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0521789826 - Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul

Greg Woolf

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Becoming Roman

The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul

Under the emperors' rule, the cultural lives of all Rome's subjects were utterly transformed. This book is a study of this process – conventionally termed 'Romanization' – through an investigation of the experience of Rome's Gallic provinces in the late Republic and early empire. Beginning with a rejection of the concept of 'Romanization' it describes the nature of Roman power in Gaul and the Romans' own understanding of these changes. Successive chapters then map the chronology and geography of change and offer new interpretations of urbanism, rural civilization, consumption and cult, before concluding with a synoptic view of Gallo-Roman civilization and of the origins of provincial cultures in general. The work draws on literary and archaeological material to make a contribution to the cultural history of the empire which will be of interest to ancient historians, classical archaeologists and all interested in cultural change.

Greg Woolf is Professor of Ancient History at the University of St Andrews. He is co-editor, with Alan K. Bowman, of *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (1994).

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To the memory of my father

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Preface

This book is a study of the origins and nature of the culture of the provinces of the early Roman empire. The creation of provincial cultures is not an obvious sequel to Rome's conquest of the Mediterranean world and its continental hinterlands. To illustrate the point we might imagine another – counter-factual – Roman empire, created in much the same way as the real one by armies led out on campaign by aristocratic generals to defend and extend Roman power, and to win booty, prestige and territory. As the campaigns become grander, the armies grow larger and fight further and further away from home until expansion ceases and there is peace in the provinces of this imaginary Roman empire. Taxes are paid and the odd rebellion essayed and suppressed but otherwise life goes on much as it did before in the cities of the Greeks, the villages of Gaul, the temples of the Egyptians and so on. If Counter-Rome's subjects farm a little harder and fight a little less, the day to day rhythm of their lives is unchanged, they speak the same languages as before, worship the same gods, inhabit the same houses and eat the same foods off the same pottery as they had always done. And when the empire withers away or collapses, as all empires – imaginary or real – must do, all is exactly as it was and no traces of it remain. Gauls and Greeks, Jews and Egyptians once more go their separate historical ways, untouched by their shared experience of imperial rule.

This book is an exercise in differentiating that imaginary, counter-factual, empire from the real one. As a matter of fact the provinces of the Republican empire did bear some resemblance to those of our counter-factual model, but under the emperors the cultures of Rome's subjects were transformed utterly. Cities sprang up where there were none before, new temples were raised to new gods, and even the most intimate details of life were refashioned. In Gaul men literally came down from the hills, shaved off their beards and learned to bathe themselves. Nor did these changes affect only the richest and most prominent. The humblest altars and the cheapest pottery vessels testify to the creation of a new

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civilization. Changes of this sort might be documented from all over Rome's empire, but did not result in a culture of imperial uniformity. Rather each region witnessed the creation of distinct civilizations – crudely described today as Romano-British, Gallo-Roman and so forth – that reflected their various predecessors but nevertheless converged on, and formed part of, an imperial whole. For this reason, and to allow the process to be studied in the detail it deserves, this study is based on the provincial cultures of just one part (albeit a large part) of this empire, Rome's Gallic provinces.

Roman Gaul covered a vast and varied swathe of territory that today comprises the whole of France and much of Switzerland, Germany and the Low Countries. At the end of prehistory all this area was inhabited by late iron age populations, who shared broadly similar arts and technologies, but combined them in intensely local manifestations. Roman armies conquered all these societies in the second and last centuries BC and brought them into an empire already based on the Mediterranean world. Gallo-Roman civilization emerged from the subsequent confrontation between iron age cultures and the civilizations that we call Classical. This study poses the questions of why did this happen and why did it happen in the ways that it did? The subject, then, is the various processes usually summed up in the term Romanization, although, for reasons that will become apparent, that term is in many ways unhelpful.

