

7. Through the Flames of the Pyre: The continuing search for Anglo-Saxon infants and children

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Over the last thirty years many studies have explored the ways in which gender, the lifecycle and social hierarchy were expressed through Anglo-Saxon funerary rites. Such studies have mainly examined the relationship between the age and sex of individuals and the material culture with which they were buried, the form of their grave and its location within the cemetery. However, this research has focused overwhelmingly upon inhumation burials (e.g. Lucy 1998; Stoodley 2000), while contemporary sites where cremation was the predominant funerary rite have been relatively understudied and largely excluded from social archaeologies of the period (for exceptions, see Richards 1987; Lucy 2000; Ravn 2003). It is no surprise, therefore, that within the context of studies of Anglo-Saxon childhood it has been the evidence of inhumation cemeteries that has principally informed interpretations. For example, in her analysis of the treatment of children in the Anglo-Saxon funerary rite, Sally Crawford (1999, 16) mainly drew on the evidence from inhumation cemeteries, stating that '[c]remation cemeteries ... may yield some information about early Anglo-Saxon society, but their interpretation is much more difficult than inhumation sites, so inhumations are the major source of archaeological evidence for childhood in the earlier Anglo-Saxon period'. However, given the considerable amount of information extracted from cremated bone from a number of large early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, including Sancton I (East Yorkshire) (McKinley 1993), Spong Hill (Norfolk) (McKinley 1994), Cleatham and Elsham (both North Lincolnshire) (Squires 2011), an understanding of this funerary rite can, in fact, now be achieved, along with the ways in which the youngest members of society were treated in this funerary context. This chapter sets out to redress the balance in studies of Anglo-Saxon childhood, and to provide a detailed analysis of the ways in which infants (birth to four years) and children (five to twelve years) were treated and disposed of in the cremation ritual of early Anglo-Saxon England through an examination of demographic profiles and accompanying grave assemblages. It will be argued that infants and children were treated in a similar manner in death regardless of the funerary rites that were practiced by the communities in which they lived.

Children in the Anglo-Saxon funerary ritual: where are they?

The examination of age organisation by funerary archaeologists primarily deals with the differential treatment of individuals belonging to different stages of the lifecycle, with respect to the burial conditions and deposition of age-specific objects (Parker Pearson 1999, 74). The main aim of such analyses among Anglo-Saxon archaeologists interested in childhood has been to provide an insight into attitudes towards, and special treatment afforded to, the youngest members of early Anglo-Saxon communities in life and death (Crawford 1999, 19–32; Lucy 2000, 87–90, 111; Stoodley 2000, 105–18). A recurrent issue among such studies is the significant deficiency of infants and children from early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries where inhumation is the predominant rite. The cemetery at Great Chesterford (Essex), which is dominated by the inhumation rite, appears to be exceptional in that 49% of the cemetery population is comprised of non-adults, and Vera Evison (1994, 31) has concluded that all individuals of the Great Chesterford community were buried in this graveyard regardless of age. In contrast, infant and child mortality rates from most contemporary cemeteries have long been recognised as being considerably lower than at Great Chesterford (Crawford 1993, 84; Stoodley 1999, 106). For example, 27% of the cemetery population from Worthy Park (Hampshire) were below thirteen years of age (12% infants; 15% children) (Wells *et al.* 2003, 154–57), and a similar percentage was noted at Butler's Field, Lechlade (Gloucestershire) (19% infants; 8% children) (Harman 1998, 48–52). This mortality profile is not what should be expected among pre-modern populations, when infant (less than one year old) mortality should be as high as 40 to 50% (Weiss and Wobst 1973; Coale and Demeny 1983). A number of suggestions have been put forward as to the whereabouts of these missing individuals from early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, and each of these hypotheses will be briefly explored as a context for the results presented in this chapter.

First, it has been suggested that due to the fragility of infant bones these skeletal remains are more prone to taphonomic decomposition than the remains of older individuals, especially at sites with acidic soils (Crawford 1993, 84; Scott 1999, 121). However, Jo Buckberry (2000) has disputed this notion as a plausible explanation since under favourable burial conditions the bones of infants and young children can survive just as well as their adult counterparts. Buckberry (2000) also points out that acidic, gravely or sandy soil not only destroys the skeletal remains of the youngest members of society but can cause the loss of entire adult skeletons. The inhumation graves at Snape and Sutton Hoo (both Suffolk), for example, show evidence for this type of taphonomic process. The sandy soil destroyed a significant proportion of bone from these cemeteries, and, in many cases, the presence of human-shaped soil stains provided the only evidence for inhumation burials (Carver 1992, 352; Filmer-Sankey and Pestell 2001, 248). In sum, the skeletal remains of infants and children survive as well or as poorly as those of adults.

