Abstract

HUBER, CHRISTOPHER RYAN. The Dominance of the Roman Army in Northern Britain and Subsequent Rift between Roman and Briton on the Military Frontier. (Under the direction of Dr. S. Thomas Parker.)

Britain was a province far from the Roman heartland. An accomplishment in its mere inclusion within the Roman Empire, such distance made Britain a difficult prize to claim. Unable to successfully conquer the entirety of the island, the Romans established a permanent zone of military occupation that varied throughout the northern half of Britain. Under military governance, Roman interaction with local Britons remained limited, and no opportunity existed for the enfranchisement of the British aristocracy within the military administration. With minimal interaction between occupier and local, urban development, the foundation for Roman administration never took hold in the north, thus preventing the development of civil administrations or familiarity with the highpoints of Roman culture. The presence of Roman civilians on the frontier similarly remained limited. Civil settlements developed, in close association with military forts, but their administration and demographics remain unclear. Though drawing upon an ever increasing body of archaeological and epigraphic evidence to better understand the presence of Britons within the Roman military frontier, the cultural gap between native and occupier becomes similarly more apparent. With the withdrawal of Roman forces and authority in the early fifth century AD, most of Britain returned to a form that had been present during much of the Iron Age. In the north such a change was less drastic, as fewer aspects of Roman culture and society had taken hold due to the exclusion of Britons from administrative roles. Like the rest of Britain, those of the north returned to ways of life that had previously developed to fit the specific challenges of British life.
The Dominance of the Roman Army in Northern Britain and Subsequent Rift
Between Roman and Briton on the Military Frontier

by
Christopher Ryan Huber

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APPROVED BY:

__________________________
Dr. Ronald Sack

__________________________
Dr. Julie Mell

__________________________
Dr. S. Thomas Parker
Chair of Advisory Committee
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Biography

Christopher Ryan Huber was born August 28th, 1984, to Richard and Susan Huber. He attended Watauga High School in Boone, North Carolina. After two years at Arizona State University, Christopher came to North Carolina State University in 2004, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History in 2006. Since that time he has worked toward a graduate degree in Ancient History at the same institution.
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Introduction: Roman Britain - An Incomplete Conquest and Evolving Subject

Britain represented the epitome of Roman dominance on the European continent. In the first century AD the Roman military reached across mythical boundaries to bring a dimly understood land into the collection of provinces and peoples that constituted the Roman Empire. Yet when Rome was forced to withdraw from Britain in 410 AD, the island experienced a relatively rapid reversion to political and economic systems that had operated there long before the Roman conquest.

In Britain the arrival of the Romans brought unprecedented levels of continental contact and economic activity, as well as the first unified form of governance. Yet the Roman systems arrived as a complete cultural package, developed elsewhere in the European world, under different cultural and climatic conditions. These imported systems operated with a significant degree of independence from those of the native Britons. The Roman systems were self-contained and able to call upon massive amounts of resources from vast holdings beyond Britain. While some vestiges of the Roman presence would remain, following the fifth century withdrawal, most Roman methods of construction, exchange, production, governance and general living fell out of immediate use once those who had brought them to Britain had departed.

In the rugged north, where the Roman army still maintained order and security, native Britons had found even less room within the Roman way of life, having adopted few Roman methods and material goods during the occupation. On the military frontier, Romans fulfilled their own political and economic needs, to the exclusion of existing
native elites. Such exclusion led to relatively little acculturation and integration within the frontier. For the surviving Briton aristocracy and the people of northern Britain, there were no cities to abandon and no large-scale political bodies from which to govern. After the departure of the Romans, Britain returned to the methods and materials that had long developed under the conditions found within the British Isles, once again driven by the desires and ambitions of the competing British tribes as well as the machinations of neighboring peoples across the Channel.

The study of Roman Britain, like any subject of academia, continues to evolve. Modern research not only incorporates new evidence and theories, but also changing cultural perspectives and approaches to obtaining the relevant meaning for modern audiences. From origins in antiquarian gentlemen seeking gilded treasures with reckless abandon, to the increasingly technology oriented examination methods used by modern archaeologists, the study of Roman Britain has changed drastically within the previous centuries as new methodologies and techniques continue to refine our understanding of the past. Like any subject, the appropriate assessment of Roman Britain goes well beyond a single discipline; historians, anthropologists, geologists, botanists, climatologists and archaeologists have, and continue to, play a key role in developing our understanding of Britain, well before, during and after it was a holding of the Romans.

Britain has been a prolific academic subject, even within the relatively narrow confines of the Roman occupation and influence. To list each significant work from every discipline that has contributed to the modern understanding of Roman Britain is too extensive to be undertaken here. Yet a handful of works have come to play an important
role as definitive contributions to Roman British studies. The work of Wacher, Salway, Breeze, Birley, Richmond, Bidwell, Hodgson and numerous others have greatly advanced modern understanding of British Romans (and Roman Britons). Whether through personal means, institutional affiliation, or increasingly predominant professional and rescue excavation contracts, the study of Roman Britain continues to develop at an increasing pace, incorporating an expanding toolkit of both technological and traditional methods in examining both the archaeological and documentary record of the Roman presence on the islands of Britain.
Chapter 1: Iron Age Britain and the Arrival of the Romans

As a collection of islands off the northwest coast of modern France, Britain is in a peripheral location relative to the European continent. Britain has been both defined by and isolated from continental influences and events throughout its history. Before the coming of the Romans in the first century AD, the various British Isles had long been engaged in trade and cultural interaction with other populations throughout the continent. Though distanced from the rest of Europe, Britain was still subject to many of the same trends and developments that affected continental peoples. Migrations, exploration, raiding, and exchange all brought ideas and goods to the British islands, if sometimes in a limited or altered form. Thus, the early periods of human occupation in Britain followed relatively similar trajectories to those of continental Europe.

The first major cultural assemblage to be dispersed throughout Europe was a varied number of groups collectively referred to as Hallstatt, named for the site of first identification in modern Austria. Covering the end of the European Bronze Age and the early stages of the Iron Age, Hallstatt characteristics varied greatly as they were absorbed and

Figure 1: Iron Age Chronology in Britain (Cunliffe, Iron Age Communities, 26) - Britain was subject to influence by many of the same cultures and developments found on the Continent, though often arriving later. Yet independent developments also characterize British Iron Age groups who adjusted to local environmental and social conditions.
altered in the numerous regions of Europe, and included the first examples of iron-forged swords. Hallstatt assemblages were followed by those of the La Tène culture, first identified at sites within modern Switzerland. Continental hill-fort settlements first achieved a more developed *Oppida* status during this time, the predecessors to urban settlement outside the Mediterranean. La Tène cultures are found throughout the late Iron Age into the arrival of the Roman period. As Hallstatt and later La Tène cultures and material goods diffused throughout Europe, British populations along the channel imported continental characteristics, dispersing them further into Britain’s rugged interior as well as adapting them to their own domestic needs.

Geographically, modern Britain is an island with a length of approximately 600 miles north to south, and averaging between 200 and 300 miles in width, though less than 50 miles wide at its narrowest point, the line between the Firth of Clyde on the west, and the Firth of Forth on the east. Primarily the island can be divided into highland areas of the north (Scotland and the Pennines of northern England) and west (Welsh peninsula), and the lowlands in the southwest and east. Southeastern Britain is characterized by relatively flat land and low hills, generally well suited to cultivation and efficient communication between settlements.

The more rugged terrain of the north and west lends toward a pastoral economy with pockets of arable land. The effects of rain-shadow on Britain produce much wetter conditions along the entire western slope of the island, further hampering the development of cultivation in these areas. Cunliffe notes in *Iron Age Communities in Britain* that:
Some parts of Britain, in particular the north and the west, were more susceptible to climatic change than others. Here quite minor fluctuations in rainfall or temperature would have caused widespread environmental change and this in turn would have affected settlement and society. The relationship between man and landscape in these regions was one of unstable equilibrium whereas in the south-east the equilibrium was less easily upset.¹

While this made reliance (or consistent production) from agriculture difficult in higher elevations, recent survey and excavation efforts have begun to shed light on the true degree of cultivation that occurred in highland areas. As Cunliffe explains, surveys of many Northumberland sites, “…show them to be associated with clearance cairns and field walls, the latter occasionally lapped by minor lynchets caused by ploughing. The pollen evidence provides further support for the view that even the settlements at the highest altitudes were engaged in some agricultural activities albeit on a limited scale.”²

Recent excavations at many Roman military sites in northern Britain have revealed pre-existing field systems beneath the earliest levels of Roman occupation. In The Oxford Illustrated History of Roman Britain, Salway points out, “…some highland land is better for agriculture than contiguous lowlands.”³ Long held scholarly traditions placed the northern inhabitants of Britain in an entirely pastoral

¹ Barry Cunliffe, Iron Age Communities in Britain (London: Routledge, 1991), 23.
² Ibid., 280-81.
context. Recent efforts by figures such as D.W. Harding have begun to change this view. Harding elaborates,

Important though pastoralism undoubtedly was, we can now be confident that Piggott’s model of primitive pastoralists was misplaced, and that there were extensive areas of the northern coastal plains and valley lowlands where cereal cultivation would have been an important component of the economy. Self-evident as this might seem to anyone familiar with agricultural patterns in Northern Britain from more recent time, it has taken a good deal of research (e.g. Van der Veen, 1992) to dispel the image of the footloose Celtic cowboy ranging over rough pasture in a state of pastoral nomadism.4

Traditional views of an entirely pastoral society in northern Britain with no knowledge or use for cultivation are no longer tenable. Yet the limited potential of local agricultural production never allowed the degree of social agglomeration and complex cultural development that was possible in the more agriculturally productive and geographically accessible lowlands of the southeast. As such, the earliest examples of significant social complexity in Britain are found along the southern coast parallel to continental groups across the Channel who served as the primary trade partners and cultural importers for Britain.

Even before the Iron Age, extensive trade networks had already developed, which moved goods, people and ideas throughout the European world. As anthropological understanding and archaeological study continues to develop and evolve, the stunning implication of finds such as the Amesbury Archer5 illustrates the high degree of social

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5 Found in 2002, the “Amesbury Archer” (and associated burials) presents an intriguing view of British elite society around the period of 2400-2100 BC, and is contemporary with early construction phases at the massive site of Stonehenge. Artifacts associated with his burial indicate a relatively high degree of wealth and technical understanding, as well as metallurgical expertise (including materials from as far away as
complexity and extensive economic interaction already long present in pre-Classical Britain. Such realizations have revised the traditional views of scholars who believed that widespread cultural assemblages could only be explained by direct migration, rather than indirect diffusion through trade and cultural exchange.