The aim of this book is not, therefore, to provide another history of Roman Gaul, nor to provide a comprehensive account of Gallo-Roman archaeology.¹ It does, however, aim to offer an analysis of Roman civilization in early imperial Gaul. The subject is enormous and might be studied through any number of media, and in a variety of ways. I am very conscious of the paths not trodden: there is little here on art and architecture, less on numismatics, nothing on gender. The silences are not, of course, all of my choosing, but I have often selected among alternatives so as to treat each theme once, and to keep the work to manageable proportions. In selecting topics for detailed discussion, I have been guided sometimes by what seems central – urbanism, for example, and cult – and sometimes by the availability of recent high quality studies. In this respect, this study has only been possible thanks to the excellence of so much recent archaeological work in France and neighbouring countries, to the extent that it would have been impossible to write a book of this sort twenty years ago. The technical proficiency

¹ The fullest overall account remains that of Jullian (1908–26). Up to date accounts are offered to the history by Drinkwater (1983), and to the archaeology by King (1990a). The best short English introduction is provided by the chapters contributed by Goudineau to *Cambridge Ancient History* volumes x (1996) and xi (forthcoming).

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of this research and its systematic nature have transformed our knowledge of Roman Gaul, and I make no apology for asset-stripping the best results of these labours, although I do so conscious of the immense debt I owe to them. Archaeologists are necessarily painfully aware of the incomplete nature of their findings, and the provisional nature of any conclusions. Yet that problem will be with us as long as the science survives, and arguably there is little point accumulating data if analytical syntheses of this sort are not to be attempted. Historians and classicists are less worried by the provisional nature of interpretation, seeing it as inevitable within any living intellectual discipline. It is profoundly to be hoped that new understandings of Roman cultural history and further archaeological research, both in fieldwork and in theoretical debate, will all contribute to the superseding of my arguments and conclusions. That is inevitable in any case, but it is better to embrace the future than to attempt (futilely) to ward it off.

Gauls were not alone in becoming Romans. The argument therefore begins (chapter 1) with an exploration of how best to approach the general intellectual issues involved, couched as a discussion of Romanization, long the dominant paradigm in such investigations. Important contexts for these changes are the nature of Roman imperialism and Roman notions of civilization, both in theory and in their impact on practice. Those subjects are treated in chapters 2 and 3. I have avoided attempting to provide a thumbnail sketch of the salient features of pre-Roman culture and society in the region, partly because I have discussed some aspects elsewhere,² but mostly because it seemed better to integrate discussion of each aspect with that of its transformation under Roman rule. Chapter 4 provides a brief sketch of the geographical and chronological contours of change, viewed through one particularly sensitive medium, epigraphy. The discussion then moves on to consider central features of Gallo-Roman civilization, beginning with the most public manifestation, the creation of Gallo-Roman cities (chapter 5), and moving through the transformation of the countryside (chapter 6) to the establishment of new patterns of consumption (chapter 7). That progress also lead from discussion of public and collective acts of cultural transformation, through more private manifestations of cultural change and from the activities of the new aristocracies of Roman Gaul to the gradual dissemination of Roman styles and tastes throughout the population. The final substantive chapter (chapter 8) deals with a central issue, religion, often (but wrongly) thought of as the last bastion of pre-Roman identity and culture.

2 Woolf (1993a) (1993b) (1993c). The best account of the archaeology of the late La Tène is Collis (1984).

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I conclude (chapter 9) with some comments on the sort of civilization created and enjoyed in Roman Gaul.

The chronological limits of this study are set by the questions it has posed and need little explanation: both iron age and early Roman Gaul bear on the question, as do the cultural history of the late Republic and the early empire in general. It was tempting to pursue the study of Gallo-Roman civilization further in time to the late empire, despite the immense extension to this work that that would have entailed. But the focus of the study remains the process by which Gauls became Romans, and subsequent developments – among them the decline of cities, Christianization and the redefinition of Romans in opposition to new barbarians – belong to another story or stories, although the cost is that some issues, language change for example, receive less full attention than they might have had. At all events, the cultural history of late antique Gaul deserves more than a coda to a book on the early empire. Instead I have left Gaul at the end of the third century, when the Gallic Panegyricists could at least conjure up the image of a civilization founded in the age of Caesar and Augustus. Most of the book concerns the first and second centuries AD, the period within which Gallo-Roman culture was first created and then generalized.

