

《Review》

Richard Hingley, *Roman Officers
and English Gentlemen*— *The Imperial Origins of Roman Archaeology* —Pp. xv + 224, Routledge, London
and New York, 2000

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For some years, Richard Hingley, a lecturer at Durham University in the north of England, has been one of Britain's foremost specialists in the 'post-imperialist' approach to studying Roman Britain and the processes of 'Romanisation'. For Hingley, this has involved criticising imperialist approaches which concentrated on the élite and their pivotal role in the 'Romanisation' process. Hingley has played an important part in bringing the role of those lower in the social hierarchy, such as the slaves, the poor and the unRomanised, to our attention (e.g. Hingley 1989, 1991, 1997). Many scholars have assumed that all native Britons were pro-Roman, had a natural desire to become Roman, to adopt Roman material culture and to emulate élites. As Hingley (1997, 84) has pointed out, 'only certain ancient people are given a voice by the modern scholar and this voice is almost invariably pro-Roman.'

As part of the post-imperialist generation, Hingley has distanced himself from those with a pro-imperialist perspective. The pro-imperialists are and were people whose models of Roman Britain have been influenced by the existence and organisation of Britain's own Empire. They have also viewed Romanisation as 'progress' and 'advancement' and equated it with 'civilisation', suggesting that it 'improved the lot of the natives' (e.g. Frere 1967, 342). The supposed abandonment of a native identity and adoption of a Roman image has been presented as a positive and deliberate act by pro-imperialists. Parallels drawn between the Roman and British Empire has led to a conception of the motivation behind the creation and maintenance of the Roman Empire as positive. In other words, it has often appeared that the motivation behind expansion and conquest was a moral obligation to bring civilisation to barbarian societies on the periphery of the Roman world (Hingley 1993). In this way, the Roman Empire even provided an origin myth for the purpose and morals of the élite of the British Empire (Hingley 1995).

Critiques against the pro-imperialists and their views of the past grew in number in the early 1990s, and included the work of Freeman (1997) as well as Hingley (1991, 1993, 1995). Because of Hingley's previous work in this field, it was to be expected that his new book *Roman Officers and English Gentlemen* (Hingley 2000) would eventually be written. At 160 pages of text to 60 pages of notes and bibliography, this book is certainly an important work of reference, better suited to scholars of post-graduate level and beyond than to undergraduates.

Divided into three main parts, entitled *Imperialism*, *Englishness* and *Romanisation*, Hingley's book has two aims. It seeks to explain the value of a study of the historical context of the development of Romano-British studies, and also aims to contribute to the growing literature on English identity, and to the nature of British Imperialism.

There are many sub-themes to the book: it also focuses attention on the use of images of Rome and the native resistance to Rome in the establishment of 'imperial discourse'. Hingley argues that, through the creation of imperial discourse, some late Victorian and Edwardian British administrators, politicians and academics used images of the Roman Empire to help them to define the identity and imperial destiny of Britain.

Hingley's inspiration for the book comes from the work of English authors who wrote in Victorian and Edwardian times, and who drew explicit parallels between the imperial experiences of England and those of Rome. As Hingley also discusses, some late Victorian and Edwardian texts suggest that the classical Romans passed on to the English a civilisation that led fairly directly to the modern state of England. Through the process of conquest, Rome was felt to have introduced civilisation and Christianity to Britain and also to have helped form the imperial character of the English.

Imperialism

The first part of the book is entitled 'imperialism' rather than 'colonialism' because, as Hingley reminds us, British occupation of many parts of the world did not always lead to large-scale colonial settlement. To quote Hingley, 'imperialism' can signify the practice, theory, and attitude of a dominant metropolitan nation or people in establishing control over and ruling another nation or people' (2000, 7).

