

# Julius Caesar's Invasions of Britain

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## I

In 55 B.C., Julius Caesar was actively involved in a campaign against the native peoples of Gaul. The Gallic rebels had proven to be a challenge to the invading Roman armies which Caesar led from 58 to 52 B.C. However, in the midst of this conflict, Caesar made the unusual decision to turn his attention to a new locale, Britain. With one campaign currently underway, we must ask ourselves; why would Caesar turn his focus elsewhere when it wasn't an imminent threat? What did he hope to accomplish by this action? What after-effects did Caesar's campaign have on both Britain and Rome respectively?

Caesar's invasions in 55-54 B.C. had a dramatic effect on shaping the histories of both the Roman Empire and the Isle of Britain. His operations influenced the world in many different ways; economically, politically, and socially. Through the course of this paper, I shall attempt to identify what Caesar's rationale was for invading and what he achieved based on Caesar's own writings in conjunction with the archeological and historical evidence gathered through secondary sources. Then, I will analyze and compare the results of the invasion that Caesar believes he accomplished with modern historians' views to determine the successfulness of his campaign. Along with challenging Caesar's point of view concerning the Romano-British incursion, I will closely examine the impact of the Roman Empire on Britain society and vice versa.

Caesar's personal journals regarding the conflict can be found in his *De Bello Gallico*, translated as *The Battle for Gaul*, which explains in some detail his intentions and, more

importantly, what he believes to have accomplished as a result of this undertaking. Caesar wrote these volumes as a way of showing the average Roman citizens the glory he had achieved through his exploits in Gaul and Britain. Since Caesar began his campaign in Gaul in 58 B.C., these documents were created to remind the Romans of Caesar's accomplishments in the name of Rome despite his nine year absence. The book may also have been intended as an answer to political opponents of Caesar, who questioned the necessity of such a costly war which, at the time, one of the most expensive in Roman history.

There seems to be a distinct shift or evolution if you will, from older and more traditional writings to the contemporary examinations of Caesar's accomplishments in regards to the campaign into Britain. Results of this invasion are primarily viewed in two ways. The first is the traditional view of Roman influence on Britain and its peoples as shown in the writings of Sheppard Frere, Robin Collingwood, and Peter Salway. The second is the more modern approach which best shown in Martin Millett's work, *The Romanization of Britain*. In this approach, the emphasis is placed on the examination of Britain's impact on Rome. Historians of this event seem to focus on archeological evidence.

Until the 2000's, the traditional approach of Historians strictly focusing on evidence of Roman influence in Britain through standard archeological confirmation of Caesar's accomplishments was the only pursued avenue. This train of thought is adapted to include social and cultural aspects derived from other social sciences. Millett describes the principle differences in this modernistic methodology in his preface, "A review of the evidence seems especially important since members...are seeking new explanations for cultural change in the

Roman world: they are unwilling to accept the paternalistic view that ‘the Britons did what they were told by the Romans because it represented ‘*progress*’.”<sup>1</sup>

The first source which I will be considering is Collingwood’s *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*. Robin George Collingwood was a British philosopher and historian who wrote three texts on the subject of Roman Britain. Collingwood seems to focus most of his attention on archeological evidence within the chronology of the documented events. They also address the ramifications of Caesar on the Romanization of Britain and its affect thereafter on British culture. Collingwood describes in preface the exact goal of his writings as to, begin with Julius Caesar’s first reconnaissance mission, analyze the state of the isle and its people during 55 and 54 B.C. The portions of Collingwood’s writings that I am most interested in for the purpose of this paper are the selections on Pre-Roman Britain and its communications with mainland Europe as well as the detailed account he gives of Caesar’s invasions, and the influences Caesar left in his wake. Collingwood’s perspective is heavily influence from the British point-of-view. “In writing this study of Roman Britain, my aim has been to make a contribution to the history of Britain, regarded as a region with a personality of its own...”<sup>2</sup>

Collingwood chose Julius Caesar’s invasion of Britain as the starting point for his history because, as mentioned above, he supports the idea that the effects of the invasion helped to shape the increasing impact of Britain on Europe as a whole. He seems to argue that Caesar’s actions and the influence of the Roman Empire where crucial in the overall development of Britain. His research resulted in a bi-lateral view in which Rome was the most affected, but still acknowledges the substantial changes within the Isle of Britain as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Millet, *Romanization of Britain*, xv.