This book has grown from a doctoral thesis written in Cambridge in the late 1980s. It is a pleasure once again to thank Ian Hodder, Keith Hopkins and Sander van der Leeuw who shared in its supervision, and most of all Peter Garnsey, who has seen the whole project through from beginning to end. I could not have hoped for better guides and teachers. Collectively I wish also to thank all those who shared the exciting experience of graduate study in Cambridge in that period, both in the Faculty of Classics and the Department of Archaeology. I was fortunate in having Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and Dick Whittaker as my doctoral examiners, whose comments gave me much to think about and have led to substantial refinements in the arguments. Many others have been generous with advice and help. Numerous French archaeologists generously welcomed me as a student, rather than a practitioner, of cultural imperialism. I owe particular debts to Christian Goudineau and Olivier Buchsenschutz who started me on the right path, and to Jean-Louis Cadoux, my colleague in field survey in Picardy, from whom I have learned much about Gallo-Roman archaeology. Throughout the long gestation of thesis and book, a number of colleagues have (not always knowingly) offered argument and inspiration at critical stages, among them John Collis, Michael Crawford, John Drinkwater, Chris Gosden, Colin Haselgrove, J. D. Hill, Fergus Millar, Martin Millett, Daphne Nash, Simon Price, Nicholas Purcell and Ian Ralston. I am

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also extremely grateful to Chris Gosden, Martin Millett, Simon Price and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, who all commented on sections of the penultimate draft, and especially to Peter Garnsey, who read it in its entirety. Pauline Hire has been the most patient as well as the most helpful of editors. Tamar Hodos left the text much clearer than she found it and saved me from many errors and inconsistencies. The work was been supported by a number of institutions including the British Academy, the CNRS, the Laboratoire d'Archéologie of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, and my two Cambridge colleges, Trinity and Christ's. The actual writing of this book took place while I was a Fellow of first Magdalen and then Brasenose Colleges in Oxford. I am grateful to both institutions for support and sabbatical leave, and to my colleagues at Oxford in Ancient History and in Archaeology. It is impossible to say how much I owe to all those named and to others too numerous to name.

Other debts too are immeasurable. My mother, my brother and my late father, to whose memory this book is dedicated, gave limitless love and support, as has Johanna Weeks, who has cheerfully borne the brunt of the enthusiasms and frustrations of a decade, and our daughter Maud, who arrived just in time to cheer me through the final revisions. My thanks to all.

