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Civilization of the Language 1 (L.1 - S.1)

TD 2: Rethinking ‘Romanization’ in Roman Britain

Source: Hingley, R. (2008). Not so Romanized? Tradition, reinvention or discovery in the study of Roman Britain. *World Archaeology*, 40(3), 427–443. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00438240802261531>

Haverfield and other writers developed a contrasting approach by adopting a theory of Romanization that explicitly addressed the cultural conversion of the Britons to a Roman way of life.

Haverfield built on developing knowledge of Roman culture in Britain and overseas. The term ‘Romanization’ was first introduced into the English language during the late nineteenth century (http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry_main/50208316/). The only use of the noun listed by the Oxford English Dictionary prior to the final fifteen years of the nineteenth century was by the renowned American linguist William Dwight Whitney (1867: 167), who wrote about ‘Italy after its first Romanization’.⁵ The context of this author’s usage of the word makes it evident that he was addressing the transformation of language in Italy during the later first millennium BC. Arthur Evans’ suggestion in 1885 that the personal names on gravestones in Roman Illyricum (Fig. 6) provided striking evidence for the ‘thoroughgoing Romanization’ of particular parts of the region (Evans 1885: 127) adopts a comparable perspective.

The eminent German classical scholar, Theodor Mommsen, adopted a comparable approach through his use of ‘Romanisirung’ in the fifth volume of his seminal work, *Römisches Geschichte* (1885).⁶ The English classicist, E. G. Hardy (1887: 61) reviewed Mommsen’s book

and translated 'Romanisirung' as 'Romanisation', stressing that Mommsen had been able to develop the idea not only because he collected classical 'texts' but also the 'more valuable evidence of inscriptions, coins and archaeology' (ibid.). Mommsen's review of the epigraphic evidence for the Roman provinces helped to transform earlier understandings to provide a more dynamic account of Roman social change. In 1906, Francis Haverfield built upon Mommsen's account (see Freeman 1997: 39, 42), adopting the term for the title and content matter of his influential article, 'The Romanization of Roman Britain'; this publication was expanded in 1912 into a small book which was republished on several occasions. The use of this new concept helped Haverfield to consider the textual and archaeological evidence for Roman Britain. Mommsen's and Haverfield's idea of Romanization drew the archaeological discoveries that had been amassed over the previous centuries - including houses, settlements, pottery and metalwork - into a study previously dominated by linguistic and literary conceptions (Freeman 1997). Several factors came into play that encouraged the introduction of the idea of Roman cultural change at this time. First, new comprehensions of the material culture of pre-Roman, Roman and post-Roman people had arisen as the result of the increasingly systematic excavation of sites and the study of objects from the mid-nineteenth century, as antiquarianism was transformed into archaeology and the idea of a considerable depth of time prior to the Romans arose (Morse 2005; Todd 2004). The accumulation of information about indigenous material culture suggested that much of this was an amalgam between the better-known Roman culture and the objects that were now recognized as having been used by people in Britain during prehistory (Hingley 2008). Second, a growing internationalization of knowledge, exemplified by the scholarship of Mommsen and Haverfield,

drew earlier ideas of Britain as a primarily military province into question by placing the evidence in a broader imperial context, suggesting that there was a significant indigenous input into much of the Roman culture known from the province (including many of the towns and villas). Third, the growth of ideas of social evolution (Bowler 1989) and the increasingly problematic imperial situation (Hingley 2007) called for explanations of cultural change which emphasized that, given the right conditions, the conquest and control of indigenous peoples could result in the passing on of civilization, casting a reflective focus on the evidence for the lack of assimilation of many of the colonized societies of the British empire (ibid.).