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# Remembering Britannia: expressions of the identities by Britons on the Continent during the Roman Empire

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# Attitudes towards the Past in Antiquity
# Creating Identities

Proceedings of an International Conference
held at Stockholm University, 15–17 May 2009

edited by

Brita Alroth and Charlotte Scheffer

Stockholm 2014

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Abstract
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This volume brings together twenty-eight papers from an International conference on attitudes towards the past and the creating of identities in Antiquity. The volume addresses many different approaches to these issues, spanning over many centuries, ranging in time from the Prehistoric periods to the Late Antiquity, and covering large areas, from Britain to Greece and Italy and to Asia Minor and Cyprus.

The papers deal with several important problems, such as the use of tradition and memory in shaping an individual or a collective identity, continuity and/or change and the efforts to connect the past with the present. Among the topics discussed are the interpretation of literary texts, e.g. a play by Plautus, the *Aeneid*, a speech by Lykurgos, poems by Claudian and Prudentius, and of historical texts and inscriptions, e.g. funerary epigrams, and the analysis of the iconography of Roman coins, Etruscan reliefs, Pompeian and Etruscan frescoes and Cypriote sculpture, and of architectural remains of houses, tombs and temples. Other topics are religious festivals, such as the *Lupercalia*, foundation myths, the image of the emperor on coins and in literature, the significance of intra-urban burials, forgeries connected with the Trojan War, Hippocrates and Roman martyrs.

*Keywords*: The past, identities, memory, tradition, continuity and/or change, mythology, religious festivals, funerary inscriptions, forgeries, Trojan War, Hippocrates, Lykurgos, Etruscans, the François Tomb, Caecilius Iucundus, Athens, Rome, Britain, Crete, Cyprus, Phrygia, Capitolia, Christian martyrs.

*Cover illustration*: Part of Roman sarcophagus relief, *c*. A.D. 300. NM Sk 185.
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# REMEMBERING BRITANNIA: EXPRESSIONS OF IDENTITIES BY 'BRITONS' ON THE CONTINENT DURING THE ROMAN EMPIRE

BY

TATIANA IVLEVA

*Abstract*

This paper explores the ethnic terms used by British emigrants when naming their origin. It will be argued that the memory of their ancestral land played an important part in the construction of their migrant identities and helped the self-awareness of an ethnic migrant group to emerge. Furthermore, it will be shown that the interaction of British emigrants with other migrant or indigenous groups on the Continent may have led to the formation of a different self-perception in comparison with the 'Britons' living inside their tribal territories. It is suggested that the ethnic names used to label the inhabitants of Roman Britain, although being Roman constructs with little self-ascriptive value, were adopted by the British emigrant community in order to distinguish themselves from others.

## Introduction

In his article on the meaning of ethnic names such as *Britannus* and *Britto*, Keith Matthews asks what significance these two terms had for those whom they labelled as well as what the difference in meaning was between them.[1] Using the writings of amongst others St Patrick and burial objects found at the cemetery at St Albans, UK as evidence,[2] Matthews argues that both ethnonyms were used by the outsiders and intruders, the Romans, to name the local inhabitants of the province of Britannia. He establishes that while "the ethnic name *Britannus* was given to the population by outsiders" and, subsequently, used mostly by the local Roman authorities, the ethnonym *Britto* derived from the self-awareness of what it was to be an inhabitant of Roman Britain".[3] Hence, although both terms were alien to the indigenous population of Britannia, pressure from the Roman administration meant that they were gradually adopted by the inhabitants and even became the categories from which native British self-awareness was created and maintained.[4] Although Matthews' conclusions appear interesting and mind-provoking, he did not allow 'the Britons' to speak for themselves by using their own terminology as expressed on inscriptions.[5] Funerary inscriptions which give information about the deceased were regrettably omitted from his work.

In order to understand what such ethnonyms as *Britannus/Britto* meant to the native inhabitants of Roman Britain, one needs to consider how emigrants from this province referred to their homeland and how they identified themselves within the different communities. This will help to understand the usage and the reasons behind the adoption of these Roman constructs. The evidence from the emigrant community is the best available to shed light on the meaning of the particular ethnonyms, because those who lived in their home province would not be as explicit as emigrants would be when naming their origin.[6] A reconstruction of how a community of migrants remembers its ancestral lands can be used to establish the meaning of ethnic names as

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[1] Matthews 1999, 14.
[2] Matthews 1999, 16, 23.
[3] Matthews 1999, 25, 29–30.
[4] Matthews 1999, 26.
[5] Matthews (1999, 19) indicates that "the natives of Roman Britain left no description of themselves" so the only way to understand "how they constructed their identities is through material culture" (ibid., 20). Matthews however did not take into consideration the epigraphic record left by the natives of Roman Britain, while this record contains valuable information on how indigenous populations described themselves.
[6] Kakoschke 2004; Oltean 2009. Oltean (94–95) argues that "Dacians who emigrated were demonstrably keener to make their ethnic origin explicit than were their relatives back at home" and that "certain environments increase the exhibition of *origo*: these tend to be communities of settlers coming from diverse regions".

used by these individuals when naming their origin, and epigraphy is an important source for establishing this.

This article focusses mainly on how *Brittones* used their past to recreate their identities in their new circumstances and how they presented their identities to the Roman public. The following issues will be addressed: how 'British' were 'Britons' and how did they emphasise their attachment to the province of Britannia? Using examples of Latin inscriptions found on the Continent, this paper considers the memory of the homeland as expressed by the British emigrants in order to gain insight into their sense of ethnic identity. The various forms of inscriptions were chosen because "the traces of ethnic identity are in principle archaeologically intangible, unless combined with contextual historical data"[7] and because inscriptions are a means of storing memory in written form.[8]

Prior to analysing the surviving material it should be noted that the author of this work is fully aware of the fluid and dynamic nature of ethnic identities. As argued by Sian Jones, "the idea that ethnic groups are fixed and bounded entities extending deep into the past is a modern classificatory invention".[9] Here, the concept of identity is understood as a certain identity (ethnic, cultural, national etc.) expressed by an individual or group at a particular time through a particular medium in a particular set of circumstances. The question is not *what* the ethnic identity of emigrant 'Britons' was but *why* they chose to express this particular identity, why they felt the need to express certain identity features at a particular time.[10]

Last but not least, it must be emphasised that "there is a desire to explore diversity, not to find a unitary solution".[11]

## The epigraphic data

The contextual data consist of 47 inscriptions and military diplomas in which (a) a person indicated his or her *origo* as *Britannus*, *Britannicianus* or *Britto*, or used a word starting with the element *brit-*; (b) the cognomen of a person started with *brit-* or was a variation and different spelling of a word containing this element, such as *Britonus, Brittonus, Britanus* or *Britta* etc.; (c) a person stated the province of Britannia as the birthplace or gave as *domus* a British town; or (d) a person mentioned that he or she originated from one of the indigenous British tribes.

In total there are 27 funerary inscriptions: *CIL* II 586, 952, 1072, 1335, 3129, 3255, 6311; *CIL* III 11233, 14216,8; *CIL* VI 3279, 3301, 3346, 3594, 32861; *CIL* VIII 1950, 3962, 21669; *CIL* XIII 1981, 8314; *AE* 1939, 53; *AE* 1956, 249; *AE* 2003, 1218; *ILJug* 2, 679; *HEp* 1, 555; *HEp* 2, 143; *EE* 9, 62; *IAM* 2, 56. These inscriptions are dated from the second half of the first to the end of the third centuries AD, with the exception of one Christian inscription, which dates from the fourth/fifth centuries (*AE* 1939, 53). For three inscriptions—*ERRioja* ID 27, *Conimbri* 236 and *HEp* 2, 182c2—the type is hard to determine, but it is most likely to be funerary since names of persons are given with the filiation, which is usual for a funerary text.

