‘Mediterranisation’ of Celto-Germanic religion

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Introduction

The pre-Roman religion of the Celtic and Germanic tribes of north-western Europe is very hard to study. Before the coming of the Romans, Germanic peoples left no written sources, no inscriptions to their gods (no inscriptions of any kind whatsoever in fact) and they left only very little sculptures of their gods, or representations of a different kind. There is evidence for a pre-Roman native tradition of dedicating wooden statues at shrines, which has been extensively studied by Simone Deyts.[1] Unfortunately wood is hardly the most durable material for sculptures. Very few of the ancient wooden sculptures are left and though Deyts has done an admirable job at studying what remains, the surviving materials are not sufficient to make much more than educated guesses about pre-Roman religion in north-western Europe. This situation changes however, after a period of intense contact with the Roman Empire, which resulted in the conquest of large parts of Celtic and Germanic territories and continued interaction between independent Germans and Romans in the *limes* territories, peaceful and otherwise.

Roman soldiers and civilian settlers brought with them the Roman epigraphic habit, which also extended to religion. North-western Europe became littered with huge amounts of inscriptions, many of which were religious in nature. Similarly, the Romans brought and made many sculptures, depicting their gods. However, this cultural phenomenon that was so typical for the Mediterranean world did not remain limited to the Roman population. One can see that some time after the initial occupation the Roman habits started to rub off on the native Germanic and Celtic peoples, a 'Mediterranisation' of the native religions if you will. They too started to erect inscriptions and sculptures, resulting in a complete change in the appearance of native worship. These sources are extremely interesting, since they provide us with the only possibility we have to look at the native Celto-Germanic religions from the indigenous peoples' own point of view, rather than that of the Romans.

Using these sources does provide us with a set of problems. This change in appearance of worship was not a syncretisation of Roman and Celto-Germanic religions, rather it was an almost complete takeover of the Roman system. This should come as no surprise, considering that before the Mediterranean system was adopted there was hardly any native sculptural and certainly no epigraphical tradition whatsoever. However, it does make it at times very difficult to make a distinction between Celto-Germanic and Roman inscriptions and sculptures. The Germans and Celts did not develop a writing system of their own, they did not even use the Latin script to write in their own languages. Almost all of the Celto-Germanic inscriptions are completely in Latin (there are some rare exceptions in Greek as well). The sculptures too are all made in Roman style. However, in many of them distinct Germanic and Celtic attributes can be found, which separate them from the Roman material. Obvious examples are Germanic or Celtic names mentioned in the inscriptions, of both gods and dedicators. More problematic are gods with double names, often a Latin and a native one.

It is my goal in my MA thesis to examine this 'Mediterranisation' of the native north-western European religions and, by studying the Celto-Germanic religious sculptures,

[1] Simone Deyts, *Le sanctuaire des Sources de la Seine* (Dijon 1985); Simone Deyts, *Les bois sculptés des sources de la Seine* (Paris 1983).

inscriptions and also sanctuaries, see what can be learned about the religious beliefs and customs of the native population of the Germanic provinces. Using these sources I will try to get an idea of what Celto-Germanic religion looked like before the coming of the Romans, as well as see if over time more elements of Mediterranean religion besides only the outside appearances became part of Celto-Germanic religious culture. In other words, to find out how exactly the Roman colonization has changed the indigenous religions of north-western Europe. I will compare these developments in different territories, to see if they were comparable in different parts of the empire and if so, whether the changes in religious worship were adopted with a similar speed everywhere or not.

The foundation of my thesis will be the theory of Ton Derks, which states that in northern Gaul there was a cultural and religious division, based on differences in agriculture between the two territories. In the north, which was predominantly pastoral, people would have been much less accepting of Roman customs since the foundation of their culture was so different from that of the Mediterranean world. The southern part of Gallia Belgica however was already culturally more similar to the Romans, as both their cultures were based in a territory where arable farming was the dominant form of agriculture. Derks believes that this is the reason that in that area people were much more accepting of Roman religious practice.[2]

For several historians and archaeologists who have dealt with ancient north-western Europe, the question of ethnicity has played a major role. This can lead to great difficulties. Some authors go to great lengths to define which peoples were Germanic and which were Celtic and debate endlessly about which criteria can or cannot be used. Some authors deal with the subject rather briefly and unsatisfactory, like Edgar Polomé, according to whom the Germanic peoples are simply all those who's cultures origins can be traced to the Iron Age Jastorf culture. These 'Germanic' material cultures were then later influenced by the La Tène and Hallstatt cultures, which are quickly termed Celtic without much further thought.[3] Other authors go to the other extreme. Unlike the one page that Polomé spends on the subject, Malcolm Todd has a thirteen pages long introduction in which to ponder on the problem. There he begins by looking at the matter through the Roman perspective, derived from ancient literature, which can very crudely be summarized as the Germans being all the barbarians from the north that were beyond Rome's direct influence. Then Todd deals with the problems of archaeology. Like Polomé he mentions the Jastorf culture and admits that there seems to have been cultural stability in northern Germany and southern Scandinavia since the late Neolithic. But rather than accepting this as absolute proof he points to the fact that this provides no certainties of ethnic continuity. Although it would have been helpful if Todd had provided his own definition of ethnicity (a term which appears to have as many meanings as it has authors using it) his caution is very appropriate. In the end Todd concludes that the best way to categorize the Germanic peoples is through linguistics, while immediately pointing to the problem that with the limited sources we have, only a framework of the early Germanic languages can be constructed.[4] An author who switches back to the extreme end of

[2] Ton Derks, translated from Dutch by Christine Jefferis, *Gods, temples and ritual practices: the transformation of religious ideas and values in Roman Gaul* (Amsterdam 1998), 241-246, in particular 242 and 245.
[3] Edgar C. Polomé, "Germanic religion: An overview" in: Edgar C. Polomé (ed), *Essays on Germanic religion* (Washington 1989) 68-138, there 68.
[4] Malcolm Todd, *The early Germans* (Cambridge 1992-2004), 1-13.

minimalism, even further than Polomé, is Anne Ross. In her book she has chosen to ignore the issue completely and just label as Celtic anything that can even remotely be linked to the La Tène culture, which results in Celts suddenly popping up all over Denmark and Germany.[5] Something that neither Todd nor Polomé would approve of, I'm sure.

To avoid these issues I will not limit my research to a distinct ethnic group, but rather focus on a geographical area, an approach in which I follow Ton Derks. In part, the area which I will study also overlaps with his, namely the continental part. This territory consists of the lands between the rivers Rhine to the north and east and Seine in the south, and the North Sea coast and the Channel in the west. This is the Roman province of Gallia Belgica, the territories of which that bordered the Rhine would in the Flavian period become the two separate provinces Germania Inferior and Germania Superior, in part because of military needs. Derks has chosen for this area because of the great internal differences from a military point of view, with the Rhine border being heavily garrisoned and the interior demilitarized, and the great variety in landscapes, which may have influenced religious beliefs and the presence of much archaeological and epigraphical source material.[6] The basis of my study is a critical examination of Derks' book, bringing it up to date with more recent research and making corrections where necessary. Moreover, in order to check the validity of Derks' theory more thoroughly, I will involve the Roman province of Britannia in my research. Like Gallia Belgica and unlike, for example, southern Gaul, Britannia is an area where there was very little Mediterranean influence before the Roman conquest. Also, luckily for ancient historians and archaeologists, Britannia provides us with a great wealth of sculptures and inscriptions. This makes it the ideal area to examine Derks' hypotheses in a broader context. Note that whenever I myself refer to Gallia Belgica in this thesis I refer to the territory of the original province, including the newer provinces Germania Superior and Germania Inferior. Also, I will still regularly make use of terms like 'Celts' and 'Germans', but I do not try to separate the two. Generally, I treat the indigenous populations of the Roman provinces as fairly coherent groups, while using ethnic labels when one seems more appropriate (for example, when a dedicator of a votive altar has a Germanic name).

The timeframe I have chosen is also very similar to that of Derks. Although there have been some very early contacts between Romans and Germanic tribes and the Romans already had a long and bloody history with the Gauls, there is not much material dating from before the invasion of Julius Caesar in 58 BC. The Roman cultural influence in the north only grew strong after the conquest and colonization. Therefore, the arrival of the legions of Caesar will mark the beginning of the time period I will be studying. As my research concerns the native pagan religions I will not include later Christian material. The growing strength of Christianity and the decline of pagan religions is one of the reasons why I have chosen the late third century AD as the end of my timeframe. This point in time also marks other drastic changes in the Roman world, namely the beginning of the Germanic invasions and a shift in political power from Rome to Gaul, which was sealed with the founding of the Tetrarchy under Diocletian.

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[5] Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (Londen 1974).
[6] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 24.

In the first chapter I will give a brief overview of the Roman conquest and occupation of northern Gaul and the Germanic provinces, in order to give some background information to the rest of my research and to make it easier to place my subsequent chapters in the set timeframe. After the first chapter I will get to the core of my argument. The second chapter will be a description of the landscapes of Gallia Belgica and Britannia. This is crucial, as Derks' theory is founded on the idea that there was a cultural and religious division between the Rhineland and the southern half of Gallia Belgica, which was rooted in differences in agriculture. In the first half of the second chapter I will therefore quickly summarize Derks' description of northern Gaul, to follow with one of Roman Britain. The focus there will be on the ongoing debate, whether or not there was an agricultural division between various parts of Britain as was the case in Gallia Belgica. I will demonstrate there that this was indeed the case. In chapter three I will then demonstrate how these differences in agriculture have influenced religion in northern Gaul and Roman Britain. It will become clear there that in Britannia, as in Gaul, cultural differences founded in varying forms of agriculture have most definitely had an impact on how accepting indigenous populations were of Roman culture, but that there were also profound differences between Britain and Gaul which cannot be explained by Derks' theory. In the fourth and final chapter I will provide more examples of discontinuity between the Iron Age and the Roman period that do not seem to fit in Derks' theory, specifically religious sculpture in Roman Britain and the *matres* cults of northern Gaul, and see how these phenomena should be explained.

Chapter 1 The conquest of the barbarian world

The Romans have had a long and often bloody history with the barbarians from the north, going as far back as Rome's near mythological past as described by Livius. He writes how several Gallic tribes crossed the Alps in the late fifth century BC. Among these tribes were the Senones, who declared war on Rome after being attacked by Roman ambassadors, the three Fabii brothers. Somewhere around 390 BC they marched on Rome and defeated the legions led by the Fabians, after which they sacked and burned Rome, a humiliating defeat that the Romans would not soon forget.[7]

It is not difficult to imagine the Romans to be reminded of those events when the Cimbri came from the north in force in 113 BC, invading the Alpine client kingdom Noricum, which roughly covered modern Austria. They quickly delivered a crushing defeat to the consular army of Gnaeus Papirius Carbo, who was sent to aid Rome's ally. The Cimbri could have marched into Italy without much resistance then, but they chose to head westward across the Rhine and into Gaul. In the following years they came back several more times and won some major victories against Rome, until in Aix-en-Provence they were met by Gaius Marius, who defeated the Germanic host with his new reorganized army and drove them back to where they came from. Both in Antiquity and in modern times it is unclear what it was exactly that the Cimbri wanted, but repeated requests made by them for lands to settle on make it seem like they were an entire people on the move, looking for a new home, rather than an invasion army bent on plunder and conquest. Possibly, they were forced out of their native land due to overpopulation. It was a sign of things to come, centuries later.[8]

1.1 The campaigns of Caesar

But for now the tide had turned. For another forty years Rome would not be bothered by the peoples from the north, until the time came that Gaius Julius Caesar took the fight to them. His troubles and ambitions in Rome left him with a need for both money and glory if he wished to maintain his political position, let alone improve on it. He was given a chance to attain both when, through a stroke of luck and in defiance of the Senate that wished to see Caesar's power diminished, the Popular Assembly made him governor of the two provinces Cisalpine Gaul and Illyricum, to which Transalpine Gaul was added a little later. It is strange that so much power was awarded to a single man, especially since there were no military threats to Rome in any of those provinces, but Caesar surely did not complain. It is possible that he planned a campaign from Illyricum against wealthy Dacia, but another opportunity arose across the Alps.[9]

A few years before Caesar became governor in Gaul there was a Germanic invasion into Gaul led by the Suebic chieftain Ariovistus. The Gallic Sequani invited Ariovistus and about 15.000 of his men to aid them against their western rivals the Aedui, who were an ally of Rome. This was nothing uncommon, Gallic tribes often employed the services of mercenaries from across the Rhine in their internal struggles. But Ariovistus and his men found the lands of the Sequani to their liking and turned on their employers, inviting more of

[7] Titus Livius, *The history of Rome* 5.35-5.45.
[8] Todd, *The early Germans* (1992-2004), 47-48.
[9] Adrian Goldsworthy, *In the name of Rome* (London 2003), 185.

their countrymen to join them until, according to Caesar, more than 120.000 had crossed the Rhine. According to Malcolm Todd it was this threat to Rome's allies and its own province of Transalpine Gaul that triggered Caesar's campaigns in Gaul.[10] This is only partially correct. Caesar's military efforts in Gaul had already started earlier in the year 58 BC, before he decided to deal with Ariovistus, in response to the migration of the Helvetii, a people who inhabited a territory that roughly corresponds to modern Switzerland. This event is omitted completely by Todd, probably because of his focus on the Germanic peoples.

The reason for this migration is unclear. Caesar claimed that the migration was inspired by a single man, a notable of the Helvetii called Orgetorix in 61 BC, and that after his death at the hands of rival Helvetii magistrates it was made possible by his son-in-law, the Aeduan nobleman Dumnorix. His reasons for supporting the Helvetii were as unclear to Caesar as they are to us, but it seems likely that there was much more to the migration of the Helvetii than we know. Goldsworthy is rightly critical of the numbers that Caesar mentions: according to the governor there were about 368.000 people on the move, about which Goldsworthy states that we "can say little more than that a substantial number of warriors and their families were migrating."[11]

For Caesar, this was a fantastic opportunity. In order to magnify the threat in the eyes of the Romans he likened the migration to the invasion of the Cimbri a few decades earlier. The comparison was not so far off, besides the fact that this time Rome would fare much better. Caesar repelled their initial attack and, reinforced by legions from Italy and by local allied tribes, followed the Helvetii through Gaul. After a pursuit of several days, Caesar won a decisive victory. The surviving Helvetii retreated and finally surrendered, being threatened by starvation. The ones that yet tried to flee were returned to Caesar as slaves by the other Gauls. In an act of clemency unusual for Roman generals Caesar allowed the surviving Helvetii to return to their homeland and even supplied them with grain, so they could securely rebuild their communities. Only the Boii, a subgroup, were settled amongst the Aedui on the request of the latter, to bolster their strength.[12]

It was only now that Caesar turned his attention to Ariovistus, at the request of his Gallic allies whose lands were being plundered. Ariovistus had just been declared a friend of Rome by the Senate, but protecting Roman allies and the Roman province overruled that. Caesar faced some difficulty in keeping up the fighting spirit of his troops, who were hesitant about attacking the large and ferocious Germans, but as soon as his men were back in line he attacked Ariovistus. Caesar wished to exploit the advantage of higher morale, as he had heard that Germanic soothsayers had proclaimed that no victory could be achieved before the new moon. After a hard battle the Germans were soundly defeated.[13]

Winning two such massive victories in a single year was almost unheard of and should have more than satisfied any other governor. Not so for Caesar, his campaign was only just beginning. In 57 BC he marched against the Belgic tribes of north-eastern Gaul, to aid his allies the Remi. The superior Roman supply chain gave Caesar the advantage, forcing the Belgians to react to him. Still he almost lost it all at the battle near the river Sambre, but the

[10] Todd, *The early Germans* (1992-2004), 48-49.
[11] Goldsworthy, *In the name of Rome* (2003), 186-187.
[12] Goldsworthy, *In the name of Rome* (2003), 186-192.
[13] Goldsworthy, *In the name of Rome* (2003), 192-194.

victory achieved there did grant him a year of unhindered plundering of the Belgic territories. The next year passed without major campaigns. Caesar even had time to return to Rome, politics there taking priority. In 55 BC he had a bridge built over the Rhine and in that year and the following he launched some small excursions into Germania, mostly to impress the Romans with the mere fact that he could. The Germanic peoples still had a fearsome reputation.[14]

In 55 BC he also launched his first invasion of Britain. Caesar's justification for that was that they were aiding the Gauls. According to Suetonius it was because he liked pearls and Britain was rich in those[15] but according to Goldsworthy it probably was for the fame he could attain in conquering this mysterious, barely known part of the world.[16] David Mattingly offers a better fleshed out explanation. The Republic was heading for its final days and the swiftly expanding empire offered tremendous opportunity for ambitious individuals. Caesar was such an individual, but to make sure he would not lose his shot at power he had to keep his military command. To do this, he had to prove that his job in the north was unfinished, something he could do by demonstrating that the Britons were a threat to Rome. Of course he also would not have been blind to the fact that more triumphal processions in Rome would strengthen his popular support.[17]

The invasions of Britain were not very successful and had in fact almost become total disasters. In the first one the Romans did not even make it off the beachhead because of the ferocious British attacks. The Romans retreated to Gaul the moment their ships, which were damaged in severe storms, were repaired. The second one, in 54 BC, was better planned, with much more ships that now were adapted for landings on the beach. There was some indecisive campaigning which ended with the submission of two British kingdoms in the southeast, that now became client states of Rome. Caesar had expected much more support from native rulers because of the good diplomatic contacts he already had with some of them before his first invasion. Instead, they had temporarily put their conflicts aside to fight the invader, perhaps having learned from the example of the Gauls what would have happened otherwise.[18] These invasions are often depicted as unimportant episodes, but nothing could be farther from the truth. For large parts of Britain the integration with the Roman world began here and not with the invasion of 43 AD. This is most notably the case for the two new client kingdoms, who had established diplomatic relations with Rome that would last for decades, but it happened also in other British kingdoms. British troops were lightly armed and armoured, unlike the well equipped Roman soldiers. This meant that numbers were the best defence. Caesar's invasions triggered the emerging of stronger and larger 'states' in Britain, in direct response to the growing Roman threat. In this context one can also see the increasing use of coinage and the imitation of Roman imperial propaganda on British coins.[19] Caesar however, was probably just happy to be back in Gaul in time to deal with two major uprisings, which would prove to be his biggest challenges yet.

[14] Goldsworthy, *In the name of Rome* (2003), 194-197.
[15] Suetonius, *Divus Julius* 47.
[16] Goldsworthy, *In the name of Rome* (2003), 197.
[17] David Mattingly, *An imperial possession: Britain in the Roman empire* (London 2006), 64-65.
[18] Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman empire* (2006), 65-67.
[19] Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman empire* (2006), 47-48, 63, 66, 69-71.

