

Towards a ceramic approach to social identity in the Roman world: some theoretical considerations*

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to outline some aspects of a theoretical framework for the study of the ways in which Romanisation affected the social identity of non-élite groups in the Roman Empire and, particularly, Italy during the Republican period. The Romanisation of Italy and the western provinces has been the subject of much recent work, by both archaeologists and historians.¹ However, most of that work

* I would like to express my gratitude to Andrew Merryweather and Jonathan Prag for inviting me to speak at their conference, and for their patience in dealing with my old-fashioned attitudes to the World Wide Web. This paper provides but the sketch of an approach to the study of Romanisation through the analysis of artefactual variability and, admittedly, suffers from a lack of practical application of any sort. Nonetheless, it should provide some food for thought and stimulate the current debate. For a fuller treatment of the issues discussed in this paper, the reader is referred to Roth, R.E. (not yet submitted), 'Black-glazed Pottery from Volterra. Material Culture and Social Change', PhD-thesis to be submitted to the University of Cambridge.

¹ 'Romanisation' is here – following Keay and Terrenato - used in its 'weakest' sense, that is, as a convenient way of summarising the processes which contributed to the creation of Roman Italy and, for that matter, to the integration of the western provinces into the Roman Empire. The heterogeneous processes of social change which I discuss in this article took place within a greater historical dimension. This historical dimension is the expansion of Rome as the main hegemonial power, first in Italy and, subsequently, across the Mediterranean and beyond, as well as the long duration of that hegemony. 'Romanisation' represents a convenient term by which to refer to this particular historical framework. In fact, it appears to be the most neutral term which can be used in this context – paradoxically – just because its original implications are now so widely rejected. This rejection forms the lowest common denominator of all modern studies. Romanisation may, therefore, be used as an 'umbrella term' to refer to the creation of Roman Italy and the Empire, and I shall follow this convention. See S. Keay and N. Terrenato (2001a), 'Preface', in S. Keay and N. Terrenato (eds.), *Italy and the West. Comparative Issues in Romanization* (Oxford), x; see also N. Terrenato (1998a), 'The Romanization of Italy: global acculturation or cultural *bricolage*?', in C. Forcey, J. Hawthorne and R. Witcher (eds.), *TRAC '97. Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Nottingham 1997* (Oxford), 20-27; J. Webster (1996), 'Roman imperialism and the "post-imperial age"', in J. Webster and N.J. Cooper (eds.), *Roman Imperialism: Post-colonial perspectives* (Leicester), 8, with n. 15; similarly W.V. Harris (1979), *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome, 327-70 BC* (Oxford), 4 (on 'imperialism'); but cf. P. Freeman (1996), 'British imperialism and the

focuses on the processes taking place at the level of élite culture. This leaves unaddressed the effects which wider historical developments had on the lives of the majority of the population.²

The scope of this paper is extremely limited, and does not permit a detailed discussion of the recent debate on Romanisation, which was, in many ways, sparked by the publication of Martin Millett's *The Romanization of Britain* in 1990.³ Rather, I would like to compare two approaches which have recently been proposed for the study of social identity in the Roman world, and discuss how far they are applicable to an investigation into non-élite culture. These approaches are, first, the work of Greg Woolf on Roman Gaul and, second, the model of 'cultural *bricolage*' proposed by Nicola Terrenato for the creation of Roman Italy.⁴ Despite their groundbreaking introduction of the concept of social agency into the debate, I shall argue that the models offered by these two scholars still focus too much on the changes observable in the culture of the élites. However, I am going to suggest that Terrenato's concept of *bricolage* provides a heuristic tool which, if it is conceptually extended, may also provide an appropriate framework for the study of the social processes taking place at the non-élite level.

'Becoming Roman'

The most important contribution made by the work of Woolf to the study of Romanisation is his notion of culture as a dynamic system. Woolf's model of Romanisation as cultural genesis, rather than acculturation, convincingly explains the

Roman Empire', in Webster and Cooper (1996), 19-34; M. Grahame (1998), 'Material culture and Roman identity. The spatial layout of Pompeian houses and the problem of ethnicity', in R. Laurence and J. Berry (eds.), *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire* (London), 156-178; R. Hingley (1996), 'The "legacy" of Rome: the rise, decline and fall of the theory of Romanisation', in Webster and Cooper (1996), 35-48; G. Woolf (1998), *Becoming Roman: the origins of provincial civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge), chapter 1.

