Geographies of Provincialism in Roman Sculpture[1]

Peter Stewart

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Reviewers:
Glenys Davies, Jas Elsner

Abstract

Focusing on Roman Britain but using examples across the empire, this article examines the relevance of geography to the form and distribution of "provincialized" classical imagery in the Roman period. This must be explained with reference to the competence of the craftsmen, the expectations of provincial artists and viewers, and geological factors. In some cases geology rather than culture seems to have a surprisingly large role in determining the presence and absence of sculpture. Attention to the material complexities of the geography of provincial sculpture provides a useful foil to considering Roman imperial art as a pervasive visual culture.

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Introduction

[1] The geography of art – a recurring aspect of art-historical studies for as long as they have existed – has been receiving renewed attention in the last twenty or thirty years.[2] Much work has engaged particularly in historiographical critiques, especially challenges to the concept of artistic centres and peripheries, and the focus has been on early modern art in Europe.[3] But there is perhaps no artistic tradition in Europe that invites such geographical consideration as obviously as the art of the Roman Empire.

[2] At its greatest extent, in the early second century AD, the Roman Empire encompassed more than 3.7 million km^2, including the territory of more than thirty modern states.[4] Despite the ethnic and cultural diversity of these lands, the several

[1] This article was written for the first RIHA Lecture at The Courtauld Institute of Art on 16th February, 2010. Versions were delivered in seminars at the Freie Universität, Berlin (TOPOI Excellence Cluster) and the University of Southampton (Department of Archaeology), and I am grateful for the contributions of participants. I also thank the reviewers for their comments, even where suggestions have not been adopted. The maps were produced by Michele Massa, with the help of data compiled by Marion Ferrat. Their work as my research assistants was funded by The Courtauld Institute of Art. I am most grateful to Karin Kyburz for her skill in acquiring images.

[2] Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*, Chicago and London 2004, reviews the geographical study of art since antiquity and analyses its recent rejuvenation (esp. 10-11, 17-104).

[3] Note esp. Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg, "Centre and Periphery", in: *Storia dell'Arte Italiana, History of Italian Art*, vol. 1, Cambridge 1994, 29-112 (originally published as "Centro e periferia", in: *Storia dell'arte italiana*, pt. 1, *materiali e problemi*, vol. 1, Turin 1979, 283-352); Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*.

[4] Cf. Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, Stanford 1997, 8 fig. 1 (that graph starting in late third century).

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dozen provinces of the empire all inherited in some manner or another, the artistic traditions that Rome had itself adopted from the Greek world. Rome's geographical expansion enabled the apparent diffusion of Graeco-Roman traditions of figurative imagery, with their "classical" repertoire of forms and iconography. In fact they spread far beyond the notional political limits of the empire; for example, they are strikingly represented in the Gandhara sculpture of Pakistan and Afghanistan. The very character of Roman art is conspicuously shaped by geography. Or rather, its lack of a formally distinctive character – its dependence on Greek precedents – was determined by its proximity to the artistic traditions of Greece and Magna Graecia, and more especially its encounter with the Hellenistic kingdoms during the third to first centuries BC.

[3] From the first century BC onward, Rome's expansion beyond Italy and the Mediterranean ensured that Roman artistic practices appeared in regions that had previously known very different art forms and styles. Recent scholarship has rightly challenged the value of the term "Romanization" as a label for this sort of cultural dissemination.[5] The objection is not simply a post-colonial reaction to the Romanocentric, elitist, or imperialist biases embodied in the term. For the concept of "Romanization" also masks the dynamic qualities of an imperial culture that was both superficially homogeneous and yet highly mutable and complex. Nevertheless the phenomenon of Roman-style art and culture across the vast territory of the empire is a real one which cannot be dismissed, particularly within an art historical study aiming to follow a particular thread of classical art where it does appear. (Perhaps what is required is a different label such as "Romanism", analogous to the "Hellenism" of the Greek *oikoumene*.[6])

[4] Some of the traces of artistic "Romanism" are conspicuous. The Greek art form of mosaic appeared virtually everywhere under Roman rule and endured in the Byzantine and Islamic Middle East for centuries afterwards. The technology of fine painted wall-plaster – Roman wall-painting – was adopted with extraordinary technical, if not iconographical, consistency in many lands that had never known anything like it – practically anywhere that saw the adoption of right-angled walls. But this article is concerned with the rather less physically confined classical art form of sculpture, and it addresses not the successful dissemination of Graeco-Roman art through the provinces, but rather the countless works on the fringes of the empire that represent, at least at first sight, a partial failure or loss in the diffusion of classical art: a loss that apparently

[5] See e.g. David Mattingly, ed., *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism. Power, Discourse, and Discrepant Experience in the Roman Empire* (*Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement* no. 23), Portsmouth, RI, 1995; Richard Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture. Unity, Diversity and Empire*, London and New York 2005, 30-46 (inc. further references). Cf. revision of the concept in Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman. The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul*, Cambridge 1998.

[6] For the use of the term "Romanism" cf. Miranda Aldhouse-Green, *An Archaeology of Images. Iconology and Cosmology in Iron Age and Roman Europe*, London and New York 2004, xvi.

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arises from their physical and conceptual *distance* from the Mediterranean centres of classicism. I refer to objects like those in Figures 1 and 2, though it should be stressed from the outset that provincial sculpture was highly varied and included many more complex and sophisticated works which sit more comfortably within the traditions of classical art.[7]

[5] Despite considerable efforts to document this sort of sculpture for many parts of the empire, such material continues to suffer from a certain neglect.[8] In part this neglect arises from the apparently poor quality and simplicity of the sculptures themselves. There is a presumption that there is little to say about individual works of such modest ability, and all art history, even when it comes under the umbrella of classical archaeology, continues to value quality more than is generally admitted. But even grander and more refined remnants of provincial sculpture receive less attention than might be expected. The main problem for most provincial sculpture is its perceived location, not in space, but within historical narrative.

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The Character of Provincialism

[6] Roman art in general has always had an uneasy position within the story of art because so much of it looks backwards to the repertoire of styles and imagery formed in classical and Hellenistic Greece.[9] It has seemed to be situated "after the end of art".[10] It has been suggested that the resurgence of interest in Roman art in recent decades has been enabled by our new postmodern sensibilities, and perhaps there is an element of truth in the claim.[11] In any case, if metropolitan Roman art has appeared to lack originality and distinctiveness, so much the more does provincial art which is, as Plotinus

[7] Votive from Staunton-on-Arrow: Martin Henig's, *Roman Sculpture from the Cotswolds Region with Devon and Cornwall* (*Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani, Great Britain*, vol. 1, fasc. 7), Oxford 1993, 25-26 no. 75. For Pan reliefs from Croatia, see esp. O. Hirschfeld and R. Schneider, "Bericht über einer Reise in Dalmatien", in: *Archäologisch-Epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Österreich* 9 (1885), 1-84, here 31-84.

[8] Note especially the monumental volumes of Emile Espérandieu's *Recueil général des bas-reliefs de la Gaule romaine* and their successors, Paris 1907-, and the international *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani*. The web image-bank www.ubi-erat-lupa.org has also made a significant contribution to recent literature.

[9] Generally see Otto Brendel, *Prolegomena to the Study of Roman Art*, New Haven 1979; T. Hölscher, *The Language of Images in Roman Art*, trans. A. Snodgrass and A. Künzl-Snodgrass, with Foreword by J. Elsner, Cambridge 2004.

[10] To use the title of Arthur Danto's book, *After the End of Art. Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, Princeton 1997. A similar attitude to Hellenistic art used to prevail, encouraged by Pliny the Elder's claim in *Naturalis Historia* 34.52, that in the 290s BC the art of bronze sculpture "stopped" (*cessavit deinde ars*).

[11] Elaine Gazda, "Beyond Copying. Artistic Originality and Tradition", in: eadem, ed., *The Ancient Art of Emulation. Studies in Artistic Originality and Tradition from the Present to Classical Antiquity*, Ann Arbor, MI, 2002, 1-24, here 1-15. Cf. Elsner in Hölscher, *The Language of Images*, xviii, for postmodernism as an analogy for Roman eclecticism.