There are eight votive inscriptions: *CIL* II 805, 5812; *CIL* XIII 6221, 6679; *AE* 1915, 70; *AE* 1922, 116; *AE* 1987, 698; *AE* 1996, 905. The votives are dated from the end of the first to the end of the third centuries AD.

One inscription—*EE* 8:2, 262,15 (p. 490)—probably names the master of a workshop—*officina Brito*(…). Rather than belonging to a votive or funerary context, it was probably a sign put up in front of the workshop.

There are two public monuments: the Tropaeum Traiani in Adamklissi, Romania (*CIL* III 14214), built after the Dacian wars to commemorate the soldiers of the Roman army who participated in the conquest of Dacia, and an inscription with the names of the soldiers of the legion, probably the *legio III Augusta*, from Lambaesis, Algeria (*CIL* VIII 18087).

Lastly there are six military diplomas on which the receiver states his ethnic origin as British, either referring to his British tribe or city, or simply giving his *ethnikon*

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[7] Oltean 2009, 93.

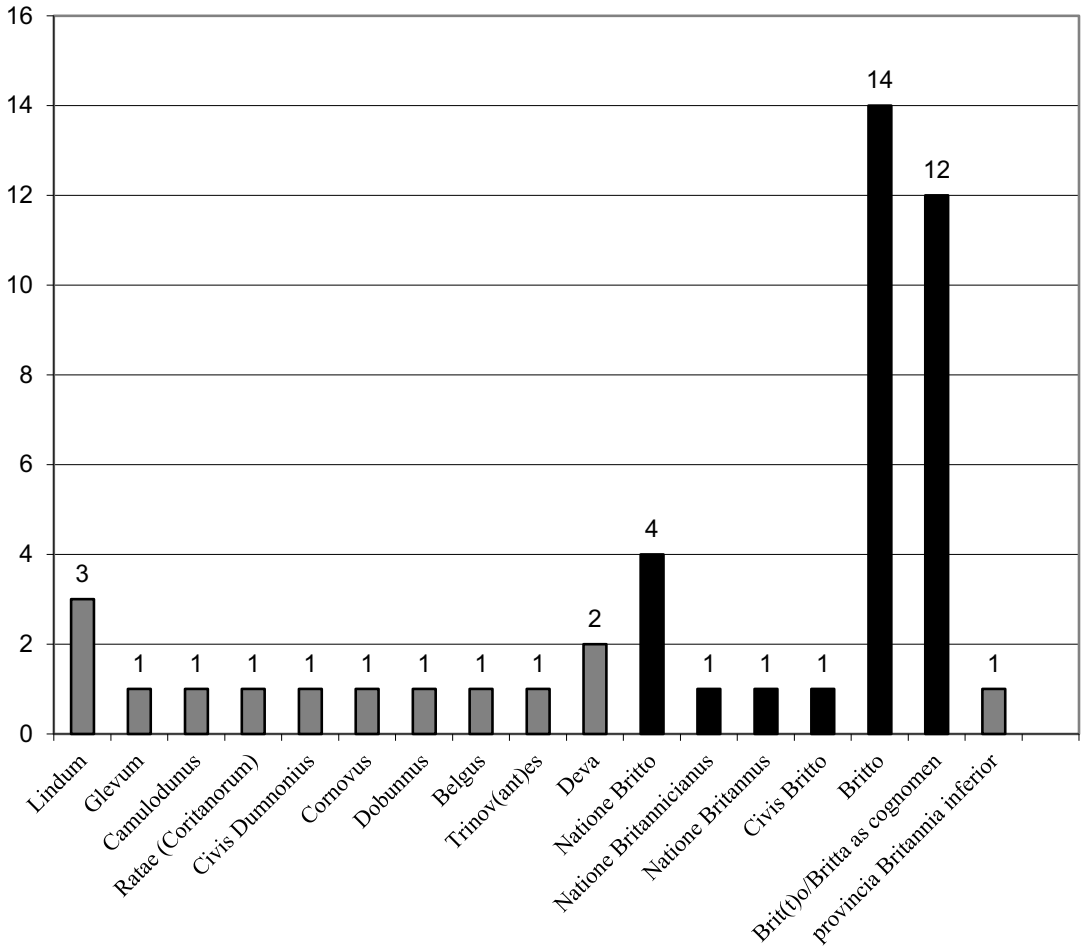
[8] Barrett 1993, 237. Barrett (ibid.) argues furthermore that inscriptions allow the memory to "extend beyond this simple textual model because memory organizes consciousness, enabling experiences to become recognizable and to be spoken about". "Memories might be recorded, literally inscribed, onto the monuments" which makes the inscriptions the perfect repository (Hope 2003, 119).

[9] Jones 2007, 66. "The ethnic categories are produced, reproduced and transformed through the systematic communication of cultural differences with relation to the cultural practices of particular ethnic others. … The construction of identity involves the marking of contrast – the opposition of selves and others" (ibid., 68). Especially in migrant communities the construction of identities goes through identity stress when new forms of identification are constructed, manipulated or adjusted to circumstances. The identity stress and construction of migrant ethnic identities are thoughtfully and profoundly described in Oltean 2009, 92–93.

[10] Oltean 2009, 93.

[11] Mattingly 2004, 9.

Table 1. Indication of origin by British emigrants on the inscriptions and military diplomas found on the Continent.




as *natione Britto: RMM* 20; Eck & Pangerl 2007, 234; *CIL* XVI 49,[12] 110, 160, 163. The diplomas are dated to the second century AD, the latest being issued in AD 154.

This produced a dataset of 47 'Britons'; hence, there is direct evidence of 47 persons of British origins who for various reasons moved to the Continent and indicated their origin as being 'British'.[13]

## Remembering Britannia: the construction of ethnic identity in a provincial setting

Preliminary analysis of inscriptions with the *ethnikon Brit*(…), with *domus* in the province of Britannia and of personal names such as *Britonnus* etc. has shown that

[12] Kennedy argues that this person, Lucco son of Trenus, was Dobunnian through his mother (1977, 254). Kennedy mistakenly assumes that the names Lucco and his father's Trenus were attested only in Noricum and in the Danubian provinces. He proposes that Lucco was the son of a Dobunnian woman married to a soldier from Noricum who had at one time served in Britain and died in service. In such cases, his children, born before he had received citizenship, would take the origin of their mother (ibid., 254). However, recent research by Mullen (2007) shows that both the names of the father and the son are well attested in the British epigraphic record: the element *luc-* is the third most commonly attested element in Roman Britain (ibid., 50). The name Lucco is found in some numbers on inscriptions in Roman Britain (Mullen, online database). The father's name–Trenus–is also attested in Britain in some numbers (Mullen, online database). Hence, Lucco is indeed first-generation Dobunnian.