Secondly, it has been argued that interment in shallow graves, which consequently led to post-depositional disturbance, plays a significant role in the poor preservation of infant and child burials from early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries (Crawford 1993, 84; Crawford 1999, 76; Scott 1999, 121). This is exemplified at the cemetery at Butler's Field, Lechlade, which was excavated in 1985 (Boyle and Palmer 1998, 1). Shallow graves

were recorded on two occasions at this site, one of which contained a foetus while the second held the remains of a foetus or young infant, and both have been interpreted as a careless approach to the burial of very young individuals (Crawford 1999, 76). The burial of a cadaver, regardless of age, in a shallow grave or in the topsoil faces the risk of disturbance from scavengers and could, indeed, account for the small number of infants and children in the funerary record. However, if this practice was intentionally carried out due to the age of an individual, it was certainly not uniformly undertaken, even within the same cemetery, as is demonstrated by the presence of individuals belonging to the same age thresholds that have survived in the early Anglo-Saxon funerary record (Scott 1999, 121). Thus, it seems more likely that many young individuals from the early Anglo-Saxon period were excluded from burial in community cemeteries as a result of cultural influences and ideological beliefs, rather than taphonomic factors. Indeed, while taphonomic factors could equally have affected infant burials from the late Anglo-Saxon period, infants are found in greater numbers in the funerary record of this period (Lucy 1994, 27), and this may be attributable to the introduction of Christianity and interment within consecrated ground (see Craig-Atkins this volume).

Third, recovery bias is a factor that may contribute to the dearth of infants and children from cemeteries of the early Anglo-Saxon period. It is possible that the identification of skeletal remains belonging to immature individuals is dependent on the research interests of the excavator, the area of excavation and time constraints upon archaeological recovery and post-excavation analysis of skeletal remains (Buckberry 2000). The gracile nature of infant remains has sometimes led to them being overlooked during the excavation process and only recognised during the post-excavation analysis of an assemblage. This is demonstrated by the discovery of foetal remains only during the post-excavation osteological assessment of a female burial from the cemetery at Butler's Field, Lechlade; these foetal remains had not been noted during the excavation itself (Crawford 1999, 76).

Fourth, cultural influences have also been considered as factors that led to the differential burial treatment of infants in the early Anglo-Saxon period. It has recently been suggested, for example, that the low frequency of infants from early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries can, at least partly, be accounted for by their burial within settlements and buildings (Hamerow 2006; Crawford 2008), a practice that has also been identified on the continent (Beilke-Voigt 2008), and in Iron Age and Roman Britain (Armit and Ginn 2007; Moore 2009). Helena Hamerow (2006, 13) has pointed out that one third of the human deposits from early Anglo-Saxon settlement contexts belonged to infants, which is a higher frequency of infants than is usually found in contemporary cemeteries. Despite the fact that the sample used in Hamerow's (2006, 4–7) study is rather small, the percentage of infants from settlements is closer to the expected rates of infant mortality compared to cemetery sites of the same period (see above, p. 115). The discovery of infants interred in domestic contexts has been linked to both fertility ideology and infanticide (Scott 1999, 122; Hamerow 2006, 28). It has been proposed that the presence of infants within the domestic sphere may represent an offering to ensure future fertility of the community and protect stored grain (Hamerow 2006, 28). A similar practice has been observed among Hindu-practicing communities in Nepal, where children are buried close to non-arable land in the vicinity of the home (Oestigaard 2000, 24). In this ethnographic study, Terje Oestigaard (2000, 24) suggests that the community believed

that the spirit and soul of the deceased infant or child should stay close to the family home as it would have a positive influence on the mother's fertility.

Sally Crawford (1999, 66–7) has suggested that while there is a good chance that infanticide would have been frowned upon during the Anglo-Saxon period it may have been a means of controlling the size of a family unit or disguising the conception of an illegitimate child, and this may have been another factor accounting for burial of infants away from communal cemeteries. It has been argued that similar practices were employed to control the size of family groups in early Anglo-Saxon England. Based on the work of Hansueli Etter and Jürg Schneider (1982, 53), which deals in part with the funerary treatment of infants and children on the continent in the early medieval period, Theya Molleson (1991, 118) has suggested that the Saxons introduced the custom of so-called 'fitness testing' upon their arrival in Britain. This practice involved subjecting babies to cold water, which was most likely to have been a stream or river. If the infant survived it is thought that the baby was kept, but if not, the infant was left in the body of water. This procedure may have been perpetuated to control population numbers for social or economic reasons or may have been used to ensure that only the strongest individuals survived (Molleson 1991, 120). However, there is no direct evidence for this practice in early Anglo-Saxon England, whether documentary or archaeological.