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might have put it, a mere image of an image.[12] Whether one sees Roman provincial art as belonging in a backwater or a footnote, it is all too easy to locate it aesthetically as well as geographically on the margins. Perhaps few scholars of Roman art would admit to ignoring the provinces in this way. Yet most of us do ignore them much of the time and the neglect is to an extent quantifiable.[13]

[7] The situation is worse for Roman provincial sculptures that are crudely and simply carved. It is on these that I particularly wish to concentrate. Some such sculptures do in fact exhibit considerable technical skill and their departures from classical figurative norms such as realistic proportions and naturalistic modelling of bodies can be regarded as signs of local stylization or even hybridity. With the word "provincialism", however, I refer mainly to those sculptures that are selectively dependent on Graeco-Roman traditions: works that imitate or reproduce them, but fail to do so comprehensively. From the perspective of a classically attuned viewer, something is always lost in these works. Commonly what is retained best is the iconography, which is central to the efficacy of the image; what is lost is naturalism, refined finishes, or the regular stylistic traits of Mediterranean classicism. To refer to "loss" and "failure" raises problems, and indeed we shall see that provincialism is more complex than this caricature implies.[14] Moreover, there is an obvious inherent bias – an imperialist bias perhaps – in valuing the appearance of classical traits in art as positive, and their absence as a lack or lapse. In using this Romanocentric language I write as an art historian pursuing a particular artistic tradition rather than an archaeologist of the provinces. Yet even so we shall see that maintaining a Roman perspective on provincial art can be deceptive.

[8] Figure 1 presents a good example of the loss entailed in this sort of provincialism. The simple votive relief from Staunton in Herefordshire retains everything a viewer acculturated to classical iconography would need to recognize its recipient as Mercury. The figure has wings on his head and holds the caduceus; there is even a truncated dedicatory inscription, *DEO ME(rcurio)*, probably the product of someone only semi-literate in Latin. Stylistically it is completely un-classical. The crude carving, the bendy, disarticulated limbs, its simple, globular head and facial features, the flattened, profile

[12] Plotinus, *Enneads* 2.7; cf. Plato, *Republic* 597d-e. Cf. R. Bianchi Bandinelli's characterization of simplistic sculptures, which lack culturally specific traits, as outside history – "primitive art, and what we may call 'non-culture', are timeless": *Rome. The Centre of Power. Roman Art to AD 200*, London 1970. Provincialism is, of course, worse than primitivism.

[13] For example, Diana Kleiner's authoritative volume on *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven and London 1992), is typical of many general discussions of Roman art (including my own): approximately 15% of the figures show works with a provenance outside Italy. The proportion in my own book *Roman Art* (Oxford 2004), which aims to survey the discipline, is the same. Kleiner herself notes p. 16 the "pressing need" for further studies of provincial sculpture.

[14] Cf. the influential and eloquent account of provincialism in Kenneth Clark, *Provincialism*, London 1962 (Presidential address to The English Association), esp. 3-4: "In these instances it may be said that provincialism is simply a matter of distance from the centre, where standards of skill are higher and patrons more exacting [...] provincial art fails from its lack of style [...]."

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legs and the uncertain implication of some covering around the waist, all defy Graeco-Roman conventions. These characteristics are typical of much so-called primitive sculpture because they are easy and effective means of representing the figure. They are not specific to this region (as we see from Fig. 2) and should not be seen as local, culturally specific mannerisms.

1 Votive relief of Mercury, inscribed 'DEO ME(rcurio)', from Staunton-on-Arrow, Herefordshire, ca. 2nd-3rd century AD, limestone, H. 0.26 m. Hartlebury, Worcester County Museum (photo: museum)

2 Votive relief of Silvanus (with iconography of Pan), from Split, ca. 2nd-3rd century AD. Split, Archaeological Museum (photo: courtesy of Troels Myrup Kristensen, by permission of museum)

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[9] The Staunton relief may have been an "amateur" work rather than the product of a specialist carver. Many reliefs are much simpler even than this (Fig. 3) and certainly did not require any specialist skill or knowledge of stone work, though even here some notion of what a Roman votive relief should be, with its carved, frontal representation of a deity (and a dedicatory inscription to *DEA RIIGINA* [sic]) has been retained.[15]

3 Votive relief of Dea Regina, from Lemington, Gloucestershire, ca. 2nd-3rd century AD, limestone, H. 0.265 m. Chedworth Roman Villa (photo: by kind permission of the National Trust (www.nationaltrust.org.uk); © NTPL/Ian Shaw)

[10] The sculptors of such works sometimes displayed even less competence in figurative carving than might be expected of a complete amateur with no prior experience. This strongly suggests not only that manual skills were lacking, but that some of the basic principles of classical sculpture were unfamiliar or, perhaps more likely, of little interest. Even among considerably more ambitious provincial monuments, which may well be the work of specialists, one finds surprising gaps in competence that could have been avoided with the most basic planning, had this been thought desirable. For instance, the sculptor or sculptors of Quintus Voltius Viator's impressive first-century tombstone from Mainz (Fig. 4) did not make the conceptual leap of imagining how the upper and lower parts of the deceased groom's body would relate to each other when the middle portions were masked by the horse.[16] This may be a harder concept than it appears for an artist relatively unfamiliar with conventions of spatial recession. Even so, an advance sketch on the surface of the stone could have avoided the incongruity had the artist been concerned to do so, and it would also have kept the figure's legs within

[15] Found Lemington, Gloucestershire; now at Chedworth Roman Villa, inv. 145.4. Henig, *Roman Sculpture from the Cotswold Region*, 32 no. 94.

[16] Mainz, Landesmuseum, inv. S150.

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bounds. The lack of such planning and sketching is a regular trait in provincial sculpture and there are many examples of what might be called a "one-dimensional", sequential approach to the rendering of figures.

4 Funerary stela of Quintus Voltius Viator, from Mainz, 1st century AD, limestone, H. 2.75 m. Mainz, Landesmuseum (photo: Bildarchiv Foto Marburg, www.fotomarburg.de)

[11] At the same time, sculptors who breach fundamental principles of classical carving in some respects, can adhere to them carefully in other ways. The second-century tombstone of Marcus Cocceius Nonnus from Old Penrith in Cumbria (Fig. 5) combines a rough and irregular, freehand treatment of the figure and his architectural frame, with the meticulous carving of guidelines for the inscription, with its bold, lapidary letters.[17] Straight lines were evidently a more important component of an inscription than they were of architectural elements in a relief, though in fact we find many curious examples of the eccentric use of guidelines in inscriptions: the guidelines are sometimes ignored, or they are ruled at an incline, or they converge or diverge, or they are drawn freehand. Figure 6 shows a provincial example, the stela of a certain Nicrinus from Pest in Hungary, but the phenomenon can be found across the empire.[18] These examples of the partial

[17] London, British Museum, P&EE 1969.7-1.4. R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain* (*RIB*), Oxford 1965, no. 932. The inscription in this and many other cases is possibly the product of a different craftsman.

[18] Nicrinus, in Serbian Convent, Szentendre (www.ubi-erat-lupa.org ID no. 684). Generally, see Gian Carlo Susini, *The Roman Stonecutter. An Introduction to Latin Epigraphy*, Oxford 1973, 37-38, pls. IV-V.

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adoption of Roman sculptural practices, the selective use of unproductive protocols, could stand for sculptural provincialism in general. Something has been lost in transit.

5 Funerary stela of Marcus Cocceius Nonnus, from Old Penrith, ca. early 2nd century AD, sandstone, H: 2.20m. London, British Museum (© The Trustees of the British Museum)

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6 Funerary stela of Nicrinus. Szentendre (Serbian Convent), Pest, Hungary, 2nd century AD, sandstone, max. H. 1.56 m (photo: www.ubi-erat-lupa.org, O. Harl)

[12] The stela of Cocceius with its crudely carved pediment and mouldings further suggests that the *idea* of the aedicular form as a characteristic design for gravestones was more important than its execution.[19] Indeed on one limestone stela of a legionary from Aquileia we find a very assured adaptation of the aedicular shape in such a way that it has lost any architectural coherence.[20] Elsewhere, where a lack of skill or time, or resources, or interest, prevented the sculptural elaboration of a stela, we can often still find the sketch of an aedicula or mouldings crudely incised on the stone.[21]

[13] There are a variety of possible explanations for why provincial sculpture so frequently exhibits such signs of provincialism: the dependence on Roman conventions only partly reproduced. Geographical distance is an important factor, although Kenneth Clark's emphasis on artistic centres and their peripheries in defining later forms of

[19] Cf. Martin Millett, *The Romanization of Britain. An Essay in Archaeological Interpretation*, Cambridge 1990, 116-117, arguing that in Britain the *choice* of a tombstone was more important than its quality or degree of classicism.

[20] Tombstone of Aurelius, Museo Archeologica, Aquileia, inv. 16. Valnea Santa Maria Scrinari, *Museo Archeologico di Aquileia. Catalogo delle sculture romane*, Rome 1972, 120 no. 351. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* V 900.

[21] See e.g. stone in Ljubljana, National Museum, inv. L 100. Milan Lovenjak, *Inscriptiones Latinae Sloveniae*, vol. 1, Ljubljana 1998, no. 87.

