Communal dining in the Roman West : private munificence towards cities and associations in the first three centuries AD

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Chapter 5

Geographical distribution of privately sponsored communal dining in the Roman West

In the present chapter and the next, the practice of privately sponsored communal dining will be examined on the macro level, that is by looking at the geographical distribution of the epigraphic evidence of public and collegial dinners in the western half of the Roman empire and at changes over time. The main question which will occupy us is: How was the practice of communal dining distributed and what were the reasons for this distribution? Locating the evidence of communal dining on the map of the imperial territories helps to trace interactions between cities in mainland Italy and urban communities in Spain and North Africa as well as any differences between the regions.

5.1 The geographical distribution of privately sponsored public dining

5.1.1 Regional differences: distribution in Italy and the western provinces

The geographical distribution of Latin inscriptions

Although Latin inscriptions constitute a phenomenon of major cultural importance in the western half of the Empire, their geographical distribution is uneven. Scholars have explored the issue of setting up inscriptions from various perspectives.[1] As noted by

[1] E.g. Woolf (1996) treats the diffusion of Latin inscriptions as the embodiment of the expansion of Roman society; Meyer (1990) takes epitaphs as evidence of the spread of Roman citizenship; Mouritsen (2005) proposes that there was no 'universal' epigraphic practice but instead multiple habits throughout the Empire; Mann (1985) demonstrates that there might have been a lack of 'epigraphic consciousness' among the local inhabitants on the British

Patterson, the number of inscriptions from a particular site which has been published depends on a whole range of factors, among them 'the subsequent history of the site, the circumstances of its rediscovery, and the extent to which epigraphic enthusiasts in the area have preserved and/or recorded the texts'.[2] Despite the operation of these and other factors which will inevitably affect the discovery and accessibility of epigraphic material,[3] it is generally agreed that the geographical distribution of published inscriptions does give a good impression of regional variations in epigraphic densities.[4]

It is generally accepted, for instance, that the density of inscriptions in Italy is higher than in the western provinces. It is also clear that dramatic differences in the number of inscriptions per square kilometre existed even in Italy. More than thirty-five years ago Duncan-Jones demonstrated that epigraphic density is highest in *regio* I (Latium and Campania), second-highest in *regio* VI (Umbria), third-highest in *regio* IV (Samnium) and so forth. The lowest density is to be found in *regio* III (Lucania and the region of the Brutii). The overall pattern mirrors regional differences in urban densities.[5]

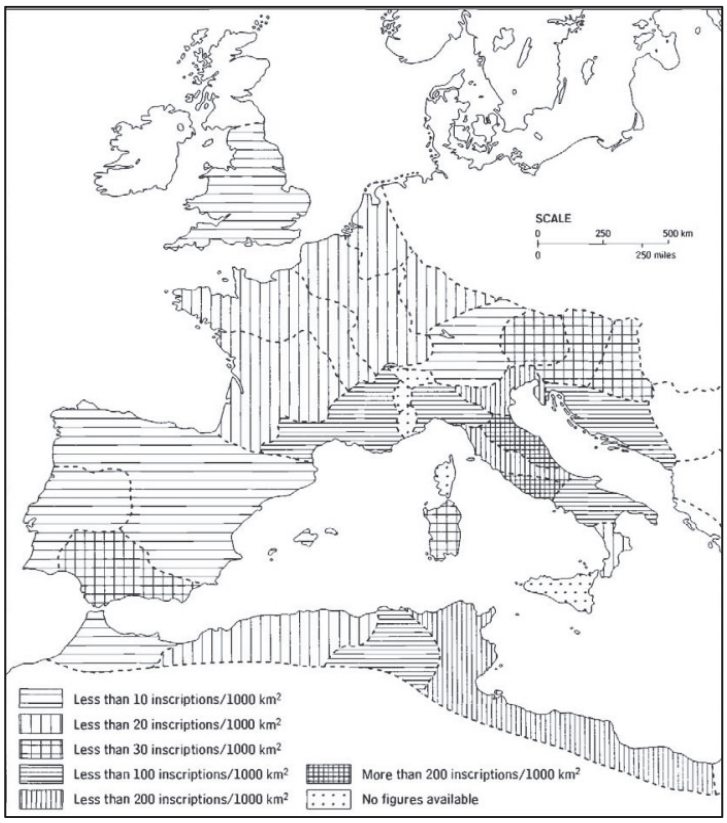


Figure 5.1 Epigraphic density in the western provinces

In his book on Roman Gaul, Greg Woolf maps variations in epigraphic density in the western provinces (Figure 5.1).[6] It can be seen that the average density in Africa Proconsularis matches that of various Italian regions and that Numidia, Dalmatia and

frontier; for a summary and review see Bodel (2001), 6-10; Hemelrijk (2015) discusses the epigraphic habit in relation to its indication for a certain phenomenon, 31-35.

[2] Patterson (2006), 119.

[3] For analyses of factors which affected the formation of the epigraphic records of Italian towns, see Patterson (2006), 119-125; Woolf (1996), 36; Duncan-Jones (1982), appendix 13; Hemelrijk (2015), 33.

[4] For the distribution and density of Latin inscriptions, see Harris (1991), 265-268; Woolf (1990), 200-204; Woolf (1996), 36-37; Cooley and Burnett ; Laurence, Esmonde Cleary and Sears (2011), 310-311.

[5] Duncan-Jones (1982), 339. Cf. Harris (1991), 265-267. For variations in urban densities, see Jongman (1988), 68-70; De Ligt (2012), 212-213 and 231.

[6] Woolf (1998), 82.

Narbonensis have also yielded a relatively large number of inscriptions per square kilometre. Lower densities are found in Pannonia, Noricum, Baetica and Sardinia, Mauretania Caesariensis and the three Gauls. The epigraphic densities in Lusitania, Tarraconensis, Britannia, Raetia and Mauretania Tingitana have the lowest number of inscriptions per square kilometre.

