

Javno predavanje

WILLEM JONGMAN
University of Groningen

Towards a New Economic History of the Roman Empire

Srijeda, 26. ožujka 2025, u 17:00
Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu
Konferencijska dvorana Knjižnice (2. kat)

The Roman Empire was the largest state of its time, with a population of 60-100 million people representing a quarter or more of the world population of its time, a high urbanization rate, and a sophisticated material culture. And yet, the history of the Roman economy has long suffered from on a pessimistic cultural turn among classicists limited to literary sources that emphasized its cultural continuity and underdevelopment, disliked economic theory and ignored the vast quantity of archaeological data that has become available in recent decades. On the other hand, there were the modern historians for whom history really only started in the year AD 1000, and who were steeped in the idea of an *histoire immobile* of preindustrial stagnation. On top of that, there is now the modern idea that classical antiquity is only irrelevant white man's history. I will try to argue that with proper quantitative data from archaeology, and using some economic theory, it is possible to write an economic history of the Roman world that is both real economic history, and one that shows that for a few centuries Roman economic growth was remarkable for any period up to the Industrial Revolution, but that its subsequent decline was equally dramatic.

Willem M. Jongman is Honorary Professor of Ancient History and Economic and Social History at the University of Groningen (Netherlands). His book *The Economy and Society of Pompeii* (Amsterdam, 1988) is considered one of the most important on ancient economics. In his work, he often combines an explicit use of modern social science theory with a critical and sophisticated use of vast empirical (often archaeological) data sets. His current research focuses on the Romans' biological standard of living, on social relations in rural areas using archaeological field surveys, and on Roman labor, including slavery.