Finally, and of most direct relevance to the present chapter, cremation has been suggested as a mortuary rite disproportionately afforded to the youngest members of society, which might explain the small number of burials of infants and children among early Anglo-Saxon communities practicing inhumation (Crawford 1999, 76; Leahy 2007, 60). For example, in seeking to explain the low numbers of infants in inhumation cemeteries, Crawford (1999, 76) has suggested that '[o]ther methods may have been used to dispose of infants, such as cremation without subsequent burial', while Kevin Leahy (2007, 60) has proposed that the low frequency of infants and children among the inhumation burials at the Cleatham cemetery 'may be due ... to a tendency to cremate children's bodies'. At the time of Leahy's (2007) publication, the idea that infants and children were cremated, as opposed to receiving an inhumation rite, was a plausible explanation given that cremation was the prevalent funerary rite at the Cleatham cemetery, although his report appeared without an analysis of the cremated remains, which had not, at that point, been studied (see Squires 2011). A major problem with this theory is that a detailed assessment of infants and children from a range of cremation cemeteries has never been carried out. This is necessary, and long overdue, to determine whether the small number of infants and children from inhumation cemeteries really is accounted for by high numbers among cremation deposits.

In this chapter, an examination of the demographic profile of Anglo-Saxon cremated bone assemblages aims to establish whether the 'missing' infants and children from inhumation cemeteries were afforded cremation rites. Osteological data that have been obtained through the analysis of cremated bone from infant and child burials will be examined in conjunction with an assessment of associated grave assemblages, including artefacts, cinerary urns and animal bone. Subsequently, these results will be compared with the provision of grave furnishings that were offered to infants and children from contemporary inhumation burials. Based on funerary evidence, this chapter aims to provide an insight into the perceptions and attitudes that were displayed towards the youngest members of early Anglo-Saxon society.

Demography

Before commencing the analysis of early Anglo-Saxon cremation cemeteries, the methodologies for determining age from cremated remains need to be established. As a result of modern cremation methods, there has long been a false impression that the resultant material from the cremation process is fine ash (Murad 1998, 94). However, before the bones are removed from modern cremation hearths, the skeletal remains are still identifiable in their anatomical position, and are subsequently crushed until the cremated material is no longer recognisable (McKinley 1994, 75; Murad 1998, 94–5; Warren and Schultz 2002, 657; Warren *et al.* 2002, 38). This practice was not carried out in Anglo-Saxon England, and, therefore, fragments of bone and teeth can be identified to provide evidence for the number of individuals within a burial, the age and sex of the deceased and the presence of any palaeopathological conditions. Unfused epiphyseal surfaces and tooth development, including the presence of unerupted dentition, are the most valuable diagnostic skeletal elements required for detecting the presence of infants and children within a cremation burial (Moorrees *et al.* 1963; Scheuer and Black 2000) (Figures 7.1 and 7.2). As an individual grows older, the number of these useful age markers decreases and, as a result, establishing the age of an individual becomes more difficult. Thus, the identification of infants and children among cremation assemblages is, to an extent, easier than establishing explicit age categories for adults. In contrast, it is worth stating that, as with unburnt, inhumed bone, the determination of the sex of infants and children cannot be reliably undertaken. The primary reason why traditional osteological methods that are used to ascertain the sex of adults cannot be used in the analysis of infants and children is because sexual dimorphism does not commence until adolescence in both males and females (Scheuer and Black 2004, 14). It should be noted that the age groupings used in this study follow those employed by Jacqueline McKinley (1993; 1994) in her reports on Sancton I and Spong Hill. The aim of employing these age groupings during the analysis of the Elsham and Cleatham assemblages by the present author (Squires 2011) was to facilitate comparisons with the Sancton I and Spong Hill cemeteries, as the latter two cemeteries produced a significant quantity of cremated skeletal material and, consequently, a large body of demographic data.

The findings outlined in this chapter are based on the analysis of nine cemeteries where cremation was the dominant or sole funerary rite: Snape (Suffolk); Rayleigh and Mucking (both Essex); Spong Hill and Caistor-by-Norwich (both Norfolk); Sancton I (East Yorkshire); Newark (Nottinghamshire); and Elsham and Cleatham (both North Lincolnshire). Evidence was also included from thirteen sites where the inhumation rite was practiced, either as the sole mortuary tradition or alongside cremation: Great Chesterford and Mucking (both Essex); Butler's Field, Lechlade (Gloucestershire); Berinsfield (Oxfordshire); Worthy Park (Hampshire); Beckford A and B (Worcestershire); Buckland (Kent); Edix Hill (Cambridgeshire); Spong Hill (Norfolk); Sewerby (East Yorkshire); Castledyke South and Cleatham (both North Lincolnshire). The percentages of infants and children at the cemeteries examined in this chapter were determined in light of the total number of individuals that could be assigned to a biological age category. Among the assemblages considered in this chapter, an average of 11% of individuals were afforded the cremation rite (Figure 7.3) and 8% of individuals that were buried following the inhumation tradition (Figure 7.4) belonged to the infant age



Figure 7.1. Unerupted tooth crowns from burial MT84FX (burial 230) at Cleatham (North Lincolnshire) (photograph author, with permission of North Lincolnshire Museum).