Geographical distribution of epigraphic evidence for privately sponsored public dining

To judge from published inscriptions found in the western half of the Roman Empire, the practice of privately sponsored public dining was unevenly spread (Figure 5.2).

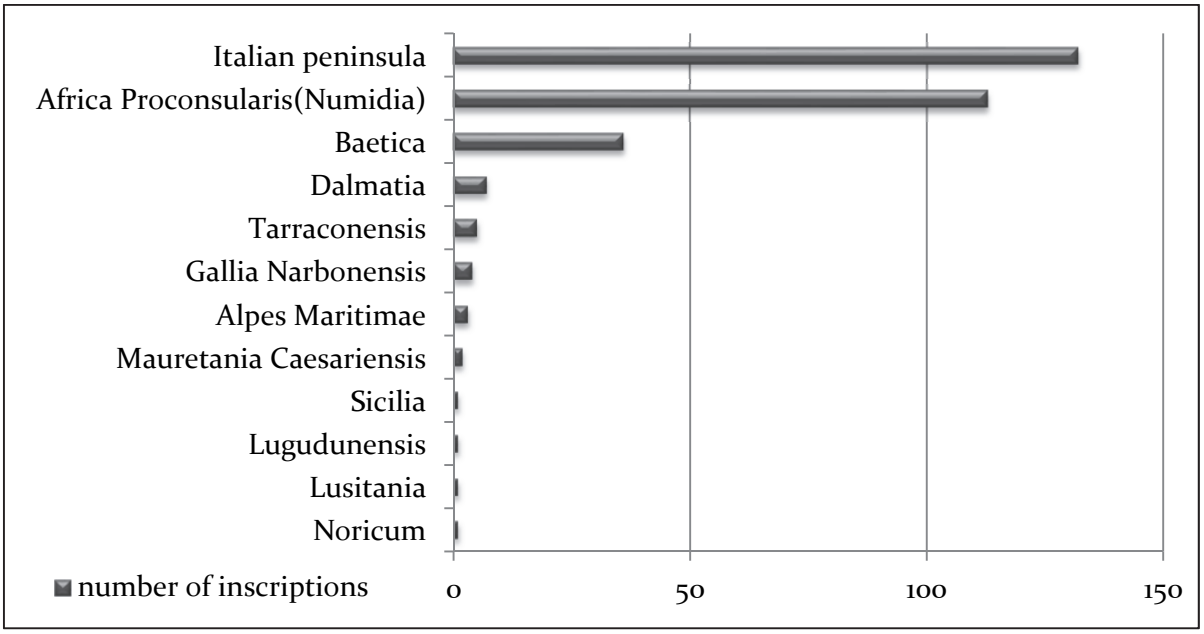


Figure 5.2 Distribution of inscriptions referring to privately sponsored public dining in the western empire

On Map 5.1 below, it can be clearly seen that this practice is recorded most frequently on the Italian Peninsula, Africa Proconsularis and Baetica. Closer inspection reveals that the distribution in Italy itself was uneven.[7] It clustered in the central part of Italy, especially in *Regio* I (Latium and Campania), *Regio* IV (Samnium) and *Regio* VI (Umbria), broadly according with the distribution pattern of all published inscriptions.[8] Far fewer epigraphic texts referring to public dining have been found in Cisalpine Gaul and southern Italy.[9] In Africa Proconsularis and Numidia, fifty-nine

[7] Here my focus is on mainland Italy. The only one inscription found in Tyndaris (Sicily) is not taken into account in the statistical analysis. Cf. Donahue (2017), 214.
[8] Latium and Campania (*Regio* I, 22 cities), Samnium (*Regio* IV, 11 cities), Picenum (*Regio* V, 5 cities), Umbria (*Regio* VI, 20 cities), Etruria (Regio VII, 10 cities).
[9] Liguria (*Regio* IX, 1 city), Venetia and Histria (*Regio* X, 2 cities), Transpadana (*Regio* XI, 1 city), Apulia (*Regio* II, 3 cities and 1 *pagus*), Bruttium and Lucania (*Regio* III, 6 cities).

cities have produced evidence of privately sponsored dinners targeting civic communities (or local town councils).[10] Most of this evidence comes from the north-eastern coast facing the Italian Peninsula. Of the three Spanish provinces, Baetica has yielded a much larger number of inscriptions referring to public dinners than either Tarraconensis or Lusitania.[11] The practice was also found in Gallic provinces, but only sporadically.[12] A mere handful of inscriptions have been preserved in Dalmatia, in the Alpes Maritimae and in Noricum.[13] In the rest of the Western Empire, comprising Gallia Belgica, Britannia, the two Germaniae and the Pannonian provinces, not a single inscription referring to a privately sponsored public dinner has yet been discovered. The distribution map shows that the custom of public dining was distributed primarily in those regions which bordered the Mediterranean Sea. Very little evidence has been found in the frontier provinces.

Map 5.1 The communities of Italy and the western provinces which produced inscriptions referring to privately sponsored public dining

In those places in which no evidence is found, 'no evidence' by no means excludes the possibility that privately sponsored public dinners were ever held there. Nevertheless,

[10] Africa Proconsularis (Numidia) (59 cities), Mauretania Caesariensis (2 cities).
[11] Baetica (29 cities), Lusitania (1 city), Tarraconensis (4 cities).
[12] Gallia Narbonensis (3 cities), Lugdunensis (1 city).
[13] Dalmatia (6 cities), Alpes Maritimae (2 cities), Noricum (1 city).

there are some strong reasons to think that the geographical spread of the epigraphic evidence does reflect the reality of cultural practices. In Roman Gaul, for instance, twenty cities have produced more than 100 inscriptions. These cities line the valleys of the Rhone, the Saône and the Meuse. The number of cities in which more than fifty inscriptions have been found exceeds forty, and these cities are scattered across eastern Gaul.[14] Yet not a single inscription referring to privately sponsored public meals has been found to the north of Lugdunum. This is unlikely to be sheer coincidence.

