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SOCIAL DYNAMICS ON THE NORTHERN FRONTIER OF ROMAN BRITAIN

Summary

Despite much work on the frontier of Roman Britain, major questions concerned with society and settlement archaeology remain underinvestigated. Salient details of two major urban sites, Carlisle and Corbridge, both of which may shed further light on processes of settlement growth and decline, and which may ultimately contribute to a greater understanding of how the frontier worked, are summarized. At Carlisle, and probably also at Corbridge, settlement growth associated with forts was rapid and multi-tracked, but from the later 2nd century AD changes took place associated, perhaps, with enhanced status and a growing sense of community.

INTRODUCTION

Much of the literature on Roman frontier issues in Britain has been explicitly concerned with military matters such as regiments, forts, architecture and weaponry with social and economic matters being of lesser concern. On the other hand such matters have excited attention in Europe (Whittaker 1993; Elton 1996), and in some instances, as in Asia or North America, studies of frontier formation and the

implications for society, or for political frameworks and economic directions in comparatively recent times, has helped illuminate Roman frontier studies (Dyson 1985a and b).

In Europe, for example, recent work includes that of scholars working in northern France, Belgium, Germany and the Rhineland (Roymans 1990; 1996a, b; Haselgrove 1996; Willems 1983; 1984; Wilson and Creighton 1999) where excavation on both military and non-military sites, combined with an examination of textual evidence, is shedding much light on the extent to which Roman imperial policies impacted on local tribes. In Egypt Alston has used papyri from the Fayum to illuminate social relations between soldiers and civilians in ways not possible in Europe (Alston 1995; 1999).

Slofstra has also looked at the processes of acculturation building on a theory of communities proposed by the late Norbert Elias (Elias 1974; Slofstra 1983, 74-7). He was particularly concerned to examine the dynamics of relationships between peasantry and the state, a concept that had not previously been explored by Roman provincial archaeologists in Gaul or on the Rhenish *limes*. In northern England, where archaeologists continue to be preoccupied with empirical or historical, as opposed to theoretical, approaches, rural settlers tend to be referred to as 'natives' whilst the word 'peasant' is only used periodically (Salway 1981, 236). In fact archaeologists of Roman Britain seem wary of its use, rarely, if ever, adopting the word 'peasant' (Jones *et al* 1988; Barrett *et al* 1989; Higham and Jones 1975; Jones and Walker 1983). Yet, as Slofstra and others have pointed out, it is an extremely useful concept because, notwithstanding the differences between peasant societies across the world, it allows for a closer examination of the links between different levels and segments of society in agrarian communities (Dalton 1972; Slofstra 1983, 80-1). These are

certainly applicable to Roman Britain if, by peasant, we mean a small-scale producer using simple technologies relying mainly on what they themselves produce for their subsistence (Firth 1951 quoted in Dalton 1972, 386). However, as anthropologists would point out, peasantries are more complex than this. By the late Iron Age social structures in the north had clearly evolved beyond this point as is evident in the social implications that follow from the increasingly well attested widespread clearance of the landscape.

The low profile given to issues of social differentiation or settlement growth in northern England, and the absence of anything remotely like Roymans's 'holistic' approach (1996b), means that research inevitably lags some way behind work on the Rhenish frontier, with few English scholars apart from Higham and Hingley attempting to fill it. An important early contribution to Romano-British issues is that of Salway's overview, *Frontier Peoples of Roman Britain* published as long ago as 1965. In this baseline paper Salway set out salient aspects of the textual and archaeological evidence for *vici* and the *vicani*, larger settlements such as Carlisle and Corbridge, and aspects of material culture including buildings as they were known at the time (Salway 1965). A small number of more wide-ranging syntheses have also appeared, including Higham's survey of the northern counties to AD 1000 (1986) or Higham and Jones's *The Carvetii* (1985) as well as a stream of papers by the late George Jobey on 'native' sites [FN1].

Attention has been so firmly fixed on the progress of the Roman conquest into Scotland, and the way in which linear barriers like Hadrian's Wall functioned, to the extent that much remains unclear about the non-military sites, especially the towns and *vici*. Not the least of these problems is how far they were affected by changing imperial frontier policies. Despite progress made by the late Professor Barri Jones

and Nicholas Higham (Jones and Walker 1983; Higham and Jones 1975; 1985), on rural settlement, a recent assessment made with regard to work on *vici* in the 1980s and 1990s concluded that relatively little work had taken place on *vici* in the past 20 years or so (McCarthy 2002a, 111) with the result that the picture painted by Salway (1965) and later updated (1981, 611-14) remains a key point of reference. There have been no studies comparable with those in Germany by Sommer (1984; 1999).

Even less attention has been paid to settlement dynamics, especially with regard to the origin of settlements in the frontier zone, how they were sustained, what factors precipitated change, and why and when they declined. What happened to civilian populations during periods of military change, as for example, when Hadrian's Wall was built, or the frontier moved to the Antonine Wall in 139, and back again in the early 160s? How and why did *vici* develop outside fort gates? Were they, as Sommer suggests, laid out when the fort was planned (1999; 86-7), were they occupied at the same density all year round, or did some experience periods of population inflow or exodus connected with the movement of the local garrison? In northern England can we discern broad patterns of zonation extending outwards from Hadrian's Wall in terms, for example, of settlement morphology, wealth or indicators of acculturation as can be seen at different scales on frontiers elsewhere (Roymans, 1990; 1996; Lattimore 1962). Can we also identify individual settlement exploitation areas and subsistence strategies based upon soil type, topography, fluvial histories and ecological potential in conjunction with archaeology as attempted, for example, by Bewley in northern Cumbria, Mercer and Tipping in the Bowmont valley or Dockrill and others in the Northern Isles (Bewley 1994, 65-81; Mercer and Tipping 1994, 1-25; Dockrill *et al* 1994).