[13] By 'British' origin is understood the origin of a person whose inscription indicates that he or she originated from the province of Britannia, either from an urban or rural environment.

those who migrated to the Continent in the Roman Empire preferred to indicate their pan-tribal origin, i.e. BRITISH (*Table 1*). This can be seen from *Table 1*, where the highest numbers belong to columns (in black) occupied by such categories as *BRITTO*, *NATIONE BRITTO* and personal names *Brit(t)o* or *Britta*. The following preliminary conclusions can be proposed. Emigrants from Roman Britain preferred to call themselves 'Britons' so as to emphasise that they were members of the GROUP of people with whom they shared the land of their birth—the province of Britannia. Whenever they wished to emphasise their special ties with the motherland they would mention the tribe they belonged to or the city where they were born. Hence, we see people from Glevum (modern-day Gloucester), Deva (Chester) and Lindum (Lincoln); and members of such tribes as the *Dumnonii*, *Dobunni* or *Belgi* (*Table 1*). Those who left the British Isles, then, were divided into those who emphasised their pan-tribal identity ('Britons' remembering their ancestral land as the province of Britannia) and those who deliberately chose to express their regional identity, remembering the tribe or city they hailed from.

However, the geographical spread of the inscriptions reveals the following inconsistency. Those who simply call themselves *Brit(t)o/a* without the indicative Latin word *natione* (meaning origin) were concentrated in the Spanish and North African provinces: 18 and 4 cases respectively (*Fig. 1*). It is possible that here *Brit(t)o/a* was a cognomen used by emigrants to establish their 'ethnic' ties with the homeland. This begs the question whether some 'Britons', after the invasion of Claudius in AD 43, emigrated to Spanish and North African provinces or whether in this case the ethnic cognomen *Brit(t)o/a* stood for something else.

## How to recognise a real and a fake 'Briton'

Two inscriptions in which *Britto* is part of a person's cognomen can be usefully compared in order to establish if this was indeed an ethnic cognomen used solely by British emigrants.

*CIL* II 6311, Perales de Milla, Spain

*D(is) M(anibus) / Britto / Uloq(um) / Datic(i) / an(norum) LXX / s(it) t(ibi) t(erra) l(evis)*

Translation: "To the Underworld gods. Britto Uloqum, son of Daticus, (died) at the age of 70. May the earth rest lightly on you."

*CIL* VI 3594, Rome, Italy

*D(is) M(anibus) / Fl(avi) Britto/ni \|(centurionis) leg(ionis) XIIII / Gem(iniae sic!) Cato/nia Baudia / coniux et / liberi / eius b(ene) m(erenti) / fecer(unt)*

Translation: "To the Underworld gods. To Flavius Britto, centurion of the *legio XIIII Gemin(i)a*. Catonia Baudia, wife and their freedmen made (this stone) to a well-deserving person."

Both inscriptions are funerary, dated to the second century, and both name individuals with the cognomen *Britto*. If we go beyond what is written on the tombstone and try to understand who these '*Brittones*' were, it becomes clear that one of them did indeed come from the province of Britannia, while the other had no connection with it. The first inscription names Britto, son of Daticus. According to research by Spanish scholars, Uloqum is not a personal name, but most likely a *nomen gentilicium* or tribal affiliation.[14] Inscriptions with the word Uloqum are widespread in the area around modern-day Madrid, Spain, which led scholars to conclude that Uloqum is some kind of tribe or place name, or a *nomen gentilicium* referring to a tribe which resided in this area in Roman times.[15]

The second inscription names Flavius Britto, a centurion from the *legio XIV Geminia*, which was part of the invasion troops in AD 43. The legion stayed in Britain for two decades after the invasion, participated in the suppression of the Boudiccan revolt in AD 61, and was finally sent from Britain to the Continent in AD 69.[16] Most likely the centurion was a 'Briton' by birth, hailing from one of the British tribes and recruited into the legion some time during the Flavian dynasty. In order to enter the legion he was granted citizenship and probably received a new Latin name: Flavius. This new name gave him a new identity—he was no longer called by his British Celtic name, but by a Roman name which indicated his origin: Britto. Moreover, his wife was also a 'Briton'. Catonia is actually a Celtic name deriving from the Celtic element *catu-*.[17] Names starting with this element appear 17 times on inscriptions found in Roman Britain and can be considered to be well-represented in this province.[18] Her cognomen, Baudia, is reminiscent of Boudicca, the name of the famous queen of the British tribe *Iceni*,

[14] Aguña 2003–2004, 189, 200.
[15] Aguña 2003–2004, 200.
[16] Farnum 2005, 23.
[17] Evans 1967, 171; Delamarre 2001, 94.
[18] Mullen, online database, accessed on 23 September 2009.

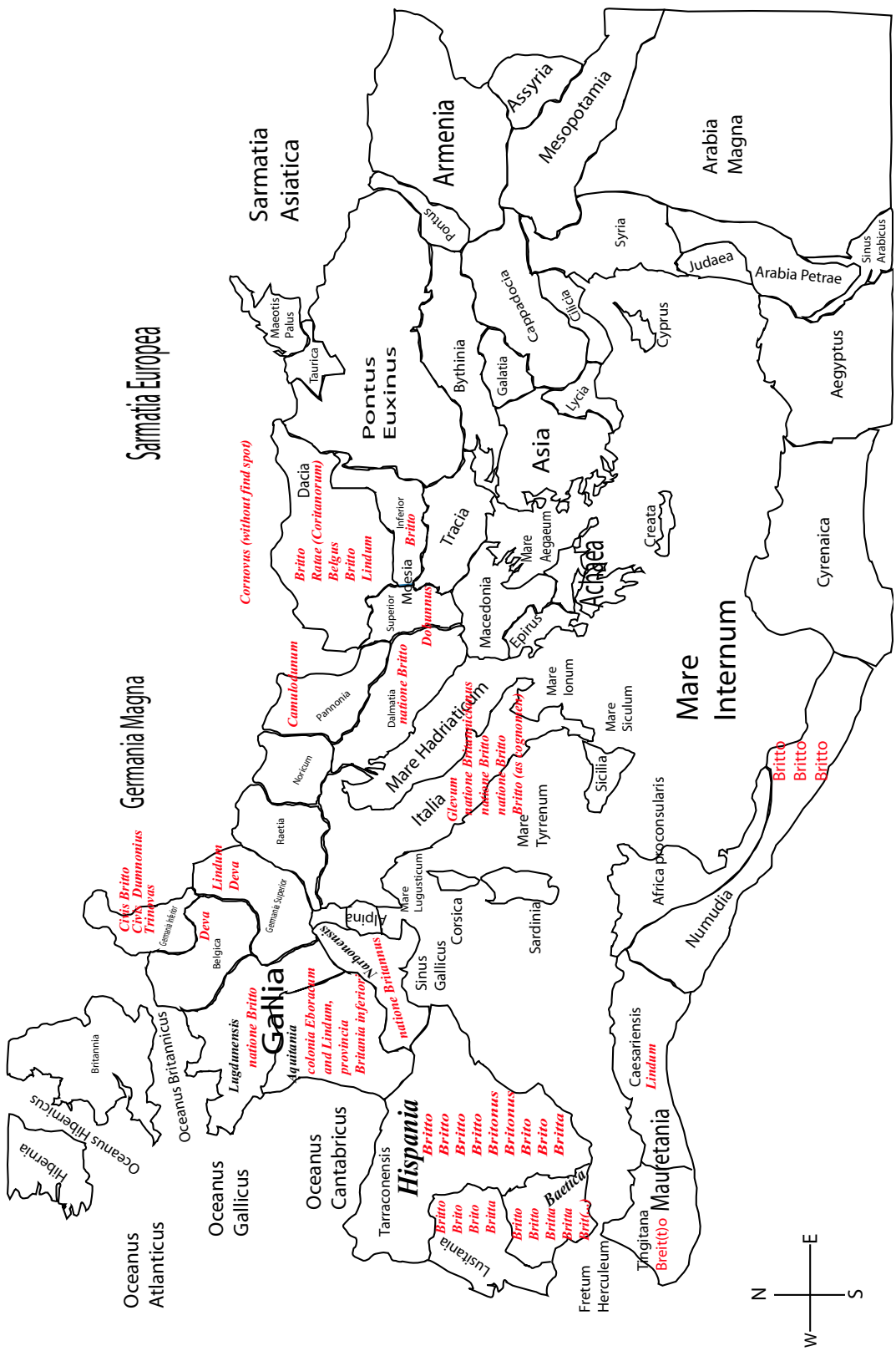



Figure 1. Distribution map of "Britons" attested epigraphically across the Empire.

