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Romano-British archaeology has long suffered a degree of schizophrenia. The subject is enormously popular with the public, and with school children; but it is something of a pariah amongst archaeologists of other periods and places. It is regarded as perhaps having too much evidence for its own good, with the result that it scorns theoretical archaeology, is positively myopic in outlook, and above all is dull and boring.

A fierce controversy in Romano-British archaeology has all too often meant a civilised debate about the minutiae of the Roman occupation. A glance at the list of contents in volumes of the prestigious journal *Britannia* shows that it is not unusual for several pages to be devoted to learned articles which debate whether a particular event took place in this year or the next, or indeed in this month or the next. There are, of course, serious points behind these papers; but the prehistorian, dealing with centuries or even millennia, may be forgiven for wondering if it really matters, or at least if there are not other questions that matter much more. Reading the titles of such articles, it is certainly easy for one to understand why Roman Britain has been for so long regarded as somewhat removed from the real world of archaeology.

In recent years the cosy world of Romano-British orthodoxy has been shaken to its foundations: if evidence is needed, one has only to point to the establishment of a Theoretical Roman Archaeology Group. The battlefield of Romano-British studies which once saw little more than minor skirmishes now presents a scene of unremitting hostilities and carnage. Dead orthodoxies litter the field. No longer can it be said that Roman Britain is dull and boring. All of this should be welcome – the challenging of long-accepted but out-dated and flawed models of the past is always good news in archaeology. But, as usual, revolutionary fervour has got carried away, mown down more than a few innocents, and set up its own orthodoxies which will in time doubtless prove as flawed and passé as those they replaced.

So what are the new tenets of post-revolutionary Romano-British archaeology? Essentially they boil down to a single, central belief: that the Roman occupation of Britain had little impact on the majority of Britons, and that such changes as did take place were determined more by processes and attitudes which were formed in the pre-conquest years, than by the wishes, dictates or encouragement of the Romans.

From this central tenet radiates a series of more specific propositions, of which a few may be selected for mention: **URBANISATION**: the pace and scale of urbanisation reflects the pre-conquest native experience of ‘central places’ (*oppida* and hillforts) where political and economic functions were concentrated, and the location of Romano-British towns owes more to the Iron Age settlement-pattern than to factors introduced by the Romans. **MARKETS AND TRADE**: the British adopted the use of coinage only very slowly and reluctantly; exchange, until the later third century, was embedded in social relationships and involved reciprocity, redistribution, and fixed prices. The free market and money economy were virtually unknown. **AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION**: The Roman conquest saw little innovation in farming for at least two centuries, so that the changes identifiable in the late Roman period are likely to be entirely native-induced

and to owe little to the Roman occupation. ROMANISATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL: the evidence we often use to document the Romanisation of the native British can be exposed as little more than a façade, and on closer examination may even prove to be evidence of them expressing their native cultural identity.

I should like to look at each of these propositions in turn, to consider their implications, and to weigh them against the evidence, and since this paper is presented to the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society I shall try to focus particularly on evidence from the west country. So first, URBANISATION. The Romans were enthusiasts of towns and town-life. Indeed it is often said that they tried to run their empire as if it were a city-state (Reynolds 1988, 17). There were good practical reasons, however, for encouraging towns to grow and flourish throughout the empire, because towns made administration and taxation so much easier, and they also encouraged and fostered marketing and trade. Unlike most of the empire, Britain presented the Romans with something of a problem – when they arrived they found nothing that resembled a town as they knew it. There are many archaeologists who would take issue with this statement, in the sense that they would argue that the *oppida* like *Calleva*, *Camulodunum*, *Verulamium* and Bagendon already fulfilled many of the functions of a town or city (Collis 1984, 224–6). That being so, the British were already disposed towards, and prepared for, urbanisation. Furthermore, analysis of the origins of Romano-British small towns by Barry Burnham (1986) has shown that about 37% of them certainly overlie earlier, Iron Age settlements, and a further 27% may do so. This too suggests that the Romano-British towns had their origins in the pre-Roman Iron Age.

There may be a grain of truth in all this, but not much more. If one compares the *oppida* to the Roman view of town-life, they are alike as chalk and cheese. What would the Greek geographer Pausanias have said about *Camulodunum* or *Verulamium*? This is what he said about the town of *Panopeus* in Phocis: 'It is a city of the Phoceans, if one can give the name of city to those who possess no government offices, no gymnasium, no theatre, no market-place, no water descending from a fountain, and whose population lives in hovels?' (Pausanias X, 4, i). I do not think he would have been very impressed with our British *oppida*. Equally, simple superimposition or juxtaposition of a late Iron Age settlement and a Roman town is no proof whatever of a generic link between the two, particularly as so often we have little idea of the nature of the underlying native site. On present evidence, apart from a handful of major centres, many appear to be no more than scattered farmsteads and hamlets; only a few might even claim to be of village status.

