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William Thomas Luke White   April 9, 2019

Experience, Practice, and Identity in Roman Britain: Interpretations of Roman-ness at Bath and Hadrian's Wall, 55 BC - 410 AD

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Abstract

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This thesis traces the development of certain hybrid cultures and identities in
Roman Britain from 55 BC through 410 AD. Moreover, this work is primarily concerned
with sources from the Hadrian's Wall region, as well as sources from Bath. Most of the
sources come from the first through the third centuries AD.

For the purposes of this study, Roman identity is understood in terms of a
multiplicity of discourses. I suggest that the Roman imperial influence in Britain was
largely decentralized, dynamic, and ideological in nature, which facilitated the formation of
diverse hybridized cultures based on local interpretations of Roman-ness. Furthermore, I
argue that the characteristics of the hybridized cultures and identities that developed
generally reflected the sociopolitical circumstances in which they were formed. The case
studies at Bath and Hadrian's Wall show that even in the same province, and sometimes
even in the same community, the form and function of emergent hybrid cultures could
differ depending on specific context.

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Introduction

The aim of my research is to explore how people living in Britain experienced and interacted with Roman imperialism from 55 BC through 410 AD. Although I draw on evidence from all across Britain, my enquiries are focused on two locations in particular: Bath and Hadrian's Wall. I selected these places because both reflect a distinct and crucially important dimension of Romano-British society. Indeed, Bath was a major religious site and Hadrian's Wall was a military hub. Furthermore, both represent a fundamental locus of interaction between native and imperial cultures. I expect that by analyzing the available sources from these regions, including a broad range of archaeological and epigraphic findings, I may begin to elucidate certain of the dynamics that characterized life in Roman Britain.

Of course, this study necessarily encompasses several complex and contentious topics that have received great scholarly attention in recent decades, including issues relating to the very nature of identity, culture, colonialism, and empire. The field of Roman history, like so many other academic disciplines, has experienced considerable upheaval as emergent schools of thought such as globalization theory, gender theory, and post-colonialism, have necessitated the reconsideration of conventional historiographical narratives. For example, the Western world has long considered Rome to be the archetype of empire—the word "empire" derives from the Latin term *imperium*[1]—and as such, Western powers

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[1] Kathleen D. Morrison, "Sources, Approaches, Definitions," in *Empires: Perspectives from Archaeology and History*, ed. Susan E. Alcock, et al. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1-3.

have frequently looked to Rome as a model for their own expansion.[2] Gradually, this led to a "circular process of interpretation" whereby colonial empires, especially Great Britain, surveyed the Roman past for imperial precedents and in the process constructed interpretations of Roman imperialism that were heavily shaped by the prevailing ideologies of their own age.[3] Accordingly, one of the most significant contributions of post-colonial thought to Roman historiography has been its role in challenging those traditional imperialist discourses—exposing them as "predicated… [on] binary divisions" and other reductive categorizations.[4] Now, in large part due to the works of scholars such as Edward Said, Homi Bhaba, and G.C. Spivak, there is a consensus amongst Roman historians regarding the crucial importance of uncovering previously neglected subaltern perspectives.[5] The fact remains, however, that Rome was an altogether different sort of empire than the modern colonial empires that inspired the initial wave of post-colonial literature. For this reason, although post-colonial theory offers a valuable framework for understanding Roman imperialism from the provincial perspective, it would be

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[2] David J. Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 19.

[3] Richard Hingley, *Roman Officers and English Gentlemen: The Imperial Origins of Roman Archaeology* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1-2.

[4] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 143-144.
For other seminal texts dealing with the intersection of identity, culture, and colonialism, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007); Siân Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 1997); G. C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1988).

[5] Andrew Gardner, "Thinking about Roman Imperialism: Postcolonialism, Globalisation and Beyond?," *Britannia* 44 (2013): 18-19.

anachronistic to assess Roman provincial interactions solely in the context of a modern colonial discourse.

In order to develop an improved understanding of how Britain's incorporation into the Roman Empire affected local identities and cultures, it is necessary to incorporate a bottom-up historiographical approach. The challenge is to engage subaltern perspectives without presupposing the same overarching structures and conditions as those inherent to modern colonial discourses. For my part, I begin with the assertion that most scholarship has misunderstood how cultural changes in Britain actually occurred: they did not take place in a linear fashion, they did not necessarily lead to an improvement in peoples' everyday lives, and above all, they were not necessarily implemented by Roman authorities. In fact, in many cases, provincial peoples selectively engaged with elements of Roman culture depending on their own personal agendas. I refer to primary materials in order to demonstrate how provincials in Roman Britain became co-authors of the hybrid cultures that emerged across the region, helping to shape what it meant to be Roman. Furthermore, I argue that the characteristics of the hybridized cultures and identities that developed tended to reflect the sociopolitical circumstances in which they were formed. While in some cases, those sociopolitical circumstances were the direct consequence of Roman rule, in many other cases, they stemmed from a confluence of regional factors that had considerably less to do with specific Roman policy.

It is well established that the Roman Empire was in many respects, a "true minimal state" that sought to delegate its operations to local agents whenever

possible.[6] In Britain, perhaps to a greater extent than in any other province, there was a dynamic of "strong regionalism" at play.[7] This manifested in myriad ways. For example, rarely were the individuals charged with performing local administrative tasks actually from the metropole; on the contrary, provincial bureaucratic structures tended to mirror pre-Roman social hierarchies.[8] However, the context of those arrangements was completely different from that of modern colonial projects where, in order to collect taxes and ensure stability, rulers had no choice but to "make alliances with the old elites who had previously been portrayed as the obstacle to universal progress."[9] In the Roman Empire, meanwhile, the integration of provincial elites into the imperial power structure was a natural consequence of expansion, considering both the vast geographic scale of the provinces, as well as the Empire's divergent—with respect to modern empires—notions of identity.

An individual's *belonging* in the Roman world was not a function of their political or ethnic background.[10] Instead, Roman identity was much more closely related to status, which itself was associated with one's cultural fluency. Provincial elites could strategically engage with Roman culture in order to differentiate

[6] Peter Fibiger Bang, "Trade and Empire: In Search of Organizing Concepts for the Roman Economy," *Past & Present* 195 (May 2007): 13.

[7] Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350 - 550 AD* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 393.

[8] David J. Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 26.

[9] Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa*, African Studies Series 89 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11.

[10] Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 240.

themselves within their communities and earn cultural credibility.[11] Furthermore, this process of differentiation typically played out in the realm of everyday life, especially in relation to habitual, social practices.[12] However, one of the central themes of this work is the idea that Roman culture and identity were discursively constructed. Therefore, when I refer to Roman culture and identity, I am not concerned with an essential quality or fixed, universal connotation. Instead, I wish to emphasize the variability of those terms depending on the frame of reference. In general, I will use "Roman-ness" (similar to *Romanitas)* to denote an all-encompassing ideal signifying what it meant to *belong* within the Roman world. For the purposes of this study, Roman culture and identity ought to be understood as fluid components of "Roman-ness." Likewise, when I label an object or behavior as 'Roman,' I am not necessarily asserting its essential Roman character; rather, I am designating it as a symbol of Roman-ness within a specific context. Moreover, I have coined the phrase "Roman ascriptive practices" to refer to practices which purport to convey a semblance of Roman-ness through their performance. Whether or not the practices themselves were legitimately Roman in origin, or would have been recognized as Roman in all settings, is immaterial. Their significance derives from their association with Roman-ness within a particular context. In other words, by engaging in a Roman ascriptive practice, an individual could signal his proximity to Roman-ness to other members of his community.

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[11] Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 239.

[12] Louise Revell, *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 36. On the social repetition of cultural practices: "Roman culture and power are not ephemeral concepts… they were embedded in the everyday lives of the peoples of the empire and reproduced through their daily activities."

My overarching model for Roman influence in the provinces is partially derived from Geertz' interpretation of culture as a "set of control mechanisms… for the governing of behavior."[13] Although Rome's coercive capabilities were considerable, and its commercial footprint was vast, its most powerful hegemonic mechanism was ideology. Unfortunately, a comprehensive analysis of Roman imperial ideology far exceeds the scope of this study; for this reason, I will focus on just a single aspect, which was of great importance to provincial peoples: the implicit promise that anyone could share in the wealth and glory of the Empire.[14] Of course, for the majority of provincial peoples, this idea was unrealistic. Although there were real opportunities for self-advancement, it would have been immensely difficult for an individual falling below a baseline threshold of resources, such as land ownership, to improve his status. Yet, for a not insignificant population of provincials, including indigenous political leaders, auxiliary soldiers, and entrepreneurs, there was real security—existential and financial—in being able to show that you *belonged.* Here, Adam Smith's commentary on ambition and social distinction is instructive: he argues that the primary aim of emulation is to be

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[13] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 44. "Culture is best seen not as complexes of concrete behavior patterns-customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters-as has, by and large, been the case up to now, but as a set of control mechanisms-plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call "programs")-for the governing of behavior."

[14] Naturally, this state of affairs was not without its problems. Certain episodes of violence, such as the Batavian revolt of 69-70 A.D., were related to a Roman failure to adequately incentive its auxiliary (provincial) soldiers. "As Tacitus' account of AD 69–70 in the Histories makes clear, provincial soldiers must be given rewards that bring their interests in line with the stability of the empire." Jonathan Master, *Provincial Soldiers and Imperial Instability in the Histories of Tacitus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 72.

noticed; to be approved of; to have one's existence recognized and respected.[15] In the Roman Empire, the key to establishing one's standing within the upper strata of that world was not "assimilating to an ideal type, but rather acquiring a position in the complex of structured differences in which Roman power resided."[16] It was understood that aristocrats in the provinces were required to oversee regional administration, and thus, provincial elites gained opportunities to accumulate such wealth and prestige as would confer status even in the metropolitan core.[17] However, though incorporation into the Roman Empire affected all of Britain, the Roman imperial influence can be difficult to trace because of its uneven distribution. In fact, one might argue that a hallmark of Rome's influence was its paradoxical quality of being everywhere and nowhere at once. The overall material record indicates a decisive shift towards Roman cultural sensibilities, yet the spread of Roman culture was an idiosyncratic process dependent on dynamic contextual elements such as the specific arrangements of local power structures and social networks.[18] For this reason, a military settlement along Hadrian's Wall might look virtually indistinguishable from forts all across the Empire, while the farmsteads only a few miles away might contain no traces of Roman influence.

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[15] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: A. Millar, A. Kincaid, and J. Bell, 1759), 109-110. "From whence, then, arises that emulation which runs through all the different ranks of men, and what are the advantages which we propose by that great purpose of human life which we call bettering our condition? To be observed, to be attended to, to be taken notice of with sympathy, complacency and approbation, are all the advantages which we can propose to derive from it."
[16] Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 245.
[17] Martin Millett, *The Romanization of Britain: An Essay in Archaeological Interpretation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 7-8.
[18] Gardner, "Thinking about," 14-16.

This is a significant point in light of the recent proliferation of scholarly literature focusing on the experiences of non-elite provincials because it underscores the necessity of analyzing provincial outcomes within the appropriate contexts. Undoubtedly, there were many who benefitted under Roman rule, yet there were many more who did not. Following the deconstruction of simplistic civilizing narratives and imperialist discourses, the task of exposing and highlighting the variability of provincial experience has become a priority for many Roman scholars. This typically entails the analysis of certain source materials, including specific types of food, funerary items, tools, and clothing, which were associated with the daily lives of non-elite provincials. Studies of this nature can reveal a great deal about life in Roman Britain, but they rarely have much of substance to offer in terms of refining our understanding as to the actual social, cultural, and economic effects of Roman imperialism. After all, documenting the scope of life under Roman rule is hardly the same as demonstrating Rome's influence on the province. The next step must be to disaggregate the range of provincial outcomes as much as possible based on discrete factors such as location and time period. Certainly, an analysis of the foodstuffs consumed by lower class people along Hadrian's Wall during a time of unrest will tell a different story than one focused on the food which people consumed in an autonomous southern village during peacetime. Through the thoughtful categorization of such contextualized evidence, scholars may begin to distinguish between those outcomes—in terms of economic, social, and cultural eventualities—directly linked to the Roman imperial influence, and those to which the Roman contribution was negligible. Moreover, by selecting two locations of

fundamental cross-cultural exchange, and by cataloguing primary materials from those sites, I am undertaking the first steps of this broader historiographical process on a geographically concentrated scale.