Bronze and Iron Age contacts with the Continent were important social and economic pipelines for population centers along the southern and eastern coast, which were well situated to make use of their maritime advantage. These population centers prospered as imported goods funneled throughout the island in the centuries preceding the arrival of the Romans in Gaul in the first century BC. The principal port of Britain before the middle of the first century BC was Hengistbury, advantageously located along the south central coast. For Mediterranean goods traveling north, much of the trade moved along the Atlantic coast of France and Brittany, or moved along shorter but more

Figure 3: The Shift in British Trade Centers following Roman Conquest of Gaul (Salway, Oxford Illustrated History, 6) – The Roman impact on British trade and continental contact was profound. British traders along the southeastern coast capitalized upon consolidated Roman continental holdings rather than Atlantic and Baltic sources.

Spain). Through advanced chemical analysis the individuals have been identified as having immigrated to Britain from somewhere in the continental Alps of modern Switzerland.
time intensive land routes in Iberia and southwestern Gaul.\textsuperscript{6}

The arrival of the Romans created a significant shift in British trade and continental contact. As Gaul fell to the generalship of Julius Caesar, it became further incorporated into an expanding Roman political and economic network in which Gaul had long participated as a collective of independent tribal entities. Caesar’s arrival on the Gallic coast in the middle of the first century BC brought newly available trade opportunities from Roman holdings in southern Gaul, and Italy, overland through the newly secured territories, and dispersed from increasingly consolidated holdings in \textit{Gallia Belgica} by the time of Claudius in the mid first century AD.

With many old contacts having been displaced or destroyed by the arrival of the Romans, new links were established with rising groups along the Belgic coast, and the principal trade node in southern Britain shifted to the east, closer to the new Gallo-Roman partners. This shift created a new area of core contact and center of cultural diffusion in the southeast, as

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{core_periphery_map.png}
\caption{The Core-Periphery relationship in Britain around the time of Caesar’s campaigns (Salway, Oxford Illustrated History, 29) – By the time of Caesar interactions between Britain and Gaul had concentrated upon port centers located along the southeastern British coast.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{6} For cost/benefit discussion of later (more efficient) Roman trade routes into Britain and the advantages of sea born transport see K. Greene, \textit{The Archaeology of the Roman Economy} 1990, pg. 41.
well as a newly defined periphery of increased cultural lag and isolation running along the western coast and extending into the more isolated highland areas. This created a unique cultural assemblage in Britain among the more numerous and denser populations of the southeastern lowlands, centered on oppida-like nucleations, of both enclosed and dispersed forms. These groups were in regular cultural contact and economic exchange with neighboring peoples, principally in Belgica. Warfare was endemic, though not overly destructive, and notably included the continued use of war chariots. Use of coinage had come from across the Channel, with some of the southeastern tribes even minting their own, but use did not extend beyond the southeastern lowlands in Pre- and early Roman period.

Peripheral to the more developed southeastern lowland zone, settlement types of the British highlands were smaller and more dispersed, reflecting the reduced sustenance capacity and increased ruggedness of the terrain. Covering a wide range of topographies and climates, the isolative nature of the highlands fostered much more diversity in settlement structure among populations of the periphery. From the Orkney Islands in northern Scotland along the west coast of Britain to the tip of Cornwall, settlement forms sometimes shared more in common with Irish types and overall Atlantic trends than they did with Gallo-British counterparts in the lowlands. Climatic shift created social

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7 Though only in high denominations during this period, some smaller denomination issues would be appear immediately prior to the Roman invasion. Minted with propaganda and self-aggrandizement in mind, it is possible that this coinage (and the standardized ingots noted by sources such as Caesar) were used more in forms of social exchange between elites rather than for economic transactions. For detailed discussion regarding the complexity of non-monetized social exchange see M. Mauss, The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies, 1990.

8 Cunliffe, Iron Age Communities, 247.
instability in the highlands as nucleation, social interaction, and sustenance strategies adapted to changing conditions, often resulting in an increased emphasis on defense as social and economic pressures mounted in the period before the Roman arrival. As Cunliffe remarks, “the communities of the Atlantic province remained dependent on the sea as a means of communication as well as for food gathering and protection. While the sea linked far-flung parts of the province together, it seems to have isolated it from the rest of the country.” It was this dynamic in which the Romans found Britain on the eve of conquest in AD 43. Roman knowledge and dealings were initially limited to the southeastern lowlands until provincial expansion brought interactions with highland groups following the initial invasion and consolidation.

By the time of Caesar’s governorship of Gaul and his attempted invasions of lowland Britain in 55 and 54 BC, Britain had long been known to the Roman world but only minimally understood. Even in the time of Augustus, Britain was conceptually still shrouded in mist across vast Oceanus, and considered the edge of the Roman world. Some ancient authors believed that the obscurity and lack of civilization in Britain reflected a lack of resources and wealth. Cicero, writing to his friend Atticus during Caesar’s second invasion of Britain, states:

It is known that the approaches to the island are fenced about with daunting cliffs; and it has also become clear that there is not a scrap of silver on the island; there’s no prospect of booty except slaves – and I don’t imagine you are expecting any knowledge of literature or music among them! (Oct. 54 BC)

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9 Cunliffe, *Iron Age Communities*, 310.
But optimism in the resources and opportunities of Britain were not lost to all contemporaries, and British potential would eventually become better known within the Roman world. “Roman public opinion,” as Richmond points out, “felt distant Britain as almost legendary, the source of mineral wealth, its very size and definition as an island in doubt, a new world of awesome isolation and uncharted risk.” Writing in the early first century AD, Strabo describes Britain in his Geographica: “…most of the island is low-lying and wooded, but there are many hilly areas. It produces corn, cattle, gold, silver and iron. These things are exported along with hides, slaves and dogs suitable for hunting.” British hounds remained a notable export of Britain throughout the Roman period. Cornish tin had long been traded throughout the Mediterranean world. An essential strategic resource, the securing of these deposits would have been of noted importance in Roman goals. Other contemporary sources searched for alternative justifications for the Roman invasion of Britain. Suetonius, an Imperial biographer writing in the first few decades of the second century AD notes that, though their quality was substandard, perhaps part of the incentive for Caesar’s invasion of Britain was due to locally collected pearls. As governor of Gaul in the middle of the first century BC, Julius Caesar knew the reputation of Britain, its relationship to neighboring Gallic tribes, and its location on the new edge of Roman territory.

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11 I.A. Richmond, Roman Britain (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963), 11.
With such an obvious opportunity for fame and glory at hand, Britannia was a natural location for two expeditionary invasions in 55 and 54 BC. Caesar’s first expedition in 55 met with limited success, establishing a beachhead and garnering half-hearted requests for peace from local leaders. The next year Caesar again crossed the Channel with over 800 ships, pushing as far as the River Thames. Yet the subjugation of such a vast land would take more than a single season, and with native support fading and the winter season again approaching, Caesar once more returned to Gaul. He had shown that Britannia was now within the direct sphere of Roman influence and ambition, and had made the initial forays that signaled the islands eventual absorption into the Roman Empire.

Caesar himself wrote a detailed account of his campaigns in Gaul (and Britannia), the *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, which served an important need of Caesar, namely to keep his name within the public eye and garner public support of his energetic quest for military glory in Gaul. Recent archaeological and anthropological evidence has come to both support and contradict the relative accuracy of Caesar’s statements. Yet Caesar remains an important contemporary Roman source regarding Britain merely by the fact that he is the only surviving author writing from first hand observation. Caesar extensively describes not only various Gallic tribes, but also his encounters and knowledge of their British counterparts, noting:

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The inland regions of Britain are inhabited by people whom the Britons themselves claim, according to oral tradition, are indigenous. The coastal areas belong to people who once crossed from Belgium in search of booty and war… After waging war they remained in Britain and began to farm the land. Population density is high, and their dwellings are extremely numerous and very like those of the Gauls. They have large herds of cattle. They use either bronze or gold coinage or, instead of currency, iron rods of a fixed weight… Their bronze is imported.\textsuperscript{18}

It is important to remember that Caesar’s dealings were only with British groups of the southeastern region of the island that, as we have noted, had long established Gallic contacts and had adopted many of the same social and cultural characteristics. Caesar had no dealings or knowledge of the peoples in the northern highlands. Aware of the precedent set by his great uncle in Britain, Augustus seemed a natural candidate to complete Britannia’s incorporation within the new Roman state. But due to concerns elsewhere, including an uprising in Gaul, Augustus spent the energies of his reign elsewhere.

It was not until the reign of Claudius that Rome would finally establish a lasting presence in Britain in AD 43. Seeking military acclamation

following his unorthodox ascension to the Purple, Claudius naturally turned to fabled Britannia, who had resisted even Caesar himself, as a means of cementing his blood right to Imperium. Under the command of Aulus Plautius, and with four legions\(^\text{19}\) (ca. 20,000 citizen legionaries) and an implied equal number of auxiliary troops, the Roman army quickly brought much of southeast England under its direct control, and established relationships and treaties with tribes which remained outside direct Roman rule. Campaigns would continue under subsequent emperors to add increasing amounts of territory and inhabitants to Roman rule. After securing the southeastern part of Britain, attention turned to Wales, though its incorporation was delayed by the Boudican Revolt of AD 60-61, which caused significant destruction and chaos in the eastern area of the province.

Following civil turmoil in Rome in AD 69, a series of governors were appointed who extended Roman control over the unruly Brigantes, originally utilized as a advantageous buffer state controlling the narrow northern territory of what is now Yorkshire in northern England. The rule of Agricola (governor from AD 78-85) is well documented by his son-in-law, the Roman historian Tacitus. His military campaigns made significant thrusts into the northernmost reaches of Britain, not only defeating the last major group offering organized opposition (the Caledonii) but also confirming Roman knowledge of Britain as an island. Upon defeating the Caledonians and their allies at the Battle of Mons Graupius in AD 83, Agricola set about establishing the military occupation of the Scottish highlands, hinged upon construction of a legionary

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base at Inchtuthil. However, military demands in other areas of the empire siphoned off Agricola’s military strength, forcing an almost immediate withdrawal to more defensible positions in the south. As Tacitus observed, with typical rhetorical exaggeration, in his *Historiae*: “Britain was thoroughly subdued and immediately abandoned.” 20 With the idea of complete conquest in Britain discarded, subsequent emperors and governors were faced with the problem of establishing an effective system of defending the Roman province in the south against incursions from the north.

Following Agricola’s withdrawal, succeeding Roman administrators established a frontier zone of military occupation in the former territory of the Brigantes. After breaking the power of the native tribes, military garrisons were positioned throughout the region, concentrating along the primary east-west valley in the area, including the River Tyne to the east, and Solway Firth to the west. As elsewhere in the empire, efficient communications and mobility were essential to Roman success. The construction of the east-west Stanegate road in the area connected the growing military settlements of Carlisle and Corbridge and helped to achieve strategic Roman military needs.

