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THE CONTEXT OF THE ARGUMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Archaeology is based upon labels: from the artefact in the museum case to the culture we are describing, we provide it with a label. This seemingly small and unproblematic description encompasses much: a geographical area, a time period, or a group of people, often all three. Such labelling activity is rooted in the origins of archaeology as a discipline, and in spite of recent disquiet about their usefulness, it is still central to the way we communicate and practise archaeology. The problem is that a label is more than a neutral shorthand, but forms the fundamental core of the way in which we conceptualise the world, past or present. If we describe a pot as Bronze Age, or Minoan, or Anglo-Saxon, we are assigning it a category which fits into our divisions of cultures in the past, and our understanding of their relationship with others. Therefore, if we describe a pot as Roman, we are grouping it together with a series of other pots and artefacts we recognise as Roman. The problem with this approach is that when we are using such a label to describe Roman material culture, we are using it to describe a set of material which is far spread in time and in space. Yet it has increasingly been recognised that when we examine the material culture in detail, there is similarity, but not homogeneity, both in form and patterns of use. We can account for differences over time through a series of sub-categories, such as republican, early imperial, or late imperial. The differences over space are more difficult: there is no simple equation between the extent of Roman rule, Roman material culture, and by analogy, Roman identity.

Within the traditional teleological paradigm of Romanization, there was an apparent explanation for this problem. As society was conceived as evolutionary, the development from 'pre-Roman' to 'Roman' was

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underway, but was at various stages incomplete, leaving a blend of the two. With the re-examination of this paradigm in the last two decades, the idea of regionality has become dominant, with a series of works examining the process of Romanization in groups of provinces or smaller areas (for example, Millett 1990b on Britain; Alcock 1993 on Greece; Keay 1995 on Spain; Woolf 1998 on Gaul; also papers in Keay and Terrenato 2001, reviewed by Mattingly 2002). However, these have described the variability more than accounting for it, with the implicit assumption that this variability is a consequence of the starting point, i.e., the indigenous culture. A number of theoretical approaches have been used to explain this (e.g., creolization, post-colonial theory, models of assimilation and resistance), but they are still drawn towards the idea of bounded cultural identities of Roman and pre-Roman, and the ability to label material culture as more one or the other, a hybrid of recognisable constituent parts.

However, until very recently the question which had not been fully thought through is whether we should expect homogeneity within a widespread political or even cultural group. In the case of globalization in the modern world, Hobsbawm has argued that there are some goods which are truly global (such as Coca-Cola), but others which are positional or local (tickets to the opera at La Scala), thereby producing shared global material culture, and regional material culture (Hobsbawm 1999: 62–6, especially 64–6). The paradox which Hobsbawm identified as part of globalization is also a structural part of the Roman empire. There are certain things which we can think of as shared amongst the various groups of peoples (for example, amphora containing oil, wine or fish sauce), but there are also aspects which will remain truly local (regional pottery such as Black Burnished Ware) or restricted to certain social groups (use of silver tableware). Therefore, rather than expecting homogeneity within the archaeology of the provinces of the empire, we need to acknowledge that there is an inherent paradox of similarity and variability, thereby accepting that this is a fundamental part of a Roman ethnic identity.

To be Roman was a discourse rather than an absolute. It was a discourse based upon a shared idea of being Roman (Woolf 1998: 7–16). However, in the absence of the globalising technologies of the modern period, the convergence of this discourse would be less absolute than we might expect today. As an inhabitant of the provinces would likely never see the city of Rome, or even Italy, they did not have the means of comparison available to the modern commentator, who can put together the material

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remains of the entire empire. Therefore, we should not think of this as a uniform or unified discourse. We need to explore how some structures were shared as part of membership of the Roman cultural group, and other elements remained localised without contradicting such a Roman identity. It is clear that certain aspects were shared, such as political organisation or religious practice, but others were not, such as age and gender structures (Hopkins 1983; Revell 2005). For this reason, this book represents an exploration of what it was to be Roman: which structures were shared between the different groups, how they were enabled through the architectural surroundings, and consequently, how they are manifested within the material remains of the archaeological record.

