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Sommario/riassunto

Merchant organisation was a global phenomenon in the early modern era, and in the growing contacts between peoples and cultures, merchants may be seen as privileged intermediaries. This collection is unique in essaying a truly global coverage of mercantile activities, from the Wangara of the Central Sudan, Mississippi and Huron Indians, to the role of the Jews, the Muslim merchants of Anatolia, to the social structure of the mercantile classes in early modern England. The histories of merchant communities are not their histories alone, but also the histories of assumptions concerning their contexts. From the comparative perspective adopted here, it emerges that in markets where Western European merchants vied for place with competitors from the Near East, South Asia or East Asia, they were very often unsuccessful.