Historiography and Methodology

Perhaps the most pervasive historiographical narrative pertaining to Roman expansionism is the notion that its campaigns of conquest and colonization were complemented and justified by a systematic civilizing mission. Although modern colonialists were chiefly responsible for bringing this theme to the forefront of classical academia,[19] its ideological origins go back to the days of the Roman Republic. The literary class of Rome was always preoccupied with the presentation of certain non-Romans as barbarians and uncivilized "others." Indeed, Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* begins with the imposition of Roman geographical order onto foreign lands, and each of its books is "concerned with the representation of... otherness."[20] Following the Gallic sack of Rome in the fourth century BC, the specter of Gallic violence apparently lingered in the Roman imagination to such a degree that Roman sources are replete with hyperbolic allusions to Gallic savagery.[21] In his condemnation of the Praetorian Sejanus, Valerius Maximus describes the fallen prefect as "more cruel than monstrous and unbridled barbarism," and he accuses him of attempting to "revive and outdo the capture of our city by the Gauls."[22] Even in the time of Tiberius, Romans were still

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[19] Hingley, *Roman Officers*, 111-114.

[20] Andrew C. Johnston, "'Nostri' and 'The Other(s),'" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Writings of Julius Caesar*, ed. Luca Grillo and Christopher B. Krebs (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 84.

[21] Johnston, "'Nostri' and 'The Other(s),'" 82.

[22] Valerius Maximus, "Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium 9.11.4 (ext.)," in *The Roman Empire: Augustus to Hadrian*, ed. Robert K. Sherk, vol. 6, *Translated Documents of Greece and Rome* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 76-77.

invoking their northern neighbors as the embodiment of feral violence. Moreover,

throughout *de Bello Gallico,* Caesar draws on familiar ethnic tropes to frame the

Gauls and Germans in terms of their difference from the Romans.[23] And as he moves

farther from Rome, Caesar indicates that native peoples he encounters grow

increasingly wild. Thus, while the Helvetii are "a warlike people,"[24] the Germans

beyond them are even more volatile, and the Suebi in particular are so unruly that

they, "do not know what compulsion or discipline is, and do nothing against their

inclination."[25] The attribution of distinctly non-Roman qualities—like impulsiveness

and ferocity—to foreign peoples reinforced the Roman perception of the barbarians

as threatening. More importantly, according to characteristically self-aggrandizing

imperial rhetoricians, it also underscored the Roman sense of obligation to civilize

their uncultured neighbors.[26]

It is likely that, especially as the pace of Roman geographic expansion

increased exponentially during the late Republic and early Principate, the

preoccupation of writers such as Caesar and Strabo with depicting the Romans as

purveyors of culture to conquered savages corresponded to "a growing

consciousness that Romans were destined by the gods to conquer, rule and civilize

the world."[27] The Romans considered themselves a superior people in large part

because they possessed *humanitas*, an enigmatic quality that "encapsulated a set of

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[23] Johnston, "'Nostri' and 'The Other(s],'" 85.
[24] Julius Caesar, *The Conquest of Gaul*, trans. S.A. Handford, ed. Jane F. Gardner (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 1.1.2.
[25] Caesar, *The Conquest*, 4.1.1.
[26] Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 63.
[27] Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 48, 54.

ideals" and "distinguished [the Romans] as cultivated, enlightened, humane and so fitted to rule and lead by example."[28] Barbarians, in contrast, such as the Gauls and Britons prior to their assimilation, were supposedly deficient in *humanitas*, which gave the Romans further justification for their expansion.[29] A popular expression of Rome's supposed vocation features in Vergil's *Aeneid,* when Anchises offers Aeneas a glimpse of the future: "'remember, Roman, these will be your arts:/ to teach the ways of peace to those you conquer,/ to spare defeated peoples, tame the proud.'"[30]

This relates to a dubious imperial rationale that has enjoyed a long pedigree; namely, that the violent means of imperial expansion are justified by their supposedly peaceful ends. Even as they were exploiting the vast majority of provincial peoples by drawing on their resources and labor, Roman elites ostensibly believed that their colonial subjects were better off under their rule.[31] Moreover, two millennia later, the prominent historian Charles Maier maintains that Vergil's vision is "not just propaganda," but instead, "the most persuasive argument on behalf of empire."[32] The emphasis on Rome's capacity to deliver stability remained a central theme amongst imperial writers and ethnographers. Strabo, in his *Geography*, explains that in spite of their warlike nature, the Gauls are currently "at

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[28] Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 55.
[29] Ibid; 59.
[30] Vergil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Bantam Classic, 2004), VI, 851-853. (1135-1137 in Mandelbaum).
[31] Daniela Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia: A Greek Man of Letters in Augustan Rome* (London: Routledge, 2000), 115-122.
[32] Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and its Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 120.

peace… living under the command of the Romans, who have subdued them."[33] Similarly, in the *Agricola,* Tacitus writes that the British natives were much fiercer than their Gallic neighbors because they had "not yet been made soft by prolonged peace."[34] Subsequently, Tacitus explains how his father-in-law, Agricola, sought to placate the Britons—a people "naturally inclined to war"— by rewarding them with the fruits of Roman civilization, including public buildings and proper education.[35] Evidently, this strategy paid off, as Tacitus remarks that before long, "even our style of dress came into favor."[36] In each case, the implication was that the Romans, by virtue of their military might, ambition, and cultural superiority, managed to fashion even the most barbaric tribes according to their own likeness, delivering peace and prosperity along the way. Unsurprisingly, this strand of Roman ethnography would prove quite popular during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when a rapid evolution in formal Romano-British studies coincided with the zenith of British imperialism.

Although the Romans themselves had engaged in the construction of "Roman" versus "native" binaries based on their impressions of cultural supremacy, nevertheless, they never articulated the concept of a formal or deliberate civilizing mission. Then, at the turn of the twentieth century, the British scholar Francis J.

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[33] Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, trans. H.C. Hamilton and W. Falconer (London: George Bell & Sons, 1903), 4.4.2.

[34] Tacitus, *Agricola*, trans. Anthony R. Birley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), chapter 11.

[35] Tacitus, *Agricola*, in Birley (trans.), chapter 21.

[36] Ibid; 21.

Haverfield developed his seminal "Romanization" paradigm.[37] Haverfield's analysis

of cultural change in Roman Britain was greatly informed by the German scholar

Theodor Mommsen's work on Roman acculturation processes.[38] In the introduction

to his first volume on the history of Rome, Mommsen asserted that the Empire

"fostered the peace and prosperity of the many nations united under its sway longer

and more completely than any other leading power has ever succeeded in doing."[39]

Haverfield went much further. Convinced that there was something exceptional

about Roman expansion that had facilitated its successful proliferation of peace and

culture, he began to develop a theory of Roman imperialism that posited "a

deliberate policy on the part of the empire to reconcile subjects to colonial rule and

to reward their compliance with the fruits of civilization."[40] Above all, his

Romanization framework described the Empire's exertion of a "unidirectional

cultural influence" that effectively converted native cultures and identities to Roman

standards.[41] However, Romanization was also a teleological theory that understood

Roman imperialism as a mechanism of social progress.[42] Haverfield opined that

Britain was the natural heir to Rome's civilizing project, and he recognized many

similarities between the two empires. For example, at a 1911 conference, he

remarked: "the methods by which Rome incorporated and denationalised and

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[37] Richard Hingley, "Not so Romanized? Tradition, Reinvention or Discovery in the Study of Roman Britain," *World Archaeology* 40, no. 3 (2008): 427-443.
[38] Hingley, "Not so Romanized?," 427-443.
[39] Theodor Mommsen, *The Provinces, From Caesar to Diocletion*, trans. William P. Dickson, vol. 1, *The History of Rome* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1886), 5.
[40] Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power*, 38.
[41] Andrew C. Johnston, *The Sons of Remus: Identity in Roman Gaul and Spain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 17.
[42] Hingley, *Roman Officers*, 112.

assimilated more than half its wide dominions, and the success of Rome… in

spreading its Graeco-Roman culture over more than a third of Europe and a part of

Africa, concern in many ways our own age and Empire. "[43] Haverfield was not alone

in drawing parallels between Roman and British imperialism. The connections were

simply too convenient to ignore. After all, if Rome's civilizing mission in Britain had

made possible Britain's present day global hegemony, and if the British were the

imperial successors to Rome, then perhaps Britain's colonial engagements could be

justified on the same basis as Rome's colonization of Britain. Haverfield and his

contemporaries established a dialogic feedback loop wherein the past was used to

inform the present, and in turn, "the Roman past was itself re-invented" to suit the

contemporary political climate.[44] Not only did this circular logic influence British

politics, but also it set a troubling historiographical precedent.[45]

Although several notable historians, including Ronald Syme, pushed back

against the Romanization paradigm, it remained the gold standard in Roman studies

for most of the twentieth century.[46] The tendentious associations between colonial

Britain and ancient Rome did not last quite so long. Britain's hegemony would

persist for several decades, but collective British enthusiasm for empire began a

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[43] Francis J. Haverfield, "An Inaugural Address Delivered Before the First Annual General Meeting of the Society," *Journal of Roman Studies* 1 (May 11, 1911): xviii.
[44] Jane Webster, "Roman Imperialism and the 'Post Imperial Age,'" in *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives*, ed. Jane Webster and Nicholas J. Cooper, Leicester Archaeology Monographs 3 (Leicester, UK: School of Archaeological Studies, University of Leicester, 1996), 11.
[45] Hingley, *Roman Officers*, 27.
[46] Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power*, 22. "'Romanization implies the execution of a deliberate policy. That is to misconceive the behavior of Rome."

steady decline shortly after Haverfield introduced his theory.[47] Moreover, the

twentieth century was a period of extraordinarily rapid and fundamental change

that underscored the difference between modern civilization and its predecessors.

Indeed, while both Britain and Rome certainly possessed empires, Rome cannot be

said to have engaged in any form of imperialism that remotely approximated the

imperial engagements of the British Empire.[48] Numerous scholars have remarked

on the distinct characteristics of modern imperialism, emphasizing its relationship

to economic systems such as capitalism. Both J.A. Hobson[49] and Eric Hobsbawm,[50] in

various ways, argued that imperialism evolved as a result of the rise of global

capitalism. Robinson and Gallagher, too, recognized the importance of economic

considerations in shaping imperial strategy.[51] Naturally, social and political changes

accompanied the sweeping economic and military developments of that era. The

formal decolonization of the colonial empires began in 1947, and in the second half

of the twentieth century, the emergence of new schools of thought such as post-

structuralism and post-colonialism facilitated a broader ideological

decolonization.[52]

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[47] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, ed. Alison Light, Sally Alexander, and Gareth Stedman Jones, vol. 2, *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain* (London: Verso, 1998), 83-84.
[48] Webster, "Roman Imperialism," 2.
[49] J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: James Pott & Company, 1902), 101-103.
[50] E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 73.
[51] John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review*, n.s., 6, no. 1 (1953): 6.
[52] Webster, "Roman Imperialism," 5-7.

Writers such as Frantz Fanon initiated critiques of imperialist discourses that would resonate with generations of scholars to follow: "the final aim of colonization was to convince the indigenous population it would save them from darkness. The result was to hammer into the heads of the indigenous population that if the colonist were to leave they would regress into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality."[53] Edward Said's 1978 *Orientalism* was a foundational work that utilized Michel Foucault's notion of discourse[54] in order to describe how the West wields power through symbolic representation, such as the construction of an essential "Other."[55] A number of scholars, including Homi Bhabha, picked up on threads of Said's work and introduced concepts such as hybridity that opened up a further range of interpretive possibilities within postcolonial criticism. The notion of hybridity is especially useful because it encompasses both a customary meaning of amalgamation, as well as a connotation of accommodation within a power discourse, such as in an imperial-provincial context. According to Bhabha, one of the ways that imperial powers exercise authority is to "mobilize culture as a… warlike strategy" for the purpose of rendering the conquered within "a dialectical power struggle between self and other."[56] Hybridity allows for the innate difference of a hybrid to effectively hide in plain sight because the hybrid possesses the "semblance of the authoritative symbol" but lacks its essence.[57] Thus, when the "discriminated

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[53] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 149.

[54] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 36-37.

[55] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 1.

[56] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 191-197.