In this part of the book, the theme of imperialism also considers ways in which

images derived from classical Rome were used to help inform British imperial policy during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Hingley describes how British hostility towards imperialism changed, becoming more popular after Queen Victoria was made Empress of India in 1876. In the 1880s, 'imperialist' came to refer to those who wished to tighten the bonds which united various parts of the Empire. It also became associated with the acquisition of colonies for economic or political gain, and with the assumed imperial 'mission' of spreading 'civilisation' to others. Thus, the term imperialism changed from having a negative to a positive image. As part of this, the image of the Roman Empire came to be used to help define British imperialism.

Many writers used the analogy of the collapse of the Roman Empire to warn British people, especially schoolboys, that they should work hard to keep up the British Empire unless the same fate should befall them as had befallen the Roman Empire, and that they might disgrace the memory of their forefathers who had worked and fought hard to win and make the Empire for them. The Roman Empire was seen to bear such an obvious resemblance to that of the British that it was used to provide moral guidance.

This part of the book also discusses how late Victorian and Edwardian archaeological excavation in Roman Britain, especially on Hadrian's Wall, helped to build frontier policy in the contemporary British Empire. The military problems of late Roman Britain were projected into the context of the British Empire, particularly India; problems of imperial defence were informed and guided by Roman examples. Classically educated administrators of the Empire could apply knowledge derived from their classical education during their careers.

Late Victorians and Edwardians took an interest in how the Romans managed to 'incorporate' and 'assimilate' the various 'barbarians' into their empire, and in the lessons that they might have for the British Empire. The Roman Empire was seen to have a 'mission', similar to the mission of the British, to bring peace, stability and progress to the non-white population of their Empire.

Hingley stresses how a classical education created a close association in the minds of many Englishmen between themselves and the ancient Romans. Classical concepts also helped to compare the natives of the Empire to the barbarians of the classical sources, and such comparisons helped to define issues of frontier policy and assimilation in the British Empire. Ancient Rome was used to provide a warning to the British: a decline and fall of the Empire could occur unless they could find a way to

stop it.

Englishness

The second part of the book, 'Englishness', explores images of English national origin between 1880 and 1920. Initially, the popular image of Englishness combined a Teutonic (Anglo-Saxon) and Celtic (ancient Britons who escaped the Anglo-Saxon invasion) racial origin. The descendants of the Teutons were the English, whereas the Celts were the ancestors of the Welsh, Scottish and Irish. An equation was drawn between the native 'Celtic' Britons and the native population of British India. However, with time, people became uncomfortable with this image. In addition, people wanted to move away from ideas of a Germanic origin for the English due to the growing military threat of Germany towards the British. Instead, an image of the English as a fusion of a variety of 'races' through time became more popular; it was an origin which gave a greater sense of unity to the British people. One of these 'races' was, of course, the Romans, and another was represented by heroic native Britons, such as Boudica. The English could thus see themselves as the 'inheritors of the imperial torch of the Romans', both morally and racially (*ibid.*, 62).

Hingley discusses how the English managed to resolve the contradiction of being descendants of both the 'superior' Romans and the defeated native 'Celtic' Britons. He discusses how some late Victorian authors struggled with the idea of a native British defeat and were embarrassed by former foreign domination. National pride was salvaged, however, by exploring the active opposition of the ancient Britons to Rome. Various native heroes who fought the Romans such as Boudica, Caratacus and Calgacus were discussed, and other heroic figures were invented by Victorian authors. Boudica, whose name means 'Victoria' in Celtic, provided an analogy for Queen Victoria herself, and the victories of Boudica were likened to the victories of Victoria. However, her image was problematic in that she led a bloody battle against a 'civilised' occupying power which, as Hingley reminds us, was a difficult image to apply in the context of the British domination over India.

English descent from apparently uncivilised and defeated native Britons was made acceptable in the minds of the Victorians by Haverfield (1905), who established that the Britons actually *became* Roman (and therefore civilised) by a process of 'Romanisation', attaining a high degree of Roman learning through a process of classical education and exposure to a Roman way of life. The Victorian and Edwardian

ruling élite could thus claim a direct Roman origin mixed with the courage of the native Britons; the stigma of Roman conquest could thus be removed.

