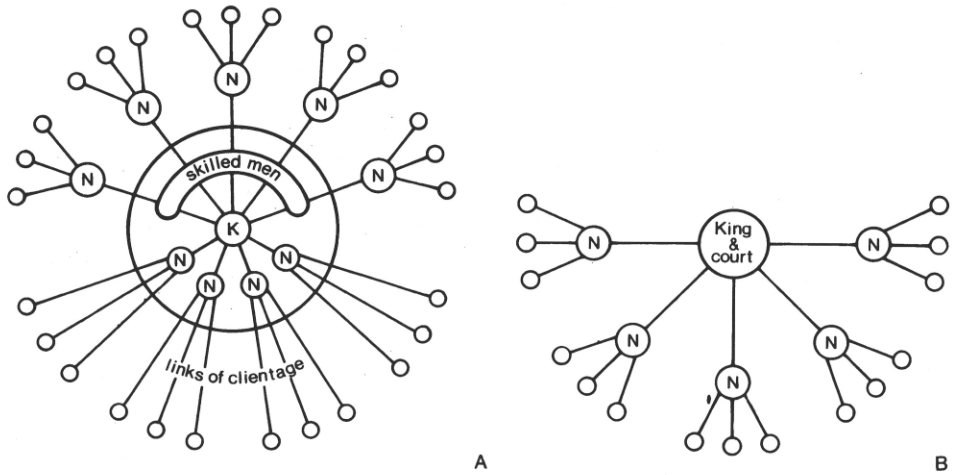
CHAPTER 2

Cultural Mysteries and Culture-Histories

In this chapter I critique conventional culture-history accounts of Iron Age societies and the Roman occupation of northern England. I then propose alternative approaches to understanding the communities of the region during the study period.

Models of Iron Age social structure

Conventional and populist views of later Iron Age communities imagine tribal 'kings' or chiefs at the head of warrior aristocracies, with craft specialists, 'druids' and 'bards' below this, and then peasant farmers and slaves owing fealty to the king and the tribal aristocracy (e.g. Airne 1950 (in Sørenson 2006); N. Chadwick 1971; Cunliffe 1984, 1991, 1995; Davies 2000; Dillon and Chadwick 2000). Cunliffe and James both illustrated their models of society, though in the latter case mostly men and only a few of the 'ordinary farming folk' were portrayed (Figs. 2.01-2.02).



108 *Diagram to give some tentative ideas of the kind of social structure which may have been in operation.* A *assumes the king, his followers and some nobles reside in the fort;* B *assumes that only the king and his followers are resident*

Figure 2.01. *Models of Iron Age society according to Barry Cunliffe, based on his excavations at Danebury hillfort in Hampshire. (Source: Cunliffe 2003: 167).*

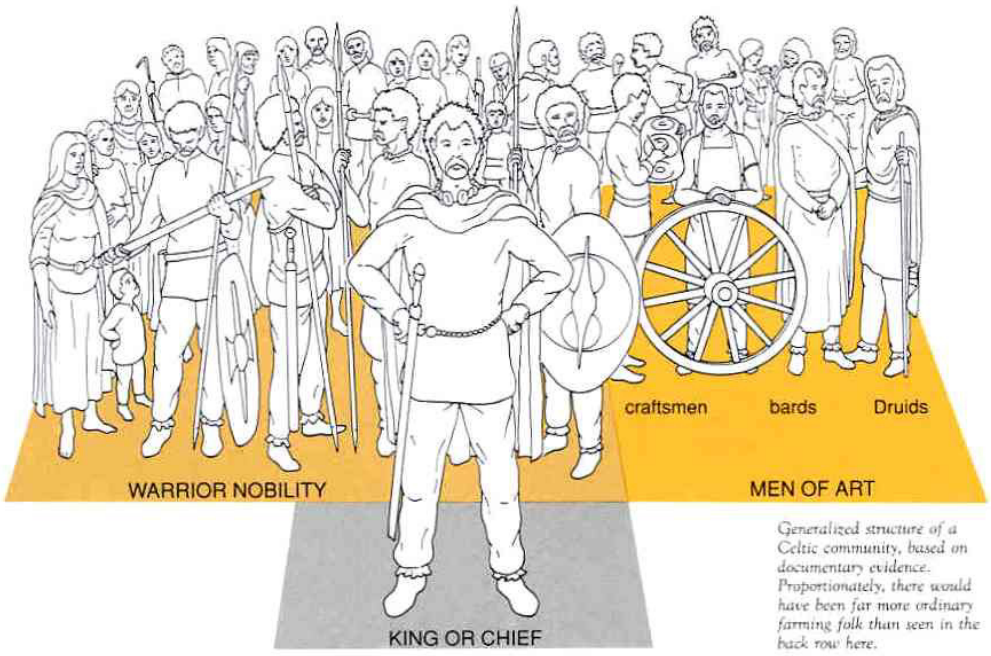


Figure 2.02. *Iron Age society according to Simon James. (Source: James 1993: 53).*

These ideas are derived partly from Classical authors such as Caesar, Livy and Dio, but also from early medieval Irish and Welsh sagas (e.g. Cunliffe 1984: 560-562). A rather ahistorical idea of 'Celtic' society is the result. Notions of heroic warriors, fighting and feasting are based on accounts from the seventh to eleventh centuries AD. Such approaches rely on biased or ill-informed Classical authors, and also on uncritical use of the early medieval sources, which themselves often reflected idealised views of society (Collis 1985, 1997; Dunham 1994; Haselgrove 1986; Hill 1989; Merriman 1987). Although some ethnohistorical accounts could be used in a very general way to inform discussions of the Iron Age and Romano-British period, it is quite another thing to transpose specific early medieval social structures directly back into the pre-Roman past, as Barry Cunliffe, John Davies and others have done. These ideas nevertheless remain popular and widespread, especially in modern Wales, Scotland and Ireland where many people hark back to idealised notions of pre-English identity (James 1999; S. Jones 1997; Morse 1996). These accounts also confuse the often contradictory evidence from Classical literary sources and linguistic studies with the *archaeological* evidence for Iron Age communities (Chapman 1992; Collis 1997, 2003; James 1997; Merriman 1987). Such 'Celtism' (Hill 1996: 96) also tends to downplay the many regional variations across Iron Age Britain and Ireland.

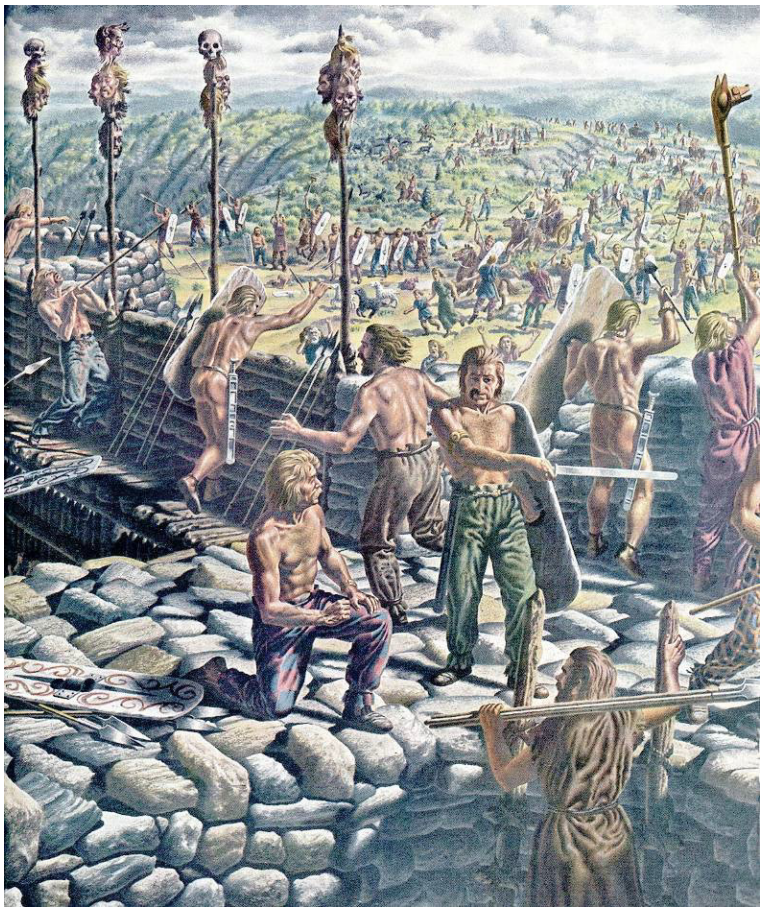


Figure 2.03. *'Celtic' kitsch: populist stereotypes are much in evidence in this overly dramatic recreation of Iron Age life. (Source: 1960s teaching pack, author unknown).*

