



Insults, status, and the Athenian marketplace

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The marketplace in Classical Athens was a site that brought together people of all socioeconomic and legal statuses, where distinctions between citizen, metic, and slave were blurred and status was contested. In this talk, I will argue that one important way these claims to status were negotiated was through insults of various kinds. Drawing on distinctions that have been made between 'benign' and 'malign' insults and between 'playful' and 'consequential' laughter, I will show that marketplace insults—those delivered in and about the agora—could be employed both to assert one's own status and to demote the status of others.

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