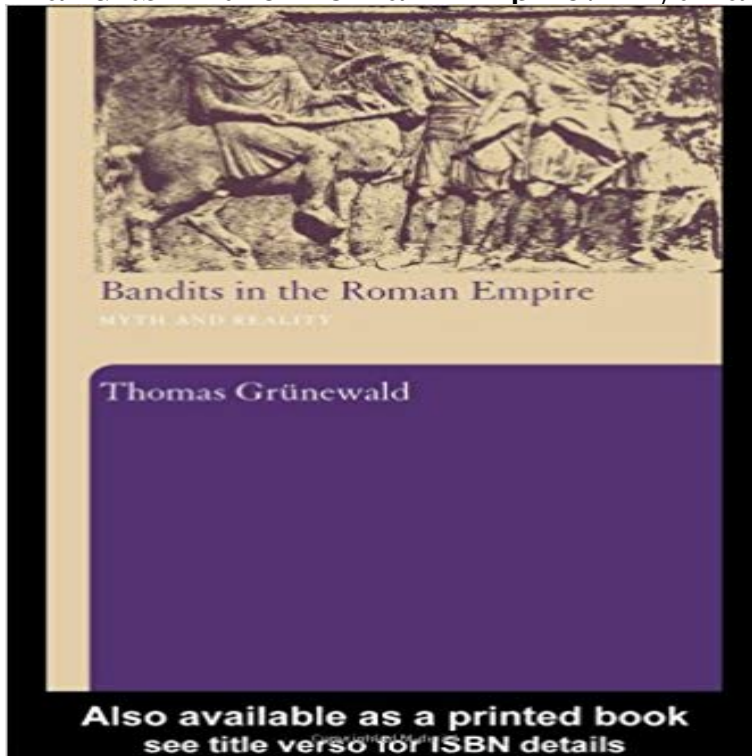


Bandits in the Roman Empire: Myth and Reality



This wide-ranging and informative survey of outsider groups in the Roman Empire will contribute greatly to our understanding of Roman social history. Examining men such as Viriatus, Tacfarinus, Maternus and Bulla Felix, who were called *latrones* after clashing with the imperial authorities, special attention is given to perhaps the best-known bandit of all, Spartacus, and to those who impersonated the emperor Nero after his death. Topics covered include: * Whom did the Romans see as bandits (*latrones*)? * What did they understand as robbery (*lactrocinium*)? * How pressing was the threat that the bandits posed? * How did their contemporaries perceive the danger? We are shown that the term *latrones* was not just used to refer to criminals but was metaphorically and disparagingly applied to failed political rebels, rivals and avengers. The word also came to represent the noble brigands, idealising the underdog as a means of criticising the winning side. The author therefore presents the bandit as a literary construct rather than a social type.

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