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The Reputation of the Roman Merchant



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THE REPUTATION OF THE ROMAN MERCHANT

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Roman merchants, artisans, and service providers faced substantial prejudice. Contemporary authors labeled them greedy, while the man on the street accused merchants of lying and cheating. Legally and socially, merchants were kept at arm's length from respectable society. Yet merchants were common figures in daily life, populating densely packed cities and traveling around the Mediterranean. *The Reputation of the Roman Merchant* focuses on the strategies retailers, craftsmen, and many other workers used to succeed, examining how they developed good reputations despite the stigma associated with their work. In a novel approach, blending social and economic history, *The Reputation of the Roman Merchant* considers how reputation worked as an informal institution, establishing and reinforcing traditional Roman norms while lowering the cost of doing business for individual workers. From histories and novels to inscriptions and art, this volume identifies common reputation strategies, explores how points of pride and personal accomplishments were shared with others, and explains responses to merchant activities on the small-scale. The book concludes that merchants invested heavily in their reputations as a way to set themselves apart from common, negative stereotypes without admitting that there was anything shameful about the work they did.

Jane Sancinito is Assistant Professor of History, University of Massachusetts-Lowell.

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