

# Late Roman Decadence and Beyond: Explaining Roman History

**Stephan Berry (free author, Berlin)**

## **Abstract**

The Roman Empire occupies a pivotal position in modern perceptions of history, and it frequently serves as a point of reference and as a source of examples in discourses on the past and on our own time as well. However, even though Rome is certainly one of the most intensely investigated cultures of the past, we are far from knowing “everything”. The concept of explanation becomes crucial in particular for those phenomena that are neither adequately represented in the written records studied by historiography, nor in the material remains studied by archaeology. One example is the question whether the Romans had a grand strategy and how the geographic boundaries of their empire can be explained: Such issues refer to plans, intentions, concepts of geography and the like, which have to be reconstructed in a wearisome way from the scarce surviving evidence, in order to obtain explanations for the strategic decisions made by the Romans.