² This gap is also noted by Richard Hingley ((2000), *Roman Officers and English Gentlemen. The imperial origins of Roman archaeology* (London), 152-55), and, with particular reference to the works of Terrenato and Woolf, by Simon James ((2001), 'Romanization and the peoples of Britain', in Keay and Terrenato (2001b), 205).

³ M. Millett (1990), *The Romanization of Britain. An Essay in Archaeological Interpretation* (Cambridge). For opinions that were largely or partly formed in response to Millett's work, see, for example, the contributions to Webster and Cooper (1996), as well as G. Woolf (1997), 'Beyond Romans and natives', *WA* 28.3: 339-50, and *idem* (1998), chapter 1.

⁴ Chiefly, Woolf (1997, 1998); Terrenato (1998a); *idem* (1998b), "'Tam Firmum Municipium": the Romanization of Volaterrae and its cultural implications', *JRS* 88: 94-114; *idem* (2001), 'A tale of three cities: the Romanization of northern coastal Etruria', in Keay and Terrenato (2001b), 54-67.

ubiquity of Roman material culture in Gaul as evidence for its internalisation by all members of provincial society.⁵ This internalisation of Roman culture renders the division of ‘Roman’ and ‘native’ redundant,⁶ and makes it possible to view the use of Roman material culture at all levels of provincial society as an expression of more complex and differentiated social identities by competent human agents. People did not live in a world which was simply divided into the categories of ‘native’ and ‘Roman’.⁷ Categories of social identity, such as gender, age or religion, would almost certainly have been much more relevant to most people on a daily basis,⁸ and Woolf’s model provides a possible way in which to conceive of how Roman material culture may have come to represent those categories.

However, a slight shortcoming of Woolf’s work may be identified in his attempt to explain *how* Roman material culture was internalised in the social representation of the sub-élite groups. His concept of a ‘formative period’ or ‘cultural revolution’, spanning the fifty or so years immediately after the Roman conquest of Gaul, in which Roman material culture replaced that of the Iron Age, is not entirely convincing for several reasons.⁹

The most problematic aspect of Woolf’s concept of a formative period during which Gallic cultures briefly ‘converged’ across the province, is the re-emergence of marked and deliberately expressed regional differences afterwards.¹⁰ If the formative period indeed saw the abandoning of traditional ways of life, even at the quotidian level, in a desperate effort to appropriate everything that was Roman, how then could those traditional ways suddenly re-appear and be expressed through the - by now internalised - Roman material culture? As I shall discuss, Woolf’s study of mass-consumption and, in particular, his largely quantitative analysis of the production and distribution of *sigillata*,¹¹ do not go far enough to explain the processes by which Roman culture may have been internalised by the sub-élite groups.

I shall briefly point out the main methodological problems of Woolf’s ceramic analysis. The dramatic spread of Italian *sigillata* and its replacement by Gaulish products from the end of the formative period are indeed interesting phenomena that do point towards a change in the daily life of the non-élite groups. But this

⁵ Woolf (1998), 18f., discusses the shortcomings of approaches based on acculturation.

⁶ Woolf (1997); *idem* (1998), chapter 1.

⁷ In particular, Woolf rejects the concept of *romanitas* as anachronistic: Woolf (1998), 54-60, 63-71; also see G. Woolf (2001), ‘The Roman cultural revolution in Gaul’, in Keay and Terrenato (2001b), 183.

⁸ See also the remarks by James (2001), 205.

⁹ Cf. Woolf (1998), chapter 7; Woolf (2001).

¹⁰ Woolf (1998), 238f.

¹¹ Woolf (1998), chapter 7, esp. 185-93.

phenomenon cannot be explored through quantitative analysis alone. Instead, this would require a detailed comparison between the contexts of production and consumption of the Italian and the Gaulish wares, and, most importantly, of the routines involved in their production. This would also imply that the imitation *sigillata* wares produced during the formative period should not be dismissed as ‘stop-gap solutions’,¹² but would have to be drawn into that comparison. For they are, after all, transitional products and therefore most likely to provide evidence for whether and how the routines of production and consumption changed, or did not change, in the everyday life of the sub-élite groups. Finally, some consideration should be given to the plain wares too, which account for the largest proportion of ceramics after the formative period.¹³ As Woolf himself points out, these locally made plain wares are themselves hybrid products, integrating native and Roman ceramic traditions,¹⁴ and it should thus be through these wares that the processes of change and continuity, observable during the formative period, could most successfully be studied.

