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Britons abroad : the mobility of Britons and the circulation of British-made objects in the Roman Empire

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Stellingen

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“Britons abroad: the mobility of Britons and the circulation of British-made objects in the Roman Empire”

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1. ‘British’ is a cultural construct imposed by Rome in order to form a new cultural unity within the diversity of cultural forms, a process which failed in Britain, but took off among Britons settling abroad. There the artificially created cultural unity started to take the form of an ethnic label; as such, imposed culture became an invented ethnicity for an imagined community. (Present thesis, conclusions)
2. It is impossible to construct an experience of ‘being Briton’ in the context of the wider Roman Empire, because it is unnecessary: ‘being Briton’ in Britain and ‘being Briton’ on the Continent was always different and played out in different contexts. Yet, because the mobile individuals’ routinised identities are expressed in ‘shared ways of doing things’, members of ‘the invented British community’ might at particular times or in particular situational circumstances have acted ‘more British’ through their appearance. (Present thesis, conclusions)
3. British-made brooches, being British products, were symbols that stood for Britannia. Through wearing a brooch, different messages could have been sent by the owner, while the ‘Britishness’ of the brooches could ‘resonate’ together with all the other meanings. (Present thesis, chapter 6)
4. For communities living in and then leaving Britain the label ‘Britishness’ may have been associated with the new cultural framework they had experience of while living in Britain. Being of different cultural as well as ethnic stock, growing up in other spheres of *habitus*, such immigrants absorbed elements of ‘Britishness’ and brought them over to the Continent, where these elements served the immigrants’ own needs and cultural practices. (Present thesis, conclusions)
5. Ethnicity is rather a subjective phenomenon drawing its sources from cultural associations and practices, and in which the agents’ actions are crucial in forming, maintaining and dissolving ethnicity. Cultural identity is a pool from which ethnic manifestations can be extrapolated; it has properties that are common to all other kinds of identity but to some extent can be realised in itself.
6. We should finally move ‘beyond ethnicity’ since an ethnic indicator is simply a semantic construction, where an origin is reflected in social practices and in an invented but shared *habitus*.
7. The terms ‘diaspora’ and ‘migration’ are used by some scholars as synonyms, although the terms themselves and the processes they describe are diametrically opposed. A diaspora is a much more complex process than migration and should be treated as such.

8. The study of cultural identity through the means of dress avoids the danger of material culture evidence being used non-reflectively without understanding the intention behind its usage. Dress behaviour provides a medium for the communication of various types of identities between a wearer and his/her audience, and sometimes points to intentionality, i.e. that something can be worn to express a specific identity.
9. “Clothes say a lot about someone. In one instant they tell you something about somebody’s size, age, style, gender, income and all sorts of other personal details. But it also has to do with ephemeral matters such as the memory of a certain time when the clothing was worn and the reason it was kept” (Yin Xiuzhen, exhibition poster, Groninger museum, Groningen, the Netherlands)
10. A person’s luggage represents a home. What we take with us when we travel, is carefully selected on the basis of 20 kilograms per person, but what we chose to take is a conscious, sometimes time consuming, act.
11. Upon receiving the Dutch citizenship and see the graph “nationality: Dutch”, the realisation quickly hit me: “I am anything but”. The same idea might have hit some of those Gauls or Germans who received Roman citizenship.
12. There is no place like home.