A comparison with the distribution of Latin inscriptions

In the Italian Peninsula, it appears that the distribution of inscriptions referring to public dining largely conforms to the epigraphic density in different regions of Italy but the situation does not seem to have applied in the western provinces. A comparison between epigraphic density and the number of inscriptions concerning privately sponsored public dining shows the following patterns:

Province	**Density of inscriptions (number/1,000 square km)** [15]	**Number of inscriptions concerning privately sponsored public dining**
Africa Proconsularis (Numidia)	127.3 (94.3)	113
Dalmatia	62.7	7
Narbonensis	55.6	4
Pannonia	28.7	-
Noricum	24.8	1
Baetica	21.7	36
Sardinia	20.2	-
Mauretania Caesariensis	18.9	2
Belgica and Germany west of the Rhine	18.3	-

[14] Woolf (1998), 84-85.
[15] Harris (1991), 268, Table 4.

Aquitania	11.2	-
Lugdunensis	10.3	1
Lusitania	9.6	1
Tarraconensis	7.8	5
Britannia	5.7	-
Raetia	5.2	-
Mauretania Tingitana	3.3	-

Figure 5.3 Comparison between epigraphic density and the number of inscriptions concerning privately sponsored public dining in selected western provinces

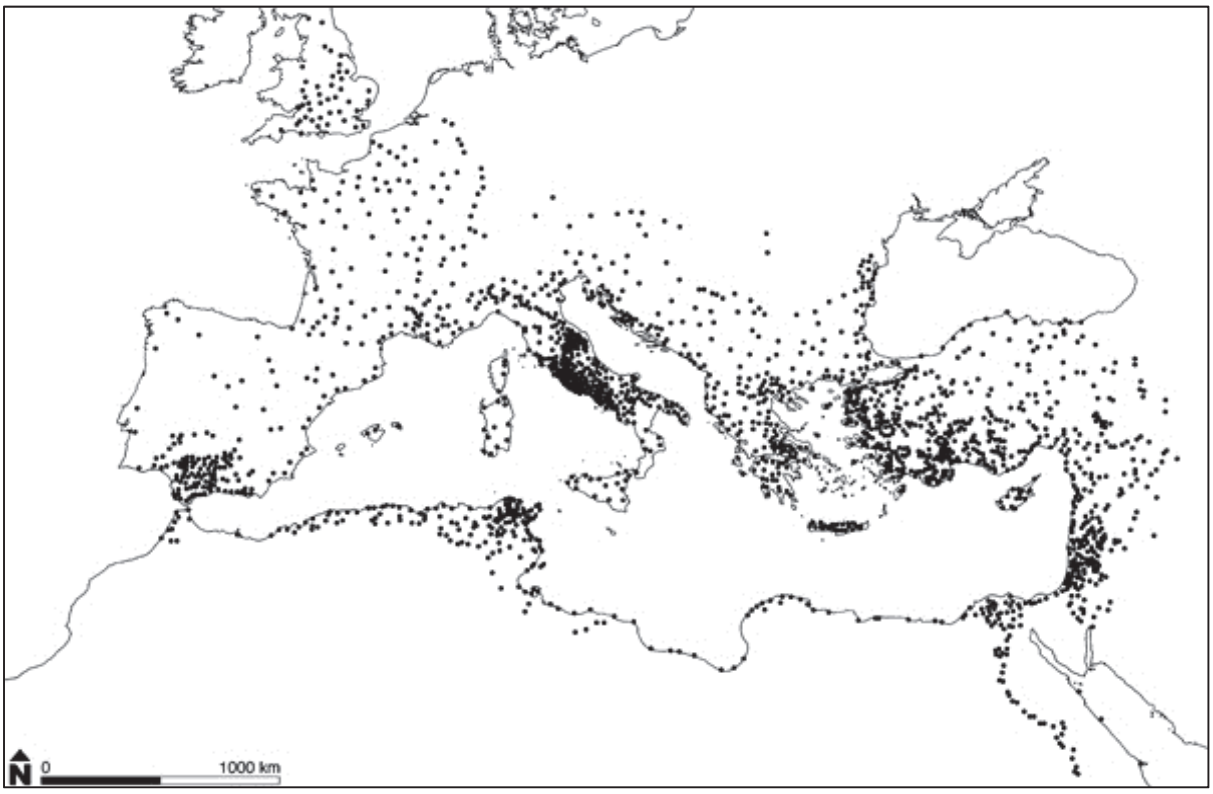
Obviously, in the western provinces variations in the number of inscriptions referring to public dining do not always correspond to variations in epigraphic density. For instance, the comparative result from Dalmatia is remarkable. As Harris has observed, as the provincial capital of Dalmatia Salona has made a great contribution to the total amount of epigraphy of that province.[16] However, none of the seven inscriptions concerning public dining which have been found in Dalmatia comes from Salona. In the three Spanish provinces, Baetica has produced fewer inscriptions per square kilometre than either Dalmatia or Narbonensis. Yet it has the third largest number of inscriptions referring to public dining after Italy and Africa Proconsularis. On the Iberian Peninsula, the epigraphic density in Baetica is about three times higher than that in Tarraconensis. Nevertheless the number of Baetican inscriptions mentioning privately sponsored public meals is almost seven times higher than in Tarraconensis.

Urbanization

Since epigraphy was primarily an urban phenomenon, variations in urban density are likely to have played a role in the distribution of inscriptions. As can be observed from Maps 5.1 and 5.2, the areas in which the epigraphic evidence of public dining was most concentrated are also the most densely urbanized regions. Writing of Italy, Jongman points out that the three regions with the highest epigraphic densities (Reg. I, IV and

[16] Harris (1991), 267.

