

The Politics of Jewish Commerce



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This 2008 study demonstrates the centrality of economic rationales to debates on Jews' status in Italy, Britain, France and Germany during the course of two centuries. It delineates the common themes that informed these debates - the ideal republic and the 'ancient constitution', the conflict between virtue and commerce, and the notion of useful and productive labor. It thus provides an overview of the political-economic dimensions of Jewish emancipation literature of this period. This overview is viewed against the backdrop of broader controversies within European society over the effects of commerce on inherited political values and institutions. By focusing on economic attitudes toward Jews, the book also illuminates European intellectual approaches toward economic modernity. By elucidating these general debates, it renders more contemporary Jewish economic self-conceptions - and the enormous impetus that Jewish reformist movements placed on the Jews' economic and occupational transformation - fully explicable.

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