These and other matters, including issues of communal development building on the work of sociologists such as Elias (1974; 1982), and developing ideas advanced in the Urban Hinterlands Project (Perring 2002), now need to influence the agendas for research in northern Roman Britain. Elias drew attention to the variety of communities but noted that in ancient societies they acquire visibility only if it is recognized that they (the communities) go through particular developmental stages (1974 xv). This was an important point in the development of community theory with regard to ancient societies that has not, so far, been matched in Romano-British studies. Haynes has also discussed the idea of community within the Roman army noting, as with Elias and social scientists, that communities transcend institutions and that ultimately people are more influenced by relationships than formal structures (1999, 9 *et seq*). Alston, working with Eqyptian material, notes that whilst soldiers retained their own identities webs of social ties developed which bound them to the local populations (1999, 180, fn 17). Such networks, then as now, could result in the gradual obscuring of cultural identities as friendships and relationships led to the adoption of names, dress, speech mannerisms, language, decorative preferences and other elements.

At present our perception of the frontier people is imprecise and unfocused. We have little idea as to who they were and how they might have reacted both to the initial Roman penetration and subsequent events. There is a need to clarify this, and determine what, if any, interdependencies existed between the peoples of the north. Certainly, Elias's definitions (1974, xv-xx) of what constitutes simpler, undifferentiated societies, factors such as the idea that the 'division of labour' concept was undeveloped, or the tendency to act communally in matters of livestock management or defence, for example, merit consideration. It seems to me that such

matters are not unimportant if we are to arrive at a balanced view of the Roman conquest and the nature of societies in the first half of the [st] millennium AD.

Within the scope of this paper it is not possible to address all the issues that arise from this discussion. It aims, rather, to contribute to the debate by first of all exploring two important frontier sites, Carlisle and Corbridge, both of which were regarded by Salway as exceptional because they appeared to be significantly larger than *vici,* and both having received a very great deal of archaeological attention (Fig. 1). It is contended that the issues raised by these sites could have important lessons for understanding social dynamics on the northern frontier, and it begins to address the problems alluded to above.

The status of neither Carlisle nor Corbridge is certain, but both appear to have been 'towns' in the mid- to late-Roman period, if not earlier. Corbridge, with the name-element *Corio-* could well have had some hosting or administrative function in relation to the *res publica* within which it was located, perhaps as a civitas capital (Rivet and Smith 1979, 323; Burnham and Wacher 1990, 60). Otherwise its claim to be a town is based mainly on the size of the site, exceeding that of most *vici*, together with the nature of the buildings currently revealed on the 'main site'. Carlisle, probably twice the size of Corbridge, may very well have been the civitas capital of the Carvetii, the name of which, *civitas Carvetiorum*, is recorded on a tombstone at Old Penrith (RIB 933) and a milestone at Brougham (Rivet and Smith 1979, 301; Burnham and Wacher 1990, 54; Shotter 1996, fig. 37).

Following discussions of Carlisle and Corbridge, an attempt is then made to summarise the archaeological evidence (Table 1) which is then used to formulate models for urban growth (Table 2). Finally, the models are discussed and conclusions set out.

CARLISLE (*LUGUVALIUM*)

Carlisle lies on the south bank of the River Eden and astride the major routeway northwards into Scotland. Unlike Corbridge, Roman Carlisle is concealed beneath the medieval and modern town (Salway 1965, 41-5; Charlesworth 1978; McCarthy 2002a, b) as a result of which the archaeology is far less accessible [FN 2]. Excavations since 1977 (Fig. 2) have yielded deeply stratified, well preserved deposits in different parts of the town and provide some detail which may also be applicable to Corbridge.

Pre-Roman Iron Age activity has not been identified in the immediate vicinity – indeed recognizing sites of this period west of the Pennines is difficult in general. Even so there are hints that there may have been a focus for Iron Age tribes nearby including the place-name, *Luguvalium*, attested on a writing tablet from the mid 80s, and which commemorates a major Celtic deity, Lug, as well as a palimpsest of crop marks a short distance to the northwest. Below Carlisle itself, apart from plough marks and lithics, the only hint of pre-Roman activity is the possibility of a double-ditched enclosure identified only by geophysical prospection, thought to be earlier than the Roman fort which itself is known to be of Cerialan date (McCarthy 2002b). The choice of this site by the Romans could, therefore, have been dictated as much by it being an existing focus of activity, as for its strategic potential.

In AD 72-3 a turf and timber fort was built, probably by forces under the command of Petillius Cerialis, on a promontory overlooking the confluence of the Rivers Eden and Caldew (Fig. 3). The southern gate, defences, western defences, barracks and parts of the central range have been located, and a number of dendrochronological dates, together with coins, confirm the Cerialan date. The fort,

occupied by an *ala* and estimated at around 5 acres (2ha.) in size, remained in use until the mid-4th century albeit with modifications and some reconstructions.

At an uncertain date, but possibly within the 70s or early 80s, a ditched annexe was added south of the southern defences. It appears to have been devoted to a range of fort-related functions including, perhaps, repair and maintenance of equipment, and the coralling and slaughter of livestock (McCarthy 1991, 21; 2002b, 73).

Within the first 25 years, a period during which the name *Luguvalium* is attested in correspondence (Tomlin 1991), many other activities took place at Carlisle. A metalled road leading south from fort and annexe was lined with timber buildings, some of which have been found some 600m to the south. Dating from the late 70s they consisted initially of open-fronted structures, similar to those at Red House, Corbridge, but they were replaced in the 80s or 90s by a close-set arrangement of rectilinear buildings that resemble domestic accommodation perhaps for veterans although none are specifically attested epigraphically [FN3] These remained in use until the early 2nd century when they were pulled down and their plots briefly abandoned (McCarthy 1990, 365).

To the east of the fort/annexe further activities were also taking place, from the late 1st century on the eastern limits of the settlement in what is now known as The Lanes. Here the land seems to have been divided into two zones (McCarthy 2000, 55-6). At the southern end a zone of relatively extensive properties containing rectilinear timber buildings set within hedged and fenced yards has been identified including a building utilising timbers felled in AD 93-4, which overlies an unenclosed roundhouse thought to be early Roman in date. Activities in this zone involved livestock illustrated by animal feed, and wood-working, evidenced by off-cuts, and domestic accommodation (McCarthy 2000, 18-31).

