scotland, c. 90% of short cist burials with Short-Necked Beakers were aligned east–west, while in north-east England the proportion was closer to 60%. The bodies were largely adults buried singly in crouched position, but double burials also occurred, including several instances of an adult with a child: this was particularly evident in East Lothian, where a strong general trend towards east–west burial was maintained. Across the whole study area burials in short cists were alternatively accompanied by flat riveted bronze daggers, with no surviving artefacts, and, a little later, with Food Vessels or with jet ornaments. As these late third millennium burial traditions developed in relation to one another, each assemblage of a burial reiterated some features of previous ones, but grave orientation and body positioning (where this could be detected) varied increasingly over time. Burials with types of Beakers other than Short-Necked Beakers were less likely to conform to the same bodily positioning and orientation, for instance. Such developments did not occur at the same rate or in the same way across the whole region. Differing local traditions emerged, interwoven with, influenced by and influencing the unfolding of larger-scale regional and pan-regional trends in mortuary practice and artefact use. For instance, towards the end of the third millennium BC north–south burial became increasingly common in northern Northumberland, along with the use of jet/jet-like buttons and necklaces and Food Vessel pottery. This assemblage, however, unfolded at a greater scale than northern Northumberland, since similar practices are also evident in parts of Yorkshire, for instance. In the western parts of Lothian Food Vessel pottery was largely adopted for burial, while Beaker pottery of varying types were common in burials in eastern parts of Lothian, where burials adhered to the predominantly east–west orientation that seems to have dissipated elsewhere as the use of Short-Necked Beakers declined compared with other grave goods. The historical emergence of different social networks is a crucial element in explaining this patterning, as is the emergence and maintenance of differing idealized ways to present the bodies of the dead at funerals. But other factors were at play too. Mortuary practices are, among other things, technologies that transform the dead and the living, changing the relations between and among both communities. Such technologies changed repeatedly, were produced and performed in subtly different ways, citing and altering previous iterations of funerary practice. While these iterations, juxtapositions and inversions in patterning are important in terms of identity generation, the effects, resonances and legacies of each funerary technology bear further scrutiny, and the precise types of materials, features, objects and places involved are crucial to this.

The use of short cists for burial in the region developed, changed, and eventually ceased, in relation to other dimensions of mortuary activity; their efficacy changed. Short cists contained the dead in a contracted position, sealing them with a heavy cover slab, probably usually covered with backfill and/or a mound. They could *potentially* be re-opened and remains added or removed, or simply monitored. Such cists could prevent direct contact between human remains and soil — and this seems to have been the case for earlier cists in particular. The use of short cists changed and diversified over time as orientation patterns shifted, and backfilling cists with soil seems to have increased; but burying a body on its side to face south seems to have been a common practice. Cremation became increasingly common after c.2100 BC, and initially some cremated remains were deposited in short cists, but over time it seems the cists became shorter and squarer. Eventually, a couple of centuries into the second millennium, cists lost their resonance, their efficacy; they were no longer constructed and Food Vessel Urns, Collared Urns, or simply pits, served as containers for cremated remains. Sometimes pits were lined with small stone slabs or a slab was placed over the mouth of an urn. Such urns holding cremated remains worked differently to cists as containers, and cists worked differently as containers for cremated remains compared with crouched bodies. When cremated bones were buried, cists no longer supported the directing of bodies to face south. Later in their currency short cists had increasingly formed clusters — communities of the dead that were often united by mound construction — and later squarer cists were sometimes inserted into those existing burial grounds or placed at their periphery and covered with an extended mound. The dead could now be directed towards the south in a different way: burials of cremated remains that were not central were frequently located in the southerly quadrant of the mound. Technologies once integral to the 'directing' of the dead^{xiii} were replaced and sometimes that principle became translated in a new way. New assemblages with new resonances and effects arose from revising features of older practices, from making new types of graves and cemeteries alongside or away from older ones. The social and political factors in deciding whether or not to adopt a new practice need to be set alongside the existing local assemblages and interpreted partly in terms of the effective difference between what went before and what was being adopted — e.g. the different experience of the bodily remains of the deceased afforded to the living, or the effect on relationships among the living and the dead of shifting to a new burial ground or extending an existing one that had been disused for some time.