VI) also were the regions with the highest number of towns per square kilometre.[17] The geographical distribution of inscriptions containing information about privately funded public dinners mirrors these patterns, with privately sponsored public dinners being recorded in twenty-two cities of *Regio* I, eleven cities of *Regio* IV and twenty cities of *Regio* VI.



Map 5.2 Distribution of urban centres in the Roman Empire[18]

However, the distribution of inscriptions referring to public dining in the western provinces is not a perfect match for the pattern of urbanization. On the one hand, a comparison between the evidence of public dining and patterns of urbanization shows that these sources have been predominantly located in the most densely urbanized areas of the Roman West.[19] Nevertheless, it remains striking that public dining does not feature in any inscription from the Germanic provinces, Britain or northern Gaul, and only in a few inscriptions from Tarraconensis and Lusitania. This is all the more surprising as in all of these provinces urban centres were founded and civic

[17] Jongman (1988), 68-70; cf. Bekker-Nielsen (1989), 25. Patterson (2006), 123, points out that the variations in the density of inscriptions between different areas of Italy correspond to the different densities of urban settlement.
[18] Russell (2013), 65, Fig. 3.8.
[19] For the relations between urbanization and economic development, see Morley (2011), 143-160; Wilson (2011), 161-195.

monuments constructed, some of them at least with money provided by private munificence.

Woolf summarizes the characteristics of the geographical distribution of Latin inscriptions. He indicates that in the western provinces, highly urbanized and highly militarized areas had the largest clusters of epigraphy and highlights a couple of common features of urban and military societies.[20] Nevertheless, it can be seen that the geographical distribution of inscriptions concerning public dining is at odds with this general pattern. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the geographical spread of privately sponsored public dining simply does not match the geographical patterning of urbanization. Therefore, in addition to regional variations in epigraphic density and in the density of towns, other factors should be taken into account.

Public dining and 'Romanization'

In his path-breaking monograph on the origins of provincial civilization in Gaul, Greg Woolf surveys the results of more than a century of research on the geographical spread of Roman-style institutions, names, language, citizenship, architecture, metalwork and ceramics. As he notes on the basis of these studies, 'the West is seen as more Romanized than the East; the Mediterranean world more Romanized than temperate Europe, southern Gaul more Romanized than northern Gaul, Italy more Romanized than the provinces, and cities more Romanized than the countryside.'[21] He continues by applauding the basic mapping exercises as immensely valuable tools but denies that they can be used to delineate the contours of 'Romanization', especially when the aim is to judge various provincial cultures against the standard of a supposedly pure Roman culture.

While there is every reason to subscribe to Woolf's doubts about the explanatory value of the term 'Romanization', it is indisputable that certain aspects of the (dynamic) civic culture which are encountered in the towns of mainland Italy did not spread across all provinces of the Roman empire with the same intensity.[22] The geographical distribution of the epigraphic evidence relating to privately sponsored public dinners strongly suggests that this practice did reach some provinces in the western half of the Roman empire but not others. In line with Woolf's approach, it would be wrong to jump to the simplistic conclusion that the north-western and the Danubian provinces were 'less Romanized' than the Mediterranean provinces of the Empire. It could be more convincingly claimed that although cultural interactions took place in every part

[20] Woolf (1996), 37; Bodel (2001), 8-10.
[21] Woolf (1998), 6.
[22] The term 'Romanization' has attracted controversy, for the discussions around it, see Bénabou (1976); Barrett (1997); Millett (1990); Woolf (1992); Woolf (1998); MacMullen (2000); Webster (2001); Mattingly and Alcock ; Mattingly (2002); Mattingly (2004); Keay and Terrenato (2001); Hingley (2005) van Dommelen and Terrenato (2007); Roth, Keller and Flaig (2007); Revell (2009) and Naerebout (2013).

of the Western Empire, the results of these contacts were widely divergent. The limited geographical spread of the practice of public dining is one illustration of these geographical discrepancies.

It is not always easy to identify those factors which might explain why certain elements of Roman culture were adopted in some areas but not in others. Literary sources refer to certain types of communal feasting in parts of Gaul before the Roman conquest and these feasts are also thought to have played an important role in various societies of Iron Age Britain.[23] Despite these remarks, there is no epigraphic evidence which refers to wealthy benefactors sponsoring public dinners in any city of northern Gaul or southern Britain. In the case of Britain, it has been suggested that after the Roman conquest power remained concentrated in the hands of a small oligarchic elite who did not feel any need to compete among themselves by hosting displays of private *euergetism*.[24] Although this theory is no more than a hypothesis, it does provide a convincing explanation of the total absence of evidence of privately sponsored public dinners.

Considering the situation in the frontier provinces, it might be suggested that the dominant role of the army and the persistence of various existing cultural habits produced forms of cultural interaction resulting in a very partial adoption of euergetic practices. It has been observed, for instance, that in Germania Inferior and Superior many gifts to communities were offered by military personnel and that those members of civic communities who stepped forward as benefactors preferred to spend their money on sacred buildings and statues. In these areas benefactors might not have felt any need to fund public meals for civic communities.[25]

We must also not overlook the possible impact of colonization.[26] In the late Republican period and the first decades of the Principate, large numbers of colonies were founded outside Italy.[27] Since the vast majority of the colonists who settled in these colonies originated from Italy, it does not seem implausible to speculate that colonization contributed to the spread of Roman and Italian cultural habits to parts of North Africa, Spain and southern Gaul.

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[23] Ath. *Deipno*. 4.152B-C: Posidonius depicts a Gallic banquet; 4.152D-E: Posidonius tells the story of Lovernius who offered wine and food during a political campaign. For communal feasting in Iron Age Gaul and southern Britain, see e.g. Poux (2004a); Poux (2004b); Fichtl (2013); Van der Veen (2007).

