

## COMMUNAL DINING IN THE ROMAN WEST

WEN (S.) *Communal Dining in the Roman West. Private Munificence towards Cities and Associations in the First Three Centuries AD.* (Mnemosyne Supplements 457.) Pp. xiv + 321, figs, maps. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022. Cased, €114. ISBN: 978-90-04-51686-1. doi:10.1017/S0009840X23002603

This book, developed from a doctoral dissertation, deals with the practice of privately sponsored communal dining in the Roman West during the first three centuries CE. The research is in line with a new and updated approach to social history threads already explored by several scholars, but never applied comprehensively. W.'s approach of considering groups not strictly part of the basic structures of the city such as *collegia* (a broad category, in which she includes both religious and professional associations and *augustales* [p. 9]) is interesting and appreciable. This choice reflects a different and matured consciousness of the role of these intermediate groups in municipal life among recent studies (e.g. N. Tran, *Les membres des associations romaine* [2006]). In the thorough presentation of the subject W. highlights the lack of attention to *collegia* and to the profiles of benefactors as well as a tendency to level the phenomenon chronologically (pp. 5–7). W.'s goal, therefore, is to move beyond these gaps to present a comprehensive view in this book, which consists of five chapters and five extensive and detailed appendices.

The introduction, methodology and theoretical apparatus are foregrounded in the first chapter. Inscriptions, as W. points out, are the only sources that can attest to the phenomenon. Therefore, W. starts the research by gathering a database of 350 inscriptions, which form the backbone of the book. To analyse such a large number of documents scattered in space and time, W. develops categories and structures the research semantically from the beginning. The analysis of the documentation thus moves through two different perspectives: 'studying privately sponsored communal dinners . . . from the angle of Roman commensality' (p. 11) and grouping this particular form 'with other forms of *euergesism*' (p. 16). For the first perspective 'the investigations will be based on the tripartite distinction between private, public and collegial' (p. 11). In the second case, commensality will be observed concerning other forms of munificence that characterised Roman city life, which have been much studied in the past (e.g. P. Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque* [1976]; A. Zuiderhoek, *The Politics of Munificence* [2009]).

The second chapter explores the profile of benefactors and investigates the reasons that prompted these benefactions. The structure is clear and divided into several categories. Cases of collective munificence by the *ordo decurionum* are limited and occur mainly on the occasion of major events such as the emperor's birthday. More conspicuous is the communal dining offered by individuals to the entire community, which W. analyses by distinguishing between men and women. The same distinction is made in the last category concerning benefactors of collegial dining. W.'s focus on women's actions is methodologically interesting and relevant. Women are the protagonists of about 20% of general benefactions (p. 34), a considerable number, and they generally come from the elite. Both male and female benefactions are caused by different factors such as access to a magistracy or priesthood ('Office-Related Benefactions', p. 49), and they can happen in response to an honour received from the community or one of its parts ('Responsive Benefactions', p. 55). But this euergetic action can also occur as a testamentary act (p. 64) or without an apparent manifest motive ('Voluntary

Benefactions', p. 59). W., lastly, analyses from an emic perspective the reasons and goals of the benefactors, which can be summarized by four points: attachment to the local community, religious belief, benevolence towards the emperor and what he represents, and celebration of the benefactor's birthday to perpetuate their memory (pp. 68–79).

Reversing the perspective, the third chapter moves from the benefactor to the beneficiaries. They can be classified into seven categories: adult male citizens, *decuriones*, *augustales*, *collegia*, women, children and non-citizen residents. Favourite targets of benefactors throughout the period studied are adult male citizens, decurions and, to a lesser extent, *augustales*. The inclusion of other groups appears to be optional, 'however, the fact that they were invited to attend public dinners demonstrates that the concept of community was fluid' (p. 108). A section is devoted to the different types of meals offered to groups because 'examining the benefactors' arrangements in this matter is still a good way to study how the concept of community was applied in practice' (p. 108). Then a more detailed overview of the internal situation within the *collegia* is offered. Here it appears that the banquets were more inclusive because they involved both simple *corporati* and magistrates; however, this can by no means be taken as an indicator of the absence of a strong internal hierarchy. The study of these different categories allows W. to reflect on the concept of community that emerges from the epigraphic documentation examined.

