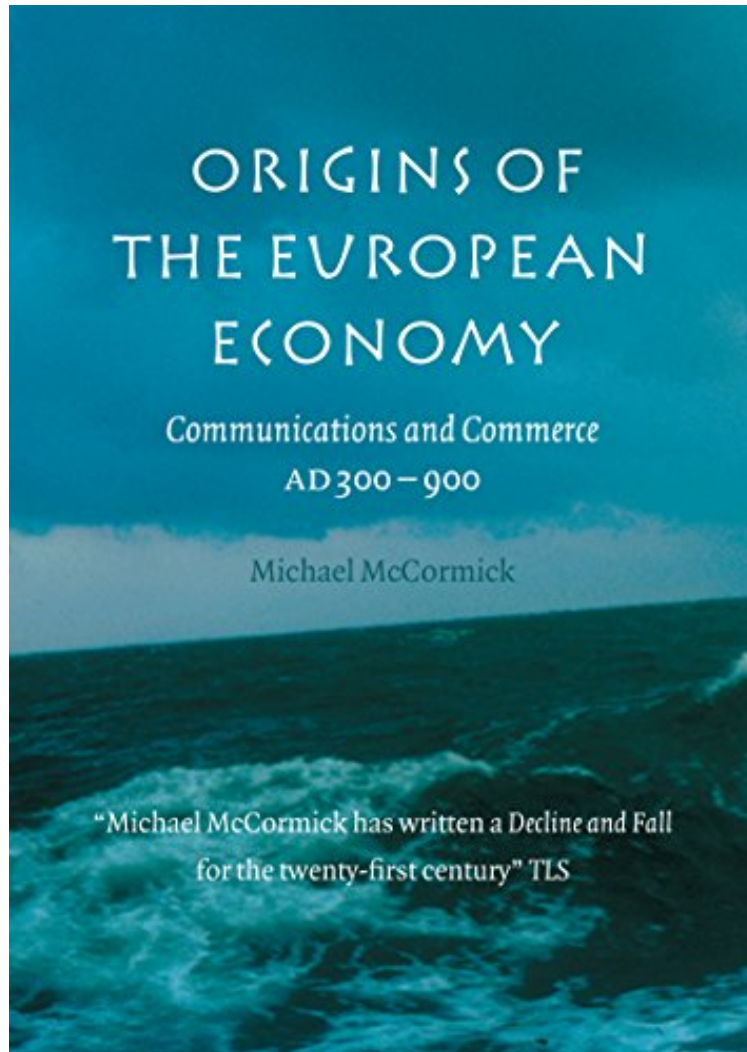


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## Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300ndash;900

*Michael McCormick*

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**Michael McCormick : Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300ndash;900**  
before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300ndash;900:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Re: A brilliant, seminal, page turnerBy Daniel KaranOther reviews have discussed the content and so i won't repeat.I agree that this is a brilliant, siminal work and one that should be read by all interested in both the middle ages as well as those interested in the "decline and fall" of roman antiquity as well as the rise of "modern" Europe. The best work of history i have read in some time (the last one being Peter Heather's Empires and Barbarians)It is impossible to be anything less than in awe of McCormick's command not only of a

tremendous amount of data (from archaeological finds of coins, pottery etc., to diaries of travelers as well as Church records/documents etc) but also his "smarts" in how to use such data in trying to understand what it tells us and what patterns if any it reveals. So, for example, when examining the issue of trade one of the things McCormick looks at are ingredients included in medical book remedies surmising that ingredients included that were not local had to at least be known about and in all probability at least somewhat available or they would not have been included. The inclusion of many maps throughout and tables throughout the text also are extremely helpful in that they make it much easier for the reader to visualize the trade and communication routes and patterns that McCormick is discussing as well as to tally up numerous discreet pieces of documentary evidence that he is examining to demonstrate its cumulative weight. Despite its length (over 800 pages in text plus nearly 200 pages in appendixes), this is a wonderful read (a page turner that I couldn't put down and plowed through in 2 weeks) that gives the reader much to chew on not only for the period that McCormick is looking at e.g., since McCormick argues that slavery does not die out at the end of antiquity and in many ways forms the economic basis for much of the early medieval European economy (providing the major source of the money that Europeans used to purchase goods from the east) I think it forces us to reexamine the whole notion of slavery and its "rise" in the feudal/early modern era i.e., slavery is much more of a continuum from antiquity through the 19th century (and indeed through to today since there are probably more slaves in absolute numbers today than there were during its supposed "heyday") though the places where it was "centered" changed as did the ideology that propped it up. McCormick is also refreshingly modest despite his exhaustive research and command of the material he is looking at and more often than not makes his conclusions provisional based on the state of the evidence at this time (as well as acknowledging that there are languages that he does not speak and therefore was not able to examine source material directly) or even that no "definitive" conclusion can be made one way or the other though the evidence may suggest a likely conclusion or several reasonable possible conclusions. He is also extremely respectful of and kind to other scholars (openly acknowledging their work and ideas) including those with whom he may disagree so e.g., though he is in many ways picking up on, responding to and critiquing the work of Henri Pirenne, McCormick winds up by saying that in the end Pirenne may be right at the same time that he was wrong i.g., that there would indeed have been no Charlemagne without Muhammed but perhaps not for the reasons Pirenne believed. In a world in which people are often less than kind and often downright disrespectful towards those with whom they disagree, this was also a welcome plus in McCormick's writing. It is a crime that the publisher has not issued this amazing work in an affordable paperback edition. The list price is truly outrageous but, that having been said, for those that can afford the hefty purchase price and are interested in medieval European history and beyond it's a must read. 14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Resurrecting Rome's Fall: the view from the early 21st century By Arnold Levis No one who is seriously interested in the transition from the Roman Empire to the Early Medieval West should pass up the opportunity to own this volume--in hardcover!--for only \$52. Michael McCormick analyses the economic transformation of the Mediterranean world ca. A.D. 300 - 900. In doing so, he presents a nearly compendious wealth of data (including a vast and multi-faceted bibliography) on various aspects of the question. "Origins of the European Economy" joins works by Chris Wickham, Charles McClendon, and Peter Heather (among others of like quality) that re-analyze questions concerning the fall of Rome and the rise of Latin Christendom from various angles, including the economic, architectural, and military-political. In this first decade of the 21st century, the old debates between the catastrophist and continuist views on the Roman-Medieval transition are being informed by a fresh influx of data and analysis. The new studies, including "Origins of the European Economy," promise to bring about a quantum step-up in our understanding of this ancient issue. Arnold Levis 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great book....boring-sounding title By Avidreader I've enjoyed this; but, not for casual history reader.

For fifty years debate has raged about early European commerce during the period between antiquity and the middle ages. Was there trade? If so, in what - and with whom? New evidence and new ways of looking at old evidence are now breaking the stalemate. Analysis of communications - the movements of people, ideas and things - is transforming our vision of Europe and the Mediterranean in the age of Charlemagne and Harun al Rashid. This is the first comprehensive analysis of the economic transition during this period for over sixty years. Using new materials and new methodology, it will attract all social and economic historians of antiquity and the middle ages, and anyone concerned with the origins of Europe, the history of the slave trade, medicine and disease, cross-cultural contacts, and the Muslim and Byzantine worlds.