What it was to be Roman was talked about in the textual sources, but it was also something worked through in the everyday activities of the peoples of the provinces. The archaeological record is the remains of the material which was caught up in such activities: it is the medium and the product of human action. For archaeologists, this means that as we study the material remains, we need to consider the ways in which they were bound up in social practice. This book is primarily concerned with the public architecture of the Roman empire. However, rather than an art-historical approach, I shall consider the ways in which it formed the spatial setting for these activities, and thus became bound up in the discourse of being Roman. This is not to privilege the architectural evidence as being somehow specially representative of Roman identity; rather I have selected one particular form of evidence to provide an in-depth study. It is usual in lengthy discussions of Roman imperialism and Roman identity to consider multiple forms of evidence (e.g., Millett 1990b; Woolf 1998; Mattingly 2006). Whilst this has proved a fruitful approach, the interpretation I shall present rests upon the detailed analysis of public architecture within towns. There is a fundamental connection between identity and everyday activities (or performances) within a communal setting (Goffmann 1965: 28–82): it is through these that we understand both our own and other people's place within any community. The public buildings which form our archaeological evidence are implicated in the maintenance of identity as the settings within which these performances are enacted (ibid. 32–4). With these ideas in mind, we can move from seeing an amphitheatre or a baths as being diagnostic of cultural change, to being bound up in the ongoing maintenance of a Roman identity.

In order to reconstruct the social background and aspects of use of these public spaces, I shall also draw in the epigraphic evidence, in particular

religious and political inscriptions. These form a natural adjunct to the public architecture, as they were bound up in the fabric of the public spaces of the towns (Revell in press). These types of inscriptions were spatially located in the public areas, such as temples or fora, and they were an integral part of political processes such as magistracies and munificence (Mackie 1990), and religious worship through dedication (Beard 1991). They provide a means to explore the kinds of activities which were carried out in the public spaces of the towns, and the ways in which certain people strove to highlight or strengthen their social position within these societies.

This study will consider in detail a series of urban sites from three provinces: Baetica, Tarraconensis and Britannia. These have been selected to represent the variability rather than the homogeneity of the urban context within the Roman empire: from the monumental splendour of Italica, to the apparent bareness of Caerwent. Studies of Roman imperialism tend to concentrate on single provinces, or groups of provinces which fall into modern political boundaries; there are fewer extended works which consider more disparate provinces (one exception is Cepas 1989). My aim here is to explore the similarities and differences between towns in the Iberian peninsula and Britain, transcending boundaries constructed by ancient administration and modern academic tradition. The danger is that it would be very easy to slip into a centre–periphery model, perpetuating the split between the (geographically) central Mediterranean provinces and the peripheral north–western provinces. Geography then becomes the only explanation for this variability, rather than a potential factor in questions of social and cultural closeness and distance. This underlying dualism is countered by extending the examination to cover a range of urban centres; thus it will be possible to take the question of variability beyond the issue of regionality.

This study takes an explicitly synchronic perspective. Due to the dominance of the underlying paradigm of cultural change (Romanization) in Roman archaeology, there is a tendency to write the archaeology of the provinces as a historical narrative from the pre-Roman society to either the height of Roman influence or the loss of Roman control during the late imperial period (again, Millett 1990; Richardson 1996; a notable exception is Woolf 1998; see Revell 2002 for a critique of this approach). As this study is concerned with what it was to share in a Roman identity, the exploration of a single time period is more appropriate. Therefore, I shall focus on the first half of the second century AD, after the initial process of conquest in all three provinces, and when the process of cultural

change was visible. This is not to claim that by this point Romanization was complete, but rather that the effects of cultural change were visible in all the case studies. Taking such a snap-shot approach is problematic when dealing with the epigraphic evidence, most obviously due to the problems of dating inscriptions. As they provide useful evidence about the ongoing use of the buildings, I apply less rigid chronological criteria.