Moving from these general points to consideration of particular examples, we find little in the archaeological record of our Romano-British towns in the west country to justify the assumption that the natives were predisposed to urbanisation, or that the Romano-British towns developed out of existing Iron Age settlements. Bourton-on-the-Water (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 288–9), if it can be called a town, was of course preceded by the fortified site at Salmonsbury. But since Bourton appears to develop significantly only seven or eight decades after the invasion, it is impossible to claim that the Iron Age site was influential in the development of the Roman settlement. Wanborough (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 160–4) produces no evidence of Iron Age occupation at all, and seems most likely to owe its development to the establishment of a *mansio* or public inn at the junction where the road from Cirencester branches off to Silchester in one direction and Winchester in the other. Nettleton (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 188–92), has yielded a small amount of Iron Age material, but there is no evidence of significant activity here until the establishment of a Romano-Celtic temple in the late first or second century alongside the Fosse Way. Bath (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 165–76), the most impressive of the small towns in the region, may have had a pre-Roman

cult centre, and may have had a Roman fort; but there can be no doubt at all that what made Bath an important town was the hot springs. Spas were a well-known and popular feature of the Roman world, and Bath would have attracted investment by Roman entrepreneurs. Camerton (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 292–6) certainly had a pre-Roman history, and there was a Late Iron Age occupation of some significance, from which half a dozen Dobunnic coins have been recovered. But on present evidence there is no reason to think that the Roman town grew from the pre-conquest settlement, for there appears to be a gap of perhaps as much as a century between the end of the Iron Age occupation and the building of the first Roman houses. Charterhouse (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 208–11) is an entirely Roman creation, a pit-head settlement for the lead-mines, initially developed under direct military control; whilst Sea Mills (Todd 1976, 102–4) too began life as a harbour for the Roman army and navy to use in the occupation of south Wales. Looking over the evidence from these small towns, one can see a multiplicity of factors in their foundation and development, but neither existing native settlement nor native interest figures prominently amongst them.

When we turn to our major town of Cirencester, the message is essentially the same. The *oppidum* at Bagendon and the important centre at Minchinhampton certainly attest major political foci in the vicinity at the time of the invasion; yet a Roman town grows up at neither, but rather on a virgin site at Cirencester. This shift of location, relatively small as it is, cannot be dissociated from the location of both a major Roman road junction, and a Roman auxiliary fort. There is no doubt that a civilian settlement grew up alongside the fort to serve its needs, nor that when the fort was finally abandoned in the early–mid 70s, the civilian town not only survived but quickly spread across the site (Wachter and McWhirr 1982, 60–4). Its rapid, and apparently well-ordered development at this time must be related to a *Roman* decision to create a *Civitas Dobunnorum* with its administrative capital at Cirencester.

The early history of Cirencester is also relevant to the second of our four points for discussion – MARKETS AND TRADE. Those who promote the view that the economy of Roman Britain was embedded in social relationships and that exchange was mainly conducted by reciprocity and redistribution, or on the basis of fixed prices (Hodder 1979), certainly have a case which needs to be answered. At a general level, they point to the fixed price of corn, and the redistribution of food-supplies both to the army and to the city of Rome, whilst in Roman Britain in particular they point to the acute scarcity of coinage (at least in the archaeological record) until the late third century. The shortage of coinage in general, and lower value copper denominations in particular, is certainly difficult to explain if a cash- or free-market economy was operating in Britain before the period of the Gallic Empire. Paradoxically, some of the evidence used to support this viewpoint undermines the argument. If ever there was a case of an exception proving the rule, it is the Roman government's intervention to fix the price of corn. They fixed it precisely because the free-market constantly threatened to push its price up out of reach of the mass of the population, particularly in times of shortage. Indeed, the fixed price of corn is so often quoted, and so well known, precisely because it was so exceptional. Equally, the *annona* or corn-tax was instituted partly to ensure the supplies of food to military garrisons whatever the free market did to prices. The power of the market by the late third century is of course demonstrated not so much by Diocletian's Prices and Incomes edict of A.D. 301, which attempted to fix the price of hundreds of goods and services, but by the fact that it was effectively ignored and forgotten within a decade despite the draconian penalties which breach of the edict incurred.