Figure 7.2. Unfused femur diaphysis from burial MT84DM (burial 260) at Cleatham (North Lincolnshire) (photograph author, with permission of North Lincolnshire Museum).

grouping (0 to four years). Thus, it is clear that infants are under-represented among both inhumation *and* cremation practicing populations. A similar picture emerged when examining children (five to twelve years) from these sites. In total, 14% of individuals from the cremation burials and 12% of individuals from the inhumations were assigned to the child category (Figures 7.3 and 7.4). Among all cemeteries where cremation was the dominant mortuary rite the number of foetuses, infants and children was very similar, with the exception of Caistor-by-Norwich (Figure 7.3). This cemetery produced an unusually high frequency of children (39%), and this may illustrate that a wider selection of individuals of the Caistor-by-Norwich population were afforded the cremation rite and subsequently buried in the cemetery than was the case elsewhere. Calvin Wells (1973, 120) notes that the excavator of this site – F. R. Mann – showed a clear preference for the collection of skeletal remains of children, particularly teeth, over those of adults, and this may account for the demographic profile of this cemetery. Nonetheless, the percentage of infants at this site is still low, at just 7%.

Some of the sites examined in this study have provided evidence for the use of both inhumation and cremation, for example Spong Hill (Hills *et al.* 1984; McKinley 1994), Cleatham (Jakob 1999; Leahy 2007; Squires 2011) and Mucking (Mays 2009). The demographic profile of infants and children from these mixed-rite cemeteries is striking: expressed as a percentage of the total number of aged burials, the cremation burials produce at least twice the number of infants and children compared to the inhumations (Figure 7.5). These results can be, perhaps, partly attributed to the fact that cremation was the dominant rite at these three sites and consequently a higher proportion of the cemetery population was afforded this funerary rite. Furthermore, it may also be the case that a select group of individuals, mainly adult, were afforded inhumation at such sites; it is notable, for example, that the percentages of foetuses, infants and children were even lower among the inhumation burials at these mixed-rite cemeteries than in other inhumation cemeteries (Figures 7.4 and 7.5). More broadly, it does appear to be the case that infants and children are more likely to be interred in

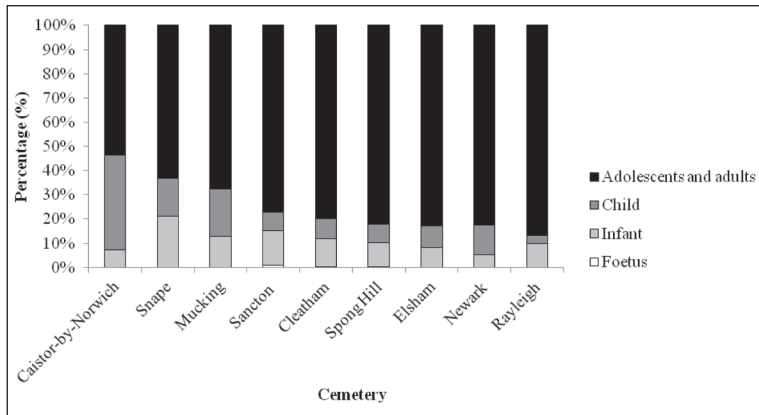


Figure 7.3. Percentage of foetuses, infants and children from the total number of cremation burials from nine early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries.

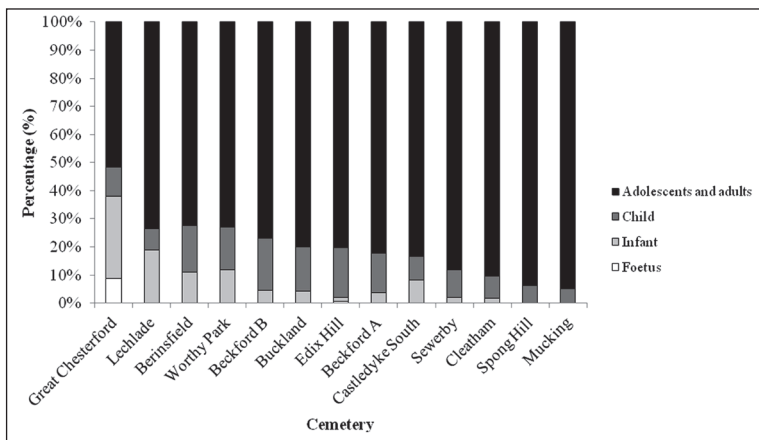


Figure 7.4. Percentage of foetuses, infants and children from the total number of inhumation burials from thirteen early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries.