<sup>2</sup> Collingwood and Myres, *Roman Britain*, vi.

The second source of note that should be reviewed is Dr. Sheppard Sunderland Frere's work entitled *Britannia*. Frere, like Collingwood, was a British historian and archeologist. While Frere uses the conventional outlook of Rome's effect on Britain, he takes a different approach to researching the material which is opposite from historians such as Collingwood and Millett. He focuses his writing solely on interpreting Caesar's actual endeavors instead of the archeological results and affects on British society. Frere does mention post-invasion Britain at some length including a section on Commius and the chapter on the impact the invasions had on Rome is covered in a different way than prior volumes on the subject.

The third text analyzed in this study is Peter Salway's *The Frontier People of Roman Britain*. He writes on the Roman influence over the peoples that they conquered, and gives little thought to Britain's role in changing the Roman Empire. This is very helpful as it is the opposite of Millett's work; therefore it gives the reader a nice contrast. Salway seems to believe that Caesar's invasion marked the beginning of Britain as a "true" civilization. He gives little to no credence to British society, culture, or any other British development prior to Roman occupation of the region.

His reasoning for this view of the invasion as a "Roman conquest" is derived from the advancement of the Roman imperialistic ideals and culture on Britain and its peoples. "...they [Romans] represent for Britain something new: four centuries of a cosmopolitan society with the basic elements of true civilization – an altogether greater magnitude of security, personal freedom, justice, literacy and prosperity than at any previous time..."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Salway, *Roman Britain*, xii.

The final source that is necessary to provide an opposing view from those previously expressed is Martin Millett's *The Romanization of Britain*. Millett's work helps to identify the impact of Britain on Rome as opposed to the traditional view of Britain's incorporation into the empire. His text is an in-depth analysis of what "Romanization", a term originally coined by Theodor Mommsen<sup>4</sup>, means. The concept of Romanization is a complex one. According to Millett, Romanization was not a complete domination of one culture over another, but rather a process of blending or merging Roman society into another culture. "We must thus see Romanization as a process of dialectical change, rather than influence of one 'pure' culture upon others. Roman culture interacted with native cultures to produce the synthesis that we call Romanized."<sup>5</sup>

## II

Caesar's first invasion of the Isle of Britain seems to open up a plethora of plausible explanations as to his motivations for embarking on such a monumental. Caesar himself cited his rationale for the endeavor as first and foremost being a military decision. "...I knew that in almost all of our campaigns in Gaul our enemies had received reinforcements from the Britons"<sup>6</sup> Although militaristic value might have been Caesar's primary focus, his mind was almost certainly interested in ulterior motives as well.

According to J.P.V.D. Balsdon, the decision to send an expedition to Britain had been devised a year prior to the actual invasion: "The notion was in his mind, perhaps, in early 56, indeed when he was at Luca, and it may well have been for this project that those ships had been

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<sup>4</sup> See also Mommsen, *Provinces of Roman Empire*.

<sup>5</sup> Millett, *Romanization of Britain*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Caesar, *Battle for Gaul*, 81.

build on the Loire...”<sup>7</sup> In Michael Grant’s *Julius Caesar*, he supports the idea that one goal of the expedition was of a monetary nature: “Caesar himself like many others hoped for lavish loot of gold and silver and above all pearls.”<sup>8</sup> Besides the material resources, the prestige of conquering this mysterious land surely grabbed the attention of Caesar. Adrian Goldsworthy’s text describes the possible allure of the British Isle to Caesar as being adventurism and confidence of conquering an exotic land.<sup>9</sup>