[57] Bhabha, *The Location*, 197.

subject" dons the mask of the authority, the imperial symbol remains the same, but it is detached from its intended meaning—Bhabha calls this a "metonymy of presence."[58] What this means in practice is that when Agricola's British subjects chose to start wearing togas, for instance, that shift cannot be understood as a straightforward indication that the Britons had Romanized. As historian David Mattingly observes, Romanization "tends to reduce the question of cultural identity to a simple binary opposition: Roman and native," even though archaeological evidence shows the opposite: that there was a tremendous breadth of cultural variety throughout the Roman world.[59] Hybridity acknowledges that simply resembling the Romans is not commensurate with being Roman. Indeed, it is also possible that by mimicking the cultural sensibilities of their conquerors, colonial subjects were themselves donning a mask behind which they could subvert imperial power mechanisms, exert their own cultural influence, and contribute to the discourse of Roman identity. The concept of hybridity is additionally significant because, according to Bhabha, "culture, as a colonial space of intervention and agonism… can be transformed by [hybridity]."[60] In the context of Roman history, this provides one set of explanations for how provincials actively contributed to the formation and re-formation of Roman culture and identity.

The frameworks of post-colonial theory have proved influential even in studies of the ancient world. Numerous Roman historians adopted a post-colonial approach as they reevaluated their own discourses, including texts long considered

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[58] Ibid; 197.
[59] David J. Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire*, Penguin History of Britain 1 (London: Allen Lane, 2006; London: Penguin Books, 2007), 14.
[60] Bhabha, *The Location*, 197.

canonical. Unsurprisingly, Haverfield's theory of "unidirectional cultural influence"

rapidly fell out of favor as scholars insisted on the development of more nuanced

models of cultural interaction.[61] In *Becoming Roman*, Greg Woolf states that the

acculturation process was "more complex than simply the rejection of one cultural

system in preference for another."[62] For example, the formation of Gallo-Roman

society was connected to "the imposition of much more intense structures of

exploitation and control"[63] that resulted in hybrid societies "that reflected their

various predecessors but nevertheless converged on… an imperial whole."[64] In

other words, while the Romans were certainly not the sole architects of provincial

culture, they still played a role in facilitating specific forms of cultural development

through their interventions in provincial economic affairs. For his part, Andrew

Johnston considers how locals engaged with the "expectations" associated with their

peripheral membership in a vast empire.[65] More specifically, drawing on versions of

local "auto-ethnography," Johnston identifies some of the performative techniques

that provincials employed both to reinforce images of a unique, indigenous heritage

amongst themselves, as well as to "accommodate" or "subvert" imperial

expectations when it suited them.[66] Another influential study was pioneered by the

historian David Mattingly, who utterly rejects Romanization on account of its

ambiguity, its derivation from modern imperial discourses, its prioritization of elite

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[61] Johnston, *The Sons*, 18.
[62] Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 7, 10.
[63] Ibid; 239.
[64] Ibid; x.
[65] Johnston, *The Sons*, 254, 264.
[66] Ibid; 231-234.

narratives, and its failure to consider cultural divergence across the provinces.[67]

Instead, Mattingly attempts to trace the lived experiences of lower class provincials

whose contributions to the material record have previously been overlooked.[68]

Drawing on the work of Edward Said, Mattingly introduces the phrase "discrepant

identity" as a means of accounting for the diverse scope of provincial experiences—

in contrast to simplistic, oppositional narratives of native resistance and

collaboration.[69] Above all, Mattingly's subaltern method requires that he reference a

variety of distinct evidence sources in order to demonstrate that life in the

provinces cannot be characterized according to one-dimensional models. For

example, through a discussion of land use, Mattingly demonstrates that even

provincial territory was shaped by a mix of "coercion, accommodation, and

resistance—exploitative of, but also exploited by, some of the local population."[70]

Mattingly's work has considerable overlap with that of the historian Jane Webster.

Webster established a creolization model derived from new world processes of

cultural exchange.[71] Webster's creolization theory emphasizes the "asymmetric

power relations" inherent to the production of colonial materials, and thus, allows

for artifacts that "appear Romanized, but… can negotiate with, resist, or adapt

Roman styles to serve indigenous ends."[72] Moreover, Webster's approach is valuable

because it offers a path to the study of provincial non-elites, whose stories are

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[67] Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power*, 38-40.
[68] Ibid; 38-40; 203-207.
[69] Ibid; 29, 215.
[70] Ibid; 147.
[71] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies*, 52.
[72] Webster, "Creolizing the Roman," 219.

largely confined to "the materiality of domestic life."[73] Ultimately, as a result of the

work of many scholars over several decades, Romanization theory has been largely

discredited, and frameworks founded on ideas such as hybridization, creolization,

and discrepancy have taken its place.

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[73] Ibid; 223.

Chapter I: Life at Hadrian's Wall

Power, Privilege, and the Mundane

From Julius Caesar's invasions of the mid-50s B.C. until the Roman withdrawal in 410 A.D., Rome's engagements in Britain were always characterized by a military presence. Indeed, Rome maintained a military occupation of Britain for nearly four centuries following the Emperor Claudius' conquest in 43 A.D., and it has been estimated that the population of Roman soldiers and dependents rose to as high as 125,000.[74] Moreover, the Roman military exerted a powerful influence across Romano-British society—especially in regions where soldiers were stationed. From their engagement with local peoples, to their development of regional infrastructure, to their demand for resources, Roman soldiers were a driving force behind the evolution of provincial culture. The areas around Hadrian's Wall represent a particularly rewarding zone of enquiry, owing both to the robust military communities that existed there, as well as to the wealth of extant evidence that survived. Construction of the Wall began after the Emperor Hadrian's visit to Britain in 122 A.D., and scholars have posited numerous explanations for its development.[75] Although the exact reasons for the construction of Hadrian's Wall remain subject to debate, recent archaeological studies in the region have provided valuable insight into the experiences of those who lived in its vicinity. From these analyses, it is possible to derive several broad observations. First and foremost, the

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[74] Martin Millett, *The Romanization of Britain: An Essay in Archaeological Interpretation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 184-185.

[75] David J. Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire*, Penguin History of Britain 1 (London: Allen Lane, 2006; London: Penguin Books, 2007), 110.

Empire's frontiers, such as Hadrian's Wall, ought not to be regarded in the same sense as modern imperial frontiers, which function to divide regions and restrict the flow of people and goods across specific boundaries.[76] On the contrary, while Hadrian's Wall certainly represented a physical *limen* of sorts, its primary function was not as a rigid barrier of defense, but rather, as an infrastructural mechanism of regulation and control.[77] In fact, recent finds and archaeological analyses along the wall strongly indicate that the Wall was intended to be an at least somewhat permeable threshold, across which local peoples were accustomed to passing with relative ease.[78]

Second, the ethnic diversity found at the Wall extended far beyond simplistic distinctions between Roman soldiers and indigenous civilians. To be sure, the Roman imperial military, particularly at the margins of the Empire, was hardly a monolithic institution; rather, as James observes, the Romans themselves tended to conceive of the military in pluralistic, decentralized terms.[79] While threads of common identity certainly linked soldiers across the empire, nevertheless, the

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[76] Richard Hingley, *Hadrian's Wall: A Life* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 298-303.

[77] Alan K. Bowman, *Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier: Vindolanda and Its People* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 24; Geraint Osborn, *Hadrian's Wall and Its People*, Greece and Rome Live (Exeter, UK: Bristol Phoenix Press, 2006), 31-32.

[78] David Breeze, "The Value of Studying Roman Frontiers," *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal* 1, no. 1 (2018): 10-11; Osborn, *Hadrian's Wall*, 22.

[79] Simon James, "The Community of Soldiers: A Major Identity and Centre of Power in the Roman Empire," *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal*, 1999, 14. "'Army' (*exercitus*), singular, was used for a particular grouping of forces, such as the standing army of a province or a corps specially assembled for a particular campaign. When generalising about the military, they employed plurals, writing of 'the armies' (*exercitus*), 'the legions' (*legiones*), 'the regiments' (*numeri*), etc., and not least of 'the soldiers' (*milites*), denoting a socio-political category."

widespread community "was internally sub-divided in a range of ways."[80] In the

case of Hadrian's Wall, although legionaries—the "quintessentially Roman

soldiers"—were responsible for its construction, its garrisons were almost

exclusively comprised of auxiliary troops.[81] Auxiliary soldiers were an important

part of the landscape of Roman Britain; one military diploma suggests that over fifty

auxiliary units were stationed in Britain during the first century.[82] These auxiliary

units were often recruited from other provinces, and they encompassed a wide

variety of cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds.[83] It is worth noting that

although British units were relatively common in other regions of the Empire, such

as in the Danubian armies, they were almost totally absent from their own

provincial garrison.[84] Instead, a considerable portion of the army in Britain was

made up of soldiers from Gaul and Germany.[85] For example, among the tablets

recovered from Vindolanda, there are several which attest to the presence of

auxiliary units made up entirely of Tungrians and Batavians.[86] Soldiers came from

even more distant lands, as well: the Notitia Dignitatum testifies that a *numerus* of

boatmen from the Tigris were stationed at South Shields for a time.[87] Meanwhile, as

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[80] Andrew Gardner, ed., *Agency Uncovered: Archaeological Perspectives on Social Agency, Power, and Being Human* (London: UCL Press, 2004), 41.
[81] Osborn, *Hadrian's Wall*, 35.
[82] Theodor Mommsen and Herbert Nesselhauf, "Diplomata Militaria," in *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin, 1936), XVI:69.
[83] Ian Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces: The Roman Auxilia and the Making of Provincial Society from Augustus to the Severans* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 70.
[84] Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 126.
[85] Ibid; 127.
[86] Tab. Vindol. I 154; Tab. Vindol. II 217.
[87] Notitia Dignitatum, XL, Dux Britanniarum, 22.
http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/notitia1.html

one dedication slab discovered at Vindolanda implies, some cohorts were a mixture

of soldiers from different backgrounds.[88] Indeed, the dedication, which may be

translated as, "The Gallic citizens to the goddess Gallia and, in agreement, the British

(citizens),"[89] was apparently intended to commemorate the reconciliation of feuding

British and Gallic soldiers within a cohort.[90] Although auxiliary soldiers were

generally considered to be of lower status than the legionaries, they nevertheless

possessed greater prestige, wealth, and Roman-ness than the vast majority of

provincial civilians. This meant that, at the regional level, soldiers were incentivized

to engage with local peoples as a means of redeeming their positions of relative

privilege.[91] Moreover, these soldiers—who in many regards likely seemed

indistinguishable from proper Roman legionaries from the perspective of native

Britons—not only introduced Roman cultural ideals via their regional interactions,

but also they conveyed elements of their own provincial roots. At the same time,

they themselves could be affected by or integrated within local customs. In this way,

auxiliary soldiers played a key role in shaping the ever-evolving standards of

Roman-ness.[92]

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[88] Anthony R. Birley, "Cives Galli De(ae) Galliae Concordesque Britanni: A Dedication at Vindolanda," *L'Antiquité Classique* 77, no. 1 (2008): 172.
[89] Birley, "Cives Galli," 172.
[90] Ibid; 185.
[91] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, ed. John Kenneth Galbraith (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 16-17. Veblen writes: "the power conferred by wealth also affords a motive to accumulation… the end sought by accumulation is to rank high in comparison with the rest of the community in point of pecuniary strength."
[92] Jonathan James McLaughlin, "The Transformation of the Roman Auxiliary Soldier in Thought and Practice" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2015), xi.

The decision to construct Hadrian's Wall necessarily entailed the establishment of regular outposts along the frontier. As auxiliary units from across the Empire were recruited to garrison those outposts, it is clear from the material record that the inhabited regions along the Wall began to experience changes reflecting their growing connection to global networks of trade and diplomacy.[93] Of course, the establishment of Hadrian's Wall did not mark the onset of Roman influence in the North,[94] but it did represent a crucial turning point in terms of how it both accelerated and subtly reoriented the processes of cultural transformation that were already taking place. An examination of the Romano-British pottery industry reveals some of the ways in which the Roman military presence facilitated economic activity and cultural exchange. Pottery is a useful medium for such analysis because of its ubiquity, resilience, and above all, its close relation to social practices such as feasting, drinking, and trade.[95] Thus, based on the presence of certain pottery types, it is possible to extrapolate regional dynamics including discrete cultural norms. For example, around 120 A.D., a form of pottery known as South-east Dorset black-burnished 1 (BB1) ware began to appear in the North "in levels associated with construction of Hadrian's Wall."[96] This ware, characterized by a dark, polished surface and frequent lattice patterns, descended from the native Durotrigian ceramic tradition and became popular due to its durability as well as its

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[93] David Benjamin Cuff, "The Auxilia in Roman Britain and the Two Germanies from Augustus to Caracalla: Family, Religion and 'Romanization'" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2010), 198.

