

Lecture summaries

Roman and native in south-east Scotland: the problem and the potential

Lesley Macinnes*

The lecture presented a résumé of the problems inherent in the study of the inter-relationship between Roman and native in Scotland, both indicating the nature of, and bias within, the evidence, and reviewing its potential.

The need to understand the nature of native settlement before, during and after the Roman occupation was stressed. A regional approach to this study was advocated, with emphasis on multi-period landscape studies. The value of aerial survey in particular was highlighted and the methodology for analysing material so obtained laid emphasis on the need for mapping and detailed transcription as a basis for morphological analysis. The need to examine the chronological development of settlement in a regional context was also stressed and the value of comparing different regions demonstrated.

The implications of this regional approach for our understanding of the Roman period were considered, taking the examples of Angus, Fife and East Lothian, the lecturer's own research areas. Variations within the settlement patterns from the pre-Roman Iron Age and throughout the Roman period were outlined and the differences between the areas illustrated. In particular the development of discrete enclosed settlement units south of the Forth was contrasted with the more open settlement around souterrains north of the Tay. A 'cultural boundary' around the Tay, but perhaps oscillating between the Forth and Tay, was postulated.

The need to relate settlement patterns to other forms of evidence was also stressed. The distribution of pre-Roman and Roman artefacts was found to complement the 'cultural boundary' noted in the settlement evidence and an attempt was made to link this with tribal areas attested in literary sources.

Finally, the problems posed by the character and distribution of Roman artefacts were considered and the difficulties inherent in the use of this material as a means of dating contemporary settlements outlined. The distribution of Roman artefacts was examined and found to be closely related to the periods of greatest army activity. They also appeared to occur differentially within the native settlement pattern, with Traprain Law and certain architecturally unusual settlements obtaining most Roman material, although its distribution was fairly widespread in the second century AD. The conclusions drawn were that Roman material was available to the native population directly through the medium of the army, that it was distributed through the native hierarchy, not wholesale, and that Traprain Law, and perhaps the Votadini as a whole, occupied a position of particular importance in apparent contrast to other *oppida*.

*Cadw, Welsh Historic Monuments, 2 Fitzalan Road, Cardiff

It was recognized that the hypotheses put forward need to be tested further. This could be achieved by extending regional settlement studies to other areas in Scotland; by concentrating on independent dating methods; by greater emphasis on the context of Roman material within native settlements; by a concentration of fieldwork and excavation in areas of apparent importance to the relationship between Roman and native. Areas which may particularly reward closer study were identified, such as the Esk Valley, Traprain Law and its environs, minor *oppida*, souterrain settlement complexes such as Newtown and Inverkeilor in Angus. Finally, the importance of considering Scotland in a wider context was stressed and the need for greater co-operation between prehistorians and Romanists emphasized.

Monumenta Romani Imperii, recent work on Roman inscriptions and sculptured reliefs from Scotland

L J F Keppie*

In 1768 Glasgow University published a catalogue of its holdings of Roman inscriptions and sculptured stones, some 30 items, under the heading *Monumenta Romani Imperii* (Monuments of the Roman Empire). Since then many more pieces have come to light, to a total of about 160 pieces, mostly preserved today in the Royal Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, or in the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow. There are small collections elsewhere across Scotland, notably at Dumfries. This material has been brought together for the first time in the Scottish Fascicule of the Corpus of Roman Sculpture (*Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani*), published by the British Academy. The Scottish Fascicule includes all known material carved, sculptured, or decorated in Scotland during the Roman occupations of the later first to early third centuries AD. There are few busts or statues; most of the material consists of decorated altars or commemorative tablets erected by, or under the auspices of, Roman army units stationed in Scotland. There are pieces carved to a high standard, but others are rough in the extreme. Among the commemorative tablets are the fine distance slabs from the line of the Antonine Wall, many adorned with scenes symbolizing the victory of the Roman Legions over native tribes. The Legions often adorned the building stones with their emblems, the Capricorn and Pegasus of the Second Legion and the Wild Boar of the Twentieth Legion. The presence of these emblems often identifies the Legion responsible for construction work at a particular fort. Regiments of auxiliaries in the Roman army also set up altars. At Birrens in Dumfriesshire the Second Cohort of Tungrians (which formed the garrison in AD 158–180) was especially active, and altars carved by its craftsmen are instantly recognizable. In general, the sculptured material from Roman Scotland helps to enrich our picture of life on the far north-west frontier of the Roman Empire.

*Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow

Town and country in Roman Britain: a social perspective

M Millett*

Evidence concerning the nature and distribution of villas in Roman Britain was presented and discussed in relation to the general pattern of the culture of the Province. It was observed that the pattern was uneven both in time and in its geographical coverage. The areas where villas developed early were in general the areas of intensive pre-Roman contact, and there was a strong relationship between the density of villas in the late Roman period, and the areas which had had most inscriptions and the largest towns earlier. A series of observations were made about the relative changes in size and distribution of the villas, and the closeness of their relationship to the principal towns.

On the basis of this survey it was argued that villas could not be considered as a purely economic phenomenon as this interpretation was not consistent with the evidence of either their distribution and size, or the information available concerning changes in the arable economy in the pre-Roman and Roman periods. It was argued that the villas were essentially a social phenomenon, reflecting the aspirations of the ruling native élites to demonstrate their *Romanitas* in the private sphere.

Against this background, the villas were compared with other features of Roman Britain, notably the towns. It was argued that together they showed a pattern which was potentially informative about indigenous social structure. Ideas developed along these lines were then compared with the information from areas where villas never emerged. It was suggested that their failure to appear was significant and could be accounted for by a combination of a less centralized social organization with the destructive effect of the Roman military presence on the pre-existing social organization.

Pictish symbols: their meaning and usage

Anthony Jackson†

Social anthropologists have made a special study of symbols in tribal societies and they have stressed that the meaning of symbols can only be found out from within the society – it cannot be imposed from without. Furthermore, the symbols must be congruent with everything else we know about the society – its kinship system, its political system, its economy and religion. Hence symbols also form a system which articulates with and illuminates the other institutionalized tribal systems to give a holistic meaning to the society – both to them and to us.

Traditional scholarship on the Pictish symbols is wrong on three counts:

- (1) nobody has ever defined a symbol, so there are no criteria,
- (2) symbols are not art objects, neither are they derivative,
- (3) symbol stones are not funerary inscriptions to individuals.

My argument goes as follows: (1) a symbol is any design that combines more than once with another design on stone. This gives us basically 28 symbols; (2) symbols only occur in pairs. Multiple

*Department of Archaeology, University of Durham

†Dept of Social Anthropology, University of Edinburgh

symbols on stones can be resolved into pairs while all single symbols are found on damaged stones; (3) the 'mirror and comb' design is a special symbol that denotes 'bridewealth' [gifts given by the groom's side to the bride's side] and is always found at the bottom of a pair of symbols whenever it occurs.

Technically, the Picts were matrilineal [ie descent passed through women] and practised patrilineal cross-cousin marriage [ie a man married his father's sister's daughter] in order to create and maintain tightly-knit groups of political alliances. The ideal number of lineages [clans] practising this intermarriage is four. Each lineage had a unique symbol that ultimately derived from their claim to some mystical powers. I call such a group a *macropit*.

If we have four lineages P, Q, R & S in a macropit and they marry their proper cousin, then if Q & S are the politically leading lineages we will get

S+	Q*
P	R

where + = mirror and * = mirror and comb

This will generate eight symbol pairs: S/P, P/S+, S/R, R/S+, Q/P, P/Q*, Q/R, R/Q*. Note that S & Q, P & R do not combine because they are exogamous within the macropit since they are equal status and cannot intermarry.

While macropits could need eight symbol stones to express the set of alliances this is not absolutely necessary since it can all be said with two stones: P/S+ and R/Q* as these are the two main chiefly stones – as indicated by the bridewealth payments made by the chiefly lineages S & Q. This becomes significant when we turn to king-lists and find that there are four royal lineages in the Pictish genealogies that intermarry but only two lineages that actually supply the kings on an alternating basis.