which derives from Celtic *boudi-*.[19] Although names with such element, used by both males and females, appear 47 times across the provinces of the Roman Empire against only once in Britain, it seems plausible that she was of British origin and followed her husband to his post on the Continent.[20] The unpopularity of names starting with *boudi-* in Britain is understandable considering the impact of the suppression of the revolt in AD 61 and probable negative associations with the name.

It seems likely that in the second inscription we are dealing with a family of 'Britons' and in the first with an individual who was Spanish by birth. Hence, in other inscriptions from Spanish provinces, the cognomen *Britto* does not stand for distinct ethnic origin and is not used as an ethnic marker. It is useful to provide another inscription to support this view. *CIL* III 3271 mentions a person whose father's name is Britto and whose origin is *domo Hispano*—Spanish by birth. The popularity of the name Britto in Roman Spain can be explained as follows. *Britto* derives from the Gaulish Celtic[21] element *bretos-*, which means 'judgment, thinking, mind'.[22] If therefore someone was named Britto by his parents, this is indicative of a wish for the child to be thoughtful or mindful. The appearance of the Gaulish Celtic name in Spain, where the majority of the population spoke a Celtiberian branch of the Celtic language, is not unusual. For instance Gaulish Celtic names such as Boudicca or Verecundus also appear in some numbers there.[23]

However, on the basis of an analysis of the usage of the cognomen *Brit(t)o/a* in Roman Spain, the inscriptions from the Spanish provinces must be excluded from this research since this cognomen does not indicate the ethnic origin of a person, but is a Celtic personal name widespread in Roman Spain.[24]

If we consider the four North African inscriptions, which also mention men whose origin or name is *Britto*, it seems that they also need to be excluded from the present study because here too, *Britto* did not stand for ethnic origin but was a Celtic name. One inscription, however, does indeed suggest that an individual hailed from Britain. *IAM* 2, 56 from Tamuda, Morocco, shows that the person originated "from Britons": [*ex*] *Breitonibus* was inscribed after his name. The other three inscriptions recorded as having been found in the Roman province of Numidia are very questionable.[25] On all of them *Britto* appears after the name of the person—the usual place on the inscription for the origin indicator, but their names do not indicate that they were British Celts. The cognomen of the man from *CIL* VIII 1950—Tannonius—was popular in North Africa; it appeared there 28 times out of 39 inscriptions found across the Empire.[26] His cognomen, therefore, suggests a North African origin. It is plausible that he was born into a family of mixed origins: one side was North-African, hence Tannonius, another Celtic speaking, hence the cognomen *Britto*.

The origin of the man mentioned on *CIL* VIII 18087 is unclear. He was probably a legionary soldier from the *legio III Augusta* serving at the time when the inscription was made. On the one hand, if *Britto* formed part of the name of the soldier, the question is: why do other names on the same inscription end in *-us*? On the other hand, if *Britto* is an origin indicator, why were other legionaries mentioned without any indication of where they came from? It makes no sense to mention the origin of only one person. It is more than likely, therefore, that *Britto* here is a cognomen. Since on inscriptions from Spain the cognomen in most cases ended in *o-*,[27] it is also plausible that the person from this inscription from Lambaesis originated from a Celtic-speaking family residing in Roman Spain.

The origin of the man from the third inscription—*CIL* VIII 3962—is hard to identify. The name Petronius is widespread across all provinces.[28] Although there is no indication that this person could not have been a 'Briton', when we compare it with the other two inscriptions from Numidia it seems reasonable to suggest that *Britto* here is simply the name of a person whose origins

[19] Delamarre 2001, 71; Raybould & Sims-Williams 2007, 86.

[20] The author of this article has consulted the online epigraphic database of Clauss & Slaby for the exact number and refers those who are interested in the appearance of the names starting with *boudi-* to this database.

[21] By Gaulish Celtic here is understood a branch of the Celtic language. The Celtic language is divided into sub-families of Gaulish Celtic spoken mostly in the Roman province of Gaul; Celtiberian, spoken mostly in Roman Spain, and Brythonic, spoken mostly in Roman Britain (Delamarre 2001, 7–11).

[22] Delamarre 2001, 74, 265.

[23] Palazon 1994, 302, 542.

[24] The following inscriptions were excluded: *AE* 1987, 698; *AE* 1996, 905; *CIL* II 586, 805, 952, 1072, 1335, 3129, 3255, 5812, 6311; *HEp* 1, 555; *HEp* 2, 143, 182c2; *EE* 8:2, 262,15 (p. 490); *EE* 9, 62; *ERRioja* ID 27, *Conimbri* 236.

[25] *CIL* VIII 1950, 3962, 18087.

[26] The author refers the interested to the online epigraphic database of Clauss & Slaby. In the publications of Mocsy and Lörincz on the spread of names in the Roman Empire, the cognomen Tannonius is said to appear once in the Moesian provinces and twice (once in Mocsy) in Gallia Narbonensis (Mocsy 1983, 281; Lörincz IV, 107). Neither publication included the North African and Near Eastern provinces.

[27] See, for instance, *HEp* 2, 143 mentioning Sempronius Britto or *CIL* II 952 mentioning Decimus Cornelius Britto.

[28] Mocsy 1983, 220; Lörincz III, 135.

lay elsewhere. Therefore, on inscriptions recorded in Numidia *Britto* is a name and does not represent an ethnic origin. Equally it is not the ethnic marker that can be used to identify 'Britons'; instead it can be used to identify Gaulish Celtic-speaking people in Roman Spain.

The assumption that *Brit(t)o/a* is simply a popular cognomen supports the analysis of other names starting with Britt-. For example, names such as Brittus appear five times in Italy[29] and Brittius/Brittia eleven times.[30] In Rome alone, names such as Brittius/Brittia appear nine times,[31] and Brittidius/Brittidia six.[32] In other provinces names starting with Britt- are equally unexceptional. In Pannonia, Britticius and Britta were commemorated,[33] in Gallia Narbonensis, two people called Brittius were given monuments in two different cities,[34] in Aquitania one may encounter 'Brittula' and 'Britex',[35] in Germania Superior 'Britta',[36] in Belgica 'Brittonius',[37] in Noricum 'Britto'[38] and in Africa Proconsularis 'Brittanus'.[39] In all, 41 people with a cognomen starting with a Gaulish Celtic element Britt- are known from inscriptions found across the Roman Empire. It seems plausible that they were neither British emigrants nor offspring of British people who migrated to the Continent. They had only one thing in common and this was the fact that their names started with the (relatively popular) element Britt-. In order to recognise a genuine British emigrant, as in the case of Flavius Britto, one needs to look more closely at the text of the inscription and reconstruct the person's biography, as was done above.