[94] Paul A. Tyers, *Roman Pottery in Britain* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1996), 48.

[95] Martin Pitts, "Regional Identities and the Social Use of Ceramics," *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal*, 2005, 50.

[96] Tyers, *Roman Pottery*, 185.

distinctive appearance.[97] It had been utilized at pre-Flavian military settlements in

Dorset and Devon, but prior to the reassignment of Southern military units to new

stations along the Wall, it had evidently never been transported to the North.[98] This

black-burnished ware was hardly the only imported style of pottery to flourish

along the Wall; in fact, it seems that several units of Germanic soldiers brought with

them a distinctive style of ceramics known as Housesteads ware—labeled after the

fort from which those materials were recovered.[99] These units, identified on altars

as the *Numerus Hnaudifridi* and the *Cuneus Frisiorum,[100]* originated from regions of

Germany and the Netherlands associated with pottery styles resembling those

which have been found at the Housesteads fort.[101] Thus, it is probable that one of

the ways these foreign soldiers, or at least their dependents passed the time was by

making ceramics in their native fashion. Even more remarkably, collections of

ceramics derived from North African pottery traditions have been discovered near

the Wall, strongly indicating that there had been a population of African potters

living there, ostensibly producing wares for the consumption of military units from

the same regions in Africa.[102]

      Evidence relating to the mundane activities that defined day-to-day life along

Hadrian's Wall can reveal a great deal about the nature of the Roman military

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[97] Tyers, *Roman Pottery*, 66, 183; Peter Salway, *A History of Roman Britain* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1993), 39-51. The Durotriges were an indigenous tribe from Dorset, known for their hill forts, pottery, pre-Roman coinage, and violent opposition to the Claudian campaigns.
[98] Tyers, *Roman Pottery*, 66.
[99] Ibid; 76.
[100] RIB 1576, RIB 1594.
[101] Tyers, *Roman Pottery*, 76.
[102] Vivien G. Swan, "Legio VI and its men: African legionaries in Britain," *Journal of Roman Pottery Studies* 5 (1992): 3.

presence and the military's influence on local communities. The main reason for this has to do with the fact that, in Britain, as across the Empire, the establishment of civilian settlements in the immediate vicinity of military bases was common practice.[103] These sorts of military-adjacent communities, known as *vici* when attached to auxiliary forts, and *canabae* when attached to legionary forts, ensured that there was consistent overlap between military and civilian life in the provincial territories.[104] In fact, according to Simon James, the lives of soldiers and civilians near military establishments were intertwined to such an extent that they cannot be clearly delineated as separate communities; instead, scholars must recognize military settlements as "complex social mixtures" encompassing, not only soldiers, but also their servants, families, suppliers, and various "hangers-on."[105] During the early stages of these military communities, the vast majority of non-military inhabitants were probably those with close ties to the soldiers who had moved along with them from their previous bases.[106] Over time, though, many of these extramural settlements expanded to accommodate throngs of local as well as foreign peoples who chose to reside and operate in close contact with the frontier armies. A cursory examination of tombstone remains from around Hadrian's Wall attests to the unexpected diversity of the region, where Syrians, Spaniards, Germans, and Moors alike could carve niches within the cultural fabric and

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[103] Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 130.

[104] Ben Kolbeck, "A Foot in Both Camps: The Civilian Suppliers of the Army in Roman Britain," *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal*, 2018, 13.

[105] Simon James, "Soldiers and Civilians: identity and interaction in Roman Britain," in *Britons and Romans: Advancing an Archaeological Agenda*, by Martin Millett, ed. Simon James (York, UK: Council for British Archaeology, 2001), 80-84.

[106] Kolbeck, "A Foot," 8.

bequeath enduring records of their existence.[107] Perhaps this diversity reflected a

surplus of opportunities for self-advancement at the frontier compared to the more

developed regions of the Empire. After all, where there were soldiers, there was coin

to be spent, and the relative lack of existing infrastructure to support troops in

northern Britain ensured that there was a near constant demand for goods and

materials.

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[107] Osborn, *Hadrian's Wall*, 69.

Chapter II: Imperial Appetites

Food Practice and Culture along the Wall

"Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es"[108]

"Tell me what thou eatest, and I will tell thee what thou art."

– Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

As was typical of the broader Roman presence in Britain, the experience of living alongside the soldiers of Hadrian's Wall was transformative for many, yet the extent to which the outcomes were positive, negative, or somewhere in between depended greatly on the specific contexts within which interactions took place. As previously mentioned, soldiers stationed on the frontier possessed disposable income in the form of coinage that attracted all manner of artisans, merchants, thieves, prostitutes, and laborers.[109] These civilian suppliers might have been native Britons, kinsmen of the ethnic auxiliary garrisons, or unrelated migrants from elsewhere in the Empire. In any event, some of the most compelling evidence for the emergence of hybrid cultures and identities along the Wall relates to the flow of organic goods, such as the foodstuffs that these auxiliary garrisons acquired from suppliers. Although organic materials themselves tend not to survive the passage of time, nevertheless, the recovery of items such as containers, production equipment, and records of sale, among others, has enabled scholars to partially reconstruct

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[108] Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du Gout, ou Méditations de Gastronomie Transcendante* (Paris: Gabriel de Gonet, 1848), Aphorism #4.
[109] Osborn, *Hadrian's Wall*, 69.

ancient foodways. On the one hand, the importance of this project is self-evident.

After all, the consumption of food is a core human concern. It is also a regular,

typically social endeavor that requires, at the very least, time and resources to act

out. Already, these facts pose certain challenges in a military setting, and the truism

that, "an army marches on its stomach" certainly applied in the case of troops

stationed in Northern Britain.[110] Indeed, the provision of food and drink was of

crucial importance within that environment, as in virtually all martial settings,

seeing as soldiers require proper nutrition to sustain their active lifestyles as well as

their morale. On the other hand, a more subtle set of implications arises from the

roles of food and drink as fundamental indicators of identity in the ancient world,

which could mark one's ethnic heritage, cultural background, and social status.[111]

It is by no means a coincidence that so much of the evidence for social

transformation in Roman Britain is connected with food culture; in fact, it is quite

natural.[112] As Stephen Mennell argues, the evolution of food culture tends to reflect

the "changing structures of social interdependence and changing balances of power

within society."[113] In addition to that semiotic function, drinking and dining

practices can also directly contribute to social change and identity formation.[114]

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[110] Roy W. Davies, "The Roman Military Diet," *Britannia* 2 (1971): 122.
[111] Peter Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 6.
[112] Karen Ingrid Meadows, "The Social Context of Eating and Drinking at Native Settlements in Early Roman Britain" (PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 2002), 31.
[113] Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 16.
[114] Christine Ann Hastorf, *The Social Archaeology of Food: Thinking about Eating from Prehistory to the Present* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3.

Considering the significant extent to which Britain was altered by the Roman

occupation, one would expect the material record to convey the emergence of new

dietary trends during that period. Moreover, as the Roman military was a primary

agent of cultural change—not to mention a major consumer of foodstuffs—it follows

that careful study of military foodways might yield particular insight into the

shifting circumstances of life in Roman Britain. However, in general, scholars have

relied on theoretical frameworks that understand cultural transformation in terms

of categorical oppositions, such as Roman and native.[115] Such approaches to

material interpretation have therefore tended to lack sufficient regard for context

and ambiguity.[116] Moreover, these methodological shortcomings are not exclusive to

studies predicated on the Romanization model. On the contrary, even scholars

seeking to revise or undermine the conventional historiography have frequently

reverted to their own forms of essentialism.[117] For example, a scholar who is

predisposed towards a post-colonial school of thought might be especially inclined

to interpret cultural continuity as resistance, or emulation as forced assimilation.[118]

While this is not inherently problematic—any instance of material culture may elicit

a multitude of different readings—it becomes an issue when ideological

preconceptions shape material analysis at the expense of context and

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[115] Revell, *Roman Imperialism*, 2-37.
[116] Meadows, "The Social," 31-32.
[117] "King's suggestion that religion in the Roman provinces became "culturally
Roman while remaining ethnically Celtic" (1990: 237) illustrates the same problems
as the Romanisation model, especially through perpetuating dichotomous ethnic
constructs." D. Martin Goldberg, "The Dichotomy in Romano-Celtic Syncretism:
Some Preliminary Thoughts on Vernacular Religion," in *TRAC 2008: Eighteenth
Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Amsterdam 2008*, ed. Mark
Driessen, et al. (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2009), 188.
[118] Revell, *Roman Imperialism*, 2, 25.

complementary evidence. Knowing what types of food people ate can only tell part

of the broader cultural story.[119] The connotation of a specific food may vary

depending on context, such as, "[the] cultural setting, who prepared the food, how it

was prepared, who served it, and what it was served with."[120] It is critical, therefore,

that we resist the tendency to contextualize material evidence based on reified

identity categories; instead, we must utilize an integrated model of enquiry that

"focuses on the social contexts of eating and drinking."[121]

The primary element in the diet of a Roman soldier was the grain ration, or

frumentum, which usually entailed the consumption of wheat or barley products.[122]

The other dimensions of the overall ration, referred to as *ciberia,* encompassed non-

grain ingredients such as meats, oils, and vegetables.[123] During times of war, when

food options were limited, maintaining the standard ration was a strategic

imperative. Indeed, Tacitus asserts that when Agricola was governor of Britain, his

armies were protected from blockade because each fort was equipped with at least

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[119] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, 1996 ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 21. "No 'natural' or manufactured product is equally adaptable to all possible social uses, there are very few that are perfectly 'univocal' and it is rarely possible to deduce the social use from the thing itself. Except for products specially designed for a particular use… or closely tied to a class, by tradition (like tea-in France) or price (like caviar), most products only derive their social value from the social use that is made of them."

[120] Christine Ann Hastorf, "Gender, Space, and Food in Prehistory," in *Engendering Archaeology: Women and Prehistory*, ed. Joan M. Gero and Margaret W. Conkey (Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), 135.

[121] Meadows, "The Social," 32.

[122] Pat Southern, *The Roman Army: A Social and Institutional History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 113-114; Jonathan P. Roth, *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War (264 B.C. - A.D. 235)* (Boston: Brill, 1999), 18.

[123] Roth, *The Logistics*, 24-26.

a year's worth of rations.[124] Even during peacetime, military leaders facilitated the seamless supply of provisions by building and maintaining storage infrastructure. For example, an inscription from Great Chesters along Hadrian's Wall credits an Asturian cohort with rebuilding a dilapidated granary—*horreum vetustate conlabsum*—at the request of the governor during the early third century.[125] While the standard ration was essential, it was not usually dispensed free of charge. Moreover, while the ration functioned in part as a means of standardizing the military diet and ensuring nutrition, it was far from the only source of sustenance that soldiers consumed. During peacetime in particular, a soldier's diet might consist of an eclectic mix of both local and foreign ingredients, and civilian entrepreneurs played a central part in supplying the goods that supplemented their basic rations.

In terms of local ingredients, soldiers became accustomed to eating various foods originating from the regions where they were stationed. For example, evidence from numerous sites in Britain, including coastal forts such as South Shields and Maryport, as well as inland locations, shows that soldiers were in the habit of eating native seafood such as shellfish.[126] In a letter from Vindolanda addressed to a decurion named Lucius, the writer mentions that a friend sent him fifty oysters from a place called Cordonovi.[127] Oysters were plentiful in Britain, and evidently, it was quite feasible to keep seafood fresh during land transport such that even soldiers stationed over a day's journey from the coast could enjoy them.

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[124] Tacitus, *Agricola*, chapter 22, in Birley (trans.), Tacitus, *Agricola and Germany*.
[125] RIB, 1738.
[126] Davies, "The Roman," 128.
[127] Tab. Vindol. II 299.

