M4C Collaborative Doctoral Award

Project Title	
Reconstructing Regional Identities in Britain 1st BCE-4th CE through Metal Artefacts: The case of the Cornovii	

LEAD INSTITUTION				
Name of HEI institution	University of Leicester			
Lead regional city	Birmingham ☐	Coventry ☐	Leicester ☒	Nottingham ☐
PARTNER ORGANISATION				
Name of organisation	The British Museum			
Website URL	https://www.britishmuseum.org/research https://finds.org.uk/			

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research will explore important issues of regional identity in SW Britain under Roman rule and try to define the fundamental differences between the people of Devon/southern Somerset (*Dumnonii*) and the people of Cornwall (*Cornovii*) through a large-scale study of Iron Age and Roman coins and metalwork.

The conventional academic view of this region, such as presented on the Ordnance Survey Map of Roman Britain, is that it was all part of the territory of a people called the *Dumnonii*, with urban-based regional government at Exeter (*Isca*). However, the lead HEI supervisor has proposed in a couple of studies that there were fundamental differences between the people of Devon and southern Somerset (*Dumnonii*) and the people of Cornwall (*Cornovii*) to the west of the River Tamar and that this divergence pre-dated the Roman period. Cornwall is also notable for its lack of urban settlements and Roman-style farms (villas), making it look more like the military zones of the province. In fact, over the last 20 years Roman forts have been located close to diachronic mining landscapes, supporting the idea of the *Cornovii* and their mineral-rich territory being more closely supervised by Rome than the *Dumnonii*.

There is a substantial and readily available new source of data to develop these ideas and fill gaps in our image of the region and people under Rome: since 1997 the British Museum's Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) has been recording material found by members of the public across England and Wales through a network of regional Finds Liaison Officers. SW Britain has benefitted hugely from this scheme, with c.273,000 artefacts of diverse types (chiefly metalwork and coins) recorded (this out of >1.5 million artefacts recorded by the PAS, www.finds.org.uk/database).

The new data from the PAS, combined with recent archaeological work on the forts and mining landscapes, make this a timely moment to re-examine the question of the nature of the regional identities. The project, jointly supervised by British Museum and Leicester staff, will also integrate material from collections held by the Royal Institution of Cornwall (RIC) and the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) as well as historical data from publications of regional material such as Roger Penhallurick's (2009) *Ancient and Early Medieval Coins from Cornwall & Scilly*. The project will look at what material culture can tell us about regional trajectories and the expression of identity through the differentiated distribution of varied artefact types and deviation in patterns of coin use between Cornwall and the rest of the SW. Coins will be an

important dataset: Penhallurick's catalogue for Cornwall is now supplemented by the PAS finds and the results of a previous collaborative project involving the British Museum and the Leicester lead supervisor on Roman coin hoards from Britain (Bland et al. 2020). Shifting patterns of coin use can be explored both spatially and chronologically.

Timetable
Initial analysis of the PAS data will focus on identifying which specific categories of Iron Age and Roman era metal artefacts may be most indicative of regional identity or external contacts and trade (Yr1). The spatial analysis methods to be used to interrogate the data will include Geographical Information System (GIS), not simply to map overall distributions but also to look at hotspots of Roman imports around potential harbour sites, forts, mining districts and so on. One possibility is that deviations from the normative patterns of engagement with Roman coins and metal artefacts may have been connected with areas of active exploitation of mineral resources. Detailed chronological analysis and more complex statistical approaches like cluster and correspondence analysis will be employed to divide a set of objects into groups and look at the variations within those in order to cross-reference the multivariate components (Yrs2-3, with main placement Yr3). The Cornish data will be at the forefront, but in the final write-up, the diagnostic classes of finds will be reviewed against the wider regional background made possible by the PAS database (Yr4).

The project addresses nationally important research questions about the varied nature of the impacts of the colonial rule of Roman Britannia and the discrepant identities that this gave rise to. It will mobilise in a new and dynamic way the research potential of the huge volume of data assembled by the BM-managed PAS. By addressing issues of regional identities, it will also demonstrate much greater time depth of Cornish and Devonian regionalism than orthodox models currently recognise. We believe a further strength of the project is the way it brings academic expertise from the M4C together with both national and regional partners in the heritage sector.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE	
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