In conclusion, the ethnonym *Britto*, on three North African and 18 Spanish inscriptions, formed part of the cognomen of a person; it derived from the Gaulish Celtic element *bretos-* and it was not used by British emigrants to indicate their origin through a cognomen. These 21 inscriptions therefore need to be excluded from the present study since they do not refer to emigrants from Roman Britain. What is left are 26 inscriptions and military diplomas: 15 funerary, four votive, six military diplomas and one public monument.

## *E pluribus unum*[40]

The epigraphic record was divided according to date (*Tables 2, 3* and *4*). Three tables show how people who hailed from Britannia named their origin on first, second and third centuries AD inscriptions and diplomas. A consistent pattern emerges.

There are four inscriptions that can be dated to the first century (*Table 2*).[41] Only in one case did relatives of a deceased express his origin as *civis Britto*: British citizen. This person was an auxiliary soldier from *cohors VI Ingenuorum* which carried the title *civium Romanorum* meaning that all soldiers who served in this unit had Roman citizenship. Another soldier who was commemorated as *civis Dumnonius*, citizen of the Dumnonii which inhabited the southwest corner of England, served in the Roman navy, where Roman citizenship was granted after 26 years of service. The inscription shows that he was still serving at the time of his death but already possessed citizenship. Either this is a case of wishful thinking on the part of those who commemorated him or he was indeed granted citizenship for some exceptional deed while serving. What these two inscriptions do tell us is that these two people—or their heirs—proudly emphasised both their connection with the province of Britannia and their Roman citizenship. On another two inscriptions, the *origo* of auxiliary soldiers was indicated as follows: one originated from the British *Trinovantes* tribe[42] and another from the city *Colonia Claudia Camulodunum*, modern-day Colchester in the UK. In these two cases the tribal origin of these soldiers was stated out of pride and not to conform to a contextual standard or fashion. They served in units supplemented with the recruits of different ethnic backgrounds: the Trinovantian served alongside *Breuci*, a tribal entity which sent its recruits from Pannonia, and the soldier from *Camulodunum* probably served alongside legionaries recruited from all around the Empire. Below there will be a discussion on the significance of stating one's origin in a unit of mixed ethnic background.

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[29] *CIL* V 5002; *CIL* IX 1899, 3098, 6263, 6320.
[30] *CIL* IX 1237, 3098 (male and female), 3115 (male and female), 4995, 5038, 5444; *CIL* X 151; *CIL* XI 4970; *AE* 1988, 425.
[31] *CIL* VI 1924, 2153, 8729 (two females), 13640, 16725, 26675; *AE* 1977, 78; *AE* 1984, 126.
[32] *CIL* VI 13636 (two males and one female), 13637, 13638, 13639.
[33] *CIL* III 14356, 5a, 15169.
[34] *CIL* XII 3353; *AE* 1976, 406.
[35] *CIL* XIII 192, 497.
[36] *CIL* XIII 5020.
[37] Nesselhauf 1937, no. 1.
[38] *CIL* III 4727.
[39] *CIL* VIII 27763.
[40] The title for this section was taken from the name of the paper presented by Paula Perlman at the conference "Attitudes towards the past in Antiquity: creating identities?" held at Stockholm, 15–17 May 2009. The author of this work strongly believes that there are correlations between the conclusions of Perlman's paper (called "E pluribus unum. The construction of polis identity in Archaic Crete") and the present article. It is for this reason that this quote is used here.
[41] *AE* 1956, 249; *AE* 2003, 1218; *CIL* XIII 8314, 11233.
[42] It must be noted that on the tombstone the tribe is mentioned as 'Trinovas', which can be identified as the British Trinovantes tribe.

Table 2. Origin on the inscriptions dated to the first century.

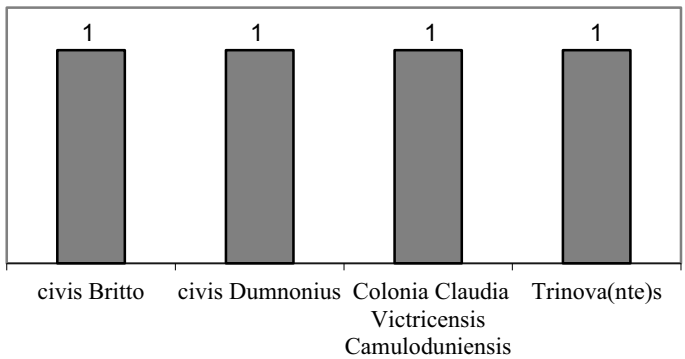


Table 3. Origin on the inscriptions and military diplomas dated to the second century.

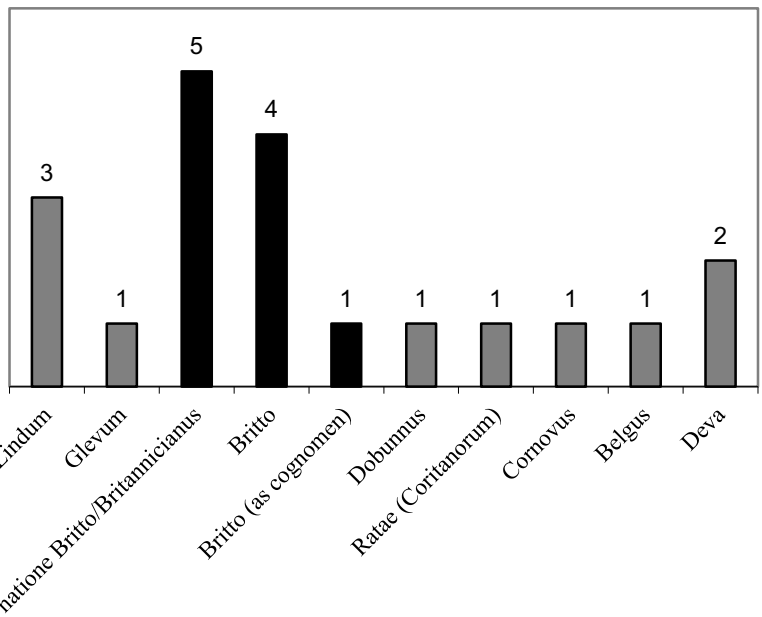


Table 4. Origin on the third century, including one Christian, inscriptions.

From inscriptions and diplomas dated to the second century, another pattern can be determined (*Table 3*).[43] While ten people still continued to name as their place of origin either a British city or a tribe, ten (in black in *Table 3*) preferred to identify themselves as a community of British origin by naming their origin as *natione Britto/Britannicianus* or as *Britto*.[44]

The third-century inscriptions exhibit different features (*Table 4*).[45] One person chose to emphasise the communal identity, stating that he is from the Roman province of Britannia Inferior. On the Christian inscription, however, the relatives of the deceased preferred to indicate his *ethnikon* as *natione Britannus*.