Homegrown fruits and nuts were also on the menu for soldiers throughout the

province.[128] Furthermore, the discovery of "considerable quantities of bone" at

Vindolanda, including the bones of sheep, goats, pigs, deer, Celtic Shorthorn Cattle,

and native chickens, indicates that locally sourced meat was another feature of the

auxiliary soldier's diet.[129] Undoubtedly, the elite soldiers ate more and better cuts of

meat, but there should have been enough for even the low-ranking troops. It must

be noted, however, that the origins of these locally sourced dietary trends were

more nuanced than one might expect. Indeed, none of these instances necessarily

signal a broad Roman assimilation to local culinary practices; rather, it seems to

have been the case that Roman soldiers largely incorporated those native

ingredients to which they were already partial, while importing from all across the

Empire certain desirable ingredients that could not be sourced locally. Often these

imported ingredients were small or exotic, as in the case of foreign spices, but it was

not unusual for garrisons to order staple foods in bulk from abroad. For example,

while the livestock around Hadrian's Wall was apparently suitable for the soldiers

stationed there, a strontium isotope analysis of dental enamel from domesticated

animals kept at the legionary fortress at Caerleon in Wales reveals that "a

substantial portion" of the livestock consumed there was transported "from

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[128] Davies, "The Roman," 132.
[129] M.R.D. Seaward, "Observations on the Bracken Component of the pre-Hadrianic deposits at Vindolanda, Northumberland," *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 73 (1976): 183.

considerable distances away."[130] Likewise, the shipment of vast quantities of grain

from the Egyptian and African provinces to legions in Europe is well documented.[131]

One of the primary reasons that distinct culinary practices developed along

the Wall was because inhabitants of military communities prepared foods utilizing

an amalgamation of ingredients and techniques from British, Roman, and other

ethnic traditions. To be sure, this outcome can be understood as a natural

consequence of the imperial system, in which ethnic units with internalized Roman

characteristics were routinely stationed at the thresholds of their known world,

without abundant access to the cultural trappings associated with the Empire's

more developed regions. The preceding interpretation might be summarized

accordingly: soldiers and their dependents made the most of what they had at their

disposal, relying on the tools of their ethnic heritage, their Roman military

backgrounds, and anything else they picked up where they were living. While this

conclusion is perhaps accurate in a general sense, it fails to account for the

particular idiosyncrasies inherent to the Romano-British setting. To begin with, the

hybridized food cultures that emerged along the Wall were possible only due to the

proliferation of long distance supply networks and civilian entrepreneurship, which

expanded the options available to those with the necessary resources. Of course,

possession of resources was largely a function of status. Thus, it follows that the

elite soldiers within a community—such as the inhabitants of the *praetorium,* or

"officer's house"—typically enjoyed the most varied and luxurious diets. Meanwhile,

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[130] Richard Madgwick et al., "On the Hoof: Exploring the Supply of Animals to the Roman legionary fortress at Caerleon Using Strontium (87Sr/86Sr) Isotope Analysis," *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences* 11, no. 1 (2019): 233.
[131] Roth, *The Logistics*, 166.

ordinary soldiers and civilians living in close proximity to the military establishment likely consumed a smaller amount of imported luxuries commensurate with their lesser buying power. Finally, those with the least resources, such as native farmers, presumably subsisted on what local ingredients they could grow or forage.

It is significant that even individuals possessing considerable resources did not exhibit an overt preoccupation with structuring their diets in order to conform to a hypothetical Roman ideal. Moreover, considering the logistical factors at play, the correlation between social status and consumption of ostensibly Roman cultural items ought not to be understood in terms of any straightforward causal relationships. There was, of course, consistent demand for stereotypically Roman items among those who could afford them, but there was also interest in non-Roman items, including locally sourced ingredients. A fragmentary shopping list from Vindolanda, featuring items for a slave to purchase on behalf of the commander's household, reveals some of the goods that high-ranking soldiers along the Wall were in the habit of consuming.[132] The tablet includes both local ingredients, such as apples and eggs, as well as transported goods, such as fish sauce and a container of olives.[133] According to Davies, "all Romans were fond of fish-sauces, especially *garum*," but since *garum* was quite expensive, soldiers generally used a lower-grade substitute known as *muria*.[134] It is certainly possible that, in spite of the Roman affinity for fish sauces, the product failed to catch on with rural Britons, since the

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[132] Robert Matthew, "Frater, Soror, Contubernalis: Greedy Institutions and identity relationships in the auxiliary military communities of the northern frontier of Roman Britain in the First and Second Centuries A.D" (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2015), 262.
[133] Tab. Vindol. II 302
[134] Davies, "The Roman," 131.

remains of fish sauce amphorae are almost exclusively concentrated in cities and military sites.[135] Alternatively, considering that even the prefect's household purchased *muria* rather than *garum,* the lack of evidence for fish sauce consumption amongst rural Britons is probably more attributable to its prohibitive cost than to an indigenous rejection of Roman tastes.[136] Furthermore, it is noteworthy that, when it comes to certain items, the writer leaves the specifics of the purchase to the slave's discretion. In the case of the apples, the purchase was dependent on their condition: *mala si potes formonsa invenire centum;* in the case of the eggs, it was dependent on their price: *aequo (pretio)*.[137] One might infer that the eggs and apples required the slave's discretion because they were locally produced, and therefore, subject to greater variability in quality and price than standardized imports like fish-sauce. In any event, the fact that the slave was tasked with evaluating items prior to purchase signifies that, even if most slaves could not personally afford such ingredients, nevertheless, some were expected to be savvy market operators.

The transport and trade of flavorings such as herbs, spices, oils, and sauces was essential to the evolution of food culture along the Wall first and foremost because it enabled soldiers to escape the banality of their rationed diets, and it facilitated the preparation of familiar dishes.[138] The most basic additive in the military community was salt, which is referenced in several tablets from Vindolanda, including two that seem to represent rudimentary accounting

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[135] H.E.M. Cool, *Eating and Drinking in Roman Britain* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 62.
[136] Tab. Vindol. II 302
[137] Tab. Vindol. II 302
[138] Matthew, "Frater, Soror," 277-280.

inventories.[139] Olive oil, too, must have been rather common. The Dressel 20

amphora type, which was produced in Baetica and used in the Spanish olive-oil

trade, was prevalent in Britain up through the third century AD, at which point

amphorae from North Africa took over.[140] Intriguingly, sherds of an earlier form of

the Dressel 20 type have been discovered in Britain tracing back to the late first

century BC, implying that native Britons were part of the Spanish olive-oil trade

prior to the Roman conquest.[141] This evidence of a British predilection for

Mediterranean products that predates the Roman occupation underscores a key

point relating to the Romanization debate: consumption patterns alone render, at

best, incomplete portraits of social dynamics. To be sure, consumption patterns

provide insight into social practice, and social practice is connected with identity

expression.[142] However, identity is fluid and multi-faceted; thus, it is inadvisable to

classify people or objects in terms of discrete identity categories on the basis of their

perceived relation to certain social practices.[143] In other words, although labels such

as Roman, native, or hybrid are frequently instructive, their unambiguous

application in the context of certain social practices can be misleading. When it

comes to the use of olive oil in Britain, for example, it is tempting to interpret its

proliferation as a 'Romanizing' phenomenon or to infer native resistance from its

absence. The reality is far more complicated. Indeed, while Britain's pre-Roman

involvement in the olive oil trade problematizes the notion that olive oil

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[139] Tab. Vindol. II 185, 186.
[140] David Williams and César Carreras, "North African Amphorae in Roman Britain: A Re-Appraisal," *Britannia* 26 (1995): 232.
[141] Williams and Carreras, "North African," 232.
[142] Gardner, *Agency Uncovered*, 39-46.
[143] Jones, *The Archaeology*, 34-39.

consumption was indicative of Roman acculturation processes, nevertheless, it does not preclude the possibility that certain populations did embrace olive oil, as well as other ingredients, as a means of advertising their assimilation.[144] Olive oil meant different things to different people, and the recognition of this variability is fundamental to the project of understanding everyday life in Roman Britain.

In addition to generic products such as salt and oil, the Vindolanda tablets also include references to several rare commodities such as pepper, which one tablet records as having been purchased for 2 *denarii*.[145] As Bowman observes, this was not an insignificant sum for a common soldier, and pepper must have been a "really expensive luxury, especially on the northern frontier" given its exotic origins.[146] Moreover, it is doubtful that a soldier of modest means would have bought pepper merely for its flavor, especially considering the availability of less costly alternatives. Indeed, the question of why an auxiliary might prioritize such an expense invites several potential explanations. One possibility is that this purchase resulted from a desire amongst some auxiliary troops to flaunt their status according to Roman standards of decadence. After all, it is well established that food is an essential symbol of identity.[147] Even more importantly, for men whose military service conferred only partial access to Roman privilege, culinary practice perhaps represented another opportunity to bridge the gap between their ethnic roots and their aspirations for imperial prestige.

[144] P.P.A. Funari, "The Consumption of Olive Oil in Roman Britain and the Role of the Army," in *The Roman Army and the Economy*, ed. Paul Erdkamp (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 2002), 263.
[145] Tab Vindol. II 184.
[146] Bowman, *Life and Letters*, 77.
[147] Hastorf, *The Social*, 3.

For centuries, Roman ethnographers depicted non-Romans as "others," and a recurring trope within this tradition was the contrast between the allegedly unsophisticated culinary habits of the barbarians and the refined tastes of the Romans.[148] On the one hand, as the legendary cookbook of Apicius documents, Roman fine dining required elaborate combinations of herbs, spices, and sauces, including pepper.[149] The ability to procure extravagant ingredients from across the Empire was emblematic of a Roman's prowess. On the other hand, according to generations of Roman writers, non-Roman peoples such as Gauls, Germans, and Britons were accustomed to eating "primitive" dishes—crudely prepared and consisting only of simple ingredients.[150] Since many of the units stationed along the Wall were descended from those same Barbarian tribes whose eating preferences the Romans had dismissed as uncivilized, one might expect that they would have been eager to distance themselves from the culinary traditions of their ancestors. After all, according to Hastorf, "to be Roman was to eat and drink the Roman way, with certain meals, dish sequences, and ingredients, forming an identity and a political position in the empire."[151] However, this approach would have us believe that every time a Germanic auxiliary acquired *2 denarii* of pepper or ordered an amphora of wine for his barracks, he was striving towards an ever-elusive standard of authentic Roman-ness. Material and textual evidence from along the Wall support a more nuanced interpretation. For these soldiers, as for other upwardly mobile

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[148] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 62-70.
[149] Apicius, *Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome: A Bibliography, Critical Review, and Translation of the Ancient Book Known As Apicius De Re Coquinaria*, trans. Joseph Dommers Vehling (New York: Dover, 1977), passim.
[150] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 67.
[151] Hastorf, *The Social*, 181.

provincials, social progress was not a matter of strict conformity; instead, it could be achieved through a discretionary conformity in which they selectively engaged with discrete Roman standards of wealth and status.   It turns out that, insofar as soldiers were engaged in a constant negotiation of ostensibly disparate native, ethnic, and Roman identities, they were in fact participating in the ongoing process of constructing and re-constructing what it actually meant to be Roman. Roman-ness, then, is best understood as a discourse that incorporates a diverse range of identities and experiences, including those which conventional scholarship has considered unambiguously 'native' or non-Roman.[152]

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[152] Revell, *Roman Imperialism*, 9.

Chapter III: Wine, Beer, and Batavians

A Case Study of Drinking Cultures

"On Wine Made From Barley"

Who art thou and whence, O Dionysus? By the true Bacchus

I recognize thee not; I know only the son of Zeus.

He smells of nectar, but you smell of goat.

Truly it was in their lack of grapes that the Celts

Brewed thee from corn-ears...[153] – The Emperor Julian

Wine made from grapes—as opposed to the myriad types of 'wine' made from other fruits according to Pliny[154]—was the alcoholic drink of choice amongst the ancient Greeks and Romans.[155] For them, the superiority of wine was not merely a matter of taste, but a question of refinement and cultural values.[156] In addition, wine was a prized commodity at the heart of a vast trade network that encapsulated

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[153] Julian, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, trans. Emily Wilmer Cave Wright, vol. 3, *Epigram 1* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), 304-305.

[154] See Pliny, Naturalis Historia, XIV, "The Natural History of the Fruit Trees," for an account of various types of wine. Chapter 19, "The sixty-six varieties of artificial wine," is particularly instructive: "A wine is made, too, of the pods of the Syrian carob, of pears, and of all kinds of apples... Among the garden plants we find wines made of the following kinds: the radish, asparagus..." etc. Pliny, *The Natural History*, trans. John Bostock, Henry T. Riley, and Karl Friedrich Theodor Mayhoff (Somerville, MA: Perseus Digital Library, 2006), Ch. 19.

[155] Max Nelson, *The Barbarian 's Beverage: A History of Beer in Ancient Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 115.