The shortcoming of the model of Roman culture proposed by Woolf is, therefore, not so much the model itself, as his explanation of how this ‘structured system of differences that was highly differentiated’ may have been created.¹⁵ By contrast, I suggest that Terrenato’s model of ‘cultural *bricolage*’, which very much draws on and extends the approach of Woolf,¹⁶ potentially offers a way in which the creative aspect of Romanisation may be explained.

‘Cultural *bricolage*’

The term *bricolage* describes ‘a process in which new cultural items are obtained by means of attributing new functions to previously existing ones’. A classic example of this is provided by the way in which ‘the archaic system of élite alliance was transformed and made to serve a new purpose with imperial integration of the Italian aristocracies’. As a result of these processes of *bricolage*, Roman Italy was a cultural *collage*, ‘a complex patchwork made of elements of various age and provenance: some of them are new, but many others are old objects, refunctionalized in new forms and made to serve new purposes within new contexts’.¹⁷

¹² Cf. Woolf (1998), 238.

¹³ Woolf (1998), 194.

¹⁴ Woolf (1998), 194.

¹⁵ Cf. Woolf (1997), 340f.

¹⁶ Terrenato (1998a), 23.

¹⁷ Terrenato (1998a), 23. A comparable case has been convincingly argued for Roman sculpture by Tonio Hölscher, in (1987), *Römische Bildsprache als semantisches System* (Heidelberg); see also the

As I have already pointed out, and shall further explain below, I regard the concept of *bricolage* as heuristically useful for the study of Romanisation processes at *all* levels of society. However, I suggest that this potential has not been fully realised so far, and that Terrenato's application of the concept still places too much emphasis on the social identity of the élites. An example, taken from Terrenato's work on the *Ager Volaterranus*, will illustrate my point.

Based on field-survey evidence, Terrenato has demonstrated an impressive continuity in the settlement patterns of the hinterland of the northern Etruscan city of Volterra in the hellenistic period. Villa-style buildings do appear, with all their trappings, such as mosaic floors and columns. However, these structures seem to have been integrated into the existing settlement patterns; that is, they filled spaces which had already been taken up by élite dwellings in the previous period. Meanwhile, the buildings at the lower end of the settlement hierarchy do not appear to have changed over centuries.¹⁸ Terrenato, therefore, concludes that, in the case of Volterra, it was only the élites who took part in the cultural and political life of their counterparts across Roman Italy.¹⁹ By contrast, Romanisation did not at all affect the social identity of the sub-élite groups of the population of Volterra and its territory. They continued to live within their old social structures protected by the patronage of the élites. Social life within the regional community thus continued to be 'regulated by traditional, pre-Roman relationships'.²⁰

In its social rôle at the interface between this traditional community on the one hand, and the pan-Italian Romanised élites on the other hand, the Volterran aristocracy thus acted out two distinctly different social identities. Depending on with which of the two they were dealing at the time, they would have acted either as 'global players' or as feudal landlords.²¹ By contrast, the identity of the social groups below the élites remained the same as before, defined by their unchanging socio-economic relationship with their patrons. Roman culture to those sub-élite groups would have been synonymous with élite-culture, with which their relationship had not

discussion of hellenistic 'Formenvielfalt' in P. Zanker (1987a), *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder* (Munich), chapter 1.

¹⁸ Terrenato (1998b), 94-99.

¹⁹ Terrenato (1998b), 106-09.

²⁰ Terrenato (1998b), 108-12.

²¹ My use of this term should not be taken to imply that the terminology used to describe the modern phenomenon of globalisation should be applied to the study of Romanisation, as has recently been proposed by Robert Witcher ((2000), 'Globalisation and Roman imperialism. Perspectives on identities in Roman Italy', in E. Herring and K. Lomas (eds.), *The Emergence of State Identities in Italy in the First Millenium BC* (London), 213-26). See also the critical remarks, with regard to globalisation-paradigms in general, made by Hingley in this volume.

changed.²² According to Terrenato, the social identities of the sub-élite population were thus somewhat one-dimensional, in that they were primarily defined by formal relationships of political and economic control. In the following section, I am going to question this view. I shall attempt to look for other, less formally defined social relationships which would have mattered in the day-to-day lives of most people, and which would have been affected by the increasing involvement of the regional élites with their peers across Italy.