It must be noted that only tentative conclusions can be drawn from this evidence. It would be a mistake to generalise on the basis of the information from the limited amount of sources and to suggest that a set of commemorative customs, such as how one should name one's origin, was utilised by 'Britons' and their family members throughout the Roman Empire. In comparison with other groups of migrants one might think that the number of 'Britons' who emigrated is strikingly low. For instance, it is known that around "150 Dacians were spread unevenly across the Empire",[46] whereas 174 cases of emigration from both Germanic provinces are attested.[47] The number of those who moved to the Continent from Britain is expected to be higher, since it is known (a) that 14 auxiliary units were formed from the inhabitants of this Roman province,[48] (b) that 'Britons' served in the legionary forces and together with these legions were transported to the Continent[49] and (c) that 'Britons' were recruited into units of different ethnic backgrounds.[50] Two trends might have been responsible for the low number of surviving inscriptions. The first can be found in particular commemorative custom of people in Roman Britain when only few might have been remembered by a stone funerary monument.[51] A second trend can be connected with the irrelevance of naming an individual origin when a particular soldier served among his own countrymen. Oltean notes in her study of Dacian soldiers serving abroad that it becomes "particularly significant for a Dacian individual to indicate his Dacian origin in a unit of different or mixed ethnic background".[52] It would be unnecessary for a 'Briton' in a British auxiliary unit to specifically name his origin, whereas if he served in other ethnic units he would most likely emphasise his ethnic background. This can be supported by the number of British soldiers epigraphically attested as serving in their own ethnic British units: out of 139 known soldiers only 11 can be identified as British.[53] Moreover, the inscriptions of these British soldiers are dated to the second century, when recruitment took place at the local level. British *alae* and cohorts were supplemented with Dacians, Thracians, Pannonians and recruits from elsewhere, which led to a necessity for soldiers to emphasise their differences in ethnic origin.[54]

It should be noted that the low number of surviving inscriptions does not indicate that 'Britons' did not migrate to other Roman provinces. Most likely they did and in higher numbers, but they left little or no traceable evidence. Nevertheless, the material available to us still shows a considerable degree of variation in origin nomenclature.

Migrants who arrived on the Continent after the invasion of Claudius in AD 43 proudly emphasised their specific affiliation with a British tribe or with a city. The focus was on citizenship status and membership of a particular regional tribal formation. To migrants in the second half of the first century, the combination of being both Roman and belonging to a specific British tribe, with its deep roots stretching back into the past, appears to have been an important symbol of identity.

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[43] *AE* 1915, 70; *CIL* III 14214, 14216,8; *CIL* VI 3279, 3301, 3346, 3594, 32861; *CIL* VIII 21669; *CIL* XIII 1981, 6221, 6679; *CIL* XVI 49, 110, 160, 163; *ILJug* 2, 679; *RMM* 20; Eck & Pangerl 2007, 234; *IAM* 2, 56.

[44] The inscriptions where the word *Britto* is used without the indicative *natione* were not located in Spain or North Africa, except the one from Morocco which has already been discussed. One is recorded on the Tropaeum Traiani monument (Adamklissi, Romania) where there was no place to add the indicative word *natione*, another two are military diplomas where it was not customary to use the word *natione*.

[45] Inscriptions *AE* 1922, 116; *AE* 1939, 53; *CIL* VIII 5180.

[46] Oltean 2009, 96.

[47] Kakoschke 2004, 198.

[48] Spaul in his Ala$^2$ and Cohors$^2$ publications mentions two *alae* and nine cohorts (Spaul 1994, 68–73 and 2000, 189–204). The analysis of Marcu for the province of Dacia (2002–003, 219–235) and research by the author of the present article into the history of British auxiliary units (Ivleva 2012) has shown that there were 14 units.

[49] Examples: e.g. Marcus Iunius Capitus, soldier of *legio X Geminia*, Marcus Ulpius Ner(…) Quintus from *legio VI Valeria Victrix*, Iulius Victor from *legio XX Valeria Victrix*.

[50] Examples: e.g. Catunectus from *cohors III Breucorum*, Liccaius from *cohors III Campestris*, Decimus from *cohors VI Ingenuorum*.

[51] Hope 2003, 132.

[52] Oltean 2009, 97.

[53] Ivleva 2012, 87. It must be noted that four of these 11 'Britons' were identified on the basis of their names. They were not included in the present study, because they or their relatives did not mention their *ethnikon*, that of *natione, domus* or *civis*, which is relevant for the present paper.

[54] Ivleva 2012, 88.

In the second-century inscriptions, a slow shift can be detected. While some people still preferred to be identified with a specific British tribe or a city, others seemed to deliberately emphasise their pan-tribal origin, that of *natione Britto*. It is interesting to note that whenever they chose to emphasise their pan-tribal ethnic identity, other individuals in the Empire usually indicated their home region, that of *domo* or *civis*.[55] Those who identified their origin as *natione Britto* never indicated the region where they came from.

These two forms of expressing ethnic identity on the second-century inscriptions, regional and pan-tribal, require further discussion. There are two possible explanations for these different forms of identification. The first is that those who called themselves 'Britons' were born in Britannia but did not belong to any specific tribe. To be able to indicate on the tombstone that one was, for instance, *Belgus* or *Dobunnus*, an individual needed to have both or at least one parent who was a member of a particular British tribal entity. It can be suggested that these *Brittones* were the children of emigrants who came to Britain with the Roman army, or were the children of traders living in Britain. In that case, *natione Britto* was used as a form of ethnic identification by individuals who were born in the province of Britannia but were not members of British indigenous tribes.

A second option is that *natione Britto* was used by second-generation emigrants, those who were not born in Britannia but whose parents belonged to one of the British tribes. They will have retained the memory of the name of the province where their ancestors came from and called themselves 'Britons' as a group of people who shared the same ethnic background through their ancestry. Hence, those who claimed to have *natione Britto* emphasised their provincial rather than their regional origin. Consequently, those who named a British tribe or city on funerary monuments dated to the second century belonged to the indigenous population of Roman Britain and emigrated directly from Roman Britain to the Continent.

The problem with these explanations however is that *Britto* was a Roman construct used to label the inhabitants of the lands they referred to as Britannia.[56] There was no such thing as a British pan-tribal identity, as has been archaeologically shown by Matthews.[57] This can also be supported epigraphically. Within Roman Britain itself, out of 2215 published inscriptions in the volume *Roman inscriptions of Britain*, there were eight on which relatives of the deceased indicated the origin of their loved one, three votive inscriptions on which individuals mentioned their origin and one building inscription.[58] These twelve individuals belonged to various British tribes. As can be seen from *Table 5*, six were citizens (*cives)* of different tribes, such as the *Canti, Cornovi, Dobunni, Catuvellauni*, *Dumnonii* and the city of *Lindum* (Lincoln); three indicated their origin (*natione*) as belonging to the *Belgi, Briganti* and *Catuvellauni* tribes, while three simply named their origin as (*colonia*) *Victrix*, *Caledonus* and *Brittonus*. These stones with inscriptions were erected by the relatives of the deceased who died far away from their home tribe inside the Roman province of Britannia and by the individuals who fulfilled their vows in a foreign region of their home province. For instance, an individual from the *Canti* (*Cantiaci*)[59] tribe erected a votive monument at Colchester, a city that belonged to the tribe of the *Trinovantes*; an individual from the *Cornovi* tribe died in Ilkley in Yorkshire, which in Roman times belonged to the *Briganti* tribe, and a woman from the *Dobunni* tribe died on the territory of the *Briganti*. Although the territories of tribes such as the *Cantiaci* and *Trinovantes*, or *Cornovi* and *Briganti*, are adjacent, these individuals or their relatives found it important to emphasise their origin in another tribal territory. Indeed even inside the tribal territory, relatives of the deceased emphasised their origin: a woman, a citizen from *Lindum* (Lincoln), died in the same place; a member of the *Belgi* died at Bath, which was part of the territory of the *Belgi* tribe. It seems reasonable to suggest that for the relatives of the woman who died at Lincoln, the most important aspect was her status and not her origin. She was a citizen of the city where she died; hence, she was *a Roman citizen* of Lindum. In the case of the soldier who died in his own tribal territory, his origin, on the contrary, was important. He already had Roman citizenship, since he served in the legion, so there was no need to emphasise it once more. This could explain why his relatives chose *natione* instead of *civis*. However, since he served in a legion which also contained soldiers from other ethnic backgrounds, on his tombstone his relatives most likely preferred to mention that he was native to the region his legion was stationed in, as opposed to his comrades from the Continent.[60] It is also possible that he was mentioned as

[55] See for instance *AE* 1990, 990 – *natione Pannono domo Sirmus*; *AE* 1961, 331 – *natione Graeca, civis Tarsus Cilicia*; *CIL* XVI 152 – *natione Italico domo Miseno* and many others.