Also important here is the emergence of the burial grounds as a type of place that was becoming common across large areas of Europe. By the end of the third millennium many communities had shared *some* comparable experiences of the ritualized, arguably often

idealized, treatment of at least some of the dead, and small cemeteries stemming from repeated burial practice in the same place; similarities within which local differences would easily be apparent. This process took place within a larger-scale, longer-term shift in the roles and effects of burial practice, personal ornaments, and artefacts in the generation of personhood (Harris et al. 2013), hand-in-hand with changes in the range of materials (gold, copper, jet, etc) and forms of the artefacts that were created. A sense of flow, shift, contingency, can be identified *along with* the successive emergence of some looser or stronger types of assemblages, at differing scales. The deployment of a certain type of assemblage (short cist burial, the accumulation of the dead in cemeteries, and so on) in any given spatial region can be set alongside the emergence of that phenomenon at other scales, both within and outside of that region: the scale of the type, its *distribution* in space and time, is one of its key characteristics that allows us to say something about the conditions of its emergence. Various scales of interlocking assemblages are apparent: burials with Short-Necked Beakers in short cists are partly a subset of burials in short cists and partly of burials with Short-Necked Beakers (and at a larger scale, of burials with all kinds of Beakers), and some of them exhibit the LESM/RWSF pattern. More localized assemblages (such as the double burials in short cists in East Lothian) articulate with larger-scale assemblages. Each inter-related assemblage can be understood both at its own scale and in relation to the scales of its constituent elements and any larger, broader, type that it may belong to. This emphasis on overlapping and inter-related assemblages of types can therefore assist in working at different scales and detecting changing relationships (cf. Crellin, this volume; Harris, this volume).

The impact of one mortuary act on another can also be partly appreciated by an appeal to types. The effects of any one mortuary act can be considered in varied ways, including legacies of one act in the sequence of dealing with a single deceased person, in the sequence of burials at a site, and in the historical sequence of mortuary practices that were current at a larger scale. The *chaine operative* approach to treatments of dead bodies adopted by Appleby (2013) is one valuable way to trace how change in one stage of mortuary activity materially affects the possibilities for other steps in the sequence. In my own recent work I have focussed on how funerary practices are arranged in sequences as part of a ritual process, highlighting how the dead were transformed rather than interpreting the burials as reflecting their lived identities as perceived by mourners (Fowler 2013a, 235–57; 2015; cf. Fowler 2013b). Here again the same type of act had different effects in different mortuary assemblages, depending on the legacies of what had gone before. For example, I have suggested that burial was part of the funerary separation between living and dead early in the Early Bronze Age when burials were isolated or in very small groups, but later in the

period burial was often an act of reincorporation for the deceased into a community of the dead as burials clustered into cemeteries (Fowler 2015). A focus on sequence, on mortuary process, allows further reflection on the efficacy of types of objects — things-in-events or the material legacies of previous practices — within the mortuary events that mobilized them. The types of objects involved in the transformation of the dead were selected repeatedly because of their specific efficacy as types of things with certain properties arising at specific moments in these assemblages. The inclusion of key artefacts in distinctive colours, decorations, textures and other properties — potentially manifesting spiritual as well as practical efficacy in transforming relations between the living and the dead — was part of the affective field^{xiv} of a funerary assembly: the ability of bronze blades to shine, to cut away the dead from the living before being sheathed and buried and/or to provide the dead with a means to fight, kill and/or cut meat, and a means by which to identify them as a certain kind of person^{xv}; of pots to assist with the preparation, storage, consumption and sharing of food; or of cists, ceramics and cairns to contain loss and provide potential future access to the remains of the dead (Fowler 2013a, 235–57; cf. Thomas 1991; Brück 2004a). Each object could not achieve such effects ‘on its own’, or at any time, but within specific moments and assemblages (including soil, light, fire and smoke, words and gestures, for instance). Here we might also consider Maria Nieves Zedeño’s (2009) ‘assemblage-based relational taxonomy’, which attends to how certain object types and materials often associated at Native American ritual sites (e.g. animal effigies, smoking pipes and associated materials, and red pigments) share specific effects that rely partly on their inter-relatedness (their recurrent associations, in Lucas’ terms). Zedeño works across different types of objects to identify index objects that carry potency and animacy with them. This may be a fruitful way to approach the specific types of objects that were selectively chosen for (and potentially specifically designed for) deposition in British Early Bronze Age burials^{xvi}. While some objects may have been made exclusively for funerary use and deposition^{xvii}, they may have carried potency in their material properties such as their shape, colour and material — features that illustrated connections with and beyond other objects of their type.