Another reasonable explanation explored by Grant is the impact of the invasion on one of his enemies, Veneti of Brittany. The tribe of Brittany had a dominant monopoly on all British trade at the time. Caesar’s prior attempts to infiltrate this trade and gain information regarding the island had failed simply as little was known about Britain and its people. This most likely intrigued Caesar, thus increasing his desire to investigate. While these both hold merit, Caesar’s ultimate decision probably was intertwined with his conflict in Gaul. Both Grant and Balsdon agree that Caesar knew of the close ties between Britain and Gaul at the time and may have based his final decision on this rationale. According to Grant, “Caesar claimed that they had helped his Gallic enemies...they showed a provoking tendency to harbour Gaulish resistance movements.”<sup>10</sup> Caesar simply could not overlook the support given from the British to the Gallic forces who opposed him. As he observes, Britannia “had close trading links with the maritime states in northern Gaul and was an easy refuge for discontented Gauls who might build up a centre of resistance from which to launch a counter-attack on the Romans in Gaul.”<sup>11</sup>

I believe that Caesar’s general curiosity regarding Britain, coupled with trade interests

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<sup>7</sup> Balsdon, *Julius Caesar*, 82.

<sup>8</sup> Grant, *Julius Caesar*, 65.

<sup>9</sup> Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 270.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

and a desire to thwart the Britons and Gauls from maintaining their alliance against the Roman authority, to be the principal rationale for his undertaking. To cite him again: “I thought it would be useful merely to have visited the island, to have seen what sort of people lived there, and to get some idea of the terrain and the harbours...The Gauls knew practically nothing about all this...no one goes to Britain except traders, and they are acquainted only with the sea coast and the areas that are opposite Gaul.”<sup>12</sup>

As stated previously, Caesar’s writings served an essential role in reminding the Romans of his accomplishments and the initial expedition to Britain very well may have been to an attempt on his part to gain popularity, especially because this was an uncharted land. This is the most probable cause for the invasion even though Caesar’s text never overtly mentions it. To be quite blunt about the expedition, Caesar used the British campaign a publicity stunt to further his own political aspirations. Campaigning against the savage Britons in an unknown, wild frontier was sure to impress and show Caesar as the brave heroic Roman conqueror. Caesar employed traders to gather information concerning the island, but received little intelligence. This seems to have further peaked Caesar’s interest as cited in his writings: “I could not find out about the size of the island, the names and populations of the tribes...their methods of fighting or the customs they had, or which harbours there could accommodate a large number of big ships...I sent Gaius Volusenus there...and gave him instructions to make enquiries about all these points and come back to me as quickly as he could.”<sup>13</sup>

### III

Uncharacteristic of Caesar, this first attempt at taking Britain is rather poorly planned and somewhat of a disaster of an excursion. As stated in Balsdon, Caesar’s own account of the

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<sup>12</sup> Caesar, *Battle for Gaul*, 80-81.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.



British expedition was “an all-but complete fiasco in which, providentially, few lives were lost.”<sup>14</sup> Caesar ordered the invasion in 55; however it was postponed due to the uprising of a conflict in the eastern portion of Gaul. Since winter was rapidly approaching, Caesar was forced to scale back his operation and determined that a “reconnaissance expedition” was all that could be accomplished within the time allowed. The force sent for reconnaissance is well documented in Caesar’s writings. “...80 transport ships had been obtained and assembled, enough in my opinion to take two legions across to Britain. There were also some warships...In addition to these, there were 18 transports...I assigned to the cavalry.”<sup>15</sup> The reconnaissance force was rather small compare to Caesar’s usual invading armies. This was a direct result of the lateness in the year since the expedition did not set sail from Gaul until August.

This is Caesar’s first mistake in the campaign. His impatience and insistence to invade Britain so late in the year as winter approached caused a vast number of problems for his fleet. His second folly would be lack of information about the land he was invading. Caesar spend the weeks prior to fleet’s departure attempt to learn what he could from the traders who had been to island, but found little to be helpful. Still, Caesar pressed on. The lack of knowledge regarding the coast in the South-Eastern tip of Britain seems to account for the need to circle back toward the east. The army’s misfortunes seem to come immediately upon arrival:

The invasion force sailed after midnight and stood of the cliffs of Dover at 9 or 10 the next morning. Here landing was obviously impossible; so the fleet sailed east, to attempt a landing between Walmer and Deal, where a British force, strong in cavalry and chariots, was waiting on the shore. Disembarkation...was next to impossible, until the warships were [maneuvered] close in to land and the enemy brought under a sharp assault from javelins, arrows, and slings, which drove them back from the shore...<sup>16</sup>

With their landing completed, the real hardships began. In their haste, the Romans had set sail without the proper necessities for their goals. They lacked heavy equipment and their

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<sup>14</sup> Balsdon, *Julius Caesar*, 82-83.