In the winter of 54-53 BC there was a rebellion of Belgic tribes, who managed to inflict heavy losses on the Romans before Caesar defeated them.[20] But an even more serious threat rose in the winter of the following year. A majority of the Gallic tribes, even many of the ones that initially supported Rome, decided that they had enough of the Roman presence in their lands and united under the famous Vercingetorix of the Arverni to drive them out. After some indecisive fighting, the Gauls suffered a defeat at Avaricum. This only strengthened Vercingetorix' authority however, as he had warned against defending the city, which allowed him to recruit even more tribes to his cause. The Gauls then amassed their army outside Gergovia, where they fended off a Roman attack and forced Caesar to withdraw to Transalpine Gaul.[21]

After this event, many of the previously reluctant tribes joined Vercingetorix, while Caesar recruited more Germanic mercenaries. Then they joined battle again by the Loire. After some indecisive fighting Caesar's army marched against the tribes of eastern Gaul. Vercingetorix ordered his cavalry to attack the Roman column but they were routed by Caesar's Germans. This prompted the retreat of the Gauls to Alesia, where they were followed and besieged by the Romans. In spite of expelling the non-combatants, who were left to starve between the rival armies in order to save supplies, and the arrival of a Gallic relief force which joined the battle, Caesar was finally victorious and Vercingetorix was captured. Though it had been the final real chance of the Gauls to overthrow Roman rule, it was not their last attempt. In 51 BC there was a much smaller uprising, which was swiftly dealt with. They were harshly punished, all the surviving warriors had their hands cut off. Caesar was very lenient to the Aedui and Arverni though, trying to win them back as friends of Rome. Vercingetorix was not so lucky. He was held captive for a few years until Caesar found the time to celebrate his triumph, then he was ritually strangled at the end of the procession.[22]

1.2 Battle in Germania

After the conquests of Caesar it still took some time for Gaul to become a stable Roman province. A complete administrative structure had to be implemented, which included a census on at least three occasions since 27 BC, to assist with taxation. A coherent policy first emerged under the governorship of Agrippa between 39 and 37 BC. He was governor before Gaul was divided into three separate provinces and was thus responsible for the entire area. His most important achievements where the construction of the first Roman highways in Gaul (which in part followed the old La Tène trading routes), as well as for the first time in Roman history using the military potential of local populations to control the conquered territory, by allowing allied Germanic groups like the Ubii and Batavi to settle west of the Rhine. Also, from the Augustan period onwards the Romans tried to shape the conquered tribal societies into something more easily manageable by structuring them into *civitates*, city states after the Roman Mediterranean model. Since there were no cities in Gaul, new urban centres were constructed, from where the local elites would govern the surrounding territories. For the Romans this centralization made governing and controlling the conquered territories much

[20] Goldsworthy, *In the name of Rome* (2003), 198-199.
[21] Goldsworthy, *In the name of Rome* (2003), 199-206.
[22] Goldsworthy, *In the name of Rome* (2003), 207-212.

easier. Both in size and in the rights granted to them by Rome there were great differences between the *civitates,* based both on the relationship the tribe had with Rome and on the political reality. Some of the new *civitates* had to control huge territories to fill the vacuum left by the slaughter of Caesar's armies, while old allies of Rome like the Treveri were exempt from taxes and were granted the rights of a Latin *colonia* long before the other *civitates.*[23]

Still, it took a long time for Gaul to become safe from military threats. Agrippa had to quell multiple uprisings between 38 and 19 BC, but more dangerous than that were the attacks from Germanic peoples across the Rhine. These were not all merely small raids either; an alliance of the Sugambri, Tencteri and Usipetes defeated the provincial army in 16 BC and captured on of its eagle standards.[24] Rome had to respond.

An attempt to conquer Germania, something even Caesar did not consider[25], became possible when Gaul became relatively stable around 25 BC. It is the question however, if the conquest of the lands between the Rhine and the Elbe was ever the Roman objective. Many historians, like Todd and Goldsworthy believe that it was; others, like Derks, do not. According to Malcolm Todd there was a grand strategy that was already set in motion in 25 BC when the Romans started to conquer the peoples of the Alpine passes, an undertaking which was completed in 16 BC. Todd believes that the only reason for this conquest could have been the creation of a way into Germania, as the Alpine peoples posed no threat to Rome. He and Goldsworthy see further proof in the strategy employed by the Romans in their invasion of the lands beyond the Rhine between 12 BC and 9 BC (during which the Roman general Drusus, father of the famous Germanicus, even reached the Elbe), the attacks they launched from south of the Danube and the further campaigns led by Tiberius around the turn of the century. Drusus erected many fortresses on his campaign, which can be interpreted as an attempt at consolidation, and Augustus appointed Publius Quinctilius Varus as governor of Germania, apparently to implement the Roman administrative apparatus after great successes early in the first century AD.[26]

Derks disagrees and claims that there never was a grand plan to conquer Germania. Instead he suggests that the Roman invasions were always retaliations for Germanic attacks and attempts to instil so much fear of Roman might in the Germanic peoples that the attacks on Roman provinces would stop. If there ever was any policy of conquests he believes that it must have been abandoned at the latest under Claudius, something I think everyone will agree with.[27] However I do not agree with him that there never were such plans, if only because one does not appoint a governor of a territory if he plans to abandon it after the military campaign is over. I believe that the Romans did actually try to conquer Germania at first, but that those plans were cancelled after the devastating defeat in the Teutoburg Forest, when Arminius, a commander of Varus' auxiliary forces and a chief of the Cherusci, lured the Roman army of Germania into a trap and slaughtered all three legions and a host of auxiliary troops. The subsequent campaigns of Germanicus have a very different character than those of his father Drusus and of Tiberius before, now being more like punitive raids (albeit on a very large

[23] Goldsworthy, *In the name of Rome* (2003), 244; Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 36-44.
[24] Goldsworthy, *In the name of Rome* (2003), 244.
[25] Goldsworthy, *In the name of Rome* (2003), 242.
[26] Todd, *The early Germans* (1992-2004), 50-52; Goldsworthy, *In the name of Rome* (2003), 244.
[27] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 38.

scale), with the Roman armies returning back to their own lands behind the Rhine after every campaign season. And after Germanicus there have been no more military operations that can be interpreted as an attempt to conquer Germania.

After the disaster of Teutoburg Forest Tiberius was dispatched to the Rhine frontier immediately, along with all the troops that could be gathered from the provinces, amounting to eight legions and an even higher number of auxiliary troops. But the expected Germanic invasion did not come. The warriors of Arminius had returned home with their loot to revel in their glory. However, the Romans could not let the defeat of Varus go unanswered, for who knew when the Germans would muster their forces again to march forth with newfound confidence? Roman superiority had to be asserted once more. In preparation of the war to come, several punitive expeditions were launched into Germania in the years after the defeat of Varus. In 11 AD Germanicus joined these expeditions and assumed supreme command over the Rhine frontier when Tiberius returned to Rome in 13 AD, in response to the imminent death of Augustus. Germanicus would lead the massive Roman campaigns in 15-16 AD, using all eight legions and the auxiliary troops of the Rhine frontier.. The main objective of these expeditions was never the conquest of territory, nor even the destruction of Germanic military potential. The goal was to show to the peoples of the north that Rome was invincible and fighting her was useless. Because of this, winning some major victories against the Germans was important for Germanicus, but not nearly as important as never suffering a defeat himself. In this he succeeded. He never struck a decisive blow against Arminius, but in spite of a few close calls he never suffered a major defeat either, while winning one battle after the other. At the end of 16 AD he was called back to celebrate his triumph in Rome, despite not actually having defeated the Germans yet. Apparently he begged for another year in Germania to finish the job, but this was more than likely imperial propaganda, to convince the world that if Rome had wanted to, she could destroy the Germanic tribes completely.[28]

1.3 The conquest of Britain

The end of the Roman campaigns in Germania did not signify the end of Roman military efforts in north-western Europe. Julius Caesar had left two client kingdoms of Rome in Britain, that at times gave the Roman emperors a major headache. Rome always made sure to have a supply of Roman-educated British royal hostages and always tried to put one of those on their client kingdom's thrones when the time for succession came. This did not always work. At several occasions men outside Rome's sphere of influence seized power, and they were not always pro-Roman. In such cases military intervention was definitely an option. Augustus considered invading Britain several times, but always managed to find a more convenient diplomatic solution instead. The emperor Caligula was not so skilled a diplomat, and may even have been manipulated into attacking Britain by the son of the British king Cunobelin, Adminius, who fled to Rome after a dispute with his father. However, mutiny in Caligula's army prevented him from doing more than collecting seashells, to celebrate his triumph over Neptune. Problems with the royal succession were also a root cause, as Mattingly puts it, of the invasion of Claudius in 43 AD, that was to be the start of the Roman conquest of Britain. In this case however, it was probably not the *British* royal succession that

[28] Goldsworthy, *In the name of Rome* (2003), 245-246, 249-261.

was the cause of the conflict. Caligula and Claudius quickly succeeded each other and each needed military glory to establish their position. Client kingdoms were an easy target. Moreover, an attack was easily legitimized, because in Roman eyes a client kingdom was already part of the Empire, so it did not conflict with the somewhat strange Roman notion that wars could only be fought in self defence.[29]

When Claudius invaded, he did so in force. Four legions and an equal number of auxiliary soldiers were sent across the Channel, amounting to about 40,000 men in total. The troops remembered the near-disaster of Caesar's amphibious landing and at first refused to enter the ships, until an imperial freedmen shamed them into it. The fleet was split into three groups, that were at first unopposed after landing. The Britons had not yet marshalled their defences, possibly believing that the troops' initial refusal had led to a mutiny, so the Roman invasion would be postponed. They got their act together pretty fast however, but suffered defeat in their first battle, against the future emperor Vespasian. The Romans won a second victory at the Thames, after which Claudius himself joined the army and conquered Colchester, the capital of the eastern client kingdom. Then Claudius, having won his military glory, immediately returned to Rome, having been in Britain for barely two weeks. The war continued however, with attacks on the large southern client kingdom. What happened their exactly is unclear, but the Romans were victorious and installed a new client ruler there in 47 AD. Many Britons surrendered, but others fled to the west and north, among whom Caratacus, king of the Catuvellauni, who became an important leader of the British enemies of Rome.[30]

Compared to Julius Caesar's lightning campaigns in Gaul, progress in Britain was dreadfully slow, with progress almost grinding to a halt after the death of Claudius and the indecisiveness of Nero. The fighting did continue between 47 and 69 however. Much of the minerals that Rome sought were further to the west and north. Considering that most of the independent British leaders were also there, the decision to attack was easily made. Some of Rome's new clients revolted, leading to significant troubles, but Rome's scorched earth policy forced many of the hostile tribes to their knees. Caratacus was captured by the queen Cartimandua of the Brigantes and handed over to Rome, where through his pride and defiance he won Claudius' clemency and escaped execution. Caratacus' new tribe, the Silures of Wales, did not surrender after the loss of their leader and internal struggles in the kingdom of the Brigantes allowed them to win significant victories against Rome. The tide turned in 57 under governor Veranius, who had much experience in mountain warfare and quickly destroyed the Silures. His successor Paullinus crushed the Ordovices, the last to oppose Roman rule.[31]

The victory was short-lived. After the death of the client king Prasutagus of the Iceni, the Romans tried to incorporate his lands into the province. Very harsh Roman policies during this attempted incorporation led to a revolt under the command of Prasutagus' widow Boudicca. Systematic abuse of the Britons by Roman troops made sure that many other tribes joined her as well. Paullinus' army was spread out and unable to offer serious resistance; much of it was destroyed and many of the new Roman colonists (many of them Gauls) were slaughtered. Paullinus managed to gather about 10.000 men. They were greatly outnumbered,

[29] Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman empire* (2006), 72-73, 75, 94.
[30] Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman empire* (2006), 95-100.
[31] Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman empire* (2006), 101-105.

but the Romans had demilitarized the native population after the conquest out of fear of revolt, so Boudicca's troops were poorly equipped and ill-trained. By choosing the terrain well, Paullinus won a major victory. It was probably critical that the southern client king Togidbunus remained loyal to Rome and kept the peoples south of the Thames out of the rebellion. Further expansion was postponed. Troops were needed elsewhere in the empire and Britain had to be stabilized after the Boudiccan revolt.[32]

After the civil war in the year of the Four Emperors following the death of Nero, the new emperor Vespasian needed major military victories to win and keep the support of the legions. To this end he went to Britain, where he retook the kingdom of the Brigantes and made it part of the Roman province. He invaded Wales in 73 or 74. The conquest of Wales was finished in a single season by Agricola when he became governor in 77. Then he continued further northward. He was faced with a shortage of troops, since part of his army was recalled to other provinces and part had to stay behind to maintain control over the conquered territories. So Agricola's solution, in the words that Tacitus put in the mouth of the Caledonian chieftain Calgacus, was to "make it a desert and call it peace"[33]. Besides Tacitus' statements we also have the remains of Roman fortresses to prove that Agricola completed the conquest of all of Scotland somewhere in 83. However, it was given up again within a few years. The population density of Scotland was much higher than we used to assume and there were barely enough Roman troops in Britain to keep the southern half of the island under control, while troops were also direly needed elsewhere in the empire. Moreover, the lack of natural resources in Scotland meant that there was little reason to even try.[34] On the long term however, it might have been better if they had. For as long as the empire existed, Roman Britain would be plagued by attacks from the north. The construction of the Hadrian Wall, the campaigns of Septimus Severus of 208-211 and the splitting of Britain into two provinces in 213, Britannia Superior with its capital at London and Britannia Inferior with its capital at York were responses to those attacks. In spite of their frequency and occasional Roman defeats however, the territorial integrity of Roman Britain was never really threatened.[35]

Now with this overview of the political history of the Roman conquest of the Celto-Germanic world in mind, we are properly equipped to deal with the main issue that concerns us in this thesis, which is that of the influence of the Roman conquest and colonization on Celtic and Germanic religion. This will be the focus of the following chapters.

[32] Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman empire* (2006), 105-113.
[33] Tacitus, *The life of Cnaeus Julius Agricola* 30.
[34] Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman empire* (2006), 113-119, 124.
[35] Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman empire* (2006), 119-124.

Chapter 2: The role of the landscape

Religion in the ancient world was strongly influenced by the landscape in which the people lived. Not only in Celto-Germanic northern religions, but also in the religious world of Mediterranean peoples like the Greeks and Romans, the entire world was perceived as divine. From the highest mountaintop to the smallest creek, there were gods and goddesses for everything. Key landmarks like hilltops, lakes, springs, bogs and exceptional trees were often centres of worship, that in the Greek and Roman world could give rise to large temple complexes which could include not only temples, but also inns, bathhouses and theatres.

Pre-Roman religious sites in north-western Europe were not so complex, but no less important. While there was very little monumental architecture, there is a large amount of proof that many of such places were regularly visited, central places of great religious importance. Large deposits of coins, brooches and weapons in springs and lakes testify to that. An example of this is a large deposit of votive gifts found in a peat-bog at Hjortspring, on the island of Als in the western Baltic, where many rectangular wooden shields, iron spears, mail garments and a few swords were found along with the famous Hjortspring boat, the oldest wooden plank ship found in Scandinavia. They were probably placed there between 150 and 80 BC. Pools and peat-bogs seem to have been one of the most popular locations for votive deposits in what is now Denmark and north Germany, especially for weapons, to thank the gods for military victories. These weapons were broken before being deposited, perhaps to symbolize the defeat of the opponent or to make them useless to mortal men, so the holy places would not be looted. Most of these date to the Roman and Migration periods, but the habit dates back to at least the Neolithic. That many of these votive sites were used on multiple occasions over a long period of time proves that these deposits weren't random, determined merely by the location of the battlefield on which the weapons of fallen enemies were looted, but that the votive sites held significant religious importance. The bog at Thorsbjerg for example, was used as a site for votive deposits for over three centuries.[36]

In late Iron Age Britain permanent structures were rare, yet not so rare as in Germania. Especially hilltops were a popular location for early shrines, which were separated from settlements. Ritual activity there included not only animal sacrifice, but also the votive offering of weapons, as in Germania, and also many coins and personal ornaments. Also, like in the continental Celto-Germanic world, springs, river crossings and bogs had great religious value and were popular sites for votive offerings of the aforementioned kind. These practices were very similar to those of the Mediterranean world, so it is no surprise that they continued, often in the same places, after the Roman conquest, though the kind of objects deposited changed (weapon deposits became very rare) and monumental architecture became more prevalent.[37]

It is clear then that the landscape was very influential in shaping the religious customs that were practiced there and that to properly study Celto-Germanic religion, proper attention must be paid to the landscape of north-western Europe and the ways in which it influenced local culture. Therefore, I will now examine primarily the various soil types and other

[36] Todd, *The early Germans* (1992-2004), 21, 108-109.
[37] Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman empire* (2006), 306.

ecological factors, like atmospheric precipitation and temperature, in the study area, which comprises Roman Britain and Gallia Belgica, including the territory that Domitian later restructured as the new provinces Germania Superior and Germania Inferior. I do this because, as Derks has said, the land's geology and climate are an incredibly powerful influence on peoples' culture, since they directly determine what kinds of agriculture are possible in a given area. Given how in the ancient world most people depended on agriculture for a living, it would have had an overwhelming influence on settlement patterns, ways of life and mentalities, peoples' culture. According to Derks, understanding how the landscape influenced agriculture is therefore of the utmost importance if one wishes to understand north-western European religious customs.[38]

2.1 Gallia Belgica

In Gallia Belgica, or as Derks puts it, the region between the Seine and the Rhine, there are three different types of landscape, based on variations in tectonics, geology and soil. These are firstly the pre-Quaternary mountain areas, secondly the Pleistocene hilly landscapes with loess soils, and thirdly the flat lowlands which have sandy Pleistocene areas, but also Holocene peat, clay and dune soils.[39]

The mountain regions in Gallia Belgica are mostly found in the South-East and comprise the Ardennes, Eifel, Hunsrück and Vosges. The summits are not particularly high, the highest being the Donon in the northern Vosges at 1009 metres. They do not exceed the tree line and are covered in snow only in winter. However, because of the infertility of the soils, the high amount of rainfall and the comparatively low temperatures, the conditions for agriculture are bad indeed, aside from a few scattered plateaus with richer erosion soils. For the most parts, the mountain regions are best suitable for raising cattle.[40]

The Pleistocene hilly landscape with its rich loess deposits is dominant in the south. It extends in a wide belt from west to east, all across Gallia Belgica. It includes modern day Normandy, Picard and Artois in France, Hainault and Hesbaye-Condroz in Belgium, Dutch South-Limburg and easternmost ends in the Jülicher and Zülpicher Loessbörde in Germany. The fertile soils make these lands most suitable for agriculture.[41]

Flat lowlands dominate the northern half of Derks' study area, referred to by him as the Lower Rhine area. In these, a greater variety of soil types than in the loess belt can be found. There are Pleistocene sands in the southern Netherlands, northern Belgium and the northern part of the German Rhineland. In the river area of the central Netherlands and in the Dutch and Belgian coastal zone however, Holocene peat and clay soils are dominant. Despite these differences, the entire area has one thing in common. Most of the surface, consisting of sand and peat soils, is quite unsuitable for agriculture. In the sandy region there are small areas where conditions are relatively favourable for agriculture, at locations where river deposits of gravel and coarse sands are covered by loamy cover-sand. In the rest of the lowlands suitable places for agriculture are limited to dune land, fossil channel beds, natural

[38] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 55.
[39] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 55.
[40] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 55.
[41] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 55.

levees and stream ridge soils. However, while the majority of the lowlands are far from ideal for agriculture, they make for excellent grazing grounds for cattle.[42]

However, just because an area was more suitable for a certain form of food production does not mean that this also was the form that was actually realized in practice. The first important conclusion that must be drawn, is that mixed farming was practised everywhere in northern Gaul. Still, Derks claims that regional differences can be found, that also match the expectations based on his aforementioned research of the varying soil types. In this, he is less careful and more ambitious than Barri Jones and David Mattingly who, in a similar argument about Roman Britain which I will come back to later in this chapter, state that because mixed farming was practiced, there would have been no clearly defined economical boundaries. While Derks agrees that there are no *clearly defined* boundaries and that trying to find regional differences based on archaeological evidence alone is to tricky a business to attempt, he does believe that regional differences, where either agriculture or stockbreeding was the dominant form of farming, can be found. Instead of relying solely on archaeological evidence he tries to compare both forms of farming in each region based not only on ecological research, but also on information found in local culture, signifying the greater importance of one or the other. [43]

First, Derks compares the northern and southern halves of Gallia Belgica in the late La Tène period. For starters he points to palynological research by Willems and Roymans that indicates that the Lower Rhine area had a very open landscape with large areas of pastureland.[44] Secondly, analysis of the remains of domestic animals found in Lower Rhine settlements shows that the majority of domestic animals were cattle, followed by sheep, with there being only small amounts of goats and pigs. Such a dominance of cattle is typical for a stockbreeding society; in areas where agriculture is most important pigs tend to be the dominant domestic animal, for reasons explained further below. So if this consumption pattern is also taken as representative for the production ratios it is a strong indicator that cattle raising was the most important form of farming in the north. This is corroborated by the dominance of the *Wohnstallhaus* in the area, a type of house which existed there from the Bronze Age into modern times, that was divided into a living section and a large stabling section. Finally, it is stated that outbuildings, used as houses and as storage space for agricultural produce, were scarce and were often abandoned and rebuilt in a new area after only a few decades. Such relocation is necessary in case of low soil fertility, which makes lengthy fallow periods necessary. This also indicates that agriculture was probably less important than stockbreeding in the Lower Rhine area.[45]

In the southern loess areas of the late La Tène period the situation was different. Here also, remains of domestic animals have been analyzed. Unlike in the north however, pigs were

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[42] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 55 -56.

