M. has interpreted often-ignored material in an original manner, and he discusses the documentary evidence carefully and sensitively. That a book which deals with a specific formula has its limitations is, of course, inevitable, but these should serve as an incentive to scholars not to take other conventional religious expressions for granted either.

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PUBLIC FEASTS

J. F. DONAHUE: *The Roman Community at Table during the Principate*. Pp. xiv + 333, ills. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004. Cased, US$70, £44. ISBN: 0-472-11389-5.

This careful reconstruction of the social context of banqueting depends on a collection of 316 inscriptions from the first through fourth centuries A.D. that record communal feasts in Italy and the Roman West (meticulously edited on pp. 163–239). The author analyzes in particular the social status of benefactors and beneficiaries to reconstruct how these feasts replicate and thereby reinforce social hierarchies. Presentation and approach resemble Garrett Fagan's fine *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* (1999), which similarly aims to dispel the notion that baths served as great social levelers. The book also complements K. Dunbabin's recent study of visual representations of public dining in *The Roman Banquet* (2003; too recent for D. to consult).

An introduction clearly defines the public feast as 'any gathering to which the *populus* at large or representative groups from within the community were invited in order to share a meal' (p. 3) and briefly discusses the apparent distinctions prevailing among the terms encountered in extant inscriptions (*epulum*, *cena*, etc.). The following three chapters use primarily literary evidence to provide a context for analyzing the epigraphical material in Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 1 ('The Roman Feast: An Overview') is neatly organized around Statius' description of a public banquet given by Domitian (*Silvae* 1.6). Statius depicts an occasion open to all classes, including women and children, and implies that all dine on equal fare. In his vivid reconstruction, D. attempts to show that, despite Statius' encomiastic phrasings, this banquet—like those analyzed in the epigraphic chapters—in fact segregated attendees and parceled out food according to social status (his conjecture becomes fact by p. 70). The analysis, however, assumes that Statius' description of the senators' fare as *lautiores* conveys a true comparative sense (contra the evidence of Paul. Fest. 48M, cited by D. in a different context), while ignoring the far more relevant reference to hierarchical arrangement at l. 35 ('orbem qua melior severiorque est'). Furthermore, any parallels cited for such social stratification must confront the fact that Domitian's feast celebrates the Saturnalia, when one *expects* subverted expectations. The chapter closes with interesting speculation (for both Rome and her municipalities) on the mechanics and manpower necessary for such lavish spectacles. D. observes that the nonexistence of professional caterers means that these events must have been orchestrated principally through the private resources of the *familia*.

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Chapters 2 and 3 sketch out the development of public feasting from archaic Greece through the principate. D. stresses in particular how most of these entertainments have as much to do with reinforcing social hierarchies and enhancing personal prestige as with developing a sense of community. This dual emphasis continues with the emperor and his family, where D. follows Veyne in locating part of the princeps' power in his 'authority to bestow gifts on the *populus*' (p. 65). The social distinctions maintained at imperial-sponsored feasts are evident throughout society, from the banquets of wealthy patrons to the celebrations of lowly *collegia*.

The final two chapters constitute the most original of the book: a discussion of, respectively, the benefactors and beneficiaries of the communal banquet. The abundant epigraphical material aligns well with the observations concerning rank and social status that had preceded. One particular inscription outlines clearly the gains accrued from convivial philanthropy (*CIL* IX.3160): a local magistrate, in exchange for being publicly recognized on bronze tablets by the decuriate and *populus*, provides a communal feast; this act is in turn acknowledged by a second publicly funded monument, which the donor then recognizes by permanently endowing an annual distribution to the community. Unsurprisingly, considering the financial outlay involved, the greater an individual's political significance the more likely he is to sponsor a public feast, with decurions dominating the sample (109 examples), followed by aediles (no figures given), Augustales (twenty-four), *equites* (twenty-four), and members of various priestly colleges (twenty-six). The last group provides particular interest since half of these named benefactors are women, a statistic that inspires an interesting section on female benefactors in general (pp. 107–15). Here we learn that women sponsored 51 per cent of public feasts in Baetica, and that a woman from Veii hosted an exclusive banquet for 'municipal women of every rank'; balancing these enticing data is the fact that of the forty-six known benefactions, 54 per cent designate women as relatives or heirs to men. Faced by such disparate and sparse material, D. cautiously concludes that some women 'enjoyed a rare opportunity to compete with men for public recognition in a highly visible public setting, no doubt serving as rôle models for countless municipal women in the process' (p. 113).