J.D. Hill has criticised Cunliffe's model of an intensely stratified Iron Age society, with powerful chiefs or kings controlling centralised agricultural and artefact production and exchange (Hill 1995b: 68, 73, 1996: 102-105; 2005). Hill suggests that households were the main basis of Wessex Iron Age communities, and it was they who owned land and controlled the means of production. Different households may have been linked by kinship and ties of obligation into larger social groups, but it is doubtful whether these were 'tribes' as such. Hill also disagrees with the idea that kinship was the fundamental means of ordering Iron Age society, and along with others (e.g. Gosden 1989; Sharples 1991b) has proposed that class, age, gender and skill may have been the basis for competitive, unstable social relationships. There were no permanent elites of warriors, chiefs or kings, but rank and leadership were more loosely defined, and subject to contest and rivalry. *If* this was the case for Iron Age Wessex, where there were 'centralised' sites such as hillforts and evidence for high status metalwork, then what of my study region, where there are far fewer

material indications of *apparent* social stratification than in south-central England? Only the development of *oppida* in the very late Iron Age in south-east England (and perhaps at Stanwick in North Yorkshire) might indicate the emergence of powerful chiefdoms with their own coinage and growing sense of 'tribal' identities and authority, and even with these it has been argued that *oppida* might not have been central places specific to particularly chiefly lineages (Haselgrove and Millett 1997).

In a cogent critique, Inés Sastre argued that in addition to the uncritical use of Classical sources and stereotypical tropes of 'Celtic' warrior societies, many European Iron Age archaeologists have been unduly influenced by very simplistic evolutionary ideas of pre-capitalist societies (Sastre 2002: 225-228), with chiefdoms are seen as another socio-economic stage between gatherer-hunter bands and early states (e.g. Fried 1967; Friedman and Rowlands 1977; Service 1962, 1975). Using concepts of peer polity interaction, prestige goods exchange and world systems theory, such processual models were used explicitly and sometimes rather uncritically to explain the emergence of inequalities and social elites in later prehistory across Europe (e.g. Brun 1995; Champion and Champion 1986; Kristiansen 1982, 1991; Parker Pearson 1984; Sherratt 1994). Sastre suggests that in Iberia at least there was a segmented society, that although not subject to pronounced class-based divisions was nevertheless characterised by social inequalities based on control of communal production (Sastre 2002: 233).

I have problems with aspects of these critiques, particularly Hill's assertions (1996: 106-107) that kinship would not have been an important aspect of later Iron Age societies, and Sastre's insistence that farming necessarily involves an ever-increasing intensification of production coupled with conflict-ridden social inequalities (Sastre 2002: 229-230). Nevertheless, they provide useful starting points with which to assess the archaeological evidence for social structure in the study region.

Firstly, few hillforts were constructed and inhabited during the early or middle Iron Age. Thus, even if hillforts were built primarily for defence (and see Chapter 9 for a critique of such ideas), or if they were projections of power and status, there was not

the same need to build them as in other regions. Sites such as Sutton Common could perhaps be seen as defended refuges and centralised storage areas, but it is not clear if this was organised by a social elite or by a relatively undifferentiated community. At Sutton Common, the lack of contemporary settlement and arable production in its immediate vicinity might suggest that it was not a 'marsh fort', but rather a communal focus and even a ritual centre for more dispersed communities (see Chapter 9). The late Bronze Age or early Iron Age palisaded enclosures at South Elmsall and Swillington Common South were not 'domestic' settlements (Howell 1998, 2001), but these were hardly chiefly strongholds either.

Secondly, in the region there is relatively little evidence for swords, daggers and other weaponry, in contrast to East Yorkshire where during the Iron Age there seems to have been an emphasis on the deposition of martial artefacts in the burial record, perhaps part of discourses constituting personal and gender identity (Giles 2000: 168). But these discourses seem to have been missing from the study region, and need not represent actual warfare in any case. Thirdly, although there have been a few finds of items of metalwork such as torcs and swords (see Chapters 10 and 11) that may have represented the high-status of their owners, the study region was not marked by the production, exchange and deposition of large quantities of prestige metalwork and decorated and/or wheel-thrown pottery. Coins were minted at more distant centres such as Old Sleaford (Elsdon 1997), but few seem to have circulated in northern Nottinghamshire, and fewer still north-west of the River Don (see below).

Figure 2.04. *Corieltauvian coin found near Brough-on-Noe, Nottinghamshire. (Source: World Wide Web http://web.arch.ox.ac.uk/coins).*

Fig. 2.05. (left). *A gold Corieltauvian coin found near Doncaster, an extremely rare find in South Yorkshire. (Source: ©AS WYAS, courtesy of Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery).*

This again suggests a less hierarchical society, certainly one with less archaeologically visible status differences. In other regions of Britain, the production and exchange of material culture may have been part of how wider social identities and networks were created and maintained (Gosden 1989; Moore 2007). Without such an emphasis on material culture, power might have been played out in other more intangible ways. The development of agglomerated settlements at sites such as Micklefield, Castle Hills, Wattle Syke, Dalton Parlours, Moor Pool Close, Rampton and Cromwell suggests that by the late Iron Age some communities had access to greater resources and imported goods than others and accrued some economic, social and political power, but the majority of settlements were dispersed, small-scale farmsteads that would have probably been occupied by one or two extended families. The household was probably the principal organisational level of society.

> All are recognised, for there are not too many…envisage the singer, the hunter, the fighter, the runner, the grower, the cook, the mother, the herder, the elder, the gatherer, the daughter, the father, the healer, the trader and the ironworker. There are 15, there are no others. They are all related, and tied by kinship…In the end, no matter how small, no matter how short-lived *there is nothing else but family* (Zubrow 2006: 313, original emphasis).

In the ethnographic and ethnohistorical record there are many possible analogies for late prehistoric social structures. In parts of West and Southern Africa for example, paramount chiefs control the distribution of surplus agricultural production through

taxes, and may accrue large retinues and considerable personal wealth and prestige (e.g. Gibbs 1965). These elites were often co-opted into colonial administrations. In the pre-colonial Hawaiian Islands chiefs controlled production through land grants to lower ranks, and they received the resulting rents in return. They maintained their positions through wars of succession and conquest, and elaborate ritual practices mediated and controlled by religious elites (Earle 1977, 1987). The minor chiefs who were their vassals controlled the allocation of land in extensive systems of fields. These societies are all characterised by very large populations with sizeable administrative, political and/or religious centres, however, and the production and exchange of artefacts with high-status characteristics. Such 'complex chiefdoms' (Earle 1991) do not fit with the evidence for the Iron Age of the study region.

Other work within anthropology and ethnography has taken a more critical approach to chiefdoms and chiefly power. For example, the notion that hereditary stratification is a consequence of economic complexity and increased production has been undermined (Rousseau 2001). In some societies where the household is the primary 'economic unit', there is often a tendency to produce only an acceptable minimum and no more, where social reproduction is more important than economic intensification (Sahlins 1972: 86). A small agricultural surplus may be produced as a safeguard against future famine or disease, but there may be no social pressure to exploit land holdings intensively. Agricultural production creates the *potential* for agricultural surpluses, storage and private property (Netting 1990: 46-47), but many so-called 'peasant' societies are characterised by relatively minor differences of wealth and/or status (Dobrowolski 1971; Saul and Woods 1971) – the difference between owning five milk cows as opposed to two milk cows for example.