[43] Barri Jones and David Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (Oxford 1990), 5; Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 56.

[44] W. Willems, "Romans and Batavians. A regional study in the Dutch eastern river area II.", *Berichten van de Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek* 34 (1984) 39-331; N. Roymans, "The sword or the plough. Regional dynamics in the Romanisation of Belgic Gaul and the Rhineland area." in: N. Roymans (ed), *From the sword to the plough. Three studies on the earliest Romanisation in Belgic Gaul and the Rhineland area* (Amsterdam 1996) 9-126, there 51-52.

[45] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 57.

the most common domestic animal. The pig is an omnivore that does well in a great variety of landscapes without requiring much looking after, unlike cattle, the raising of which does not leave much time for agriculture. Thus, we can see this as an indication that in the loess areas stockbreeding was secondary to agriculture. Moreover, the *Wohnstallhaus* is not used. Instead, structures of the type interpreted as outbuildings in the Lower Rhine area are dominant, with the largest possibly serving as dwellings and smaller ones as barns. Unlike in the north, living areas and farm buildings were clearly separated and arranged in well-organized settlements that were inhabited for long periods of time, which means that the soil must have been fertile indeed.[46]

In the time of Roman colonization these contrasts between the two parts of Gallia Belgica became even greater. The division becomes more distinct due to a change in the settlement pattern. In the loess area a relatively dense distribution of Roman *villae* develops, while in the northern zone the settlement pattern remains as it was in the late La Tène period. Many historians today believe that this change in the southern half of Gallia Belgica came to be because of cultural and ideological factors, with the attitude of local elites towards Roman culture, especially architecture, spatial organization of settlements and forms of agrarian production, being a key factor.[47]

In most cases, *villae* developed out of older La Tène settlements and were first constructed in timber early in the first century, to be replaced by *villae* with stone foundations since the Flavian period. It must be noted that these *villae*, both the timber and the later ones, are exactly what a Roman *villa* is supposed to be like, both in architecture and decoration. There are no older native influences to be found. Another difference of great importance between the *villae* system and pre-Roman agriculture is that production in Roman times is aimed at creating a surplus, rather than just being self-sufficient. This was not only necessary to pay taxes to the Roman government, but also so that agricultural surplus could be sold at markets, to gain the funds required for the lavish lifestyle of a Romanized notable and for further investments in the private residence. Also, the population increase of the 2nd century would have made necessary a larger food supply, further increasing the need to intensify food production.[48]

It is practically certain that on the *villae,* arable farming was the main activity, with stockbreeding having a subsidiary function, as it was on the pre-Roman farms. It is more difficult to say how much more the importance of arable farming had grown in relation to stockbreeding compared to La Tène times. Derks at least is convinced that the pre-Roman pattern was strongly intensified, and it would appear as if he may very well be right to believe

[46] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 58.
[47] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 58. Derks refers further to four articles. Three are from: J. Metzler *et al.* (eds), *Integration in the Early Roman West. The role of culture and ideology* (Luxembourg 1995). There: C. Haselgrove, "Social and symbolic order in the origins and layout of Roman villas in northern Gaul", 65-75, there 65, 74; J. Slofstra, "The villa in the Roman West. Space, decoration and ideology", 77-90, there 87-89. Slofstra however, also puts a lot of emphasis on the role of the Roman state in integrating local elites, something Derks does not mention; N. Roymans, "Romanisation, cultural identity and the ethnic discussion. The integration of Lower Rhine populations in the Roman empire", 47-64, there 55, 60-61. He shows how in the north, cultural and ideological factors made sure that a villa-landscape did not develop there. Derks' final reference is to: Roymans, "The sword or the plough." in: Roymans (ed), *From the sword to the plough.* (1996), pages 97-99 are especially notable.
[48] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 58-60.

so. There has been palynological research of Derks' study area in the Roman period, the result of which show that the loess area had a very open landscape with large amounts of arable land. These lands were mostly used for the production of cereals, the peak of which was reached in the early imperial period. The traditional cereals of barley and millet were replaced by various types of wheat, according to some historians to cater to the demand for these cereals by the army. [49]

More evidence for a greater specialization in arable farming is found in the outbuildings, the *horrea.* These were granaries intended for the storage of crops and have a much larger capacity than the barns and silos of La Tène settlements. According to Derks this is even more significant because the army stored the grain meant for its own consumption in *horrea* near the army camps, so agricultural production must have been even greater than the *horrea* at the *villae* indicate. I think he exaggerates here. There were many troops stationed in Gaul, but their number is still very small compared to the total population. Derks makes it sound as if the *villae* produced food only to supply the army but seems to forget for this instant that these farms fed the rest of Gallia Belgica as well. He points to the appearance of new advanced farming tools, which do not occur outside the *villae* area, the use of which will have improved the efficiency of arable farming. This too is not one his stronger arguments, since improved efficiency in arable farming does not necessarily mean that stockbreeding became less important. Still, the evidence from the palynological research and the size of the *horrea* are evidence enough.[50]

Finally, mostly in the regions with a drier, milder climate, there appeared many *villae* that were focussed on wine production, which arrived in northern Gaul with the Romans, the earliest evidence dating to the second half of the 1st century. Definitive proof for this only occurred in the last two decades, both in ecological data and in remains of material culture. This further hints at a growing importance of arable farming and a reduced importance of stockbreeding.[51]

Derks also believes that in the Lower Rhine area intensification must have taken place in the cattle raising sector, with arable farming there becoming less important, contrary to what happened in the south. His reason for this is that he believes that agriculture must have become more intensive there as well, but intensification of arable farming was not possible, as all arable lands were most likely already used to the fullest extent. However, he missed the consequence of his own point, that intensification of agriculture in the Lower Rhine area need not have taken place at all. In the south, part of the need for intensification was driven by the desire to construct and decorate *villae*, which were not found in the north. Also in the Lowlands, as Derks says himself, taxes were not only paid in agricultural produce and cowhides, but also by sending men to the *auxilia.* Thus, there might not have been a need to increase farming output all that much. The evidence he presents to demonstrate the intensification of stockbreeding in the north does not proof anything either. His argument here

[49] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 61; F. Bunnik, "Pollenanalytische Ergebnisse zur Vegetations- und Landwirtschaftsgeschichte der Jülicher Lössbörde von der Bronzezeit bis in die frühe Neuzeit", *Bonner Jahrbücher* 195 (1995) 313-349, especially 336-337; L. Kooistra, *Borderland farming. Possibilities and limitations of farming in the Roman period and Early Middle Ages between the Rhine and the Meuse* (Assen 1996), there 96, 113-114 and table 19.
[50] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 61-62.
[51] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 62.

is twofold. First, he demonstrates that the regional differences in composition of the livestock are the same as in the La Tène period, with the proportion of cattle being the very highest of all of northern and central Europe and sheep and goats coming in second. His second point is that traditional house types remained dominant and that there were no Roman *villae*. Neither of these points proves that stockbreeding in the north was intensified at all, it only shows that things stayed pretty much the same as in pre-Roman times. He ends with a point that might show hints to intensification, namely the digging of parcellation ditches and the use of wooden culverts and sluices, which "may perhaps be explained as an attempt to increase the yields of grassland by controlling the water balance."[52] The key words being "may perhaps"; it is hardly conclusive evidence.[53]

Sadly, for the mountainous zones ecological data is completely lacking and our knowledge of house and settlement types is extremely limited. All we know is that traditional house types seemed to remain dominant. Perhaps the situation there was similar to that in the Lowlands, with the situation not having changed much since the La Tène period.[54]

2.2 Britannia

Now let us look at the situation in Roman Britain, for the examining of which I greatly rely on Barri Jones' and David Mattingly's *Atlas of Roman Britain.* A serious problem that they address on the very first page of their atlas and which also applies to the work of Derks is that the landscape can change drastically over time, which makes the applying of modern data to a study of the ancient landscape an arduous task. There can be no certainty that the climate in ancient times was the same as it is today. To use an example from a very different field of study, Victor Lieberman demonstrates quite convincingly that even climate changes that took place in the past 1500 years have had profound effects on world history, so it is very dangerous to assume that two thousand years ago the climate in a given area would probably have been the same as it is today.[55] Jones and Mattingly however suspect that in Britain's case the climate hasn't changed all that much over the past two millennia, but other factors important to agriculture, like the courses and navigability of rivers or the extent of forest and woodland cover may have been very different. [56] While Jones and Mattingly have taken this additional difficulty into account in their research, Derks makes no mention of it at all and makes use of maps of his study area in the 20th century alongside palynological research, seemingly without giving it much thought. While Derks does seem to have enough other evidence to justify his use of modern geological maps, he should at the very least have mentioned the issue.

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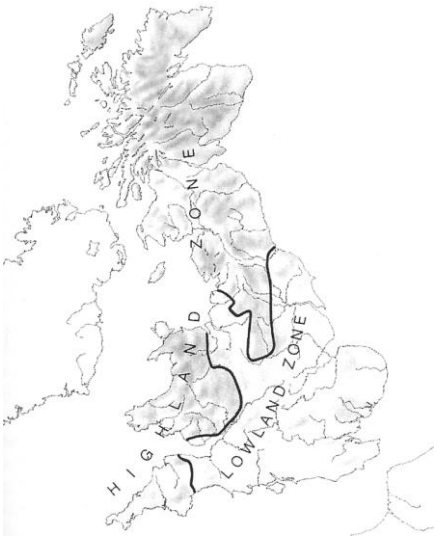
[52] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 63.
[53] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 62-63.
[54] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 62-64.
[55] Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in global context, c. 800-1830* (New York 2009). A good example of climate change on a relatively short term is the so called Medieval Climate Anomaly, which caused a very warm and agriculturally prosperous phase in Europe between roughly 800-1300, but led to much colder and wetter summers in Europe and strongly diminished monsoons and presumably river flows in mainland Southeast Asia between 1300 and 1450 and had significant consequences for agriculture in both areas (Pages 80-84 in particular).
[56] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), 1.

As for the actual geological situation in Roman Britain, at first glance it would appear as if a clear distinction between a predominantly stockbreeding area and a zone were arable farming is dominant also existed in Britain. Traditionally, Britain has been divided into a highland and a lowland zone, with the highland zone being assumed to be mostly pastoral and the lowland zone primarily agricultural.[57] As can be seen in map 2:1, the highland zone is approximately made up of modern day Wales, Scotland, part of northern England and England's westernmost tip. The lowland zone is made up of the major part of England. This division is based upon the solid geology of Britain, a simplified map of which can be seen in *An atlas of Roman Britain*[58]. In what is known as the highland zone, most older and harder rock formations are to be found, in contrast to the Midlands and southern England, with its sedimentary rock formations. This has implications for the relief and the climate and also means that in the highland zone one can find a great deal of minerals and good building stone, while the lowland zone has a much better basis for agriculture. Based on that, historians who believe in the highland/lowland division claim that in the highland zone, with its infertile soils, stockbreeding would have been the dominant form of agriculture, while arable farming would have been dominant in the lowlands. Today, the lowland zone has the highest percentage of high quality arable farmland whilst the highland zone is noted for its upland stock-rearing, which has also influenced historians' perception of ancient Britain.[59]



Map 2:1 Highland and lowland zones of Britain

Map 2:2 Main drift-covered regions (shaded)

Mattingly and Jones strongly oppose this idea of a highland/lowland division of Britain. They argue that the two regions are no homogenous units, but point to the large regional differences within each. They also point out that drift geology greatly complicates the basic image sketched by the solid geology. Drift geology is very important, because the superimposition of glacial or fluvial drifts can bury the soils made up by the solid geology very deeply, making the aforementioned map of Britain's rock formations much less useful. Of course, it was particularly during the Ice Ages that drift geology fundamentally changed the landscape of all of Britain, superimposing soils derived from sands, gravels and boulder clays on top of the older soils, as can be seen in map 2:2. This provides a partial explanation for the presence of rather large areas of good quality farmland in the highland zone, for example in South Wales and quite extensive parts of Scotland's eastern coastal area. Already in ancient

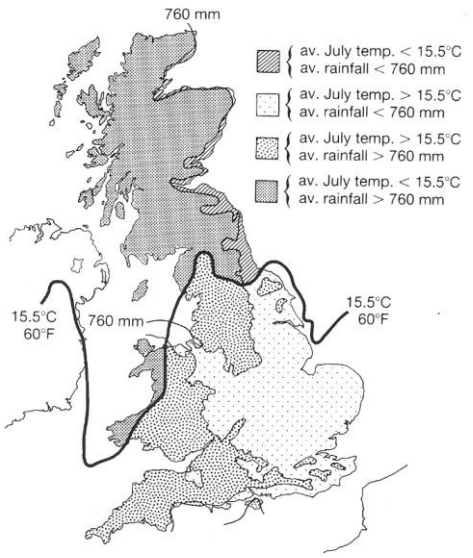
[57] A concept introduced by: Cyril Fox, *The personality of Britain* (Cardiff 1932).
[58] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), map 1:1.
[59] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), 1.

times crops were being cultivated in these areas. Conversely, the lowland zone has areas of much poorer quality, like the Wessex plain.[60]

Another point that Mattingly and Jones raise to discredit the highland/lowland model of Britain is that of water, in the form of atmospheric precipitation and Britain's river system. Concerning the latter, a very important and often used natural phenomenon to separate geographical regions is that of drainage divides, also known as watersheds. A watershed is a boundary between two neighbouring drainage basins and is sometimes also used as a geopolitical boundary, such as the border between Suriname and Brazil. If there was indeed such a great division between the highland and lowland zone as some historians claim, than it would be natural to expect Britain's main watershed to separate the two regions, so Jones' and Mattingly's reasoning goes (if my interpretation of their reasoning is correct, they are not very explicit at this point). Rather, while the main east/west watershed does lie somewhat more to the west, in England it runs right through the lowland zone and thus forms no boundary between the lowlands and the highlands.[61]

The annual rainfall is another important influence on agriculture. It comes as no surprise that the highland zone has the highest rainfall, ranging between 760mm a year to extremes of over 2500mm, due to the higher altitude and the fact that most of Britain's rain comes from the Atlantic and thus passes the highlands before entering the lowland zone of modern England. An annual rainfall of over 760mm makes agriculture substantially more difficult due to an excess of water, so one could think that this made the lowlands much more suitable for farming. This is not the case however, since in the lowlands also farmers had to deal with a large excess of water, not because of rain but due to the floodwater of the major river valleys of the lowland zone.[62]

Closely related is the use of Britain's 'climatic quadrants'. Britain can be divided into four parts, based on the interaction between temperature and rainfall as seen in map 2:3. The climatic zone best suited for agriculture is that which receives less than 760mm of rain a year and has average July temperatures of over 15,5 °C, whilst the worst is that which receives *over* 760mm of rain a year and has average July temperatures of *less* than 15,5 °C. As can be seen on the map, most of the lowlands are in the ideal climatic quadrant, whilst the Scottish Highlands are in the worst. Jones and Mattingly use this map as proof that the intermediate zones of western and north-western England are not part of the highlands and thus the traditional division is meaningless, though one might of course also use this same map to claim that these areas are definitely separate from the lowlands and that the highlands/lowlands model is



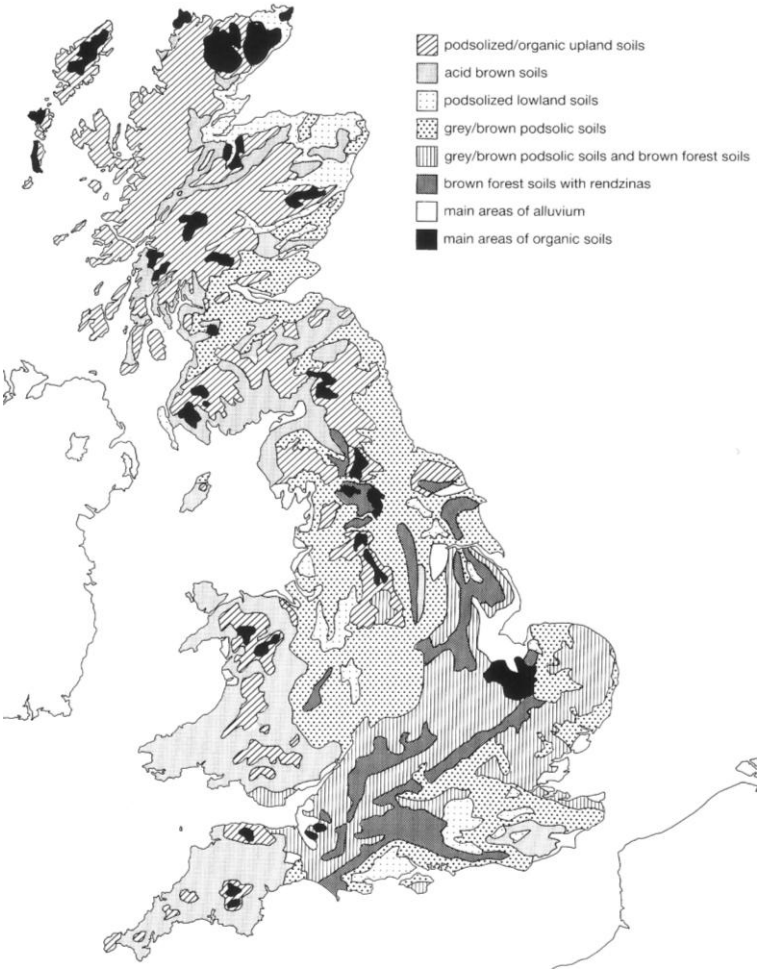
Map 2:3 Climatic quadrants in Britain (the 15,5°C isotherm is the supposed northern limit for the economic cultivation of wheat).