Pictish cosmology is dominated by fours. There were four kingdoms in Class I times each containing eight macropits. It was down to two kingdoms in Class II times, still with eight macropits. Hence 48 macropits existed altogether and one can show that 95% of all known Pictish symbols are uniquely defined by them and that they are geographically located. Each macropit has a different composition and consists of a choice of four dissimilar symbols chosen out of the 28 symbols available. We can thus predict which symbol stones are missing and their likely provenance. The hypothesis is therefore testable. The statistical probability that these 48 unique selections of 4 symbols out of 28 also happen to be found in four discrete areas is infinitesimally small and cannot be due to chance.

Ogams, incidentally, are not a written language but denote significant calendrical events. The Celtic calendar was also divided into fours – the quarter days that are still with us.

The Picts were an amalgamation of different P-Celtic speaking tribes who were first forced to unite by the Romans but who came under increasing pressure from the Scots, Britons and the Northumbrians in the seventh century. It is suggested that symbols were then invented to be inscribed on stone as a perpetual witness to the alliances made by the macropits for they *at last* made succession to local office perfectly clear. Previously the Picts were always quarrelling about who should succeed because of their difficult kinship system. What united all the macropits together was that they all contained one or more representatives of the seven major lineages of the Picts. More particularly, most macropits contain the "crescent and V-rod" – one of the royal lineages.

The full argument is spelled out in my book: *The symbol stones of Scotland*, Orkney Press, 1984. The lecture attempted to highlight the important aspects of my thesis. The most important point is that this is an holistic account of the Picts using all the available information in an integrated way on

every aspect of the Picts. Hence, in true anthropological tradition, I disagree with all the previous exponents of the Picts who have and hold to their separate, single disciplinary approaches because theirs is but a partial view of a tribal society which is always an unified entity. Analysis is necessary to describe but synthesis is absolutely essential if we are to understand a tribe such as the Picts. What is equally extraordinary is the fact that nobody has ever tried to bring together the vast amount of information we possess about the Picts into one whole. The Picts are the least mysterious people of Dark Age Britain so *why* are we still mystified?

Funeral heraldry in Scotland

Charles J Burnett, Dingwall Pursuivant*

Heraldry has formed an important part of the visual and social history of Scotland because it symbolizes kinship and familial bonds. The armigerous Scot was surrounded by heraldry which he used on buildings and possessions, combining its decorative qualities and kinship tokens to form one of the most common design elements found in Scotland from 1400 to 1700.

It is not surprising that heraldry should also have a role in the last public act of all – death and interment. Because so much heraldry was present at funerals the Lord Lyon and the other officers of arms ensured its correct use and it was they who undertook the funeral arrangements long before undertakers, as we know them, came into being. Guidelines were drawn up by the heraldic executive as to the amount of panoply permissible and the order in which it was marshalled, according to degree. This involved the families concerned in great expense and both Parliament and Church passed various laws to restrict the number of mourners and public display. The most elaborate funeral procession ever seen in Scotland was that of John, Duke of Rothes, in August 1681 which has fortunately been recorded for posterity in a series of engravings.

The engravings show many banners devoted to the public demonstration of kinship through descent and this practice was also reflected in another important piece of funeral heraldry – the hatchment. This was a diamond-shaped panel bearing the full armorial achievement of the deceased surrounded by up to 16 small probative shields. It was further enlivened with painted tears, initials and death heads. Two of these hatchments were executed, one to be hung outside the main door of the house and the other hung in the place of interment. By adopting this form the Scots followed the practice of Northern Europe; in England the hatchment bore only the arms of the deceased. As funerals became less elaborate in outward display from the 18th century on, the hatchment became the last residual element of former splendour because it succinctly summed up personal achievement and honourable descent. The last hatchment painted and used in Scotland was that of Sir Alan John Colquhoun of Luss, sixth Baronet, who died in 1910.

A survey of hatchments remaining in Scotland was undertaken over 10 years and this revealed 52 of these extant in churches, museums and private homes. There are three locations with seven or more hatchments forming important family groups, the rest are found in various areas of Scotland outwith the Highlands. They form a valuable part of the Scottish heraldic heritage as they link us directly with funeral customs no longer seen but which have helped to give identity to the uniqueness of Scotland as a country.

*Royal Museum of Scotland