the community cemetery among groups practicing cremation. In contrast, inhumation practicing groups appear to have more frequently excluded the youngest members of society from large burial sites. Yet, despite the fact that the cremation cemeteries have produced a larger number of infants and children than contemporary inhumation cemeteries, the total number of these individuals cannot, on their own, account for the low number of immature inhumation burials.

The results outlined in this chapter reveal that the average numbers of infants and children from Anglo-Saxon cremation burials are almost as low as those recorded from contemporary inhumation cemeteries. Thus, it is clear that there was not, in general, a preferential tendency for infants and children to be cremated rather than buried, and

Site	Burial type	Foetus	Infant	Child	Total number of aged burials	% of foetuses, infants and children
Cleatham	Inhumations	0	1	5	62	10
Cleatham	Cremations	3	99	71	856	20
Spong Hill	Inhumations	0	0	2	32	6
Spong Hill	Cremations	2	219	168	2196	18
Mucking	Inhumations	0	0	5	98	5
Mucking	Cremations	0	37	56	288	32

Figure 7.5. Number and frequency of foetuses, infants and children observed from three early Anglo-Saxon mixed-rite cemeteries.

this cannot, contrary to previous suggestions, account for the ‘missing’ infants and children of inhumation practicing groups. There is certainly variation in demographic profiles between cemeteries, but this variation is similar among both cremation and inhumation cemeteries. In sum, infants and children were treated in a similar manner among communities that performed both inhumation and cremation rites.

Grave assemblages

The following section of this chapter will examine the artefacts that were interred with infants and children that were afforded the cremation rite. These grave provisions will be compared with those provided for individuals allocated to the same age categories in inhumation cemeteries. It begins, however, by contrasting the grave (and pyre) goods found in inhumation and cremation burials more generally, in order to highlight what appear to have been the ideological differences between communities that practiced the different mortuary rites. As we will see, these contrasts make the similar treatment of infants and children in death even more striking. In addition, an interesting relationship that was identified between biological age and cinerary urn height will also be addressed in this section. Of course, the association between age and vessel height cannot be compared with contemporary inhumation burials, since the dead were not interred within such receptacles. Yet this discussion aims to highlight that age played an important role in the selection of grave provisions among cremation practicing groups.

The use of both the cremation and inhumation rites at different sites, or indeed within the same cemetery, has been suggested to represent groups holding distinctive ideological beliefs (Williams 2002, 66). This is particularly notable given the differential grave assemblages and actual funerary ceremonies afforded to individuals that belonged to groups that followed divergent mortuary customs. It has been widely recognised that early Anglo-Saxon inhumations display clear gender divisions (Härke 1990; Stoodley 1999; Lucy 2000). Jewellery and dress-accessories, for example brooches and wrist clasps, along with weaving-related items, are strongly associated with females, while military accoutrements, such as swords, shields, and spears, are closely connected with

males. Artefacts that occurred with both sexes, often referred to as 'gender neutral', comprised knives, buckles and pottery vessels (Lucy 2000, 87). In stark contrast, cremation burials do not show such clearly defined sex or gender specific divisions based on grave provision (Squires 2011), though some discrete associations do occur and will be discussed later in this chapter.