In the the northern zone, on top of fragmentary remains of early buildings, is a substantial 'military' style structure tentatively identified as a *praetorium* or *mansio* (McCarthy 2002b, 56; Black 1995, 23-4, fig. 1.10) attributed to the reigns of either Hadrian, or possibly, Trajan, on the basis of small amounts of pottery, including Black Burnished ware. This building, together with another *mansio*-like structure, enjoyed only a short life before being deliberately demolished and its site covered with burnt destruction material. The whole northern zone was then occupied by extensive timber buildings, the fragmentary plans of which resemble plans of the vexillation fortress at Longthorpe, or some in the *retentura* at Corbridge. This whole area is tentatively designated as an 'official' zone from which military and or administrative functions were conducted. Indeed, it may not be too far fetched to associate the area with Annius Equestor, the *centurio regionaris* based in Carlisle and associated in the Vindolanda archive with Luguvalium (McCarthy 2002b, 76; Bowman and Thomas 1983, 107-10; 1994, 221-2).

Meanwhile, to the south and east of the core settlement a palimpsest of forts and/or temporary camps was erected, probably around the turn of the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. All seem to have had a short life before being superseded by a 'planned arrangement' of rectilinear buildings with access lanes and yards fronting the main Roman road south in Botchergate. By the mid 2nd century Carlisle may have expanded to around 80 acres (33 ha.) in area.

The archaeological record contains hints of a shift in direction in Roman Carlisle probably from the mid-2nd century on (Fig. 3). To the south, at Collier Lane, an enigmatic linear and embanked feature has been interpreted as an aqueduct against which substantial deposits of midden waste accumulated. To the north, in the mid-Roman period, an area of wetland on a palaeochannel of the River Eden was

reclaimed with extensive dumps of clay before being built up. The fort itself remained in use throughout, albeit modified and later reconstructed in stone, but the annexe was replaced by other structures which included a very large, multi-roomed stone structure of sufficient size to be a public building at Abbey Street. On the eastern side of Carlisle, in the Lanes, an attempt was made to enclose the settlement with earth and timber defences, but the project was abandoned probably in the 3rd century To the south and in the east strip-houses and larger town houses were built and remained in use with additions and changes to the end of the 4th or into the 5th centuries AD. An extensive bath-suite, either part of a *mansio* or a bathhouse was built and some new roads laid out.

CORBRIDGE (*CORIOSOPITUM*)

Some 40 miles to the east of Carlisle is Corbridge, a place that has been examined many times since Leonard Woolley first commenced work there in 1906. Located on a small spur overlooking the north bank of the River Tyne, it is an extensive site (Fig. 4) which today lies beneath agricultural land but with its central area (the main site) laid out for public display. Slight traces of prehistoric antecedents to Roman Corbridge include lithics, a roundhouse (below Site 11), plough marks and palisaded enclosures at Bishop Rigg a short distance to the west, but dating and further details are generally lacking (Jobey 1979). There is no evidence so far to suggest that the site was unusually significant in prehistoric times, and this may imply that the Romans' choice of this site was dictated largely by strategic convenience.

The Roman town of Corbridge is approximately 40 acres (16ha.) in extent (Bishop and Dore 1988). It originated as a fort in about AD 86, succeeding the earlier supply depot at Red House, a short distance to the west (Hanson *et al* 1979). From

then to the mid-Antonine period the forts were reconfigured or modified on several occasions (Bishop and Dore 1988; Burnham and Wacher 1990, 58-62). Defences have been investigated and other excavations have located the disturbed remains of central range buildings including the *principia*, whilst barracks have been found in the *retentura*. In the 160s the site was levelled and later a very substantial stone building (Site 11) was erected along with many stone-built dwellings, workshops, temples, and military 'compounds' fronting metalled roads (Fig. 4). The length of time over which this building programme extended is unknown, as is the full extent of the rebuilding. In the fields beyond the main site aerial photographs show extensive, but as yet undated, built-up areas in which there are roads, lanes, boundaries, strip-houses and occasionally other slightly more elaborate structures.

Much speculation has surrounded the large building known as Site 11. At approximately 76m square it occupies the key central position in Corbridge overlying the *principia* and barracks of the earlier fort. Consisting of ranges of similar-sized rooms around a courtyard, this stone-built structure completely dominates the plan of Corbridge (Bishop and Dore 1988, Figs. 3-5). Its date of construction, period of use and function are very poorly understood, not least because early excavations and programmes of consolidation by the former 'Ministry of Works' have effectively removed all later deposits. The later history of Roman Corbridge is, therefore shrouded in uncertainty. In the end, perhaps in the 5th century, Corbridge was deserted and the medieval market town and modern village grew up about a kilometre away. In the meantime the religious focus was firmly established at Hexham in the 7th century.

Table 1: see appendix

CARLISLE AND CORBRIDGE DISCUSSION

The archaeological evidence at Carlisle is clear. A fort was established in the early 70s (Annetwell Street), an annexe (Castle Street) was attached to it and a number of 'zones' of activity developed on adjacent sites. These included an 'official' area to the east (Lanes North), enclosed properties close by (Lanes South) and 'strip' buildings placed 'check-by-jowl' to the south (Blackfriars Street).

A significant change can be detected from the middle Antonine period on. There are hints of new roads, together with large, stone public buildings (Abbey Street, Market Hall), and other public works such as land reclamation (Civic Centre) and the provision of a water supply (Collier Lane) is also indicative of a growing confidence in Carlisle and its future by the inhabitants. Indeed, it implies a degree of civic pride. But this phase of growth may not have taken place as a single event; the dating currently available is insufficient to determine the chronology of activities, and the most that can be suggested is that a period of civic pride commenced in the mid 2nd century and may have continued for sometime. The ambition implied by public works was tempered when some schemes, such as the defence project (Lanes South), were reined back. One can only speculate as to why this happened. The hinterland was not especially rich, so it may have been simply a case of ambition outstripping funding capability. At a private level, however, we can see that one town house on the eastern side of Carlisle was progressively enlarged throughout this time to include a hypocausted room and a probable first floor by the later 4th century. At least one other town house continued to be used into the 5th century as a solidus of Valentinian II was found sealed in the hypocaust below a number of refloorings (Keevill *et al* 1989).