Towards a new approach

Even if the power relationships between the regional élites and the social groups below them did not *formally* change, their representation was transformed as a result of the Romanisation of Italy. The introduction of new material forms into the countryside, such as villas, and into the cities of Italy, such as monumental sanctuaries or theatres, radically changed the setting within which daily practices were carried out. It is through such daily practices that social relationships are regularly acted out, that they are represented. The setting, and the practices or routines which it frames, stand in a dialectical relationship with one another; and the setting thus becomes an activated part of the social interaction which it frames. The presence of new material forms within such a setting – as part of the social representation of one group – will, therefore, inevitably affect the self-definition of the social actors when carrying out their daily routines within this *locale*.²³

More concretely, I suggest that social identities, such as those relating to gender or age, were redefined, since the changing of the setting of daily interaction provided a new point of reference.²⁴ Furthermore, I think, it is necessary to conceive

²² Terrenato (1998b), 109-12.

²³ This term is used by Anthony Giddens to refer to a ‘setting for [social] interaction. A setting is not just a spatial parameter, and physical environment, in which interaction occurs: it is these elements mobilised as part of the interaction.’ (A. Giddens (1979), *Central Problems in Social Theory. Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Basingstoke and London), 207).

²⁴ With regard to urban life, such an activated setting may be understood in terms of the concept of *Stadtbild*, as defined by P. Zanker (1987b), *Stadtbilder als Spiegel von Gesellschaft und Herrschaftsform* (Mainz), esp. 3; see also P. Zanker (1990), ‘Einleitung’, in W. Trillmich and P. Zanker (eds.), *Stadtbild und Ideologie. Die Monumentalisierung hispanischer Städte zwischen Republik und Kaiserzeit* (Munich), 9f. The changing setting of human landscapes in long-term history is comprehensively discussed by C. Gosden (1994), *Social Being and Time* (Oxford), 84-100, 144-56. Recently, Peregrine Horden and Nicolas Purcell have discussed the changing rôle of particular forms of ‘ecological’ existence, as the reference points of the wider historical frameworks shift, in (2000), *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford), chapter 3, esp. 64f. on pastures in south

of power relations at more than merely the normative, official level.²⁵ In this respect, the works of Goffman and Giddens on front/back divisions offer a useful way of explaining how social actors may frontally conform to a social rule while, at the same time, making it quite clear that their view of themselves is not absorbed or defined by that rôle.²⁶ Therefore, I suggest that it is necessary to inquire how the self-definition – and thus the representation – of sub-élite populations changed as a result of the representational behaviour of their superiors, as, for example, expressed by the monumentalisation of urban sanctuaries in second-century BC central Italy.²⁷

It is through the analysis of the stylistic variability in everyday artefacts that, in my opinion, an inquiry into the changing social representations of sub-élite populations can be most successfully undertaken. Such variability at the micro-level can be related to the developments on the macro-scale, which may, in turn, be reflected by the more commonly observed material patterns, such as architectural changes. A suitable theoretical framework for such an inquiry is offered by the work of Danny Miller. In the introduction to his *Artefacts as Categories*, Miller writes: ‘The variability of objects is significant as a major source of evidence for the study of society, the artefactual environment being one of the main products of social action. It is anticipated, therefore, that an understanding of the forces which create artefactual variability can also contribute towards an understanding of the social.’²⁸

For the archaeologist, of course, ceramic vessels form the single most important source for the study of the creation of artefactual variability in everyday life. This is not only the case because pottery accounts for most of the material which is archaeologically recovered; but also because in ancient societies, pottery was present in most contexts in which daily social routines would have been carried out. It would thus have functioned as a marker of those contexts or, conversely, would have obtained its specific meaning through its presence in a particular context. In this way, pottery can be considered a ‘framing device’ which, depending on the particular context of social action, either frames this context or is framed by it; it is not by itself meaningful, or only rarely so, but instead creates and assumes social meaning by

Etruria. They do not, however, address the ways in which such system-changes may have affected the self-perception of the human agents within those ‘microregions’.

²⁵ See Giddens (1979), 93, 149 for a discussion of the reciprocal nature of social power.

²⁶ Giddens (1979), 208; *idem* (1984), *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge), xxv, 68-85; E. Goffman (1961), *Encounters. Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction* (Indianapolis), 84-152, *passim*.