There are three areas in which I believe we can identify a shared idea of Roman-ness: urbanism, the emperor, and religious practice. These were not the only structures which were tied up in the spread of Roman identity; ideologies of eating and drinking, or economic activity could also be considered in the same way. Nor are these three areas privileged above other possibilities, as somehow being more diagnostically Roman. These ideologies were reproduced in everyday activities, and the daily surroundings of the public buildings were the product of these ideas, but also were bound up in the rituals which perpetuated them. Although these three ideas were shared, they were not identical across space. Therefore the variability in the repeated architectural styles becomes a way to explore the paradox of similarity and difference: which elements of these ideologies were shared, but also where the 'give' or tension existed within the structures.

However, to concentrate solely on the idea of Roman identity and Romanization risks downplaying other aspects of identity and local hierarchies. Such ideologies also allowed for varied experiences within local societies, and so became a new way to understand differences within communities. Thus different groups, whether formed through age, status, gender, profession or legal status, would also be differentiated in part through the same social structures. This leads us to the multivocality and discrepant experience of the architectural setting. Religious or political activity was bound up in the reproduction of Roman identity, but at the same moment, it was part of the maintenance of more local hierarchies. Therefore, in the final part of this book, I shall take the activities and ideas presented within the discussion of these ideologies and use them to explore different experiences of being Roman, and in particular the way in which these Roman structures privileged certain aspects of identity, most especially the adult, free, wealthy male.

1.2 THE MODERN CONTEXT OF ROMAN IDENTITY

Since the late nineteenth century, the dominant theme of Roman provincial archaeology has been the question of cultural change within the

context of Roman imperialism. It arose within the particular historical setting of the imperial ethos of the modern nation-states, and as such its leading proponents were embedded within the ideology of empire and civilizing ethos. I do not want to undertake a lengthy deconstruction of the work of the scholars such as Mommsen, Haverfield and Collingwood (see for example, Freeman 1997; Hingley 2000). However, as Richard Hingley has noted, the effect of this on the discipline overall has been a concentration on two particular themes: the incorporation of the provinces into the political system of Rome, and the cultural transformations we term Romanization (Hingley 1991: 91–2). At this early stage, the prevailing paradigm was one of the replacement of one homogenous, static cultural system by another, equally homogenous and static, the language used to denote these two systems was seen as unproblematic and all-encompassing (it should be noted that at this time, it was not a problem unique to Roman archaeology, but was a way of thinking running through the study of all archaeological periods). The narrative was framed around discrete entities labelled 'Roman' and 'native' and these were seen as both describing and explaining the material remains. These were fixed givens with an inherent essentialism, with little questioning of their usefulness or appropriateness. The result for much of the twentieth century has been that the study of the archaeology of the Roman provinces has been based upon a single research agenda with a model of two opposing cultures, each with its own discrete material typologies. Whilst there are a number of problems with this approach to the cultural change visible within the archaeology of the provinces, they can be boiled down to three key assumptions. The first is that it is based upon the fundamental idea of bounded, autonomous groups which can be identified through key diagnostic forms of material culture. The second is that the model of cultural change is teleological, with a defined arrival point of Roman-ness. And thirdly, this was seen within a paradigm of social evolution, where 'native' and 'Roman' were stages on a progression to modernity; as such Roman was somehow better or more civilized than pre-Roman.