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provincialism has been criticised.[22] Many of these sculptures were produced on the margins of the empire, far from the art of the Mediterranean or even from provincial centres for the production of classical-looking work. It has been plausibly suggested, for example, that the patrons of much sculpture in Roman Britain may have been largely unfamiliar with classical artistic forms at the centre of the Empire.[23]

[14] Sheer incompetence is another important determinant of provincialism in Roman sculpture, though it is one that archaeologists are understandably reluctant to dwell on because it invites subjective responses. It is therefore paradoxical that commentaries on provincial sculptures periodically seek to redeem them or to make excuses for them. In various fields of art history a longstanding disdain for provincial art has engendered revisionist reactions. Thus for example Byzantine and Italian Renaissance forms of provincialism have found redemption in recent decades.[24] The material culture of Roman Britain, which serves as my case study, was once notoriously criticized by R.G. Collingwood for its "blundering, stupid ugliness that cannot rise to the level of [...] vulgarity".[25] Since then a number of authors have been able to find traces of merit even in the crudest specimens of Romano-British sculpture. Interestingly, their praise frequently adopts the rhetoric of primitivism so skilfully analysed in a different context by Sally Price. Thus particular works are admired, for example, for their native vigour.[26]

[15] More recently Miranda Aldhouse-Green has argued that certain very crudely fashioned religious sculptures from Roman Britain are signs of resistance to the representational norms of the imperial power rather than incompetent or partial Romanization. The relief from Lemington in Figure 3 is, "one of the most evocative images from Roman Britain"; the goddess carries a spear and it is in her left hand, "thus, at one and the same time, contradicting the human 'norm' of right-handedness and offending Roman gender sensibilities"; and: "The image may encapsulate ideas of past, ancestral memory, belonging and a deliberate retro-ideology that served to empower and

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[22] Castelnuovo and Ginzburg, "Centre and Periphery".

[23] Martin Millett, *English Heritage Book of Roman Britain*, London 1995, 99. We also need to be aware that the shape of the Roman empire was very different from that projected in modern maps, inasmuch as patterns of urbanism, or lines of communication by water or road, placed some areas "closer" to Rome and the Mediterranean, or further away, than they literally are.

[24] See e.g. A.W. Epstein, "The Problem of Provincialism. Byzantine Monasteries in Cappadocia and Monks in South Italy", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 42 (1979), 28-46. To an extent Clark's lecture, Provincialism, attempts to re-evaluate provincialism from a connoisseurial perspective.

[25] R.G. Collingwood and J.N.L. Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*, Oxford 1937, 250.

[26] See e.g. the Great Britain fascicules of the *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani*, passim, and cf. Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, Chicago and London, 1989. For a more self-conscious aesthetic defence of Romano-British provincialism see Martin Henig, *The Art of Roman Britain*, London 1995, 11.

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reassure her producers and her worshippers."[27] The problem is that an object of this kind simply cannot articulate whatever resistant tendencies might have existed among the otherwise silent inhabitants of Roman Britain. Roman religious art easily accommodated foreign forms – including aniconism – and unfamiliar iconographies: there is nothing inherently counter-cultural about them (nor spear-bearing by female deities!). Moreover, supposedly "resistant" sculptures of this kind are indistinguishable from *bad* sculptures made by incompetent or unskilled carvers – an observation made convincingly by Catherine Johns.[28]

[16] Most writing on provincial sculptures now tends to assume that they must be evaluated on their own terms and not with reference to artistic customs of distant Mediterranean centres. This approach is surely correct. Nevertheless, as Johns shows, quality and skill are indeed important factors in explaining provincial art, provided that they are treated with suitable caution. We can point, as an example, to two military tombstones made in Cirencester in England at almost the same time, and set up by and for similar people, in the same place, to serve the same purpose (Figs. 7 and 8).[29]

[27] Aldhouse-Green, *An Archaeology of Images*, 25-26. Her point is developed further in her article, "Alternative Iconographies. Metaphors of Resistance in Romano-British Cult Imagery", in: Peter Noelke, ed., *Romanisation und Resistenz in Plastik, Architektur und Inschriften der Provinzen des Imperium Romanum* (*Acts of the 7th International Colloquium on Roman Provincial Art*), Mainz am Rhein 2003, 39-48.

[28] See Catherine Johns, "Romano-British Sculpture. Intention and Execution", in: Noelke, *Romanisation und Resistenz*, 27-38; eadem, "Art, Romanisation, and Competence", in: Sarah Scott and Jane Webster, eds., *Roman Imperialism and Provincial Art*, Cambridge 2003, 9-23.

[29] Henig, *Roman Sculpture from the Cotswold Region*, 45-46, no. 137; 46-47, no. 138.

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7 Funerary stela of Sextus Valerius Genialis, from Cirencester, ca. later 1st century AD, limestone, H. 2.1 m. Cirencester, Corinium Museum (photo: museum)

8 Funerary stela of Dannicus, from Cirencester, ca. later 1st century AD, limestone, H. 1.08 m. Cirencester, Corinium Museum (photo: museum)

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[17] The skill of the respective sculptors at producing a conventional Graeco-Roman image of a cavalryman riding down a barbarian varied strikingly. The first, for all its irregularity, is relatively naturalistic and dynamic; the other is coarser, simplified, more frontal, with distortions of scale and anatomy. The only likely explanation for these differences involves the availability of sculptural skills and the degree of demand for such skills, as Henig suggests.[30] In any case the technical quality and investment of craft involved is historically meaningful.

[18] There are two other important causes of provincialism. One is the general lack of demand for sculpture in the provinces, for it is broadly true that the quality of sculptures and the extent of classical workmanship is highest in those specific areas that produced the greatest number of works. The style of works is more diverse and their quality is lower in areas of low demand. The whole of Britain could be reckoned an area of low demand.[31] Secondly, an art historical concentration on *imagery* tends to obscure the importance of the stone sculptures themselves as objects. Their material presence, their permanence and monumentality, were possibly more important than anything that was carved upon them. What makes this all the more likely is that in certain parts of the empire, including much of Britain, stone monuments were not at all common. With these final considerations we must turn to the geography of provincial sculpture to learn more about who used it and where.

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The Geography of Provincialism

[19] My case-study is Britain, a province only fully annexed with the Emperor Claudius's invasion of AD 43, before which Roman-style figurative sculpture was little known.[32] Maps 1 and 2 show the distribution of Roman sculptural finds in Britain, on the basis of the Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani.[33] Maps have their own economy of truth, and there are inevitable risks in the interpretation of these ones. Besides the fundamental biases and failings in the underlying data, there are questions of interpretation: when are carved stones to be counted as "sculptures"? When are crude

[30] Henig, *The Art of Roman Britain*, 107-108.

[31] See also Peter Stewart, "*Totenmahl* Reliefs in the Northern Provinces. A Case-Study in Imperial Sculpture", in: *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 22 (2009), 253-274, esp. 268, 272-273.

[32] For a critical overview of the situation see Miranda Green, "God in Man's Image. Thoughts on the Genesis and Affiliations of Some Romano-British Cult-Imagery", in: *Britannia* 29 (1998), 17-30.

[33] The fascicules of *CSIR Great Britain*, vol. 1 (1977-), have been used, except for the north-west of England (shaded area), which will be the subject of a future fascicule by L. Allason-Jones and J. Coulston. Data for this area are provisional, being derived less systematically from a variety of publications. The *CSIR* fascicules represent a thorough and generally consistent, but not altogether comprehensive or up-to-date, survey of identified material in their respective regions. I am most grateful to Francis Grew of the Museum of London for making available the list of entries in the forthcoming south-east England fascicule. The points plotted on the maps include works in metal and in imported marble, but comprise overwhelmingly British stones. They exclude clearly modern and dubious works.