Corbridge also commenced with a fort which also underwent multiple reconstructions until, like Carlisle, a major reconstruction took place in the middle

Antonine period. Thanks to Bishop and Dore we now have a better understanding of the locations of, and the changes to, the Flavian to Antonine forts. But, despite the long history of archaeological exploration we get very little sense as to whether occupation and changes in the forts is reflected in extra-mural settlements although work at sites such as Carlisle, Old Penrith or Vindolanda suggest that it will have been present (McCarthy 2002a; Austen 1991; Birley 1977). From the 160s the requirement for a garrison at Corbridge, at least in the sense of a quingenary unit accommodated in the conventional way (cf Bishop and Dore 1988; Burnham and Wacher 1990), seems to have been judged unnecessary. Whether the so-called 'compounds' were intended to fulfill a military function is not known, but in planning terms the new post-160s arrangement owes relatively little to its antecedents although one or two features, including the Stanegate (*via principalis*) retained the same position as in earlier arrangements. It is possible, for example, that the demolition of the forts left the (hypothetical) extra-mural settlements untouched and that the rebuilding programme was 'fitted' into the remnants of the street plan that survived. That Site 11, variously interpreted as a market place (*macellum*), store building or forum was an original element in this rebuilding seems likely on the grounds of stratigraphy and dating (Bishop and Dore 1988, 105, 139-40; Burnham and Wacher 1990, 60) but its size is significantly out of proportion to the rest of the town plan, and its apparent abandonment could be taken to mean that the civic fathers withdrew support, perhaps because they could not afford it. On the other hand, given that the centre of Corbridge was clearly a very busy place with street-frontages being a prime location, it stretches credibility to envisage Site 11 as remaining wholly unoccupied during Corbridge's zenith. On the opposite side of the Stanegate to Site 11 the frontage appears to have

been more modest in scale both before and after the insertion of two compounds into the existing pattern of buildings.

TOWARDS A MODEL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Table 1 attempts to summarise the archaeological data from Carlisle and Corbridge and they form the basis for a model for social change which is set out in Table 2. Although forts are key installations at both sites, at Carlisle, and almost certainly Corbridge as well, they are only one element, the others being made up of a mixture of people including 'natives'. The tables, therefore, cover the period of, and are concerned with, the *transition* from what we might suppose to have been highly segmented or undifferentiated societies into a state system with more centralised controls and decision-making processes.

Table 2 interprets the data in Table 1 and marries it with assumptions made about the pre-Roman Iron Age. Here they are set against a range of headings that anthropologists and social scientists,as well as archaeologists, would recognize as being key forces involved in social change (Elias 1974, xx-xxi ; 1982; Mennell 1992, 65; Slofstra 1983). These are themselves based on a range of sociological and historical studies focusing on frontier developments in other places including the American colonies and China (Horn 1988; Lattimore 1962).

The dynamics of society in Roman Britain are most clearly expressed in archaeological evidence, especially that which concerns individual site histories, building forms, artefactual and ecofacual remains and settlement morphologies. From these, to which can be added occasional textual references, it is possible to draw inferences about diachronistic factors such as social change, integration, identities,

population density, economic trends and linkages. This is what Table 2 sets out to achieve.

Two dates have been chosen to express the changes. The pre-Roman Iron Age date refers to a point prior to the arrival of the Romans in the 1st century AD. The Tyne and Tees valleys have yielded some information for this period but in the north-west this is a time for which there is little direct evidence in either the record of field monuments, excavations or casual discoveries (McCarthy 1995, 491-2; Haselgrove 2002, 55-7; Hingley 2004). Given this low level of information assumptions have to be made. For example, in the case of the northwest it is suggested that the landscape was populated by small-scale farmers and that society was organised as a fairly flat hierarchy of food producers whose primary aim was subsistence. This may not apply across the Solway Firth in Dumfries and Galloway, however, where there is a wider range of settlement size and type, as well as some spectacular Iron Age metalwork perhaps indicating a more developed hierarchy. In north-east England Iron Age sites show variations in settlement size from single- to potentially multi-household sites (Haselgrove 2002, 57-63) possibly betokening the existence of a strongly developed social hierarchy, especially in the areas of Durham and the Tees valley. Does the absence of such evidence point to a lack of social differentiation as Willis suggests (1999)? On the other hand, this region has yielded imports of Gallo-Belgic and Gallo-Roman ceramics of the 1st century AD at sites other than the oppidum at Stanwick (Haselgrove 2002, 67-8; Willis 1999). Whilst social structures and exchange mechanisms may not have been as advanced as in southern Britain, there are subtle hints of changes taking place in the 1st century AD.

The second date extends from the mid to late Antonine period AD 150-175 to the mid-3rd century, say AD 250. By the start of this phase both Carlisle and

Corbridge had already been in existence for around 75 to 100 years, and had passed

through a number of important stages. This is the point *by which* the criteria set out in

the left column will have begun to change, but the start of this also marks the start of a

phase of increasing maturity in the local communities at both sites

Table 2: see appendix

At neither Carlisle nor Corbridge is there any evidence of substantial pre-

Roman settlement, although there are indications at Carlisle that land was being used.

Here, on the eastern side of the settlement, a metalled trackway flanked by fields led

towards the river crossing, whilst elsewhere there is an indication of open land

perhaps implying pastoral farming (McCarthy 2002b; Keeley 1990, 315-6). However,

it is abundantly clear that in the north generally there were significant clearances

during the Iron Age and that crop husbandry was well established (Dumayne and

Barber 1994, 171; Mercer and Tipping 1994; Hanson 1996; van der Veen 1992).

Settlement in the vicinity of both sites is to be expected and a number of enclosures

have been located within the vicinity of Corbridge, although they are currently

undated.

Exchange

At present we know little about exchange networks in this area in the pre-Roman Iron

Age. There is no evidence for coinage in the north and it is assumed that, like many

Celtic societies, wealth was reckoned in numbers of cattle, and that this formed a

basic unit of exchange. Similarly, there is very little evidence in the north generally,

and none at all in the north-west, to suggest that pre-Roman societies had much of an

acquaintance with 'exotic' goods from the Mediterranean world before the mid 1st

century AD (Willis 1999; Haselgrove 2002, 67-8). It is only at this point that samian ware, and other fine ceramics are found at the oppidum at Stanwick, North Yorkshire, and farmsteads in the Tees valley. Trade in more mundane, but essential, items such as querns and sea salt has also been recently recognized in the north-east and given the probable importance of Meols, Cheshire, as an emporium, it is highly likely that exchange networks also penetrated the north west England and south west Scotland (Willis 1999, 100-1; Matthews 1999,181-90).