None of this should diminish the biographical or personal value of burying a specific thing — a gathering of past relations — or the symbolism or affordance for metaphor it might have in citing other acts, events, processes, things, places or bodies; but *some* of the potency of each object derived from its belonging to a type, having a specific material configuration, belonging to a community of similar others sharing form, material, decoration and/or other characteristics: a short cist, a stone-kerbed burial mound, a Short-Necked Beaker, a copper alloy dagger. This is why typologies so effectively help underpin the appreciation of Early Bronze Age ways of becoming; *including* becoming a person, becoming dead, becoming an

ancestor, becoming a certain kind of place, and becoming a community that traces its history partly through mortuary practice. The sequential and cumulative effects of funerary assemblages that stemmed in part from certain types of things — including controlled exposure to and distancing from the dead — were heavily bound up with reiterative sensual and emotive experience (cf. Hamilakis 2013), and citation of beliefs about life and death, ancestry and relatedness, morality and proper conduct (cf. Fowler 2013a, 230–50; in press). These were all, arguably, bound up in the *materialization* (*sensu* Lucas 2012, 167) of funerals, and the ways that funerals dematerialized some previous relations in that process. We can consider the impact that changes in the assembly of types of things, burials and architecture in funerals had on other assemblages that relied on them, including persons. If we want to understand ‘connections between concrete entities’ (Lucas 2012, 193), I would suggest we still need to attend to such experiential factors which were involved in the emergence of past assemblages (Fowler 2013a, 64). After all, meaning and matter are co-emergent through the materialization of such assemblages (Alberti & Marshall 2014).

In sum, considering multiple dimensions assembled in Early Bronze Age mortuary practices together (experience, metaphor, contingent material properties, type) provides a more rounded approach than any single focus alone. Furthermore, in this period typology has a crucial role to play in appreciating any of these dimensions because there were prehistoric formalizations and diversifications in the selection of types of portable artefacts, dress items, and treatments of corpses before the burial of some or all elements of those deceased bodies. Recognising this, and tracing connections over generations of burials and across the varied landscapes people inhabited, is integral to understanding the distinctiveness of this period (which is in turn made up of many shifting relations in which such things and places played vital roles).

Conclusion

[typologies] ...tend to presume that there is some kind of resonance between our ordering of the material and past realities. What we have lost, however, is the explicit scrutiny of what that link is about (Sørensen 2015, 91).

Studies of Early Bronze Age objects and burials that are most concerned with typology generally explain typological change in social terms, where social refers to human relationships mediated by things: social networks, local communities, gendered identities, political strategies. The revised, more-than-human, definition of ‘the social’ that is core to much assemblage theory posits human immersion in a turbulent world of potent materials, things, places, ideas, beliefs, emotions, symbols, metaphors, and practices; all of which

comprise society, and are always historical and intermixed. I have argued that typology can also play an important role in archaeologies that pursue such relational and processual approaches (e.g. those deploying concepts such as assemblages, entanglements, networks or meshworks, those adopting new materialist and more-than-representational stances). Studies of Early Bronze Age objects and burials that are most concerned with memory, experience, citation or metaphor sometimes adopt or move towards such a stance, but generally take a less thorough and comprehensive approach to typology. While typology can obscure differences, and we have to be alive to that and attend to the history and specificity of each thing in each gathered assemblage *as well as* its relation to a type, it can also be used to appreciate a key dimension of relations among things, within and between assemblages. Studies of citation across object or site types (e.g. of decorative motifs) would seem to me to be compatible with — even an element of — an avowedly relational and multi-dimensional approach to typology. Not all objects or architectures do cohere strongly as types, and as such the emergence of types requires explanation alongside the exploration of contingency, *bricolage*, process and flow in exploring past ways of becoming. Typological analysis and interpretation therefore has a specific role to play within a broader relational approach.