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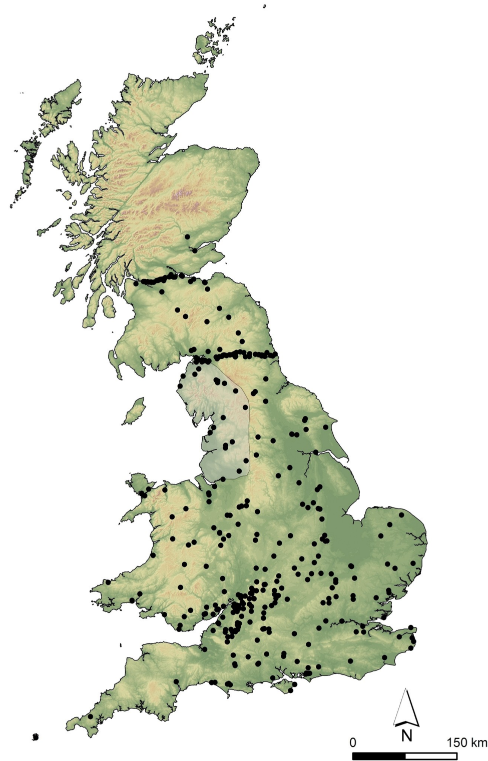
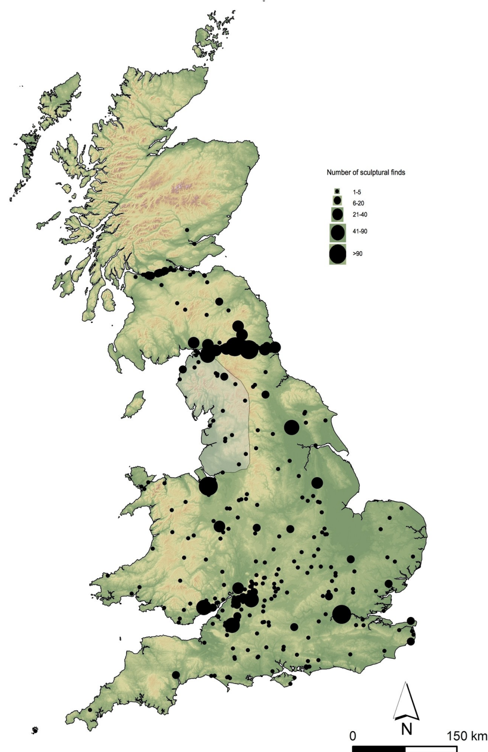
stone figures to be considered *Roman* sculptures? However, such problems do not significantly affect the patterns that emerge from these maps.



Map 1 Map showing find-locations of sculpture from Roman Britain (see note 33 above for methodology) (90m Digital Elevation Model: CIAT http://srtm.csi.cgiar.org)



Map 2 Map showing volume of finds of sculpture from sites in Roman Britain (DEM source as Map 1 above)

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[20] Some of the patterns are indeed striking. For Britain reveals at once what was true of the entire empire: that sculpture was not a more or less consistently diffused element of Roman culture in the more Romanized parts of the provinces, but rather the preserve of specific communities within the provincial population. Chief among these communities was the army.[34]

[21] The British maps are transsected by two clear lines of sculptural finds that correspond to Hadrian's Wall and the Antonine Wall. The lines are composed of aggregated findspots of numerous religious or funerary sculptures and other works set up in the second and third centuries by soldiers, chiefly auxiliary soldiers, and by connected civilians, at military sites along these defensive lines. One of the series of points that join the walls corresponds to military sites along the Roman road between Corbridge and Inveresk.

[22] Map 2 is more effective at demonstrating other aspects of the "human geography" of sculpture since its points are scaled to reflect the quantity of finds in particular areas. Now it becomes obvious that a large proportion of the province's sculptures are concentrated in the few major urban centres (most of which were at one time bases for legions). Besides London, which was the capital of the whole province from the later first century till its division at the start of the third, there is Lincoln, York, Chester, Wroxeter, Gloucester, Cirencester, Bath. The Roman legionary base of Caerleon is also conspicuous, as well as smaller towns such as Verulamium (St. Albans). This distribution partly reflects the accidents of survival (such as the grave stelae of Chester built into its late Roman city wall), and the consequence of modern urban development which has brought up considerable quantities of buried material since the later nineteenth century. But it also shows that provincial sculpture was a largely urban affair. The observation applies to Britain, but similar patterns could be found elsewhere.

[23] The concentrations can be explained in part – but only in part – by the functions that sculpture served rather than by varying degrees of commitment to sculpture as an art form. For in Roman culture the town was a place of public honorific monuments, architectural benefactions, and important civic cults; its fringes were often crowded with tombs and funerary memorials. These were the main purposes of sculpture in classical antiquity.

[24] Public portrait sculpture is a special case. Little survives from Roman Britain and it is generally underrepresented in the north-western provinces, despite Suetonius's claim

[34] On military sculpture and its styles see Natalie Kampen, "The Art of Soldiers on a Roman Frontier. Style and the Antonine Wall", in: Eve D'Ambra and Guy Métraux, eds., *The Art of Citizens, Soldiers and Freedmen in the Roman World*, Oxford 2006, 125-134. She stresses the need to consider the communities of sculpture-users in the provinces, and criticises discussions of military provincial sculpture in terms of "lack" (134).

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that the future Emperor Titus had received numerous statues and images there.[35] Even the inscribed stone bases that might attest to lost statues are few. One can conclude that the customs of civic euergetism that underpinned honorific statuary (statues were often rewards for public benefactions) never gained currency among the British elite. Public building works are indeed less well documented in northern Gaul, Germany, and Britain.[36] This is perhaps surprising, given the opportunity that the imported language of euergetism potentially afforded for mobility among provincial aristocracies (i.e. for short-circuiting established hierarchies). Statuary culture flourished in some other parts of the empire which had known no such traditions before the arrival of Roman rule (for example in south-east France and the Iberian Peninsula). It is even harder to explain why emperors' portraits are thin on the ground in Britain, though we shall return to them shortly. In any case, the public portraiture of the province was concentrated in the urban centres, as it necessarily was everywhere in order to achieve its maximum impact in celebrating the recipients of honours and ensuring that they remained implicated in public life.[37]

[25] The social geography of sculpture that is outlined by these patterns of distribution is interesting, if not perhaps very surprising. It has generally been assumed that there were variations in the usage of Roman-style art according to the degree of "Romanization" in specific regions or communities, though the map of sculpture in Britain exhibits particularly sharp contrasts (in comparison with the distribution of inscriptions, for example, or indeed the spread of mosaics, which is linked to rural villa-life and is therefore more even).

[26] However, these raw data conceal rather more curious trends which can be exemplified by focusing on the military patronage of sculpture. It may not be very useful to regard the Roman army as especially Romanized.[38] It comprised ethnically diverse troops with different functions, the majority raised in the provinces (but not necessarily those in which they served). There may have been considerable cultural diversity among the army, not all of which is obvious in the archaeological traces that they left behind. Nevertheless, much of the army was formed by citizen legionaries, it was commanded by Roman aristocrats, and many of its practices came from Rome. These included the use of Latin, the fondness for erecting inscribed stones and, as we have seen, the use of

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[35] Suetonius, Titus 4.1. On the lack of statues see Peter Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society*, Oxford 2003, 174-179; idem, "How Romulus Came to Bisley", in: *Apollo* no. 461 (July 2000), 15-19.

[36] See E. Frézouls, "Evergétisme et construction urbaine dans les Trois Gaules et les Germains", in: *Revue du Nord* 64 (1984), 27-54; T.F.C. Blagg, "Architectural Munificence in Britain. The Evidence of Inscriptions", in: *Britannia* 21 (1990), 13-31; Millett, *The Romanization of Britain*, 78-85.

[37] For these functions of portraiture see Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society*, esp. 136-140; idem, *The Social History of Roman Art*, Cambridge 2008, 101-105 (with further references).

[38] On the nature of the army's Roman status and identity see Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture*, 93-94; with reference specifically to military art see Kampen, *The Art of Soldiers*, 132.

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sculpture. The army accounts disproportionately for stone monuments, not only in Britain but in all the provinces.

[27] A closer examination of their patronage raises puzzles, however. For example, the armies on the Rhine frontier in Germany and the Netherlands were responsible for hundreds of stone funerary monuments. There was evidently a flourishing production of limestone and sandstone stelae at Mainz, Bonn, and Cologne. The stelae in these areas were almost exclusively made for soldiers. In different periods in the first and second centuries AD they bear relief sculptures of cavalrymen, or standing soldiers, portrait busts and – most popular of all – "funerary banquets": the *Totenmahl* reliefs that probably show the deceased reclining at ease in a comfortable afterlife (Fig. 9).[39] The stones testify to the popularity of figurative sculpture and empire-wide iconographical motifs like the banquet among many soldiers who could afford such monuments. What is strange is that this kind of imagery is relatively uncommon on the gravestones of the legionary soldiers serving in the same area. Hardly any of the documented banquet reliefs demonstrably belonged to legionaries: the iconography was clearly favoured by cavalry auxiliaries. In Galsterer and Galsterer's collection of inscribed stones from Cologne the majority of grave monuments of legionaries lack any more than marginal figurative decoration (ca. 5 out of 8 meaningful pieces) and the emphasis is on text, whereas both cavalry and infantry auxiliaries mainly have elaborated scenes (ca. 17 out of 19).[40]

[28] The implication is clear: that while substantial stone stelae were desirable memorials for those troops who had the means to provide them, the use of figurative sculpture upon them was overwhelmingly favoured by non-citizen auxiliaries raised in the European provinces, and eschewed by the citizen legionaries.[41]

[29] The legionaries' reticence may in fact reflect a reaction against the iconographical prolixity of their less well paid, non-citizen colleagues, while the use of elaborate iconography on the part of the auxiliaries may be aspirational. A similar case can even be made for funerary sculpture in imperial Italy, where extant sarcophagi, altars and stelae may disproportionately represent freedmen and those of a similar social milieu, while

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[39] See e.g. the German volumes of the *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani*; for typology see Hanns Gabelmann, "Die Typen der römischen Grabstelen am Rhein", in: *Bonner Jahrbücher* 172 (1972), 65-140; on banquet reliefs see e.g. P. Noelke, "Grabreliefs mit Mahldarstellung in den germanisch-gallischen Provinzen. Soziale und religiöse Aspekte", in: P. Fasold et al., eds., *Bestattungssitte und kulturelle Identität: Grabanlagen und Grabbeigaben der frühen römischen Kaiserzeit in Italien und den Nordwest-Provinzen*, Cologne 1998, 399-418.