There can be forms of unequal social relations that need not be explained by ideas of hierarchy, control and exploitation (e.g. McIntosh 1999; Saitta 1994; Stein 1998), as in segmentary societies or those with 'heterarchies' of inequality (e.g. Brumfiel 1995; Crumley 1995; Hill 2005; Johnson 1989; Sahlins 1961; Upham 1990). These studies do not deny that social inequalities exist, but power and status are seen as much more informal, local and historically contingent. Authority often has to be earned, and may not correlate to material expressions of wealth at all, as with the 'big men' of some

New Guinea communities (Feil 1987; Godelier 1986a; Pospisil 1963; Strathern 1971), for whom negotiation, oratory and persuasion are far more important than coercion. Big men may be ridiculed or even ostracised, a form of social levelling. Power is a relational and a performed attribute, subject to criticism and sanction by others who are active social agents in their own right (Clay 1992: 723-725). Authority is a two-way interaction, and leaders may be seen as serving a group of people, rather than people being in service to them. Even in hierarchical societies such as the Bedouin there are many social checks and balances to ensure the respect and compliance of others (Abu-Lughod 1986: 99-103). Leadership and seniority may have continually been assessed, and criticised where it was found wanting. Power could be contested and challenged. Other forms of authority may be derived from spiritual sources, in a manner that negates simple Western notions of secular versus sacred power.

There can be competitive clans, lineages or families, and although some may become dominant for short periods, this is rarely stable, and others may supersede them after a few years or generations. These ideas may be much more appropriate to many Iron Age societies than complex chiefdoms (Collis 1994: 32; Sastre 2002: 233). In these communities, perhaps only those who had proven themselves during fighting or as negotiators and brokers might have been allowed to lead. Others who may have achieved higher status might have included craft specialists such as metalworkers and potters. Success in one realm of practice may be taken as evidence of prowess in others (Herbert 1993: 2-3). And in any 'culture' there may actually be many different interdigitating or inconsistent interpretations and practices existing through each other to greater or lesser degrees (q.v. Archer 1988: 8-10; Hill 2005).

Though many small-scale societies have unequal distributions of resources amongst age and gender groups, with women and the elderly often receiving less food than men for example (Godelier 1986a: 15-16; Rappaport 1984: 74-76), there is also a danger of focusing on androcentric notions of power. The complex chiefdoms of the Nigerian Igbo had separate political and legal institutions for women, and senior women serving in these had considerable power and prestige (Okonjo 1976; Van Allen 1977: 169)[2]. In Native American groups with matrilineal descent such as the Iroquois and Hopi, women were mediators and had great social authority (Schlegel

1977: 254). With the Yakö of Nigeria, the matrilineal line was considered more important in matters of religion and livestock than the patrilineal line (Forde 1968: 180-189). Even in overly patriarchal societies, 'unofficial' means such as collective discussion and shaming may allow women to maintain some independence and influence men's decisions and behaviour (Moore 1986: 175-196; Wolf 1972: 37-41).

Following Classical sources and 'Celtism', Iron Age societies are often portrayed as exotic, romanticised and orientalised 'Others' (q.v. Fabian 1983; Said 1978), with their purported predilection for warfare and religious rites. Yet at the same time, many aspects of their societies such as agriculture and settlement are seen as familiar and knowable. However, these people *were* different from us (q.v. M. Knight 2002), and these differences were likely to have been manifested in aspects of everyday life that archaeologists have long considered unproblematic (Hill 1992: 60; Rowlands 1986: 746). There is much that archaeologists do not understand about Iron Age social structure – if these communities were based on matrilineal or patrilineal descent groups, if households and/or families were conjugal or cosanguinal, polygamous or polyandrous, and matrilocal or patrilocal in terms of where they resided. These factors would have great bearing on the makeup of households, and the apparent patterns that we observe in archaeological remains. As I outline in Chapter 7, it is not known how land allotment, land tenure and land inheritance were constituted.

There were undoubtedly social changes as a consequence of the Roman invasion of AD 43 and occupation of the midlands, and following the conquest of the north in AD 70-71. Any existing inequalities may have become further emphasised, especially if some households and clans were able to gain social, political and/or economic advantages through contacts with the Roman administration. New elites were established as 'Roman' settlers moved into the region, and new forms of material culture might have allowed identities to be expressed in novel ways. Yet for most rural people, there may have been relatively few changes following the occupation of the north, at least for the first few generations of Roman rule. The household and kinship ties probably continued to define social identity for people in these small-scale rural communities (McCarthy 1996).

A brief conventional culture-history of the region

The main 'tribes' thought to inhabit the region during the Iron Age were the Brigantes, the Coritani (now usually termed the Corieltauvi) and the Parisi. In traditional culture-history accounts, the Corieltauvi were thought to hold sway over most of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire (Breeze 2002; May 1994; Todd 1973; Whitwell 1982), with centres at Leicester and Ancaster, Dragonby and Old Sleaford (e.g. Elsdon 1997; May 1996). The western and northern boundaries of the Corieltauvi may have been formed by the Rivers Trent, Don and Humber. North of the Humber in eastern Yorkshire were the Parisi, with their putative boundaries possibly formed by the North Yorkshire Moors and the River Ouse (Ramm 1978; Stead 1965, 1979). The area of central northern England northwards from the River Don was supposedly the realm of the Brigantes, thought to comprise a looser tribal 'federation' (Branigan 1984; Hartley 1980; Hartley and Fitts 1988).

Figure 2.05. *Putative 'tribal' groupings of Britain. (Source: James 1999: 101).*

These dispositions are based on the writings of Tacitus and Seneca, Ptolemy's Geography and the Antonine Itinerary of the third century AD, but we *cannot* assume that these groupings reflected peoples' contemporary understandings of their own affiliations and identities (James 1999; Jones 1997). As in many colonial contexts, this was likely to have been a simplification of much more complex situations by Roman administrators, and it is uncertain or even unlikely that many people within these areas would have thought of themselves as Corieltauvi and Brigantes. Many societies do not draw clear-cut ethnic distinctions, or only do so in times of social stress when they perceive that they are being threatened (e.g. James 1999: 73-74). Ironically perhaps, the very presence of the Romans following their first incursions in 54 and 52 BC and prior to the invasion of Britain in AD 43 may have had a galvanising effect on many previously loosely connected communities, causing them to assert or invent a common identity, both as allies of the Romans (q.v. Creighton 2006), or as opponents of them. If linear earthworks such as the Aberford Dikes and the Roman Rig were of later Iron Age date, they could have been a reaction to a perceived threat from further south (see Chapter 7).

Following the invasion of AD 43, Roman forces moved north establishing forts at Chesterfield and Lincoln, the latter probably dating to around AD 55 (Jones 2002; Jones et al. 1980: 48). Some researchers suggest the Roman fort at Chesterfield was built between AD 55-65, possibly on the site of an Iron Age farmstead or small hillfort, but then abandoned by AD 90-100 (Lane 1985). Others propose two phases of fort building in AD 55-60 and AD 80-85 (Woodall 1979), or a fort with an annex built between AD 65-80, but with a civilian *vicus* not established until the early second century AD (Ellis 1989). A more recent consideration of the evidence proposes a Roman fort and *vicus* established at Chesterfield in the early Flavian period or late first century AD, perhaps following earlier but unknown Roman occupation (Connelly and Walker 2001: 44). This fort may then have been abandoned around the mid-second century AD and the vicus may have contracted. The nature and extent of the occupation at Chesterfield between the later second and fourth centuries is relatively unknown, though some features and artefacts of this period have been excavated (Cumberpatch and Thorpe 2002; Taylor 2001a).

The early phase of the fort at Templeborough and the vexillation fortresses at Broxtowe, Rossington Bridge, Osmanthorpe and Newton-on-Trent may also have been established in the mid-first century (Bishop 1999: 307; Bishop and Freeman 1993; Buckland 1986; Hanson and Campbell 1986: 81-82; May 1922: 5-6; St. Joseph 1969; Webster 1981: 307), that at Rossington probably supporting up to 2500 legionaries. There is debate over whether they were winter camps (*hiberna*) or summer campaign bases (*aestiva*) (Bishop and Freeman 1993: 173), but this distinction may not have been rigidly followed by the Roman military in any case. They provided a flexible line of defence, allowing Roman units to campaign north of them if required.