[24] Millett (1990), 82-83.

[25] *Ibid*.

[26] For debates about colonization, see e.g. Salmon (1969); Sommella (1988); Oakley (1993); Van Dommelen (1998); Torelli (1999); Fentress (2000); Hurst and Owen (2005); Purcell (2005); Terrenato (2005); Bradley and Wilson (2006); Broadhead (2007); Sewell (2010); Stek and Pelgrom (2014).

[27] For lists of provincial colonies and *municipia* in the time of Augustus see Brunt (1971), 589-607; Keppie (1983), esp. 49–58.

Figures 5.4-5.7 show the locations of the Caesarian and Augustan colonies in North Africa and Spain as well as those North African and Spanish towns in which epigraphic evidence of privately funded communal dinners has been detected.

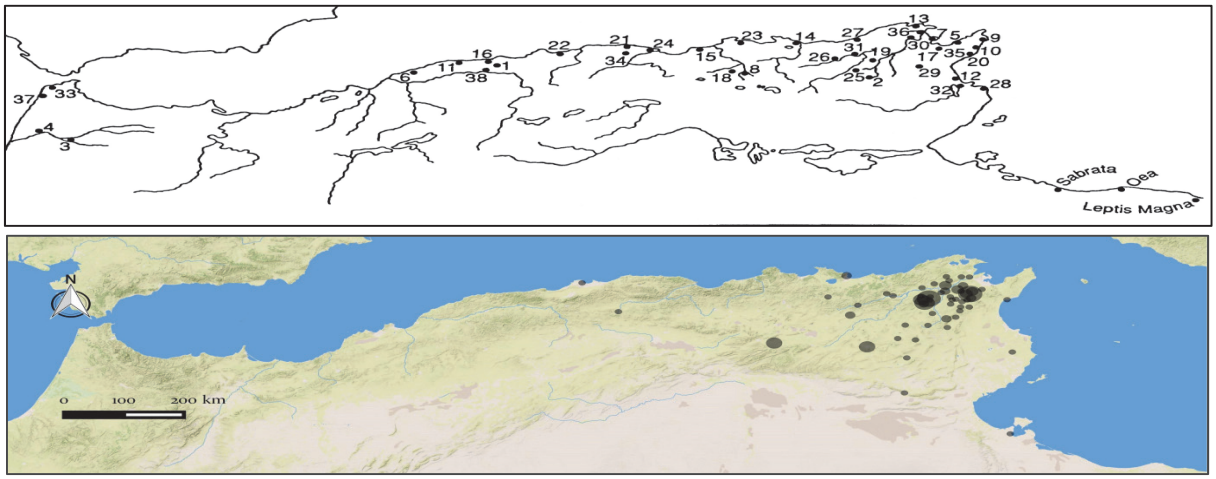

Figure 5.4 Distribution of Caesarian and Augustan colonization in Africa[28] (above)
Figure 5.5 Distribution of inscriptions concerning privately sponsored public dining in Africa (below)

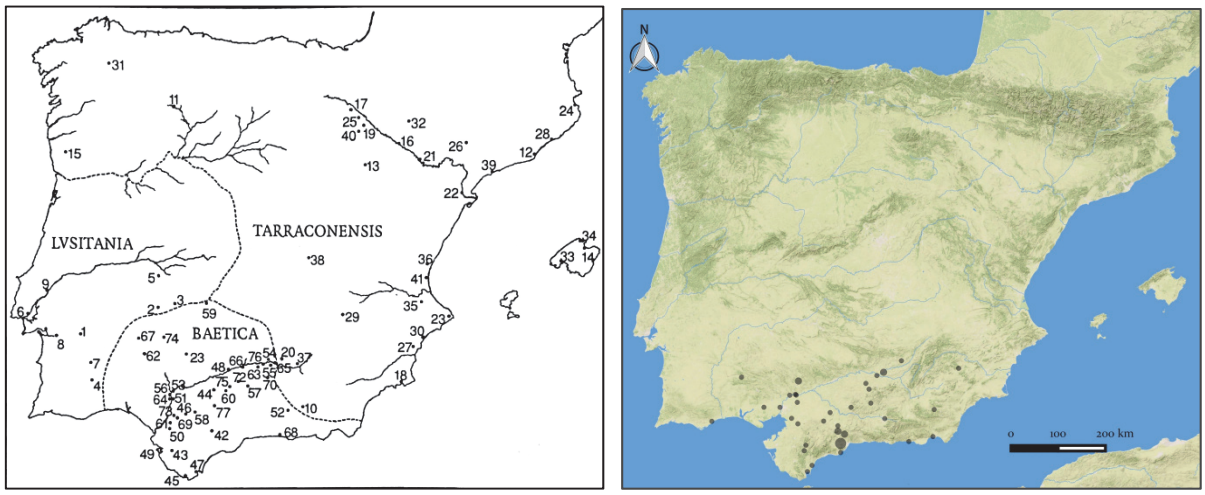

Figure 5.6 Distribution of Caesarian and Augustan colonization in Spain[29] (left)
Figure 5.7 Distribution of inscriptions referring to privately sponsored public dining in Spain (right)

At first sight the maps suggest that in Roman North Africa and Spain the practice of privately sponsored public dining was found mainly in those areas which had the largest concentrations of Caesarian and Augustan *coloniae* and *municipia*. Nevertheless, only six North African and three Spanish towns in which evidence of public dining has been discovered can be shown to have received colonists during the second half of the

[28] MacMullen (2000), 32.
[29] *Ibid*. 52.

first century BC.[30] It is also noteworthy that, out of four Gallic and six Dalmatian towns in which epigraphic evidence of public dinners has been discovered, six were Caesarian or Augustan colonies (four in Gaul and two in Dalmatia). These data clearly show that the practice of privately funded dining was by no means confined to Caesarian or Augustan colonies, but also that these colonies are likely to have played at least some part in the dissemination of this practice.