[40] B. Galsterer and H. Galsterer, *Die römischen Steininschriften aus Köln*, Cologne 1975. My figures are approximate because of the difficulty of interpreting fragmentary stones, and many stones cannot be identified adequately. Veterans are omitted. Impressionistically, one can make a similar observation about other military tombstone on the Rhine.

[41] Note discussion of similar patterns elsewhere on the Rhine and Danube by Valerie Hope, *Constructing Identity. The Roman Funerary Monuments of Aquileia, Mainz and Nîmes*, Oxford 2001, 41-43.

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aristocratic funerary self-representation through sculpture was sometimes surprisingly restrained.[42]

[30] In Britain, a similarly unexpected development occurs in the funerary sculpture of the cavalry auxiliaries themselves. These mounted troops were brought from the Continent to Britain at the time of Claudius's invasion, and they apparently brought with them a type of funerary stela that was already common on the Rhine. The so-called rider-reliefs, which depict a cavalryman spearing a prone barbarian from his horse, seem to have been popular among the auxiliaries in Britain around the later first and early second century AD.[43]

[31] At that stage the imagery looses its popularity among the Rhine armies and is largely superseded by the un-militaristic banquet scenes (albeit frequently accompanied by representations of a cavalry horse with its rider or groom). The banquet imagery also begins in Britain at that time, but as far as inscriptions allow us to determine, the new imagery is used primarily for civilians, and often for women, who generally did not receive such monuments in the military areas of the Rhine.[44] The cavalry auxiliaries, meanwhile, almost cease to be represented altogether in the sculptural record although there is no reason to think that their numbers in Britain declined. In other words, in Britain, these auxiliary soldiers virtually drop out of stone culture at precisely the time that civilians on the fringes of the army adopt it.

[32] Trends of this kind could be pursued in many parts of the empire. Their explanations are bound to be complex, if not imponderable, and it is not my aim to explain them here. They are useful, however, in demonstrating a more general principle: that figurative sculpture in the whole empire was a patchy and unpredictable habit, not a straightforward manifestation of Roman cultural expansion or "Romanitas".[45]

[33] The forms of selectivity in the usage of sculpture that are outlined above resemble the pattern that has long been recognized in the Roman imperial use of stone inscriptions. For inscriptions are overwhelmingly associated with the more densely populated regions of Italy, Greece, and other parts of the Mediterranean coast, where their use flourished within urban monumental culture. Yet there is a temporal as well as spatial dimension to this bias. Stone inscriptions flourished above all in the 2nd and early 3rd century, before the political and economic turmoil of the third-century crisis nearly

[42] See e.g. Diana Kleiner, "Roman Funerary Art and Architecture. Observations on the Significance of Recent Studies", in: *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 1 (1988), 115-119.

[43] For overview see Marion Mattern, "Die Reliefverzierten römischen Grabstelen der Provinz Britannia: Themen und Typen", in: *Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* 22 (1989), 707-801, here 711-714.

[44] See Stewart, "*Totenmahl* Reliefs".

[45] To use a near-neologism that is endemic in discussions of Romano-British culture.

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ended monumental production altogether.[46] Meanwhile, on the fringes of the empire, inscriptions are most numerous in urban centres and military areas.

[34] The point is that this use of inscriptions is not as intimately linked as we might expect to the notional functions of texts or of monuments. It represents not the *need* to use epigraphy, but rather a cultural disposition to monumentalize. Describing this tendency and its growth in the western provinces Ramsay MacMullen coined the phrase that is now routinely applied to the imperial culture of inscriptions: the epigraphic habit.[47] We might equally refer to a sculptural habit among the varied populations of the Roman provinces. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that a relatively small proportion of any provincial population would have had any direct involvement in the making or purchasing of sculpture, perhaps even within those communities like the army for which sculptural production was a norm. A recently excavated Roman cemetery at Gloucester yielded 73 burials from the time of the legionary fortress there in the first century until the fourth century AD.[48] Only two stelae were found, both with figurative carving and inscriptions. One may suspect that the monumental invisibility of the majority at this site was typical, and not merely the result of accidents of survival.

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The Geology of Provincialism

[35] We have not exhausted the information offered by the distribution maps. For, besides the bias towards towns and military sites, there is one further concentration of sculpture, which is predominantly civilian and religious rather than military or funerary. It corresponds to the belt of limestone hills extending across England from Bath towards the north-east, including the Roman towns at Gloucester and Cirencester. The greatest concentration falls upon the Cotswold hills.

[36] The yellow, oolitic limestone of the Cotswolds is a coarse, Jurassic freestone of a kind widely sculpted in the European provinces of the Roman empire. Its coarse structure does not hold sharp details well and unless gesso is applied it can never have a smooth surface.[49] It therefore contributes to the rough "provincialism" of sculpture in this region.

[46] See no. 47 below.

[47] R. MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire", in: *American Journal of Philology* 103 (1982), 233-46; Stanislaw Mrozek, "À propos de la répartition chronologique des inscriptions latines dans le Haut-Empire", in: *Epigraphica* 35 (1973), 113-118. See also Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 77-105, on Gaul and the geography of epigraphy.

[48] The figure excludes the mass grave on the site containing more than 90 other individuals' remains from the later second century. See A. Simmonds et al., *Life and Death in a Roman City. Excavations of a Roman Cemetery with a Mass Grave at 120-122 London Road, Gloucester*, Oxford 2008, with 116-118 on the stelae.

[49] I am aware of no clear cases of extant gesso or paint on Romano-British sculptures, though it is assumed to have been used and survives on Roman sculptures elsewhere in Europe (e.g. from Carnuntum in Austria).

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Yet it has the advantage that it is soft to carve but develops a hard and durable surface. Cotswold stone is therefore good sculptural stone.

[37] The find-locations of Roman sculptures follow this superficial seam of stone very closely as it extends across western and central England, eventually petering out around Lincoln. Map 3 (which has uniform, superimposed points) offers a clearer picture of the relationship between sculpture and geology, with the sculptural finds tending to follow the boundaries of accessible stone, and the greatest concentration being the most productive stone source, the higher ground near the south of the Jurassic belt. This is, for exactly the same reason, the most attractive part of the Cotswolds: historically, styles of construction serve as very accurate markers of surface geology, and the distinctive limestone roofs and walls of the Cotswolds hardly extend more than a few kilometres from the source of stone. The same principle applies to other "stone villages" in modern Britain.[50] Building stone does not, as a rule, travel, except where other materials (principally wood) are unsatisfactory, where a special demand exists, and where there are suitable means of transportation in the form of navigable water. For example, Cotswold stone has periodically been brought by river to London, which does not have its own underlying building stone but has often produced an unusual demand for durable building materials.[51]

[50] See e.g. Brian Bailey, *Stone Villages of England*, London 1982.

[51] See now the important study by Kevin M.J. Hayward, *Roman Quarrying and Stone Supply on the Periphery – Southern England. A Geological Study of First-Century Funerary Monuments and Monumental Architecture*, Oxford 2009. Hayward's petrographic studies demonstrate some of the patterns of movement of British and Continental freestones in the south and south-east of England, where good monumental stone is lacking, and in the early period of the Roman province. They present sometimes surprising examples of stone movement, as well as the general attraction of proximate stone sources.