<sup>15</sup> Caesar, *Battle for Gaul*, 81.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

rations and provisions were grossly inadequate for the upcoming winter. This gave the British troops an advantage as the Romans would be forced to live off the land and forage for supplies. These difficulties were quickly compounded by the severe weather and the treacherous current of the channel which battered and tossed Caesar's fleet. "The Roman had taken no precautions, however, against the high neap tides in stormy weather and, when the warships drawn up on the land were badly damaged and the transports standing out at sea were battered by colliding with one another, the Britons...decided to abandon their submission, and to fight instead."<sup>17</sup>

The chaotic arrival caused the Roman cavalry to be scattered and disorganization amongst the ranks. "The fighting was fierce on both sides. Our men, however, could not keep ranks or get firm footing or follow their proper standards, and men from different ships grouped themselves under the first standards they came across. There was great disorder as a result."<sup>18</sup>

Despite this distinct edge held by the Britons due to their knowledge of the shores and the Roman ineptitude, the Britons never seem to take full advantage of the situation which eventually resulted in the concession of the conflict by the British Chieftains. As terms of the surrender, Caesar required that hostages be sent to him back in Gaul. However, only two of the tribes actually sent them. Caesar used this arrangement as a way to try and save face before returning with troops to Gaul from what was a poorly premeditated and inadequately executed expedition.

This endeavor as a whole was relatively unsuccessful, but it did accomplish a few items including the release of Commius, Caesar's envoy, who was captured by the Britons prior to the assault. Caesar's "success" eventually reached the ears of Rome and the senate passed a

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<sup>17</sup> Balsdon, *Julius Caesar*, 83.

<sup>18</sup> Caesar, *Battle of Gaul*, 83.

“*supplicatio*”<sup>19</sup> of twenty days which was undoubting proposed by Pompey and Crassus. While Caesar doesn’t complete the agenda he had set from the invasion, one thing is for certain; crossing the channel was no small feat and justly was worthy of praise. Caesar’s fortune does seem to a drastic upturn during his return in the summer of 54 B.C.

#### IV

Drawing upon his experience from the year before, Caesar increased the size of his forces as well as choosing a more favorable season for his next campaign into Britain. “I took with me five legions and a force of cavalry equal to that which I had left with Labienus...2,000 cavalry...more than 800 ships...”<sup>20</sup> With the assistance of private ships loyal to him, Caesar set sail for a second time with approximately 800 ships in total. A far cry for the meager 100 or so launched in the first assault. The second improvement Caesar made was one of preparation for landing on the harsh British coastline. The force he had amassed was intended to intimidate the Britons who otherwise might have opposed his landing. Learning for the cliffs of Dover, Caesar chose to land at Sandwich Bay which was north of Deal, near the mouth of the Great Stour River. After landing and without any hesitation, Caesar led his forces up the Great Stour to Sturry where he met up with the British opposition. “Caesar decided on an immediate attack, and marched out under the cover of darkness with forty cohorts and 1,700 cavalry.”<sup>21</sup> Caesar’s columns had their enemy on the run with very little to no resistance.

While the ensuing battle produced a favorable outcome for Caesar, the victory was bittersweet due to his first error of the invasion. Despite the damages caused in the stormy sea and rough coastal terrain which were sustained in the first encounter, the Roman fleet remained out at sea instead of portaging. A gamble to be certain on the part of Caesar and the result

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<sup>19</sup> *Supplicatio* is the Roman practice of thanksgiving or supplication to the gods decreed by the senate.

<sup>20</sup> Caesar, *Battle for Gaul*, 91.

<sup>21</sup> Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 288.

proved to be disastrous. “The fleet lying at anchor had been badly damaged by storm, and forty ships had been lost. Ten days were then spent in hauling the ships up on shore, extracting skilled carpenters from the ranks and sending instructions to Laberius, who had been left in Gaul, to send across fresh ships and materials.”<sup>22</sup> Caesar, it would seem, constantly underestimated the fierce, storm-ridden waters of the channel.

