

Examples of Plagiarism in Archaeology

Do you know what plagiarism is? Most students know that downloading essays off the internet or copying whole passages from someone else's work without acknowledging them is plagiarism. But what about short sections? Or plagiarising ideas? These examples explore some of these issues. While these are fairly mild examples of plagiarism, being careful about where, who and how you reference will improve your academic writing skills considerably.

Example 1.

This is the source that the student used in their answer:

The concern with 'cultures' which stimulated the ethnoarchaeological work grew out of a widespread disillusion in prehistoric archaeology with the value of describing and defining cultural entities and with the possibilities of interpreting them. It had become clear that cultures did not always equal ethnic units. The main alternative to this idea had come from processual and behavioural archaeology with the notion that areas of cultural similarity reflected areas of high social interaction (Hodder 1982 p. 11).

Hodder, I. 1982 *Symbols in Action* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

And this is what they have written:

Defining the extent and nature of cultural groups in the past was very important to archaeologists working at the beginning of the 20th century, but by the 1950s it had become clear that cultures did not always equal ethnic units. The main alternative to this idea had come from processual and behavioural archaeology, which suggested that similarities in material culture did not necessarily identify a cultural group (Hodder 1982).

Hodder, I. 1982 *Symbols in Action* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Is this plagiarism?

Yes, this is plagiarism. While Hodder is referenced as an overall source for the paragraph, on closer examination, one section of the text exactly replicates Hodder's words (see below). This is probably because the student took detailed notes from Hodder without using quotation marks, and these were then used in the essay.

The direct quote from Hodder is highlighted here in bold in the student's writing:

Defining the extent and nature of cultural groups in the past was very important to archaeologists working at the beginning of the 20th century, but by the 1950s it **had become clear that cultures did not always equal ethnic units. The main alternative to this idea had come from processual and behavioural archaeology**, which suggested that similarities in material culture did not necessarily identify a cultural group (Hodder 1982).

Example 2.

This is the source that the student was using. It appears in a journal article publishing the results of the author's latest research.

The distribution pattern for torpedo and Roman vessels suggests three seaborne routes to India: directly from the Gulf (torpedo jars), via Qana (torpedoes and some Roman amphorae) and even directly from the Red Sea (Roman amphorae). These potential routes hint at the overall complexity of travel and transport within the Indian Ocean. The clustering of torpedoes around the territory of the Western Kshatrapas can be related to cultural factors, but that of Roman vessels owes more to an overall social and political climate within this region which encouraged the importation of foreign goods. Influenced by wave upon wave of foreign invaders from the north-west, from the Greeks to the Parthians, Scythians, Kushanas and Sasanians, the area was part of a nexus of trade routes connecting coastal ports with inland sites (Tomber 2007 p. 984).

Tomber, R. 2007 Rome and Mesopotamia – Importers into Indian in the First Millennium AD. In *Antiquity* 81 (2007): 972-988.

This is what the student wrote:

Three sea routes are suggested by the distribution patterns of torpedo and Roman vessels, directly from the Gulf, via Qana and directly from the Red Sea (Tomber 2007 p. 984). The find spots, particularly of the Roman vessels, suggest that the local social and political environment encouraged the import of foreign goods as a result of long term contacts with foreigners in the region.

Tomber, R. 2007 Rome and Mesopotamia – Importers into Indian in the First Millennium AD. In *Antiquity* 81 (2007): 972-988.

Is this plagiarism?

Yes, this is plagiarism. The student has correctly attributed the first part of the paragraph to Tomber, but in fact the ideas in the second half are also taken from Tomber's work. Without the citation, it looks as though the student has made this interpretation and is presenting these ideas as their own. A better solution would be this:

Three sea routes are suggested by the distribution patterns of torpedo and Roman vessels, directly from the Gulf, via Qana and directly from the Red Sea. The find spots, particularly of the Roman vessels, suggest that the local social and political environment encouraged the import of foreign goods as a result of long term contacts with foreigners in the region (Tomber 2007 p. 984).

Example 3.

This is the source that the student was using. It is from an overview of the British Neolithic and Bronze Age.

The presence of animal remains within several tombs suggests that these ordered deposits could also refer to the ties between certain resources and categories of person. In southern Britain, the closest associations found inside tombs are with cattle. 'Head and hoof' burials have been recorded at a number of sites, and in certain Severn-Cotswold tombs, the bone of cattle were sometimes treated in the same ways as the bones of people. In effect, tombs appear to have provided a context in which links could be made between specific people and particular spheres of economic life"(Edmonds 1997 p. 33).

Edmonds, M. 1997 *Stone Tools and Society: Working Stone in Neolithic and Bronze Age Britain*. London: Routledge.

This is what the student wrote:

In southern Britain tombs "appear to have provided a context in which links could be made between specific people and particular spheres of economic life" (Edmonds 1997 p. 33). The presence of animal remains within tombs suggests that the bones of animals, especially cattle, were sometimes treated in the same way as those of people.

Edmonds, M. 1997 *Stone Tools and Society: Working Stone in Neolithic and Bronze Age Britain*. London: Routledge.



Is this plagiarism?

No, this is not plagiarism. Although the student is using a lot of material from Edmond's text, there is a distinction made between Edmond's original contribution linking ritual, individuals and economics, and a general observation that the bones of cattle and humans are treated in the same way in some graves, which is well known to the archaeological community working on British prehistory. Therefore it is only the direct quote from Edmonds that needs to be attributed to him.