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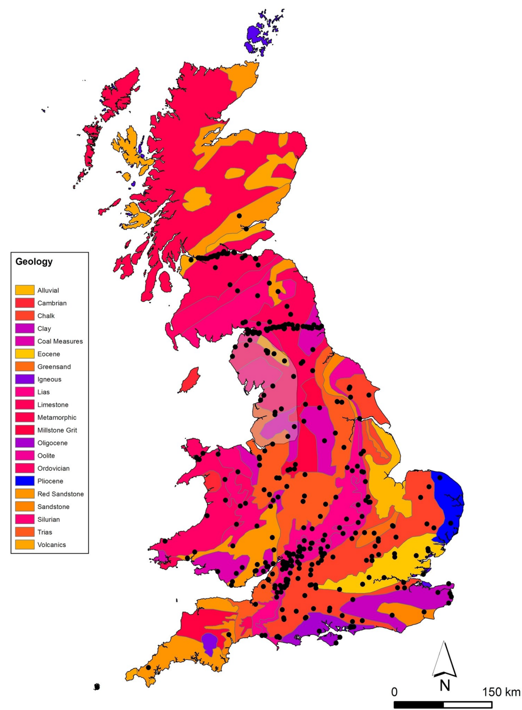

Map 3 Find-locations of sculpture from Roman Britain superimposed on geological map (geological background: EDINA/© Crown Copyright/database right 2010. An Ordnance Survey/(Datacentre) supplied service)

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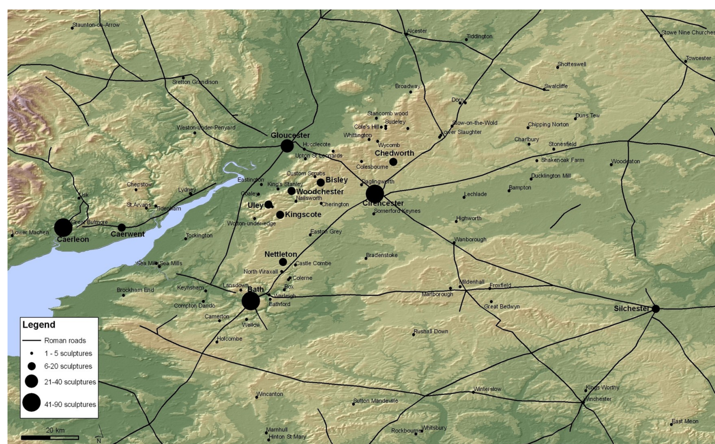
[38] This principle should not apply to sculptural stone to the same extent, since the quantity of material required is smaller. Yet the distribution map reveals an extraordinary correspondence between the sources of stone and deposition of sculptures (allowing for the fact that exact stone types and quarries have rarely been identified). The correlation is in fact closer than the map suggests, for many of the outlying sculptural finds can be dismissed from calculations. Of the twenty-two sculptures recorded in the lower terrain to the south-east of the Cotswolds as far as Silchester (Map 4), four are undatable "Celtic" heads or very simple carvings;[52] one is possibly modern; one porphyry head is probably a modern import.[53] Several of the pieces are in unusual or very local materials: chalk; green schist; even ammonite.[54] The limestone sculptures are generally very small, admittedly sometimes as a result of fragmentation; only three of the convincingly ancient works have a maximum dimension above 0.30m, and most would fall within the luggage limits for an international air passenger.[55] There is only one really substantial sculpture charted in this region: a limestone altar of Fortuna from Bampton in Oxfordshire (height 0.95m), which should way approximately 130kg.[56] It was found about 2km from the River Thames and 6km from the River Windrush, which could have facilitated transport of stone from the west. In any case, the limestone hills are less than 10km away.



Map 4 Detail of Map 2, marking sculptural finds from the west of England (DEM source as Map 1 above)

[52] B.W. Cunliffe and M.G. Fulford, *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani, Great Britain*, vol. 1, fasc. 2, *Bath and the Rest of Wessex*, Oxford 1982, 37 no. 135; 37 no. 136; 37-38 no.137; 38 no. 138.

[53] Cunliffe and Fulford *CSIR* I 2, 24 no. 91; 31 no. 113.

[54] Cunliffe and Fulford *CSIR* I 2, 28 no. 103 (chalk); 37-38 no. 137 (ammonite); Henig, *Roman Sculpture from the Cotswold Region*, 22 no. 61 (schist).

[55] Cunliffe and Fulford *CSIR* I 2, 34 no. 120; 27-28 no. 102; Henig, *Roman Sculpture from the Cotswold Region*, 12-13 no. 28. For the density of Cotswold limestone (ca. 2 tonnes/m^3) see A. Brooks and S. Adcock, *Dry Stone Walling*, revised edn. Doncaster 1999, 37-39.

[56] Henig, *Roman Sculpture from the Cotswold Region*, 12-13 no. 28.

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[39] However, even the more portable stones are surprisingly few in number outside the area of Cotswold stone. As a rule, the makers of sculptures virtually used the stone beneath their feet. Where suitable stone is was absent, even if it could be easily transported in small quantities, sculptures tend to be absent.

[40] The rule does not apply consistently. We have already seen exceptions in some of the large towns that grew outside geologically suitable areas, and London is the biggest exception of all. There are countless other situations across the empire in which special demand for stone prevailed over geographical impediments. Stone for sculpture or the sculptures themselves could travel.[57] But very generally speaking they did not. What holds for the Cotwolds can be observed elsewhere in Britain and the empire and recent studies have emphasised the close connection between sculptural finds and local availability of stone.[58] At Mainz on the Rhine, where hundreds of stone monuments and fragments survive, it was previously believed that much of the production of limestone sculpture depended on the quarries of the Lothringen area, near Norroy-lès-Pont-à-Mousson, some 200km away. Thanks to the Moselle and Rhine, it would seem that much stone did indeed make this journey, but petrographic analysis has now demonstrated that 38% of the sculptural stones identified (56% of funerary sculptures) were made from the tertiary limestone in the immediate vicinity of Mainz itself.[59]

[41] Classical art historians are usually preoccupied with the one stone that consistently defies the determinism of geology: marble. Thanks to the Mediterranean and the infrastructure of empire, by the Roman period marble was being transported in huge quantities over enormous distances, and partially or completely carved marble sculptures also travelled. Marble and sculptures were imported into north Africa and the Near East; Marbles from Greece and Asia Minor were shipped to Italy, though Italy had its own resources in the Carrara quarries of Tuscany.[60] Coloured marbles for decorative objects, architectural elements and veneers travelled even more widely.[61] Yet despite the

[57] The picture tends to be most complex where stone is not immediately available, or is transported from a variety of nearby sources. See e.g. Hayward, *Roman Quarrying and Stone Supply*; the forthcoming fascicule of the *CSIR* for south-east England (Francis Grew, pers. comm.); and e.g. Bojan Duric et al., "Stone Use in Roman Towns. Resources, Transport, Products and Clients", in: *Starinar* 56 (2006), 103-137, dealing with stone sources for Sirmium in modern Serbia.

[58] E.g. Melanie Jonasch, pers. comm., relating to her research on Gallo-Roman portrait stelae in Burgundy; M. McCarty, *Votive Stelae, Religion and Cultural Change in Africa Proconsularis and Numidia, 200 BC - AD 300*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Oxford 2010, 16-17; idem, "Réseaux d'idées. Routes romaines et géographie religieuse de l'Afrique du nord", in: *Africa romana* 18 (forthcoming).

[59] Claudia Stribny, *Die Herkunft der römischen Werksteine aus Mainz und Umgebung. Vergleichende petrographische und geochemische Untersuchungen an Skulptierten Kalksteinen* (*CSIR Deutschland* II.8 *Germania Superior*), Mainz 1987.

[60] Generally on this marble trade see Hazel Dodge and John Ward-Perkins, *Marble in Antiquity. Collected Papers of J.B. Ward-Perkins*, London 1992, esp. e.g. 13-22, 80-85.

[61] For coloured marble in Britain see: D.P.S. Peacock and D.F. Williams, "Ornamental Coloured Marble in Roman Britain. An Interim Report", in: M. Schvoerer, ed., *Archéomatériaux. Marbres et autres roches* (ASMOSIA IV), Talence 1999, 353-357.

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desirability that its appearance and carving qualities lent it, it is worth noting that its movement had its own patterns and limitations, its own specific markets, and that it also was susceptible to the gravitational pull of its geological origins.

[42] In Britain the tight correlation of geology and sculpture is particularly striking, even if we allow for social factors (for example a hypothetically higher degree of "Romanization" in the wealthy grazing lands of the Cotswolds, or distinctive religious practices in this zone, or the effect of the road network). There are other parts of the provinces where the habit of sculpture created demand and the demand was met by the most economical routes.[62] In Britain there are disproportionate gaps in the evidence for those regions which lack sculptural stone. What this implies is that people made sculptures in certain places because they could, and not simply because they were acculturated to Roman practices. The notion that the spread of classical visual culture could be arrested by such a mundane factor as geology is unsettling, for we have learned to be suspicious of geographical determinism in the history of art.[63]

[43] So what alternative explanations should be considered? The most important potential factor behind gaps in the evidence is the use of sculptural materials other than stone. Bronze was extensively used for statuary across the Roman empire, but because of its intrinsic worth and recyclability it never survives as well as stone sculpture.[64] Britain was rich in the main composite materials of bronze – copper and tin – and it is possible that works such as cult images or imperial statues were manufactured in bronzes to a greater extent than in Italy or provinces with a better marble supply. This would have had the interesting effect of altering the normal hierarchy of materials that seems to have applied elsewhere, whereby bronze (especially gilded bronzes) held special prestige.[65] Besides the several, substantial heads from bronze statues that survive in Britain, numerous small fragments such as fingers or pieces of horses have been discovered. However, it would be impossible to quantify the role of bronze, and given its use for statuary we would not expect it to affect the distribution maps of Romano-British sculpture very significantly.