[56] Matthews 1999, 15.

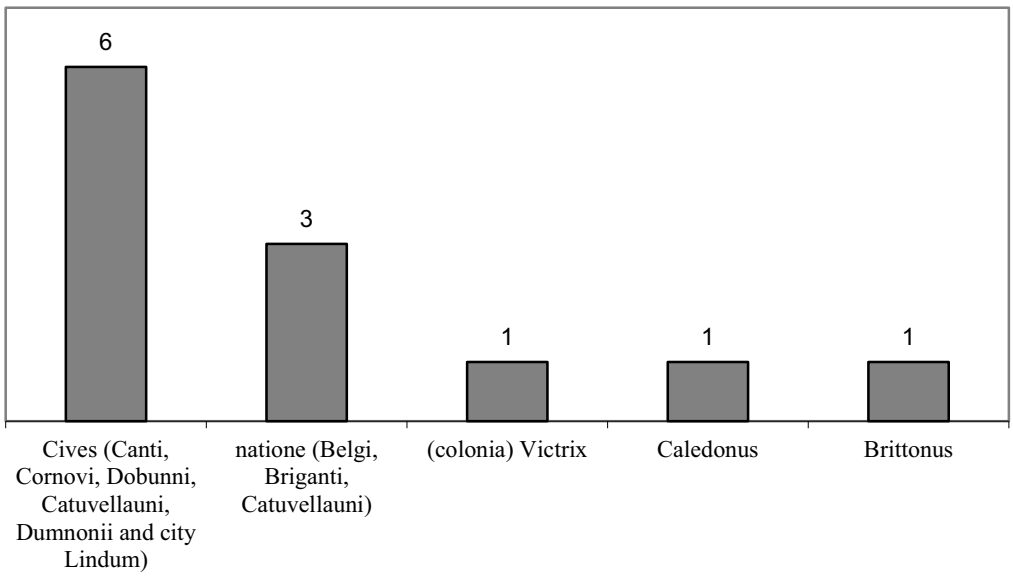
[57] Matthews 1999.

[58] *RIB* 156, 188, 191, 192, 250, 621, 639, 1065, 1962, 2142, 2152, 3005.

[59] There are two different spellings of the name of the same tribe: *Canti* and *Cantiaci*.

[60] See for instance *RIB* 203 – *Nicaea in Bithynia*; 450 – *domo Samosata*; 490 – *natione Syrus, Osroenus*; 493 – *Lugdunus*; 498 – *Celeia*; 500 – *Arelate* and many others.

Table 5. Indication of origin inside the province of Britannia.




*Belgus* because of the mixed ethnic environment in Bath: its popular hot springs had seen many visitors from elsewhere.[61]

The votive monuments of individuals who indicated their origin as *Caledonus* and *Brittonus* are interesting. The first one was found at Colchester, the territory of the *Trinovantes* in Roman Britain, and another one in Castlecary, along the Antonine Wall in Scotland. The ethnic name *Caledonia* was also a Roman construct, given to the confederacy of the tribes of Scotland which later became distinguished in the literature as Picts. *Caledones* and *Brittones* were the classic ethnonyms primarily used by Romans to indicate the confederacies of tribes in northern and southern Britain respectively. Assuming therefore that 'Briton' was a clear expression of regional origin, there is no reason to assume that 'Caledonian' did not fulfill the same function. What is clear in these two votive inscriptions is that the Roman constructs were used to indicate pan-tribal identity in lands that were inhabited by different pan-tribal entities. 'Caledonian' indicated that he was from the North, in the heart of the 'British' territory, in the South; while 'Briton' indicated that he was from the South in the territory inhabited by the northern confederacy of tribes called 'Caledonians'. This suggests that inside Britannia, pan-tribal and regional ethnic identities were used by individuals to emphasise their belonging to a particular group. In the case of 'Caledonian' and 'Briton', pan-tribal identity was used to stress the group identity of those who lived in the North and the South. These two broad groupings in a society brought some degree of uniformity in overall diversity. However, it is plausible that not everyone accepted it. Most likely these two categories were used to emphasise the different ethnic backgrounds, i.e. southern and northern, rather than British or Caledonian pan-tribal uniformity. In the case of those who mentioned their city or tribe, the regional identity was used to underline the profound differences between neighbouring tribal entities.

It must be noted that once an individual moved out of the province of Britannia, he or she could no longer use the southern and northern ethnic group names, i.e. *Brittones* and *Caledones*, since the whole meaning of the difference would be lost. Possibly *Brit(t)ones* on the Continent started to mean something else. Being a Roman construct, the ethnonym *Brittones* was used by those who originated from the province with the same name and by those who lived in Britannia to distinguish between the two major groupings of North and South. What it does not mean is that 'Britons' *en masse* at one point in time saw themselves as 'Britons'—a group of people who had the same ethnic identity. It should be noted again that the construct was used to distinguish oneself from another: within Britannia, an individual from the North or from the South; outside Britannia, an

[61] Oltean, personal comment.

individual from Roman Britain, as opposed to an individual from Roman Gaul or Germany. If someone for example said that he or she was from the *Cantiaci* tribe in the territory of the *Eravisci* tribe in Pannonia, this would be meaningless, as people from the *Eravisci* tribe would not have heard of the *Cantiaci*, whereas if one said that one came from Britannia, the *Eravisci* would probably have understood that this person came from a distant province of the Empire.

One question remains unanswered: who could use the *ethnikon natione Britto*? Was it used by people who were born in Britannia but did not belong to any British tribes? Or was it used by second-generation immigrants to emphasise the origin of their ancestors? The situation can be compared with that of modern-day emigrants.[62] First-generation emigrants often refer to the city or village or region where they were born, while second-generation emigrants name the country of origin of their parents. In other words, to the question regarding their origin they would answer, for example: 'I am Russian from Moscow, but I live in Holland', while their children would say: 'We were born in Amsterdam in Holland, but my parents are Russians'. Probably the same situation can be observed on one inscription from Rome, where someone mentions '*natione Dacisca regione Serdica nato*': he is Dacian by origin, born in the region of Serdica, the modern-day capital of Bulgaria, Sofia (*CIL* VI 2605).[62a] It seems reasonable to assume that if a person had *natione Britto*, his or her parents originated from the province of Britannia, making this person a second-generation emigrant. This individual did not belong to a particular British tribe, and neither probably did his/her parents after their emigration. Having parents who were members of a certain tribe did not automatically make you a member of the same tribe if you yourself were born on the Continent. However, it did ensure membership of a group whose ancestors originated from Britannia. By choosing to label one's origin as British, one distinguished oneself from other groups of immigrants or from the dominant group in the territory where immigrants and their families settled down.

