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'Romanisation' and Roman material culture

P. W. M. Freeman

MARTIN MILLETT, *THE ROMANIZATION OF BRITAIN. AN ESSAY IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION* (Cambridge University Press 1990). Pp. xvi + 255, 95 ills. (maps and plates) and 32 tables. ISBN 0-521-36084-6. £30.

Even for historians and archaeologists, there are facts of life. For more than 600 years, the city of Rome possessed an 'empire' made up of a number of administered regions known as provinces. The life of the city of Rome had consequences for these regions at many levels. From the recognition and acceptance of these facts has come a plethora of discussions examining the nature and outcome of the contacts between Rome and her provinces.¹ This 'essay' on one of the central issues of Roman provincial studies as it relates to Britain will attract more than passing attention, and is likely to have implications for how one might look at the consequences for other provinces of being part of the empire. The essay deserves attention because of the way in which it treats its subject-matter, and there is much else to admire, including the explanation and synthesis of much data, with numerous informative diagrams and tables.²

A résumé of the thesis

According to the preface, the 'essay' is structured in light of modern preoccupations (re-economics) as reflected in urban and rural settlement:

"... members of the post-imperial generation (to which I belong) are seeking new explanations for cultural change in the Roman world: they are unwilling to accept the paternalistic view that 'the Britons did what they were told by the Romans because it represented *progress*'. I have thus attempted to provide one alternative explanatory framework ..." (p.xv).

Chapt.1 ('The nature of Roman imperialism') discusses the dynamics of Roman imperialism with the "aim ... to examine the integration of Britain into the Empire, thereby exploring more wide-ranging ideas about Romanization" (p.1). Towards this end, there is a résumé of Roman expansion and a digression on "imperialism and economic exploitation", where Millett recapitulates the modern perception of Roman provincial administration as de-centralised. Whilst he disparages the primacy of economic factors for shaping Roman expansion, he sees economics as the central feature in provincial life. This sets the tone: Changes in Romanisation are visible in and occasioned by economic circumstances.

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- 1 E.g. S. J. Keay, *Roman Spain* (London 1988); A. King, *Roman Gaul and Germany* (London 1990); L. Curchin, *The local magistrates of Roman Spain* (Toronto 1990), and *Roman Spain: conquest and assimilation* (London 1991). I am grateful to the anonymous readers for their comments and observations concerning this article; they have saved me from a number of errors.
 - 2 Typographical errors are few. Those noted include p.43 Angelsea, p.44 insert 14 in *Annals* 30 (this problem would have been avoided if Millett had used the normal convention for numbers of books, as he does for Caesar and Strabo), p.51 the spelling of Kingsholm, p.51 a hitherto unknown reference in *Agricola* (32.17), p.80 governors, p.81 Macmullen, p.87 and ill.28 annexe and p.109 ill. 39 Wroxeter. In ill.23, marcellum for macellum. Particularly unfortunate is the mis-spelling of Millett's name on the spine. In the bibliography Bogaers 1979 should read *RIB* 91, Garnsey 1978 is duplicated, and Stevens 1933 should read Apollinaris. There are traces of ghosting at ill.55 on p.133. Of course there are some omissions in the bibliography, including S. Sommer's *The military vici of Roman Britain* (Oxford 1984), but reference to other recent work on the administration of the empire is also lacking: that would have helped to support many of Millett's points. There is an often irritating habit of citing certain works without specific page numbers, which makes the citation virtually useless: thus at p.34, Alföldi (error for Alföldy) 1974 should include p.44 ff.; at p.44 with Braund 1984, p.69 with Ward-Perkins 1974, and p.113 with Bulleid and Gray 1911, the references do not substantiate the points made. Lewis and Reinhold are given full references at p.42, 46, 87 but not on p.80. One notes also occasional lapses into verbosity (e.g. p.123).