

E.L. Will Book Review for “Trade in the Ancient Economy”

Edited by Peter Garnsey, Keith Hopkins and C.R. Whittaker

xxvi, 230 pages, 1 text figure, 3 tables, bibliography. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA 1983 \$24.00

Sir Moses Finley's publications on ancient economic history provide the framework for this collection of essays by 14 scholars from England, France, Italy and Holland. The writers seek to accommodate Finley's theories to the growing body of archaeological evidence pointing to large-scale manufacture and distribution of goods in antiquity, especially during the Roman period. Grain, shipping amphoras, tableware, wine, freight, bank loans, and other topics are examined for the light they throw on the amount of trade in antiquity.

Finley had argued that agriculture was the basis of the ancient economy and that the volume of trade was low. While still adhering to the outlines of the Finley arguments, particularly as they concern archaic and Classical Greece, *Trade in the Ancient Economy* presents a less simplistic, more complicated picture and suggests that trade played a greater role in the ancient economy. There can in fact no longer be doubt that Italy exported wine and olive oil in significant amounts throughout the Mediterranean during the Roman Late Republic and that during the Roman Empire there was massive exportation of olive oil and garum from Spain and of olive oil from North Africa. While the evidence from Spain is largely ignored in the essays, the material presented suffices to suggest, if only by implication, that the Finley model hardly supplies to the Roman period.

One could argue that it is probably premature, in any case, to undertake theoretical discussions such as those of Finley and his followers, to “think away.” In the words of one of the essayists, “concepts appropriate only to the capitalist market economy,” as long as most of the basic archaeological evidence still awaits publication. Further revisions of the Finley model are undoubtedly in store. But the writers of these essays should still be complimented on their efforts to clarify Finley, to whom the book is dedicated, and on their formulation of questions that will facilitate later discussions. *Elizabeth Lyding Will, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA*

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