[60] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), 2-3.
[61] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), 3.
[62] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), 4-5.

correct. Obviously, one could also put into question the use of a model based so heavily on rainfall, as we have just seen that floodwater is just as important.[63]

A final factor that Jones and Mattingly use to weaken the case for the old definition of a highland and lowland zone is that of the length of the growing season, determined in part by the harshness of the winters, which they measure by the average number of days with snow lying. Scotland, northern Wales and the Pennines naturally have much heavier snowfall than the southern regions. It is interesting however to note that parts of England, namely the Midlands and East Anglia feature rather heavy snowfall as well, whilst much of the west, for example South Wales and Cornwall, have much milder winters than one might expect as a consequence of the influence of the Gulf Stream.[64]

Map 2:4 shows a simplified map of the soil types present in modern Britain, provided by Jones and Mattingly. One can see that the least suitable soils for agriculture, notably the podzolized and acid brown soils, are mostly found in what is traditionally designated as the highland zone. While the lowland zone features many different soil types, it can be noted that all the best soils for agriculture, the brown forest soils and the brown podzolic soils, are to be found there. Jones and Mattingly are right in saying that this map is not a straightforward indicator for land quality though, since other factors such as drainage and climate affect that as well. It must be said though, that these soil types can often be a very decent indicator of climate. For example, podzols are most common in cold and wet regions, or in warm regions with strongly fluctuating groundwater levels whilst brown forest soils tend to be found in humid, temperate climates with less than 760mm of rainfall a year. The similarities with the traditional highland/lowland model in Britain are striking.[65] Mattingly and Jones however, try to prove again that there could not have been a clearly defined



Map 2:4 Generalized soil types in Britain

[63] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), 4-5.
[64] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), 4-5.
[65] Carth K. Voigt, "Soil types" in: E. Julius Dasch *et al.* (eds), *Encyclopedia of earth sciences Vol 2* (1996), 993-996; the English Wikipedia articles *Brown earth* and *Podzol*.

boundary between pastoral and agricultural areas, this time by referring to early 20th century farming practices in Britain. The maps they use clearly show that arable farming was practiced wherever possible throughout Britain, also in the highland zone, and that stockbreeding was very important on the entire island. They state that despite modern agricultural technology, communications and economics, the situation must have been the same in ancient times.[66] I am convinced however, that they underestimate the importance of modern technological advancements. The invention of fertilizers alone has lead to an increase in crop yields of *at the very least* 30-50% and allows for the cultivation of lands that would have been entirely useless for farmers in ancient Britain.[67]

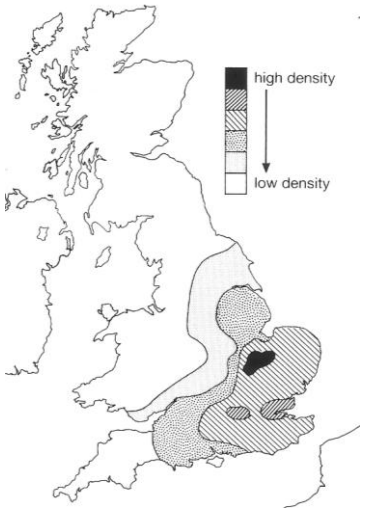
Still, it would appear that overall, Jones and Mattingly have a very strong case against the tradition model of a division between a highland and a lowland zone. There are however equally strong, if not stronger arguments to support (a more refined version of) the traditional division. Much more of them in fact than just that of the solid geology, upon which the theory was originally founded. For starters, many of the arguments provided by Jones and Mattingly are not as strong as they seem. First they argue that mixed farming was practiced all over Britain and that thus there could not have been a strong division between a stockbreeding and an agricultural region. I do not attempt to disprove that mixed farming was practiced everywhere. There is an absolute, one hundred percent certainty that it was, just like it was in Gallia Belgica. However, this does not mean that one of the two forms could not have been more prevalent than the other in a specific area.

Jones' and Mattingly's argument of drift geology is quite solid. However, when looking at map 2:2 one can see that, while drift geology has been an important factor in forming the soils of the Scottish highlands and the north-eastern lowlands, most of the western highland zone is not covered by glacial drifts and thus the solid geology is most important there. This just happens to be the part of the highland zone that was part of the Roman province Britannia, and thus the part that is of importance in this study. This means that in these parts of the highlands the quality of the soil was for the most part quite poor, which could have lead to a greater focus on stockbreeding.

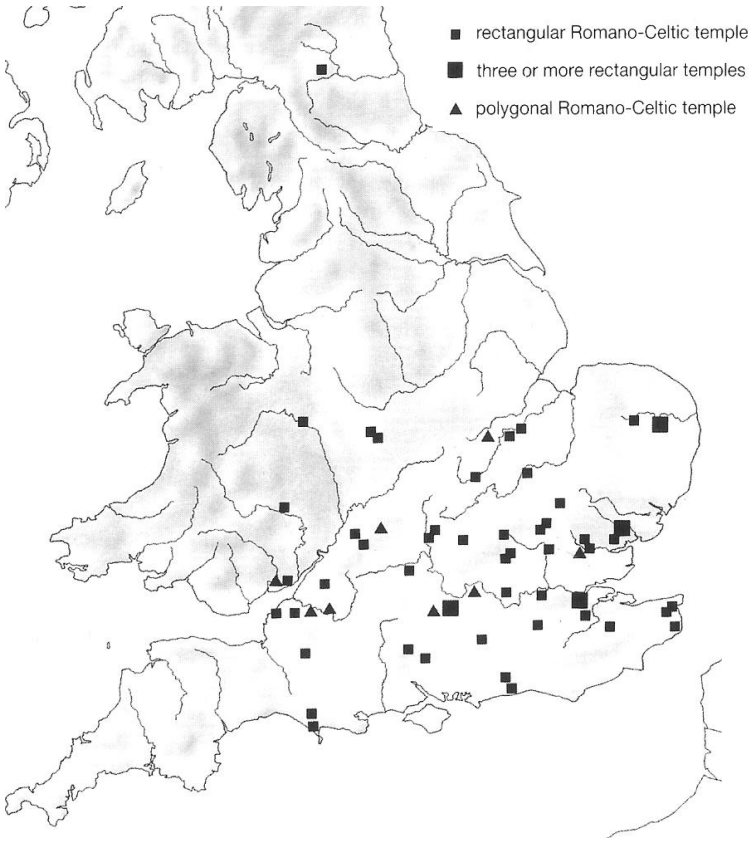
It is especially Jones' and Mattingly's climatic arguments that leave more to be desired, given how they are all based on data from the 20th century situation. In their own introduction, Jones and Mattingly have already stated that climate can change quite radically over the years, though they state that for Britain it probably has not changed much over the past two millennia, without stating the reasons they have for assuming this. And Lieberman in his book shows that even in the course of a few decades, factors such as rainfall, temperature and even the course of rivers, all three of which are quite vital for Jones' and Mattingly's argumentation, can change quite radically. We must search for other methods to come closer to the truth concerning the highland and lowland zone. Like Derks has done, we can use cultural evidence, much of which is already provided for in Jones' and Mattingly's *Atlas of Roman Britain.*

[66] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), 5-7.
[67] W. Stewart, D. Dibb, A. Johnston and T. Smyth, "The contribution of commercial fertilizer nutrients to food production", *Agronomy Journal* 97 (2005) 1-6, there 5.

Derks has noted how in Gallia Belgica the spread of Roman *villae* is limited to the area where stockbreeding is a subsidiary activity to agriculture, while in the Lower Rhine area, where stockbreeding was dominant, there were no *villae* to be found. If one assumes that in Roman Britain there also was a division between an agricultural and a stockbreeding area, one might assume that there were many *villae* in the lowland zone, especially the east, which had the most favourable circumstances for arable farming, and that there must have been very few, if any, *villae* in Britannia's highland zone, being roughly modern day Wales and the counties of Cornwall and Devon. One look at map 2:5, which demonstrates the density of Roman towns and *villae,* shows that this was indeed the case. The distribution of Roman *villae* appears to have been completely limited to the lowland zone, especially the eastern part, while in the highland zone there were no *villae* whatsoever. That there were no *villae* in the Scottish highlands, despite there being quite a bit of good farmland, can easily be explained by the fact that the area had never really become a part of the Roman empire, despite Agricola's efforts, and thus there would have been little cultural influence from Rome. One might attempt to make a similar argument for the highlands of Wales and south-western England, since they were conquered later than the east of Roman Britain, but still they had been part of the empire for such an extensive period of time that this is not a sufficient explanation for the difference in *villa* distribution with the lowland zone. It is more plausible to assume that, like in Gallia Belgica, this phenomenon can be traced back to cultural differences resulting from a different focus in farming practices, with stockbreeding being dominant in the highland zone and arable farming in the lowlands.

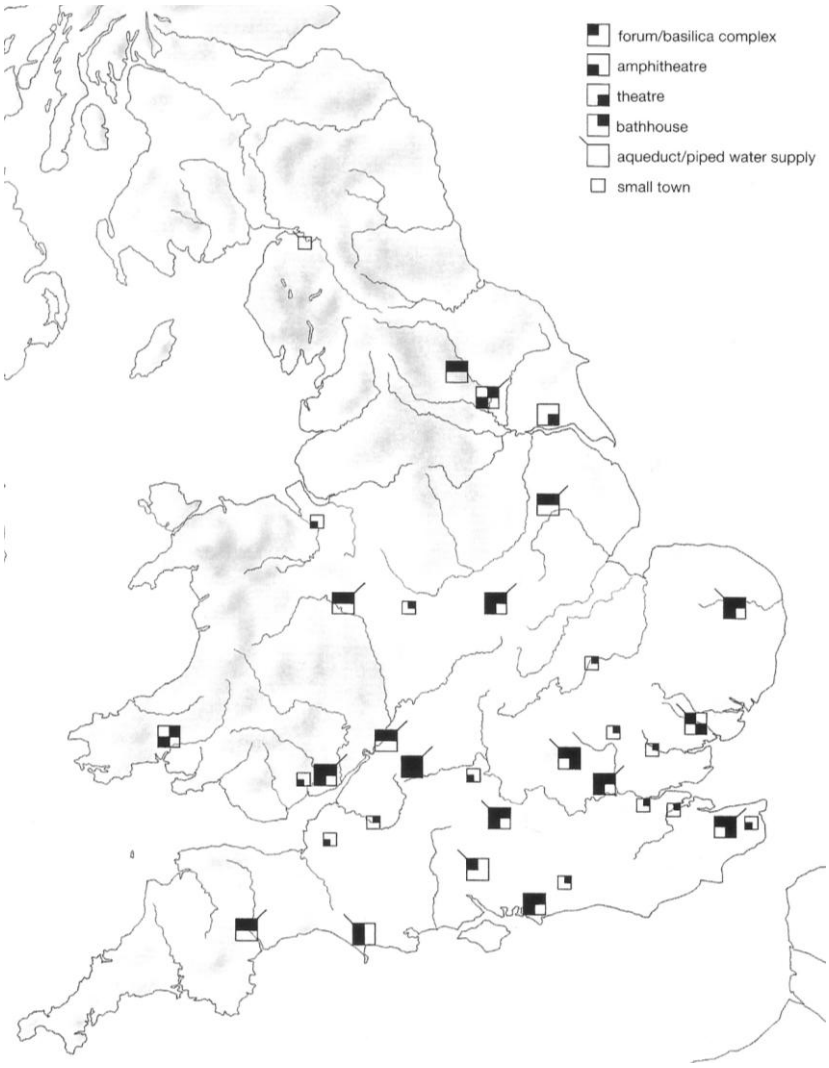


Map 2:5 Distribution of towns and villas



Map 2:6 Distribution of rectangular and polygonal Romano-Celtic temples in Britain

Also notable is map 2:7, which shows Britannia's urban amenities, the monumental architecture like forums, theatres and amphitheatres, aqueducts and bathhouses. Although they aren't as clearly limited to the lowland zone as the Roman *villae*, there are very few of them in the highland zone. A similar difference in regional distribution can be seen in the spread of Romano-Celtic temples as shown in map 2:6, which will be examined more in-depth later in this study. This contrast stands out even more if one considers that the largest amount of quality building materials in Roman Britain was in the highlands in the west, as noted earlier in this chapter. Therefore, construction in the highland zone would possibly have been cheaper, and definitely have been a lot easier than in the lowlands. The fact that there were so much more urban amenities in the lowlands indicates that there were significant cultural differences between the regions, with the lowland zone being much more accepting of Roman culture.



Map 2:7 Civic amenities: derived from archaeological, epigraphic or literary evidence (large symbols = major towns; small symbols = minor towns)

The last indication that one can indeed identify the highland zone as a predominantly stockbreeding region and the lowland zone as one where agriculture was most important is to be found in the locations of the archaeological sites where agricultural equipment has been found. The type of farmyard structure which is usually identified as a corn-drying oven is almost exclusively found in the lowland zone, which indicates that in this area arable farming was much more advanced than in the highland zone.[68] Also, since these structures only appear in the latter half of the Roman occupation period, one cannot argue that the difference in regional distribution is due to the later conquest of the highland zone. The locations of sites where other agricultural equipment was found are very similar to that of the corn-drying

[68] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), map 6:46.

ovens.[69] The difference is that much of the equipment found in these locations is much older, some of it dating back to the first century BC, well before Roman conquest, which provides a strong indication that the difference in farming practices between the highland and lowland zone already existed in the pre-Roman period. Jones and Mattingly also note the resulting pattern, with the largest concentration of tools and ovens being located in south-eastern Britain, but call it unremarkable and do not make the connection with the highlands/lowlands model.[70]

2.3 Preliminary conclusions

In conclusion we can say that mixed farming, utilizing both stockbreeding and arable farming, was the norm all over north-western Europe. However, it is so that both in Britannia and Gallia Belgica, we can identify different regions where either stockbreeding or arable farming was a significantly more important form of farming. This was due to a large amount of interacting causes, like differences in altitude, differing soil types, the course of rivers, temperature and atmospheric precipitation. The degree in which local populations accepted Roman culture were also affected by this, with the peoples from the agricultural areas being more welcoming to the new Mediterranean ideas, like the construction of *villae* and theatres, than those from the cattle-raising lands. In the province of Gallia Belgica we can identify the Pleistocene hill landscape in the south as the predominantly agricultural area, while the south-eastern mountainous regions and the Lower Rhine area in the north are primarily cattle-raising territory. The existence of such a geographical division between different forms of farming in Britain is hotly debated, but I hope to have sufficiently demonstrated that there indeed was one. In the Roman province of Britannia, the predominantly cattle-raising area was in what are now roughly Wales, parts of northern England and the English counties of Cornwall and Devon. In other words, the southern territories of the traditional highland zone. The part of Britannia where arable farming was dominant corresponds to most of present day England, the lowland zone. In the following chapter I will study the effects that this division in farming practices had on the religious customs of the inhabitants of the Roman provinces.

[69] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), map 6:47.
[70] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), 228-230.

Chapter 3 Provincial religion in north-western Europe

The differences in the landscape, and consequently in farming methods, between the different regions of the study area that have been examined in the previous chapter, had a profound impact on the local religious life. How exactly it influenced religion is not completely clear, however. Derks claims to have found very significant differences in religion between the Rhineland in the north and the southern half of his study area. Most important of these are that in the two areas different Roman gods were adopted, with Hercules becoming the most important deity in the mostly pastoral Rhineland while Mars became the chief divinity of the pantheon in the predominantly agricultural southern half of Derks' study area. This difference can also be traced in the local temple building habits. A very clear difference between the two areas is that in the south there were a great many temples, with a relatively large amount being built in the classical style while most of them were of the Gallo-Roman type, wherein a mixture of native and Roman elements can be found. In the Rhineland however, there were very few temples, and most of these were of more traditional types.

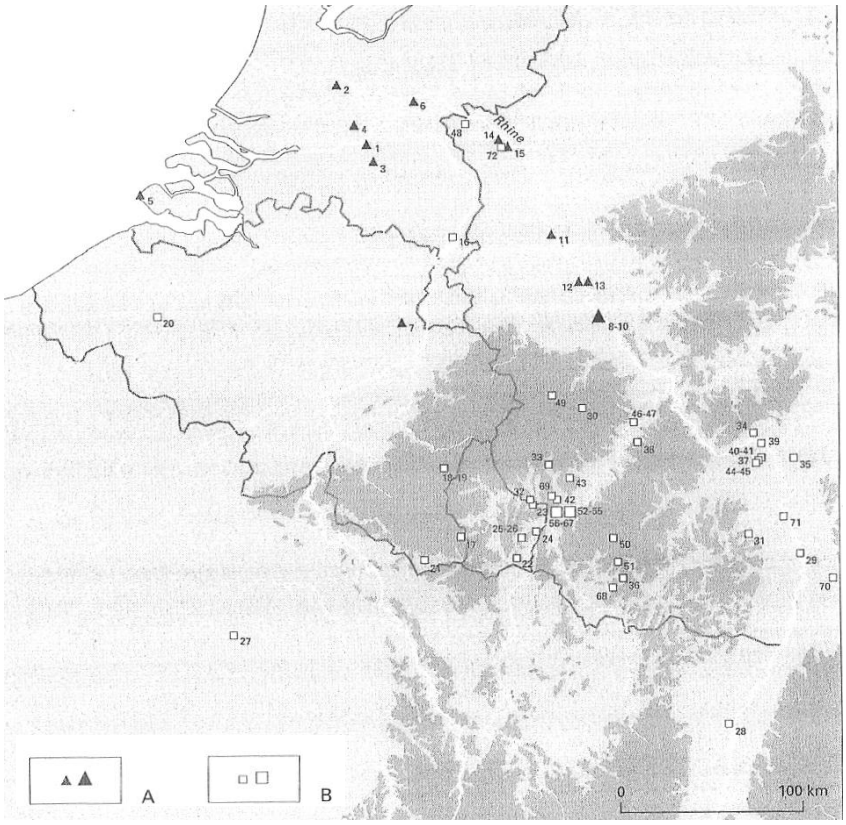
According to Derks, this religious division between the two territories is caused by the different agricultural basis, which lies at the heart of the ancient societies' cultures. He stresses continuity from the pre-Roman Iron Age cultures into the Roman period. Because the agricultural foundation of culture and religion did not change, Gallic religion would have remained pretty much the same as well, but with a thin veneer of Roman religion covering the old customs. To test this hypothesis, I will examine the effect of the similar division between the mainly agricultural lowlands and the mostly stockbreeding highlands of Britannia. We will see that the different agricultural basis of these two territories has indeed caused significant differences in religion, but that they were of a very different kind than those that Derks has found in northern Gaul. Also, in Britannia there is a third distinct region along the northern border with its very own religious culture, that is not formed by the agricultural foundation of society there, but by the presence of the Roman legions. A closer examination of this will shed new light on the Rhineland, where there also was a strong Roman military presence which led to important changes in the religious life of the local population. While much of the character of the pre-Roman religion remained, the new Mediterranean influence introduced a great many new things and caused very notable discontinuity with earlier Iron Age religious systems.

