

THE ORIGINS OF THE ROMAN ECONOMY

In this book, Gabriele Cifani reconstructs the early economic history of Rome, from the Iron Age to the early Republic. Bringing a multidisciplinary approach to the topic, he argues that the early Roman economy was more diversified than has been previously acknowledged, going well beyond agriculture and pastoralism. Cifani bases his argument on a systematic review of archaeological evidence for production, trade and consumption. He posits that the existence of a network system, based on cultural interaction, social mobility and trade, connected Rome and central Tyrrhenian Italy to the Mediterranean Basin even in this early period of Rome's history. Moreover, these trade and cultural links existed in parallel to regional diversified economies and institutions. Cifani's book thus offers new insights into the economic basis for the rise of Rome, as well as the social structures of Mediterranean Iron Age societies.

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THE ORIGINS OF THE ROMAN ECONOMY

FROM THE IRON AGE TO THE EARLY
REPUBLIC IN A MEDITERRANEAN
PERSPECTIVE

GABRIELE CIFANI

University of Rome "Tor Vergata"



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Valentinae

διόπερ οὐχ οὕτως ἔστι φροντιστέον τῆς αὐτῶν τῶν πράξεων ἐξηγή-
σεως οὔτε τοῖς γράφουσιν οὔτε τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσιν τὰς ἱστορίας,
ὡς τῶν πρότερον καὶ τῶν ἅμα καὶ τῶν ἐπιγινομένων τοῖς ἔργοις.

ἱστορίας γὰρ ἔαν ἀφέλη τις τὸ διὰ τί καὶ πῶς καὶ τίνος χάριν
ἐπράχθη τὸ πραχθὲν καὶ πρότερον εὐλογον ἔσχε τὸ τέλος, τὸ κατα-
λειπόμενον αὐτῆς ἀγώνισμα μὲν μάθημα δ' οὐ γίνεται,

καὶ παραυτίκα μὲν τέρπει, πρὸς δὲ τὸ μέλλον οὐδὲν ὠφελεῖ τὸ
παράπαν.

Neither the writer nor the reader of history, therefore, should
confine his attention to a bare statement of facts: he must take into
account all that preceded, accompanied, or followed them.

For if you take from history all explanation of cause, principle, and
motive, and of the adaptation of the means to the end, what is left is
a mere panorama without being instructive;

and, though it may please for the moment, has no abiding value.

Polyb. III, 31, 11–13

(text and translation from Hultsch, Shuckburgh 1889)

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At that time I found the majority of the explanations for the rise of Rome between the eighth and fourth centuries BC unsatisfactory, out of date, stereotypical and highly speculative, based as they were on simple agriculture and pastoralism or the need to plunder nearby communities or to respond to social struggles within the civic body, with very little attention paid to long-term transformations or evidence of production and trade in the Roman community itself.

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