Howard Williams (2005, 269) has suggested that weapons were infrequently employed in the cremation rite as they acted as mnemonic agents, which represented personhood in an idealised form and were accordingly more suited to the inhumation rite. In contrast, the utilisation of combs and toilet articles in the cremation ritual generated select memories through the display and transformation, fragmentation and redistribution of bodies and artefacts (Williams 2005, 269). This has significant implications and points to ideological differences between communities that practiced different funerary rituals. Combs, in particular, appear to have been an intrinsic part of the cremation rite, though are much rarer in contemporary inhumation burials (Williams 2003, 113). These items were made of bone or antler and were interred with cremated individuals regardless of age or sex. Interestingly, combs were rarely placed on the cremation pyre and were most frequently placed in the cinerary urn in an unburnt state along with the cremated bone after the funerary ritual. Williams (2003, 116–17) has proposed that combs were important items for rituals surrounding personal grooming, and despite being a common item they appear to have been significant personal objects. Complete combs are extremely rare in early Anglo-Saxon cremation burials, and, based on the fact that the recovery of half-combs or even smaller fragments is more common, it appears that these objects were intentionally damaged before deposition (Williams 2003, 107–8). Williams (2010, 74) has suggested that the deliberate breakage of combs would have prevented other individuals from using these artefacts, while the possible distribution of comb fragments between the living and dead would have prompted an ongoing connection between the deceased and living kin. The miniature toilet sets and combs that have been recovered would have been impractical for use in life, suggesting that they were produced solely for funerary purposes (Williams 2010, 74). Williams (2010, 75) has suggested that miniature combs and toilet articles held amuletic and regenerative properties, which were possibly thought to protect the dead and aid the deceased's transformation into a new form in the afterlife. Overall, it appears that various elements of an individual's identity were represented in the cremation rite through the combination of different objects in the grave repertoire. However, these associations are not as clear cut as those identified from contemporary inhumation burials. Instead of displaying the idealised form of an individual in the mortuary rite, cremation practicing groups seem to have been more selective in remembering the dead and emphasising the transformation of the deceased into a new form. Moreover, the frequent use and deposition of combs and toilet sets, which included both full-sized and miniature tweezers, earscoops, razors, shears and blades, in the cremation rite, but scarcely at all in the inhumation rite, illustrates further differences in the ideological beliefs of groups practicing cremation and inhumation.

The remaining section of this chapter will explore grave provisions from infant and child cremation burials from early Anglo-Saxon England, which will, in turn, be compared with grave assemblages from contemporary inhumation burials. To begin, an examination between age and the height of cinerary urns will be provided. Evidence

from Sancton I (McKinley 1993, 314), Spong Hill (McKinley 1994, 102) and the results presented in Julian Richards' (1987, 137) multi-site study, which incorporated 18 cemeteries, illustrated that infants and children were typically buried in shorter urns than adults. In addition, as part of the present study, statistical analyses were carried out on the evidence from the Elsham and Cleatham cemeteries, and these tests produced results that were highly statistically significant, confirming the hypothesis that infants and children were buried in shorter urns than adults at these cemeteries. There are practical reasons that, perhaps, account for cinerary urn selection. For example, based on analyses from the Elsham and Cleatham cemeteries, it is notable that the weight of cremated bone from infants and children was significantly less than that from individuals belonging to older age categories. Adults produced more cremated bone than infants and children and, consequently, taller urns would have been required to accommodate the large amount of skeletal material from older individuals. Nonetheless, cultural factors may have still played an important role in the selection of funerary receptacles. There are apparent gradations in vessel height, which relate to each age category from the Elsham and Cleatham cemeteries (Squires 2013, 164). These results support the notion that practical reasons were not the only factors that were considered when selecting cinerary urns. It is possible that adults were interred in taller vessels as these may have indicated the status and position an individual had achieved in life (Richards 1987, 136). These positions were likely to have been ascribed to individuals as they passed through the various age thresholds and, as such, represented important stages of an individual's life, for example the transition to adulthood.

The Elsham and Cleatham evidence was examined by the present author to determine whether there was a relationship between age and the interment of faunal remains (Squires 2011). Animals clearly played an integral part in the early Anglo-Saxon cremation rite. Cremated faunal remains illustrate that animals were placed on the funerary pyre alongside the deceased, either as joints of meat or whole bodies, and their burned bones were deposited in an urn or pit. Statistical analyses revealed that infants and children were less likely to have been afforded animal offerings than adolescents and adults at both Elsham and Cleatham. A similar pattern has been observed at Newark (Harman 1989, 24), Sancton I (McKinley 1993, 310) and Spong Hill (McKinley 1994, 99). In addition, these sites also illustrated that older individuals were afforded a wider range of species than infants and children, who were most commonly afforded joints of meat from small to medium-sized domesticates, particularly sheep/goat (Harman 1989, 24; McKinley 1993, 310; McKinley 1994, 99). In contrast to Anglo-Saxon cremation burials, animals appear to have played a less important role in the contemporary inhumation rite as these types of burials produce a smaller number of faunal remains (Williams 2001, 197; Bond and Worley 2006, 90). This discrepancy appears to show that animals played a more important role in the funerary customs, and possibly the beliefs, of individuals belonging to cremation practicing communities. As a result of the limited number of cemeteries that have produced significant quantities of animal bone from inhumation burials, very little work has been conducted on the lifecycle and provision of faunal offerings in the inhumation rite (Fern 2007; Lee 2007). Based on the inhumation assemblages examined in this chapter, it is notable that all ages and both sexes were afforded animal offerings, though the inhumation burials that did produce animal bone occur in very small numbers (Evison 1994, 35; McKinley 1994, 137; Wilson 1995, 109–11;