3.1 Agriculture and religion in Gallia Belgica

Derks claims that the cults of Mars and Hercules were at the centre of their respective area's public cults, public cults being cults on a regional level that were linked to the *civitas* or *pagus* and maintained by the Roman state, in the general interest of the community. Different in nature are private cults, the cult communities of which were specific subgroups in society that had to bear the financial costs of maintaining their cults themselves. Private cults were usually very local in nature, for instance in the case of family cults, but in some cases private cults could acquire regional importance, like those of patron gods of craftsmen's guilds.[71]

[71] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 94.

The various public cults of Mars and Hercules in the *civitates* of northern Gaul did not have a uniform structure. Rather, the gods usually appeared as a local variant with its own double name, in which the Roman god was linked to a native deity. Thus, in the double names we can find a very large variety of native gods, while only a few Roman gods were chosen as the native deities counterparts. The Roman deities that were selected for this honour were Hercules, Apollo, Silvanus, Mars and Mercury, with the last two being the most prevalent. Also, it is interesting to note that a native god is never associated with more than one Roman god. As has already been stated in the introduction of this chapter however, the most interesting spatial division is that between Mars in the south and Hercules in the north, which is demonstrated in map 3:1, through the sites where votive inscriptions to these gods have been found.[72]



Map 3:1 Findspots of votive inscriptions to originally indigenous gods associated with Hercules or Mars (numbers refer to Derks' appendices 3.1 and 3.2). A = dedications to Hercules; B = dedications to Mars (larger symbol: more than two inscriptions).

It must be noted however, that we are not completely certain that the cults of Mars and Hercules were in fact public cults, but especially in the case of Mars there is strong evidence suggesting that it was the case. The clearest example is that of Lenus Mars and Mars Iovantucarus, who were both worshipped in the sanctuary of Trier-'Irminenwingert' and are generally regarded as one single deity known by two different double names. In the Trier area, inscriptions dedicated to these two gods are by far the most numerous, they are spread over large sections of the *civitas Treverorum* and their main centre of worship is one of the most impressive temples in Derks' study area, located just outside Trier's *civitas* capital. Thus, it is almost certain that Lenus Mars was the main god of the Treveri. For other variants of Mars in the southern *civitates*, the evidence is less conclusive, but still quite strong. Many of the inscriptions dedicated to them are centred around older, pre-Roman cult places that developed into monumental sanctuaries in the Roman period, like that of Mars Cnabetius near Schwarzenbach. These are probably the chief gods of *pagi.* In other cases the importance of a god can be judged by the fact that dedications to him were found in completely different parts

[72] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 94-96.

of the Roman empire by worshippers from the deities home region, who also identified themselves specifically as citizens of a northern Gallic *civitas.* Such is the case with Mars Camulus, a god of the Remi, inscriptions to whom have been found also in Rindern and Rome. Derks' last argument is not so solid. There, he bases the importance of gods associated with Mars on the existence of priestly offices mentioned on inscriptions. However, Derks only shows very few inscriptions. On over half of these the name of the deity isn't even readable, but in two of four cases Derks feels comfortable claiming it must be a specific variant of Mars, judging from the ethnicity of the dedicators. I find this to be more guesswork than proper deduction, but still the other arguments are solid enough to state that Mars must have been one of, if not *the* chief deity of Gallia Belgica's southern *civitates.*[73]

The case of Hercules is both more difficult and simpler at the same time. He was definitely the chief deity of the Batavi, given the large number of inscriptions dedicated to him, even by Batavians far from their homeland, in other parts of the empire, and the fact that he was worshipped in the monumental sanctuary at Empel. No other *civitas* has dedicated as many inscriptions to Hercules Magusanus as the *civitas Batavorum.* For the other *civitates* of the Rhineland however, the case is much less clear. Only a comparatively very small number of dedications to this god has been found there. But, considering that in those areas Roman votive traditions did not find as much appeal as in the rest of the study area and that, as a consequence, almost no inscriptions to any deities at all have been found there, one may assume that Hercules Magusanus was a principal deity in the other Rhineland *civitates* as well.[74]

The questions Derks ask is how then we can explain the worship of Mars and Hercules in northern Gaul. How did the associations of Mars and Hercules with native gods come into place and should we interpret these associations as a superficial veneer, or were the indigenous gods fundamentally changed?[75]

To answer these questions we must first know who made these associations in the first place. It is clear that it was not the Roman conquerors. We know from numerous examples that Rome never actively tried to influence the religious life of its subjects as long as public order was not threatened, as it was with the Jewish Wars and the unrest caused by the Druids in Gaul and Britannia. Also, if the worship of Roman deities in Gaul *was* directed by the Roman state, it would make sense that everywhere in Gaul, the same Roman gods were venerated. Clearly, this was not the case. Therefore, these associations must have been made by local populations, probably shortly after the Roman conquest, which would have been several decades later for the Lower Rhine area than for the Gallic interior. Local elites must have had a leading role. They would have had the most knowledge for Roman culture and also had the most to gain by presenting themselves as loyal subjects of Rome. The gods whom they chose to associate with Mars and Hercules must have been the chief tribal gods, protectors in times of both war and peace. Having just been soundly beaten by the legions, it is logical that the indigenous peoples would choose to associate their gods with the deities responsible for Rome's great martial successes, the war gods Mars and Hercules.[76]

[73] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 96-98, Table 3.4.
[74] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 98-99.
[75] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 100.
[76] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 100-101.

This does not explain however, why in some areas Mars was chosen and Hercules in others. Derks' explanation is that we should look to the way in which these deities intervene in the lives of their followers. Since all gods are omnipotent and usually active in all fields of life, it is that which he claims we should look to if we want to see the real differences between Mars and Hercules. The key difference is that Mars acts as a vigilant defender, while Hercules is an invincible travelling hero, always away on some quest or military campaign. This has great consequences for their worship as it is related to farming practices.[77]

In the Mediterranean world, the worship of Mars was mostly associated with arable farming and viniculture, whilst Hercules was most important for stockbreeders, despite both gods being active in all forms of agriculture. Derks points to a passage from Cato's *De agricultura* as being vital to his understanding of the role of Mars in agriculture. Cato describes a ritual for purifying farmland, where he advises to say a prayer, accompanied by wine, to Janus and Jupiter and to sacrifice a lamb, a calf and a suckling pig to Mars while asking Mars to do the following, amongst other things: "to obstruct, drive back and ward off visible and invisible plagues, infertility and destruction, disasters and storms."[78] It must be noted that in the Loeb edition of 1934 instead of to obstruct, drive back and ward off, the line is translated as "keep away, ward off, and remove", the verb 'to remove' implying more a healing capacity than a defending one, as Derks wishes to emphasize. Still, his point seems strong enough, especially when combined with other evidence, like the decorations of vine-branches and *cornucopiae* (horns of plenty) on the armour of Mars Ultor's cult image in Rome, and the absence of animals.[79]

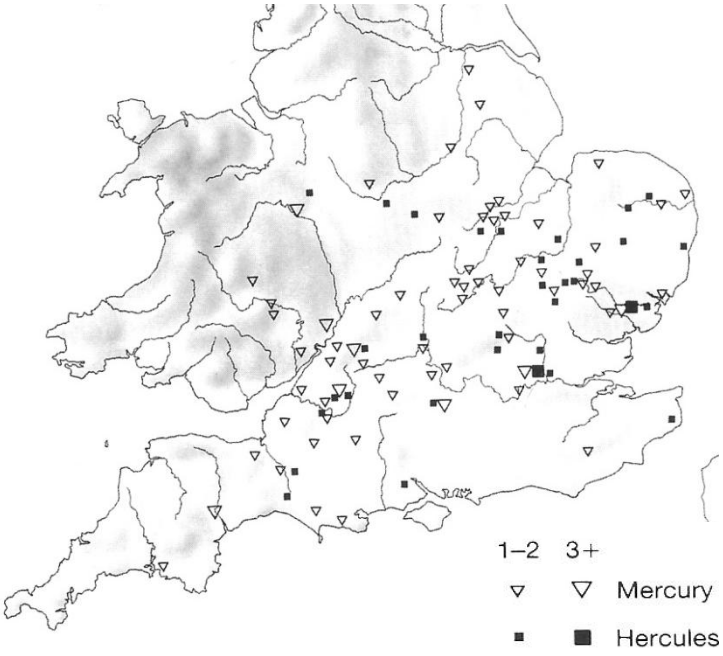
On the other hand, the most monumental and well-known temples and monuments to Hercules in Rome, including the large sanctuary of Hercules Invictus, are situated on the Forum Boarium, the 'cattle-market', as Derks translates it. On this *forum*, Hercules was honoured by oil merchants, moneychangers and cattle-dealers, proving that, like Mars, Hercules was more than just a god of war. Regarding agriculture, his special relation with livestock, particularly cattle, becomes even clearer from the fact that in the western Mediterranean Hercules was above all other things the patron of wandering herdsmen.[80]

If we now compare the territorial spread of the worship of Mars and Hercules in Gallia Belgica to the agrarian practices there, one can immediately see the remarkable similarities. In the southern part of Derks' study area, where arable farming was the norm, Mars was the chief deity of many public cults, while in the cattle-raising north it was Hercules. Derks believes that the resemblance is so clear that it cannot be a coincidence. He may well be right in believing that local elites must have been well aware of Roman mythological tales and chose tutelary deities who fitted best with their own perception of the world. Both the southern peoples and those of the Lower Rhine area chose gods who epitomized martial values, but in the south people preferred Mars, who represented more urban values, while in the north people chose Hercules, who better fitted their pastoral lifestyle.[81]

[77] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 102.
[78] Cato, *De agricultura* 141, 2.
[79] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 102.
[80] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 102-104.
[81] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 105.

3.2 A comparison with Britannia

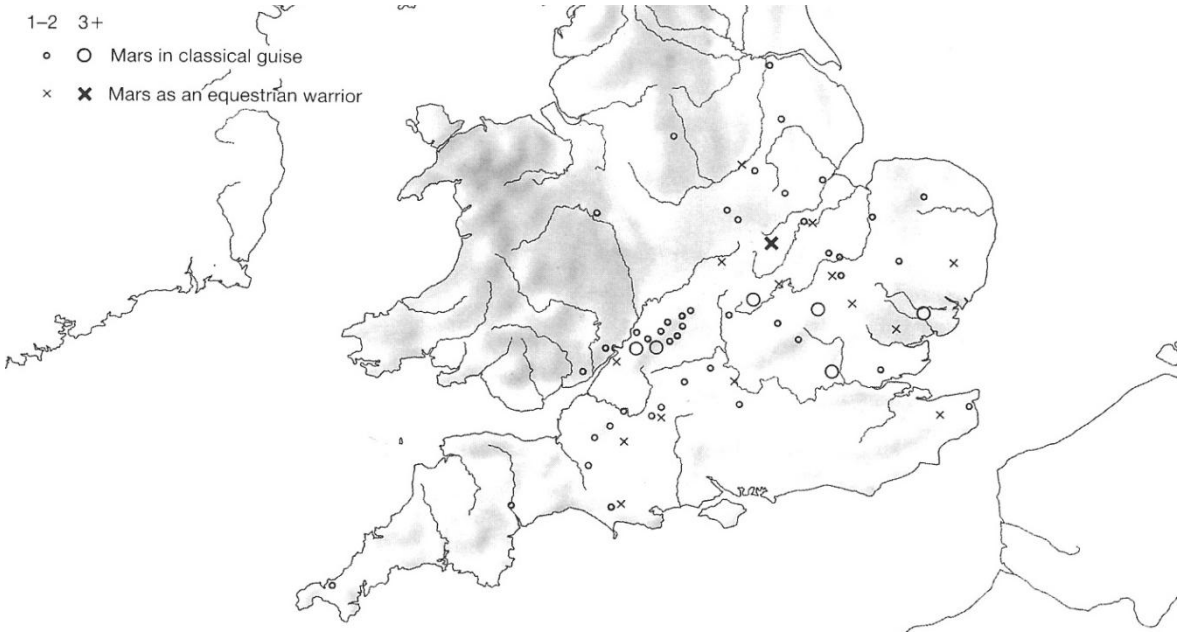
To check the validity of Derks' theory, I will now examine the situation in Roman Britain. In the previous chapter we have already established that there was a division between a mostly pastoral and a predominantly agricultural area, just like in northern Gaul, which in Britain we refer to as the highland and the lowland zone. If we compare this to data concerning people's religious habits, there are some very interesting things to be found. Maps 3:2 and 3:3[82] show the finding places of non-epigraphic evidence for the cults of various forms of Mars and Hercules (and Mercury as well, though this is of secondary importance to my argument here). Inscriptions in Britannia are almost exclusively found in the militarized northern border zone and are generally made or commissioned by the Roman soldiers stationed there. These garrison troops came from all over the empire but were not recruited locally, which makes them significantly less important for this paper, which focuses on the native cult communities.[83] Most of the evidence found in the demilitarized, civilian territories south of the border, which is represented in the two maps shown here, is in the form of sculptures. In these maps a pattern can be seen which is clearly related to the population's means of sustenance, but which is also very different from what Derks has found in Gallia Belgica. Based on the conclusions of Derks, we would expect to find signs of cults to Hercules in the highland zone and evidence of the various cults of Mars in the lowland zone. Clearly this is not the case. Rather, the worship of Mars and Hercules seems to have been spread rather equally throughout the lowland zone, while dedications to either god are almost completely absent in the highland zone. How should this difference with Gaul be explained, and what consequences does it have for Derks' interpretation of his findings there?



Map 3:2 Evidence (mainly non-epigraphic) for the cults of Mercury and Hercules in the non-military zone of Roman Britain

Clearly the practiced form of agriculture has also in Britain led to a great divergence in religious customs. It is equally clear however, that this has not led to pastoralists opting for

[82] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), maps 8:6 and 8:7. Note: due to a printing error in the *Atlas*, the map showing evidence for the cults of Mars has been switched with that of the cults of Apollo and Minerva. The map concerning Mars is supposed to be map 8.5, but instead it is map 8.7.
[83] Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman empire* (2007), 187-188.



Map 3:3 Evidence (mainly non-epigraphic) for the cult of Mars in the non-military zone of Roman Britain

Hercules as their chief deity and agriculturalists for Mars, as Derks believes happened in Gallia Belgica. Rather, instead of adopting elements of Roman culture that fitted with their way of life, it would appear that people in Britannia's highland zone rejected any and all elements of Roman culture altogether. This does not limit itself to just the worship of Mars and Hercules, or indeed just to religion. The same cultural divergence between the highland and lowland zone can be seen in many different aspects of life. There is no room here for an in-depth analysis of all these elements, but a quick look back to the end of the second chapter shows this same difference in the spread of Roman-style *villae* (map 2:5), monumental architecture (map 2:7) and more advanced farming equipment (Mattingly's and Jones' maps 6:46 and 6:47). In addition to these, the *Atlas of Roman Britain* shows a similar pattern for, among other things, the pre-Roman spread of coinage[84], towns[85] and pottery kilns[86]. Considering this, it is almost inconceivable how Jones and Mattingly can still reject the highland/lowland hypothesis.

This cultural division between the highland and lowland zones has also been discussed by Andrew Sargent, who has based his research on the fifth edition of the *Ordnance Survey Map of Roman Britain* (March 2001). He dismisses agriculture as a cause in one brief paragraph. Instead, he claims that the difference is caused by the existence of two different native cultures with roots in the tribal society of pre-Roman Britain, without providing a satisfactory explanation for what would have made these two cultures so different. Sargent suggests the strong pre-conquest contacts of much of the lowland zone with the continent as a cause, but if that were true than we should observe a change in the highland zone as well,

[84] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), maps 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11. Almost all the coins and coin moulds shown on these maps have been found in the lowland zone. Moreover, most of the coins found in the highland zone were found in hoards, which indicates that they were not used as currency, but were part of the treasuries of wealthy nobles.

[85] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), map 5.12.Urbanization in the highland zone remained almost exclusively limited to the capitals of the *civitates,* which were built by the Romans, not on in the initiative of the native populations.

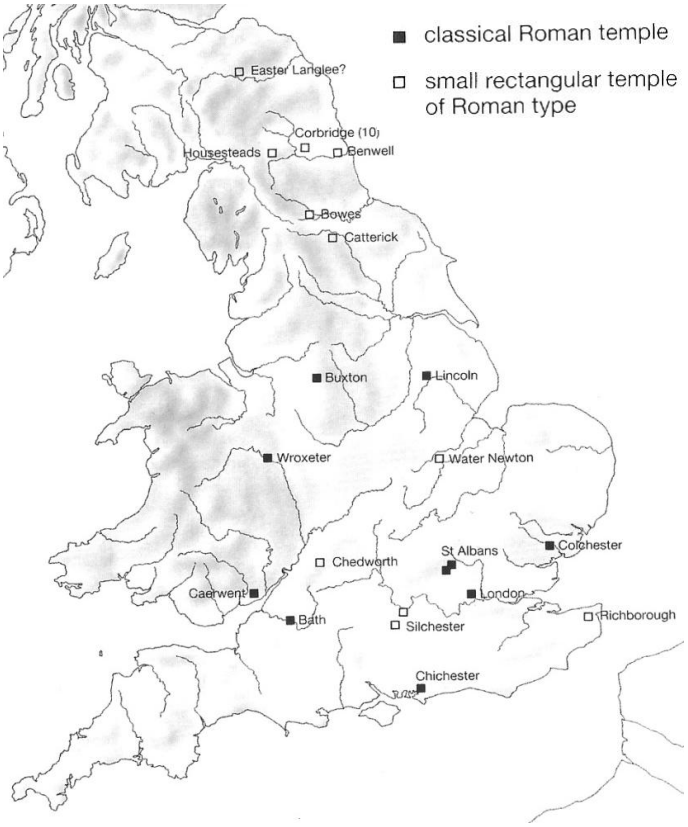
[86] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), map 6.24.

after the Roman conquest exposed it to the influence of Mediterranean culture. Since this is not the case, we can assume that the real cause of the cultural divergence between the two areas is caused by different agricultural practices.[87]

A more relevant example for this thesis is the distribution of various types of temples, already hinted at near the end of the second chapter. First, let us take a look at temples in northern Gaul, to establish a basis for comparison. In this area, one can identify three major types of temples[88] which can all be divided in several subcategories. The three main types are the classical podium temple, the Gallo-Roman temple, identified by the ambulatory, and the single-celled temple that lacked an ambulatory.