Traditional methods of exchange, doubtless including cattle, gifts and barter, were probably not entirely supplanted by a money economy and taxes. Finds of Roman coins, common in the urban centres, forts and *vici*, are so rare on rural sites that the extent to which coinage was ever used outside the main areas of romanization is questionable. Initially, it is possible that coins did not circulate more widely than amongst the community of military, veterans and some of their immediate contacts. What value may they have held for the indigenous groups who had no previous experience of cash transactions? The probability is that in the north there were multiple exchange mechanisms operating and that the impact of market forces outside these foci was negligible.

Manufacturing

In the absence of production sites in this region during the pre-Roman Iron Age manufacturing is assumed to have been undertaken at a very low level, perhaps on an as-needed basis. The arrival of the Romans did not signal the arrival of large-scale manufacturing except, perhaps, to a limited extent in a military context, but mass-produced goods including samian ware, and many copper-alloy items were introduced and flooded the markets in forts, *vici* and towns. The idea that locally manufactured goods was made for more than a single outlet from the 1st century AD is attested by

the discovery of locally-made ceramics at a variety of sites (McCarthy 2002b, 122-3). In addition there were occasional military manufactories (depots) as at Brampton, Cumbria, broadly comparable with the legionary works at Holt, Denbighshire, whose products may also have penetrated the civilian market.

Much of the cultural material circulating in the romanized centres was undoubtedly made by specialists such as bronze-smiths, blacksmiths, glass-workers, and other craftsmen whose products appear repeatedly on urban and military sites across Britain. Some of this took place in forts or annexes, as seen at Carlisle, but some, such as wooden artefact manufacture, also took place outside (McCarthy 1991; 2000, 29, 62; McCarthy *et al* 2001). It is impossible, however, to determine whether the mode of production was domestic, tributary, or tax-based (Perring 2002, 12-14).

Environment

The effects of cultivation, pastoralism and the use of wood, timber and other resources on the natural environment is impossible to quantify for the pre-Roman Iron Age, but the records of dendrochronology at Carlisle and pollen sequences from mires in the northern military zone show that there had been much clearance in the centuries leading up to the arrival of the Romans (McCarthy 1995; Hanson 1996). Local disruption will have occurred because the arrival of large numbers of troops and their horses and other livestock will have placed increased demands on local supplies. This is an issue that has exercised scholars for sometime (Breeze 1984; McCarthy 1995; Bishop 1999; Kreuz 1999). The question is not whether the areas, whether northern England or in Germany, were capable of supplying the army, but it is the extent of the incomers' impact on the natural resources and society. For example, the simple requirement for building materials involving substantial cubic metreages of timber and vast amounts of coppiced roundwood whenever a fort was constructed will have

affected local stocks considerably, not to mention the demand for fuel for industrial

processes. Over time, however, whilst the amount of land under cultivation and used

for grazing or as hay meadows increased to meet local demand, especially in the

vicinity of urban centres, forts and *vici*, the impact on woodlands may have become

less evident as stocks of alder woodland in the valleys regenerated.

Diet

Nothing is known about the pre-Roman Iron Age diet in NW England directly, but

there is good evidence from the north-east and elsewhere showing a diminishing

interest in emmer wheat, whilst spelt wheat and barley were the principal grain crops

(Huntley and Stallibrass 1995, 37-42, 123-33; van der Veen 1992). From the 70s AD

on excavations have yielded evidence for the secondary processing of cereals in

Carlisle whilst a late 1st and 2nd century farmstead about 1 km away has produced

evidence of primary grain processing (McCarthy 2002b). The extent to which pulses

and dairy products formed a significant part of the diet is unclear, but although game

and fish are such minor parts of bone assemblages that they can be effectively

discounted as regular contributors to diet, at least within the romanized areas,

Stallibrass has warned that local societies may not have been averse to new

introduced species (Huntley and Stallibrass 1995, 132). The Romans imported olives,

grapes, garum(fish oil), wines and probably bread wheat and some had a penchant for

pork. These represent an increase in the variety of foodstuffs available, but insofar as

the excavated data can be interpreted, there are hints of variations in patterns of use

across the north (ibid., 58-9, 156-7). Excavation at places such as Carlisle shows that

they may have been eaten by many parts of the community, but the regularity with

which they were consumed and the consequent improvements in vitamin and calorie

intake is less clear. At the very least we might imagine a greater degree of conviviality from time to time!

Livestock are abundantly represented in the archaeological record at Carlisle with cattle, as usual, dominating assemblages. Stallibrass has indicated the possibility of a restricted cattle gene pool (Stallibrass 2000).

Language and literacy

Brittonic dialects which were part of the 'Celtic' group of languages are likely to have been spoken, but as few words survive it is only possible to hypothesise about speech. Jackson has drawn attention to the probability that there were dialectical differences in pre-Roman Britain, and highlights Cumbric, from which only three words survive, as being one possible example (Jackson 1953, 7-10). The greatest influence on local languages, however, was by way of soldiers and officials drawn from many places in the Mediterranean and continental world. These certainly brought with them not only Latin, but a multiplicity of other foreign languages and dialects. The incorporation of Latin 'loanwords' into local speech, such as *pontem* for bridge, was particularly significant but, as Jackson has noted, speech patterns are unlikely to have been affected as those of Latin and British are very similar (Jackson 1953, 80-1).

Unlike southern Britain or the continent, the arrival of the Romans heralded the introduction of the written word in the north as attested in the archives from both Vindolanda and Carlisle. These provide ample testimony as to the sheer volume of documents that must have been present within a very few years of the arrival of the governor Cerialis in around AD 71. Throughout the Roman period, as Thomas has asserted, Latin letters and numerals, were being written and scribbled by all and sundry, and there is no reason to suppose that the ability to communicate in writing, and in Latin, was confined to the military or administrators (Thomas, 1998, 35-6).

What is less clear, however, is the extent to which literacy skills extended downwards in the social scale or outwards from the army. Whilst most of the Carlisle writing tablets, styli, seal boxes and inkwells are known from relatively early deposits in the fort and annexe, there are some from 2nd and 3rd century domestic contexts (Padley 2000, 107-9).