Chapter 4 outlines the geographical distribution of the phenomenon, which is linked to the availability of inscriptions, epigraphic custom and urbanisation of the territory. The result is an analysis supported by numerous tables and maps, although not all of them are essential (figs 8, 9, 10, 11). The distribution of records is concentrated, as is to be expected, mainly in Italy, Proconsular Africa and Baetica. For *collegia* and the *augustales*, however, the inscriptions are primarily located in mainland Italy. The lack of benefactions to *collegia* in Africa, a land characterised by a vitality and municipal structure similar to Italy, is surprising, but may be a result of the presence of *curiae*, which catalyse the attention of beneficiaries (p. 162).

The chronological distribution of the benefactions is outlined in Chapter 5. Once again, it is not surprising that the curve of attestations related to the phenomenon reached its peak in the second century CE, the period of maximum flowering of epigraphic culture in the Roman West. The analysis of regional differences is interesting, as it shows that the phenomenon in North Africa gained its full maturity in the third century when in Italy and the rest of the West it was already in decline (p. 175).

Numerous elements emerge from the book, but I would like to emphasise three of them because of their importance to the social history of the Roman empire: city elites, among other things, financed communal dining to reaffirm the vertical relationship with the community (p. 197); *collegia* tend to reproduce in small scale the dynamics proper to the city community, as J. Waltzing (*Étude historique sur les corporations*, vol. 1 [1895], p. 426) had already noted, though with a more inclusive approach (p. 201); eventually, from the second century CE onwards, the presence of minor groups, such as *augustales* and *collegia*, and even smaller and more fragile groups, such as women, children and non-citizen residents, among the beneficiaries of public dining is indicative of a hierarchical yet more inclusive and fluid community (p. 198).

In conclusion, the analysis is well structured, despite the lack of effective use of a bibliography written in languages other than English. Still, W. has succeeded in her goal: to provide an overall picture of communal dining in the Roman West. In this framework the qualitative analysis of the sources, though it emerges in some cases, has been sacrificed in favour of an all-encompassing view. This book, thus, does not exhaust

the subject; rather, it provides a solid foundation for further qualitative insights into the epigraphic documentation.

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## ASPECTS OF ROMAN COIN HOARDS

MAIRAT (J.), WILSON (A.), HOWGEGO (C.) (edd.) *Coin Hoards and Hoarding in the Roman World*. Pp. xviii + 350, figs, ill., maps. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Cased, £90, US\$115. ISBN: 978-0-19-886638-1.

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This substantial edited volume is published as part of the thematic *Oxford Studies on the Roman Economy* series. The book represents an essential and valuable milestone in studies of hoarding trends in the Roman period. It includes several contributions published by leading experts in the field of Roman numismatics. The main strength of the work is the variety of contributions spanning different and well-connected topics.

In the introduction, which opens Part 1, ‘Approaches’, Howgego and Wilson explain the reason for publishing *Coin Hoards*. The book originated from a major conference of the same name held on 15 and 16 September 2016 in Oxford. This event represented a remarkable milestone in the wider research project ‘Coin Hoarding in the Roman Empire’, jointly conducted by the Ashmolean Museum and the Oxford Roman Economy Project, which involves various international research institutions. Starting from this premise, the volume seeks to introduce the project, including its research frameworks and various methodologies, by presenting a wide spread of coin hoards discovered in the western, eastern and central Roman Empire. Furthermore, it aims to identify up-to-date and reproducible statistical techniques to classify better and assess Roman coin hoards (pp. 5–7) and their distribution within the empire (p. 12, fig. 1.1).

Following the introduction, ‘Simplifying Complexity’, a theoretical contribution written by K. Lockyear, details a convenient statistical method for processing numismatic data (correspondence analysis). It can be applied and utilised without possessing a high level of understanding of statistical practice and theory. In particular, it allows for reducing the mere dimensionality of processed data, as demonstrated by the case study of coin hoards discovered in northern Gaul that is discussed by Lockyear.

E. Ghey’s contribution, ‘Hoarding in Roman Britain: an Archaeological and Contextual Approach’, opens Part 2, ‘Regional Studies’. It also discusses the theoretical perspectives that inspired the research project, encompassing the contents and (more importantly) contexts of each coin hoard. Furthermore, such an analysis of finds clearly demonstrates the major spread of coin hoards between 260 and 296 CE (p. 62). The Portable Antiquities Scheme has played a crucial role in providing all the relevant data.

The second regional analysis, ‘Hoarding in Burgundy, France: Micro-Study of a Region’ by A. Hostein and P. Nouvel, explains how other similar institutional bodies for the safeguarding of antiquities, such as the Institut national de recherches archéologiques préventives, could potentially contribute to the statistical assessment of