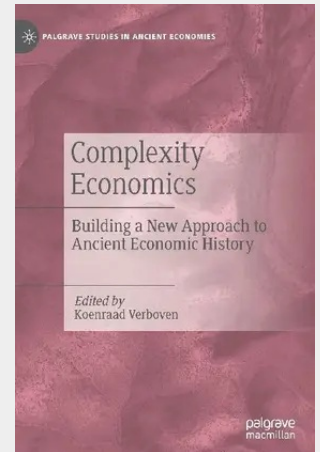


Complexity Economics

Building a New Approach to Ancient Economic History

Economic archaeology and ancient economic history have boomed the past decades. The former thanks to greatly enhanced techniques to identify, collect, and interpret material remains as proxies for economic interactions and performance; the latter by embracing the frameworks of new institutional economics. Both disciplines, however, still have great difficulty talking with each other. There is no reliable method to convert ancient proxy-data into the economic indicators used in economic history. In turn, the shared cultural belief-systems underlying institutions and the symbolic ways in which these are reproduced remain invisible in the material record. This book explores ways to bring both disciplines closer together by building a theoretical and methodological framework to evaluate and integrate archaeological proxy-data in economic history research. Rather than the linear interpretations offered by neoclassical or neomalthusian models, we argue that complexity economics, based on system theory, offers a promising way forward.

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