This frontier may thus have existed along a roughly south-west to north-east line formed by the line of the Rivers Severn, Trent, Humber and Don. To the north of this line, the client state of the Brigantes ruled by queen Cartimandua was traditionally thought to have protected this early frontier (Buckland 1986; Hanson and Campbell 1986; Hartley 1980). Cartimandua may have been part of a dynastic union with her husband Venutius, uniting previously disparate groups. Troops may have suppressed unrest there in AD 48 (Creighton 2006: 34; cf. Tacitus *Annals* 12: 31), and may have been sent to support Cartimandua around AD 57 when she separated from her husband Venutius and some form of civil conflict ensued. Roman troops may have intervened again on a later occasion in AD 68-69 after Venutius led an uprising against her rule, although Tacitus may have been conflating two separate incidents (Braund 1984; Hanson and Campbell 1986: 78). Cartimandua herself was supposedly rescued in this putative mission, but her subsequent fate is unknown.

Few small towns and villas were ultimately established to the north and west of the Trent and Don, and the settlements that were founded were more often initially linked to military establishments, as at Brough-on-Noe, Castleford, York and Doncaster. This sense of a persistent cultural boundary is supported by first century AD ceramic distributions too (Knight, Howard and Leary 2004: 145-146). Although in the later Romano-British period these distributions become more complex, they may nevertheless still reflect some underlying pre-Roman social structures.

Towards new post-colonial histories

The presence of Roman forces on the frontier for around twenty years before the invasion of the north would have had profound effects on native societies with complex two-way social relationships as a result, some perhaps broadly analogous to those on the seventeenth and eighteenth century colonial frontiers in North America and Siberia (e.g. Rubertone 1989; Russell 2001). There may have been Roman demands for tribute from client leaders, which might have caused social frictions within native communities. Younger people may have seen co-operation with Romans as offering possibilities for advancement outside the traditional status of elders, or alternatively might have called for war when elders counselled caution. Roman patrols or raids across the frontier would have stoked tensions and insecurities, and occasional retaliation. In addition, there would have been Roman expeditions to spy and make maps, as well as diplomatic missions to particular areas or individuals identified as 'leaders', to curry favour or set faction against faction. At the same time, native groups would have been endeavouring to manipulate Roman understandings of their communities in order to further their own interests.

There may have been official gifts and trade in both directions, and some 'Roman' traders may have ventured northwards along rivers and valleys. In all these cases, there would have been indigenous guides and scouts working for the Romans. There would also have been sexual relationships between Roman troops and locals, both officially tolerated as with 'camp followers'; and illicit, where serving men married local women. In colonial encounters, women of indigenous societies often became the object of sexualised male fantasies (q.v. Young 1995), and there were probably many incidences of rape and abuse. There might have been some long-lived and loving relationships as well, however. Some Romans may have adopted local dress, conventions and gods over time, as with some British and French in India and Indochina during the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries (Dalrymple 2002). Many 'Romans', especially auxiliaries, would have been from Gaul, Germany and southern Britain, and they would therefore have been engaged in complex cultural dialectics with their own Roman commanders, and with local people.

Internal disagreements between different pro and anti-Roman factions may have been exacerbated by the purported incident whereby Cartimandua took the anti-Roman rebel Caratacus prisoner and handed him over to the Romans (Hanson and Campbell 1986: 73; Hartley and Fitts 1988: 15). From around AD 54, disaffected elements within the Brigantian tribal federation allegedly clashed with Rome, and this may correlate with the establishment of the fortresses at Templeborough and Rossington around this time (Birley 1973; Buckland 1986; May 1922). A supposed Brigantian leadership dispute between Venutius and Cartimandua from AD 69 may have prompted the final Roman invasion of the north in AD 71, although as in many colonial situations it is possible that a relatively minor incident was used as a convenient excuse for what was already a planned long-term strategy.

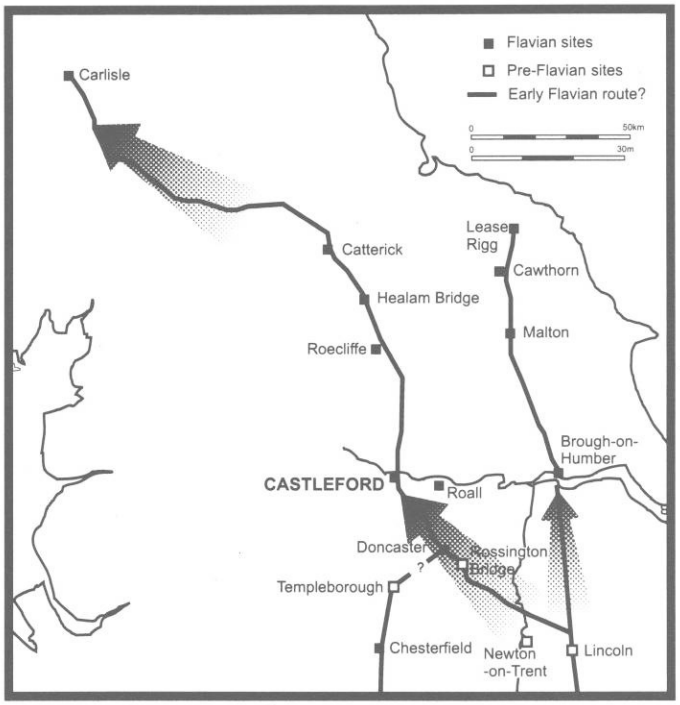


Figure 2.06. (left). *The possible route(s) of the Roman advance into the north of England, AD 71. (Source: Bishop 1999: 308-309, fig. 136).*

According to the *Histories* of Tacitus, the key instigator of the invasion was Quintus Petulius Cerialis, once commander of the Legion IX *Hispana* in the Boudiccan revolt of AD 60-61, who returned to Britain as governor with the new Legion II *Adiutrix* (Birley 1973, 1981: 66-69; Bishop 1999: 307). During the initial military campaign, Roman forces probably advanced along one or both of the lines of the later Roman roads from Lincoln to Brough-on-Humber (Ermine Street), and northwards to Malton and Newton Kyme; and/or between Rossington Bridge to Castleford and Roecliffe

(Fig. 2.06). The winter of AD 71-72 may have seen the consolidation of river crossings, with forts built at Brough-on-Noe, Burghwallis, Doncaster, York, Adel, Slack, Elslack, Tadcaster and Ilkley (Buckland 1986: 18; Dearne 1993; Faull 1981: 150), many of these small stations to safeguard roads (see below). The first phase fort at Castleford was also probably established between AD 71-73/4 (Cool and Philo 1998: 3), perhaps with a *vicus* founded shortly afterwards. This fort may have been abandoned, but a second one established in the late 80s, although this too was disused by around AD 95. The *vicus* continued in use, albeit with a likely major phase of rebuilding in stone around AD 140-180.

Figure 2.07. *Remains of the early phase turf rampart of the fort at Castleford, West Yorkshire. (Source: © AS WYAS).*

In subsequent campaigning, a fort was established in Carlisle in AD 72 (Daniels 1989: 25); and at Aldborough by the mid-80s (Bishop 1999: 308), the latter a replacement for Roecliffe. There may have been a small military station established at Kiveton Park around AD 80 (Radley and Plant 1969a). Cerialis was succeeded by Julius Frontinus, who concentrated more on subduing Wales, but he was in turn succeeded by Julius Agricola in AD 78, who took the army north into Scotland until *c*. AD 84-86. During this time, Castleford, Doncaster, Brough-on-Humber, York and smaller forts acted as supply bases and as centres for the acquisition of crops and livestock.