What about the more specific charge, that the coin-evidence from Britain points to little usage of money for everyday transactions until the late third century? It is undoubtedly true that coin loss in the first two centuries of the Roman occupation is low. Richard Reece's tabulation

(1991, 30) shows for example that of every 1,000 coins lost between A.D. 43 and A.D. 402, in Romano-British towns, average annual loss in the first two hundred years will be about 1 coin per year, whilst that over the last hundred and forty years will be about 5 a year. In the countryside the discrepancy is far greater. To set against this truth, however, we have others. We can calculate for example that the Roman army of conquest in Britain was paid at least 8,000,000 and probably nearer 10,000,000 *denarii* a year. We can also look at coin-loss on military sites, where we can make reasonable estimates of the amount of coinage that arrived there to pay the garrison. John Casey has done this for Corbridge in Northumberland, where he estimates (Casey 1980, 27) that in the first hundred and twenty years of occupation 6,000,000 *denarii* would have been used here to pay the troops. Changed into the highest denomination bronze coinage, the *sestertius*, that would mean 24,000,000 coins. Even allowing for an extensive recycling of coinage from year to year, it is significant that excavations over a period of 50 years have yielded just 1,387 coins of this period! Let us bring these thoughts nearer home, to the Kingsholm fortress at Gloucester and to the Leaholme fort at Cirencester, and let us try to make a realistic minimal estimate of how much coinage actually got into local circulation. G.R. Watson estimated (1969, 104–7), on the basis of surviving pay documents, that after paying for everything – food, weapons, armour, etc – the Roman soldier probably received about a sixth of his pay as ‘pocket money’, and this figure now seems established (Speidel 1992, 92). At Kingsholm this should mean that over 200,000 *denarii* a year (or over 3,000,000 of the more common bronze *as*) would have been available to the troops to spend on leisure and pleasure.

At the Kingsholm fortress in any single year, we are looking at 200,000 *denarii* or 3,200,000 *asses*. To date, just 40 of those coins have been recovered in excavation (Hurst 1988, 49)! Even the less well-paid auxiliaries at Cirencester should have had 13,000 *denarii* or 208,000 *asses* a year to spend in the adjacent civilian *vicus*. Although there have been attempts to play down the significance of the early *vici* beneath towns like Cirencester, it is an observable fact throughout history that military garrisons attract civilian settlements which attempt to provide for the leisure needs of the troops. The only means that the troops have of paying for goods and services is cash; and if one accepts the existence of these *vici* (and the material evidence of their existence is hard to deny), then one must, I believe, accept that the civilian population living in them became, at an early date in the occupation, coin-users.

The dearth of early coins, compared with the ubiquitous appearance of later third- and fourth-century coins, is an apparent paradox. Though much more serious study by specialists is needed, it may be observed that people would be much more careful about the loss and retrieval of valuable pieces than of others. The lowest early coin in general use, the *as*, belonged to a fairly stable system, where it counted as 1/16th *denarius*, or 1/400th of a gold piece. On the other hand, the debased later issues were the result of an endemic inflation of the money-supply, and came to be reckoned at increasingly astronomical numbers to the gold piece (Burnett 1987, ch. 6). They were in consequence far less valuable individually, and less sought individually when lost. What we cannot do is ignore the fact that Roman troops were paid, in coin, and that they used their spare cash to purchase goods and services from the nearest civilian settlement. In the case of Cirencester, of course, the troops moved on and the town was left to its own devices as a social and economic focus. The provision of a large *forum*, and by the reign of Hadrian of a market-hall, almost certainly for the sale of fresh meat, again raise the question of what role such structures could have played in an embedded, reciprocal economy. Due to the relatively limited character of the excavations within Cirencester, we do not know much about privately owned or rented shops there; but comparison with Silchester to the east or Caerwent to the west suggests that there were probably many dozens of such shops at Cirencester. Whilst

one might give some consideration to the suggestion that the *fora* had more to do with statements of civic pride than commercial activity, it is difficult to explain the market-halls in these terms, and impossible to dismiss the large number of shops in this way. Are we really to believe that all these outlets operated on the basis of reciprocal exchange or the good-will of kin-relationships?

Some of the shops on the high street, all of those in the market-hall, and a good many of the stalls set up on market days in the *forum*, would have sold either imported or locally produced foodstuffs. This brings us to our third area of debate – AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION IN THE ROMAN PERIOD. In the ‘new Roman Britain’, the farmers who produced these foods would still have been farming in the same old traditional Celtic ways, their practices having been affected little if at all by the Roman conquest. To demonstrate the point, Martin Jones (1981) produced a tabulation of agricultural innovations in the first millennia B.C. and A.D.