The two types of classical podium temples emerged in Italy during the late Republican period, developed from the Italo-Etruscan podium temples. They were characterized by a rectangular plan and a podium, accessible via a stairway on the front side of the temple. Both known subtypes are present in Gallia Belgica. The first is the *prostylus*, which had a rectangular, closed cult space (the *cella*) and a narrow hall formed by columns (the *pronaos*) in front of it. The second type, the *peripteros*, had a narrower, shorter *cella*, a much deeper entrance hall and an ambulatory, or *porticus*, on the back and long sides.[89]

The Gallo-Roman temple, which could be found everywhere in north-western Europe, from Britannia to the Alps, was by far the most prevalent with over two hundred known examples in Derks' study area. These temples were often founded on pre-Roman cult places; the gods being worshipped there were usually either old native gods or Romanized transformations of those. An example of a sanctuary founded on a pre-Roman cult place is the Gallo-Roman temple complex (or Romano-Celtic, as some scholars of ancient Britain prefer) found at Marcham, Oxfordshire; an impressive sanctuary that even had its own semi-amphitheatre. Despite some earlier controversy about the subject, it now seems clear that the site kept its religious significance from the early Iron Age throughout the Roman period and



Map 3:4 Distribution of classical and small Roman-type temples in Britain

[87] Andrew Sargent, "The North-South divide revisited: thoughts on the character of Roman Britain", *Britannia* 33 (2002) 219-226, there 225-226.

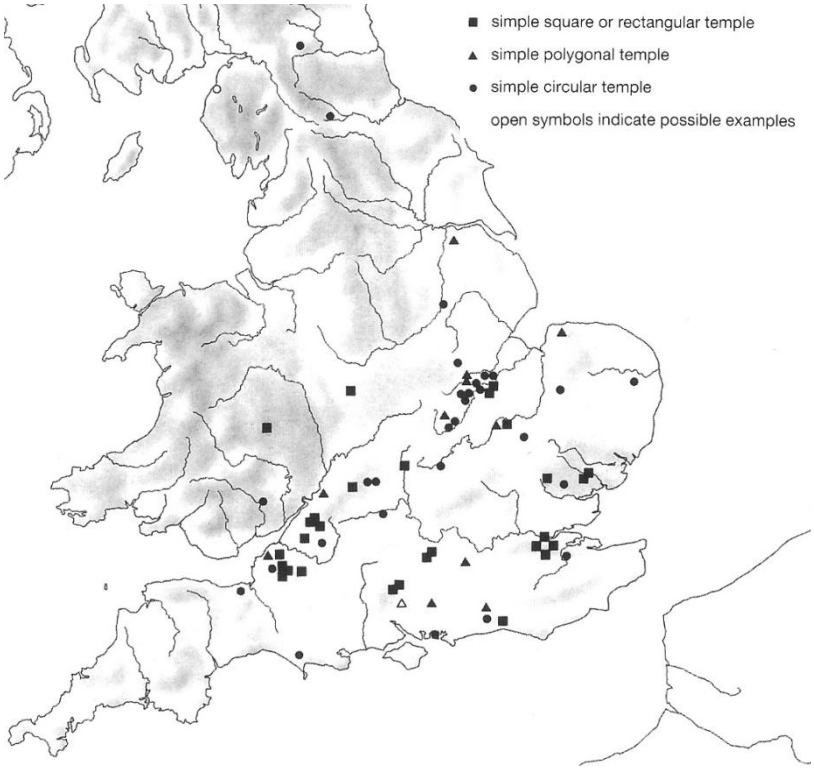
[88] Not counting the temples for eastern mystery cults such as that of Mithras which will not be discussed in this thesis as they were mostly used by Roman military personnel, and were not popular among the indigenous population.

[89] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 145.

even into Saxon times, though it is not known which deities were worshipped there. Inscriptions indicate that Gallo-Roman temples such as that at Marcham were most often funded by members of the local elite, not by the Roman government. Architecturally, the Gallo-Roman temple was characterized by a square, round or sometimes polygonal-shaped, high-walled *cella*, rather than a rectangular one as with the classical temples. The *cella* was surrounded by a *porticus* of the same shape. Most temples of this type were of the classicized variant. This form could include the addition of a *pronaos* within the front side of the *porticus*, a podium or a more rectangular shape. The typical elements however, namely the very high-walled *cella* and the *porticus* surrounding the entire temple, remained.[90]

The third and final type is the vernacular temple, which could already be found before the coming of the Romans. It was typified by being a square or rectangular, single-celled building, without a *porticus.* During the Roman period, occasionally some classical elements can be found in such temples. Usually this takes the form of an added entrance hall, created by simply splitting the rectangular *cella* in two by adding an extra wall.[91]

Considering our previous findings, the geographical distribution of these three types of temples should offer no surprises. The single-celled vernacular temples can be found in all of northern Gaul. Relatively few of these temples have been found, but that is likely because their less than impressive architecture makes them particularly difficult to find using aerial photography, which is an important tool for modern archaeologists in finding ancient cult places. This is especially true in forested areas like the Vosges and the Ardennes. Almost all of the Gallo-Roman temples however, are located in the more Romanized southern areas, where arable farming was dominant. Classicized variants of the Gallo-Roman temple, and the actual classical temples themselves, are exclusively limited to the capitals of the *civitates*. The exception to the rule are two Gallo-Roman temple complexes in Batavian territory. Derks believes that this anomaly can be explained by the prominence of the Roman military in Batavian culture. The Batavian



Map 3:5 Distribution of simple square/rectangular, polygonal and circular temples in Iron Age and Roman Britain

[90] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 146-149; Zena Kamash, Chris Gosden and Gary Lock, "Continuity and religious practices in Roman Britain: the case of the rural religious complex at Marcham/Frilford, Oxfordshire", *Britannia* 41 (2010) 95-125, there 95-96, 100-102, 120-122.
[91] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 150-152.

territory was an important recruiting ground for the auxiliary forces and members of the Batavian elites often served as commanders of these auxiliary troops. Derks claims that while in the south local elites competed with one another using symbols of Roman urban lifestyle, the elite of the Lower Rhine area focused on symbols of military life. Tombstones of retired Batavian soldiers in the style of those of legionnaires are a part of that, and Derks claims that the presence of the Gallo-Roman temples in Batavian territory must be seen in that light as well.[92]

In mentioning the influence of the Roman military machine on religious life in the Rhineland, Derks raises a critical point while simultaneously missing the greatest significance of it. A comparison with Roman Britain can lead to further insight in the role of the army in shaping local religious life. However, before we delve too deeply and too quickly into this matter, let us first take a look at temples in Britain and complete the outline of the religious divisions between Britannia's highland and lowland zones. The same three main types of temple that we found in Gaul, namely the single-celled vernacular, the classical and the Gallo-Roman temple, can also be identified here. Architecturally, they were exactly the same as their counterparts in northern Gaul, which I described earlier. Their regional distribution offers interesting similarities as well, though also some discrepancies. Maps 3:4, 3:5 and 2:6 show the locations of classical, vernacular and Romano-Celtic temples, respectively. Like in Gallia Belgica, there are only very few classical Roman temples, which are again mostly limited to the largest urban centres, the capitals of the *civitates*. Several less monumental temples in the classical style have been found in the north, near the military garrisons. Also similar to northern Gaul is the distribution of Romano-Celtic temples. Almost all of these are found in Britannia's lowland zone, the area where arable farming was the dominant form of agriculture, where more urban values were of greater importance than pastoral or martial ones and people were generally more accepting of Roman culture. They form the vast majority of the monumental temple complexes in Britain and are found in both large and small urban centres, as well as in rural areas. Very few of them however, are found near garrison settlements. The distribution of single-celled vernacular temples is more surprising. These share their area of distribution with the Romano-Celtic temples and only very rarely occur in the highland zone, making it almost devoid of temple architecture.[93]

There are historians who believe that, as was likely the case with the classical temples, Romano-Celtic temples were built by the Roman authorities in an attempt to spread Latin culture throughout the provinces. The non-Roman elements of the temples are explained as concessions by the benevolent Roman rulers, who still showed some measure of respect to the antiquity of the native beliefs and customs, as long as they did not cause any trouble. The beliefs of the majority of the population are then judged as irrelevant to the historian, as all the useful evidence is either left by the Romans, or by Britons who tried to adopt Roman ways.[94] This is evidently not the case. For one familiar with the religious life of Gallia Belgica, it would make much more sense to assume that the Romano-Celtic temples were constructed by the local elites, as part of the adopting of elements of Roman culture that fitted with their own perception of the universe. All evidence points to this also having been the

[92] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 158-168.
[93] Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman Empire* (2007), 281-282, 480-481, 520-522.
[94] M. Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain* (London 1984), 36-39.

case in Britain. Early in this chapter, it was already established that it was not the habit of the Romans to interfere with local religious life, unless particular cults were disturbing public order. This was the case with the Druidic order in Gaul and Britain which, as a consequence, was quite thoroughly eradicated.[95] There is no reason however, to assume that Romano-Celtic temples and the new deities with Latin and Celtic double names (or perhaps the old deities with their new names) were imposed by the Roman government. On the contrary, if this would have been the case we should see an equal distribution of Romano-Celtic temples all over Roman Britain. Instead, we have a clear separation between the highland and lowland zone, which makes it much more likely that, as in northern Gaul, the fusion of native and Roman religion was undertaken on the initiative of local groups. Some scholars are uncertain whether or not there actually was any Graeco-Roman influence involved at all in the appearance of the Romano-Celtic temple and suggest that it may have been a completely indigenous development. This seems extremely unlikely when considering all the Mediterranean elements found in the architecture, the geographical distribution of the temples and the fact that they first appear shortly after the Roman colonization.[96]

One might ask if this perceived difference between the highland and lowland zone is in fact just a matter of insufficient archaeological research. Maybe archaeologists have just focussed on the eastern part of Roman Britain, resulting in a disproportionately large amount of evidence having been found there, which will be corrected when archaeologists start focussing their efforts on the highland zone. This would be an incorrect assumption. Archaeologists have searched the highland zone just as intensively as the more Roman lowlands, both through traditional fieldwork as well as by carrying out extensive aerial reconnaissance. It is clear that religious practice in the highland zone of Roman Britain was "unmonumentalized, non-epigraphic and aniconic"[97], as David Mattingly describes it of rural Britain from Cornwall through Wales, and northern Britain as well. This is precisely the territory that encompasses the highland zone, though he does not mention the term, as is to be expected after he argued so strongly against the theory in *An atlas of Roman Britain.* Thus, the religious divergence between Britain's lowland and highland zones cannot be explained by a lack of effort on the part of archaeologists.[98]

3.3 The role of the army

With that issue settled, we can now ask ourselves what may have caused the differences in religion between Roman Britain and northern Gaul, when the underlying agricultural divergence was so similar? I believe that this was due to a third factor at work which played a very different role in these two regions, namely the Roman army. We have already established the most important characteristics of the Roman military in both Britain and Gallia Belgica. In the former province, the Roman troops were garrisoned near the northern border, far from the centres of the highland and lowland zones. Soldiers and civilians were further separated because troops were not recruited locally, but came from other parts of

[95] Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman Empire* (2007), 50-51, 105-106.
[96] Anthony King, "Animal remains from temples in Roman Britain", *Britannia* 36 (2005) 329-369, there 363. King does not decide either way which stand he takes in this particular debate, but leaves all possibilities open.
[97] Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman Empire* (2007), 480.
[98] Andrew Sargent, "The North-South divide revisited", 224.

the empire. Also in religious customs the army stood apart from the rest of the province. Especially notable is the imperial cult, which was very popular in the army, not just with the troops in Britannia, but all over the empire. Its prominence in the army, and also that of the cult of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, was further encouraged by the state. Amongst the general population however, the imperial cult was not that well regarded at all. In the first few decades of Roman rule it was even met with outright hostility, and it never became as popular as the cults of some other Roman deities like Mars, Hercules and Mercury. One should also note that in the army a much greater variety of deities was worshipped than in the rest of Britain. This ranged from traditional Roman deities to eastern mystery cults, to divinities from other provinces like the *matres,* to local British gods. Temples in the military zone were mostly of the classical type or of distinct military form, like shrines in the headquarters of fortresses. Perhaps of the greatest relevance for the comparison with the Rhineland is the fact that almost all inscribed altars found in Britannia are found in the military zone. Generally we can say that the army was rather conservative in its religious practice, adhering closely to Roman cultural norms.[99]

In the pastoral north of Gallia Belgica, the Roman army had a much more significant impact on the local population. Unlike in Britannia, where the Roman army was both culturally and geographically separated from both the lowland and highland zones, in the Rhineland the predominantly cattle-raising zone coincides with the area where the Roman garrisons were settled. Also, as we have seen earlier, there was much local recruitment for the auxiliary forces. Specifically in the *civitas Batavorum,* of every single family, one or two members served their term in the army. The Rhineland provided more auxiliaries to the Roman military than any other region in the empire.[100] This indicates that there were very close connections between the Roman army and the native peoples, which may also have affected local religion. I suspect that the difference between the pastoral zones of Britain and northern Gaul is caused by the great cultural influence of the Roman army in the Rhineland.

One matter in which the Roman army greatly influenced civic life in the Rhineland is literacy, which was in all likelihood much higher in the *civitas Batavorum* than it was in demilitarized areas. We can safely make this assumption based on the spread of inscriptions, which are much more commonly found in areas where there was more intense contact between the military and the civilian population, and in particular on the spread of seal-boxes found in the area.[101] While in the past it was sometimes believed that they might have been perfume boxes, amulet holders or pendants, scholars now generally agree that seal-boxes were meant to store wax imprints which were used for sealing all kinds of items, written documents in particular. We know with certainty that they have been in use from the first century B.C. until the end of the third century. They were especially popular in the army, by which means we may assume they were introduced in the north-western provinces. Seal-boxes were not used for the sealing of legal documents. These were usually written on *triptychia,* sets of thee *stilus* tablets, since with these it was more difficult to make unauthorized changes. Thus, seal-

[99] Jones and Mattingly, *An atlas of Roman Britain* (1990), 264-267; Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman Empire* (2007), 215.
[100] Ton Derks and Nico Roymans, "Seal-boxes and the spread of Latin literacy in the Rhine delta" in: Alison E. Cooley (ed): *Becoming Roman, writing Latin? Literacy and epigraphy in the Roman west* (Portsmouth, Rhode Island 2002) 87-134, there 87-88.
[101] Derks and Roymans, "Seal-boxes and the spread of Latin literacy in the Rhine delta" (2002), 88-89.

boxes must have been used primarily in a private context, mostly for sealing letters on wax-tablets, not leaf-tablets, which were not suitable for sealing.[102]

What is surprising about the *civitas Batavorum* is the incredibly high number of seal-boxes found in rural settlements. In other parts of Gallia Belgica, the vast majority of seal-boxes came from military camps. This indicates that in the *civitas Batavorum* literacy amongst civilians was exceptionally high, which was no doubt caused by the intense contact between the army and the civilian population in the area. More interesting for this thesis are the direct implications for local religious habits. Seal-boxes were not just used for private letters to friends and relatives. They also played a key part in religion, particularly in votive ritual. In the rural temple complex at Empel alone, twenty-six seal-boxes were found, a strong indication of their importance.[103] The votive ritual in Roman religion functioned as a contract between worshipper and deity. It started with the *nuncupatio*, in which the faithful individual made a request of a god, usually to be fulfilled within a certain time period, and swore an oath to make a specified sacrifice if the deity held up his end of the bargain. This 'contract' was written down, or inscribed. The votive ritual ended with the *solutio.* If the deity had granted the worshipper's request, the promised sacrifice was held and a public declaration of the fulfilling of the vow was raised, generally in the form of an inscription of some kind, specifying the request granted and the sacrifice made.[104]

Now where do seal-boxes fit into this picture? In the north-western part of the empire the votive ritual was very popular. This is testified by the large quantities of votive altars found there, not only in the Rhineland, but also in other parts of Gaul and in the more thoroughly Romanized parts of Roman Britain. These are marked by inscriptions that prove that they were part of the sacrifices made with the *solutio.* They were not actually used as altars, but as a way of publically showing the worshipper's vow fulfilled. [105] However, almost no writings that were part of the *nuncupatio* have been recovered anywhere in the empire, an exception being formed by a great number of lead tablets found at a few British shrines.[106] It has been speculated by some that the boundaries between different kinds of rituals faded in the imperial period and that we can simply see votive altars as normal sacrifices, which means that there would not have to be a *nuncupatio.*[107] Derks has convincingly proven this to be wrong and offers a strongly founded alternative. He believes that while declaring an oath fulfilled was in part a public affair, making one was a private matter which did not require durable materials. Instead, oaths were written down on wax tablets, which were then sealed using a seal-box and deposited at the temple of the concerning deity, preferably in the *cella*, to remain there until the oath had been fulfilled. This explains the extraordinarily large numbers

[102] Derks and Roymans, "Seal-boxes and the spread of Latin literacy in the Rhine delta" (2002), 90-91.
[103] Derks and Roymans, "Seal-boxes and the spread of Latin literacy in the Rhine delta" (2002), 94-97.
[104] Jean Bagnall Smith, "Votive objects and objects of votive significance from Great Walsingham", *Britannia* 30 (1999) 21-56, there 49; Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 218-220.
[105] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 221.
[106] Bagnall Smith, "Votive objects and objects of votive significance from Great Walsingham" (1999), 49.
[107] K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (München 1960), 47, is cited by Derks as an example of this school of thought.

of seal-boxes found at Gallo-Roman temples, not just in the Rhineland but also in Roman Britain, like in Great Walsingham with Wighton, the research area of Jean Bagnall Smith.[108]

3.4 Preliminary conclusions

In this chapter I have put the theory of Ton Derks to the test, that the degree of acceptance of a conquered population of Roman culture, religion in particular, is determined by how similar the culture of the people in question already was to that of the Romans. At the core of this is agriculture: the Roman culture was one founded on arable farming, so other cultures for which this was also the case would have been more accepting of Roman religious culture than societies for whom stockbreeding was the most important means of sustenance. Derks has applied these ideas to the Roman province Gallia Belgica, including the parts which would later become the separate provinces Germania Superior and Germania Inferior. He claims to have found a clear difference between the southern and northern parts of his study area. In the southern half, in which arable farming was the norm, people were eager to incorporate elements of Roman religion in their own lives, such as the Gallo-Roman temple, which has both native and Roman elements, and the worship of various forms of Mars as one of their chief deities. The latter is especially important, as besides a god of war Mars is also a patron of farmers. In the pastoral Rhineland however, far less Roman elements were adopted in the religious culture of local peoples. One thing that Derks does notice is the importance of the cult of Hercules in what few Gallo-Roman temples there are in the area. He fits this into his model by emphasizing the role of Hercules as a patron of cattle herders. His final conclusion is that both in the northern and the southern part of his study area people tried to incorporate elements of Roman culture in their religion without giving up the essence of their own culture. This was easier in the south, which was more similar to Rome to begin with.

