

Gallic Ethnography in Context from Caesar to Tacitus
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By the time Caesar conquered Gaul, Roman authors already had at hand a rich ethnographic tradition on the Gallic people, inherited from Greek authors of the Classical and Hellenistic periods, and stereotyping the Gauls as warlike barbarians. Although this traditional image of barbaric Gaul persisted in Latin literature until at least the 4th century CE, deviations from the tradition begin to emerge with Caesar in the 50's BCE. Specifically, Caesar in *de Bello Gallico*, Claudius in his speech to the senate, and Tacitus in his *Annales* depart from the traditional uncivilized stereotype of Gaul in their writings, and do so in such a way that depicts the Gauls as increasingly more Roman in their behavior and way of life. Caesar depicts the Gauls as a worthy enemy; Claudius argues that the Gauls are deserving of Roman citizenship; finally, Tacitus describes the Gauls as equal to the Romans.

The archaeological record shows that, beginning in the 1st century BCE, the inhabitants of Gaul increasingly began adopting and adapting aspects of Roman culture, including the use of Latin inscriptions, the growth of Roman forms of urbanization, and the consumption of Roman goods, such as Italian wine and Arrentine ware. By the end of the 1st century CE, almost the entire province of Gaul shows signs of assimilation to Roman culture, demonstrated most clearly in the urban centers that dotted the landscape and in the lifestyle of the Gallic elite that now held Roman citizenship.

The process of assimilation is a much a debated topic amongst Classicists. Regardless of the terminology used—assimilation, Romanization, creolization—it is important to note that there is a process of change occurring in the provincial landscape, and this process has effects both on the material culture and the literary record. The literary and archaeological evidence involving Gaul during the late Republic and early Empire provide us with the opportunity to see how changes in the material culture in the province may have affected Romans and how these changes were reflected in their writings.

Caesar, Claudius, and Tacitus all had contact with the province of Gaul, and as the province itself was adopting an increasingly more Roman appearance in terms of its material remains, each author depicts the Gauls as more Roman. Because the developments in the literary evidence so closely map the developments in the archaeological record, we might infer that the one had a direct impact on the other and perhaps the depiction of the Gauls in the literature is actually a reflection of the author's own experience with or in that province. The example of Gaul shows how the combination of literary and archaeological evidence provides a clearer picture of the effects of acculturation in the Roman Empire, and with this we are able to construct a more holistic depiction of this process. By the end of the 1st century CE, the process of change, found both in literature and archaeology, resulted in a Roman province of Gaul that was creating and consuming Roman culture, inhabited by Roman citizens, and depicted as equal to Romans in literature.