Even with the delay for repairing the fleet, Caesar’s persistence shone through. His pride and personal ambitions seem to have driven him onward. With a repeat of the events from the year prior on the seas, one might criticize his judgment, questioning his return to the Isle. In any case, this proved to be the opportunity for the British tribes to unite against their new-found enemy. The pause gave the Britons time to recover which led to several tribes, who in normal circumstances were hostile to each other, being able to combine to face the imminent threat. The British tribes appointed a war-leader named Cassivellaunus who led them against Caesar’s forces.

Despite the unification of the British tribes and Caesar’s retreat to regroup with his main force, Caesar responds rapidly and advances his troops with a fair amount of success. A few skirmishes broke out, most during patrols and most resulted in the skilled Romans driving back their attackers. Caesar appears to grow restless and turns his attention towards the northwest and the region of Thames, home to Cassivellaunus. The tactic employed by Cassivellaunus’ armies was one of small attacks on patrols and forging units instead of an open battle causing Caesar’s troops to suffer few, but steady casualties. Caesar does quickly remedy this situation as he had done so many times in the past. “...Caesar was able to make use of a local ally. With the army was Mandubracius, a prince of the Trinovantes...who had been driven into exile after

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<sup>22</sup> Balsdon, *Julius Caesar*, 84.

Cassivellaunus had killed his father.”<sup>23</sup> During this same period, Cassivellaunus organized several tribes which resided near Kent to attack the cohorts that Caesar had left to protect the ships. The Roman guards manage to repel the attacking tribesmen forcing them to sustain sever losses.

The alliance between Caesar and Mandubracius in combination with the defeat at Atrius where the fleet was anchored signaled to Cassivellaunus that the resistance was futile. In late September, 54 B.C., Cassivellaunus surrender to Caesar. The British commander promised victorious Caesar hostages and an annual tribute which was to be sent to him in Gaul. This never managed to come to fruition as Caesar would leave the isle and promptly set sail to Gaul where issues in the north had escalated, requiring his attention.

## V

While Caesar claimed victory over the British, little was actually gained. Caesar addresses the terms of Cassivellaunus’ surrender, “...I accepted their surrender, ordering hostages to be given and fixing the tribute to be paid annually by Britain to Rome. I gave strict orders to Cassivellaunus not to molest Mandubracius or the Trinobantes<sup>24</sup>.”<sup>25</sup> The tribute promised as well as the hostages agreed upon at the conclusion seem to have been short-lived if they occurred at all. The Romans did gain a newfound trading partner as a direct result of the confrontation. Ultimately, the greatest achievement of Caesar’s campaign is what it led to for the future of the Roman Empire. “Caesar left Britain never to return. It would be almost a century before another Roman army would invade the island and turn it into a province.”<sup>26</sup>

In my estimation, Caesar seems to be over-credited for the “conquering” of Britain.

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<sup>23</sup> Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 290.

<sup>24</sup> Trinobantes, or Trinovantes, was a tribe located in Southeastern Britain during the pre-Roman era.

<sup>25</sup> Caesar, *Battle for Gaul*, 97.

<sup>26</sup> Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 292.

While his campaigns were militaristically victorious, Caesar was relatively ineffective at managing his expeditions. The tribute awarded to him in his victory is undoubtedly far less than the overall expense of the British campaign with regards to the mass loss of ships that his forces incurred whilst attempting to cross the treacherous English Channel and land on the harsh British coastline. Caesar's narrative neglects to mention the cost of the war in Britain. This was most likely to avoid lending credence to his rivals back in Rome. Caesar states the positive elements that occurred during the invasion, but it is without doubt a one-sided take on the success of the missions.

For instance, his account of the return to Gaul predominantly describes as a true conqueror. "...I led the army back to the coast, where I found the ships had been repaired...because we had a great many prisoners...I decided to make the return journey in two trips. It happen the out of such a fleet of ships...not a single one with troops on board was lost."<sup>27</sup> This section of Caesar's writings seems to be him bragging about his somewhat favorable outcome as a way to gain popularity and win favor back in Rome. This is not the only occasion in which Caesar seems to claim dominance rather immodestly. "As soon as the defeated Britons had regrouped after the rout, they sent envoys to me to ask for peace. They promised to give hostages and in the future do as I ordered."<sup>28</sup>

While Caesar doesn't claim it in *De Bello Gallico*, it is often implied that his actions in 55-54 B.C. brought "civilization" to Britain. To determine Caesar's impact on British Society, we must first analyze the state of Britain society prior to invasions. Pre-Roman Britain was a multi-tribal society in which independent tribes ruled small territories, but no centralized national government was employed.

