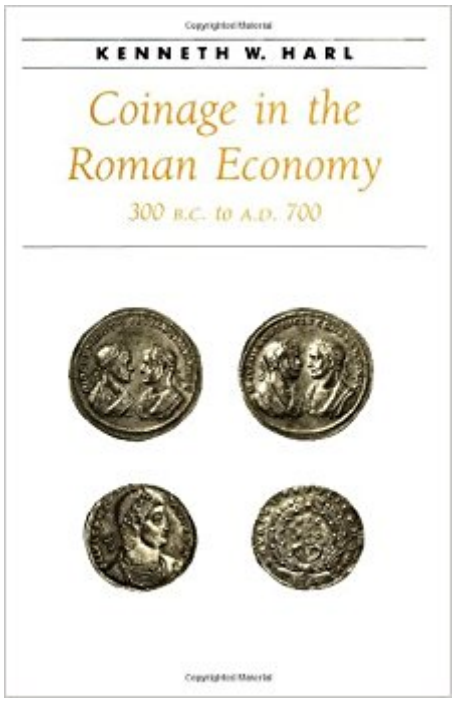
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Coinage In The Roman Economy, 300 B.C. To A.D. 700 (Ancient Society And History)



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Synopsis

The premier form of Roman money since the time of the Second Punic War (218-201 B.C.), coins were vital to the success of Roman state finances, taxation, markets, and commerce beyond the frontiers. Yet until now, the economic and social history of Rome has been written independently of numismatic studies, which detail such technical information as weight standards, mint output, hoards, and finds at archaeological sites. In Coinage in the Roman Economy, 300 B.C. to A.D. 700, noted classicist and numismatist Kenneth W. Harl brings together these two fields in the first comprehensive history of how Roman coins were minted and used. Drawing on literary and documentary sources as well as on current methods of metallurgical study and statistical analysis of coins from archaeological sites, Harl presents a sweeping overview of a system of coinage in use for more than a millennium. Challenging much recent scholarship, he emphasizes the important role played by coins in the overseas expansion of the Roman Republic during the second century B.C., in imperial inflationary policies during the third and fourth centuries A.D., and in the dissolution of the Roman Mediterranean order in the seventh century A.D. He also offers the first region-by-region analysis of prices and wages throughout Roman history with reference to the changing buying power of the major circulating denominations. And he shows how the seldom-studied provincial, civic, and imitative coinages were in fact important components of Roman currency. Richly illustrated with photographic reproductions of nearly three hundred specimens, Coinage in the Roman Economy offers a significant contribution to Roman economic history. It will be of interest to scholars and students of classical antiquity and the Middle Ages, as well as to professional and amateur numismatists.

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Customer Reviews

"This thought-provoking work... should be important reading for scholars in a variety of disciplines. It challenges, for example, the long-held belief that a large-scale drain of Roman specie went to India and the East in the early centuries of the Roman Empire and the concept that the western provinces of the Roman Empire were never completely monetized. These reinterpretations and others, presented forcefully with careful documentation, should arouse the attention of anyone interested in ancient or medieval history, economics, or numismatics." (History)

The premier form of Roman money since the time of the Second Punic War (218-201 B.C.), coins were vital to the success of Roman state finances, taxation, markets, and commerce beyond the frontiers. Yet until now, the economic and social history of Rome has been written independently of numismatic studies, which detail such technical information as weight standards, mint output, hoards, and finds at archaeological sites. In Coinage in the Roman Economy, 300 B.C. to A.D. 700, noted classicist and numismatist Kenneth W. Harl brings together these two fields in the first comprehensive history of how Roman coins were minted and used. Drawing on both literary and documentary sources, as well as on current methods of metallurgical study and statistical analysis of coins from archaeological sites, Harl presents a sweeping overview of a system of coinage in use for more than a millennium. Challenging much recent scholarship, he emphasizes the important role played by coins during overseas expansion of the Roman Republic during the second century B.C., in imperial inflationary policies during the third and fourth centuries A.D., and in the dissolution of the Roman Mediterranean order in the seventh century A.D. He also offers the first region-by-region analysis of prices and wages throughout Roman history with reference to the changing buying power of the major circulating denominations. And he shows how the seldom studied provincial, civic, and imitative coinages were in fact important components of Roman currency. Richly illustrated with photographic reproductions of nearly three hundred specimens, Coinage in the Roman Economy offers a significant contribution to Roman economic history. It willbe of interest to scholars and students of classical antiquity and the Middle Ages as well as to professional and amateur numismatists.