Some aspects of recent interpretations of change and continuity in Early Bronze Age artefact types are similar to some elements of assemblage theory. The most obvious example is the stance that causality has no singular origin, but emerges historically from the precise configuration of factors in any assemblage — an emergent causality stemming from the exact history of interactions and resonance between components that gave rise to the resulting assemblage. In assemblage theory the arrangement acts, the assemblage persists while its elements resonate together and falls apart or changes radically when dissonance arises between those elements (Bennett 2005). New elements may be integrated if they find a way to fit well with the pre-existing arrangement (cf. Hodder 2012, 113–37), or fall away if they do not; old practices cease once they no longer have the effect they once did. Ultimately this draws attention to the problem with asking for an explanation in causal terms, and we might instead advocate providing a good (and detailed) description of pattern, diversity and change (cf. Borić & Strathern 2010). Indeed, the difference between a good description and an explanation may be hard to determine (as argued for contextual archaeology — Hodder & Hutson 2003, 191–3). It is impossible to arrive at any answer as to why a certain type of burial was adopted that is both singular and satisfying — burial practices were multi-dimensional and only rarely can a one-dimensional answer explain why they changed. Rather than seeking a single or simple explanation for why change happened it seems more useful to highlight the connections across as well as within types of burial practice (i.e. the

interplay between different contemporary practices); to outline how specific changes happened and what roles and effects specific things, materials and practices had in relation with one another in that historical unfolding and in concert with the assemblages that relied on them. Those assemblages existed at a wide range of scales, and types can be useful media for shifting scales between site, region and pan-region, between shorter and longer spans of time.

As archaeologists we ourselves operate within assemblages which include the fragmentary remains of the myriad past assemblages we study, and we transform these assemblages as we work (Fowler 2013a; 2013c). Interpretative concepts and methods are woven into those assemblages, and archaeological methods that have stood since the foundation of the discipline, such as typology, give present-day archaeologies much of their shape. The emergence of typology occurred for many reasons, but at least in part because of the actual existence of object types discovered in some periods and regions, and partly also due to the efficacy of recognising types in interpreting the past. The uses of and thinking about typology have diversified from the earlier concerns with sequence and cultural groups (even if they have not fully departed from these), and should remain a focus for theoretical debate. The over-extension of typology to looser traditions of practice may well be problematic, but this does not negate the usefulness of typology in other cases. Repeatedly reworking not just specific typologies but our understanding of what types achieved is an important goal as we consider Sørensen's key challenge and scrutinize what it is that we expect our typologies to actually tell us about past realities.

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Author biography

Chris Fowler is a Senior Lecturer in Later Prehistoric Archaeology at Newcastle University, UK. He specializes in British Neolithic and Early Bronze Age archaeology, mortuary practices, bodies and personhood, and relational theoretical approaches. He has recently been researching Early Bronze Age burial practices in north-east England, the results of which are published in *The Emergent Past: A Relational Realist Archaeology of Early Bronze Age Mortuary Practices* (Oxford University Press, 2013), and recently co-edited *The Oxford Handbook of Neolithic Europe* with Jan Harding and Daniela Hofmann (Oxford University Press, 2015).

Figure Caption

Figure 1: A selection of Beakers (left) and Food Vessels (right) from Northumberland. The Beaker further left is a Short-Necked Beaker.

ⁱ There is insufficient space in this article to discuss the complex issues concerning time and the duration of assemblages that such perspectives raise (cf. Fowler 2013a; 2013c; Fowler & Harris 2015; Lucas 2012; 2015; Witmore 2007).

ⁱⁱ Apparatus here refers to the equipment, techniques, and ideas brought to bear in the process of studying something.

ⁱⁱⁱ Conventionally, a typological approach may seem difficult to reconcile with a biographical approach to a specific object or place. Yet historical changes to a place — the reworking of a burial mound, production of a cemetery, or successive activities at a henge, say — sit in relation to the material legacies of past practices at that place, and also are negotiated alongside a series of other contemporary practices, such as new forms of burial practice (cf. Last 1998). Thus, each site is an assemblage, including of features and things of various types. As circles of wood, stone or earth were added to and transformed, as cemeteries were subsumed into barrows, new types of places, effects and practices became possible, and new types of monuments and monument-building practices emerged. Typology and historical contingency should not be divorced but considered in relation to one another.

^{iv} Normark's topologies of 'universal singularities' seem to me to suffer from the same problems of abstraction and "essences" as the view of types he critiques, however.

^v For a discussion of why relational approaches should reject any idea of an essence to entities see Fowler & Harris (2015). Crudely, the 'Beakerness' of a Beaker consists of the relations that produced it and other Beakers, and the relations that keep it being a Beaker. Types had past coherence aside from that archaeologists accord to them in producing typologies, but that derives from the shared

historical processes of the creation and use of the objects of that type – i.e. from past and ongoing relations, not some essential property.