Food-related benefactions and other types of civic munificence

The provision of public dinners is only one example of 'private munificence for public benefit'.[31] This simple observation makes it possible to deepen our analysis by asking some further questions. How did civic munificence develop in different regions of the Roman West? To what extent did the overall atmosphere of civic munificence affect the propensity to pay for public dinners? Why is the evidence of privately sponsored public dinners found only in particular regions, whereas civic munificence is attested over far larger areas?

It stands to reason that the area which was in proximity to the imperial centre was most likely to have been exposed to Roman culture. The upper class of the Italian communities probably took emperors as their role models and bestowed benefactions on their own cities.[32] Richard Duncan-Jones has conducted a detailed study on private munificence in Italy. On the basis of the collection of a variety of public donations, he suggests that civic munificence became 'a regular feature of municipal life under the early Empire in Italy'.[33] Interestingly, his survey reveals strong regional variations within Italy itself. As noted above, there are notable concentrations of evidence of public dining in those areas in which the number of inscriptions per square kilometre is highest, but this observation also applies to evidence of other types of civic munificence. For instance, *Regio I* and *Regio VI* not only yielded concentrations of inscriptions referring to privately funded public dinners, but have also produced similar concentrations of epigraphic evidence of other benefactions.[34] Therefore it would seem feasible to conclude that privately sponsored public dinners were associated with an environment which favoured and encouraged munificence. Intriguingly donors from different regions seem to have preferred different types of benefactions. As Duncan-Jones observes, the evidence of *sportulae*, games and feasts is

[30] See towns with an asterisk in Appendix IV.
[31] Lomas and Cornell (2003), 1. Civic munificence here means that personal wealth was expended to provide benefactions for the public.
[32] Keppie (1983), 114-122; for local benefactors imitating the policies of Augustus, see Nicols (2014), 108-115.
[33] Duncan-Jones (1965), 189-306; for donations in the Italian communities, see also Duncan-Jones (1982), 120-237; Andreau (1977), 157-209; Mrozek (1968), 156-171; Mrozek (1972a), 294-300; Mrozek (1987), Mrozek (1972b), 30-54.
[34] Duncan-Jones (1965), Table, p.233 and Duncan-Jones (1982), Table 17, 359.

concentrated in central and southern Italy, whereas foundations tended to have been clustered in northern Italy.[35] It is also interesting to discover that, while various north Italian inscriptions refer to distributions of *panis et vinum* taking place on the occasion of the dedication of statues, not a single inscription from this region records distributions of *crustulum et mulsum*.[36]

In North Africa and Spain, civic munificence was also well developed. A good deal of evidence of private donations can be found in Africa Proconsularis, Baetica and Tarraconensis. The range of privately funded benefactions in these regions is similar to that which can be observed Italy.[37] However, although Africa Proconsularis and Baetica have produced large amounts of epigraphic evidence of privately sponsored public dinners, that from Tarraconensis is limited to four towns. All of these were situated in the border region between Tarraconensis and Baetica.[38] Hence, there can be little doubt that the practice of public dining was more deeply rooted in Baetica than in any other part of the Iberian Peninsula, but the reason or reasons for this concentration remain elusive. In addition to this, a closer examination of the evidence from Baetica and Tarraconensis reveals some intriguing differences with mainland Italy. As Melchor Gil has observed, many distributions of *epula* and *sportulae* are often referred to in the epigraphic records of the Iberian Peninsula, but not a single inscription from Baetica, Tarraconensis or Lusitania refers to distributions of *crustulum et mulsum* or of *panis et vinum*. Furthermore, the only inscription which refers to meat distributions (*viscerationes*) is the *Lex Irnitana*.[39]

In the north-western provinces, the evidence for public dining is scanty. We can be certain that this was not because potential benefactors were in short supply. As Drinkwater's investigation of personal wealth in the three Gauls shows, there were undoubtedly some men who possessed considerable wealth and their expenditure on civic munificence can even be compared to the sums spent in Africa.[40] Likewise, the sumptuous villas which have been found in Britain and Gaul demonstrate that the level of personal wealth was not low.[41] One reason for the lack of relevant evidence might be that a dynamic munificent environment was lacking.

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[35] Duncan-Jones (1982), 359-360.
[36] Goffin (2002), 154.
[37] For munificence in Africa, see Duncan-Jones (1963), 159-177; Duncan-Jones (1962), 47-115; Duncan-Jones (1982), 63-119; for munificence in Spain, Melchor Gil (1993); Melchor Gil (1994). A case study of a Spanish benefactor has been conducted by Duncan-Jones (1974b), 79-85; Curchin (1983), 227-244; Mackie (1990), 179-192.
[38] Melchor Gil (1992), 377.
[39] *Ibid*. 377-378.
[40] Drinkwater (1979), 237-242.
[41] For villas in Britain and Gaul, see Percival (1976); Rivet (1969); Haselgrove (1995); Smith (1982); Habermehl (2013).

Duncan-Jones points out that the donations found in Narbonensis 'more than equal those from the three Gauls'.[42] At first sight, this clue seems to suggest that food-related benefactions were less likely to be found in those places where civic munificence was less developed. However, this hypothesis founders on the fact that there is a considerable amount of epigraphic evidence of civic munificence in the northern provinces.