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An early system of forts, roads and observation posts was created along the Stanegate line under Trajan (98-117), and would continually be expanded and refined until the reign of Hadrian (117-138), when his conception of entrenched frontiers would lead to the elaborate fortifications in Britain now known as Hadrian’s Wall. Running 80 Roman miles along the Tyne-Solway line, the wall was constructed of mortar and stone, as well as turf, depending on available local materials. It incorporated both natural features and existing Roman fortifications in its design, which changed substantially during multiple phases of construction and restoration. Fortification systems were created both north and south of the wall, producing a zone of military control that could adapt to situations both outside and within areas of immediate Roman control.

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After the death of Hadrian in 138 his successor, Antoninus Pius (138-161) moved the British frontier north, incorporating territory south of the narrowest point in Britain, the Forth-Clyde line. Roughly half the distance of Hadrian’s Wall, the new line was built on a refined Hadrianic model, which similarly underwent revision during its construction. After a short period of occupation, the new wall was abandoned in favor of a return to Hadrian’s Wall in the 160’s. Speculation continues regarding the exact reason for withdrawal, with evidence of rebellion among the Brigantes and other tribes seeming most convincing. Upon returning to the aging Hadrianic line, extensive reconstruction projects were conducted on the deteriorating fortifications.

Excepting the offensive campaigns of Septimius Severus (208-211), who once again hoped to bring the entire island under Roman domination, the frontier fortifications of northern Britain would undergo no major shifts, but rather continual localized programs of garrison shifting and fortification maintenance and development. Roman

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24 Ibid., 148.
control of Britain would continue, marked by periods of security and prosperity as well as vulnerability and disorder, often reflective of events in the increasing chaos of Rome’s imperial structure. In the year 410 AD the emperor Honorius, facing dire circumstances throughout the western Empire, sent a message to the inhabitants of Britannia informing them that they must now look to their own defense. Roman rule in Britain had come to an end.
Chapter 2: Settlement and Administration in Roman Britain

The coming of the Romans brought a new level of organization and government to Britannia. Never before had a unified source of authority existed beyond localized and relatively isolated tribal entities. Rome now had to administer not only local populations, but also an increasing number of immigrants from throughout the Roman Empire who brought urban and rural settlement types based on existing Roman models.

The army played a significant role in the administration of Britain, both in the military frontier zone and on a provincial level. Ultimate authority lay with the provincial governor. Due to the dangerous and complicated nature of governance in Britain, appointees had to be experienced in military as well as civil administration, often having just fulfilled important magistracies in Rome. As a perilous, and therefore well-garrisoned district, Britain was designated an Imperial province, governed by a *legatus Augusti pro praetore*,25 a personal agent chosen directly by the Emperor rather than the Senate. The official title assumed and used by provincial governors differed through the centuries, reflecting either the personal status of the current governor, or more often changes in the overall imperial administrative organization. In *The Roman Government of Britain* Anthony Birley remarks:

The governors of Britain are referred to by Tacitus and other Latin writers variously as *consularis, legatus, legatus consularis, pro praetore*, sometimes as *dux*, later *praeses*; by Greek ones as στρατηγός, ‘general’, or ἀρχων, ‘ruler’. On Latin inscriptions they are called *legatus Augusti pro praetore, consularis, praeses*, variously abbreviated; on Greek ones these terms are translated.26

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The progression of titles indicates the balanced nature of early administrators in both defense and maintenance of a province, the continuity of their military specialization and the later separation of gubernatorial powers in the third and fourth centuries into purely civil and military positions as the Roman bureaucracy grew.

In Britain, governors of the first two centuries would spend the majority of their time engaged in military operations throughout the province. Governors had general goals in policy dictated to them by the reigning emperor, these objectives often changed drastically from one administration to another. To support the wide number of duties a governor oversaw, he was surrounded by a variety of subordinates, as Birley elaborates,

The governor had a headquarters staff, officium, drawn from the army in his province… His staff was headed by three cornicularii, adjutants, drawn from the legions under his command, three commentarienses, secretaries; speculatores, military policemen; beneficiarii, special-duties men; [the list continues.]

Army officials thus occupied many of the positions in the provincial administration. Some positions were of a non-military nature, such as the iuridici (a legal administrator position held by junior senators of praetorian rank) and procurator, the senior financial administrator, who reported directly to the emperor. Ultimately, authority rested with the governor himself, and the success of his career was often intertwined with the success of his province and administration. As Tacitus notes, Agricola reformed his staff, reorganized the corrupted system of collecting army corn (grain) supplies from local inhabitants, enthusiastically encouraged private investment in extensive and varied public construction projects, as well as Roman education for the children of British

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28 Birley, Roman Government of Britain,11.  
29 Tacitus, Agricola (19.4), Church and Brodribb, 689.
elites.\textsuperscript{30} Whether Agricola deserved the praise accorded him by his son-in-law Tacitus continues to be debated; but it remains important to note that such activities were within the scope of a governor’s power. Initially governors had far ranging authority in their provinces functioning as the head of both civil and military matters.

Like the governor himself, subordinate officials were drawn from the primary talent pool of aristocratic Roman society, the army. The appointing of subordinates from within the legions under the governor’s command must have further militarized the provincial administration. At the same time British elites would have had no opportunity to participate in this new province-wide level of governance, as their ties to Rome had not yet had a chance to become more than superficial conditions of convenience. Similarly, no Roman senators are attested from Britain, and Britain contributed no notable “Roman” figures to the histories. Owing in large part to long-standing oral traditions within the Celtic world, few writings and inscriptions shed light upon the people who led the various British tribes and remained after the Roman arrival. Noted Britons fall into two general categories, client rulers before and during Roman rule, such as Cartimandua of the Brigantes; and rebellious tribal leaders such as Caratacus or Boudica. During Roman rule, the power of native elites was generally in the hands of Roman officers and bureaucrats, with power only retained on the most local of levels. The lack of political ascension among the native British aristocracy during the Roman period\textsuperscript{31} has frustrated the efforts of many scholars to better understand the role of native elites under Roman rule.

\textsuperscript{30} Tacitus, \textit{Agricola}, (21.3-6), 690.
\textsuperscript{31} Birley, \textit{Frontier People}, 11.
The prosperous nature of lowland Britain under Roman rule has been well documented. Before the Roman arrival in the first century AD, lowland Britain had become the most prosperous area of Britain, with the highest population density and a relatively stable series of tribal kingdoms in regular cultural and economic exchange across the Channel and beyond. Under Roman guidance, a series of settlements was established throughout the southern half of Britain, with some flourishing and remaining inhabited to this day.

The first Roman settlement in Britain was in the form of a *colonia* (an area of land/urban settlement set aside for retired legionary veterans) at Colchester in 49 AD, previously the site of *Camulodunum*, the tribal center of the Trinovantes. After the destruction of the Boudican Revolt in 61 AD the primary seat of governance moved to the southwest. Soon a thriving provincial capital grew at London (*Londinium*). The site was well situated to control both an early military crossing of the Thames and also important land and river-based trade routes stretching throughout Britain and beyond.
Roman settlements in Britain, as elsewhere in the Empire, had varying degrees of status and organization. Besides the provincial capital, the most prestigious were the four *coloniae*, founded as planned retirement communities for the numerous discharged legionary veterans who saw service in Britain. *Coloniae* were not only deep seeds of Roman culture, but also areas of concentrated wealth, as retired legionaries would receive significant benefits either in the form of cash payment or land grant. As Salway notes, “Compulsory savings schemes (and grants of land in some cases) made them men of substance in their communities.”

Epigraphic evidence illustrates the example of a retired auxiliary cavalry officer who was elected to local councils of the *colonia*, a *municipium* and also the surrounding *canabae* (Canabae and vici were extramural settlements of camp followers and merchants associated with permanent military bases, Canabae were higher status settlements associated with legionary fortresses, while vici were extramural settlements outside auxiliary forts).

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33 Ibid.
*Coloniae* would be created from previous legionary fortresses, where the occupants would have already spent significant time. The first was established at Colchester (*Camulodunum*) in AD 49 by Claudius. It was followed by Lincoln (*Lindum*) under Domitian (81-96), Gloucester (*Glevum*) under Nerva (96-98), and finally York (*Eburacum*) during Caracalla’s reign (211-217).34 Not all *coloniae* elsewhere in the Empire developed in the traditional manner, and as Wacher remarks, “ultimately it became a fairly common practice to upgrade tribal towns and some other *vici* to the rank of *municipium*, followed perhaps by promotion later to *colonia*.”35 These settlements would have had local administrative systems based on Roman models, including town councils and various magistracies.36 Yet prominent positions would continue to have been held by army officers or perhaps wealthy Roman immigrants. Native Britons would have been the minority in the unfamiliar urban setting, and would have viewed the workings of power from the outside.

Tribal settlements and *vici* would have had the fewest civil rights, with more being granted to the occupants as the settlement’s status and importance grew. Yet in many cases little is known about the official civic status of a settlement, or its forms of internal government. Even important towns such as London (*Londinium*), eventually one of the largest cities in the Empire, Wacher admits has yielded, “no epigraphic evidence relating to its civic status”37 but continues to note that London’s size must have ensured its progression through the civil hierarchy over the centuries. Far from all occupants of

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36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
Roman Britain were Roman, the native Britons continued to inhabit what was now a Roman province, with tribal centers alongside the settlements of their Roman occupiers.

Before the coming of the Romans, settlement in much of the southeastern lowlands centered upon oppida (large scale and relatively elaborate hilltop settlements) of a model similar to those found in Gaul. Each oppidum functioned as a local political and social center with a surrounding hinterland of scattered multi-household settlements. Though sometimes achieving relatively dense population groupings, oppida do not have the hallmark features of urbanism found elsewhere in the Roman world. The complete role of oppida in Celtic society, including whether they functioned as an aristocratic power base and subsequent redistribution center, and/or a communal sanctuary/meeting place, remains open to scholarly debate.\(^{38}\) Oppida were most common among the continental Gallic tribes, and though simple forms are evident in lowland Britain, oppida are absent in northern Britain, with the controversial exception of Stanwick.

In the highlands of the peripheral zone traditional archaeological interpretations suggest a much looser social and economic system of scattered small-scale settlements\(^ {39}\) with fewer signs of arable cultivation or non-subsistence husbandry, settlements consisting of single families and led by local chieftains. Transitional forms appear in midland zones.\(^ {40}\) Cassius Dio, writing in the first years of the third century AD, describes the highland residents of Britain:

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\(^{38}\) Salway, *Oxford Illustrated History*, 11.