[156] Nelson, *The Barbarian*, 67.

the economic dimension of Roman imperial power.[157] The commercial appeal of

wine is intuitive. Wine consumption—preferably imported wine—must have been a

Roman ascriptive practice par excellence, as it demonstrated the consumer's

alignment with traditional Roman tastes, and most importantly, it differentiated the

consumer's status in a visible, symbolic fashion.[158] Moreover, as the Roman Empire

expanded, the Italian preference for wine infiltrated all of the provinces such that,

even in Egypt, where beer "had long been a standard beverage" across all social

classes, wine eventually displaced beer at elite tables.[159] One possible explanation

for why wine prevailed over beer across much of the Empire has to do with the

stereotype perpetuated by Greek and Roman writers that beer was a poor man's

drink. For example, Athenaeus, citing a philosopher known as Dio the Academic,

concludes that barley beer was an alcoholic alternative reserved for those Egyptians

not able to pay for wine, even though this claim is highly dubious.[160] Additionally,

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[157] "Wine remained the primary commodity of trade between the Mediterranean world and the Iron Age peoples of western Europe until the Roman conquest (and indeed greatly increased in volume), an anthropologically informed study of changing patterns in its consumption is an evident key to understanding the complex processes of social change resulting from colonial interaction." Michael Dietler, "Driven by Drink: The Role of Drinking in the Political Economy and the Case of Early Iron Age France," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 9, no. 4 (1990): 390.

[158] "The ceremonial differentiation of the dietary is best seen in the use of intoxicating beverages and narcotics. If these articles of consumption are costly, they are felt to be noble and honorific." Veblen, *The Theory*, 34. "The fact that imported wine was an exotic item, the means of production of which was alien to the society, would make it a useful element in symbolically differentiating elite drinking patterns. This would, of course, depend upon restriction of access to foreign trade, a common characteristic of such societies." Dietler, "Driven by Drink," 385.

[159] Nelson, *The Barbarian*, 67-68, 115.

[160] Ian Spencer Hornsey, *A History of Beer and Brewing* (Cambridge, UK: Royal Society of Chemistry, 2003), 35.

the Greeks and Romans interpreted beer consumption as a function of an

unfavorable climate.[161] More precisely, they believed that people, particularly in

northwest Europe, drank beer only because they could not grow grape vines, as was

the case in Britain according to Tacitus.[162] In fact, recent pollen and sediment

analyses have revealed that in the later periods of the Roman occupation, large

vineyards were established at several locations in Britain.[163] This probably reflects a

Roman-influenced recognition that there would be a regional market for locally

produced wine based on its lower cost profile compared with imported products.[164]

Indeed, the Roman perspective on drinking was straightforward: if you had access

to affordable wine, then there was no need for beer. Of course, people living in the

provinces did not necessarily feel the same way: the Roman enjoyment of wine,

which disseminated throughout Gaul and Britain, was never accompanied by the

Roman disdain for beer. To be sure, there were practical reasons to prefer wine to

beer. Above all, wine had a much longer shelf life; it could be stored in amphora for

years, whereas beer could only be kept for a short time before it began to

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[161] Nelson, *The Barbarian*, 40, 69.

[162] Tacitus, *De Vita et Moribus Iulii Agricolae*, 12.5:*"Solum praeter oleam vitemque et cetera calidioribus terris oriri sueta patiens frugum pecudumque fecundum: tarde mitescunt, cito proveniunt; eademque utriusque rei causa, multus umor terrarum caelique."*

[163] Hornsey, *A History*, 166-167, 230.

[164] Ibid; 166-167. "The first vineyard to be identified at Wollaston [was] capable of yielding some 10,500 litres of white wine... Wine produced at Wollaston on this scale, and the presence of nearby viticultural sites, means that this part of the Nene Valley was probably a major wine-producing area, and the end-product must have represented a major cash crop."

deteriorate.[165] In a larger sense, this meant that wine-consuming regions did not need to be immersed in wine culture in order to enjoy convenient access to the beverage. On the other hand, the regions where people regularly consumed beer certainly needed to be located in close proximity to beer production facilities. This somewhat explains why beer culture persisted in the places where it was already entrenched, in spite of the imperial stigma towards the drink.[166] Thus, while some scholars have posited "the spread of viticulture… and the extent to which it supplanted beer brewing" as a measure of Roman cultural hegemony,[167] it is worth considering how the primacy of beer in certain contexts actually reinforces a more nuanced reading of Roman-ness as a discourse comprised of a multiplicity of localized identities.

For the Batavian auxiliaries stationed at Vindolanda, the performance of specific Batavian drinking and dining customs alongside standard Roman ascriptive practices was one method of exerting their ethnic identity as a complement to their Roman identity.[168] Although the Batavians emerged from a separate ethnic stock than the Romans and were considered "barbarians" by Caesar and others, nevertheless, throughout their political integration into the Empire, Batavian identity was shaped by Roman-ness, and in turn, Roman-ness came to incorporate

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[165] Michael Dietler, *Archaeologies of Colonialism: Consumption, Entanglement, and Violence in Ancient Mediterranean France* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 236-238.

[166] Nelson, *The Barbarian*, 116.

[167] Anthony G. Brown et al., "Roman Vineyards in Britain: Stratigraphic and Palynological Data from Wollaston in the Nene Valley, England," *Antiquity* 75, no. 290 (2001): 745.

[168] "[It is] likely that Mediterranean wine represented an addition to the indigenous repertoire rather than a replacement of native forms of drink." Dietler, "Driven by Drink," 383.

Batavian identity as well.[169] To be sure, the construction of a coherent Batavian

identity occurred in the context of the large-scale recruitment of Batavians into the

Roman military. Already in the first century A.D., nearly every Batavian household

might have sent at least one soldier into the Roman military, and in exchange, the

Batavi held a privileged status.[170] First and foremost, Batavian self-image reflected

internalized Roman notions about their people as a warrior race.[171] However, the

development of Batavian self-image was not unilateral; rather, it was a dynamic

process in which Batavian soldiers were "active social agents."[172] Specifically, the

cultivation of Batavian identity involved the conscious retention of certain ethnic

'traditions' that preserved a social memory of their shared, pre-Roman heritage.

Chief among those was the convention of drinking beer.

A variety of sources from Vindolanda and elsewhere support the idea that

Roman soldiers drank beer. In fact, the Vindolanda tablets mention *cervesa,* or

"Celtic beer," on at least seven occasions.[173] In terms of the relationship between

Celtic auxiliary troops and beer, it is telling that so much of the terminology

surrounding beer culture at the Wall had Celtic origins. Of course, *cervesa* itself is a

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[169] My argument here is informed by Jones' framework for ethnic identity: "Ethnic identity is based on shifting, situational, subjective identifications of self and others, which are rooted in ongoing daily practice and historical experience, but also subject to transformation and discontinuity Jones, *The Archaeology*, 13.

[170] Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 112-114.

[171] On the Batavian reputation: "it is clear that the Batavians are valuable warriors but difficult for the Romans to control. That they are a "ferox gens" explains both why the empire is eager to employ them in battle and their intractability in camp." Master, *Provincial Soldiers*, 59.

[172] Nico Roymans, *Ethnic Identity and Imperial Power: The Batavians in the Early Roman Empire*, trans. Annette Visser, Amsterdam Archaeological Studies 10 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 255-259.

[173] Hornsey, *A History*, 232.

Celtic loan word, as is *cervesarius*—[174] meaning "beer brewer"—and *bracis*, which

refers to the malt from which Celtic beer was produced.[175] Furthermore, as Davies

observes, there must have been a steady demand for the product, given that a

former soldier of the *classis Germanica* "set himself up to supply beer to the military

market towards the end of the first century."[176] However, it is not so much the fact

that soldiers drank beer which is particularly surprising; rather, it is the implication

that for certain auxiliary units, such as the ninth cohort of Batavians at Vindolanda,

beer consumption was a key form of self-expression related to their ethnic

backgrounds. For example, the archaeologist Michael Dietler has explored the link

between communal labor and ritual beer consumption amongst peoples in Gaul and

other societies.[177] It seems plausible that soldiers expected to drink together to

mark the culmination of an extended work assignment or even just a hard day's

labor. In this context, the supply of beer was not simply another luxury; rather, as

one letter from Vindolanda demonstrates, soldiers were proactive about

replenishing the beer supply when they ran out. Indeed, when a Batavian decurion

known as Masclus writes to his prefect Flavius Cerialis requesting strategic

instructions, he concludes the letter with what might be described as an ulterior

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[174] Tab. Vindol. II 182
[175] McLaughlin, "The Transformation," 204-205.
[176] Davies, "The Roman," 133.
[177] "It is not necessarily a desire for alcohol, per se, which motivates people to work together. Rather, it is the institution of the hosted feast, with the force of relations of reciprocal obligation established through hospitality… it is clear that drinking is very commonly regarded as an integral component of work-party feasts (often the sole essential ingredient) and frequently assumes the role of a stimulus for communal work." Dietler, "Driven by Drink," 357.

motive: "My fellow-soldiers have no beer. Please order some to be sent."[178] Although

McLaughlin's notion that this request for beer implied, "a sort of *quid pro quo*:

provide the men beer by tomorrow, then we'll follow orders," is far-fetched; we can

be reasonably confident that access to beer played some role in the motivation of

troops from Germany and Gaul.[179] The prefect Cerialis's household seems to have

maintained its own stores of beer,[180] possibly reserved for special occasions such as

a festival.[181] Moreover, an apparent recipe recovered from the kitchen of Cerialis'

household contains the word *batavico,* which suggests the preparation of dishes à la

Batavi.[182] Based on Tacitus' account of German feasts characterized by binge

drinking, consultation, infighting, and reconciliation,[183] it is intriguing to consider

the possibility of Cerialis throwing such feasts, serving traditional Batavian food and

drink, in order to facilitate dialogue and camaraderie amongst his troops.[184] Since

the Batavian cohort in Britain evidently continued to "draw Batavian recruits even

in the late 1st century,"[185] it is reasonable that the prefect, or at very least the troops

themselves, might seek to recreate some of their customary drinking and feasting

practices while stationed along the northern frontier. In any event, these tendencies

amongst the Batavians ought not to be regarded as antithetical to Roman cultural

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[178] Tab. Vindol. III, 628 (inv. no. 93.1544).
Translation: Alan K. Bowman and J. David Thomas, "New Writing-Tablets from Vindolanda," *Britannia* 27 (1996): 324.
[179] McLaughlin, "The Transformation," 206-207.
[180] Jonathan McLaughlin, "King of Beers: Alcohol, Authority, and Identity among Batavian Soldiers in the Roman Auxilia at Vindolanda," *Ancient Society* 48 (2018): 177-178.
[181] Tab. Vindol. II 190.
[182] Tab. Vindol. II 208
[183] Tacitus, *Germania*, 22-23.
[184] McLaughlin, "King of Beers," 177-178.
[185] Cuff, "The Auxilia," 201.

norms, or subversive to their Roman identity; instead, we conclude that such behavior simultaneously validated their ethnic heritage and affirmed their roles within the Roman military.