In the last 20 years, the question of Romanization has become a contested topic within Roman archaeology, largely as a reaction to Martin Millett's hypothesis of elite-driven cultural change (Millett 1990a, 1990b). Millett argued that, rather than an imposition from the incoming conquerors, the native elite adopted Roman material culture and ways of living as a response to the changing political realities, and these changes

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then filtered through society as a result of emulation of the elites by the non-elites:

> I have traced the development of Romanization in terms of the aspirations of the tribal elites first becoming Roman and distinguishing themselves from their peoples. Then, as Romanitas permeated the whole of society, its different forms and expansions became key to an understanding of the power structures within the province as the aristocracy indulged in various forms of display through their art, buildings, and manners. (Millett 1990b: 212)

Whilst Millett's work has been influential in producing a more critical debate about the nature of cultural change within the provinces, it has been criticised on two accounts. The first is that it perpetuates many of the problems with the social evolution model, such as the centrality of the Roman/native binary opposition, and the second that it downplays the unequal relationship between the imperial authorities and the conquered peoples (Freeman 1993; Hingley 2005: 40–6; Mattingly 2006: 13–16). This has led to most archaeologists adopting one of two positions with respect to Romanization: those who accept it as valid concept, although in need of some reworking (for example, Keay and Terrenato 2001 argue for weak Romanization), and those who argue that it should be abandoned completely (Barrett 1997; Woolf 1998; Mattingly 2006). It has also produced a fragmentation of approaches to the subject, with a range of theoretical bases, most based within the overarching school of post-processual archaeology, such as discrepant experiences (Mattingly 2006), creolization (Webster 2001, 2003) and agency (Barrett 1997; Revell 1999; Gardner 2002). At the same time, it has led to more explicit approaches to the role of material culture within our interpretations of cultural change through a detailed consideration of the relationship between typology and context (for example, Willis 1997; Eckardt and Crummy 2006).

At the same time, Roman archaeology has been part of wider archaeological (and social) debates about the nature of identity in the past. Rather than constituting a homogenised debate, it has been addressed by archaeologists coming from a range of theoretical schools (compare Barrett 1994; Tilley 1994; Thomas 1996; Fowler 2004). Nevertheless, there are a number of key ideas which are shared by most of these approaches: identity is multiple, fluid and situational; practice forms the point of reproduction of individual identity; material culture is implicated in the

internalization and the expression of identity (Jones 1997; Díaz-Andreu and Lucy 2005). This has a number of far-reaching consequences for our models of cultural change (Barrett 1997; Hill 2001): a Roman identity is not a fixed point to be reached, but rather a more fluid concept which needs to be continuously worked at through the routines of everyday life. Consequently, material culture does not represent a particular form of identity, but is brought into the maintenance of that identity through these repeated routines. Furthermore, because we internalize our sense of who we are and how we fit into the world through these routines and the material culture, self-identity is fundamental, and a Roman identity cannot be seen as a superficial veneer, cast off at will. Finally, as any single person's identity is an amalgam of a number of different elements, such as their gender, age, status, occupation, religion and layers of ethnicity, there is a tension between the individual identity and the group identity, with the possibility of variance. So, for example, not all of the women within a single society will have an identical experience of their female identity, but it will be internalized through the same discourse, fragmenting as it overlaps with their age or status. Therefore identity becomes more of a position within a range of possibilities (or discourse) rather than a fixed set of givens.

Such critical approaches have led to a reorientation of research on the subject of identity in the Roman period. Initially much of this work concentrated on the question of ethnicity, leading to the accusation that the topic was being subsumed into models of cultural change, and that other aspects of identity, in particular gender were being ignored (for example, Laurence 1999a: 388). More recently, this has begun to change, and other discrete elements of identity have been looked at, such as military identity (Haynes 1999; James 1999) and age (Gowland 2001; Revell 2005). Others have begun to consider more explicitly the way in which these intersect and break down a paradigm of Roman-ness (Hingley 2005). In this vein, David Mattingly has argued for three major group (or discrepant) identities for Roman Britain: the army, urban communities and rural dwellers (Mattingly 2006, in particular 520–8). Similarly, Andrew Gardner identifies three levels of Roman identity from the global level of ethnicity, or military identity, to a mid-scale of gender or age, down to the micro-level of individual identity (Gardner 2002). He argues that ultimately, as identity is multi-dimensional, any investigation of identity also needs to take place through multiple scales of analysis.

