

Markets and Fairs in Roman Italy: Their Importance from the Second Century BC to the Third Century

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Abstract

Markets and fairs played a fundamental part in the commerce of the Mediterranean region in the Roman period. But where were they held, and what commodities were sold there? Using evidence from archaeology, inscriptions, and literary sources, Dr Frayn builds up a detailed and enlivening picture of stalls and stallholders, profiteering, and price control in ancient Italy, and invites comparison with medieval and modern practices. Besides the macella, or permanent markets in towns, Dr Frayn also looks at the much more numerous nundinae, or local markets, held every eight days, and the many fairs and festivals throughout Italy where retailing took place, often associated with shrines and characterized by religious motifs. The book includes a discussion of the economic and social effects of markets and fairs, including their relation to geography, demography, and modern 'central place theory'. There is also a chapter on market law, which can be traced from the *ius commercii* to the supervision

of weights, measures, and pricing. As trade contacts widened, and merchandise grew more diverse, markets and marketing evolved with increasing complexity into a highly developed system, which in the wake of conquest came to influence larger areas of inter-regional trade.

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