Chapter IV: More Than an Army

The Non-Combatant Populations along Hadrian's Wall

Civilian entrepreneurs operated in a variety of ways. Some were basically artisan shopkeepers; for example, excavations of the *vici* at Housesteads and Vindolanda demonstrate that certain enterprising individuals prospered by vending their wares from storefronts just outside the forts.[186] Others were wholesale suppliers or conventional merchants; for example, an individual known as Gavo might have collected a tidy profit through the sale of goods such as honey, beans, and clothing to officers stationed at Vindolanda.[187] For merchants, who had arguably both the most to gain and the most to lose through their business dealings, the privilege of supplying the army also came with certain risks. For example, a letter from Vindolanda, from Octavius to a man named Candidus, offers insight into the challenges of conducting a large transaction involving grain provisions for the garrison.[188] Octavius, who was plausibly a centurion but most likely "an entrepreneurial contractor,"[189] writes Candidus requesting at least 500 *denarii* to cover his agreement to purchase about 5000 *modii* of grain, lest he lose his deposit payment and become—*erubescam*— "ashamed."[190] The deeper connotation of Octavius's letter, though, suggests his fear of degrading his reputation within the community. Indeed, one's personal standing in the eyes of the military was all-

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[186] Osborn, *Hadrian's Wall*, 67.
[187] Tab. Vindol. II 192; Tab. Vindol. II 207.
[188] Tab. Vindol. II 343
[189] Kolbeck, "A Foot," 6.
[190] Tab. Vindol. II 343

important because, in addition to being the biggest consumers in the region, the

soldiers along Hadrian's Wall were also the primary agents of regulation, law

enforcement, and conflict resolution.[191] In other words, the military had the

authority to make or break an individual's livelihood, so it was important to stay in

its good graces. However, this was never such a straightforward proposition;

indeed, the complex dynamics of regional power, combined with the difficult

logistics of commerce, meant that even the most reliable merchants could simply fall

victim to misfortune or exploitation. Consider, for example, Tablet 344 from

Vindolanda, in which a civilian merchant, apparently having been beaten by a

soldier and had his goods destroyed, appeals to a military authority for

recompense.[192] This situation, while unfortunate, is more nuanced than might

initially appear. After all, the beaten merchant also wrote Tablet 181, which

documents his recent business with soldiers, "including several outstanding debts,

suggestive of a degree of trust on behalf of both parties."[193] Furthermore, as David

Mattingly points out, his capacity to complain to the proper military authorities in

Latin demonstrates that, even though he was not a soldier, he must have belonged to

the local military community in his role as a supplier.[194]

Entrepreneurial men were not the only ones to live alongside the army at

Hadrian's Wall. In fact, one especially significant development in Romano-British

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[191] James, "Soldiers and Civilians," 82.
[192] Tab. Vindol. II 344.
[193] Kolbeck, "A Foot," 13-14.
[194] "If he was not formally a part of the 'community of soldiers', he was by extension, since they were his reason for being present in northern Britain. There are other hints that many of the civilians servicing the needs of the Vindolanda garrison were likewise men from outside Britain." Mattingly, *An Imperial*, 157.

studies is the increasing recognition that women and children could be regular, prominent members of military communities. To be sure, the conventional association between warfare and masculinity is well established, and consequently, there has been a historiographical tendency to devalue or omit the roles of women in discussions of military matters.[195] However, by looking beyond the literary record, it is possible to reconstruct portraits of the military environment that clearly show the presence of women where written sources have failed to mention them. For example, although non-officer class troops could not obtain legal marriages prior to the Severan reforms of the late second century, nevertheless, it is apparent that some common soldiers had de-facto wives and families well before the practice was formally permitted.[196] Moreover, the fact that the majority of soldiers did not have families during the first century evidently had far more to do with their financial insecurity and "lack of social connections in the frontier provinces" than the marriage ban itself.[197] From the late first century into the third century, though, evidence patterns suggest a trend of growing non-combatant populations.[198] Non-combatants did not merely reside in the same community as the soldiers; in fact, many of them seem to have shared the same living spaces. According to the work of

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[195] David H.J. Morgan, "Theater of War: Combat, the Military, and Masculinities," in *Theorizing Masculinities*, ed. Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (London: Sage Publications, 1994), passim.

[196] Peter Salway, *The Frontier People of Roman Britain* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 31.

[197] Sara Elise Phang, *Roman Military Service: Ideologies of Discipline in the Late Republic and Early Principate* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 92.

[198] Elizabeth M. Greene, "Women and Families in the Auxiliary Military Communities of the Roman West in the First and Second Centuries AD" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill, 2011), 65.

Carol Driel-Murray, the remains of shoes belonging to women and children recovered from the fortress at Vindolanda strongly imply that the barracks were not an exclusively male domain.[199] On the contrary, it seems likely that women and children had access to and probably inhabited the internal confines of the fort.[200] This revelation certainly challenges the soldier versus civilian binary that has previously dominated Roman military discourses, and it encourages a reconsideration of how frontier soldiers spent their time. After all, if women and children indeed lived in such close proximity to soldiers, it is reasonable to conclude that their presence commanded a greater portion of the troops' focus and productivity than if they were confined to the external *vici*.[201]

Ironically, in a number of cases, the best sources of evidence for the experiences of provincial women come from the last place many historians would be inclined to look: military settings along the frontier. As Derks observes, the only four Batavian women known to scholars were "all the wives of serving soldiers and officers who followed their husbands through the empire."[202] It so happens that several of them lived in the area associated with Hadrian's Wall, and a few tablets from Vindolanda offer insight into the sorts of activities that they were involved with, as well as how those engagements influenced the culture of the community. One tablet that has received a great deal of attention is a letter from Claudia Severa,

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[199] Greene, "Women and Families," 38.
[200] Ibid; 108.
[201] Matthew, "Frater, Soror," 40.
[202] A.M.J. Derks, "Ethnic Identity in the Roman Frontier: The Epigraphy of Batavi and Other Lower Rhine Tribes," in *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity: The Role of Power and Tradition*, ed. A.M.J. Derks and Nico Roymans, Amsterdam Archaeological Studies 13 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 248.

the wife of prefect Aelius Brocchus, inviting Sulpicia Lepidina, the wife of Batavian

prefect Flavius Cerialis, to attend her upcoming birthday party.[203] Although no

details about the relationship between these individuals exist beyond the letter, one

can be certain based on the friendly and personal nature of the invitation that, at the

very least, these women, who held the highest social status of any of the women in

their respective forts, maintained a cordial rapport consistent with their ranks "in

civilian society."[204]

Communications between women seem not to have been restricted to

individuals of the same social rank, either. For example, in a letter to Lepidina, a

woman named Paterna promises to deliver remedies to the apparently ill Lepidina,

whom she refers to as *domina.*[205] From this deferential language, one can infer that

Paterna—while probably not a slave—was surely of a much lower status than

Lepidina.[206] Another implication of this letter is that women in these communities

forged both sympathetic and transactional relationships with each other that fell

outside the confines of their husbands' own social spheres, signifying the existence

of a community of women as a subcategory of the military community.

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[203] Tab.Vindol. 291
[204] Greene, "Women and Families," 249.
[205] Tab.Vindol. 294
[206] Greene, "Women and Families," 250.

Chapter V: Life at Bath

Ritual, Religion, and Fluid Identities

       While Hadrian's Wall is an ideal region for tracing the development of unique

hybrid cultures and identities in relation to the Roman military presence in Britain,

Bath represents a fundamental site of cross-cultural interaction in terms of religious

practice and ritual. Indeed, the evidence from Bath, which tends to convey the social

and religious dimensions of civilian life, offers a compelling complement to the

martial setting along the Northern frontier. As David Mattingly remarks, "religion is

a key area of life in which communities define their identities—at times in ways that

associate themselves with others and at other times creating social distance."[207]

Religious activities were a significant part of day-to-day life, and at Bath in

particular, because of its designation as a center of worship for the deity Sulis

Minerva, there remains a robust material record from which to learn. Moreover, the

temple to Sulis Minerva at Bath was a popular site in the region, drawing a more

diverse crowd of visitors than other Romano-British sites from which evidence

survives. By comparing the material records from Bath, which was essentially "a spa

and religious complex," with those from near Hadrian's Wall, one can infer

correlations between hybridization processes and discrete sociopolitical factors.[208]

As Alex Mullen observes, the evidence from Bath seems to encompass people from

all different sorts of backgrounds, including locals from the lower and middle

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[207] Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power*, 255.
[208] Martin Millett, *The Romanization of Britain: An Essay in Archaeological Interpretation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 110.

classes of society.[209] Additionally, the majority of these people would not have been Roman citizens until the Edict of Caracalla in 212 AD; consequently, the type of Latin that survives from Bath represents an enigmatic combination of provincial, Vulgar Latin vernacular and standard Classical Latin language.[210] For example, as Roger Tomlin points out, some tablets use words such as *bursa* or *levavit* that either do not appear at all in Classical texts, or do not appear in the particular sense in which the tablets employ them.[211] Terms like *baro* and *manducare* are also used instead of more obvious Classical synonyms.[212] Additionally, unlike in other locations, such as near Hadrian's Wall, soldiers were in the minority at Bath; consequently, evidence from there generally reflects the interests of ordinary people, whereas the few sources left by soldiers suggest that they were "keen to emphasize their status in a predominantly civilian milieu."[213] It is hardly surprising that a soldier might wish to highlight his military background in a civilian context, but the significance of this practice in a religious setting certainly warrants further investigation.

Interestingly, according to Mullen, foreigners seem to have visited Bath at high rates, and their presence is quite apparent from the records.[214] For example, one inscription from Bath reveals that the altar on which it was engraved was

[209] Alex Mullen, "Linguistic Evidence for 'Romanization': Continuity and Change in Romano-British Onomastics: A Study of the Epigraphic Record with Particular Reference to Bath," *Britannia* 38 (2007): 46.
[210] R.S.O. Tomlin, "The Curse Tablets," in *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath: The Finds from the Sacred Spring*, ed. Barry Cunliffe and John Davenport (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1988), 2:74.
[211] Tomlin, "The Curse," 2:78, 165. "The verb *levare* in the sense of 'steal' is never found in Classical Latin and very seldom thereafter." Tomlin equates the usage of *levare* in the tablets to the English colloquial association between "lift" and "steal."
[212] Ibid; 2:78.
[213] Mullen, "Linguistic Evidence," 46.
[214] Ibid; 46.

dedicated by a Treveran named Peregrinus, son of Secundus, on behalf of the Gallo-Roman Gods Loucetius Mars and Nemetoma.[215] This find suggests several important implications: first, and most obviously, that people from other Roman provinces, such as Gaul, traveled to Bath to indulge in its sacred springs. Second, that the shrine itself, in spite of its dedication to Sulis Minerva, could accommodate the worship of other deities, including non-British gods and goddesses.[216] Indeed, a separate altar, found at the Hot Baths ruins, was dedicated to the goddess Diana by a freedman known as Vettius Benignus.[217] It is also worth noting that this Gallic traveler, Peregrinus, wished both to identify himself as a foreigner as well as to give thanks to his local deities at the temple of a different god. Dedications of this sort were not uncommon at the temple. Louise Revell notes that for visitors, the inscriptions helped frame "their own relationship to the goddess: her power and the appropriate rituals to invoke it."[218] This represents one of the ways in which the specific conditions at Bath facilitated unique discourses of identity that encompassed both local-scale identity markers as well as imperial-scale markers.

Another frequent form of inscription addressed the fulfillment of a vow. Sometimes these inscriptions were vague dedications to the goddess, referring to the completion of an unspecified promise that one can only assume was connected

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[215] R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain I: Inscriptions on Stone* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1965), RIB 140.
[216] Patricia Southern, *The Story of Roman Bath* (Gloucestershire, UK: Amberley Publishing, 2013), 33.
[217] Collingwood and Wright, *The Roman*, RIB 138.
[218] Louise Revell, "Religion and Ritual in the Western Provinces," *Greece & Rome*, 2nd ser., 54, no. 2 (October 2007): 220.

to her divine powers.[219] Occasionally, though, the inscriptions featured revealing

details about the context in which they were made. For example, on an altar

dedicated to Sulis, a freedman named Aufidius Eutuches asks the goddess to protect

his former master, a "centurion of the Sixth Legion Victrix" known as Marcus

Aufidius Maximus.[220] Of course, the nature of this dedication suggests that altar was

intended as a physical expression of Eutuches's gratitude towards the man who

freed him; however, it is quite possible that Maximus asked the freedman to

dedicate this altar in exchange for manumission. A virtually identical altar,

dedicated to the same centurion by another one of his freedman, lends credence to

the idea that Maximus requested these dedications.[221] Furthermore, the fact that

both altars specifically petition for the "welfare and safety"[222] of Maximus indicates

that the goddess was revered as a guardian of sorts, and that her powers included

the protection of soldiers.

In addition to such inscriptions, Bath is known for an entirely different sort

of divine message—the curse tablet. These tablets, called *defixiones,* tend to be small

sheets of lead, bearing inscriptions that, "seek both justice and revenge—the

recovery of the stolen goods as well as the punishment of the alleged thief."[223]

Moreover, curse tablets from Britain—the vast majority of which come from either

Bath or Uley—are unique in the Roman world in that almost all of them deal with

issues of theft, whereas tablets from other provinces convey a far broader range of

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[219] Collingwood and Wright, *The Roman*, RIB 150.
[220] Collingwood and Wright, *The Roman*, RIB 143.
[221] Ibid; RIB 144.
[222] Ibid; RIB 143-144.
[223] John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 192.

concerns.[224] This pattern contrasts with the other attributes of these tablets, which are quite similar to specimens from around the empire in their "atmosphere and formulaic language."[225] For example, it was customary for the maker of the curse to use generic stock phrases such as, "whether woman or man, whether slave or free, whether boy or girl," when identifying an unknown thief, in order to ensure that the person who had committed the crime would be encompassed within the curse.[226] At times, these descriptions included other kinds of categories, such as "whether pagan or Christian," which indicates that religion was a significant marker of identity in that area.[227] This "pagan or Christian" tag suggests that Christianity was prominent enough to be included within the list of universal labels, and yet, it underscores the reality of a Christianity "set in a landscape still crowded with other gods."[228]

The curses also adhere to a formula in terms of their objectives; specifically, they usually offer the stolen items to the goddess in exchange for her help in ensuring that whoever was responsible for their theft pays via the "spill" of "[their] own blood" or some other misfortune.[229] The fact that the goddess required material incentives to carry out the punishments suggests that the relationship between petitioner and goddess was understood as transactional in nature, and that the fulfillment of 'justice' was perhaps a secondary consideration. Louise Revell observes: "there is a strong sense of place within some of the tablets, setting up an

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[224] Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power*, 259.