\(^{40}\) Cunliffe, *Iron Age Communities*, 12.
…they inhabit wild and waterless mountains and lonely and swampy plains, without walls, cities, or cultivated land. They live by pasturing flocks, hunting, and off certain fruits; for although the stocks of fish are limitless and immense they leave them untouched. They live in tents, unclothed and unshod, sharing their women and bringing up all their children together. Their government is for the most part democratic, and because their especial pleasure is plundering, they choose the bravest men to be their rulers.41

Vigilant of the pitfalls of contemporary Roman bias and antiquary perspective, a general picture of a pastoral and semi-agrarian warrior society lacking urban settlements, centralized government or widespread social cohesion, becomes visible. With little social apparatus for interaction with Roman occupiers, the day-to-day Roman influence impact on highland groups was minimal. “Units returning from Scotland in c.160,” notes Bidwell, “to begin the permanent reoccupation of the Pennines and the north-west will have encountered local communities little changed from the time before the [northern] conquest of 71, indeed many of whom had only been slowly drawn into the orbit of Roman military control during the early 2nd century.”42 Harding presents a concise current picture of highland patterns during the Roman consolidation of the frontier in northern Britain:

Within those regions that subsequently came within the Roman frontiers, Iron Age society appears to have been based upon dispersed rural settlements of which enclosed homesteads, either rectilinear or circular in plan, and containing one or more circular house, were a widespread element over much of the first millennium BC. Occasional hillforts may have been in use, but were never as numerous as in parts of southern England.43

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43 Harding, Iron Age in Northern Britain, 159.
Though lacking the large population centers found elsewhere in Britain, the relatively small amount of cultivatable land in the northeast of Britain allowed for higher population density and social interaction than found in the midlands and western highlands. Recent work, particularly widespread use of aerial photography and geophysical survey, has begun to reveal the extent of cultivation that occurred in the northeast, but also a much higher number of sites than previously assumed. Utilizing the most recent research on northern Britain, Bidwell and Hodgson describe:

> In northeast England the Roman army entered a landscape that by the later pre-Roman Iron Age had been cleared, cultivated, and densely settled. In the low-lying areas of Yorkshire the settlements typically took the form of enclosed farmsteads evenly and fairly tightly distributed over the available landscape (intervals of less than 1000m between settlements being typical in some areas). Between settlements the landscape was routinely subdivided by boundary banks and ditches and field systems.44

While the degree of land use and population density is continuing to come to light, differences remain between forms found in northern Britain and in the south. Unable to achieve agricultural surpluses like those found among the centralized groups lowland Britain, social stratification and cultural development was stymied in the north, as elite status presumably remained centered upon hostile exchange and the accumulation of military prestige. Isolated, and generally hostile to one another, few opportunities for large-scale development existed in the north.

Settlement patterns in the north suggest a diffused population, operating on an isolated and subsistence basis. These settlement forms are found throughout northern Britain; from east to west a trend toward smaller, less organized Iron Age forms

predominates, with defended homesteads being the norm along the Atlantic coast, and smaller hillforts characteristic in-between. 45 Though restricted by climatic and social conditions from reaching the production potential of the lowlands, as Harding warns, “we should be wary of misty visions of Celtic cowboys and shepherds drifting aimlessly across the upland hills.” 46 While recent work has indicated higher yields and population within the northeast of Britain, it is important to remember that significant regional differences in culture and society did exist between the core communities of the southern lowlands, and those of the more isolated and localized highlands.

Rome routinely maintained control of distant populations by enfranchising native elites into Roman benefits and systems. Britain was no different, with the southeastern lowlands adopting Roman culture in the same manner as other western continental provinces. But in northern Britain, with a limited and dispersed native aristocracy, the opportunity for enfranchisement was minimal. Hingley notes the implications of such a deficiency, “If the [northern] area had a genuine absence of high-status settlement, the extent of military domination may have related to an unstable area in which Rome could not use a pre-existing native elite to create order.” 47 Elsewhere in the empire the presence of a villa landscape is considered a clear sign of rural aristocracy, able to be drawn upon for administrative capacities in neighboring urban centers.

Southern Britain, with traditions of continental centralized polities, quickly transitioned to a landscape of villas under Roman rule. Long had archaeological

45 Cunliffe, Iron Age Communities, 369.
46 Harding, Iron Age in Northern Britain, 159.
evidence for villas among the northern frontier of Britain been lacking, yet excavations within the last decade have revealed a number of villas within the northeastern *civitas* of the Brigantes (as we have seen, the most developed political entity found within the northern frontier). In the Brigantes is the single visible tribal aristocracy of the northern frontier zone. Their early center, located at Stanwick, is the only *oppida*-like settlement to be found on the northern half of the island. A handful of northern villas have been found within the immediate area of Stanwick (seat of the pre-conquest Brigantian aristocracy) and as Hingley adds, “The villas may have developed on high-status native settlements within a zone in which Roman pottery imports had become fairly common prior to and during the early Roman period.”

Though still 100km short of Hadrian’s Wall, the relatively few sites identified as villas within Brigantia aid modern scholars in understanding the landscape of the northern frontier zone. But these sites also present problems of interpretation, as minimal material remains associated with northern villa fail to shed light on a number of important issues.

The term ‘villa’ is loosely applied to sites found within the north and is subject to ambiguity. As Hingley explains, “Villas, referred to in the classical literature, were the rural homes of the wealthy town-based elite. Villas, in archaeological terms, are fairly substantial stone-built houses of rectangular form that were built in rural contexts.”

Villas found in northern Britain, within a context of limited economic production and exchange, would not have fulfilled the economic role key to villa identity elsewhere in the Roman world. Rather, they were merely residences roughly modeled on Roman

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48 Hingley, ‘Rural Settlement in Northern Britain’ in *A Companion to Roman Britain*, 334.
49 Ibid. 333.
structural imports; northern villas most likely served a limited role as an additional form of elite display in the increasingly complex world of northern Britain on the eve of Roman conquest.

Rome, initially hoping to occupy the entirety of Britain, had to contend with governing both lowland and highland populations alongside groups of Roman immigrants and a large military presence. Arriving upon this varied landscape, the Roman invaders had to devise systems for rural administration among non-Roman British population. Continuing administrative trends, and adapting existing systems from neighboring provinces such as Gaul, Roman Britain moved from independent tribal entities to administrative units known as *civitates*.

Urban centers were the key to Roman society and administration; Britain required the gradual development of urbanized population centers, from “deliberately planted citizen *coloniae*,” as Salway explains, “through grades of *municipia* (in certain types of which in early times only those who had been elected to principal office...
received the Roman citizenship if they did not already possess it), down to peregrine civitates.” Eventually, most territory in southern Britain would be administered as civitates, based principally, as scholars such as Millett propose, upon the pre-existing tribal areas of the Late Iron Age. It was in the rural hinterland administered by these civitates that most native Britons lived.

As Roman control extended over the island, military occupation eventually passed to civil administration as an area became pacified and secure. Wacher states, “Their capital towns would normally have been set up by the provincial administration in Britain as each area was freed from military control. Each would have been formed by agreement reached between the leaders of the community and the government.” The ultimate ability to revoke rights or reassert military control would have always lain with Roman authorities. The surviving evidence, both literary and physical, for even the existence of some civitates not to mention their associated administrative organizations remains extremely limited, even in relative archaeological terms. Wacher points out, “Of the twenty-three tribal groups for which there is evidence in Britain during the Roman period, at least sixteen seem to have been released wholly or in part from military control and became self-governing civitates peregrinae.” He later adds, “But only eleven civitas capitals are directly attested…” Tribes that did not transition to Roman rule, or areas which remained within the area of active military deployment or operations, did not

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52 Wacher, *Towns of Roman Britain*, 23-24
53 Ibid., 22.
develop full *civitas* administrations, but ever present was some degree of Roman oversight. “Within any of these authorities there might be subdivisions,” says Wacher, “generally called *vici*, wards or villages, with their own minor officers or *magistri*. In some areas it seems likely that the Gallic *pagus* or rural district survived as part of the subordinate system.”54 In later centuries, *ordines* (*sing. ordo*), or local senates consisting of *decuriones* administered many day-to-day affairs. Some dedicatory inscriptions survive which illustrate the responsibilities and actions of these groups.

In Caerwent (in modern Wales), *civitas* capital of the Silures, a dedication was made by “decree of the Ordo of the *civitas* of the Silures” to Tiberius Claudius Paulinus, Proconsul of Gallia Narbonensis and Imperial Pro-Praetorian Legate of Gallia Lugdunensis.55 Unfortunately no evidence remains of the actual members of this body. Evidence of council officials in Britain survives principally in stone inscriptions, but what little evidence remains heavily favors literate Roman officials over any remaining Britons, still steeped in non-literate Celtic traditions. To participate in the Roman system, knowledge of Latin and more importantly, the ability to write, were essential. This would have put significant distance between Roman administrators and any native British elites who desired to remain loyal to their Celtic past.

The Celtic tradition of reliance upon oral transmission contributed to general illiteracy among the British population (excluding Druids and perhaps a small number of elites with extensive continental ties) and resulted in little surviving native epigraphic activity in Britain overall, not just the rugged regions of the frontier. Birley gives voice

to the scholarly frustration on the subject: “It is not possible in the case of Britain even to
attempt a study of the social structure and population of the province on the lines of that
done elsewhere in the empire, for example Pannonia, or Dalmatia.”56 Later, Birley notes
the marked lack of British figures in the histories following the rebellion of the Brigantes
under Venutius, saying: “Thereafter, apart from Calgacus, who vainly opposed the
Roman advance into the Scottish highlands in the 80’s, the scions of the native Celtic
aristocracy [though Tacitus notes as being introduced to Roman ways] are submerged
until the late fourth century, when figures like Cunedda appear.”57 Even in Roman
contexts, few examples of epigraphic evidence shed light on the existence and character
of northern native Britons. “With the possible exception of the Vindolanda Britunculi,”
says Crow, “the indigenous population of North Britain remains anonymous in the textual
records.”58

Similarly, the cohesion of some of the highland tribes should not be
overestimated. It is important to remember the variability and heterogeneity that exists in
any society, and especially among the decentralized and isolated familial clans of the
highlands, regardless of the overarching labels used by academics to describe them.
Salway is quick to remind readers, when discussing the surviving Brigantian population
following their rebellion under Venutius:

However loyal the surviving pro-Roman nobles of Aldborough and their
descendants may have been, the tribesmen of the hills remained their unruly
selves. Brigantia had always been a federation of clans rather than a single

57 Ibid., 11.
58 James Crow, ‘The Northern Frontier of Britain from Trajan to Antoninus Pius: Roman Builders and
unit… It is indeed likely that the hillmen resented the authority of Aldborough quite as much as the presence of the Roman army, even as they had rejected the sovereignty of their pro-Roman queen [Cartimandua].