Settlement

In northern England and southern Scotland pre-Roman Iron Age settlement was generally limited to single-household enclosures and hill-top settlements containing many houses. There is some variety within the class of single-household enclosures (RCAHM 1997; Willis 1999; Haselgrove 2000; Hingley 2004) but not enough is known to enable hierarchies of settlement to be identified, nor what they would signify. The hillforts, such as Ingleborough and Almondbury (West Yorkshire), Yeavering Bell (Northumberland), Carrock Fell (Cumbria), The Moyle and Burnswark (Dumfriesshire) or Eildon Hill North (Borders) are generally underinvestigated and lacking in dating evidence.

The Romans introduced great variety and complexity into settlements with the establishment of forts, towns, *vici* and, further south in Yorkshire, the growth of nucleated villages, such as Grassington in Wharfedale. They also introduced rectilinear buildings where round houses had been the norm, the use of dressed stone and ceramic tiles, architectural elaboration in the form of columns with elaborate bases and capitals, the idea of specialist spaces (rooms) within dwellings, wooden drain pipes, floors with boards on joists, glazed windows, as well as the commemoration of the dead with gravestones, mausolea and associated monuments.

Assertiveness

The network of Roman forts in the north, as well as the anti-Roman faction within the Brigantes (Tacitus, *Annals* XII, 32-6), suggests that there was an ever present threat of hostilities which ultimately led to the Romans taking control of the region. Indeed, one might read into the presence of a *centurio regionaris* at Carlisle, referred to in a text from Vindolanda, the idea that the prospect of hostilities required additional policing measures. Alternatively, it may be that the 'native' elite was too inexperienced to be administratively useful. A dispersed population lacking in much of a hierarchy could experience difficulty in making decisions on behalf of anyone apart from their own families – hence the need for the imposition of strong leadership. In other contexts it is not unknown for the attitudes of the colonisers to be determined by the colonised (Willems 1989, 37-8).

After the governorships of Cerialis and Agricola the most persuasive indication of 'trouble' is, perhaps, that of a war thought to have involved the northern regions in about AD 118 and commemorated in 119 on the reverse of Hadrianic coins with the image of a subdued Britannia. In subsequent decades the theatre of operations first moved north, to the Antonine Wall, and then back again in the 160s to the old Hadrianic frontier. Thereafter the only hint of trouble is in the appointment from time to time of governors with reputations for restoring order elsewhere, individuals such as Sextus Calpornius Agricola. In the 3rd century, apart from the Severan campaigns which mainly affected the east coast of Scotland, affairs seem to have been peaceful. Does this imply strong leadership by individuals with the authority to prevent outbreaks of hostilities?

Besides being an indicator of ambition, assertiveness is also a characteristic of a growing sense of confidence in the community. Whereas in the early days of Roman settlement, a miscellaneous mixture of individuals and families drawn from different

areas and backgrounds may not readily form a community prepared to work together, as is evident from the experiences of many colonists in America during the late 16th and 17th centuries. However, the implementation of 'public' schemes in Carlisle and Corbridge is an indicator of the existence of individuals in the community, if not in the institutions, who were confident in its success and the future.

Governance

There is little evidence for leadership and governance in northern Britain during the pre-Roman Iron Age apart from the pro-Roman Brigantian Queen Cartimandua and her husband Venutius. Details of these two are sketchy but their opposed views with regard to the Romans, and their divorce prompted armed intervention. They clearly had a lordship function which, in the case of Cartimandua, probably extended over more than 20 years, but it is impossible to determine precisely how they exercised it. In some parts of the Celtic world, as in Ireland or amongst the Batavi, or in more recent times amongst American Indians, apart from waging war and the upholding of martial values, leadership status was largely symbolic, but in the case of Cartimandua it was also political because of Roman support.

Unlike south-eastern Britain, the lack of evidence in parts of northern settlement archaeology, especially the north west, for elite sites could suggest that decision making was confined to small kin groups managing the agrarian cycle, dealing with personal relationships and disputes, rather than engaging in inter-tribal let alone international politics. The Romans transformed this first by their very presence and the imposition of state-organised military rule, and then at some point during or before AD 105 by the appointment of a military-based *centurio regionaris*. This was a post with some form of administrative oversight of the *territorium* centred on Carlisle, the evidence being documented in the Vindolanda writing tablet number

22 which refers to '…Annius Equester, centurion in charge of the region at Luguvalium…'. (Bowman and Thomas 1983, 110; 1994, 221). It is the earliest reference to this command in Britain. The significance of the tablet containing this information is the implication that the local commander at Carlisle felt it necessary to delegate policing matters in his area, perhaps because it was very extensive, or because of perceived threats. In either case the centurion could have had other soldiers (*regionarii*) working for him in different parts of the territory as happened in Lower Moesia (Speidel 1992, 140) [FN4]. If then, at a later date, civital status was awarded to the area, as many scholars suppose, we have further evidence of the delegation of administrative duties to the local elite amongst whom was Flavius Martius, Senator in the Civitas Carvetiorum who was buried at Old Penrith (RIB 933) [FN5].

Governance in the hands of the local elite remained feasible as long as the state supported by the military was in control. Once that was removed, probably in the late 4th century, the *raison d'étre* of the towns and their supporting structures proved to be too weak to continue and we enter a period of social, economic and administrative disintegration. Doubtless some of the more powerful figures in the old order, including possibly families whose forebears had held military positions of authority as well as senior decurions, survived to form new power bases or fiefdoms. But it took over 200 years from the end of the 4th century for the process of reintegration and realignment of social dependencies to begin to settle down. This anarchic period only really achieves a degree of visibility from the later 6th century on in the north.

Material expression

The absence of any significant artefactual assemblages of the pre-Roman Iron Age in NW England is unlikely to be due solely to a low level of site investigation. More

plausible is that it was an aceramic society in which cultural expression was manifest mainly through the use of organic materials, as well as verbally and symbolically in the landscape. The Roman arrival introduced a very wide range of new consumer goods amongst which are brooches, jewellery, belt fittings, cosmetic-related items, textiles, tools, furniture, and, doubtless, fashions in clothing and hairstyles. In the nascent urban centres, such as Carlisle outside the fort, and *vici*, such goods seem to have circulated rapidly amongst all sectors of the population, possibly, thereby undermining any prestige value they may have had formerly [FN6] in the days of Cartimandua. Beyond these areas, however, the take-up of new ideas is less clear and may have been very limited for some parts of the available packages. Whether this was due to cultural resistance by the 'natives' or whether an invisible barrier operated around the forts, *vici* and 'urban' centres which absorbed most of that which was supplied, is not clear. The debate as to what the acquisition of these goods meant to their wearers or users is not resolved.