Romanisation

The final section of Hingley's book focuses on the development of the theory of Romanisation in Britain from 1905 until the 1990s, considering the fundamental contribution of Haverfield.

Hingley discusses the recent calls for the abandonment of the use of the term 'Romanisation' due to the intellectual baggage that accompanies it. He suggests that 'Romanisation' as a concept should have no place, except when being used to refer to approaches of past generations of archaeologists to interpret social change.

In the time of Haverfield, Romanisation was seen as a progressive, swift and uniform culture which spread out from Italy, substituting Roman culture in the place of native in all areas of life, including language, art, religion and architecture. There was a parallel between Romanisation and the concept of progress, where the inevitability of this 'progress' was emphasised. The 'higher' civilised culture of the Romans replaced the 'lower' uncivilised culture of the Britons. However, the important point being made was that, unlike the officials of the British Empire and the colonised people of India or Africa, the native Britons and the Roman officers shared a 'racial compatibility', meaning that they could accept Roman culture. With time, Haverfield realised or admitted that the result of Romanisation varied in different places in Roman Britain, and that Romanisation produced a mix of Roman and native, rather than the transformation of Roman Britain into a fully Roman society.

Haverfield's successor in Romano-British archaeology was Robin Collingwood, who was slightly more critical about the benefits of colonialism. He also argued that the process of Romanisation produced a Roman-native amalgam of Britons who became Roman but did not cease to be Britons. He even allowed the possibility of native resistance, manifested through the conservatism of rural native Britons, who had little aspiration to become Roman. Collingwood also acknowledged, contra Haverfield, that Roman objects could be adopted by native Britons without any intention on their part to become Roman or necessarily use Roman objects in a Roman way (Collingwood 1932).

The work of Rivet (1958) followed that of Collingwood, but built more upon the work of Haverfield in seeing Romanisation as progression, as did Frere (1967), who

wrote nearly a decade after Rivet. Frere, however, saw a wide variability within the Roman-native synthesis, ranging from the almost wholly Romanised at one end of the spectrum to a substantial survival of native characteristics at the other. There has been much continuity in the theory of Romanisation into the late twentieth century: the work of Millett (1990), who claimed to be writing for the 'post-imperial' generation, nevertheless still interpreted Romanisation as progress and focused on the role of the élite. Different ways of living from the supposedly Roman trajectory were not deemed worthy of study until later in the 1990s, and Roman identity was considered more important or valid than native identity. It was difficult for some to accept that all cultures were equally valid.

In conclusion, Hingley's book brings to our attention how Victorian and Edwardian ideas of social evolution and progress continued, albeit in a modified form, into the late twentieth century. The significance of the work of scholars like Haverfield cannot be ignored, as their work has influenced studies of Roman Britain almost until the present day. Hingley calls for a critical re-evaluation of approaches inherited from our imperial past; the idea of 'progress', for example, has become increasingly criticised since the fall of the British Empire. The parallel once used by scholars between British India and Roman Britain also became less obvious once the Indian independence movement gathered force. However, other examples of colonialism are still used as analogies by scholars working in the field of Roman Britain to draw attention to examples of native resistance to colonisers and to the plight of native peoples, such as the Aborigines, Maoris, native Canadians and Americans and Zulu, whose cultures and lives have been adversely affected or destroyed by European, especially British, colonialism and imperialism. Colonialism was not, and is hardly ever, a good thing. As Hingley himself recently put it, 'the Roman conquest of Britain caused an immense disruption to the indigenous people. Large numbers of men, women and children were killed and maimed, crops and animals were destroyed and requisitioned, houses and settlements burned' (1997, 81). Although Hingley does not discuss this issue, which one might suggest would be the natural next step to take, in distancing ourselves from the imperialist accounts of those scholars who came before us, we should also all learn important moral lessons from the past and for the future, accepting a sense of sorrow and guilt for the actions of those who came before us.

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