Evison and Hill 1996, 1, 77, 88; Leahy 2007, 231–43; Lee 2007, 62). However, faunal remains were found in greater numbers at the cemeteries of Castledyke South, where they were found in 16% of graves, (Nicholson 1998, 236) and Butler's Field, Lechlade, recovered from 30% of graves (Boyle *et al.* 1998, 53–137), which permits some tentative conclusions to be drawn about the deposition of animal remains in inhumations. An examination of these data by the present author revealed that 9% of individuals from the Castledyke South assemblage and 32% of the Lechlade assemblage that were afforded animal offerings were under thirteen years of age. Despite the fact that the amount of animal bone recovered from the inhumations at these two sites was small compared to the amount of faunal remains found in contemporary cremation burials, it is notable that infants and children, regardless of the funerary rite they were afforded, were also less likely than adolescents and adults to have been provided with animal offerings.

Both practical and cultural factors may explain why infants and children were less likely than adolescents and adults to have been provided animal offerings in the mortuary arena. Infants and children would have required a smaller pyre (or grave, when considering the inhumation rite) and the presence of numerous animals, either as joints of meat or whole, would have required additional labour and economic investment, which may not have been deemed viable for individuals belonging to the youngest age thresholds (McKinley 1993, 311). Cultural beliefs may have also influenced the provision and number of animals that were afforded to an individual, which could have applied to both cremation and inhumation practicing groups. The presence of faunal remains in cremation burials seems to reflect the rites of passage that an individual had gone through during their life; for example, animal bone was strongly associated with adolescents compared to infants and children. During adolescence, new roles and responsibilities would have been assigned to individuals. Some of these roles are likely to have involved the management of livestock and participation in economic activities, such as weaving (Richards 1987, 125). Therefore, increased interaction with animals and the contribution to a community's economy may have warranted the endowment of an animal(s) in the cremation rite.

Statistical analyses were also carried out by the author in an attempt to establish whether infants and children were equally as likely to have been afforded pyre and grave goods as adolescents and adults. The results for Elsham illustrated that there was not a significant relationship between age and the presence of grave goods at this site. In contrast, statistically significant results from Cleatham demonstrated that adolescents and adults were more likely to have been buried with pyre and grave goods than the younger members of the cemetery population. The lack of pyre and grave goods associated with infants and children at Cleatham may be explained by their age and position in the community. As a result of the social standing of these individuals, it is possible that they were provided objects fashioned out of organic materials (for example wood). Such artefacts would be invisible in the archaeological record owing to the destructive nature of the cremation process and/or unfavourable burial environment. Items fashioned out of more durable materials, which therefore *perhaps* were deemed to be of greater value, were more commonly found with adolescents and adults and may have reflected their position within society. The fact that infants and children were just as likely to have been afforded pyre and grave goods as adolescents and adults from Elsham may indicate inter-site variation, and that the number of objects provided at an

individual's funeral may have been more significant at Elsham. For example, infants and children may have been provided with a smaller number of items, for example a single bead, than adolescents and adults owing to their social role and position within the community. Unfortunately, due to the loss of objects as a result of cremation and the burial environment, it is difficult to confirm that the number of objects afforded to an individual was a means of signifying social position at Elsham. Nonetheless, the information obtained from an examination of the cinerary urns and animal remains at this site illustrates that infants and children were unlikely to have been regarded as 'small adults' or 'low-status adults' (Richards 1987, 130; Crawford 1999, 169). The notion that infants and children were classified as 'small adults' in early Anglo-Saxon England can be dismissed due to its simplicity and the fact that these individuals were buried in shorter urns and less likely to have been afforded animal offerings from all sites examined in this study. This evidence alone is indicative that they were differentiated from older members of society.