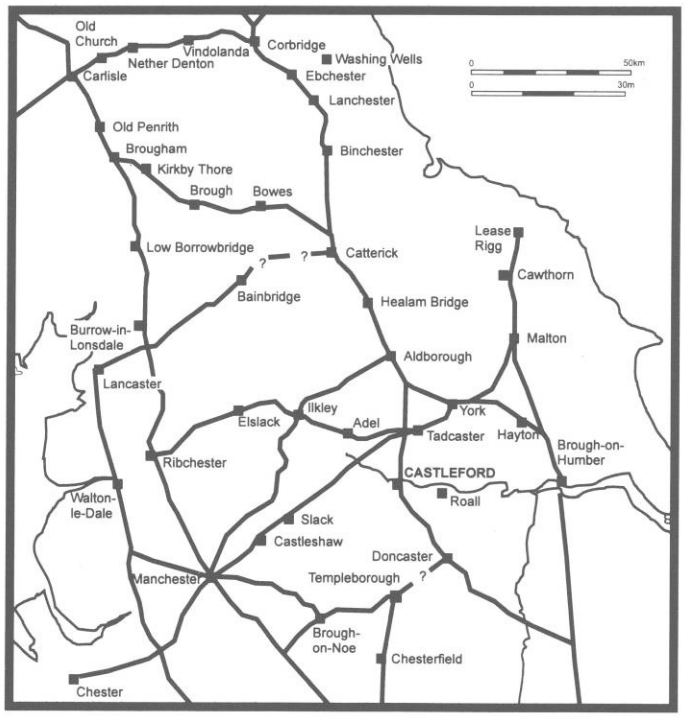


Fig. 2.08. (right). *Military sites and roads of Flavian date. (Source: Bishop 1999: 308-309, fig. 137).*

Once again, many of these troops were drawn from further-flung regions of the Roman Empire such as North Africa and Croatia. Memorial stones from Templeborough record the Fourth Cohort of Gauls (May 1922: 127), whilst roof tiles found at Slack were marked with the stamp of the Fourth Cohort Breucorum (Dodd and Woodward 1920: 86); the Breuci a tribe recorded as living in what is now modern Croatia. These non-Italian men would have had their own dynamics with their commanders, other military units, and with local people. It is also likely that some Roman soldiers, particularly those of more senior rank, might have brought their own families, servants and slaves to live with them, as happened elsewhere in the Empire (Hoffmann 1995: 110; James 2002: 42-43; Van Driel-Murray 1995: 9-10).

The impact of these northern campaigns on indigenous peoples was barely recorded by writers such as Tacitus, nor has it been much discussed by Roman military historians, but it is worth exploring these 'subaltern discourses' (q.v. Spivak 1988). Even for people with first or second-hand knowledge of the Roman army, the march of legions through their land may have had profoundly traumatic social and psychological impacts. Armed resistance would have been crushed, but even where this did not occur it is likely that livestock would have been confiscated and stored or

standing crops stolen. To date, however, there is no archaeological evidence for the wholesale destruction of settlements and houses. Turf would have been stripped from pastures to help build ramparts. Many woods and copses would have been cut down to provide the prodigious quantities of timber required for fuel and to construct forts and bridges (Hanson 1978; Reece 1997: 18-19), violating local rights of tenure and depriving local communities of such resources for many years.

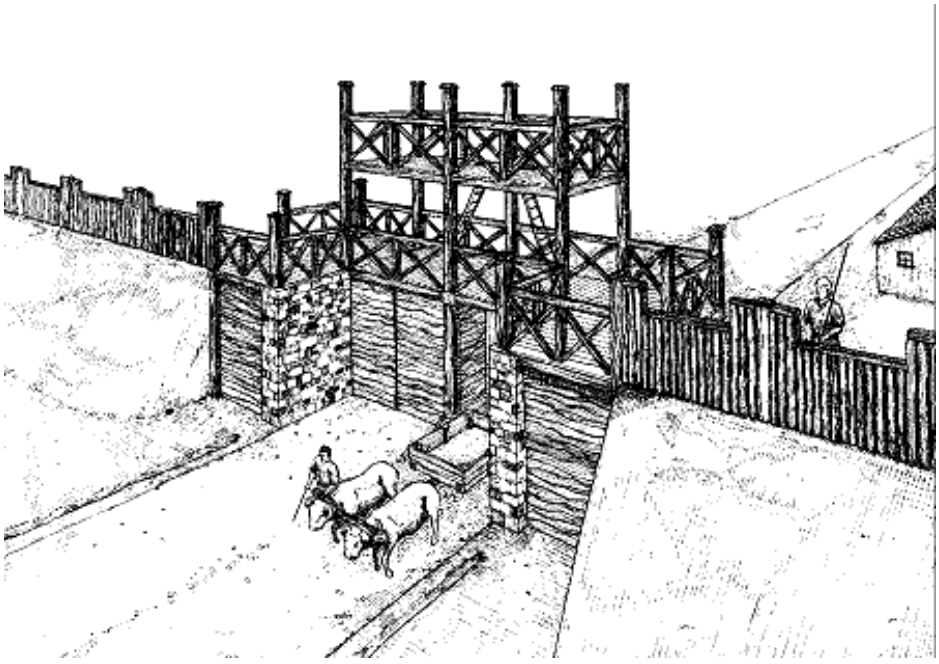


Figure 2.09. *Reconstruction of Castleford's early timber fort gate. (Source: © WYAAS).*

Confusion, rejection and fear might have characterised many initial native responses to the Roman invasion of the north (q.v. González-Ruibal 2003: 30), but the occupation would have also brought the potential to construct or renegotiate new identities. These would have been far more complex than the generic entities such as 'villa owners' and 'farmers' that normally feature in discussions of Romano-British people (McCarthy 2006: 202-203). Although for some people large extended families and kinship may have remained essential organisational frameworks of these communities, many stresses may have been created by the Roman occupation that cross-cut existing kinship ties and social obligations. For some people, smaller social networks centred on individual households might have become more important over time. For others, traditional kinship links and allegiances remained.

Infrastructure, road schemes and road protestors?

Settlements or *vici* grew up around many forts or astride roads. Doncaster was a substantial town by the second century AD (Buckland and Magilton 1986), and Aldborough became a *civitas capital*. Smaller settlements grew at Tadcaster, Wetherby, Leeds and Adel (Faull 1981: 143-146; Jefferson and Roberts 2006). Nevertheless, compared to south-central England there was remarkably little urbanisation. Possible fortlets were established at Scaftworth near Bawtry and at Sandtoft (Bartlett and Riley 1958; Dearne 1997; Samuels and Buckland 1978: 65), to guard river crossings. Scaftworth has been considered ambiguous as a military site (Van de Noort et al. 1997: 427), but another possible fort has been recently identified there, and at Kirk Sandall beside the River Don and by the River Went at Thorpe Audlin (Deegan 2007). Another possible fortlet may have been at Roall 10km east of Castleford (Fig. 2.08) (Bewley and MacLeod 1993). Many forts were bases for the internal policing of imperial interests, which some scholars now regard as one of the fundamental purposes of the Roman military (e.g. James 2002: 37-38).