^{vi} A related issue is the valid critique that typology has often treated matter as passive media to a template form, rather than a range of vibrant materials in the way assemblage theorists such as Bennett (2010) describe. The materials combined in pottery each bring their vibrancy to the mix and exhibit new emergent properties through the process of making and firing the vessels. Yet, as Conneller notes '[m]aterials can be fluid, transformable, in flux, but also ... matter may solidify, forms may become primary' (2011, 20). This article highlights cases where forms of things became important, if not primary.

^{vii} Clarke developed a complex terminology in *Analytical Archaeology*, with, for instance, distinctions between 'association assemblages' and 'aggregates' in 'complexes' and 'systems' (Clarke 1968, pp. 417). Arguably, these can be understood as assemblages of different types and at different scales. Clarke also discussed the emergent properties of 'networked' systems (ibid., 60), and 'Black Boxes' (ibid.), both concepts that have recently resurfaced in archaeology via recent assemblage theory. Discussion of the extent to which his systems approach differs from an assemblage theory approach lies beyond the scope of this article. (For a cursory discussion of systems compared with assemblages see Fowler 2013, 24.)

^{viii} Clarke's analysis led him to present a typology based first on motif and secondly on vessel shape (Clarke 1970, 38), which was soundly critiqued by Lanting and van der Waals (1972); Needham's recent work has rather reversed this (Needham 2005), although all these schemes highlight the way that certain vessel shapes and decorative motifs are intertwined to some extent. Subsequent work also emphasises regional differences in which traits were modified in different periods.

^{ix} Extra-fictile can be understood to mean the features that are not evident just in the mouldable clay of the pot.

^x Readers interested in the Deleuzian distinction between the virtual space of possibilities and actual objects (considered by Harris, this volume) may find Boast's discussion of 'forms we could say could have been made, but were not' in different regions of Britain relevant (Boast 2002, 99 and his fig 10.2 & 10.3).

^{xi} While Shepherd's analysis of the mortuary patterning and Beaker selection is convincing, her view that [p]erhaps it can be said that whilst the Beaker within the burial defines the individual, the form of the burial itself defines the tribe' (Shepherd 2012, 278) is not adopted in the approach outlined below. While similar burial practices may indicate some communication or shared cultural identity among those carrying out the burials, reasons for the spread, adoption and evolution of such practices are more complex and varied than attributing a type of burial to a certain tribe allows.

^{xii} The similarities between contextual archaeology and assemblage theory highlight an under-current of relational theories that run through academia throughout the twentieth century. Contextual meaning is a product of assembling things, ideas, beliefs, people, etc; assemblage theory draws more attention to the active processes of assemblage than to the (contingent) structures of meaning, and to the material effects of assemblages *alongside* the meanings that arise from their articulations (cf. Alberti and Jones 2013, 28). It also rejects the idea of a dialectic relationship between material and social domains on the grounds these are never separable – rather, prior material/social assemblages are repeatedly reconfigured (cf. Boast 1997; Webmoor & Witmore 2008). Arguably, assemblage theory opens out the relationality inherent in contextual archaeology beyond meaning and into any other dimension we wish to explore.

^{xiii} The direction of remains into the earth during burial, and in the case of cremation before burial into the sky as well, is another important effect of these practices (cf. Fowler 2004, 120; Gillings 2015, 230).

^{xiv} An affective field is an assemblage with specific effects including 'a particular range of emotional relations' (Harris & Sørensen 2010, 150).

^{xv} I would stress that this effect is presented in the context of the funerary sequence; similar daggers may potentially have a range of different effects in other events of deposition, such as those buried without human remains at some sites in south-west England (Jones & Quinnell 2013, 186).

^{xvi} The absence of bronze axeheads, compared with the presence of bronze daggers in some burials, briefly illustrates this selectivity (see Fowler 2013a, 86).

^{xvii} Shepherd (2012, 276) points out the good condition and lack of wear on intact Beakers in graves may underline the idea they were made expressly for funerary deposition. For evidence for differing patterns of wear across a range of Early Bronze Age objects see Woodward & Hunter (2015)

Figure 1: A selection of Beakers (left) and Food Vessels (right) from Northumberland. The Beaker further left is a Short-Necked Beaker.

(Figure 1)

758x467mm (72 x 72 DPI)

Review

Figure 1: A selection of Beakers (left) and Food Vessels (right) from Northumberland. The Beaker further left is a Short-Necked Beaker.
(Figure 1)
679x601mm (72 x 72 DPI)