²⁷ Discussed by Pierre Gros and Mario Torelli in (1988), *Storia dell'urbanistica. Il mondo romano* (Rome), 156-162; Zanker (1987a), 29 and Zanker (1990), 19.

²⁸ D. Miller (1985), *Artefacts as Categories. A study of ceramic variability in central India* (Cambridge), 1.

association.²⁹ In addition, the production of pottery is itself a routine involving productive choices at many stages; it is a material process of reproduction, the changes to which consciously or, more often, sub-consciously reflect a development in the social relations of the society producing and using the pottery. The style of the finished vessel, as the *opus operatum* of the socially conditioned *habitus* of the potter, is the medium through which those choices can be studied archaeologically.³⁰

As argued by Pierre Lemonnier, such productive choices, observable through artefactual style, should be interpreted as social representations.³¹ The particular social conditions and the social knowledge to which these representations refer vary from one sphere of social interaction to another.³² The productive choices made by the potter, therefore, ‘do not all have the same “signification”. If some seem to mark ethnic identity, others appear rather to respond to economic necessity.’³³ It is, therefore, impossible to categorise formal aspects of artefacts into those that carry communicative meaning and those that do not, on an *a priori* basis. In fact, it would be an oversimplification to assume that people create and perceive the material world as a system of pigeon-holes, let alone to presume that we can reconstruct this categorisation by invoking cross-cultural laws.³⁴ Nor is it permissible to postulate that certain aspects of artefactual form always refer to one particular aspect of social life, or that formal variation can be ‘read’ in a symbolic fashion.³⁵

²⁹ Miller (1985), 164, 175-83, 204.

³⁰ For the concept of *habitus*, see P. Bourdieu (1977), *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, Engl. transl. of French original published in 1972), 72-95; see also *idem* (1992), *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge, Engl. transl. of French original published in 1980), 52-65.

³¹ P. Lemonnier (1986), ‘The study of material culture today: toward an anthropology of technical systems’, *JAnthArch* 5: 172-80.

³² Lemonnier (1986), 173-80.

³³ Lemonnier (1986), 176.

³⁴ See also M. Dietler and I. Herbich (1998), ‘*Habitus*, techniques, style: an integrated approach to the social understanding of material culture and boundaries’, in M.T. Stark (ed.), *The Archaeology of Social Boundaries* (London), 236-42.

³⁵ Dietler and Herbich (1998), 243; O. Gosselain (1998), ‘Social and technical identity in a clay crystal ball’, in Stark (1998), 104; Miller (1985), 175f.; cf. I. Hodder (1990), ‘Style as historical quality’, in M. Conkey and C. Hastorf (eds.), *The Uses of Style in Archaeology* (Cambridge), 44-51. For reasons of brevity, I have chosen not to discuss the archaeological debate on style in any detail; for a comprehensive summary of these issues, see the contributions to Conkey and Hastorf (1990), in particular the papers by Sackett and Wiessner. As is evident from my comments in these pages, I regard Sackett’s ‘isochrestism’ as the best *a priori* approach to the definition of artefactual style (as, fundamentally, argued by J.R. Sackett (1982), ‘Approaches to style in lithic archaeology’, *JAnthArch* 1: 59-112).

By contrast, technological choices are conditioned by the specific context in which they are made; their meaning – and therefore the meaning of the stylistic elements which reflect these choices – is thus context-dependent. They are made in order to produce a representation of the structures within which the producing social agent is active.³⁶ Structural changes will, therefore, affect which choices are made; at the same time, the representations produced by these choices are themselves integral elements of those structures. Therefore, social structures and their representation through action are dialectically related, and productive activity is social action.³⁷

Ideally, therefore, when two ceramic vessels are compared, every choice involved in their production, as well as the ways in which these choices affect the form of those artefacts, should be taken into account. As a second step, possible continuities and discontinuities with regard to those productive choices, as well as resultant differences and similarities in artefactual form, should be studied within their historical dimension; that is, they should be related to other changes and continuities that are observable within the setting of interaction in which these choices are made. In this way, it may become possible to understand how stylistic choices may represent social structure through their culture- and context-specific classifications.³⁸

From the archaeological point of view, the possibilities of enquiry are, of course, drastically limited. However, I suggest that, within those limits, it is possible to relate particular stylistic choices, observable in everyday artefacts, to specific social concerns. By analysing stylistic changes over time, and by investigating how they may relate to specific developments of the activated setting in which they are made, archaeological inquiry will lead to an understanding of the historical development of those concerns.

