The Role of the Roman Government within the Grain Market during the Beginning of the Roman Empire

This paper seeks to present a model of the grain market of Rome in the early Julio-Claudian dynasty (c. 27 BCE - 37 CE) to help one understand how the mechanisms of the Roman economy were set up in the beginning of the empire to support the provision of a growing Rome. Since the Roman government was the largest purchaser of grain, accounting for around 50% of the total demand for grain in the empire (Temin 2013), I use estimations of the total government demand from the *annona* to calculate estimations of the price and quantity of grain supplied and demanded in all of Rome from known literary and archaeological evidence and previous scholarship (Erdkamp 2005, Rickman 1980, Scheidel 2012). Using these calculations, I deduce estimated quantities for the grain production of regions without enough evidence to create an estimation. By bridging these gaps, a general model of supply and demand will be applied to the known values. Then, this model presented will seek to explore the interactions between the supply and demand of grain within the city of Rome through a case study of Tiberius setting a fixed price and subsidy to suppliers during a grain shortage in 19 AD (Tac., *Ann*. 2.87). This helps one understand the economic agents that kept Rome fed and the new government from collapse. Through this work in establishing a simple supply and demand model, others can test hypotheses on this model regarding the mechanisms and factors that affect the Roman economy, in order to build a comprehensive, macroeconomic model of the entire Roman empire. This work will also hopefully shed light on the complexity of Roman economic understanding and their relatively advanced knowledge of rational economic decision-making.

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