ROMAN

Introduction

The research agenda for Roman Wales differs from that discussed by various authors in James, S & Millett, M (eds.), *Britons and Romans: advancing an archaeological agenda* (CBA Research Report 125, 2001) because of a fundamental dearth of quality data in many fields. Other research frameworks may refer to the need for sampling methodologies, but in Wales the relative scarcity of relevant material reduces our ability to challenge traditional narratives and explore new concepts. We thus feel that it deserves a high priority in the context of Welsh archaeological research agendas in general, not only because its results can be placed in a reasonably well understood framework, but also because they are comprehensible to the general public and, thus, have an inherently educational value. The very predictability of this period, often cited as dull and unexciting, can be turned to the advantage of archaeology in general by providing a straightforward pathway into the benefits of lifelong learning.

Themes

The conquest of Wales

How did the conquest of Wales proceed under the Julio-Claudian and Flavian emperors?

- There are key gaps in our knowledge of the conquest phase, particularly the military dispositions of the pre-Flavian era. There are question marks against the nature, and in particular the chronology, of a number of military sites which appear to belong to the period AD 48-74. There has been a tendency to over-simplify what is undoubtedly a much more subtle and complex picture in respect of military deployment. We may note the complexity emerging at sites such as Llanfor and Dinefwr Park, and the potential to expand our understanding of prolonged conflict by revisiting and extending the work carried out on the prominent and familiar sites of south-east Wales.

'Romanisation'

To what extent were the regions of Roman Wales integrated with the imperial economy?

How did the interaction between conquered and conqueror vary in Roman Wales?

- A re-assessment of the material record is urgently required, because this is fundamental to understanding issues such as exchange mechanisms, economic development, social status and the key theme of cultural development with specific reference to the issue of identity (euphemistically 'romanisation'). This approach should not be solely constrained to artefact studies but should be extended to include what we can glean from environmental studies and regional trends in respect of land-use and the like. This involves extensive literature research, examination and publication of museum collections and the analysis and wider dissemination of results only reported as 'grey literature'. It needs to span the later pre-Roman Iron Age as well as the earlier post-Roman period, in order to address issues of continuity, discontinuity and change.

All four regional assessments highlighted the evidence of continuity and argue for further examination of existing records with a view to identifying chronological and landscape interfaces at local and regional scales.

Settlement patterns

What forms did settlements take in the regions of Roman Wales?

- There are large tracts of Wales where the basic character of the Romano-British settlement pattern is unknown. Hitherto there has been a heavy geographical bias in the exploration of settlement forms in some zones to the virtual exclusion of others. We need to determine the extent to which the pre-existing settlement pattern determined that of the Roman period, both in terms of form and density. We also need to determine whether Romano-British communication systems affected the existing settlement pattern.
- There has been little attempt to adequately investigate high-status settlements in Wales, with the exception of the *civitas* towns. These will undoubtedly vary in type from region to region and can include hillforts in some areas, though the class would normally be judged to encompass settlements of 'small town' character and villas in a non-military and *vici* in a military context. It is astonishing how little we know of the origins and histories of villas in Wales, especially when we consider the strong hints and real likelihood of occupation into the post-Roman period at some of the known sites. *Vici* have been identified as a key to our understanding of the interface between the indigenous population and their Roman conquerors and also of the level of interaction between the military and their camp-followers. At a wider level settlement studies are a means of exploring over-arching issues of land-use and inter-site relationships.

Technology and Industry

What were the principal industries of Roman Wales?

- Technology and industry, with some few exceptions, have been grossly under-researched. Traditional narratives need to be re-examined as this has the potential to resolve issues such as regional differentiation and discrepancies.
- Desk-based assessments, for example the analysis of ceramic distributions or access to particular types of tools, should be broadened to involve fieldwork and recording on industrial complexes of all types, ranging from large- and small-scale exploitation of metals (from Flintshire to Glamorgan and Gwent in the case of lead-silver exploitation) to artefact production of all kinds. Evidence of continuity from the Late Iron Age may offer valuable insights into the origins of Roman industry.

Ritual and Funerary Practices

What types of funerary practices were followed in Roman Wales?

How did these vary in relation to pre-Roman practices, regionally or according to economic or social status?

- The study of ritual and funerary practices has languished in Wales. Wide-ranging desk-top survey of sacred landscapes, such as springs and wells

which figure in folklore, together with funerary monuments and cult sites of earlier ages which have produced evidence of Romano-British activity, has the potential to unlock an important repository of data and to identify further priorities. Several enclosure types have been tentatively categorised as being of ritual character, but none have been investigated. Geophysics and other forms of remote survey in the vicinity of known military bases and urban sites can reveal burials together with shrines and temples, some of which are alluded to in inscriptions.

Priorities

Archaeology of the early campaign years

The hitherto simplistic tale of pre-Flavian–early Flavian military operations does not stand up to modern scrutiny judging by the evidence of the complexity of re-visited and recently discovered sites. Our failure to understand this phase has singular significance for the history of the province as a whole.

Interaction between Roman occupiers and the indigenous population

The nature of the interaction between the colonisers and the colonised has yet to be established. This theme can best be addressed by investigating high-status settlement where there is greater potential for material remains. So far there has been little attempt to adequately analyse this type of settlement in Wales, with the exception of the *civitas* towns. These will undoubtedly vary in type from region to region and can include hillforts in some areas, though the class would normally be judged to encompass settlements of 'small-town' character and villas in a non-military and *vici* in a military context.

Funerary and Ritual

Evidence of funerary and ritual activity makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Roman lifestyle in other parts of the Roman world, but we have virtually no knowledge of them in Wales.