Indeed, the Brigantes were originally positioned as a viable client kingdom to Rome, as a buffer between the developing province to the south, and the unconquered highland peoples of the north. Following the rebellion of Venutius in AD 69, the territory of the Brigantes was incorporated into a Roman civitas, with fewer rights and under strict military oversight, as their territory constituted an important strategic zone, as evidenced by the later construction of permanent fortifications under Hadrian.

Whether known to have been reduced to a single Roman civitas, or to have been described as a single client kingdom, like that of the Brigantes, factions and tribal differences were well evident even to Roman contemporaries. As Tacitus records: “[Britons] were once ruled by kings, but are now divided under chieftains into factions and parties.” Divided by self-interest and often in open conflict with one another before the Roman invasion, the various tribes were rarely able to come to useful agreement in resisting the Roman onslaught. As contemporaries like Tacitus already recognized, the cultivation of disunity was one of Rome’s most effective means of conquering. Even the example of the Brigantes, long pictured by scholars (and described by Roman contemporaries) as a cohesive client kingdom situated in an advantageous location to control the narrowing northern edge of Roman holdings, has increasingly come under review.

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60 Tacitus, *Agricola* (12.3), Church and Brodribb, 684.
61 Ibid., (12.4-5), 684.
Some historians have noted the Roman proclivity for descriptive names, and the fact that “Brigante,” meaning “high ones” may have been little more than a name of convenience. More often described as a “confederacy,” some like Harding consider even that label optimistic, as their recorded fractionalization in the face of Roman encroachment indicates. He notes, “The account documented in Roman history [by Ptolemy and others] may be a rationalization of a much more complex system in which local communities had their own distinctive identities.” Certainly, if Rome was looking to maintain a client kingdom as the keeper of the northern border, it would have been immensely simpler and more secure, to have had a single political entity with which to deal, rather than many smaller independent and weaker tribal units. Disunity was a long utilized advantage during Roman conquests, but could also be a hindrance in areas Rome later wanted secure without the investment of direct occupation. In highland Britain, the independent and isolated nature of local tribes was present even under Roman rule, continuing to limit the social and economic potential of the native region and further isolating native elites from their neighbors as well as their Roman occupiers.

After being subjugated at the point of a Roman gladius the surviving members of a native tribe would typically have retained their general sense of social identity; And would subsequently be ruled by local army commanders until adequately assimilated into Roman culture (processes which are little evidenced among populations who engaged in minimal interaction with Roman occupiers on an economic, cultural or political basis).

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62 Rivet and Smith, *Place-names of Roman Britain* (London: Batsford, 1979), 279.
63 Harding, *Iron Age in Northern Britain*, 159.
64 Ibid., 23-24.
Wacher describes this civil development elsewhere in the empire during later centuries: “Some major modifications can be observed in the administrative and social structure, leading to the formation, from the tribal aristocracy, of a specific romanized social class – the curiales– and the introduction of the higher grades of magistracies.” In the major Roman settlements, these magistracies would have been held by Roman citizens, while in the rural settlements and civitas capitals evidence that actual Britons occupied these posts, rather than prominent Roman immigrants or army officers, remains lacking and can only be assumed.

Public service in the magistracies and councils of the civitates would be an important and familiar form of social status and distinction for surviving elites who were able to adapt to the Roman system. But under the overarching eye of imperial bureaucracy, even local power came at a cost in the late Empire, a fact completely new to groups who had recently had little contact beyond the next valley, let alone themselves been subject to authorities so far distant. As Salway explains:

To the imperial government all local government units were bodies upon which burdens could be laid, not representatives of popular opinion: to the people of the region they were the means by which the more wealthy members of the community were encouraged or compelled to undertake personal and financial public duties in return for honours and social prestige.66

Yet a delicate balance existed between Roman allowance of autonomy and personal responsibilities (both social and economic) to the Empire, a balance that would prove difficult for imperial administrations to maintain in later centuries. Initially, such service allowed the possibility for native elites to maintain status and distinction and served as a

65 Wacher, Towns of Roman Britain, 24.
66 Salway, Frontier People of Roman Britain, 191.
major catalyst for Roman acculturation, though public service would eventually become
so detrimental and burdensome that it would be actively avoided.

Nonetheless, such positions represented one of the few remaining outlets for
retaining elite status while participating in the Roman administration during the first
centuries of occupation in Britain. Yet such limited opportunities only existed within the
pacified *civitates* created from the territories of the southern tribes, groups who,
accustomed to continental contact and social forms, acclimated to Roman rule,
ocasionally even prospering under it.

But the Roman propensity to allow local civil autonomy (or withhold it) must
continue to be examined in Britain. Due to the severe lack of documentary evidence, the
full degree of self-government allowed to native inhabitants of the *civitates* may never be
accurately understood. Such a lack of evidence is itself enlightening, as many of the
*civitas* capitals never became successful examples of Roman settlements. Too few are
defined well enough in literary sources or the known archaeological record to have even
been located at this date. But most tellingly, few *civitas* capitals and secondary
settlements, whether newly established or relocations of previous nucleation, continued to
function as urban centers following Roman withdrawal in the early fifth century.

In discussing the success of the four Roman *coloniae* of Britain, Richmond
remarks: “…all four have remained inhabited sites ever since Roman times and are still
flourishing urban centres. Not a few of the contemporary native capitals are covered only
by ploughed fields or insignificant villages.\textsuperscript{67} Often pre-Roman tribal centers were situated on favorable terrain, functioning as meeting places and drawing their safety from numbers rather than defensible terrain. It should be noted that oppida were sometimes enclosed within significant fortifications as well. But in most cases Roman authorities moved existing population centers to a neighboring area and reestablished the tribal center as a civitas capital, often with little consideration to the suitability of the area to the needs of the resettled population. On the other hand, the land for coloniae would be given special consideration before being selected, and was often taken from what had recently been a conquered tribe’s primary settlement. Occupying the best locations helped ensure the continuity of the highest status Roman settlements, while at the same time reducing the importance and potential of tribal centers, thus ensuring a limited potential for urban development among the native British tribal population.

Even without the mechanism for urban settlement, native Britons would have found limited opportunity for participation in rural administration of tribal territory. Only through continued study and further excavation can the full extent of native participation in British civitas government be better understood. In the unorganized territory of the expansive military occupation zone, a lack of civitas based governance never created even these meager opportunities for participation by native British elites within Roman administration or culture. Bidwell points out, “On present evidence the development of urban centres independent of forts and the villa form of settlement is much less evident or

entirely absent [in the northwest].”\textsuperscript{68} Administration was firmly in the hands of long
standing Roman citizens, almost all of military rank. New native settlements were given
second tier land, lowering their production and developmental abilities, while the most
productive lands (previously the site of tribal centers) were often confiscated for Roman
settlements, most notably the \textit{coloniae}. At the same time, prospects for accumulating
status through financial means were quickly exploited by immigrants from elsewhere in
the Empire, more familiar with Roman economic systems and methods and quick to
recognize the opportunity posed by a large and diverse military garrison.

\textsuperscript{68} Bidwell & Hodgson, \textit{The Roman Army in Northern Britain}, 5.
Chapter 3: The Military Frontier of Northern Britain

The geography of Britain has played a major role in the islands development. The climatic and social impacts of rugged highlands encouraged an economic structure based primarily on subsistence husbandry and restricted agricultural efforts. The uneven terrain hindered communication and social interaction, leading to isolated populations with many similar long standing traditions, but little immediate contacts, and therefore stunted societal organization and complexity. The coming of the Romans to northern Britain brought a people vastly different than the native inhabitants, possessing a professional army, organized hierarchical command, and advanced logistical support. The Roman army would be the dominant organization in northern Britain for centuries, with dominion over local native populations in the region of the Wall, though unable to subdue neighboring groups to the north and establish a lasting presence in the Scottish highlands.

The “frontier” in Britannia was a relative term, and shifted as the island came under Roman control. Beginning in the southeastern core where the invasion began, the zone of military occupation extended north and westward, eventually incorporating the Cornish peninsula, the Midlands, and lastly the highland regions of Wales and uppermost England. As local populations were adequately subdued, their administration would pass to civil bodies of the civitates. Only in areas of continued or recent unrest, where the army would be forced to restore Roman order, would there again be periods of martial governance. Wales and northern England presented the Roman occupiers with the fundamental challenge of controlling pockets of unorganized resistance, and later a
relatively disenfranchised populous, in rugged terrain which effectively hampered communication and movement.

Elsewhere in Britain, Rome made good use of the island’s geography in constructing their grand strategy for the new province. Initially attempting to establish the client kingdom of Brigantia as a comprehensive northern buffer, the inability of the Brigantes to conform to Roman rule eventually forced their direct annexation by the Roman army. Without the manageable entity of a Brigantian state Hodgson notes, “In the north the general lack of easily-controllable elite power centres (in comparison to southern Britain) compounded by the more dispersed and isolated pattern of upland settlement must have forced the Roman army of occupation into a pattern of more and smaller bases.”69 Faced with occupying the highland region on the northern edge of the province themselves, garrisons were established with effective lines of communication and transport to respond to both local and distant threats.

One of the first elements incorporated into a permanent military frontier system in northern Britain was the construction of the Stanegate, or “stone road,” around the time of the governorship and campaigns of Agricola in the late first century. Running east west, this road was anchored by the forts of Carlisle and Corbridge, allowing effective control of the second narrowest region of Britain, the valley between the mouth of the river Tyne, and the Solway Firth.

The local network of forts, fortlets and roads would continue to be elaborated as

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attempts at Roman expansion extended further north into Scotland, beyond the Tyne-Solway line. Though the Romans were able to establish a degree of control in the area adjacent to the line of fortifications at Hadrian’s Wall, they were unable to gain control of the lands further north. Under continued pressure from native tribes in Scotland, and facing problems elsewhere in the empire, the deployment of garrisons along the Stanegate continued. Eventually, Hadrian’s Wall would supplant the Stanegate. First begun under Hadrian in 122, the series of fortifications experienced periods of
abandonment, reoccupation and renovation as Roman efforts north of the line waxed and waned. Hadrian’s successor, Antoninus Pius (138-161) moved the frontier north, constructing the Antonine Wall along the Forth-Clyde line, roughly half the distance of Hadrian’s Wall and consisting mostly of turf. Occupied for less than twenty years, the Antonine Wall was abandoned around 160 as the Romans again withdrew from southern Scotland and returned to Hadrian’s Wall, giving up the shorter line of defense provided by the Antonine Wall.