As a means of testing this theory I have attempted to apply it to Roman Britain, because like in northern Gaul there is a clear difference there between a more agricultural and a predominantly pastoral zone. The results are rather remarkable. It appears that Roman Britain actually provides a much clearer example of Derks' theory than his own study area, having a much clearer distinction in religious customs between the pastoral and the agricultural areas, while in northern Gaul this remains a little blurry. I believe this is due to the influence, or lack thereof, of the Roman army. In Roman Britain the army had, compared to northern Gaul at least, very little influence on the local population. The main garrisons were stationed far from the centres of either the lowland or the highland zone and there was very little local recruitment. In Gallia Belgica however, the pastoral zone and the location of the Rhine garrisons overlapped. Also, there was highly intensive local recruitment of soldiers. Both of these factors led to the native population adopting far more elements of Roman religion, the votive ritual being the most notable, than they might have done if they had lived in a demilitarized zone.

While Derks does acknowledge that religion in northern Gaul did change under Roman rule, he still stresses continuity with pre-Roman times, stating that the changes mostly affected the more educated elite and that for the majority of people things hardly changed

[108] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 226-231; Bagnall Smith, "Votive objects and objects of votive significance from Great Walsingham" (1999), 49-50.

since the Iron Age. We have seen that this idea has some merit, but it is not a complete picture. In the *civitas Batavorum* in particular there were some rather radical changes that do not fit in the model that Derks created, with a marked difference between religion in the pastoralist north and the agricultural south. The cause of this was the high level of local recruitment for the auxiliary forces, which strongly exposed the people to Roman culture. The exact copying of the Roman votive ritual, made evident by the finding of seal-boxes in temple complexes, is the clearest example of something that, based on Derks' theory, we would not expect in the Rhineland. While Derks is aware of these anomalies in the *civitas Batavorum* (much of what I have written on this matter is, in fact, based on Derks' own research) I believe he downplays the significance of it. In the *civitas Batavorum* at least, the coming of the Romans led to great changes in how people perceived their world, a change which was unrelated to their own means of sustenance.

Especially when compared to the situation in Roman Britain it is clear that there is much truth in the idea of Derks, that religion in the ancient world was for a large part based on the form of agriculture practiced in a given territory. However, I do not believe that this model is sufficient to create a complete image of the way in which Roman conquest affected, or did not affect, religion in north-western Europe. In the next chapter I will further examine the possibility of discontinuity with the pre-Roman period and look for more changes in religious life as a consequence of Roman influence in northern Gaul and Roman Britain that may supplement, or provide an alternative to the highland/lowland model.

Chapter 4 A changing worldview

The previous chapter was mostly focused on the idea of continuity of religious habits in north-western Europe between the pre-Roman and the Roman period. This theory is founded on the assumption that a people's means of sustenance are a fundamental basis for the way in which they perceive the world around them and in the shaping of their culture. At the end of the chapter I have mentioned a very important example of discontinuity in the Rhineland, namely the adoption of Roman-style votive ritual, especially in the *civitas Batavorum.* This is a case of an external influence, being the close connection of the local population to the Roman army, leading to a divergence from the direction we would have expected local religious development to take. However, there are also examples to be found, in both Roman Britain and northern Gaul, where there clearly is strong discontinuity with the pre-Roman period without any obvious influence from external factors like the Roman army. In these cases we must assume that it was local initiative that led to these changes, in spite of the very real tendency to stick with what fitted in older religious thought. In this chapter I will examine two examples. First I will deal with religious sculptures of human figures in Roman Britain. Specifically, I will discuss the controversy concerning the relation between the very realistic classical statues and the more abstract 'Celtic' statues. Second will be the *matres* cults in northern Gaul. A controversial subject, believed by some to be one of the clearest examples of a pre-Roman cult that did not just survive Roman colonization, but expanded after it. This would mean that it has no place in this chapter, as that would make it an example of continuity, as opposed to a radical change. Others however, believe it to be something completely new for the Roman period; a Roman-style cult, but with local origins. I believe it to be the latter and will demonstrate the reasons I have for doing so.

4.1 Religious sculpture in Britannia

Earlier in the third chapter I mentioned the broader debate, whether conquered peoples adopted elements of Roman culture on their own initiative or if the Romans tried to force their culture upon an unwilling native population. The conclusion was that the latter idea is incorrect. This discussion, however, is not just waged by historians, but also by art historians and archaeologists. Some of their conclusions concerning religious sculptures of human figures in Roman Britain are of great interest to the subject of this chapter. These sculptures can be roughly categorized in three distinctive groups. First there are the classical, Roman style sculptures, which are characterized by their high degree of realism. Secondly, there are what we will call for now the 'Celtic' sculptures. These are generally described as being very abstract and containing a great deal of symbolism, and are not intended to be realistic depictions of human figures. Figures 4:1 and 4:2 are examples of these forms. Both are statues of Mercury, the former in classical and the latter in Celtic style. The third category is a collection of everything in between, statues which are not easily categorized as being either of typically Roman or Celtic style.

Many believe that the sculptures crafted in the Celtic style, and the more Roman-like sculptures with Celtic elements, are a sign of resistance by the Britons against the oppression of the Romans. Very important for this school of thought is the idea of the so-called 'Celtic Renaissance', as described by Ramsay MacMullen in 1965. He noticed a reappearing of La Tène elements in the material culture of mid-second century north-western Europe. He offered three possible explanations for this: contact with un-Romanised Celts from beyond the borders of the empire, economic stagnation and decline making people fall back to old traditions and a growing Celtic nationalism. MacMullen himself already said that none of these explanations are satisfying, but he does take the 'Renaissance' as a sign that Romanisation (a less controversial term at that time) had always been superficial at best.[109]

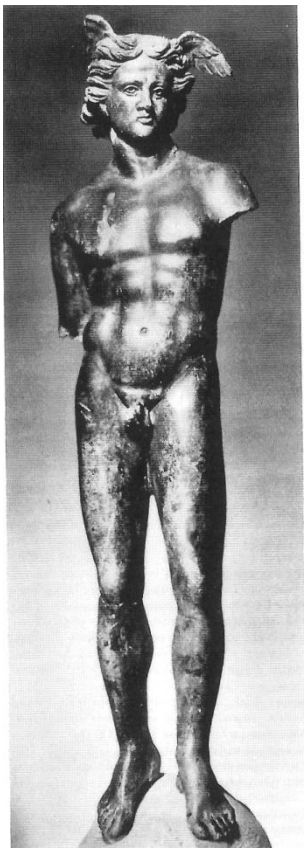


Figure 4:1 Bronze statuette of Mercury from Colchester. Colchester and Essex Museum, Colchester.

A contemporary proponent of the idea of a Celtic Renaissance is Marcus Reuter. He notes significant cultural changes in the border provinces of the northwest during the second century. Most important of these are a reduction in the amount of different styles of ceramics used, the ever decreasing import of Mediterranean goods like olive oil and the diminishing importance of bricks as building material. Also, he believes that in the same period there was a great deal of regionalization, for which he cites the many different *matres* cults in the Germanic provinces as an example.[110] He attributes this to a growing resentment of the Mediterranean lifestyle and Roman culture, the cause of which he sees in the changing recruitment system of the army. Reuter believes that in the first century the Roman soldiers, recruited in Southern Gaul, Spain and Italy, brought the Mediterranean culture with them to the north. From the second century onwards however, there was a greater focus on local recruitment and later, as we all know, Germanic warriors from beyond the borders were being recruited into the Roman military. This would have stopped the influx of Roman culture and would have made the border provinces subject to 'barbarian influences'. His final conclusion is that from the second century onwards people rejected Roman culture but did not consciously return to the La Tène culture, even though that never

Figure 4:2 Bronze statuette of Mercury from Southbroom, Devizes, Wiltshire. London, British Museum.

[109] Ramsay MacMullen, "The Celtic Renaissance", *Historia* 14 (1965) 93-104, especially 103-104.
[110] See this chapter's subsection on the *matres* cults for my reasons why I strongly disagree with Reuter's observations there.

completely disappeared. There was no real Celtic Renaissance like MacMullen said. Rather, people grasped back to *local* pre-Roman traditions.[111]

After my conclusions in my third chapter it should be very clear that I completely disagree with all this. For one, Reuter implies that before the Roman conquest there was one unified La Tène culture spread all over Gaul and the west of Germania. An idea which would have been questionable enough already, even if Reuter did not contradict himself shortly after by also stating that there were many more local traditions that people returned too after rejecting Roman culture. Also, I believe he completely misreads the role of the Roman army. As I have explained in the previous chapter, I am convinced that Roman culture was adopted on the initiative of the local populations, rather than being spread by Roman soldiers. Especially because in the case of Roman Britain, Mediterranean culture was most widespread in the regions with the least amount of troops garrisoned and the fact that in the *civitas Batavorum* it was actually the local recruitment that led to a greater acceptance of Roman culture rather than the other way around, as Reuter would have us believe. Still, there are those scholars who's ideas are rooted in that of the Celtic Renaissance and the idea of local resistance against an imperialistic Roman culture. We will now take a look at an example of this, applied to north-western European religious sculpture.

One scholar of Romano-British cult-imagery is Miranda Aldhouse Green. She sees the aforementioned 'Celtic' statues as very distinct from classical imagery, despite recognizing that such humanoid statues were virtually non-existent before the coming of the Romans. For her it is clear that in these sculptures we find a very different form of artistic expression; one that focuses heavily on symbolism and deliberately avoids the great realism of classical representative art. While she does not believe that the Roman rulers actively tried to force their own cultural values on the Briton population, she does think that religious syncretism led to an ever increasing dominance of Roman culture; a process which already started before the Roman conquest and that some Britons actively rebelled against, for example through the making of explicitly non-Roman sculptures. To support her ideas she has conducted a case study of the Cotswold region of south-west England, which lies in the area that I have identified in the second chapter of this thesis as Britain's lowland zone. Aldhouse-Green has chosen this area because since the first century already there are signs of a high degree of acceptance of Roman material values, which is supported by the writings of Cassius Dio,[112] but there are also clear examples of Celtic culture to be found.[113]

Aldhouse-Green then shows a list of examples of what she believes to be anti-Roman religious imagery. Some of these, like the *genii cucullati* (hooded spirits), the *matres* cults, antlered men, the ram-horned serpents and the fertility goddess Rosmerta are also found in northern Gaul. Aldhouse-Green seems to be particularly surprised by the presence of deities who appear to be both gods of agriculture and of warfare and guesses (for she provides no evidence for this idea) that such gods must have been worshipped by the lower echelons of

[111] Marcus Reuter, "Die 'Keltische Renaissance' in den Nordwestprovinzen des Römischen Reiches" in: Peter Noelke (ed), *Romanisation und Resistenz: in Plasik, Architektur und Inschriften der Provinzen des Imperium Romanum. Neue Funde und Forschungen* (Mainz 2003) 21-26, there 23-26.
[112] Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae* 60, 19-20.
[113] Miranda Aldhouse-Green, "Alternative iconographies: metaphors of resistance in Romano-British cult-imagery" in: Peter Noelke (ed), *Romanisation und Resistenz: in Plasik, Architektur und Inschriften der Provinzen des Imperium Romanum. Neue Funde und Forschungen* (Mainz 2003) 39-48, there 39-41.

society, perhaps even by slaves, but surely not by the 'Romanized' villa-owners. However, as I have made clear in my third chapter, it was very normal that gods of war were also associated with farming, as a community's chief deities would have provided protection in both times of peace and of war. Aldhouse-Green also suggests British subversion in the use of the typical northern cloak, the *sagum*, in which the *genii cucullati* are usually depicted. However, as she herself also says, it is most likely that these cloaks were worn just because they were more practical in the British climate. There is no reason to search for anti-Roman sentiments in such imagery.[114] The antlered figures and the ram-horned serpents are considered by Aldhouse-Green to be a deliberate archaism as these already had a pre-Roman history, unlike some of the other examples mentioned. According to her these were symbols of a north-western European identity, separate from Rome. In her conclusion she is more careful, stating that while these matters were probably not fuelled by real hostility to Rome, they did challenge *romanitas* by "presenting meaningful alternative currencies of religious expression."[115]

Claire Lindgren's opinion on this matter is similar to, but more subtle than that of Aldhouse-Green. For her study, she has limited herself to representations of Mercury and Venus. She has chosen these deities because the prototypes for these gods, especially Mercury, are representative examples of classical art, but there are also many 'provincialized' depictions of them found in Britannia. While she does not advocate Aldhouse-Green's anti-Roman resistance-hypothesis, she does believe that the so-called Celtic statues are not simply imitations of classical art as some do, but a very deliberate stylistic choice born of "a continuity of indigenous taste preferences".[116] Lindgren sees work of both higher and lesser qualities in both Celtic and Roman art, but does put the larger emphasis on the intention of the sculptor. She is of the opinion that, while the human form was practically never depicted in pre-Roman art, the Celtic statues are a continuation of pre-Roman cultural values, a preference of decorative schematic patterning and design already found in harness trappings, shield bosses, brooches etcetera, as opposed to the idealized naturalism of Roman art.[117]

Of a radically different opinion is Catherine Johns. Her ideas on the matter can be summarized, very bluntly, as follows: there are no sculptures of human form in a distinct Celtic style. Rather, the imagery that has been identified as such is made in imitation of Roman classical art but by unskilled craftsman, often amateurs. When put like that it does not sound very scholarly, but Johns does actually present a very well-founded argument. After taking a critical look at the Celtic style, it would appear that there is nothing much Celtic about it. In fact, when compared to other regions of the Roman empire, it is more surprising how very similar the 'indigenous British' statues are to sculpture found on the other side of Europe. Johns mentions statues found in Libya that would have been readily described as Celtic, had they been found in Britain. This is because many of the features that have been

[114] Aldhouse-Green, "Alternative iconographies: metaphors of resistance in Romano-British cult-imagery" (2003), 41-44.
[115] Aldhouse-Green, "Alternative iconographies: metaphors of resistance in Romano-British cult-imagery" (2003), 46-47.
[116] Claire K. Lindgren, "The provincialization of classical form in Britannia" in: Peter Noelke (ed), *Romanisation und Resistenz: in Plasik, Architektur und Inschriften der Provinzen des Imperium Romanum. Neue Funde und Forschungen* (Mainz 2003) 49-57, there 57.
[117] Lindgren, "The provincialization of classical form in Britannia" (2003), especially 51-52.

labelled as Celtic by scholars of ancient Britain are in fact universal characteristics of art made by children and untrained or inexperienced artists, among others the facial features occupying a flattened frontal area of the head, with no modelling of the cheeks, a simple straight slit being used for the mouth and a disproportionately large head, which in particular is described often by more conservative scholars as typical of Celtic religion. Anne Ross has in fact dedicated an entire chapter of her book to what she calls 'the cult of the head'.[118] But according to Johns these large heads would often have been unintentional. In fact, it would not be surprising if many of such sculptures were made by complete amateurs. Most were probably votive offerings, which could be very easily crafted at low cost by the dedicator himself.[119]

Very important also is the fact that before the Roman period there were practically no depictions of human figures, discounting a few exceptions of often questionable dating. In fact, there was no stone sculpture at all. Therefore the only standard would have been the naturalistic, Roman one.[120] Why then would British sculptors seek to develop a completely different style from the classical one? There does not seem to be any sensible reason for them to do so. According to Johns we should not look for the answer to this question in ancient times, but in the past century. Modern scholars search for hidden meanings that are simply not there, because they are influenced by the 20th en 21st century artistic ideals where the artist is always successful and only too eager to explain his or her motivations and intentions to the public, assuring them that their goal has been achieved. Moreover, in the past century more primitive, tribal art has become much more popular than art following the classical norms. Johns suspects that in claiming that the more abstract, or primitive qualities of so-called Celtic art were a deliberate aesthetic choice, modern scholars are in fact imposing their own artistic ideals on the ancient world. Johns does not mean to say that nobody appreciated those works, or that we as a modern public should not do so, but neither should we search for political thoughts that the artist probably never even considered.[121]

Personally, I do not think that either of these ideas is entirely correct, though I do find Johns' theory a lot more plausible and most certainly a very refreshing way to look at things. I myself believe that a hypothesis put forward by Greg Woolf, although designed to deal with a very different matter, is much more appropriate for this situation. The article I am referring to is about the *matres*, but its conclusions are very much applicable here. Like Woolf believes of the *matres*, I think that the Celtic statues are not really a sign of resistance against Rome, but a completely new amalgam of Roman and indigenous traditions that came about as a response to a sudden sense of a much larger world than people lived in before. A way for the peoples of the provinces to find their own place in a globalizing, Roman world.[122]

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[118] Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (Londen 1974).

[119] Catherine Johns, "Romano-British sculpture: intention and execution" in: Peter Noelke (ed), *Romanisation und Resistenz: in Plasik, Architektur und Inschriften der Provinzen des Imperium Romanum. Neue Funde und Forschungen* (Mainz 2003) 27-38, there 34-36.

[120] Lindgren, "The provincialization of classical form in Britannia" (2003), 52; Mattingly, *Britain in the Roman Empire* (2007), 521; Johns, "Romano-British sculpture: intention and execution" (2003), 36.

[121] Johns, "Romano-British sculpture: intention and execution" (2003), 36-38.

[122] Greg Woolf, "Local cult in imperial context: the *matres* revisited" in: Peter Noelke (ed), *Romanisation und Resistenz: in Plasik, Architektur und Inschriften der Provinzen des Imperium Romanum. Neue Funde und Forschungen* (Mainz 2003) 131-138, there 137-138.

