



Bringing in the Sheaves: Economy and Metaphor in the Roman World (Robson Classical Lectures)

Brent Shaw

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The annual harvesting of cereal crops was one of the most important economic tasks in the Roman Empire. Not only was it urgent and critical for the survival of state and society, it mobilized huge numbers of men and women every year from across the whole face of the Mediterranean. In *Bringing in the Sheaves*, Brent D. Shaw investigates the ways in which human labour interacted with the instruments of harvesting, what part the workers and their tools had in the whole economy, and how the work itself was organized.

Both collective and individual aspects of the story are investigated, centred on the life-story of a single reaper whose work in the wheat fields of North Africa is documented in his funerary epitaph. The narrative then proceeds to an analysis of the ways in which this cyclical human behaviour formed and influenced modes of thinking about matters beyond the harvest. The work features an edition of the reaper inscription, and a commentary on it. It is also lavishly illustrated to demonstrate the important iconic and pictorial dimensions of the story.

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