Both walls were constructed of locally available materials, the Antonine wall of turf, and Hadrian’s Wall beginning as primarily turf in west and transitioning to stone as the wall progressed east.
It’s suitability as a fighting platform in directly repelling raids and large scale invasions, continues to be hotly contested by frontier scholars.\textsuperscript{70} Though utilizing advantageous terrain to contribute to its formidable appearance, Hadrian’s Wall is not traditionally believed to have been a defensive platform from which to fight major engagements. As part of a zonal frontier approach, several smaller forts remained garrisoned beyond the wall as advanced outposts, allowing adequate time for infantry and cavalry units to respond accordingly to incoming threats. With a system of ditches and berms\textsuperscript{71} as well as other obstacles,\textsuperscript{72} the Wall was a significant impediment to anyone wanting to cross the area without Roman knowledge or permission. While military analysts and historians continue to debate the Wall’s role in direct encounters, it is safe to assume that large scale combat would have taken place elsewhere, with the Wall playing a role in observation and delaying tactics while superior Roman forces maneuvered within the surrounding area to best utilize superior their discipline and tactical formations over open ground.


\textsuperscript{71} Most notable of these is “The Vallum,” a triple series of ditch/berm structures that runs parallel to Hadrian’s Wall approximately 100 meters to the south. Its position and purpose have long stirred debate among British and Military scholars. Early thought to be a physical delineation of the military zone, archaeological evidence of later Roman construction over the structures, and dating of its construction possibly preceding the wall itself, indicate perhaps a function as a hindrance to small scale raiding by local groups still hostile to Rome during the early phases of Roman occupation. As the full function of Hadrian’s Wall becomes better understood, the role of the Vallum in an overall scheme of defense and security will become clearer as well.

\textsuperscript{72} Recent excavations have shown that branch obstacles (\textit{cippi}) were actually present in the berm along Hadrian’s Wall, contributing significantly to the hindrance of small-scale incursion from the north side of the wall zone. For excavation reports and further discussion see P. Bidwell, ‘The system of obstacles on Hadrian’s Wall: their extent, date and purpose’ \textit{Arbeia J.}, vol. 8, 2005, pg. 53-76,
Small garrisons were also deployed along the wall, spaced at one per Roman mile, in so-called “milecastles,” (actually fortified gateways) constituted that facilitated easy (though regulated) passage through the Wall. With such a high number of pathways through the otherwise fortified wall, scholars have recognized not only the Wall’s military role, but also its place facilitating and regulating trade from one side of the zone to the other. Historians such as C.R. Whittaker have convincingly argued that Hadrian’s Wall functioned as a zone, rather than a line. As a permeable barrier, the Wall would have best served Roman interests by allowing regulation of native trade and traffic between north and south. This would facilitate the continuance of existing native contact and trade systems while removing the need for any additional role by Roman personnel or authorities, while at the same time allowing Roman taxation of goods passing through the Wall zone. Thus Hadrian’s Wall provided important security and economic benefits while at the same time serving as part of an overall system of forward observation/response and as obstacle to small-scale incursion and raiding.

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73 C.R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A social and economic study* (USA: Johns Hopkins Press, 1994).
Without the traditional trappings of Roman culture found within urban centers, the lone foundation for administration in the north lay with the only sizable concentrations of Romans in the area, the military garrisons. With the nearest legionary base almost a hundred miles south at York (though construction of a legionary base at Inchtuthil in the Scottish highlands, was attempted by Agricola but quickly abandoned) the various forts and fortlets within the frontier region were not only islands of Roman culture but seats for the administration of the surrounding territory. In similar fashion to the provincial administrative organization, the command structure of the legions depended upon the militarized upper class of Roman citizens. The highest-ranking military officers outside those of the provincial administration commanded the prestigious legions, the backbone forces that had given Rome success as both a republic and later empire.

Each legion was commanded by a *Legatus Legionis*, with six military tribunes, a *tribunus laticlavius* (of senatorial rank) who was second in command, and five *tribuni angusticlavii* (of equestrian rank) charged with various administrative and tactical assignments, as well as a *praefectus castorum* (camp prefect). Subordinate to these was the *primus pilus*.
(centurion of the prestigious first century of the first cohort) and the 59 other centurions who comprised the main body of Roman officers, directly commanding the 60 centuriae, each consisting of 80 legionaries. Around 50 auxiliary regiments are attested in early Roman Britain. The auxilia fulfilled a secondary support role as specialized units, often cavalry or ranged combatants, who supported the central core of heavily armored citizen legionaries. Auxilia were comprised of non-citizen elements principally from the perigrinae, the rural non-citizen population of the Empire. Sometimes units were drawn from recently subjugated peoples or even mercenaries, and often retained many of their native characteristics and fighting techniques.

But command of auxiliary units lay with Roman equestrian officers, and the practice of deploying units far from their home regions ensured that no opportunity existed for native elites to serve Rome militarily while maintaining status within their community during active service. In later centuries the wholesale incorporation of displaced peoples into the Roman army (with native rulers such as Alaric remaining in command) led to numerous mutinies and disasters, further exacerbating the decline of the Roman west.

Auxilia units from neighboring Gaul to as far

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away as Sarmatia and Mesopotamia are attested in the British frontier. Whether commanding officer, drawn from the equestrian and senatorial classes, legionnaire (Roman citizens), or auxiliary soldier deployed to a remote province and cutting many of the soldier’s ties with his home, military opportunities were limited for native Britons, whose recent incorporation into the Roman Empire produced neither credible feeling of loyalty, nor adequate familiarity with Roman society.

The northern frontier of Roman Britain had no sizable population concentrations beyond those of Roman military garrisons. As general Roman strategy shifted to territorial defense, deployment to permanent fixed fortifications rather than the traditional marching camps constructed in a single day became the norm. With similar plans, legionary encampments of later centuries utilized increasingly fortified defenses, as well as elaborate stone structures. From the largest legionary bases, housing between 5,000-6,000 soldiers, to the smallest fortlets supporting less than 100, deployment and support required sophisticated logistical organization on the part of Roman command, as well as an effective and clearly established command structure. In the British frontier the native population remained relatively dispersed and decentralized even toward the end of Roman rule in the fifth century. Similarly, Roman settlement in the area remained limited, due to the perilous nature of the area Roman efforts at urban settlement remained in the south. Few sites in the frontier zone grew beyond the classification of *vicus*, or roughly: small fort settlement, with the exceptions of Carlisle and Corbridge.

Located along the Hadrianic frontier on the western and eastern edges of the earlier Stanegate road, Carlisle (*Luguvalium*) and Corbridge (*Corstopitum*) grew from the
sites of forcefully evacuated pre-existing tribal centers and subsequent Roman fort \textit{vici} to eventually become centers of supply and relaxation for the Roman garrisons stationed along the wall and to the north. Though still small by Roman urban standards, these sites represented the two largest population centers within the military zone. Like other settlements, the exact nature of status and civil autonomy in Carlisle and Corbridge remains poorly understood. Nonetheless, these sites, as well as those around other Roman garrisons had military origins and continued military functions. Their occupants would have had pre-existing relationships with the soldiers of the garrison, or have been enticed to the settlement from other provinces by the economic opportunity of supplying the soldiers and their families.

The army brought great economic opportunity by combining a massive influx of coinage through regular pay with the sheer amount of goods and services demanded by thousands of Roman soldiers. Garrisons attracted many individuals of a non-military nature beyond wives and children. The newly revealed presence of \textit{vici} outside almost all permanent forts, in combination with epigraphic evidence such as the writing tablets found at the fort of Vindolanda, illustrate how merchants and other camp followers routinely followed the economic opportunity provided by army units, and settled alongside forts as they became more permanent. As Bidwell and Hodgson note, “…the rapidity with which extramural buildings appeared supports C.S. Sommer’s view that
communities of civilian traders and craftsmen moved with and functioned symbiotically with military units.”76

These ‘camp followers’ consisted of soldier’s families (both unofficial, and later made legal through decree of Septimius Severus) of wives and children, as well as slaves, prostitutes, merchants, craftsman and numerous other individuals hoping to profit from the needs of the soldiers. Writers such as Appian and Caesar attest to the presence of such followers early in Roman history.77 Often soldiers would meet their wives while on campaign, most likely in a province where they were deployed for long periods. Britain was no different. A tombstone inscription from South Shields, a supply fort-port on the eastern edge of Hadrian’s Wall reads: “To the spirits of the departed (and) to Regina, his freedwoman and wife, a Catuvellaunian [see fig. 6] by race, aged 30, Barates of Palmyra (set this up).”78 Other inscriptions in the British frontier show that camp followers from such distant places as Palmyra were not rare. From Carlisle, another tombstone inscription reads, “Flavius Antigonus Papias, a citizen of Greece, lived 60 years more or less and returned to the Fates his soul, which he had on loan that long…”79 others mention departed family members from distant Sarmatia80 and Solonae81 (in modern Serbia). Inhabitants of any vicus would have been well integrated into Roman culture, either immigrating from other Roman provinces or as the newly acquired wife of a

76 Bidwell & Hodgson, The Roman Army in Northern Britain, 32.
79 RIB I 1955 in Ibid.
80 RIB I 594 in Ibid., 254.
81 RIB I 1828 in Ibid., 255.
soldier. While a significant number of vicani (vicus inhabitants) may have been native women, with some perhaps experiencing their first true introduction to Roman living, no epigraphic or archaeological evidence suggests the presence of significant numbers of male Britons. By living in such proximity to soldiers, and under the command of the garrison commander, individuals of personal or perceived ambivalence toward Roman authority would have had little presence within Roman forts and vici.

The true nature of the vicani remains to be fully examined, as Sommer notes, “…there have been no large-scale excavations of any cemeteries in Britain which might disclose the magnitude [and makeup] of the population of a military vicus.”82 And material remains from the few adequately excavated vici continue to shed little light on the nature of their inhabitants. Even in the vicus of Vindolanda, perhaps best know and studied of British Wall forts, provides few clues as to the identity of those who lived there. For now, the assumption of vici occupants (at least prominent ones) as having been Roman citizens or immigrants from other Roman provinces seems most reasonable. As Harding remarks, in Yorkshire there is currently “no evidence for [a Brigantian tribal aristocracy] presence within the military vici.”83

Vici settlements were an immediate response to the economic needs and opportunities presented by the numerous military garrisons on the frontier of northern Britain. They have now been shown to have developed contemporarily with the founding of most forts.84 Upon their arrival, a garrison would have already had a significant camp

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82 Sommer, Military Vici in Roman Britain, 32.
83 Harding, Iron Age in Northern Britain, 171.
84 Sommer, Military Vici in Roman Britain, 9.
following, which would have immediately set about constructing new facilities as their military companions constructed their new fort. Contrary to earlier academic views, recent research has shown that the immediate economic reaction to the demand of frontier garrisons was clearly apparent in almost all cases when *vici* have been adequately examined.\(^85\) New research on these extramural settlements has shown *vici* associated with many of the substantial garrisons in Britain, and elsewhere around the Empire.