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<sup>27</sup> Caesar, *Battle for Gaul*, 97.

<sup>28</sup> Caesar, *Battle for Gaul*, 83.

As previously mentioned, trade was a crucial factor in Pre-Roman Britain's economical success. The Britons had many exportable goods such as metal fabrication, pottery, and physical resources like tin and iron, and slaves. However, the British economy was predominantly based on agricultural production. Pre-Roman Britain used the production of crops and cattle as the foundation for creating their sophisticated societies prior to the Roman conquest.<sup>29</sup> While trade was mentioned as a reason for Caesar's initial expedition, the production of crafts for exportation were almost exclusively located on the south-eastern coastline directly facing Gaul while agricultural production affected both the high and low lands, encompassing all of Britain.

Caesar probably viewed the Britons as a barbaric and uncouth people. Therefore, little credence was given to the merits of British culture and society. As he wrote:

...their way of life is very like the Gauls. Most of the tribes living on the interior do not grow grain; they live on milk and meat and wear skins. All the Britons dye their bodies with woad, which produces a blue colour and gives a wild appearance in battle. They wear their hair long; every other part of the body, except for the upper lip, they shave. Wives are shared between groups of ten or twelve men, especially between brothers and between fathers and sons; but the children of such unions are counted as belonging to the man with whom the woman first cohabited.<sup>30</sup>

Despite this portrayal of the Britons as savages in Caesar's text, his same volume has been used to refute this argument. "He refers to a war leader, Casivellaunus; a prince, Mandubracius; various Kentish Kings as well as Lugotorix, a noble; and social groups which may be identified as tribes."<sup>31</sup> Through mentioning these key British figures in the *De Bello Gallico*, he affectively lends legitimacy to the concept of an advanced and, by all accounts, civilized societal structure. "[Britain was] basically hierarchical Gallic society. This comprised upper classes of nobles, warriors and the learned (including priests), who were bound together, and to whom the lower orders were attached, by social obligations and bonds of clientage."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Millett, *Romanization of Britain*, 11.

<sup>30</sup> Caesar, *Battle for Gaul*, 94.

<sup>31</sup> Millett, *Romanization of Britain*, 19.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Along with this indirect acknowledgment of British hierarchical society, Caesar does mention a few other positives about their civilization. “The population is extremely large, there are very many farm buildings...and the cattle are very numerous. For money they use bronze or gold coins, or iron ingots of fixed standard weights. Tin is found there in the midland...The bronze they use is imported.”<sup>33</sup> The use of coinage prior to Caesar’s arrival is measurable advancement of British civilization through both external and internal influences, specifically trade. Robin Collingwood reiterates the idea of pre-Roman development of Britain through coinage.

The earliest coins found in this country, apart from stray specimens of Mediterranean fabric brought by trade to the south-west, are those of the Gaulish...struck early in the first century B.C. [...] these represent the coins brought with them by invaders, with some that may have arrived by way of trade...coins began to be struck in Britain itself; possibly this was already happening before Caesar’s invasion.<sup>34</sup>

This use of coinage is then used by Collingwood to justify Caesar’s causes for the invasion such as its support of his enemy in Gaul and its value as a trade center.

Progress was already taking place throughout Britain through the means of trade, primarily with Gaul, before their Roman invaders became involved in the process. While the invasion in 55 B.C. led to key developments in the evolution of British society such as urbanization, the postulation that Caesar’s victories in the Gaul and Britain led to periods of advancement for these conquered peoples is highly unlikely as illustrated in Millett’s work. “The campaigns and the subsequent upheaval probably had important consequences for Britain, but it seems impossible to distinguish adequately between these and those already in progress as a result of previous contacts via Gaul.”<sup>35</sup>

Caesar’s campaign did in some respects establish advancements in British society. The

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<sup>33</sup> Caesar, *Battle for Gaul*, 93.