Social change

Because there is little evidence for major settlement foci or any form of hierarchy, especially in the northwest, it is suggested that many, if not most, farmers were of similar status possibly holding land and resources in common, a feature of some upland areas in Cumbria during medieval times (Winchester 1987, 87-92). If the communal organisation of resources, which might include, for example, the protection of crops against wandering livestock, was indeed the case for pre-Roman communities, it was surely disrupted by the Romans who had their own agenda. Strict military controls and new sets of dependencies with which people had to cope were introduced, and the onus for initiatives may have shifted towards the individual rather than the community. Amongst the manifestations of individuality may be cited an

emphasis on property ownership. The evidence for the latter in Carlisle is that of buildings and yards separated from others by hedges and fences and interpreted to indicate the existence of single social units with land held in severalty, as well as the ubiquitous 'strip buildings' (McCarthy 2000, 21). Indeed, it is possible that the idea of the 'strip' building may be seen as the architectural expression of individual ownership or tenancy.

Social differentiation

Within a tribal structure in undifferentiated societies, and where there are few obvious signs of ranking, the majority of tasks are performed by most of the population most of the time (Elias 1974, xxi). The introduction of state controls and the imposition of new constraints will have brought with it divisions of labour and the development of hierarchies for which there had been no prior need. In such circumstances social differentiation within communities is enhanced as individuals are accorded, or take on, specific tasks or roles. There may arise elements of competition where opportunities for advancement present themselves. Ties with former kin groups may give way to new social alignments and dependencies created by an emerging 'urban' class. Within this the stronger individual, say a member of the *ordo*, becomes the protector, sponsor or client of the weaker, the provider of services. Although, in later societies these dependencies are characterized as 'feudal' with the main characters as lords and bondsmen, the claim here is not that social relations in Roman urban centres were 'feudal', but rather that the emergence of urban life once again shifted the emphases in social relations leading to dominant individuals able to exercise a degree of what Elias refers to as 'social power' (1982, 62-3).

DISCUSSION

Work at Carlisle and Corbridge presents us with important detail with regard to reconstructing the growth of urbanisation at the very edge of the Empire, as well as developing an understanding of social dynamics in this region. Both towns are artefacts of the Roman conquest and occupation of the north. They existed to house and support their garrisons as well as acting as bases for other operations. Tablet 22 in the Vindolanda correspondence shows that there was a senior official, the *centurio regionaris*, whose title implies a wide-ranging administrative or policing role over the '*regio*' of Carlisle. Indeed it is possible that the '*regio*', perhaps even the idea of the Carvetii, was itself also an artefact of the Roman occupation, although that cannot be demonstrated in this instance and will probably never be known. The role of Corbridge at this stage is unclear apart from being a fort, but the possibility that it also enjoyed a regional remit from the Flavian-Trajanic period onwards cannot be ruled out in the light of the picture at Carlisle.

The establishment of major centres as at Carlisle and Corbridge had the potential to attract non-military personnel including some traders and local farmers, as well as retired soldiers who could double-up as reserves in times of emergency. The results of some excavations in Carlisle set out in Table 1 can be interpreted in this light and with that in mind attention is drawn to the existence of the fort/annexe, buildings referred to as a *mansio* or *praetorium* and differing urban layouts ranging from close-set gable-end-on-street properties to larger, widely spaced, hedged and fenced enclosures all present in the first 50-75 years of occupation.

During this phase development at Carlisle was characterized by rapid growth, it was multi-tracked, it was almost certainly ethnically diverse, and the urban layout on the eastern side of the settlement was subject to fairly rapid changes. Some of this

took place against the background of advances into, and then withdrawal from, Scotland with all that implies in terms of numbers of troops and their horses.

Some of these points can also be matched at Corbridge and at both in the mid to late Roman periods, by contrast, the layout seems to have achieved greater stability. perhaps encouraged by civic investment and some overarching authority such as may be exercised by an ordo and decurions. Both sites contain hints of a grid of insulae, as would be expected in civital capitals, although that at Carlisle is admittedly based on tentative interpretations of small scale investigations. Public buildings can be identified at both sites and both were clearly occupied by a range of people from artisans and farmers to a more wealthy group whose houses included hypocausted rooms. There was a school of sculpture, if not also a school of gem cutters, at Carlisle, but in neither case is there any evidence for mosaics or tessellated pavements, nor for opulent villas in the neighbourhood. On present evidence, then, the local elite lived in the towns or vici although that is not to say that they lacked interests outside.

This period was probably the zenith in the fortunes of both Carlisle and Corbridge coinciding with an apparent prolonged period of peace on the frontier itself. At York there is also evidence of change from the mid-2nd century when 'civilian' settlement began to expand (Monaghan 1997, 839, 845). Colonia status was probably conferred early in the 3rd century by Severus and/or Caracalla who were based in York from AD 208-211 and, insofar as the limited explorations south-west of the fortress can reveal, further expansion and public building is probably to be associated with the same period (Monaghan 1997; Ottaway 1993).

Elsewhere, the idea that a growing confidence in the ability of the authorities to permit government by the civitates may be reflected in the archaeology of public and private buildings as witnessed at Carlisle and Corbridge, is less easy to determine.

At the important site of Aldborough, the Brigantian capital near Boroughbridge, there is quite simply insufficient information.. At Catterick, where much archaeological activity has taken place in the extensive *vicus* south of the River Swale, buildings were converted into stone early in the 3rd century and the area enclosed by stone walls late in the century when a grid of insulae was laid out (ibid; Wilson 2002). Wilson has drawn attention to the considerable extent of the so-called *vicus* at Malton/Norton (over 20ha excluding the fort), making it larger than many small towns and probably had a key economic role in the region (Wilson 2003, 266). Other places in Yorkshire including Malton, Adel, Doncaster and Castleford also, doubtless, had significant economic roles (ibid).