Synthesis: ceramic production as *bricolage*

Ceramics are produced as a matter of routine; they reflect the *habitus* of the potter, which is adapted to the conditions of the social world in which he lives. As a change in this world of social relations will affect the ways in which the potter goes about his everyday routines, so this change will be reflected by the products of his routines. It is

³⁶ Typically, these choices are made at the level of the passive, ‘practical consciousness’, rather than at the level of the intentional, ‘discursive consciousness’; for the definition of these terms see Giddens (1979), 57-73.

³⁷ Lemonnier (1986), 156; see also the contributions to M.-A. Dobres and C.R. Hoffmann (eds.) (1999), *The Social Dynamics of Technology. Practice, Politics and World Views* (London). This dialectic is, of course, encapsulated by the concept of *habitus* (see my note 30).

³⁸ Lemonnier (1986), 172f.; Miller (1985), chapter 1.

not necessarily, and perhaps only rarely, with regard to the official, normative social relations that such change occurs. More frequently, such stylistic changes may reflect changes in the way in which social agents perceive their own rôles within those relations; that is, they represent changes in the subjective identities of these agents, which are represented in and become objectified through their practice. Such changes in practice will, in turn, alter the setting in which the social relations are acted out, and will, therefore, affect the representational behaviour of the other groups involved in the reproduction of these relations.³⁹

The stylistic choices which open themselves up to the potter when producing a ceramic vessel all have a point of reference in the world of social relations. Some choices might, for example, represent tradition, others might give the vessel a metallic look and thus refer to a status aspired to by the potter and his customers. In this way, a ceramic vessel is a piece of *collage*, created through an act of *bricolage*, and comprising a complex repertoire of social references.

Not only the producers, but also the users of ceramic vessels act as *bricoleurs* who imbue particular stylistic elements of pottery with referential meaning when using it in particular contexts. The production and use of artefacts cannot therefore be separated; instead, their relationship must be considered a dialectical one. While potters may succeed in introducing new stylistic elements and thus contribute to changes in the modes of representation of social relations, they can hardly be expected to control the particular place which their innovations might assume within the informal order of referential meaning.⁴⁰ The stylistic choices made by potters should rather be regarded as actively made, that is, as a result of their being part of the society for which they make pots, and within which they participate in an activated setting of social interaction.

By way of conclusion, I therefore suggest that the concept of *bricolage* proposed by Terrenato is heuristically useful for the study of Romanisation-processes at all levels of society. Even though direct contact with, or even awareness of the processes taking place at the pan-Italian level may not have been an issue among the regional populations, their social relations were affected by the changing settings in which they were routinely acted out. To a large extent, these changes were a

³⁹ Some of the stylistic elements of a ceramic vessel deposited as a votive at a monumentalised sanctuary may, for instance, be rather different from the corresponding elements in a pot which may have been used prior to the monumentalisation of the setting. The particular stylistic changes thus observed may potentially be regarded as representing a re-definition of the social identity of the worshipper, in response to the changes of the material setting in which that - hypothetical - ritual interaction would have taken place.

⁴⁰ E.g., Miller (1985), 190.

consequence of the introduction of new ways of social representation into the regions by the élites, which was made possible through the increasing degree of interaction – and competition – with their peers across Italy and the Empire. As Terrenato has convincingly argued, the introduction of such material forms to represent existing social relations should be considered an act of *bricolage* on the part of the élites.⁴¹ In this paper, I have attempted to argue not only that similar processes of re-structuring also took place at the sub-élite level, but also that it is conceptually and methodologically possible to investigate *how* social representations at the quotidian level may have changed, and with reference to *what*.

The study of the choices involved in the production of ceramic vessels, and in the uses to which these vessels were put in particular contexts, provides evidence for the mobilisation of available resources by non-élite groups, in response to the ways in which the Romanisation of Italy was represented to them. *Bricolage* should be regarded as a way in which resources were mobilised at *all* levels of society,⁴² in response to changing settings of social interaction. Of course, just as the perceptions of those changes varied from one group to another, and from situation to situation, so did the resources of these groups differ greatly. But even though it may have taken different forms, this re-deployment of available resources at all levels of society can ultimately be related to the wider processes involved in the Romanisation of Italy.

⁴¹ Terrenato (1998b), 95-99 and *passim*.

⁴² As originally postulated – but not put into practice at the non-élite level – by Terrenato (1998a), 23.