The difference is that the epigraphic records from the north-western provinces point to the conclusion that most private money in the form of benefactions was spent on public buildings. In Roman Britain, private benefactors preferred to spend their money on sacred buildings and statues. A similar preference emerges from the epigraphic records of the two *Germaniae*, although benefactors in Germania Superior also donated public squares and baths. In the three Gauls wealthy individuals donated a wide variety of public and religious buildings, including sanctuaries, squares, baths and spectacle buildings.[43]

Focusing on benefactresses, Hemelrijk points out that the capacity of women to contribute to civic life was particularly influenced by 'the spread of Roman citizenship and Roman civil law'. Her analysis of the geographical dispersion of inscriptions referring to female benefactors shows that the relevant evidence is concentrated in Roman Italy, North Africa and Spain.[44] Therefore it comes as no great surprise that the inscriptions referring to public dinners sponsored by women are also concentrated in these areas.

It seems fair to conclude that the epigraphic evidence of benefactors or benefactresses tends to come from areas which have also produced evidence of other types of private benefactions, such as donations of public buildings, temples or statues. What is more difficult to explain is why many regions in which private individuals are known to have erected various public or scared buildings at their own expense have *not* yielded any evidence of privately sponsored public meals. Why, for instance, were wealthy citizens in Narbonensis and southern Lugdunensis more inclined to spend money on public dinners than their counterparts in other parts of Gaul? And why does Baetica yield far more inscriptions referring to privately sponsored dinners than Tarraconensis?

Local political cultures

As has been discussed, private munificence was not completely absent in the north-western provinces. Frézouls' work on *euergetism* and urban construction in the three

[42] Duncan-Jones (1981), 219.
[43] Blagg (1990), 13-31; Millett (1990), 82-83; Frézouls (1984), 27-54; Drinkwater (1979), 238-239.
[44] Hemelrijk (2015), 20-25. For civic participation of women in the western cities, see a series of articles in Hemelrijk and Woolf (2013); Hemelrijk (2015); Nicols (1989), 117-142; Donahue (2004b), 873-891; Gaspar (2012).

Gauls and Germanies and Blagg's study on architectural munificence in Britain show that architectural monuments were financed by private benefactors in these regions.[45] In Britain and the two *Germaniae*, benefactors showed a clear preference to donate religious buildings, and only a few members of local elites chose to spend their money on public squares or baths. In the three Gauls architectural benefactions were more varied, with entertainment buildings, baths, fora and other non-religious buildings accounting for more than half of all privately funded public building projects. Blagg also suggests that in Britannia 'corporate munificence, rather than individual benefaction, was the rule in the larger urban building projects'.[46]

In any attempt to account for these patterns, it is important to remember that private munificence could be driven by a number of different desires and considerations, not all of which were equally relevant in all communities. Therefore one possible reason for the existence of region-specific forms of civic munificence might have been that the various provinces and regions of the western half of the Roman Empire had distinct political cultures.

While the civic communities of mainland Italy were oligarchical in the sense that at any particular moment wealth and power were concentrated in the hands of a limited number of families, there is also a substantial amount of evidence to suggest that these families were locked in competition for power and social prestige.[47] In addition to this, it was possible for upwardly mobile outsiders to gain access to these town elites. For instance, although the town councils of Italy did not admit wealthy freedmen, these restrictions did not apply to their descendants.

Another defining feature of the civic elites of mainland Italy was that they were operating in the context of local citizen communities which expected them to bear the interests of their fellow citizens in mind. In practical terms, this meant that members of the elite were expected to demonstrate their love of their home-towns by providing all kinds of benefactions for their local communities. In their turn, the latter were expected to reward deserving members of the elite by bestowing various honours on them. It stands to reason that, in these societies, it made perfect sense for wealthy citizens to affirm their elevated positions in the civic society by bestowing food gifts on their fellow citizens.

During the final decades of the Republic and the first decades of the Principate, colonization helped to spread this political culture to the coastal districts of North Africa, to various parts of the Iberian Peninsula and to Gallia Narbonensis. Simultaneously, Roman conquest prompted indigenous elites to embrace the Roman concept of *humanitas*, which was expressed not only in new forms of domestic architecture and far-reaching changes in patterns of consumption but also in the

[45] Frézouls (1984); Blagg (1990).
[46] Blagg (1990), 28.
[47] Farney (2007); Bradley (2015); Hölkeskamp (2010).

transformation of townscapes. Nevertheless, it must never be lost sight of the fact that the western provinces comprised a large number of different societies with very different constellations of political, social and economic power. Disparities were if anything strengthened because the concept of *humanitas* was inherently vague and flexible.[48] Against this background, it is understandable that elite adaption to the requirements of *humanitas* would have been a highly selective process which threw up a complicated patchwork of region-specific patterns of behaviour.

In his book on Roman Britain Millett observes that, 'power was in the control of a small oligarchy'. Therefore competition was not necessary since 'power was already theirs and remained with their families'.[49] As noted above, the elites of various towns in Roman Britain can be shown to have erected sanctuaries at their own expense. On the basis of Millett's observations, it could be suggested that in this particular province private expenditure on architectural benefactions was principally driven by competition with neighbouring settlements rather than by competition for power and status among members of the same town elite.[50]

The epigraphic evidence about local magistrates might provide another window onto the levels of local competition. In a forthcoming study of the distribution of inscriptions recording magistrates in the north-western provinces, Pellegrino shows (Figure 5.8) that, in Britain and many parts of the three Gauls and Germania Inferior, few magistrates appear in the epigraphic record.[51] Up to a point this dearth of epigraphic references can be accounted for as a reflection of the low epigraphic densities which have been observed in these regions. However, it does not exclude the possibility that the low number of inscriptions which have been found in these areas could also be a mirror of a lack of interest among local elites to advertise their achievements and benefactions by inscribing them in stone. On this view, both the low number of inscriptions referring to local magistrates and the dearth of inscriptions can generally be interpreted as an indication of a low level of competition among local elites.