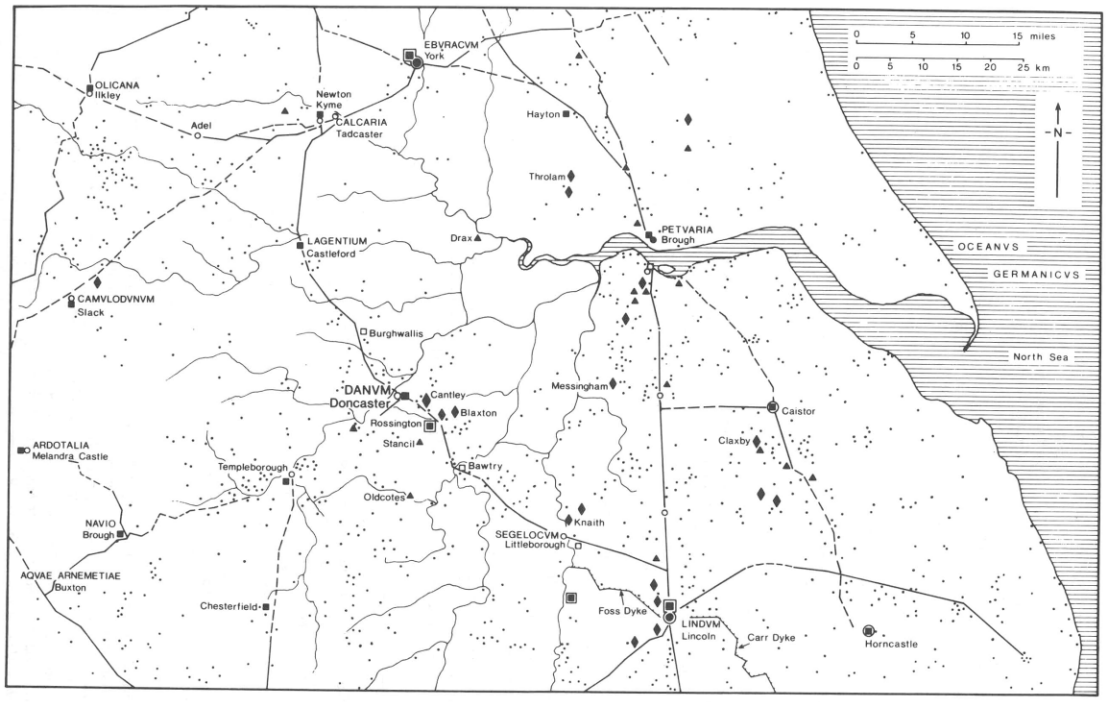


Figure 2.10. *Major Romano-British sites and roads within the study region, showing forts, towns, villas, potteries and major roads. Minor routes not shown – compare with Fig. 2.06. (Source: Buckland 1986: 7, fig. 5).*

The four main roads that the Romans established in the region were Ermine Street, the Fosse Way, the Great North Road and Ryknield Street. The Great North Road was one of two major routes north from Lincoln (Margary 1973; Ordnance Survey 1994), and *Segelocum* or Littleborough-on-Trent was established where it crossed the River Trent (Riley, Buckland and Wade 1995). It entered modern South Yorkshire near Bawtry after crossing the marshy River Idle floodplain in the form of a timber and turf 'corduroy' raft (Dearne 1997; Kennedy 1984; Van de Noort et al. 1997), and ran north-west past the fortress at Rossington Bridge to Doncaster (Buckland and Magilton 1986). It then headed north past Adwick-le-Street where part of this road was recently investigated at Redhouse Farm (Meadows and Chapman 2004; Upson-Smith 2002); and passed the forts at Burghwallis. The earliest of these forts probably pre-dated the road (if only by a few months), as here the road kinked slightly to respect it, before it then ran north-west to Castleford, Tadcaster and York (Abramson, Berg and Fossick 1999; Margary 1973, road 28a). Now the A656, this Roman road was investigated during the M1-A1 project (O'Neill 2001a: 114), but also earlier during the 1960s (Thackray 1967). The Great North Road ran parallel to Ermine Street to the east (from Lincoln to Brough-on-Humber and Malton). Just before Tadcaster it forked, the one road leading to Tadcaster and York, the other (Rudgate) going past Newton Kyme (Monaghan 1991: 53) to Aldborough.

Another important route ran from Tadcaster across the Pennines to Manchester, protected by forts and fortlets at Adel, Slack and Castleshaw (Margary 1973, road 712). Interestingly, recent work west of the Roman fort at Adel has found that a section of the Ilkley-Tadcaster road was rafted on timbers with a ^{14}C date of 180 BC – AD 30 (Jefferson and Roberts 2006). This might suggest the re-use of timbers from a native structure, or perhaps even the utilisation of an earlier, pre-conquest trackway. The route over the Pennines across Saddleworth Moor has seen considerable investigation in the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth century, but also more recent effective fieldwork by a local archaeological society which has traced the line of the road between Slack and Castleshaw across rugged terrain (Booth 2001; Lunn, Crosland, Spence and Clay 2008).

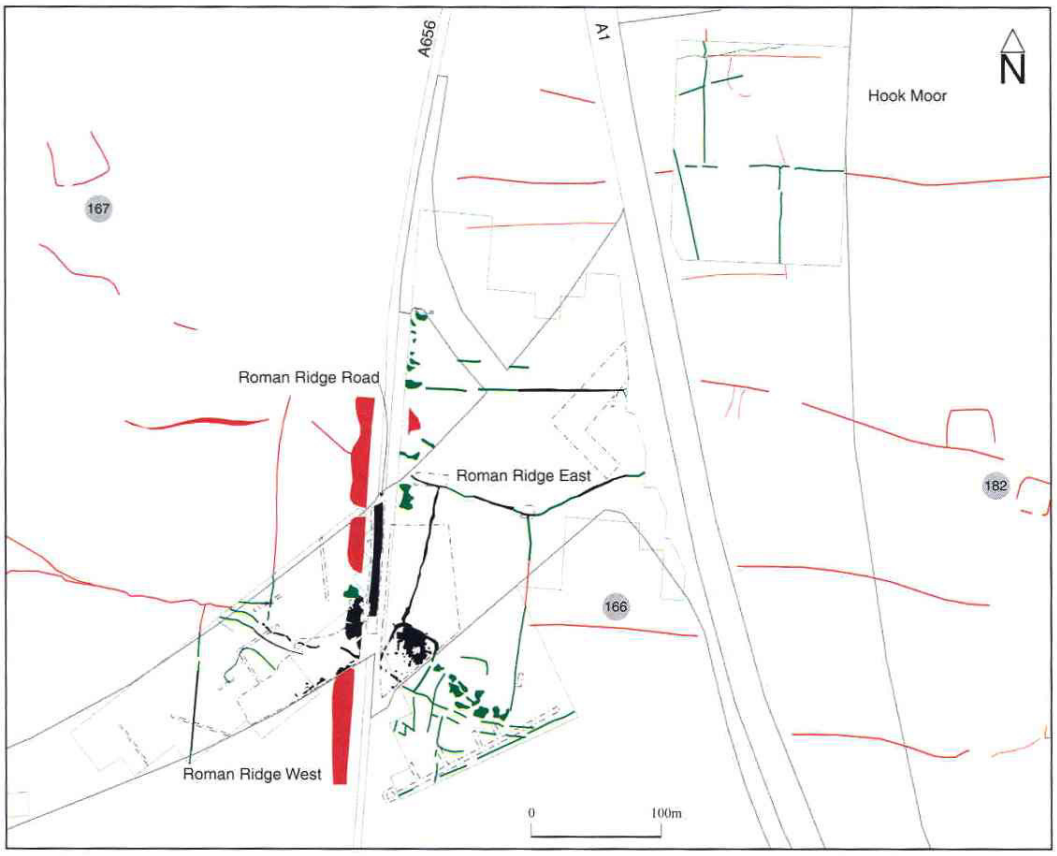


Figure 2.11. *Investigation of the Roman road at Roman Ridge, West Yorkshire, showing the road (now the north-south line of the A658) cutting across pre-existing boundaries and enclosures. Excavated features in black, geophysical survey results in green, and cropmarks in red. (Source: Deegan 2001b: 33, fig. 17).*

The Fosse Way linked Leicester to Lincoln, and it crossed the River Trent at *Ad Pontem*, near modern Thorpe (Wacher 1964). The small towns of *Crococolana* and *Margidunum* were both established astride it (Knight, Howard and Leary 2004; Todd 1969; Whimster 1989: 76, fig. 55), and a subsidiary route probably led from Thorpe to the fort at Osmanthorpe (Challis et al. 2002). The settlement at Redhill near Ratcliffe-on-Soar was established on or near the crossing point of the Rivers Soar and Trent by the road linking the fort and *vicus* at Little Chester, Derby with the fort at *Vernemetum* or Willoughby (Elsdon 1982: 14; Palfreyman and Ebbins 2003: 17-18). Ryknield Street ran north from Little Chester and Chesterfield to Templeborough (Ordnance Survey 1994), and probably entered South Yorkshire near Harthill, turning west after climbing the hill at Kiveton Park (Greene 1957a; Radley and Plant 1969a: 161). A linear cropmark visible at SK 455 880 near Aughton (SYAS SMR records) may reveal part of this road.