In the third century and later, the trend might have shifted to naming the provincial origin rather than that of a tribe or a city. Therefore, the label 'Briton' would imply those who were born in the province of Britannia, no matter where within Britannia one was from. The pan-tribal emigrant identity suppressed the regional one, making it the ultimate "*e pluribus unum*", when from the many tribes, one 'province' of emigrants emerged.

## 'British' identities under the microscope

While British emigrants made a distinction between regional and pan-tribal identities, it becomes clear that they also made distinctions in terms of regional identities. As can be seen from *Table 6*, four[63] out of six persons who named their urban origin served in the legionary forces, while five out of five persons who named their tribal origin served in the auxiliary forces. It must be noted again that only tentative conclusions can be drawn due to the scarcity of the evidence.

All named Romano-British cities[64] were former legionary fortresses that grew into veteran settlements, except *Ratae Coritanorum* (modern-day Leicester, UK). This city[65] probably never had military installations in its proximity but instead grew from a native settlement into a major Romano-British city. Those born in the former legionary camps were the children of legionary veterans and had Roman citizenship by birth; those who originated from native settlements were free-born but did not yet receive Roman citizenship. For this reason the former were conscripted to serve in the legions, the latter in the auxiliary forces. The following is suggested: a city origin stood for status and Roman citizenship, a regional for native and 'British'. It would be useful to test this suggestion by carrying out a comparison with similar groups elsewhere in the Roman Empire, to see whether having urban roots did indeed automatically secure Roman status, and whether by contrast rural or tribal origins made one 'native'. However, the author of this pa-

[62] This observation is based on the personal experience of the author, who is herself an immigrant from Russia living in the Netherlands, and during her studies in Holland has met many migrants.

[62a] This inscription can be interpreted differently, however, and its interpretation depends on the dating: a pre-AD 270s date may also indicate a person who was a member of a Dacian tribe which moved to south of the Danube early in the first century; a post-AD 270s date would suggest that this person lived in Dacia Mediterranea, whose capital was Sardica (I. Oltean, pers. comment). The later suggestion is favoured by most interpreters.

[63] The soldier who stated his origin as from *Colonia Claudia Camulodunum* served in an unknown unit. He died at *Carnuntum*, the base for *legiones XV Apollinaris* and *XIV Geminia*. It is more than likely that he served in one of these legions, probably in fourteenth *Geminia*, which, as mentioned above, served in Britain. He may therefore have been a legionary soldier.

[64] *Camulodunum* was in fact an Iron Age oppidum which was turned into a Roman legionary fortress after the invasion of AD 43 and later turned into a city with the status of colonia and populated with veterans.

[65] There is an ongoing discussion as to whether this city ever had a fort and by whom it was occupied. Suggestions range from a legionary vexillation fortress to an auxiliary temporary fort. See Watcher 1995 and Todd 1973 for further discussion.

Table 6. Origin according to status.

| *Tribe* | *Status* | *City* | *Status* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Trinova(nte)s | *Miles cohortis* | Lindum | Legionaries (2); *miles cohortis* |
| Dumnonius | *Miles cohortis* | Glevum | Legionary |
| Cornovus | *Miles cohortis* | Camulodunum | Unknown, but most likely legionary |
| Dobunnus | *Miles cohortis* | Deva | Unknown (2) |
| Belgus | *Miles cohortis* | Ratae Coritanorum | *Miles cohortis* |

per is not aware of any research on this particular subject. Unfortunately such research is beyond the scope of the present article.

Another significant parallel is the status of those who give *natione Britto* as their origin. Four out of twelve served in the auxiliary units, two were civilians, one was a legionary centurion, another a centurion of a detachment, one was junior officer on a ship and three belonged to the prestigious auxiliary unit of the Emperor's horse guard in Rome. Clearly, for British emigrants status display together with origin was also an important factor. Whenever it was impossible to indicate that one had Roman citizenship by stating that one hailed from a city, the 'status word' *civis* was deliberately chosen, emphasising Roman citizenship through a particular tribe.

## "To remember is to reconstruct"[66]

In his 2005 novel *The mysterious flame of Queen Loana*, Umberto Eco explores the nature of memory and its significance for the life of a human being, especially when one loses the ability to remember through an accident. He notes through his character that without the memory of the past one cannot see the future: "in order to say what I'll do next, I need to know a lot about what I did before".[67] When one remembers, one reconstructs "on the basis of what [one has] learned or said" since a particular moment in the past and then builds something else "… that will only be his or hers".[68]

When 'Britons' remembered their motherland, they reconstructed their own ethnic identities, which were specific for each individual: one remembered a tribe, another a city, others the province. Here, the remembrance of the homeland and the construction of the emigrant ethnic identity went hand in hand. In this context the display of ethnic identity by 'Britons' who emigrated occurs "as a result of specific mechanisms of identity definition"[69] between individuals, such as by mentioning a pan-tribal or regional identity in- and outside the province, or by the establishment of links with the ancestors by naming a provincial origin, in the absence of a regional connection with the homeland. Considering this, the context in which "the decision to indicate on the funerary monuments an ethnic identity" took place should not be forgotten, as Oltean notes.[70] The text on the tombstones was chosen by the relatives and inheritors, rarely by the deceased.[71] What this means is that a social group intended to emphasise someone's origin; it can therefore be argued that on the tombstones we are dealing not with individual memory, as is case with votives, but with collective memory. A group of people chose an ethnic definition which they felt suited them, and which they most likely used for their own funerary or votive inscriptions.

Although the surviving evidence is scant in comparison with that from other ethnic groups, an overall conclusion can be drawn from the available sources. Early on, especially in the first century, there was "no such social groups as 'Britons', the peoples were an assortment of tribes",[72] members of which emphasised their differences whenever possible. In spite of the fact that it was a Roman construct, the ethnic marker *Brittones* started to be used by the population and emigrants from Roman Britain in the late first and early second century AD, especially when other ethnic identifications seemed to fail. The label *natione Britto* was "applied to [and by][73] diverse individuals who lacked a clear sense of group identity"[74] and was used by the second generation of emigrant groups in order to distinguish themselves from other communities. Later on, the usage of this Roman la-

[66] Eco 2005, 25.
[67] Eco 2005, 28.
[68] Eco 2005, 25.
[69] Oltean 2009, 99.
[70] Oltean 2009, 99.
[71] Oltean 2009, 99.
[72] Mattingly 2004, 10.
[73] Author's insertion.
[74] Mattingly 2004, 10.

bel increased, especially in the second century, probably because of pressure from the Roman administration or Roman army to unify diverse peoples within provinces. Oltean suggests that "the Roman army reinvented rather than destroyed Dacian ethnic identity and provided the environment for the formation of a new Dacian military identity".[75] It seems reasonable to suggest that Romans also reinvented British ethnic identity by consistently referring to the people who originated from or were born in the province of Britannia as 'Britons'. The emigrants seem to have adopted the Roman ethnonym in order to distinguish themselves from other communities, while the Romans appear to have encouraged the use of this ethnic name in order to construct a pan-tribal identity. It is understandable that the Romans wanted to establish one 'state' of 'Britons' because such a development would counter inter-tribal rivalries and promote peace in the province.

In turn, the Roman construct was used by British emigrants to remember their ancestral land. This ethnonym helped the diverse ethnic groups from Roman Britain to emerge as one emigrant community, as becomes evident from the inscriptions. It must be noted that this community is visible only through the epigraphic record and was created as a way of distinguishing oneself from other ethnic groups. Privately, this community probably consisted of diverse groups from different British ethnic backgrounds.

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[75] Oltean 2009, 99.

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