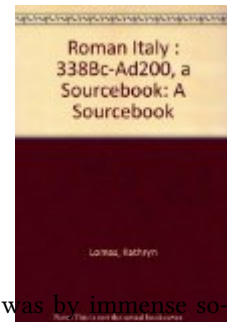


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Kathryn Lomas. *Roman Italy 338 BC-AD 200: A Sourcebook*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. xiii + 274 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-312-16072-2.

Reviewed by Helen Parkins (University of Cambridge, U.K)
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The focus of this sourcebook is all-important: it is not Rome, but Roman Italy, without control of which, it is argued, "Rome would simply have remained one city-state among many" (p. 1). *Roman Italy* is therefore concerned with documenting the process by which Rome took and then maintained control over its Italian neighbours, and by which Italy contributed to the 'making' of Rome as a city of empire.

The book is laid out more or less chronologically. The first half deals with the period from 338 B.C.-A.D. 14, while the second half is largely thematic—with chapters on the emperor, the economy, religion, and municipal life—and deals mostly with the period from A.D. 14 onwards.

Lomas's stated aims are two-fold: to supply "a user-friendly collection of sources" on Roman Italy, and to contextualize and "provide an insight" into the issues of the period covered (p. ix), thus promising to reach the parts that other sourcebooks do not. Lomas achieves the former aim by adhering to conventional practice for sourcebooks aimed at an undergraduate readership, giving the Greek and Latin sources in translation, followed by a brief commentary where deemed necessary. The latter objective is more ambitious, but is one that the author is well equipped to undertake, having written numerous articles, and notably a monograph (*Rome and the Western Greeks*, Routledge, 1993), in this subject area.

The 'contextualizing' lies mostly in the introductions (between 6-12 pages long) preceding each chapter. As well as containing cross-references to given sources, and explaining technical Latin terms, each introduction surveys the main narrative and themes of the chapter in question. Particularly for the early period to A.D. 14

(Chapters 1-4), characterized as it was by immense social and political change in Rome and Italy, these orienting summaries should prove helpful to newcomers to the subject. Lomas's knowledge of 'hellenized' southern Italy is often used here, though by no means exclusively, to shed light on the processes of conquest, assimilation, and acculturation as seen from an Italian perspective. Similarly, her expertise on municipal Italian towns provides the basis for the last two chapters on the social and political life of cities, which show how Italian cities retained their local identities despite taking on Roman political structures. Of the other chapters, that on the Italian economy deserves mention for its comprehensive review of a notoriously contentious area of Roman historical research and for serving notice of more provocative topics, such as the application of Weber's 'consumer city' model. The explanatory sections of the book as a whole are underpinned throughout by Lomas's implicit integration of archaeological findings from major excavations and field surveys carried out in Italy in recent years. These make Lomas's Italian perspective both timely and possible (and, it might be argued, imperative).

In short, this is a worthy sourcebook, and a valuable introductory textbook for any student of Roman Italy from 338 B.C.-A.D. 14. In terms of the documents used, previous sourcebooks have covered similar ground, but from a largely Roman perspective. Lomas's book should therefore be welcomed specifically for its Italian view of Rome's emergence, and for highlighting the diversity of the Italian, and thus the Roman experience.

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