



Francqui Foundation Conference

Long-Term Quantification in Ancient Mediterranean History

Neville S. Morley (Bristol University), *Orders of magnitude, margins of error*

The aim of this paper is to consider theoretical and methodological issues in the use of quantification, and arguments based on statistical analysis, under conditions of inadequate data - conditions which apply to virtually all aspects and periods of classical antiquity. It will explore the different ways in which historians seek to compensate for and rectify the inadequacies of their data, and the consequences of different approaches for the plausibility of their interpretations. Taking as its key example the development of urbanization under the Roman Empire, it will also discuss the rhetorical functions of quantification, and its role in debates about the disciplinary identity of the history of pre-modern societies.