[44] Bronze is less relevant to votive reliefs of the kind clustering in the Cotswolds. Bronze was not used for relief sculptures except for certain kinds of applied art (e.g. the decoration of furniture or door panels). Wood is potentially more important as a perishable substitute for stone in areas with limited geological resources. The possibility

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[62] See e.g. the case of Sirmium cited above: Duric et al., "Stone Use in Roman Towns".

[63] See e.g. Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*.

[64] See e.g. Andrew Oliver, "Honors to Romans. Bronze Portraits", in: Carol Mattusch et al., eds., *The Fire of Hephaistos. Large Classical Bronzes from North American Collections*, Cambridge, MA, 1996, 138-160. For surviving portrait bronzes see G. Lahusen, *Römische Bildnisse aus Bronze*, Munich 2001.

[65] See Jane Fejfer, *Roman Portraits in Context*, Berlin and New York 2008, 162.

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that votive relief sculptures similar to those in limestone or sandstone did exist elsewhere should not be discounted. Nevertheless, I am aware of no such evidence in Britain or elsewhere. Extraordinary wooden sculptures do indeed survive in the north-western provinces, for example at the sanctuaries at Fontes Sequanae near Dijon and Chamalières.[66] But these are sculptures in the round which owe relatively little to Graeco-Roman traditions and are not analogous to the stone sculptures that we have been considering. Therefore alternative materials probably had a minimal role in shaping the distribution of finds. Nor can the differential reuse of ancient carved stone in later periods have had any major impact this distribution.

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The Locations of Provincialism

[45] It will already be clear that the distribution of provincial sculpture, in Britain at least, resists any simple assumptions that may linger about Rome's position as an artistic centre and the reception of classical art on the "periphery". Yet even when we restrict our attention to unambiguous examples of the diffusion of classical art, the patterns of its movement can be surprising. One such example is the so-called *Totenmahl* reliefs mentioned above (Figs. 9-14). These funerary banquets are manifestly "classical" images, inasmuch as they come to the Roman empire from the Greek world. They had their origin in hero reliefs, but in the Hellenistic period the banquet became one of the most common scenes on funerary stelae. Outside the area of the Aegean, there was a constant production of them in Byzantion and then the Greek Black Sea cities until the third century AD, and during that time they were adopted through much of the Balkans, among the soldiers of the Rhine (from about the 70s AD), and thereafter in Roman Britain.[67]

[46] The consistency of their iconography serves to emphasise differences between regions as the banquet motif spread through the provinces. This allows us to see, for example, that the reliefs in Britain are both inferior in quality and more varied in iconography, than the flourishing production of Germania Inferior from which they are ultimately derived (Figs. 9 and 10). What we are seeing here is, in effect, a process of provincialization within one particular kind of classical art; but it occurs entirely within the

[66] S. Deyts, *Les bois sculptés des Sources de la Seine*, Paris 1983; On the religious significance of wooden sculpture in these regions see Aldhouse-Green, *An Archaeology of Images*, 88-102; Anne-Marie Romeuf, *Les ex-voto gallo-romains de Chamalières (Puy-de-Dôme). Les bois sculptés de la source des Roches*, Paris 2000.

[67] Although the iconography was used in Rome and in other regions it appears to have had little direct influence on the spread of the imagery in the northern provinces. See generally Johanna Fabricius, *Die hellenistischen Totenmahlreliefs*, Munich 1999; Katherine Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet. Images of Conviviality*, Cambridge 2003, esp. 103-110; Stewart, "*Totenmahl* Reliefs" (with further bibliography).

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provinces themselves, so that it is unhelpful to consider them in terms of Roman centre and provincial periphery.

9 Funerary Stela of T. Iulius Tuttius, from Cologne, ca. 80s AD, H. 1.11 m. Cologne, Römisch-Germanisches Museum (photo: museum, Inv. RGM Stein 16)

10 Funerary monument of Curatia Dinysia, from Chester, ca. 2nd century AD, sandstone, H. 1.10 m. Chester, Grosvenor Museum (photo: Grosvenor Museum, CWaC)

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[47] We can find the same process time and again in different localities. For example, the impressive, but crude stelae from Obernburg on the Main *limes* in Germany (Fig. 11) are reminiscent of banquet reliefs from Chester in England (Fig. 10), and within their own region they too represent a sort of provincialization of more sophisticated military monuments on the upper Rhine.[68]

11 Funerary stela of Giriso and Bibulia, ca. mid-2nd century AD, sandstone, H. 1.30 m. Obernburg, Römermuseum (photo: Manfred Eberlein, Archäologische Staatssammlung München)

[48] As a very largely provincial tradition of "classical" art, the *Totenmahl* reliefs are useful as a corrective to our assumptions about the role of Rome in "Romanizing" the provinces' art. Indeed, it has been pointed out that one kind of metropolitan marble sculpture is itself influenced by this provincial *Totenmahl* tradition: namely the monuments of the *equites singulares* in the capital. For these works appear to import and crystalize motifs that were already familiar in Germany, rather than drawing on the different and proportionally more limited *Totenmahl* imagery that already existed in the capital.[69]

[49] Something of the same complexity can be seen in the initial spread of the *Totenmahl* iconography from the Greek cities of the Black Sea to their Moesian and Thracian hinterland. Two different kinds of local "provincialization" occur among the

[68] See Stewart, "*Totenmahl* Reliefs", 272-273.

[69] A.W. Busch, "Von der Provinz ins Zentrum – Bilder auf den Grabdenkmälern einer Elite-Einheit", in: Noelke, *Romanisation und Resistenz*, 679-694.

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Totenmahl sculptures of this region. Firstly, within the Greek cities themselves the refined classicism of many of the *Totenmahl* relief contrasts with works like Tryphosa's stele which exhibits a non-naturalistic, linear style (Figs. 12-13, both from Odessos).

12 Funerary stela of Dioskourides son of Herakleides, from Odessos, ca. 2nd quarter of 2nd century AD, marble H. 0.80 m. Varna, Museum of Archaeology (photo: Rumyana Kostadinova, courtesy of museum)

13 Funerary stela of Tryphosa daughter of Xenandros, from Odessos, ca. AD 200, marble, H. 0.79 m. Varna, Museum of Archaeology (photo: Rumyana Kostadinova, courtesy of museum)

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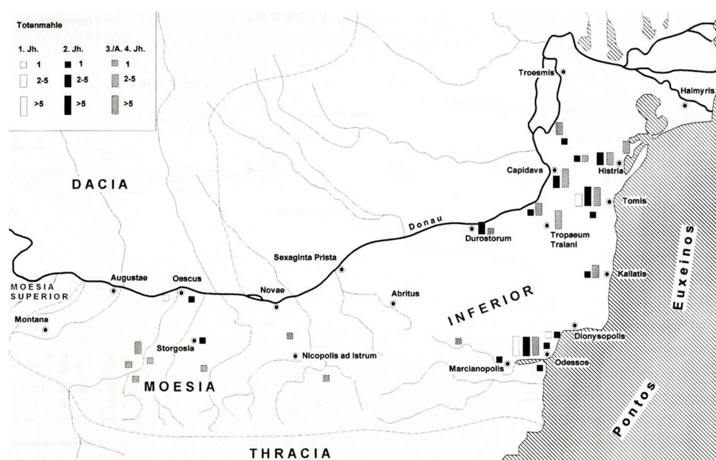
[50] The contrast illustrates the great spectrum of skills and degrees of adherence to classical norms within one deeply rooted provincial tradition. Secondly, within the Moesian interior we encounter cruder version of the classical imagery in the coastal cities, executed in local stone (Fig. 14). This work is closer to what might typically be considered "provincial". It is indeed the product of a sort of provincial fringe; yet it is the fringe of a Greek city under Roman rule, not simply the margin of the Roman empire.[70]

14 Funerary stela from Pleven (Storgosia), ca. 2nd half of 2nd century AD, limestone H. 0.78 m. Pleven, Regional Historical Museum (photo: Rumyana Kostadinova, courtesy of Varna Museum of Archaeology)

[51] The distinction becomes clearer in Sven Conrad's interesting analysis of sculptures in Moesia Inferior (Map 5).[71] We can see how imagery like the *Totenmahl* gradually spreads under Roman rule.