Notably, *vici* on the northern frontier experienced widespread decline following troop reductions in the late 3\(^{rd}\) century, with most being abandoned by the turn of the 4\(^{th}\) century. Structural changes within the forts corroborate later reductions in garrison strength, and also indicate the presence of *vicani* (or other civilian immigrants) living within the fort following military abandonment in later centuries. Generally, garrison and *vicus* remained socially and economically intertwined, with the social and economic systems of the *vicus* being dependent upon the presence of the garrison and demand which it created. Apart from a handful of exceptional cases, such as a site advantageously situated to exploit wider economic situations, all *vici* go into immediate decline following the withdrawal of its host garrison.\(^86\) For example, on the earlier military frontier of highland Wales, Erdkamp notes this change decades earlier during the military withdrawal from Wales; he elaborates, “As a major reduction in the Welsh garrison was implemented under Hadrian, with the majority of the forts in south Wales being abandoned, the *vici* also became casualties. Few show much sign of occupation

\(^{85}\) Sommer, *Military Vici in Roman Britain*, 12.
\(^{86}\) Ibid., 52.
beyond the later Hadrianic/early Antonine period. Bidwell and Hodgson summarize the current view of vici-fort relationships, “…although that reduction at many forts was at first perhaps offset by the presence of irregular troops, eventually numbers were as much as 50% lower than in the 2nd century. This provides a better explanation, now widely accepted, for the end of the vici, which came about because their economic basis disappeared.”

Local economic activity with native groups in the northern frontier never proved adequate to allow the continued existence of civilian settlement without the attraction of military demand. Only where vici were positioned to take advantage of trade from larger networks in the province (i.e. Carlisle and Corbridge) could civil settlement be sustained independently of the garrison.

Economic interaction between Roman and Briton on the frontier played an important role in supplying the army (and vicani). Whether through direct taxation in kind or negotiated sale, the transfer of Roman goods to native settlements was generally restricted to limited periods of Roman frontier activity (e.g. narrowly dated coin hoards) and does not represent continual economic exchange throughout the frontier. When discussing the primary native center of lowland Scotland (Traprain Law), Hanson notes,

It had been noted that such material was most accessible to native communities in the periods of actual occupation, and a recent re-examination of the samian ware from Traprain Law stresses the absence of any indication of an influx of pottery either before or immediately after the periods of Roman occupation of Lowland Scotland… Thus, for much of the period the Roman frontier seems to have acted as a barrier to economic exchange.

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While the design of Hadrian’s Wall might have included the ability to exploit native exchange within the Wall zone, the dynamic of economic exchange between Roman and native might have followed a significantly different course than that which existed between neighboring British groups who produced goods better fitted to the traditional needs of the area. With the later reduction of the military garrison in northern Britain, and subsequent decline of the *vici*, any native systems dependent on Roman supply would have returned to functions independent of foreign factors. Site evidence throughout Britain following the withdrawal of Roman military forces in 410 AD shows a sharp collapse in Roman systems, structures and methods, and a general reversion of once prosperous sites to schemes of pre-Roman Iron Age complexity.

Regardless of the minor economic relationship between Roman and Briton in northern Britain, substantial civilian settlement was mostly untenable despite the demand and market created by substantial garrisons of Roman soldiers. The *vici*, whether inhabited by Romans or native Britons, were the only example of civil Roman settlement in the frontier (see fig. 9), yet for scholars many questions still remain regarding the exact status of *vicani* and what opportunities for self-governance they were afforded.

Rome ruled a vast and demographically disparate territory under a single imperial system. Bureaucracy was relatively minimal because Rome relied upon local elites to administer most local affairs, while the Roman state directed collective policies, such as foreign diplomacy. Relying upon administrative bodies within urban centers, modeled upon early Roman predecessors, civilian administration in the military frontier of Britain
naturally turned to the only Roman citizens in the area who were not already under direct military authority. Researchers are reasonably confident that administrative systems within Roman *vici* were much like those in other Roman urban settlements, i.e. administration within the civilian *vicus* would have been based in prominent local citizens and a local council with minor magistracies. Hanel concludes, “Inscriptions [show] that at least some (and possibly all) settlements at military camps had their own magistrates (*magistri*) and a town council (*ordo decurionum*) which probably fulfilled the same administrative tasks as their counterparts in towns of civil origin.”

Inscriptions on public buildings, such as building dedications, evidence the actions of the *ordo* or other prominent groups of vicani. As we have seen, soldiers perhaps often participated in the administration of the *vici*, whether as garrison commanders with ultimate authority, or as lower officers holding council or magisterial positions. “Ordinary *civitates stipendiariae*” as Salway explains, “had no rights against an officer with delegated *imperium*, and the exercise of supervision over local authorities by military officers is recorded in several places during the second century.”

Yet the demands of civil administration would have detracted from other duties of the soldier, and drained manpower from the military requirements of provincial security. Therefore local civilian administration (probably supervised closely by local commanders or imperial appointees) would have been preferable to direct control by military officials. The relatively small size and population (most of whom lacked elite

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91 Salway, *Frontier People of Roman Britain*, 181.
92 Ibid.
Roman status) of *vici* combined with the proximity and rights of garrison commanders would have limited the complexity and power of *vici* administration. Yet soldiers were often present in an administrative capacity, even beyond the *vici*, as Wacher is quick to remind readers:

…there are instances of fort commanders acting in various capacities as civil administrators, especially in the later Empire: adjudicator, tax-gatherer, census-taker, police officer. There is also evidence of army officers being seconded to supervise areas of civilian settlement, the best example in Britain being the *regionarius* from Ribchester.⁹³

Some officials, such as the *centurio regionarius* (centurion of the region) mentioned above, are directly attested in Britain,⁹⁴ but the extent of their power and influence remains unclear. In the Ribchester example, the *regionarius* was charged with command of an auxiliary regiment of Sarmatian cavalry, including the settling of retiring auxiliary veterans in the area. Evidence for other officials, such as the *praefectus civitatis* (county prefect) remains elusive, as Salway explains, “…but it is likely that they occurred [in Britain], especially in the early days when proper local authorities were first being formed out of the old tribal organization, and one might expect them –or their equivalents– at a later date in some of the most difficult areas.”⁹⁵

Regarding civil participation, the principal surviving evidence of the activities of the *vicani* is primarily in the form of altar inscriptions.⁹⁶ But again as in the case of the *civitas* capitals, little evidence survives detailing the exact nature of local administration in the *vici*. Alternative, more direct, possibilities for administrative oversight existed.

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⁹⁵ Salway, *Frontier People of Roman Britain*, 180.
Some argue that, “the earliest civil settlements [on the frontier], including the growing town of Carlisle, lay in the Antonine period within an imperial estate, the direct possession of the emperor and under the control of his procurators.”97 Imperial holdings constituted a significant proportion of Roman territory, and were run under the direct authority and benefit of the emperor himself. Salway later adds, “The sudden growth of vici under the Severan dispensation brought new problems, but the government’s answer seems to have been an extension of the beneficiarius consularis system rather than the encouragement of local administrations.”98

Others, such as Wacher, contend, “… purely local and strictly controlled autonomy may have been granted to the many vici,”99 though his only direct supporting evidence lies in a handful of previously noted inscriptions revealing some group of civilian occupants dedicating religious altars. Instead, Wacher and like-minded scholars argue for the logical advantages of self-governance among the various vici. Whether overseen by local commanders or imperial officials, the administration of the only sizable civil populations on the frontier of northern Britain lay with Romans. The domain of native Britons was restricted to their own settlements, with little opportunity to integrate, or participate, in Roman systems of administration and economics.

As Roman garrisons were deployed in permanent fortifications so did the settlements of camp followers become more substantial and elaborate. The extramural settlements of legionary bases (canabae) drew upon a much higher number of better-paid

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97 Salway, *Frontier People of Roman Britain*, 187.
98 Ibid., 187.
citizen legionaries than the smaller and less prosperous *vici* that grew around forts and fortlets of both *auxilia* and legionary vexilations. Some *vici*, such as at Vindolanda, housed public structures that did not fit within the general context of the fort, such as the bathhouse and *mansio* (an inn and way station for traveling officers and officials). Yet evidence of independent administrative structures remains limited. “So far”, notes Hanel, “evidence for public buildings of the magistrates (*forum, curia, basilica*) is lacking from *vici* and *canabae*, and there is hardly any information on the respective responsibilities of the civil magistrates and the military commanders.”  

Presumably *vicus* administrators utilized structures which have yet to be identified (and must have differed from Roman forms long found throughout the Empire to have as yet escaped detection) or perhaps

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more likely utilized existing command facilities (within the praetorium), in conjunction with local military commanders with some degree of oversight in vici affairs.

The vicus would also include numerous temples to deities outside those of the official imperial cult, utilized by both soldier and civilian and representing deities and cults from throughout the Roman world. The army maintained the official imperial cult, as well as associated temples and festivities, but facilities and activities representing other religious beliefs fell under the auspices of the inhabitants and vicani administrators. Though dedicatory inscriptions are one of the most common forms of epigraphic evidence in vici, their laconic nature reveals little regarding the political undercurrents between fort and vicus.
Conclusions: The Relationship between Briton and Roman on the northern Frontier

Overall, Britain is a geographically diverse and isolated island, which contributed to marked differences in Iron Age occupation between the highland and lowland regions. These differences were further manifested during the Roman occupation. Urban settlement, the foundation of Roman society, found a favorable climate in the rolling hills and forest plains of the lowlands, among tribal groups in long contact with Gallic counterparts and even Mediterranean traders. In the north, rugged terrain limited urban potential while isolated and decentralized local groups found few familiar features among the literate urban culture of Rome.