4.2 The *matres*

With that we have come to the *matres*, or *matronae* as they are sometimes referred to. These are what appear to be mother goddesses, or perhaps ancestral mothers, whose worship is mostly centred on the Ubian territory, around modern Köln, and in the Rhine and Maas valleys.[123] The two terms are often used alongside each other and seem to be perfectly interchangeable. In the army it would appear that higher ranking officers preferred the term *matronae* while common soldiers used *matres*, but it is clear that they are both referring to the same goddesses. We know of them primarily through representations in sculpture and votive dedications, mostly votive altars, of which over 500 are known. Despite their rather limited core area of worship, evidence of their cults is found scattered over large parts of the Roman empire. They appear to have been fairly popular in Roman Britain, which is understandable considering the geographical proximity of the area. Also, while probably not worshipped by the local population in those areas, soldiers recruited in the Germanic provinces have raised dedications to the *matres* in Lugdunum, Rome itself, the Balkans and even the very easternmost provinces bordering the Parthians. The dedications in Rome came from the emperor's *equites singulares Augusti*, the imperial horse guards, many of whom came from the *civitas Batavorum*, and a dedication found in Lugdunum was set up by the military tribune Tiberius Claudius Pompeianus, of the *legio I Minvervia*, which indicates that the *matres* were worshipped throughout all levels of provincial society.[124]

One thing that immediately claims one's attention when studying the *matres* are their names. Almost all of them have Celtic or Germanic roots, not Latin ones. Sometimes their names refer to tribal groups (like the *matronae Frisiaviae, Suebae* and *Treverae*), or to the names of places and rivers (*matronae Rhenahenae*). On some occasions the meaning of a name is contested, like in the case of the *matronae Aufaniae*, which might mean 'Those who bestow in superabundance', but may also refer to fens or moors. In many more cases, we simply do not have any clue whatsoever.[125]

This is especially remarkable when looking at the cult practices, which were very conventionally Roman. It is clear that the *matres* were not a public cult, but a private one. This we can deduce from the very modest architecture of the sanctuaries. The temples and temple courtyards are small and there is no additional architecture like theatres for example, which are present at the sanctuaries of the larger public cults in the area. However, the temples are Gallo-Roman and also the enclosed courtyards and the altar stones are all of Roman style.[126] Also notable is the occurring of ritual meals as a part of votive ritual, which follows the exact same pattern that is so typical of Mediterranean cults. However, despite the obvious similarities, the ritual meals do not necessarily have to be seen as a Roman custom

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[123] The Ubian *civitas* was located on the border between the pastoral Rhineland and the more Roman south, were arable farming was more common. Most evidence for *matres* cults however, has been found in the area where Roman villas were also densely distributed. This might indicate that the cult was not popular in the pastoral zone. A map of the approximate borders of the *civitates* of northern Gaul can be found in figure 2.2, in: Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 40.

[124] Woolf, "Local cult in imperial context: the *matres* revisited" (2003), 131; Denis B. Saddington, "Roman soldiers, local gods and *interpretatio Romana* in Roman Germany", *Acta Classica* 42 (1999) 155-169, there 159, 162-163; Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 119-120; CIL XIII 1766.

[125] Woolf, "Local cult in imperial context: the *matres* revisited" (2003), 133; Saddington, "Roman soldiers, local gods and *interpretatio Romana* in Roman Germany" (1999), 159-160.

[126] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 122.

that became part of indigenous cult ritual. As Herz points out, ritual meals occur very often in religious rituals in completely different times and places, so it may very well be the case that they were already a part of Germanic and Celtic religion long before the Roman conquest.[127] The votive ritual as a whole is much more interesting. With the *matres* cults it worked exactly as I have described it in the third chapter, in the section concerning seal-boxes. The ritual started with the *nuncupatio* and ended with the *solutio*, for which an inscription was made; usually on a votive altar. The votive ritual as it was practiced by the worshippers of the *matres* adheres strictly to Roman standards and so do the actual inscriptions themselves. Therefore it is all the stranger to find deities with Celtic and Germanic names "in the midst of texts of unimpeachably conventional epigraphic Latin, sometimes carved with great care in high quality stone", as Greg Woolf has put it.[128]

To understand this enigma, we must examine the origins of the *matres* cults. One very popular idea is that they were originally native ancestor cults, obviously focussed on ancestral mothers. One of the proponents of this theory is Marcus Reuter. As we have seen earlier, he attributes the surging popularity of the *matres* cults to an ever increasing resentment of Mediterranean culture amongst the Germanic and Celtic peoples in the Roman empire, who fell back on their old customs and cults as a response. The growing importance of the *matres* was a sign of increasing regionalization in the Celtic parts of the empire. Reuter takes for granted that the *matres* were in fact pre-Roman in origin, but there is no actual evidence to indicate this and, as we shall see, there are some very good reasons to assume that they were not.[129]

Derks links the Germanic *matres* to those of northern Italy, were a similar cult was found. An important difference however, was that these deities were always simply invoked as *matronae*, they did not have proper names. Derks believes that the *matres* in northern Gaul as we know them are the product of a mixture of native ancestral mother cults with the *matronae* from northern Italy. The cause of this would be the veterans from the Roman army who, in the first century, still often came from the Po valley, Piemonte and Lombardy, and who settled in Germania Superior after their term of service had ended and then married native women. Then their cults, which were already similar, would have merged. Local names were easily adopted, since the Italian *matres* cults did not have any names of their own to begin with, and Roman cult practice became dominant. The new *matres* cults would then have spread further because of competition amongst the local population, who adopted the cults as well.[130]

Peter Herz finds this a very interesting theory, but is not completely convinced. He points out the complexity of Italian ethnicity, especially in the north, where there were still many people of Celtic origins. This makes things significantly more complicated than Derks makes it sound. He again proposes that the *matres* might also originally have been non-anthropomorphic deities, which later transformed into various kinds of mother goddesses. This is a thought which is similar to what Rüger and Horn have both suggested in 1987

[127] Peter Herz, "Matronenkult und Kultische Mahlzeiten" in: Peter Noelke (ed), *Romanisation und Resistenz: in Plasik, Architektur und Inschriften der Provinzen des Imperium Romanum. Neue Funde und Forschungen* (Mainz 2003) 139-148, there 140, 145-147.
[128] Woolf, "Local cult in imperial context: the *matres* revisited" (2003), 133.
[129] Reuter, "Die 'Keltische Renaissance' in den Nordwestprovinzen des Römischen Reiches" (2003), 25.
[130] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 127-130.

already and which Derks is quite firmly against. [131] His most important argument there is that the names of the *matres* are often derived from groups of people, which excludes the possibility of a pre-anthropomorphic stage.[132] However, we have already seen that the names of several other *matres* are derived from places, rivers or other landmarks, like the *matronae Rhenahenae*, which speaks against Derks' case. In fact, it fits very well with Herz' final argument on the matter, that perhaps we should not try to treat the *matres* as one cult, but as a very heterogeneous group, the various elements of which may have entirely different origin stories.[133]

A very different theory, which I have already briefly referred to, is proposed by Greg Woolf. He emphasizes the very cosmopolitan character of the Germanic provinces. The barriers between indigenous ethnic groups were much lower than before Roman colonization, geographical mobility increased, craftsmen and traders from Gaul came to the area, Roman settlers were a significant presence in some areas and army recruitment led many locals to see a great deal of the world. The religion of the area was just as cosmopolitan. There were no isolated populations who were suddenly confronted with the unified religious system of a conqueror, rather the indigenous peoples were exposed to the 'market-place of religions' of the Roman Principate.[134]

According to Woolf, this is the context in which we must place the *matres*. In a polytheistic world people could worship as many gods as they liked besides the *matres*, but dedications were not cheap. There must have been a reason for the success of the *matres* and it surely were not the cult acts, which were very much the same as those of other Mediterranean cults, or their focus on prosperity, which also was hardly unique or specialized at all. The one element which makes the *matres* stand apart from other cults is that they were very localized. We have already seen several possible explanations for this. Woolf disagrees with all of them. He does not believe that the *matres* were ancestral mother-goddesses, as the only indication for that are the terms *matres* and *matronae*, which does not necessarily mean 'mother', but can also indicate women of high status. Woolf is also against the idea of Iron Age continuity, as there is no proof whatsoever for the *matres* cult before the Flavian period. Moreover, the heavy focus on Roman cult practice would make little sense in such a context. Neither does Woolf believe that the worshippers of the *matres* opposed Roman religious culture, as that would not fit with the social profile of many of the dedicators. It is unlikely to say the least, that the earlier mentioned military tribune Pompeianus would have opposed Roman cultural norms.[135]

The interesting thing about the worshippers of the *matres* is that they came from all possible layers of society, from senators to legionnaires, men or women, Celts, Germans and

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[131] Christoph B. Rüger, "Beobachtungen zu den epigraphischen Belegen der Muttergottheiten in den lateinischen Provinzen des Imperium Romanum" in: Gerhard Bauchhenss and Günter Neumann (eds), *Matronen und verwandte Gottheiten. Ergebnisse eines Kolloquiums veranstaltet von der Göttinger Akademiekommission für die Altertumskunde Mittel- und Nordeuropas* (Bonn 1987) 1-30; Heinz Günter Horn, "Bilddenkmäler des Matronenkultes im Ubiergebiet" in: Gerhard Bauchhenss and Günter Neumann (eds), *Matronen und verwandte Gottheiten. Ergebnisse eines Kolloquiums veranstaltet von der Göttinger Akademiekommission für die Altertumskunde Mittel- und Nordeuropas* (Bonn 1987) 31-54.
[132] Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices* (1998), 126.
[133] Herz, "Matronenkult und Kultische Mahlzeiten" (2003), 144-145.
[134] Woolf, "Local cult in imperial context: the *matres* revisited" (2003), 134-135.
[135] Woolf, "Local cult in imperial context: the *matres* revisited" (2003), 135-137.

immigrants from Italy. Their worship of the *matres* was perhaps the only thing that these people had in common. The localism of the cults was even flaunted by people who we as outside observers would probably not even consider as locals. The *matres* cults were something new entirely, created by local peoples to give themselves a sense of empowerment, so they could establish a place for themselves within the Roman empire by adhering to Roman norms, but also incorporating very local elements that would not have made sense to outsiders, linking the local and the imperial worlds together. In this way, the *matres* are actually a sign of local acceptance of Roman culture, not of resistance to it.[136]

4.3 Preliminary conclusions

In this chapter I have looked for an alternative to the hypothesis that religion, and culture in general, are primarily founded upon a societies means of sustenance, the two possibilities in this case being either arable farming or stockbreeding. The consequence of this theory, as Derks has described it, would be that for the majority of people the core of their perception of the world around them did not change under Roman rule, as the practiced forms of agriculture remained the same as in the pre-Roman period. In finding an alternative to this idea, I have examined two examples of discontinuity with Iron Age religion in the Roman period, that came to be on the initiative of the local peoples of Gallia Belgica and Britannia.

The first case was that of religious sculpture, primarily in Roman Britain. We have seen two very different art styles there. The classical Roman one, which focuses on realism, and the so-called Celtic one, which appears to be more simple and abstract. To some scholars, the Celtic art style was a sign of resistance against Mediterranean cultural values by crafting statues with strong Celtic elements incorporated in them, relying more on abstract symbolism and not attempting to create life-like human images. Others point out that there were no images of humans in the pre-Roman period and use this as the main argument that the Celtic statues were just imitations of Roman ones, but of greatly inferior quality. While I have no doubt that this is in many cases correct, I do not believe it applies to all sculptures featuring Celtic elements, some of which are quite impressive.

Secondly I have examined the *matres* cults from the two Germanic provinces, which exhibit a strange blend of Roman cult practices with deities bearing Celtic and Germanic names. Many believe these cults to be a continuation of a pre-Roman worship of ancestral mother-goddesses. Some of their opponents however think that they were a mixture of the *matres* cults of northern Italy, brought to Germania by settling veterans, with native cults.

The most likely explanation however is one that can also be applied to the case of Britain's religious sculpture. Both the statues of human figures that feature native elements and the *matres* cults originate in the Roman period, created on the initiative of the peoples of the provinces, who were so trying to empower themselves and find a place in the Roman world. This was not an attempt at resisting Mediterranean norms, but shows that people, to a certain extent, accepted and actively embraced them. However, this did not happen everywhere in north-western Europe. Rather, this change was confined to the areas which we have already identified as being more receptive to Mediterranean religion, which I will address further in my final conclusion.

[136] Woolf, "Local cult in imperial context: the *matres* revisited" (2003), 137-138.

Final conclusion

Soon after the Roman conquest, religion in north-western Europe became very Mediterranean in appearance. Many new cult buildings were raised and, while most of them were not strictly following the rules of the classical temple complex, they were most clearly influenced by them. Sculptures were made in Roman style and almost all the inscriptions from the area, many of which were made by native Celts and Germans, were written completely in Latin. This 'Mediterranisation' of Celto-Germanic religion has been the subject of this thesis. It has been my goal to find out how exactly the Roman colonization has changed the indigenous religions of north-western Europe during the Principate.

The basis of my work is the theory of Ton Derks, according to which culture and religion are rooted in and thus greatly affected by a society's primary means of sustenance. He has chosen to study northern Gaul, in which two different areas can be identified which feature a very different religious culture. The southern half, which was very accepting of Mediterranean culture, and the Rhineland in the north, where people were more conservative. Derks believes that this is due to their practiced forms of agriculture. Whilst in both areas mixed farming was practiced, stockbreeding was more important in the north. Roman culture however, was formed by a society which had its foundations in arable farming, because of which the Romans had a very different perception of the world. But in the southern parts of Gallia Belgica stockbreeding was of secondary importance to arable farming. Therefore the core of the indigenous peoples' culture and religion was already more similar to that of the Romans, which caused the greater acceptance of Mediterranean material culture and religious customs. I have chosen to test the validity of this theory by making a comparison between the study area of Derks and the situation in Roman Britain, where there was a similar divergence between two geographical areas of a different agricultural regime.

In the first chapter I have briefly outlined the background and the events of the Roman conquest of Gaul and Britain. I began with the invasion of the Cimbri, the first time that Rome came into contact with the Germans, and then discussed Caesar's campaigns in Gaul and his only moderately successful campaigns in Britain. Then I went over the campaigns in Germania during the rule of Augustus and the dreadfully slow conquest of Britannia under Claudius and his successors.

In chapter two I have described the landscape, climate and agricultural regimes of northern Gaul and Roman Britain. My description of northern Gaul is primarily based on Derks' research. The Pleistocene hill landscape of the south was primarily an agricultural area, while in the mountainous regions of the south-east and the Lower Rhine area in the north, stockbreeding was of greater importance. There is a strong scholarly debate about the existence of such a geographical division in Britain. Earlier scholars strongly believed in a highland zone and a lowland zone, the former of which would have been more pastoral and the latter more similar to Gallia Belgica's Pleistocene hills, being focused primarily on arable farming. Mattingly and Jones (to whose excellent work I am greatly indebted, the data they have provided in their atlas was invaluable for my research) strongly disagree with this view and instead point to the fact that, both in ancient times and in later years, mixed farming was practiced all over Britain. Despite this I have demonstrated, using both geological data and cultural evidence, like the finding locations of ancient farming equipment, that a highland and

a lowland zone can indeed be identified. The lowland zone, where arable farming was dominant, corresponds roughly to most of present day England. The highland zone of Roman Britain, where cattle-raising was much more important, encompasses modern Wales, parts of northern England and the modern English counties of Cornwall and Devon.

We have seen in the third chapter that in northern Gaul there was indeed a difference in religion between the south and the pastoral north. In the southern territories, Roman customs became far more widespread than in the north. The Gallo-Roman temple became extremely popular and various forms of Mars, who was a patron of farmers as well as a war god, became the chief deities of public cults. In the Rhineland this was not the case. Only a few Gallo-Roman temples have been found there and other elements of Roman culture that where widespread in the south of Gallia Belgica, like Roman *villae,* are also very rare. The most important deity worshipped in what few Gallo-Roman temples there are, and who was therefore probably the centre of public cult worship, is not Mars but Hercules. He is also a war god, but in peacetime he is also seen as a patron of cattle herders. Based on this, Derks' conclusion is that both in the north and the south, people tried to adopt as much of Roman religion as possible without giving up the core elements of their own culture. In the south, which was already more similar to Rome, this was much easier than in the Rhineland.

We find great similarities to this situation in Roman Britain, but major differences as well. The division in religious customs between the highland and lowland zones is actually much clearer than it is in Gaul. Instead of finding evidence of the worship of Hercules in the highland zone and of Mars in the lowland zone, as I expected based on Derks' research, it turned out that the worship of Mars and Hercules was spread equally throughout the lowland zone and was completely absent in the primarily stockbreeding areas. Moreover, Gallo-Roman (or Romano-Celtic) temples are found almost exclusively in the lowland zone. It would appear as if the Britons of the highland zone rejected Roman culture altogether. The most likely cause of this, is the different role of the Roman army in both provinces. In Britannia the troops were garrisoned near the northern border, far from the centre of either the highland or the lowland zone. In Gallia Belgica however, the garrisons were not only stationed in the heart of the Rhineland, but the army also recruited intensively from the local population. Because of this, the peoples from Gaul's pastoral north were far more strongly influenced by Roman culture than their counterparts in Britain's highland zone, which explains the greater prominence of Roman religious customs, like the extensive evidence of Roman votive ritual in the *civitas Batavorum*.

In the final chapter I have expanded on this idea of possible discontinuity of religion in the Roman period, as opposed to Derks' vision that at its core, religion in the provinces remained pretty much the same as in pre-Roman times. To this end I have studied two cases of religious expression in my study area that are completely new for the Roman period. The first example was that of religious sculpture in Roman Britain, which is usually divided into two categories, the classical ones and the Celtic ones. The second one were the *matres* cults from the Germanic provinces, which exhibited a strange blend of very Roman cult practice and appearance, with strictly Celtic or Germanic names for the deities worshipped. I have argued that both these cults and the British sculptures with Celtic elements incorporated in them should not be interpreted as signs of resistance against Mediterranean culture, but actually as signs of acceptance of it. Through this blend of indigenous and Roman religion

people could truly become a part of the Roman world, without completely giving up all sense of local identity.

It is clear then that after the Roman colonization, the indigenous peoples' religion and world views did certainly change. They became more Roman, but the native populations also attempted to preserve, or create completely new local traditions to retain their own identity within the greater empire. However, it is notable that these changes occur either in the areas where arable farming was the dominant form of agriculture, or where army recruitment among the local population lead to a greater acceptance of Roman culture than we might have expected in the stockbreeding areas. The sculptures of Roman Britain, and what dedications to the *matres* we have from that area, are almost exclusively found in the lowland zone. In Britain's highland zone there is no sign of these phenomena. And in northern Gaul, the greatest concentration of *matres* worship is in the Ubian territory, the part of Germania Superior where arable farming was of greater importance than stockbreeding. In the Rhineland area, dedications to the *matres* are mostly found in the areas where the Roman army got its recruits. Therefore we can say that, while there were certainly great changes in indigenous religion that are not directly related to the local form of agriculture, the areas where arable farming was more dominant (and which were therefore already more similar in culture to the Mediterranean world) were far more susceptible to these changes than the much more conservative pastoral zones.

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