A quick glance reveals many innovations in the pre-Roman Iron Age, but only four in the early Roman period, apparently confirming the low impact of the invader on native farming. There is little that one would argue with in this table, although I suspect that the plough-coulter (which was once claimed to be an Iron Age innovation but is now placed in the late Roman period) will in time appear in first or second-century deposits, being associated with one-way ploughing which is attested in late first-/early second-century situations. But there are two aspects of the table which do need to be more carefully considered. First there is the significance of those early Roman innovations which do appear here. Take ‘exotic plants’ for example. Whilst some of these – dates, figs and olives – are only represented as imports, others were certainly or probably grown here. These include grapes, which in addition to pips found at a number of sites including Chew Park villa, are better attested by the remains found in 1893/4 in Gloucester, Silchester, and possibly at Boxmoor in Herts. (Williams 1977). Less exotic species which are now regularly identified in environmental sampling include plums (e.g. from Chew Park, Rockbourne and Barton Court villas), cherries (e.g. from Chew Park and Rockbourne), and pears and apples (e.g. from Chew Park and Barton Court). Alongside these fruits, vegetables such as carrot, parsnip, celery and cabbage appear in the record, and Barton Court has confirmed the herbs dill and coriander identified at Silchester many years ago (Miles 1986, 33). Some of these fruits and vegetables were introduced to Britain, others may have been indigenous, but the important point is that the idea of horticulture or market-gardening appears to be an innovation of the Roman period. It is attested not only by the, as yet, scarce remains of the plants themselves but also by the increased frequency of spade irons, and the appearance of pruning knives and saws. In addition we have an increasing number of villas with walled enclosures which, in the absence of outbuildings within them, seem most likely to have been gardens or orchards. Gardens on this scale might produce beyond the subsistence level, and Varro (*On Farming* I, 16) reminded Roman farmers that ‘close to the city it pays to cultivate gardens on a large scale’.

Two other early innovations, large masonry granaries and mechanical mills, are significant as indicators of the scale of crop-storage and processing envisaged on Roman villa estates, which in turn must relate to the scale of marketing of arable products to town populations. This brings us to the second aspect of Martin Jones’ table which deserves closer scrutiny – the omissions from it. The obvious ones are the creation of nucleated market centres with specialised outlets for arable products – the *forum* and the market halls – and the construction of a transport-network which allowed bulk produce to be transported to the market-place quickly and relatively cheaply. The combination of these factors must have had a major impact on attitudes to farming amongst those who aspired to emulate Roman life-styles, and we can see evidence of this in other innovations which Jones does not list. Agricultural intensification and/or more cost-

effective production is represented not only by the large granaries and mechanical mills, but also by the widespread adoption of longer, narrower fields. At Barnsley Park, for example, Peter Fowler (1975, 132–5) found that most fields had a length/width ratio of 3:1, and other examples are well-known in the west country (e.g. Tormarton, and Lye Hole) as elsewhere. These fields were both more cost-effective and more productive, because they would be ploughed in only one direction rather than cross-ploughed, and they would increase the productive area by having only narrow headlands at either end of the field. Their introduction probably coincides not only with that of the coulter plough, which made cross-ploughing unnecessary, but also with the introduction of a larger breed of ox, apparently in small numbers as one might expect if it were used as a more powerful plough- and draught-animal than as a meat-producer. Such animals have been identified at Hucclecote and Witcombe villas among others in the west country (Clifford 1933, 1954).

There is too some reason to think that there was intensification of meat-production. This is partly suggested by the faunal samples from many early Roman sites, including Cirencester. King (1988, 53–4) has demonstrated that from the later first century onwards, there is marked change in the faunal assemblages from forts, towns and villas, with sheep declining in numbers, whilst cattle and pig rise significantly. Pig in particular is a ‘fast-food’ animal, and cattle too are more efficient meat-carriers than sheep. At the same time, there is clear evidence from detailed studies by Maltby (1979) that the methods and processes of butchery were drastically changed in the later first century A.D. Cattle were driven to town and butchered there – a development perhaps associated with the provision of market-halls and market-places for regular and frequent sale of food products. The increasing importance of cattle may also be related to hay-cropping, which Jones (1991, 23) has recently identified as an early Roman innovation.

The growing popularity of pork is reflected not only in the percentage of pig-bones in faunal samples but also by the appearance of structures likely to be pig-sties in villas like Pitney and North Wraxall (Branigan 1976, 72, 79). With pork commanding a price 50% higher than beef (in Diocletian’s edict of A.D. 301), one can understand why some farmers may have put extra effort into pig-rearing. Intensive grain-fed rearing of pigs in at least three sites at Pitney would be not only an innovation in itself, but also a reflection of a wider innovation – the idea of specialisation – in the Roman farming economy. This is a topic I have discussed elsewhere (Applebaum 1972, 187–8; Branigan 1988), and it will suffice to give but one example here. At Shakenoak villa, in the early second century, three ponds were constructed, probably for the breeding of coarse fish. Even if we assume very low stocking rates, we can calculate that the annual income from fish-farming at Shakenoak may have been equivalent to the value of the dressed meat of 130 pigs or 60 beef cattle.

