



Rome's Imperial Economy: Twelve Essays

W. V. Harris

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Imperial Rome has a name for wealth and luxury, but was the economy of the Roman Empire as a whole a success, by the standards of pre-modern economies? In this volume W. V. Harris brings together eleven previously published papers on this much-argued subject, with additional comments to bring them up to date. A new study of poverty and destitution provides a fresh perspective on the question of the Roman Empire's economic performance, and a substantial introduction ties the collection together. Harris tackles difficult but essential questions, such as how slavery worked, what role the state played, whether the Romans had a sophisticated monetary system, what it was like to be poor, whether they achieved sustained economic growth. He shows that in spite of notably sophisticated economic institutions and the spectacular wealth of a few, the Roman economy remained incorrigibly pre-modern and left a definite segment of the population high and dry.

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