The coming of Rome brought a never before seen level of administration to the highland regions of Britain, and power lay with the occupying military forces of Rome. The command structure and recruitment of the early imperial legions was based on citizen volunteers, with officers being mostly of high Roman status. For Britons the idea of governing the entire island was even less familiar, and while Rome was unable to complete its conquest of the north, holdings in the southern half of the island constituted a significant territory and population. Provincial administration was reserved for the highest levels of Roman aristocratic society, who held ultimate authority (under the emperor) on the island. Lesser provincial officials were also of high Roman status. Local control fell to newly established civil administrations operating from developed urban centers, or rural civitas equivalents managing the reduced territories of native groups.
In the north, even the semblances of *civitas* government were unable to develop in the face of military realities. Early reaction to Roman rule in Britain was similar to that of other regions that came under Roman control, such as Gaul, whose episodes of continued unrest delayed the eventual invasion of Britain till the reign of Claudius. Sporadic uprisings and rebellions occurred, like those of Boudica and Caratacus, with the last bastions of resistance coming from the less penetrable highlands of Wales, and northern England. The lesser and scattered population of the rugged highlands, combined with no tradition of centralized leadership, produced a region with few if any sizable native settlements during the arrival of the Romans. Faced with continued hostility and an inability to effectively control a dispersed population over rugged terrain, Roman strategy was forced to adapt to the situation found in northern Britain. A force of disunity and instability in the north, the Brigantes, who initially served as a convenient buffer kingdom, were unable to maintain the minimal autonomy granted them by Rome.

Roman annexation of their territory and loss of Brigantian self-rule forced long term military occupation of the region. In this military frontier, even the meager apparatus of *civitas* government was lacking, and native peoples remained under the direct control of military officials. Roman civil settlements in the frontier were military in nature, growing to support camp followers, namely soldier families and merchants. The growth of *vici* reflected the social and economic needs of Roman soldiers, rather than the wishes of natives and their surviving elites. Administration in these settlements rested ultimately with garrison commanders. While the scope of civilian participation continues to be revealed as fairly minimal, even lower ranking soldiers played a role in
administration outside the fort, as high numbers of well educated Roman elites were not present in the frontier. Tied closely to the presence of the garrison, the primary occupants of these *vici* settlements were not native Britons, but mostly Roman provincials from elsewhere in the Empire. Political, social, and economic systems centered on the needs of the army and with the withdrawal of a garrison, the basis for civil settlement would collapse and the *vicus* would be quickly abandoned. The military occupation zone provided little opportunity for native Britons to maintain their elite status through participation in the newly imposed Roman system.

Rome never achieved the lasting presence on the northern frontier that was found elsewhere in Britain or in other provinces. Overall, Roman cultural and economic systems ceased to function within a short period following official withdrawal of the Roman army and administration in 410 AD. Many factors contributed to the nature and swiftness of decline at the close of the Roman period. From the beginning, Britain was peripheral relative to the rest of the European continent. With the growing scope of the ancient world, Britain did participate extensively in long distance networks of trade and cultural exchange but, from a Roman perspective, Britannia was long a nebulous figure across vast Oceanus. This distance, both geographically and culturally, prevented Britain from achieving the levels of incorporation found in other provinces such as Gaul or Hispania. This cultural distance was heightened by the disparity in Roman and Celtic society regarding literacy. Though rich in tradition, Celtic culture had long relied principally on oral transmission, while Roman society and administration were based upon deep roots of Hellenistic origin. With little familiarity in literacy, the native elites
of Britain were ill prepared to participate in the administrative systems that the Romans brought to the island.

As Roman control extended over the island, and incorporated the highlands of northern England, a new immigrant population, not just soldiers but also camp followers, arrived from throughout the Roman world. Though from distant locations, they shared a similar level of familiarity with Roman methods and customs. They utilized political, social and economic systems developed and refined elsewhere, systems which were ideologically self-sufficient. Foremost, social organization either followed strict socio-military hierarchies, or in a civil capacity modeled on the political bodies of Rome itself. Military garrisons, numerous in Britain and particularly on the frontier, were the largest source of local economic demand for Roman goods and raw materials. Immigrants from across the Mediterranean world settled alongside soldier’s families to provide the emotional and economic needs of the soldiers. The economic system of production, transport and dispersal of refined and luxury goods was already a hallmark of Roman society long before the British invasion. The efficient logistical system of the Roman army was of paramount importance in allowing the unprecedented growth of Roman control throughout the Mediterranean world. Locally produced resources and materials reached British garrisons in significant quantities, but Roman systems of taxation and exploitation limited the role and ability of native Britons to capitalize on such exchanges. Military taxes, extracted in kind in areas without a monetized economy, leave little evidence in the archaeological record and produced little economic advantage for dispersed native producers operating slightly above subsistence level.
In this manner, the army consumed a high amount of goods and resources produced directly in Britain (as well as elsewhere in the empire) but returned little to native Britons by way of cultural or economic exchange. In areas where economic exchange is evidenced in the north, it appears as a minor side note, failing to substantially change the lives of native Britons who had perhaps bartered for a piece of Roman pottery, or had hoarded a small amount of coinage during a period of local uncertainty. By and large, native settlements saw little change, or benefit, from Roman exchange, and upon the collapse of Roman administration and production, insufficient methods or desire had been planted among native Britons to facilitate the continued operation of Roman social systems or cultural aspects.

In a setting of continued local hostility, Romans living within the few civil settlements of northern Britain relied upon familiar Roman faces among the military garrisons who shared similar social and cultural features, rather than exploration outside Roman settlements into a region of unfamiliar and less governed native inhabitants. The functional independence of Roman systems is best evidenced by the close relationship of *vicus* and fort on the northern frontier. With the removal of economic demand in the form of the military garrison, Roman civil occupation quickly disappeared along with associated social and economic systems. In essence, the general face of highland Britain a few decades after the end of Roman rule had more in common with Iron Age predecessors, than what was present during centuries of Roman rule.

The transition from independent native population to part of the Roman Empire is a complex and varied process. Yet general characteristics can be observed during such a
transition. The process of integration for an outside people entering the early imperial state can be broken into four generalized stages of incorporation.

Table 1: The Four Stages of Incorporation – Though Rome conquered many peoples throughout the ancient world the process of transitioning from independent group to a functional part of the Roman Republic and later Empire followed a generalized trajectory. As security increased and the population became increasingly accepting of Roman rule, Roman systems of administration, settlement and production/consumption would be introduced or elaborated upon. Continued development and Roman acculturation would bring the area into wider interaction with other Roman provinces and trading partners. Of course interaction as well as long distance trade existed in areas of Roman conquest before incorporation, but access and participation could greatly increase once an area had transitioned from neighboring trade contact to incorporated province of Rome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military Presence</th>
<th>1 - Conquest</th>
<th>2 - Consolidation</th>
<th>3 - Familiarization</th>
<th>4 - Incorporation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Actively Hostile</td>
<td>Rebellious</td>
<td>Accepting</td>
<td>Integrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Military Rule</td>
<td>Supervised</td>
<td>Resident Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Existing Systems</td>
<td>Surviving/Military</td>
<td>Indep. Development</td>
<td>Full Participation</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Britain was never able to achieve total incorporation, culturally, economically or socially into the Roman Empire, with differing levels visible even within the highland and lowland regions of the province.

In the south, proto-urbanism, relatively centralized political entities, and familiarity with continental social and economic systems facilitated a higher degree of integration with imported Roman systems. Rome was able to adequately pacify the lowland tribal groups (with minor rebellions requiring temporary military action) to a degree that for most of Rome’s occupation of Britain, military operations could be focused on the more difficult regions of Wales, and later northern Britain with only a small number of soldiers (primarily associated with provincial command) based in the south. While many lowland tribes initially resisted the Roman invasion, a landscape of villas, markets and urban administrative centers eventually characterized the southern
lowlands. Prosperous and surviving lowland elites, imitating Roman models, constructed villas and served in civitas-based administrations. And economic exchange within the south created higher demand and prosperity than was found before or after the Roman occupation, with some areas developing relatively small scale production facilities (such as ceramic centers near Oxford) which produced uniquely British goods modeled after continental forms.

Cognizant of the more productive conditions found to the south and in response to the inability to subjugate and occupy the entire island, Roman efforts at integration in the northern frontier may have been consciously limited as emphasis remained on maintaining military security over the more prosperous south. In the north, the rugged nature of the land as well as the native resistance combined with the marked lack of a socially developed native aristocracy provided Rome with little basis for establishing local civil government and encouraging urban growth. Rather, a perpetual military presence was required along the northern frontier, further isolating native subjects from Roman soldiers and civilian immigrants. While limited civitas administration seemingly appeared among the Brigantes or emanated from Carlisle, the majority of territory in the British north was either outside direct Roman control or fell under the authority of the substantial Roman garrisons and their commanders.

Without urban centers to form the basis for Roman administrations, military garrisons formed the foundation of Roman systems within the frontier. Vici, the sole collections of Roman civilians in the north, maintained close ties to the military at the expense of interaction with neighboring Britons. Administration of civilian vicī within
the military frontier fell to prominent Roman inhabitants, often retired soldiers. With little role to play among their new occupiers, native Britons remained generally isolated and apart from the activities of their Roman neighbors. As understanding of operations in the frontier of Britain improves, revised study of fortifications like Hadrian’s Wall shows a permeable frontier, designed for regulation and response rather than as a supreme barrier. By allowing native exchange to continue relatively unobstructed (excepting taxation and other forms of exploitation) the forms and systems of native exchange continued along Iron Age precedents even in the face of neighboring monetized markets and transcontinental transport. Evidence for economic exchange between Roman and Briton in the north is minimal, with examples often limited in scope or chronology to particular conditions on the frontier, rather than representing a state of continual and productive exchange. No methods of economic exchange or production developed independently among the native Britons of the north, as such, when Rome withdrew from Britain any local access to Roman goods and knowledge was similarly removed.

In the end, the lowlands of Roman Britain were unable to reach the fourth stage of incorporation, becoming a thoroughly ingrained part of the wider Roman world. The isolation created by military withdrawal in the early fifth century and the foundational loss of economic and political support ensured the deterioration of Roman systems in the south, which were unable to maintain the structures and systems inherited from their Roman invaders. Instead the inhabitants of Britain reverted to traditional methods and forms which had been long refined to address the needs of those living in the particular conditions of Britain.
The north was characterized by an even lesser degree of success, never achieving the characteristics of third stage familiarization. With a substantial military presence, persistently hostile groups both north and south of the Wall, and minimal economic interaction, the native reversion in the north to pre-Roman methods was even more rapid than in the south. With no urban centers to decay or maintain and little desire for Roman goods which were no longer available, the peoples of the north returned to a traditional manner of living developed over centuries to accommodate the needs of a population facing specific climatic and social conditions in the rugged northern reaches of Britain. In the end the Romans brought to Britain the cultural assemblage of an urban, militaristic, literate society from the Mediterranean world, one that had developed to accommodate a way of life of much different setting and condition. With the Roman withdrawal native Britons were unable to choose particular aspects from the Roman package (such as urbanism or coinage based exchange) because of the level of native societal development, and instead reverted to traditional Iron Age methodologies more akin to their current level of sophistication in the fifth century AD.
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