Underlying talk of price, value, intensification, and marketing there is of course the idea of agriculture in Roman Britain being regarded as a profit-making activity. The late Mark Gregson (1988, 32) argued that land itself was increasingly treated as a commodity after the Roman invasion, and Roman writers such as Varro (*On Farming* I, 16–17) and Cato (*On Farming* II, 7) certainly reflect the firmly held Roman view that farming was undertaken not only as a gentlemanly thing to do, but also to make a profit. Some of the innovations I have briefly discussed would certainly be rather pointless unless the profit-motive lay behind them, and I would suggest that the idea of farming for profit was itself one of the major innovations introduced by the Romans to the native British.

Much of the income generated by farming would have been needed to invest in the building and/or maintenance and extension of the villa houses which began to be erected from the late first century onwards. The innovations we have mentioned are particularly associated with villas, and it is surely in the villas that we have the archetypal example of THE

ROMANISATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL. The villa is an artificial living environment par excellence, with heated rooms, a bathsuite or bath-house, painted walls with imitation marble panels, aquatic scenes or attractive gardens, and mosaic floors displaying scenes from Classical mythology. Yet it is here, in that most Roman of settings – the *triclinium* or dining room – that we are confronted with our fourth example of life in the new Roman Britain, where the tribal identity, rather than the Romanisation, of the individual is most proudly attested. This is an idea put forward by Martin Millett in his recent book, and here it is simply best to quote what he has written (1990, 176): ‘The [mosaic] schools are mainly confined to distribution within a single *civitas*. The coherence of spatial groupings of these mosaics is thus significant because their limitation to a single *civitas* or tribal area suggests that these social groupings remained of significance through the fourth century. A potential explanation of this lies in the significance of their use of particular sets of artistic forms as symbols to express membership of a particular tribal group.’

One’s first reaction is to wonder why native Britons should choose the most Roman of all art-forms, which came to Britain with a large and well-established repertory, as a vehicle by which to express their native identity. Furthermore, the features which distinguish the products of one school from another are usually not the principal subject matter, but rather the general design, the choice of border elements, and peculiarities of the treatment of these peripheral elements. If these traits *were* used to express tribal identity, it must have been something of a hidden agenda, since the eye-catching aspects of the mosaics were obviously their central panels and mythological scenes. Even with our Corinian Orpheus mosaics, we must remember that many Corinian mosaics did *not* include Orpheus, and equally that Orpheus turned up in far distant tribal territories at Horkstow and Winterton in Humberside and Brading on the Isle of Wight. In any case, the distribution of these floors is by no means as tribally exclusive as Millett claims. If we take the most favourable criteria against which to test his hypothesis, we can still see that overall about 40% of mosaics from these schools are ‘exported’ to other tribal territories. Our Corinian school ‘exports’ about one third of its mosaics, and to no fewer than six other tribal territories. In the southern part of our region, the Durnovarian school products are spread almost equally between the *civitas* territory and other tribal areas. If we forget tribal boundaries for the moment and simply look at mosaics as commodities for sale, the distribution begins to make sense. We find that around 85% of mosaics are found within a 50-mile radius of the workshops or schools which produced them (Branigan 1991). In other words, whilst the distribution of the mosaics does not support their recognition as symbols of tribal identity, it does suggest that the ‘service’ area of the major towns in which the mosaic schools were based was probably around 50 miles in radius. I would suggest, therefore, that far from offering evidence of strongly sustained tribal loyalties even in the fourth century A.D., mosaics like those from the Corinian school are good evidence for the demand for highly Romanised furnishings amongst native land-owners both within and beyond the borders of a *civitas*.

There are many other aspects of the ‘new Roman Britain’ which I would like to explore, but this Address is an inappropriate place to discuss such a major topic in both breadth and depth. I should also have liked to consider the underlying reasons why the ‘new Roman Britain’ – a world where ethnic identity and cultural practices are staunchly maintained by a native population in the face of cultural as well as military imperialism – has been so enthusiastically adopted by British archaeologists at the present time. One suspects that perhaps the ‘new Roman Britain’ reflects better the attitudes and preoccupations of the British at the end of the second millennium A.D. than it does those of our predecessors in the years following the Roman invasion.

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