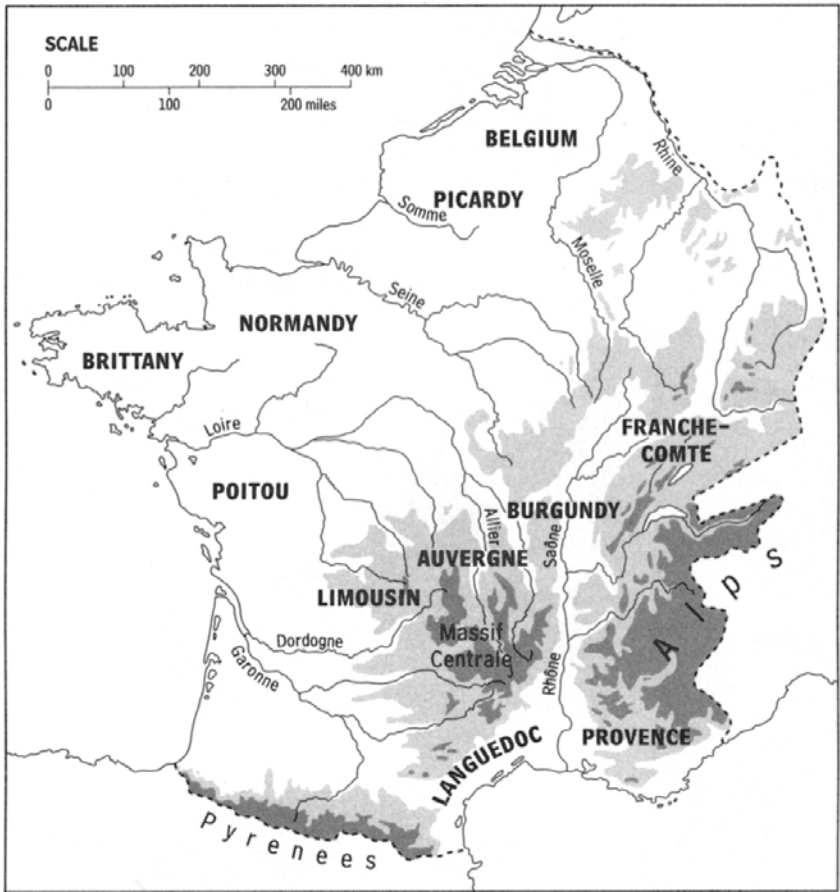
Abbreviations

AFEAF	Association française pour l'étude de l'âge du fer
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AJAH</i>	<i>American Journal of Ancient History</i>
<i>AJPh</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
ALB	Annales Littéraires de l'Université de Besançon
<i>Annales ESC</i>	<i>Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>ArchPrehLev</i>	<i>Archivo de Prehistoria Levantina</i>
<i>ARW</i>	<i>Archiv für Religionswissenschaft</i>
ASA	Association of Social Anthropologists
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
<i>BASP</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i>
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i>
BEFAR	Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome
<i>Bj</i>	<i>Bonner Jahrbücher</i>
<i>BRGK</i>	<i>Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
<i>CAH</i>	<i>The Cambridge Ancient History</i>
CBA	Council of British Archaeology
CEFR	Collection de l'école française de Rome
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>CPh</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CLPA</i>	<i>Cahiers Ligures de Préhistoire et Archéologie</i>
<i>CSSH</i>	<i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i>
DAF	Documents d'Archéologie Française
<i>DHA</i>	<i>Dialogues d'Histoire Ancienne</i>
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>ILGN</i>	<i>Inscriptions Latines de la Gaule Narbonnaise</i>
<i>ILN</i>	<i>Inscriptions Latines de Narbonnaise</i>
<i>ILS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>