When considering artefact types, cluster and correspondence analysis showed that there was no evidence for objects that were solely afforded to infants and children in the cremation rites at Elsham and Cleatham. Some of the most commonly occurring items that were found in the burials of infants and children from these sites included combs, beads and spindle whorls. These objects were found in high numbers in infant and child burials at both sites, although rings and brooches also occurred in relatively high numbers at Cleatham. Spindle whorls are associated with the production of textiles, which are frequently linked to female economic activities, such as weaving and spinning (Gilchrist 2011, 160), while brooches, rings and beads are associated with dress and the social identity of women. It has also been suggested that spindle whorls and beads held healing and protective properties, which indicates that these objects may have been included in grave assemblages for their amuletic significance (Meaney 1981, 206–7). Interestingly, these types of artefacts also occurred in adult deposits at Elsham and Cleatham, particularly among female grave provision. Similarly, McKinley (1994, 90) has noted that the range of artefacts interred with infants at Spong Hill closely reflected the grave assemblage found with females. Comparable with cremation burials, no artefact type has been found exclusively with infants and children from contemporary inhumation graves (Crawford 2000, 171). However, knives, beads, buckles, brooches, containers, pins and coins are frequently recorded from inhumations belonging to individuals under ten years of age (Crawford 2000, 174). Similar to the grave furnishings found with infants and children in cremation burials, objects possessing female and ungendered connotations are associated with infants and children from contemporary inhumation cemeteries. These observations highlight that both inhumation and cremation practicing groups had similar attitudes towards the gendering of infants and children, at least in the context of funerary rites. This may be related to the participation of infants and children, regardless of sex, in basic domestic (feminine) tasks, which suggests that their mothers (or other female carers that belonged to their extended kin group) influenced the social standing of these young individuals (Stoodley 2000, 465). The fact that adolescents and adults were more likely to have been afforded animal offerings may support the notion that as individuals reached adolescence, particularly males, they were ascribed roles and responsibilities that were not solely centred around domestic dwellings.

Artefacts from infant and child burials, both cremations and, to an extent, inhumations, closely reflect the material culture found with young individuals interred in domestic contexts. These burials were often accompanied by animal bone, pottery sherds, spindle whorls, combs and pins (Crawford 2008, 198). Based on the lack of so-called prestige items, such as weapons and jewellery, artefact assemblages found in domestic contexts are thought to have belonged to 'lower status' individuals (Crawford 2000, 173). Two notable examples of such burials are worth pointing out, as they may present a different picture. At Eye Kettleby (Leicestershire), an infant found in a sunken-featured building was accompanied by a complete pottery vessel (Hamerow 2006, 5), while at Yarnton (Oxfordshire) a probable two- to three-year-old was associated with two probable female adults, animal bone and pottery (Hamerow 2006, 7). The notion that these deposits were 'low status' should not be readily accepted. Instead, burials that are located in close proximity to the living, especially areas that would have been frequented by women, appear to have held ideological, or even amuletic, significance. The assemblages found with infants and children in both cemetery and domestic contexts may have been intentionally selected by mourners to demonstrate the close connection between young individuals, their (female) carers in life and the home as a means of protection in the afterlife (Sofaer-Derevenski 1997, 192; Kamp 2001, 3; Hamerow 2006, 19). As mentioned above, it appears that the status of infants and children in their early years was influenced by their mothers. Sally Crawford (2008, 198) has noted that infant burials from settlement sites are often neglected in analyses as they are typically found in areas, for example in the floors of sunken-featured buildings and pits, where material is frequently classified as casual deposits or discarded waste. Yet, as this chapter has illustrated, infants and children that were buried in domestic contexts were accompanied by objects that were carefully chosen by the living and cannot be classed as casual deposits. Overall, based on an examination of grave provision, it appears that attitudes towards infants and children were extremely similar among inhumation and cremation practicing communities, and this similarity of treatment extended into contexts in which such young individuals were buried in settlements.

Conclusion

One of the aims of this chapter was to assess the hypothesis that the missing infants from cemeteries where inhumation was the dominant rite had, instead, been cremated. This can now be dismissed. Instead, perhaps areas outside of community cemeteries, such as woodland and forested areas in addition to settlements and boundaries, should be focused on to gain a greater understanding of the mortuary treatment and social attitudes towards infants and children during the early Anglo-Saxon period. This chapter has also addressed the mortuary rites that were afforded to infants and children from early Anglo-Saxon cremation cemeteries, which, in the past, scholars have neglected in favour of focusing on their contemporaries from inhumation burials. It is apparent that infants and children were treated in a similar manner among groups that practiced the inhumation and cremation rite in early Anglo-Saxon England. This is a significant finding, especially in light of recent work (*e.g.* Williams 2002; 2003; 2005) highlighting the fundamental differences between inhumation and cremation as rites of

transition. Despite the ritual differences of the inhumation and cremation rites, and the distinctive treatment of adults in cemeteries characterised by these differing rites, infants and children were treated in a similar manner by communities that practiced these contrasting funerary rites. Associated grave assemblages reveal that infants and children were afforded a less ostentatious grave assemblage than adolescents and adults; for example, they were buried in shorter vessels and were less likely to have been afforded animal offerings. Infants and children were often buried with pyre and grave goods that held female connotations, suggesting that they took on a feminine identity until they reached adolescence among both inhumation and cremation practicing communities. In addition, the strong association between these young individuals, females and the home may hold deeper ideological connotations relating to protection of the deceased in the afterlife and the future fertility of women. The differential funerary treatment of infants and children appears to be the result of their social position and role within society.

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