The changes at Carlisle and Corbridge were at once sharp and subtle. Sharp, because the Romans introduced much that was new and alien to local societies. Subtle, because the system facilitated a shift in emphasis to the individual as may be seen in Table 2. It was one which allowed individuality and ambition to assert themselves and thereby create the psychological contexts in which new ruling elites could emerge in the towns and *vici*.

The public buildings, metalled roads, classical columns and capitals, dedicatory inscriptions, even something as simple as the use of dressed stone, proclaimed the benefits of embracing the ways of the *imperium*. They served to reinforce the authority of the Roman systems and formed what Alcock has termed 'memory theatres' (Alcock 2001). They formed the setting within which the townspeople may have enjoyed a degree of success, but we also have to face the inescapable conclusion from the rural areas that the apparent success was not shared by the natives' whose way of life in many parts of the northern frontier region continued with little archaeologically detectable change from the Iron Age.

Footnotes

1. For a bibliography of Jobey's work see Miket and Burgess 1984, noting especially Maciness's paper.

2. Before the 1970s some small-scale investigations had taken place and there was a strong antiquarian interest in Roman antiquities during the 19th century (Charlesworth 1978). The first large-scale excavation commenced at Castle Street in March 1977, followed by work at Blackfriars Street from July 1977 (McCarthy 1990), and thence a long series of investigations elsewhere in the town centre.

3. Although no veterans are specifically attested epigraphically at Carlisle their presence is not entirely implausible as they are known elsewhere in the frontier zone, as at Chesters (RIB 1459), Old Carlisle (RIB 887), Old Penrith (RIB 935), Kirkby Thore (RIB 770) and Greta Bridge (RIB 748). The Ravenna Cosmography names *Bresnetenaci Veteranorum* (Ribchester) as a veteran settlement (Richmond 1945, 21). The attribution of the buildings at Blackfriars Street to veterans is entirely speculative. It is based on buildings that differ in plan and construction technique to those attested elsewhere in late 1st century Carlisle, and the relatively rich artefact associations.

4. Officers with this title are occasionally attested elsewhere in Britain as in the 3rd century at Ribchester (RIB 583, 587) and Bath (RIB 152). Seven dedications at Montana in Lower Moesia were erected by *regionarii* operating under the command of a *centurio regionarius* in the 2nd century (Speidel 1992, 140). Richmond thought that the existence at Ribchester of an officer with this post 'wholly exceptional' in the

military north (1945, 25), but the Vindolanda tablet shows that this was not the case. Elswhere in the eastern Empire centurions of the district representing both the state and the army are attested (Alston 1995).

5. It is thought that Carlisle was the *Civitas Carvetiorum* although this has not been directly attested epigraphically (Charlesworth 1978; Rivet and Smith 1979, 301; Burnham and Wacher 1990, 54). It is also thought that the grant was awarded in the 3rd century but the archaeology suggests that significant developments on a civic scale were initiated earlier, in the later Antonine period.

6. Haselgrove makes the same points with regard to southern Britain and in the context of settlement in northern Gaul (1996, 175).

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Caption. Land-use table for Roman Carlisle and Corbridge

Table 1
Land-use in Carlisle and Corbridge

Date	Fort	Annexe	Blackfriars St	Lanes South	Lanes North	Other sites in Carlisle	Corbridge (after Bishop & Dore 1988)
pre-70s		p r o b a b l e		f i e l d s	–		land-use uncertain
71-2	fort built						
By early 80s		first usage	storage	roundhouse	?		
mid 80s	demolition/ rebuild	buildings		activity	?		
late 80s		abandonment	road from south established domestic	roads to north and east established	?		Primary fort
early 90s				buildings	buildings		
mid-late 90s	modificatns	new buildings	domestic	domestic/farming/craft	?		modifications
100-110	demolition/ rebuild	new layout	abandonment		official zone	fort to east (3) fort to south (4)	demolition/ rebuild - Secondary fort
110-120s			storage	domestic/farming	praetorium abandonment		
130s-140s		?	new buildings	ditto	military-style buildings	suburb (?planned) (5)	Rebuilding in stone

Date	Fort	Annexe	Blackfriars St	Lanes South (1)	Lanes North (2)	Other sites in Carlisle	Corbridge (after Bishop & Dore 1988)
mid-late 2nd	modifications	domestic	hiatus domestic/craft	ditto	domestic	possible aqueduct (6) land reclamation (7) tip for refuse (8)	fort abandoned/ demolition new layout (granaries & Site 11, temples, workshops, compounds, roads, housing)
200	new fort	?	domestic	domestic	domestic	baths/?mansio (9) public building (10)	
250				defences started/ then abandoned	domestic		
300			domestic	domestic	domestic	?	
350	abandonment	?	domestic	?	domestic	?	
400-500	barracks/squatting principia/activity	? ?	buildings	?	abandoned	?	

Site names: (1) Lanes South, large area – multiple sites; (2) Lanes North, large area – multiple sites; (3) Spring Gardens Lane;
(4) Botchergate; (5) Botchergate; (6) Collier Lane; (7) Civic Centre; (8) Collier Lane; (9) Market Hall; (10) Abbey Street/Tullie House

Caption: Table illustrating a range of dynamic forces that may induce social change
(using data from Carlisle and Corbridge).

Table 2
Changing social dynamics in the Roman north

PRIA
AD 150-250

(urban communities)

Time —————————————————————————————→

Dynamics

Exchange   currency - cattle
       money + other goods
           method - gift/barter
       cash/gift/barter
           individual basis (?tribute)
       individuals + market forces + tribute + taxation

Manufacture   household production
       individual workshops
(after Peacock 1982)

Environment   significant exploitation
       greatly increased exploitation

Diet   limited range
       wider range (some exotics)

Language &   local dialects
       multiple dialects + Latin
literacy   non-literate
       partial literacy

Settlement   mostly dispersed farms
       nucleated + dispersed
(outside Carlisle &
       (forts + vici + farms)
Corbridge)

Assertiveness   martial attitudes limited
       peaceful
          (weak leadership)
       (strong leadership)

Governance   localised   centralised/military
            centralised/delegated

Material   limited range (no imports)
            wide range (many imports)
expression

Social change   communal
            individual

**Social
differentiation** low