The final chapter catalogs the beneficiaries of banquets to demonstrate that the quality of food offered had direct correlation to the social rank of the recipient. When an inscription registers a distinction among classes, the decuriones normally receive the finest distribution. One particularly interesting inscription from Italy lists donors in their customary descending order of rank (decurions, Augustales, members of a *collegium*), despite the fact that the gift to the last group was most valuable (*CIL* IX.3842); even special circumstances, in other words, do not alter the expected public presentation of rank. The remainder of the chapter concentrates on the eighty-five attestations of one-time or annual banquets held exclusively among members of private organizations.

The author closes by contrasting public feasting at Rome with cultures in which the communal feast promotes an ideal of equality. At the Roman table, a spectator readily discerns differences between élite and non-élite. Equality does exist, but only within classes. The situation recalls Menenius Agrippa's fable of the 'body politic', whose efficient operation depends on each body part knowing its place, namely, to serve the senatorial stomach. One has to admire the brazen honesty of openly displaying society's inequality at a communal festival. It is certainly a welcome alternative to recent sightings in the 2004 election year, when Americans were treated to images of

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Yale-graduated millionaires strolling through the rural Midwest with flannel shirts and down-home attitudes.

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CAH XI

A. Bowman, P. Garnsey, D. Rathbone (edd.): *The Cambridge Ancient History. Second edition. Vol. XI. The High Empire, A.D. 70–192*. Pp. xxi + 1222, map. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Cased, £95. ISBN: 0-521-26335-2.

It goes without saying that a new edition of a volume of the Cambridge Ancient History series is an eagerly awaited event, and that the usual line-up of distinguished scholars and editors ensures that expectations of authoritative coverage are fully met. This volume is a worthy contribution to the series, and will prove invaluable to student and scholar alike. With a project of this sort, there are always going to be areas which the individual reviewer feels receive short change (Latin literature is only discussed for its relationship to the 'Greek Second Sophistic', p. 919; Egypt no longer merits its own provincial chapter, although it does appear prominently in discussions of demography and literacy; Christianity too lacks its own chapter), and there are always going to be individual details of interpretation which do not meet with wholehearted approval (does it really make sense to view Vespasian's restoration of melted down inscriptions on the Capitol as a sign of his antiquarian interests (p. 21), rather than as a significant political gesture?). It is worth stepping back a little, however, in order to consider the justification for continuing with the present format of publication.

The Cambridge Ancient History series occupies a distinctive place within publications on ancient history, catering not only for a general educated audience but also for students and scholars. As such, each volume has to tread a judicious path, presenting an authoritative account of a particular period that is comprehensible to the lay reader as well as taking into account recent trends in scholarship and new discoveries. On the whole, this volume successfully achieves this aim, but there are a number of additional ways in which it could have catered for the student and lay reader.

Traditionally, plates are published separately for each volume, but these are not integrated into the text-based volume, and instead offer an independent, complementary view of a period. In *CAH* XI, this does make for a slightly old-fashioned feel, and does not help the authors of chapters on art and architecture, or on provinces for which our knowledge is overwhelmingly archaeological. The days of writing ancient history purely from texts and documents are now long past. This tension emerges clearly from the necessity of resorting to a reference on p. 110 to Pl. XIV (presumably of Speidel 1970) for the scene of the capture of Decebalus on Trajan's column. Even accepting, however, that a volume of *CAH* is not intended to be a picture-book, this particular volume does seem short of helpful illustrations, containing only two figures, six tables, and one graph (all relating only to two chapters), in addition to the standard maps of provinces. (Contrast the eighty-four text-figures in the second edition of *CAH* IV.) In Chapter 19, 'The Danube Provinces',

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