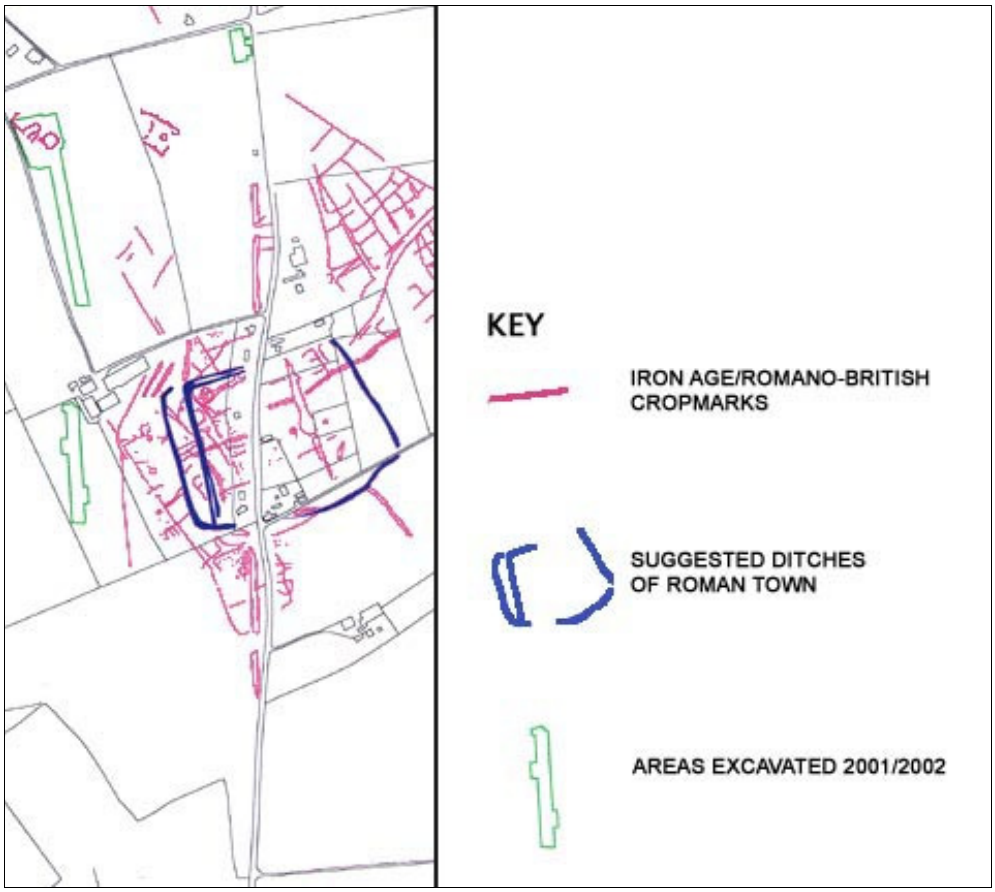


Figure 2.12. *The small town of Crococolana, Brough-on-Fosse, Notts.; showing the Roman town ditches superimposed across earlier Iron Age and Romano-British cropmarks, but also revealing later boundaries orientated to the town and to the north-south course of the Fosse Way itself. (Source: © Trent and Peak Archaeology).*

From Templeborough, a road ran westwards through Hallam Head and Lodge Moor in Sheffield to the fort at Brough-on-Noe in Derbyshire (Greene 1957b; Preston 1969). A cropmark at SE 468 031 near Barnburgh might have been part of a road connecting Templebrough to Doncaster, and there were undoubtedly many minor routes (Greene and Wakelin 1950; Margary 1973).

Roman roads and forts were powerful symbols of Roman imperialist intent (Wilcher 1997). These were 'technologies of power' (Forcey 1997). At Burghwallis and Rossington Bridge, the Roman forts and the road were superimposed across earlier field systems and enclosures (Buckland 1986: 8; Riley 1980: 94-95). At Roman Ridge, the road to Newton Kyme or Tadcaster also cut across fields and enclosures (O'Neill 2001b: 110-115, fig. 86, plate 14), and the road between Thorpe and Osmanthorpe truncated an earthwork enclosure at Camp Hill (Challis et al. 2002: 42-

43). This was a demonstration of imperial might, but also suggests that control over traditional patterns of movement was a concern of the occupiers. Familiar routines around fields and farmsteads for people and animals were disrupted, and trackways and paths blocked off, completely ignoring local tenure and tradition. This also imposed directly upon people's bodies. Although army units built some of the first roads, it is likely that forced labour was later used to construct and maintain them (Given 2004: 54; Mitchell 1993: 126-127). This would have been deeply resented, as it would not only have taken people away from their fields, but would also have quite literally severed existing social networks of tenure, obligation and debt.

For people unfortunate enough to live alongside roads, their oxen, horses and other livestock, wagons and food could all be requisitioned to Roman army units and provincial officials (Given 2004: 56-57). At regular intervals there were often small garrisons or *stationes*, but there is documentary evidence for corruption and abuses, with troops and rural gendarmes or *stationarii* extracting unofficial taxes and tolls from travellers (Lintott 1993: 125-126). In many parts of the Empire this evolved into a system of sanctioned military patronage by the later third and fourth centuries AD, where soldiers offered their protection to local inhabitants, but only at a price.

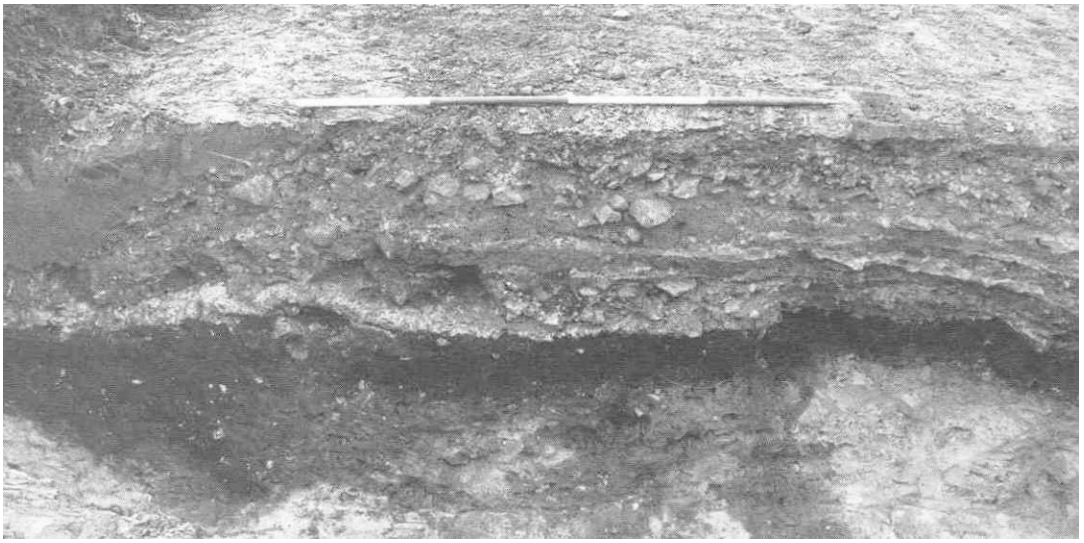


Figure 2.13. *Section through the agger of the Roman road excavated at Roman Ridge, also showing roadside sand deposits at the left of the photograph. The dark deposit was a buried soil. (Source: O'Neill 2001b: 113, plate 14).*

In the early decades following the invasion of the north, it might have been mainly military units, officials and traders using Roman roads (Petts 1998: 88). Michael Given notes how in many colonial situations, roads built by the occupiers have often been deliberately ignored by native peoples (Given 2004: 55). Many people in the study region probably continued to use existing trackways and paths wherever possible. Sometimes this avoidance was simply out of practicality – metalled roads would have been too hard for unshod cattle or horse hooves on longer journeys (see Appendix C). Many people leading pack animals or driving livestock would have travelled beside Roman roads rather than along them (Mitchell 1993: 134). A rural Roman road excavated near Paris had sandy tracks on each side of the metalled surface that seem to have been deliberately created for this purpose (Chevalier 1976: 93). The road section excavated at Roman Ridge had what were interpreted as wind-blown sand deposits on either side of the *agger* (O'Neill 2001a: 115, see Fig. 2.13), and similar layers interpreted as post-abandonment deposits were also noted at Redhouse Farm (Meadows and Chapman 2004: 13-14). It is possible that in both cases these were deliberate dumps, however. Even if they were natural and aeolian in origin, they might have been tolerated and not removed because they facilitated the movements of unshod traffic.