<sup>34</sup> Collingwood, *Roman Britain*, 92.

<sup>35</sup> Millett, *Romanization of Britain*, 31.



best example is the urbanization of the British tribes involved in the conflict against Caesar. While it was Caesar's arrival and the eminent danger towards their way of life that united the tribes under the leadership of Cassivellaunus, the common interest which led to the unification between larger and more-established tribes dissolves almost instantaneously following Caesar's departure from the Isle. Prior to the campaign in 55 B.C., British tribes were formed as small, autonomous communities with no centralized national power to unite them and, in spite of the appointment of Mandubracius as chief of the Trinobantes, the strongest of the tribes in the southern region, the clans returned to their previous traditions of governance. This relapse to a multi-tribal system of government was actually encouraged by Rome. "The diplomatic skills employed by Rome were designed to divide and dominate. By lending support to one tribal group against another they enhanced inter-tribal stresses and thus prevented the emergence of any overt external threat..."<sup>36</sup> This temporary alliance between tribal leaders was not a result of imposed Roman imperialism subsequent left after the confrontation, but more likely a mutual partnership in an attempt to reinforce and better their protection against hegemony.

Although the larger tribes broke their affiliation with one another, the opposite can be said for the smaller, more rural clans. These more isolated tribes found post-invasion Britain to be the perfect time to embrace expansion. "...some groups more remote from the continent, like the Brigantes, who seem to have been a loose confederation of five such clans...In the south and east the pattern suggests that the permanence of these groupings, and the scale of their organization, was changing in the years between the Caesarian expeditions and the Claudian conquest."<sup>37</sup> The inter-connectivity of these tribes is shown again through the archeological confirmation regarding the spread of classical coins in south-eastern. Also, the best evidence for

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<sup>36</sup> Millett, *Romanization of Britain*, 35.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 21. Subsequent evidence provided is reconstructed from Millett's text, 21-35.

this Romanization comes from the inscriptions, such as *Britannia Rex*<sup>38</sup>, on these coins. This appearance on British coinage with Latin terms imprinted on them shows us the blending of the two cultures.

In fact, the Roman occupation post-Caesarian invasion may have actually hindered the maturity of Britain. The immediate period following Caesar's victory of Gaul was dominated by civil war at Rome resulted the newly "conquered" territories in Gaul and Britain being left to fend for themselves in rebuilding their war-torn countries. We find this civil war era as one deficient in development for these two provinces until 20 B.C. in which Romanization began to resurface. This lack of progress in Gaul assuredly affected the growth in Britain as trade diminished during the Roman civil war. Any movements made during these decades were done so independently of Roman influences.

Ultimately, Caesar's invasions must be considered both a success and a failure. Militaristically, the campaign was a strong victory as Caesar's forces suffered minimal losses and on both occasions, the British tribes were forced into submission. The operation was also successful in that Caesar accomplished advancing his political standing by convincing his fellow Romans of the glory which had earned for Rome. However, the incursions into Britain were an economic nightmare. The cost of the expedition was astronomical and the tribute was to be paid annually to Caesar was transitory at best. Unfortunately for Caesar, his ability to imposed sanctions on the collecting of the agreed upon imbursement was hampered by his requisite return to Rome in 50 B.C. due to the outbreak of civil war.

While Caesar's interference in Britain quite possibly hampered more then it assisted their development, his actions lead to vast achievements for the Empire. Caesar's forays opened the door to the possibility of colonizing Britain permanently. By installing Mandubracius as a client

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<sup>38</sup> *Britannia Rex* meaning King of Britain in Latin.

king, Caesar successfully set the stage for a return to the Isle. Caesar was unable to effectively establish hegemony in Britain, but he did create the opportunity for complete Roman control of the Isle which came to fruition nearly 100 years later in 43 A.D. with the Claudine invasion.

Caesar's contribution to the creation of Roman Britain is best summarized by Tacitus.

Julius Caesar, the first Roman to enter Britain with an army, did intimidate the natives by a victory and secure a grip on the coast. But he may fairly be said to have merely drawn attention to the island: it was not his to bequeath.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Tacitus, *Agricola and Germania*, 63-64.

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