[225] Gager, *Curse Tablets*, 193.

[226] Gager, *Curse Tablets*, Source 95.

[227] Ibid; Source 96.

[228] Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350 - 550 AD*(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 34.

[229] Gager, *Curse Tablets*, Source 95.

association between the fulfillment of the curse, the goddess, and the physical setting of the temple."[230] Indeed, several of the tablets ask that the perpetrator suffer the demanded penalty within the actual confines of the shrine. For example, in one tablet, a man named Docimedis requests that whoever stole his gloves "should lose his minds [sic] and his eyes in the temple."[231] In another, Civilis entreats that the person who stole his "ploughshare" should have to "lay down his life in the temple."[232] Considering that nobody would be able to bring a plough into the temple, one must infer from this curse that Civilis was a local farmer who had come to Bath specifically for the purpose of seeking punishment for the robber.[233] One might also conclude that, based on the urgency of the tablet, the theft of a plough was a significant loss for a presumably lower-class laborer such as Civilis. That being said, the existence of tablets attributed to people such as Civilis is reasonable sign that *defixiones* likely were not altogether very expensive to make. While a plough might have been expensive for a farmer, the five denarii that one person lost was probably not a great deal of money to anyone above the lower middle classes—"nothing like the two purses of coin lost by builders of Hadrian's wall."[234] For this reason, a poor individual living nearby to Bath might have regarded the production of a curse tablet as a low-cost investment. Even if the curse were unlikely to be successful, it was at least worth the expense of making a tablet.

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[230] Revell, "Religion and Ritual," 221.
[231] Tomlin, "The Curse," 2:TAB 5.
[232] Tomlin, "The Curse," 2:TAB 31.
[233] Tomlin, "The Curse," 2: 148.
[234] Tomlin, "The Curse," 2: 80.

Just as some of the vows to Sulis Minerva can be traced to powers of healing

and protection, likewise, some of the curses relate to Sulis by requesting that she

inflict the opposite of her customary powers on the accursed. In one tablet, the

aggrieved petitioner, whose "bathing tunic and cloak" were stolen, promises those

items to her in exchange for the goddess' denying "sleep or health" to the thief.[235] To

be sure, in addition to death, the infliction of insomnia, ill health, or madness were

all typical themes of the curses, but some tablets became even more vindictive. A

man bearing the Roman cognomen Docilianus, whose "hooded cloak" had been

stolen, not only asked for the thief's death, but also requested that the thief not be

allowed to conceive any children unless they returned his cloak to the temple.[236]

The dual nature of Sulis, in terms of her capacity to heal or harm, is emblematic of

the overall fluidity of ritual practice at the temple. Likewise, the overarching

preoccupation with theft that characterizes the tablets from Bath is important for a

number of reasons. First, as Roger Tomlin notes, as of the late 1980s, barely 20 of

the roughly 1300 curse tablets from the remainder of the Greco-Roman world dealt

with theft; in Britain, meanwhile, approximately 70 such tablets existed, while fewer

than ten dealt with other issues.[237] This overwhelming thematic incongruence,

coupled with the legalistic language employed in many of the Bath tablets, indicates

that the middle and lower class peoples living near Bath in particular likely placed

more faith in the local hybrid goddesses' ability to deliver justice than in the actual

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[235] Tomlin, "The Curse," 2:TAB 32.
[236] Tomlin, "The Curse," 2:TAB 10.
[237] Tomlin, "The Curse," 2: 60.

justice system itself.[238] Moreover, based on the sample of names found at Bath,[239] it is safe to infer that the people engaging in these ritual activities were predominantly native British folks. Thus, clearly, their behavior—employing Roman *defixiones* to address a uniquely local problem, at a site belonging to a semi-native goddess—represents a highly differentiated form of cultural hybridization.

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[238] Tomlin, "The Curse," 2: 71.
[239] Tomlin, "The Curse," 2: 96-97.

Chapter VI: Power and Purpose at Bath

Symbolic Expressions of Social Dynamics

As with the discussion of materials from Hadrian's Wall, it is necessary to further contextualize the evidence from Bath in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the connections between material practice, culture, and identity at that site. First, the temple itself, built during the Flavian period and situated on top of the local hot springs,[240] was not a strict Romano-Celtic style construction. Instead, as Goldberg points out, from its earliest stages, "the architecture of Bath bears closer resemblance to sanctuaries typical of the Mediterranean world."[241] In terms of both its engineering, which contained and channeled the hot springs via a system of pipes that flowed into the bathing facility, as well as its aesthetic design, the temple was unlike any other religious site in Britain.[242] This is not to say that the temple was particularly Roman, either. In fact, almost every aspect of the complex defies simple categorization. For example, while the temple's overall style is classical,[243] the design of the temple's ornamental motifs would indicate that their craftsmen descended from northern Gaul.[244] Moreover, the temple's famous pediment, featuring the head of a male gorgon "mounted on a large circular shield and surrounded by two concentric oak wreathes," has been

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[240] Revell, "Religion and Ritual," 215.
[241] Goldberg, "The Dichotomy," 193.
[242] James Gerrard, "The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath and the End of Roman Britain," *The Antiquaries Journal* 87 (2007): 148.
[243] Gerrard, "The Temple," 148.
[244] T.F.C. Blagg, "The Date of the Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath," *Britannia* 10 (1979): 106.

repeatedly hailed as a defining work of Romano-Celtic syncretism, owing to its

fusion of classical and 'native' characteristics.[245] On the one hand, the image of the

gorgon with its serpentine hair is clearly derived from classical mythology, implying

the pediment's connection to Roman culture. On the other hand, the gorgon's

masculine visage, as well as its "lentoid shaped eyes, wedge-shaped nose and

frowning brow," reveals an unmistakable Celtic influence.[246] This apparent duality

has presented serious interpretive difficulties, and scholars have variously

referenced its unique features to offer tendentious support or criticism for a wide

range of theories. For example, the gorgon has been linked with the sun god Sol, the

imperial cult, the legendary King Bladud, and the divine Oceanus, to mention just a

few readings.[247] Yet, even as the gorgon's provenance and meaning have remained

elusive, its cultural value has never been in question.

Haverfield himself seems to have recognized the gorgon's special status in

the context of his Romanization thesis. Whereas Gerrard concludes that Haverfield's

decision to place an illustration of the gorgon on the cover of *The Romanization of

Roman Britain* revealed his belief that the gorgon was "synonymous" with

Romanization,[248] on the contrary, Haverfield wished to emphasize the Gorgon's

enigmatic, and potentially subversive essence. Specifically, Haverfield suggests that

the Gorgon represents "[the] survival of the Celtic spirit in a Romanized Britain,"

and is "proof [that] the supremacy of the dominant conventional art of the Empire

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[245] Eleri H. Cousins, "An Imperial Image: The Bath Gorgon in Context," *Britannia* 47 (2016): 99-118.
[246] James McBurney, "The Cult of Sulis-Minerva at Bath: The Religious Ritual of the Patron" (master's thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2016), 102.
[247] Cousins, "An Imperial," 99-18; McBurney, "The Cult," 99-101.
[248] Gerrard, "The Temple," 148.

could be rudely broken down."[249] To be sure, the broader context in which the

gorgon must be discussed necessarily includes the other symbols on the pediment,

which several scholars have convincingly associated with imperial imagery.[250] Still,

for Haverfield, the Celtic aspects of the piece leave a far more powerful impression

than its Roman features. In this sense, his interpretation is somewhat aligned with

the framework articulated by the influential Haverfield revisionist Jane Webster, as

part of her critique of the "neutral conception of syncretism."[251] According to

Webster, syncretism, such as the Romano-Celtic variety that the gorgon ostensibly

embodies, should not be understood in terms of a "*laissez-faire*… happy partnership"

of cultures because this "obscure[s] the active indigenous role" in its

development.[252] Indeed, from that perspective, the amalgamation of cultural motifs

on the pediment is not so much an indication of coexistence as it is a political

statement—its imagery reflecting the colonial discourse that shaped it.

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[249] Haverfield, *The Romanization*, 53.
[250] "If the interpretation of the Bath pediment which I have offered is accepted, it can be seen not only as a coherent sculptural programme relevant to the local worship of Sulis Minerva but can also be viewed on equal terms with other Imperial State reliefs." Martin Henig, "A New Star Shining over Bath," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 18, no. 4 (1999): 423.
"The iconography of the pediment cannot be linked to iconographical trends specific to North-East Gaul and the Rhineland; the 'flavour', as it were, of the pediment comes more from the empire's centre. The winged victories, coronae civicae, etc. are not provincial reworkings of Roman models: they are the Roman models themselves. The same can be said for the very fact that the temple possesses a sculptured pediment at all, making it unique amongst the temples of the North-West provinces." Cousins, "An Imperial," 99-118.
[251] Jane Webster, "Necessary Comparisons: A Post-Colonial Approach to Religious Syncretism in the Roman Provinces," *World Archaeology* 28, no. 3 (February 1997): 335.
[252] Webster, "Necessary Comparisons," 328, 335.

Conclusion: Bath and the Wall

Distinct Contexts Produce Unique Conversations

While Webster's emphasis on native agency and her rejection of Romano-Celtic syncretism as "partnership" are apt, it is beyond the scope of this study to engage in a systematic analysis of the possible political motivations of the artisans who built the Bath temple's pediment. What is of greater importance though, for the purposes of this work, is the realization that the pediment, like the shrine containing it, was embedded in a complex and highly ambiguous transcultural dialogue. This dialogue, which we can only ever partially reconstruct based on evidence such as curse tablets and architectural remains, was produced by a range of individuals possessing widely divergent relationships to Roman-ness. Some visitors would not even have considered themselves Roman, and yet, by visiting the temple, they were participating in the local discourse of Roman-ness. After all, the notion of what it meant to be Roman at Bath, as elsewhere, was in some ways inclusive of what it meant to *not* be Roman, which in turn was a convoluted function of wealth, status, lineage, ideology, and social practice, among other factors. In this way, the gorgon pediment signifies more than just a cultural tug of war between native and Roman influences. Its presence spoke to the worshippers, tourists, and revenge seekers alike who visited the shrine, and perhaps it communicated different messages to the soldier than to the farmer. As with so much of the cultural activity that we encounter in Roman Britain, it becomes quite difficult to disentangle all the disparate threads of identity that contribute to the overall atmosphere at a site such as Bath. However,

one can clearly discern that the scene at Bath was quite different from the one at

Hadrian's Wall. This is due to the observable fact that the characteristics of

hybridized cultures and identities tend to reflect the sociopolitical circumstances in

which they were formed. Moreover, the case studies at Bath and Hadrian's Wall

show that even in the same province, and sometimes even in the same community,

the form and function of emergent hybrid cultures will differ depending on context.

On the one hand, it comes as no surprise that the civilian community at Bath did not

exactly resemble the predominantly military settlements from along the Wall. On

the other hand, we can now appreciate that the range of factors contributing to

cultural development in the provinces was far more extensive and nuanced than

conventional narratives about Roman imperialism might lead one to believe. For

example, the hybrid cultures that emerged along the Wall reflected not only the

military identities of the soldiers stationed there and the vestiges of their ethnic

backgrounds, but also their relationships with civilian suppliers; with the women

and children who cohabited the forts; with their fellow soldiers of different ranks.

Likewise, while the overarching context of the cultural developments at Bath

involved the ritual practices performed at the temple of Sulis-Minerva, nevertheless,

we can detect meaningful variations in the material practices based on discrete

variables such as an individual's socioeconomic position or place of origin. Thus,

ultimately, this study has been concerned with suggesting that Roman imperial

influence in Britain was largely decentralized, dynamic, and ideological in nature,

which facilitated the formation of diverse hybridized cultures based on local

interpretations of what it meant to be, or *not* to be, Roman.

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