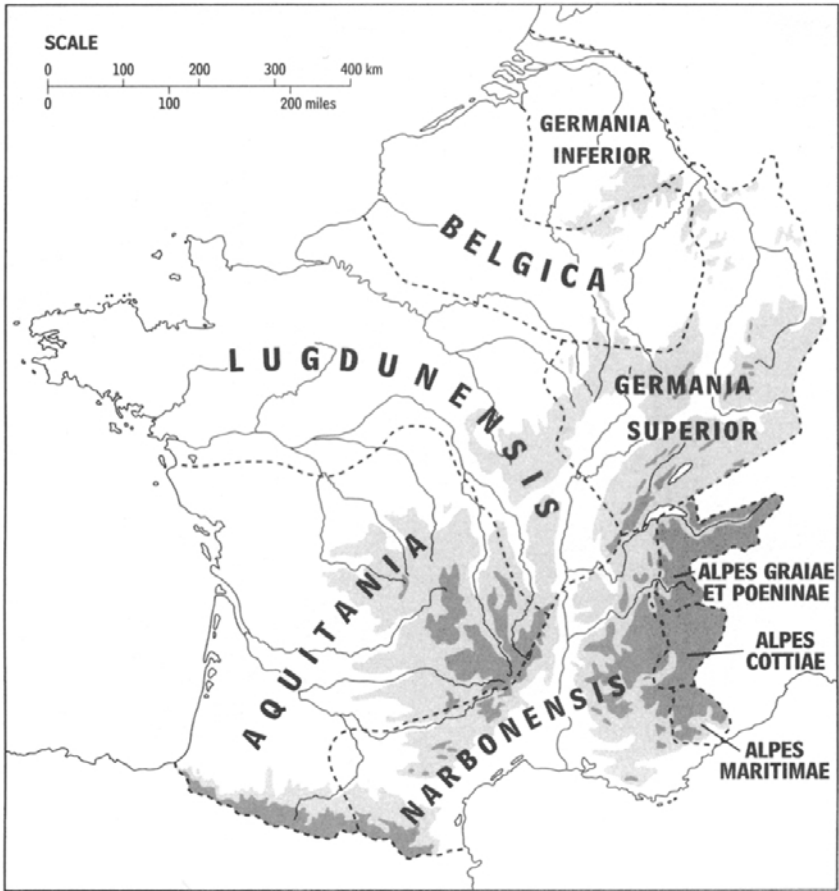
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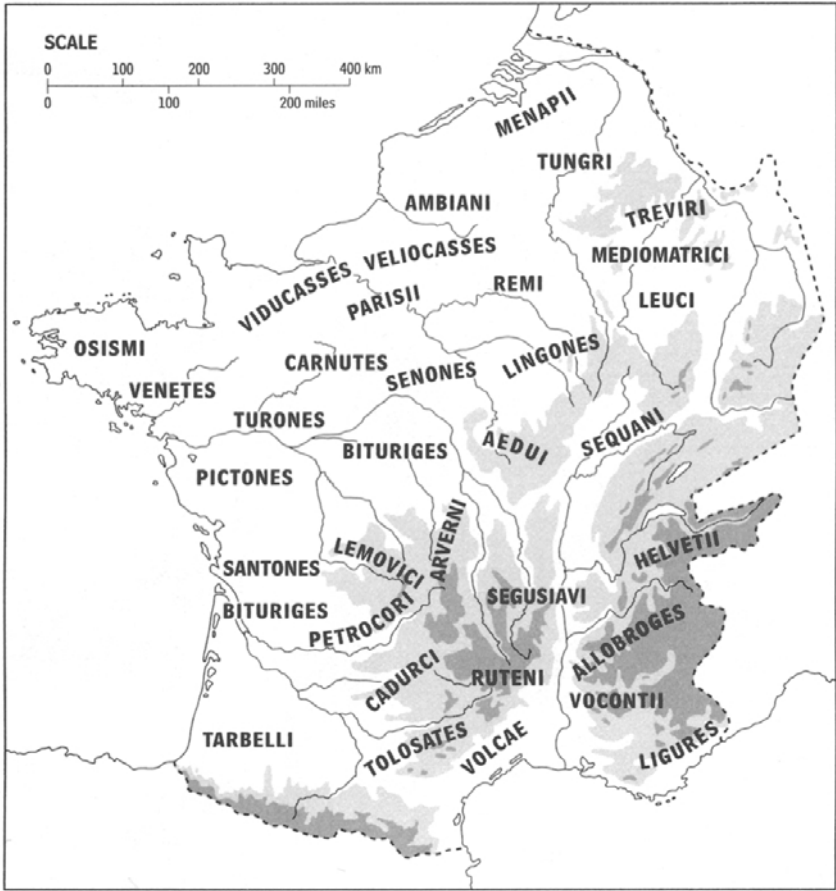
<i>ILTG</i>	<i>Inscriptions Latines des Trois Gaules</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>MAAR</i>	Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome
<i>MEFRA</i>	<i>Mélanges de l'école française de Rome, antiquité</i>
<i>MHA</i>	<i>Memorias de Historia Antigua</i>
<i>OJA</i>	<i>Oxford Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>PBSR</i>	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i>
<i>PCPhS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue Archéologique</i>
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Revue Archéologique du Centre</i>
<i>RAE</i>	<i>Revue Archéologique de l'Est et du Centre-Est</i>
<i>RAN</i>	<i>Revue Archéologique de Narbonnaise</i>
<i>RAO</i>	<i>Revue Archéologique de l'Ouest</i>
<i>RCFRActa</i>	<i>Res Cretariae Romanae Fautorum, Acta</i>
<i>REA</i>	<i>Revue des Études Anciennes</i>
<i>REL</i>	<i>Revue des Études Latines</i>
<i>RIG</i>	<i>Recueil des Inscriptions Gauloises</i>
<i>RSI</i>	<i>Rivista Storica Italiana</i>
<i>SAR</i>	<i>Scottish Archaeological Review</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Trierer Zeitschrift</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>



Map 1 Modern regions and river names



Map 2 Provincial boundaries c. AD 100



Map 3 Major peoples of Roman Gaul