A previous .com reviewer of Kenneth Harl’s "Coinage in the Roman Economy" expressed an

interest in seeing a review of the book from the viewpoint of other than a numismatist. I suppose that I can at least partly do this. Although I do collect some ancient Roman coins, I am quite casual in my approach to it and, in truth, I am more interested in the history and people behind the coins than the coins as objects in themselves. In looking on the Internet for information about the use and "real world" value of coins in the Roman Empire, I came across mention of Professor Harl's book. Wanting to better understand how those discolored bits of silver and bronze had come to be and how they were used, I understood that there was no better source."Coinage in the Roman Economy" is unabashedly, unflinchingly academic in its approach to its subject. Expect no whimsical anecdotes about mad emperors; don't imagine that there will be thrilling descriptions of great battles. It is safe to say that Brad Pitt's agent is not negotiating for screen rights to the book. Page after page, Harl details the intricacies of Roman monetary policy, how emperors gradually (and sometimes not so gradually) diluted the precious metal content of the coins, reduced their weight, and repeatedly altered exchange rates in efforts to achieve financial stability. Yet, there is an oddly compelling flow and rhythm to that description of one thousand years of coin history as we watch the story of this instrument of Roman power and art play out against a distant background of civil wars, invasions, foreign wars, and calamities. To tackle this book, a reader should already be familiar with the central events and personalities in the long history of Rome. Otherwise, the information presented cannot be integrated with the larger story. But for the student of Roman history, there is much here not readily available elsewhere, including insights into the standard of living in those distant centuries.For collectors of ancient coins, of course, there is another entire realm of information contained in this book: explanations of the how those treasured bits of metal were manufactured and distributed, how much a denarius could buy under Augustus and how little under Claudius Gothicus, why new eras brought new coins such as the aurelianus and the nummus.The ideal reader of "Coinage in the Roman Economy" is one who blends interests in both Rome and the coins themselves. It is not light reading, by any means, but effort expended will be rewarded by a new appreciation of the real importance of these small pieces of metal to that complex and now-vanished world.

Outstanding scholarly work on the subject. Harl is clear, thorough, and detailed throughout. A tremendous and reliable resource we are fortunate to have available. You won't find any fluff in Harl's work. Buy with confidence.

Excellent reference work. It helps one to better understand how coinage was so important in the

daily life in both the western (Roman)and eastern (Byzantine) world.

This book is a wealth of information. The tables on coin metal fineness have helped me in making my coin purchase decisions. Thanks to Mr. Harl for his excellent work.

I found this book scholarly, and I think it is intended to be so. Were this book otherwise organized, it could be easier to manage. I found that the many (fifty or more per chapter) footnotes were cumbersome to look at, being grouped together apart from the main text. Furthermore, most of them refer just to the origin of data. But some have more extensive contents. I could have done without many of them, but not of all of them. That kept me jumping around. Plates with illustrations are similarly placed, but this is not so annoying.This overview of the roman monetary system and coinage in use for a millennium in the Roman world is compelling. Prices and wages are also analyzed, as far as extant documents allow.Politicians from around the world could learn a lot about how Gresham's law, the economic principle that bad money drives out good (good money automatically disappears because of hoarding) works; Rome provided good example that people can't be fooled easily.Rating this book with four stars, I'm judging it as a numismatist interested in roman history and economics. I'd like to see ratings from people with other concerns.

This volume is the only one I have come across to satisfactorily treat the question of economic context and actual usage patterns of Roman coins. It is both scholarly (containing voluminous footnotes) and readable. Of particular interest is the information pertaining to the frequently neglected period of the third and fourth centuries.

By far the most complete work on the subject I was able to locate. The chronological orginization is both useful and intuitive and the writing style makes this book fairly easy reading considering the depth of information it provides.

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