It is also likely though that over time, many people would have taken advantage of the presence of Roman roads to expand their contacts and trade. South Yorkshire potters such as Sarrius were able to send their pottery up to the frontier because of their close proximity to these routes (see Chapter 10); whilst some local livestock breeders might have been transformed into cattle or sheep barons precisely because they were able to find new markets for increased numbers of animals. Some traditional paths and tracks may thus have gradually fallen out of use, and people would have been renegotiating their relationship to the landscape during the occupation. Unlike the clear palimpsest at Rossington and Burghwallis, at Spittalmoor Forest Farm the relationship between the Roman road and 'brickwork' field boundaries is more ambiguous, and at this locale many boundaries were orientated *to* the road (Deegan 1998b; Riley 1980: 94-95). Here, the Roman road superseded native routes.

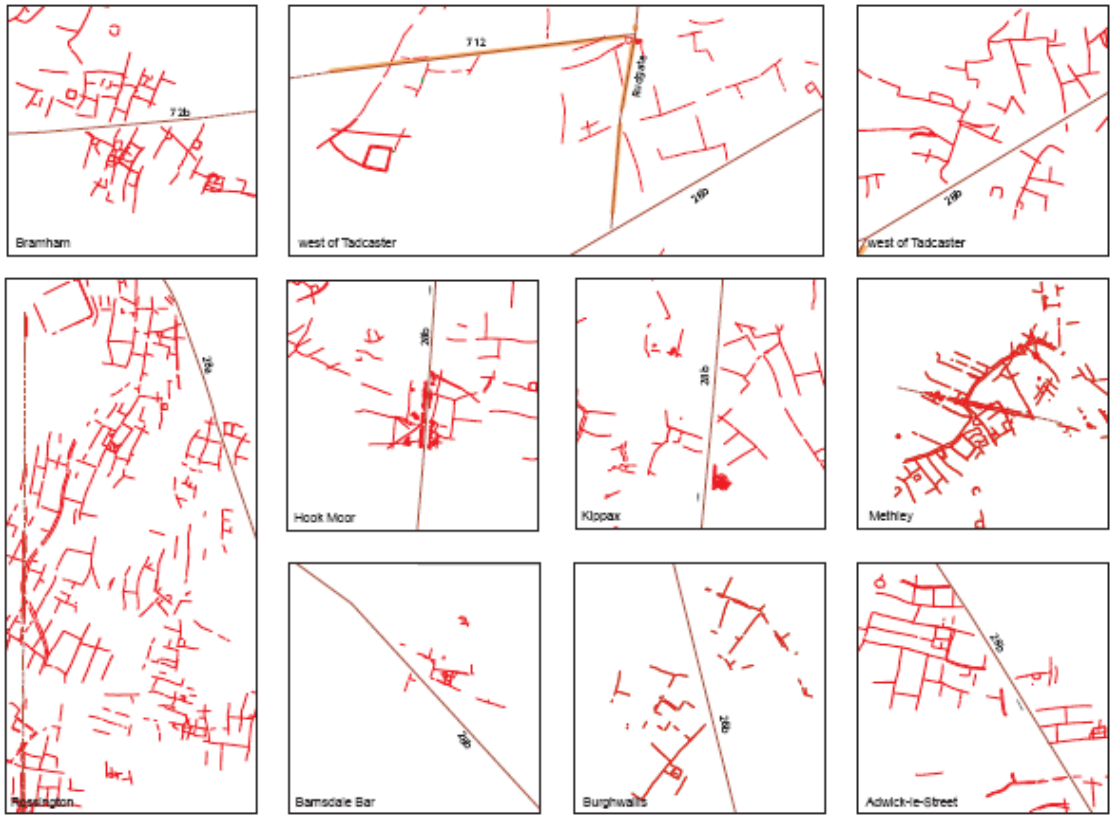


Figure 2.14. *Some of the relationships between Roman roads and field systems in the study region, with their Margary (1973) numbers added. At Bramham, Tadcaster, Hook Moor (Roman Ridge), Kippax, Barnsdale Bar, Burghwallis, Adwick-le-Street and Rossington they clearly cut across fields and enclosures. The Methley example is slightly more ambiguous, and its date is also less secure. In addition to the sinuous road or trackway cutting across some fields at Rossington which was identified by Derrick Riley, Alison Deegan has recently plotted a straight road cutting across fields and enclosures that runs northwards to the fortress at Rossington Bridge. (Source: Roberts, Deegan and Berg 2007: fig. 8.4).*

For other people, the roads brought officials including tax inspectors into their midst, and allowed the removal of some of the products of their hard labour for the army and the Empire. The imperial administrators needed to deal with large quantities of tax in kind – grain and livestock – and this required considerable control over the movement of animals and produce as well as authority over its collection (Given 2004: 38-40). Many individuals and communities must have felt seriously aggrieved by the tax collectors, with illiterate people particularly alienated from the imperial bureaucracy. Some people in rural communities could read and write, however – two metal styli were recovered from an enclosure excavated at Holme Hall Quarry, Stainton (Bevan 2006: 31; O'Neill 2007). This was rather a 'Romanised' settlement by the third century AD, with a pottery assemblage that included fine tablewares. For many

people the ability to read and write was probably crucial to their social and economic success in Roman Britain.

In many colonial situations where there is taxation, people often try and circumvent and subvert the state through illicit means by smuggling goods, stealing livestock belonging to the authorities, hiding their own grain and livestock, or even carrying out secret cultivation (Given 2004). Some Romano-British pits might have been dug furtively to keep surplus grain out of the reaches of tax inspectors, whilst the rafters of many buildings may also have concealed such evidence. Sometimes it could have been a challenge or even a game to outfox the administrators and hold back produce, at others it might have been dire necessity.

These actions may on occasion have reflected deliberate acts of cultural resistance (q.v. Hingley 1997a: 88; Scott 1985), but this might also have reflected the more general suspicions often felt by rural dwellers towards urban-based bureaucracies. Such secretive acts or hidden transcripts (Given 2004: 161; J.C. Scott 1990) may have been a source of independence and pride, and the basis for many songs and stories within rural communities. Relatively undisturbed areas such as the overgrown corners of fields, tumbled-down outbuildings, small wooded copses, carr and reed swamp and other marginal or out of the way places would have been knowledge known only to local people, part of their local landscapes, memories and identities. Archaeologists must recognise that places which might seem out of the way and marginal may nevertheless have been important to past people.

Conclusions

This synthesis has highlighted the limitations of conventional culture-histories and over-arching meta-narratives, both in terms of understanding the nature of later Iron Age communities and the Roman occupation of the region. It offers a more nuanced interpretation; one that takes into account both hegemonic and subaltern experiences of coloniser and colonised, and the diverse makeup of the 'Roman' military and

settlers. It also considers some of the effects that the native peoples had on these 'Romans', in addition to the effects that the Roman conquest and occupation of northern England had on the indigenous inhabitants. There would have been changes in dress and identity, some more marked than others. I will address these changes and also develop ideas of these dialectical processes further when I discuss models of 'Romanisation' in Chapter 10.

Notes

1. I use the term 'household' as shorthand to refer to an extended co-resident family, similar to the sense in which I believe it was meant by J.D. Hill (1995b, 1996) and Mike McCarthy (2006), though whether this extended family was conjugal or cosanguinal, polygamous or polyandrous, and matrilocal or patrilocal is unknown and open to debate. Similarly, I use 'co-resident' to mean living within the same enclosure or settlement compound, *not* necessarily within the same building. For example, a man might have routinely inhabited one roundhouse and his wives and children another, or two sisters and their one husband might all have lived in one dwelling.
2. In some societies though, senior or elderly women may be considered as quasi-male in many ways, particularly after their menopause (see Chapter 3).