My own work lies within this post-Romanization intellectual climate (if it can be described as such), and as such is not intended to be another

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book about Romanization. Rather, I am interested in Roman identity as a discourse, and the ways in which it was formulated within a series of social discourses, and how these connected with power relations at both a global and a local level. There is a tendency within many of the studies on Roman identity to concentrate on the relationship between the agent and the material culture, and less attention has been paid to the relationship between the person and the wider social structures. As I shall outline in the next section, these need to be seen in tandem, as two parts of a single process. Certain structures, such as urbanism or religion, were bound up in Roman imperialism, but they were also part of the ongoing maintenance of a shared Roman identity. Someone living within the empire internalized their sense of being Roman through the repetitious actions bounded by such structures. Therefore, through these mundane activities, they actively recreated their own identity, at the same time as they reproduced the social structures which held the empire together. This approach has the effect of transforming Roman imperialism from an abstraction comprising certain social structures to being the product of the decisions and the actions of the people who formed that empire, both those possessing administrative authority (such as the emperor and provincial governors) and those being administered. This is not to deny that these were very unequal relationships, and that there was a power imbalance between them. Therefore when we are dealing with the question of Roman identity, we are also confronting processes of imperialism and the nature of power within the Roman empire.

We also need to move away from thinking of Roman-ness as a homogenous identity. As both John Barrett and Greg Woolf have argued, it is better viewed as a discourse which could encapsulate numerous different experiences (Barrett 1997; Woolf 1997). As each person's identity encompasses a number of variables other than their ethnic identity, and as that identity will change through their lifetime, we lose the fixed point (or indices) at the end of the Romanization process (Mattingly 2004: 10–11 for an example of this fluidity). However, as we cannot disregard the question of what it was to be a Roman within the imperial context, we are left with the challenge of how to approach it. The solution adopted here is to look for the elasticity within these social structures. There is an inherent paradox in that the things which bound the empire together and created a group identity which can be broadly seen as 'Roman', also formed the way in which any homogeneity was fractured. Thus, by incorporating both agent and structure within the interpretation, we can

locate this elasticity without trying to force it into a binary opposition of 'Roman' or 'non-Roman'. The forces which created this give within the system occurred at a multitude of levels, and can be seen as enabling different kinds of identity without undermining an overall empire-wide identity.

1.3 STRUCTURATION THEORY AND ITS APPLICATION TO ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY

The analysis within this book is based upon ideas of agency and structuration, as elaborated by Anthony Giddens (1984). A number of archaeologists have discussed the main principles and its applicability to archaeology (including Barrett 1988; Graves 1989; Johnson 1989; Shanks and Tilley 1992; Dobres and Robb 2000), and to the Roman period in particular (Barrett 1997; Gardner 2002); therefore, rather than repeating this work, I want to explore the ways in which it provides a means of interpreting the spread of Roman imperialism. Structuration theory provides a powerful way of understanding human action and interaction, and how these feed into the reproduction of society. Giddens argues that social structure and individual lives should not be seen as a dichotomy, with one taking precedence over the other. Instead they form a duality, each the precondition and the product of the other (Giddens 1984: 25). In reifying society and social structures as discrete entities, or privileging human action over structural restraints, a false division is set up which obscures this symbiosis. In contrast, within Giddens' argument, they cannot be separated, but instead have a relationship of mutual dependency: social structures constitute the framework for social agents and their actions, providing a range of appropriate behaviours in their daily activities. In turn, these daily activities, routinely carried out, reproduce social structures, and ultimately the social systems themselves.

This idea of the duality of structure and agent allows us to move beyond traditional interpretations for Roman imperialism as either the product of individual intervention, or grand structural systems. We can explore the way in which the people of the empire acquired new ways of acting as the wider social conditions changed; also how their identification with a distant political force was mediated through their daily activities of going about their lives. Conversely, these lives were not lived in a vacuum, and as the socio-political context changed, so their technologies of living necessarily could not remain static. They became constrained by new ways of being and new understandings of their place in the world. The