



The Sons of Remus: Identity in Roman Gaul and Spain

Andrew C. Johnston

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Histories of ancient Rome have long emphasized the ways in which the empire assimilated the societies it conquered, bringing civilization to the supposed barbarians. Yet interpretations of this “Romanization” of Western Europe tend to erase local identities and traditions from the historical picture, leaving us with an incomplete understanding of the diverse cultures that flourished in the provinces far from Rome.

The Sons of Remus recaptures the experiences, memories, and discourses of the societies that made up the variegated patchwork fabric of the western provinces of the Roman Empire. Focusing on Gaul and Spain, Andrew Johnston explores how the inhabitants of these provinces, though they willingly adopted certain Roman customs and recognized imperial authority, never became exclusively Roman. Their self-representations in literature, inscriptions, and visual art reflect identities rooted in a sense of belonging to indigenous communities. Provincials performed shifting roles for different audiences, rehearsing traditions at home while subverting Roman stereotypes of druids and rustics abroad.

Deriving keen insights from ancient sources?travelers’ records, myths and hero cults, timekeeping systems, genealogies, monuments?Johnston shows how the communities of Gaul and Spain balanced their local identities with their status as Roman subjects, as they preserved a cultural memory of their pre-Roman past and wove their own narratives into Roman mythology. The Romans saw themselves as the heirs of Romulus, the legendary founder of the eternal city; from the other brother, the provincials of the west received a complicated inheritance, which shaped the history of the sons of Remus.

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