IV. SPOTLIGHT ON NEW RESEARCH

By WILL BOWDEN

Kitching, P. J. 2024: *Raising Terror? A Systematic Analysis of Archaeological Evidence and Interpretation into the Purpose of Hadrian's Wall*. Durham University; supervisors: Robert Witcher and Richard Hingley: paul.j.kitching@durham.ac.uk

How is evidential reasoning conducted in archaeology to enable us to refine our understanding of the past? This thesis explores this question using Hadrian's Wall as a case study. The function of the Wall remains a controversial topic and has fallen from favour in recent research. However, not least given the Wall's continuing importance in modern discourse, the question of function remains pertinent. This thesis collates and examines the archaeological evidence for the Wall, including how that knowledge has itself been constructed, and how it corresponds with multiple working hypotheses. This approach aims to mitigate bias, ensure multivocality and encourage reflexive thinking.

The research examines existing interpretations of the Wall and tacks between them, drawing out consistencies to generate a new interpretation centred on deterrence. The latter considers the Wall as a means to inspire awe and enable punitive action, focusing on the cognitive and perceptual elements of Roman power. By examining both the theory and prevalence of deterrence in classical antiquity this research seeks to assess the Wall from a new perspective, but one nevertheless rooted in the Roman experience. Examining the Wall's capacity to inspire awe and terror, rather than as a static demarcation of the limits of imperial pretensions, can challenge the dichotomy in Roman scholarship between the archaeology of conquest and post-conquest *limes* studies.

The thesis aims to capture the ongoing debates surrounding evidence and interpretation and use these as a catalyst, rather than an obstacle, to further research. The inherent subjectivity of archaeological data and theory does not negate a testing approach; rather, examining the relationship between a number of theories and the available evidence can challenge assumptions, prompt new avenues of research and contribute to the continuing discussion around frontiers and artificial boundaries.

Hurt, N. 2024: *Roman Folding Knife Handles in the Northwestern Provinces: A Study of Geographic and Social Distribution and Iconographic Significance*. Kings College London; supervisors: John Pearce and Will Wooton: nwhittington613@gmail.com

This thesis is intended to address the lack of synthetic study of Roman folding knife handles since the publication by Eugen von Mercklin in 1940, which is both theoretically outdated and deals with a small number of poorly contextualised examples. It engages with current approaches to small finds and with the ongoing debates around Romanisation and identity to re-evaluate assumptions that have been made in previous studies. The core dataset is a sample of folding knife handles from excavations and museum collections in northwest Europe, collected from online databases and physical catalogues and reports. This is not meant to be an exhaustive catalogue but represents the maximum number of examples collected from the material available to the author.

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The thesis offers a general characterisation of folding knife handles, especially the well-documented iconography, but also the geographical and social distribution; unfortunately comment on chronological distribution is limited by lack of detailed contextual information. Three case studies allow deeper investigation of particularly well represented sections of the data set: the iconographical group of hare and hound; the geographical region of Trier; and the context of burial goods. The final discussion aims to put folding knife handles in the wider context of Roman provincial culture and society, investigating how folding knife handles were produced and sold, the role of folding knives as social objects, and the consumption of images in the Roman provinces.

Van Der Meulen, B. 2024: *A Holistic Approach to 'Barbarian' Migrations: Cultural Transformations in Germania Secunda*. Cardiff University; supervisors: John Hines and Hella Eckardt: VanDerMeulenBS@cardiff.ac.uk

Studies of the Late Roman Lower German frontier have often focused on the evidence for Germanic migrants from either burials, material culture or settlement forms. This thesis adopts a multi-variate approach combining data on settlements, finds and metallurgy in both Germania Secunda and Germania Magna to present a more complex picture. A long-term comparison of structural evidence, archaeobotanical data and handmade pottery from rural settlements challenges the role of migration in the changes observed in the Late Roman settlement landscape. Instead of distinct migration events, this thesis argues for long-term interactive processes such as trade, exchange and multi-directional mobility. Dating evidence, spatial distributions and find contexts of 4,540 civilian and military copper-alloy dress ornaments were examined.

Some objects traditionally linked to specific social groups, such as Germanic women, are shown to have developed simultaneously across the study area, reflecting the formation of a Late Roman regional style of dress that incorporated 'Germanic-style' elements. The deposition of military-associated dress accessories increased in Germania Magna in the fifth century, which may reflect veterans; belts are predominantly deposited *pars pro toto* in burials in Germania Magna, and occur relatively frequently in graves of women. Systematic pXRF analysis of 686 objects showed standardisation and control in the alloying and casting stages of the *chaîne opératoire*. Consistent differences in lead and tin contents were found between military- and civilian-associated objects, indicating that military belts and brooches were manufactured on a larger scale and in more centrally overseen workshops, which the comparison of dimensional standardisation supported. Decoration of non-Kerbschnitt military belts was variable, suggestive of a lack of centralised oversight. No major chronological changes in composition or standardisation of military belts were identified, countering previous narratives of increasingly localised fifth-century production.

Abdi, S. 2024: *Creating Rural Communities: Imperialism, Processualism and Ontogenesis in Southern Roman Britain*. University of Leicester; supervisors: David Mattingly, Jeremy Taylor and Will Bowden: sahal.m.abdi8@gmail.com

In the last twenty years, commercial archaeology in Britain has rapidly increased the amount of data, narratives and evidence that has been discovered and produced. In relation to Roman archaeology, this has meant that a wealth of data has emerged for the rural activities of communities during the Roman period, helping to decentre older narratives focused on elite

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consumption, villas and urban structures and instead refocusing attention on the lives of the rural majority.

This thesis aims to continue this trend by using the results of the Roman Rural Settlement Project (RRSP) which collated all the grey literature and commercial excavation of Roman rural settlements to understand the emergence of communities in southern Roman Britain during the period of Roman rule.

The thesis develops an original theory of communities, with inspiration drawn from a variety of different theories including postcolonialism, complexity theory and Marxism, before exploring the nature of rural communities by considering three major themes; Processualism, Imperialism and Community Rituals by comparing two regions of Roman Britain: Kent and Hampshire. The aim is to understand the relationship between the socio-material and the cosmological beliefs of these systems, with the aim of elucidating how new cosmologies emerged in the imperial period, a concept defined as ontogenesis. By demonstrating that cosmologies can be developed through rigorous analysis of the social, material and political economy of communities, the thesis demonstrates that how communities conceptualised their world and their place in it is of vital importance to any archaeological project.

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