Map 5 Map of the distribution of *Totenmahl* reliefs in Moesia Inferior (after S. Conrad, *Die Grabstelen aus Moesia Inferior*, pl. 19, by permission)

[70] Examples from Sven Conrad, *Die Grabstelen aus Moesia Superior. Untersuchungen zu Chronologie, Typologie und Ikonographie*, Leipzig 2004, 132f, no. 22, pl. 25.3; 143 no. 62, pl. 42.3; 251 no. 470, pl. 60.

[71] Conrad, *Die Grabstelen aus Moesia Superior*, with diagram as his pl. 19.

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[52] This diffusion occurs because of Rome – especially the presence of the Roman army in the region – but it is not straightforwardly a military or a Roman phenomenon. Rome is the catalyst, but it is not the source, of this particular kind of "Romanization". What we are seeing in these examples is art that looks provincial, but whose provincialism is not straightforwardly linked to geography or to Roman political domination.

[53] If we return to England and the votive sculptures of the Cotswolds, we can find another instructive example of such local provincialism. Votives resembling the limestone altars to Mercury from Uley (Fig. 15) can be found all over the empire.

15 Votive altar from the sanctuary of Mercury at Uley, 2nd century AD, limestone, H. 0.44 m. London, British Museum (© The Trustees of the British Museum)

[54] The Uley altars are badly damaged, but it is still possible to see how crude carved and simple they were.[72] If found in isolation, as they often are, objects such as these seem to be good examples of provincialism on the edges of the empire. They adopt classical iconography, frequently a classical morphology, but they reproduce it in a simplified, often unskilled manner. However, in the case of the altars from Uley we happen to know more of their context. They were part of a constellation of votives relating to a much less obviously provincial-looking limestone cult statue of Mercury (Fig. 16).[73] Their provincialism, if that is what it is, must be understood within that relationship. These

[72] Uley altars: Henig, *Roman Sculpture from the Cotswolds Region*, 25 nos. 72-74; A. Woodward and P. Leach, *The Uley Shrines. Excavation of a Ritual Complex on West Hill, Uley, Gloucestershire, 1977-9*, London 1993, 94f.

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altars are not looking to Rome; they are not even simply looking to other Romano-British sculptures: they are satellites of the cult statue itself. That is their model – their own artistic "centre". This is not to suggest that their simplified classicism is not typical of the provincial art in general. The immediate context alone does not explain it. But it does complicate the picture of artistic diffusion which we might otherwise be inclined to construct from deracinated material of the same kind.

16 Reconstruction of the statue of Mercury from Uley, second century AD, limestone, H. ca. 1.8 m. Fragments in London, British Museum (drawing by Joanna Richards: after Henig, *Cotswold Region*, pl. 18, © Joanna Richards)

[55] The characteristics of provincialism that have been sketched above are certainly typical of sculpture in the provinces, but their occurrence is sporadic and depends on factors other than distance from Rome or highly "Romanized" regions of the provinces. With this observation in mind, it is worth pointing out that such sculptural provincialism can be found, albeit less frequently, in Italy itself and even in the vicinity of Rome. I refer here not to the characteristically non-classical traits in "Plebeian" or "Mid-Italic" sculpture (to use Bianchi Bandinelli's controversial terms), but rather to works that are wholly derived from the Hellenic, classical tradition yet display the same forms of provincialism found in Britain and other provinces.[74] We find occasional (poorly published) examples

[73] Statue: Henig, *Roman Sculpture from the Cotswolds Region*, 22 no. 62; Woodward and Leach, *The Uley Shrines*, 89-94.

[74] For "plebeian art" see Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, "Arte plebea", in: *Dialoghi di archeologia* 1 (1967), 7-19; idem, *Rome. The Centre of Power*, 51-71. Bianchi Bandinelli believed that "plebeian" art in Italy influenced certain provincial traditions, notably sculpture in the German and Gallic provinces which he termed, rather obscurely, "European art of Rome". This strand he considered to

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scattered around the municipalities of central Italy.[75] It is illustrated by the crude plastered-tufa statues of the early imperial necropoleis at Pompeii, and perhaps the process of "provincialization" is also implicit in the curious gods and mythological figures carved, no doubt by relatively unskilled masons, on Pompeii's public fountains, where rusticated versions of the refined iconography inside the houses were perfectly acceptable (Fig. 17). However useful "provincialism" may be as a label for the tendencies of provincial sculpture, examples such as these begin to undermine its value as a geographically determined concept.

17 Fountain relief of satyr (or possibly Endymion/Narcissus), from Pompeii, Via dell'Abbondanza (NW corner of Insula I 12), early 1st century AD, basalt (photo: author, by permission of the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei)

[56] Italian "provincialism" did not have to be merely the product of "provincial" regions of Italy or local stone-carving traditions. For example, at Luna, the port for the Carrara quarries, a marble relief for the god Silvanus was found which has much in common with sculptures on the provincial fringes.[76] In any case, the lesson of sculptural reliefs of this kind is that provincialism and the distance that it implies from metropolitan

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be artistically superior to the kinds of provincialism examined in this article. See Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome. The Late Empire. Roman Art AD 200-400*, London 1971, 105-171. Note also Bianca Maria Falletti Maj, *La tradizione italica nell'arte romana*, Rome 1977.

[75] See e.g. funerary stela from Forum Novum, built into a medieval building at Selci, 45km from Rome (Ray Laurence, *The Roads of Roman Italy. Mobility and Cultural Change*, London 1999, fig. 31).

[76] See Antonio Frova, ed., *Scavi di Luni II. Relazione delle campagne di scavo 1972-1973-1974*, Rome 1977, 314-316 no. 5, pl. 168,1. The catalogue likens this relief to works in Gaul and Britain. Cf. a similar relief of Silvanus from Ostia, through which much marble was imported to Rome: Museo Archeologico Ostiense, Aldobrandini Collection no. 142.

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norms were not limited to the provinces. In other words, provincialism happened anywhere.[77]

[57] The examples surveyed here reveal at least four different geographies of art which are in tension with each other. First, there is the physical distance of marginal provinces like Britain from the perceived centres of the classical tradition in Italy, Greece, and the Mediterranean. That distance is not quite how we imagine it through our cartographic projections of the Roman Empire: roads and waterways made some regions closer to the Mediterranean, while physical barriers such as mountains and forests removed other areas further than they appear today. But the distance is real, and for most people using sculpture in Britain or on the other fringes of the empire, specific Mediterranean sculptural prototypes would have been largely unfamiliar. Second, there is the cultural geography of sculpture-usage which to some extent overrode physical geography: sculpture was more likely to appear in quantity on military or urbanized fringes of the empire than it was in more civilian or rural regions much closer to the sources of classical art. Third, there is the limitation of geology, that in some parts proved not merely an obstacle to sculptural use but a key determining factor in the demand for it. Finally, there is a conceptual distance between naturalistic or refined works in the classical tradition and their provincialized imitations. That mental gap, which could result from differences of expectation as well as limitation in technical knowledge, could be quite independent of physical geography: the aesthetic loss or filtering that was involved could occur on the Black Sea littoral, in the hills of western England, or in central Italy itself, regardless of the proximity of refined classical models.

[58] There is another tension implicit in these distinctions – perhaps a methodological one – between *material* culture and *visual* culture. The disjuncture between the two has become increasingly apparent in recent approaches Roman art history; for studies of ancient imagery *per se*, which are often informed by literary studies, have become increasingly emancipated from the classical archaeology in which they were once embedded. The examples above show that provincial sculpture cannot in fact be understood as a disembodied field of imagery or as a visual language. It is shaped by material circumstances, whether by the determinism of geology or by the pressures of supply and demand. Yet in defiance of that observation is the fact that Graeco-Roman imagery eventually emerged in every part of the empire, sometimes, as we have seen with the *Totenmahl* reliefs, with remarkable consistency. There was indeed a "language" of imperial Roman art which argues against any retreat into localism. The same phenomenon in other aspects of material culture has recently been seen, anachronistically but understandably, as a form of globalization.[78]

[77] On the place of "popular art" within discussions of centres and peripheries in early modern Italy cf. Castelnuovo and Ginzburg, "Centre and Periphery", 49-51.

[78] Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture*.

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[59] Art history has often struggled to explain the mysterious pervasiveness of particular artistic traditions across geographical distances, so that the geography of art has produced sometimes unfortunate mystifying forces, in despite of contingent material factors: climate, blood and soil, *Kunstwollen* and *Geist*. This historiographical heritage should not discourage us from attempting to reconcile different kinds of artistic geography – the material and the cultural – for it is precisely the difficulty of doing so that makes the sculpture of the wider Roman Empire worth studying.

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