[48] Woolf (1998), 55-60; Hingley (2005), 62-64; Bauman (1996), 13-14.
[49] Millett (1990), 82.
[50] *Ibid*.
[51] Pellegrino (forthcoming). The schematic maps in figures 5.8 and 5.9 show the main patterns of the distribution of magistrates and different offices in the north-western provinces.

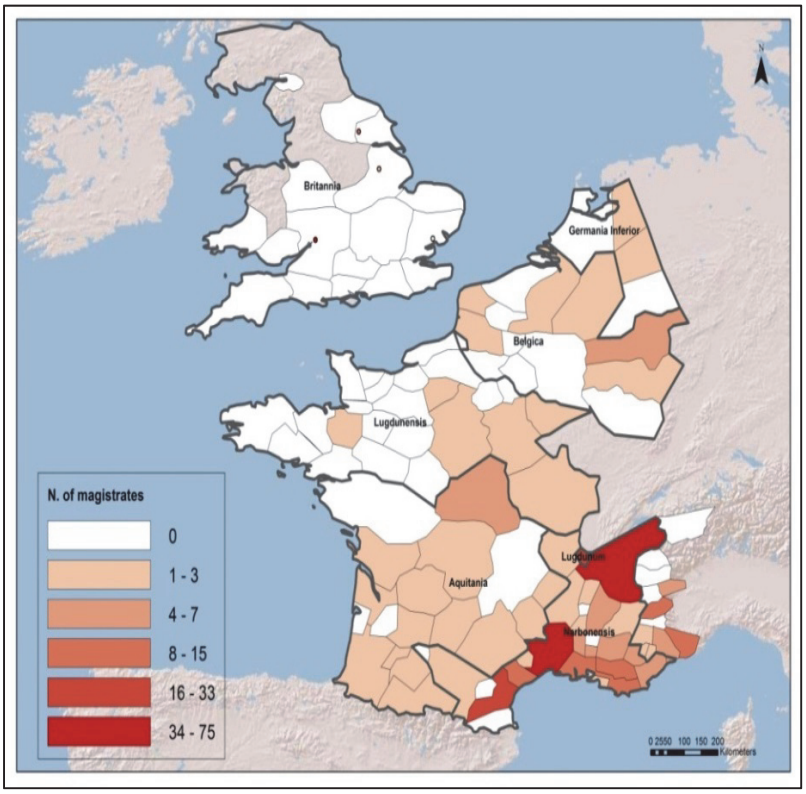

Figure 5.8 Distribution of inscriptions recording magistrates in the north-western provinces (courtesy of Frida Pellegrino)

If we zoom in on the epigraphic evidence of various civic magistracies and of members of local town councils, some interesting discrepancies between regions can be observed. As Figure 5.9 shows, in Britannia, Belgica and Germania Inferior, the usual civic offices are not fully attested. In Aquitania and Narbonensis, all magistracies can be found. In the south-eastern part of Lugdunensis, references to decurions or town councils predominate, but the pattern is clearly more diverse than in the northern and north-western parts of this province.[52] In those areas in which the full range of offices had not been installed, it might have been easier to obtain the highest office, while in those areas in which a relatively complete *cursus honorum* prevailed, the level of intra-elite competition could have been higher. Interestingly, these regional divergences seem to correspond to other differences in the adoption of 'Roman' patterns of behaviour. Aquitania, for instance, was quicker to adopt Roman institutions, suggesting that in this region local elites could have competed for power and status by vying to obtain Roman magistracies. Similarly, the higher number of private donations referred to in the epigraphic record from Narbonensis (cf. above) might be interpreted as reflecting competition for power and status in a society in which the concentration of wealth and power had progressed to a lesser degree than in northern Lugdunensis and in Gallia Belgica.

[52] Pellegrino (forthcoming).

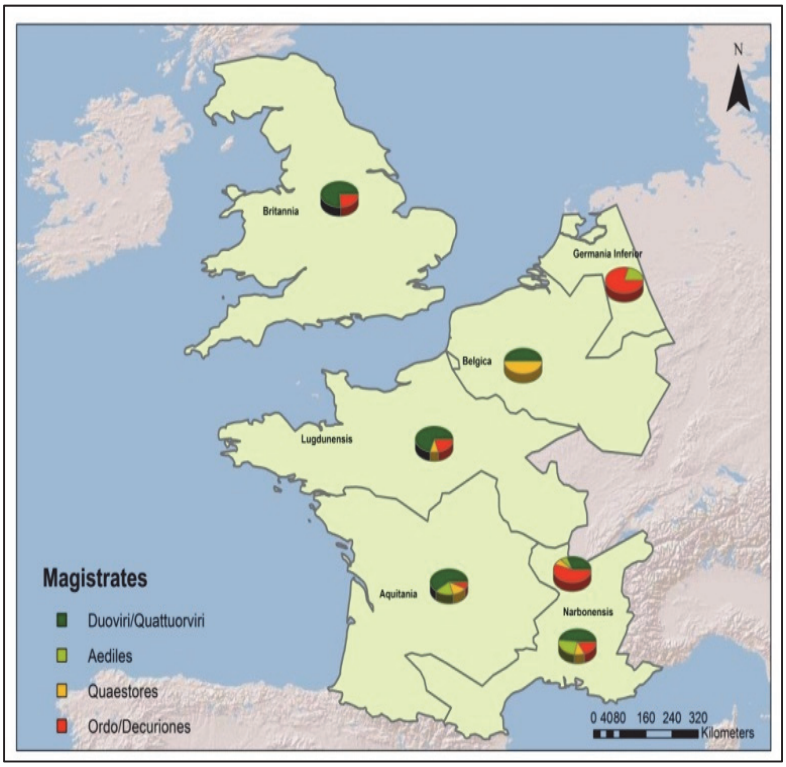

Figure 5.9 Pie charts showing the proportion of different offices attested in the north-western provinces and in Lugdunum (courtesy of Frida Pellegrino)

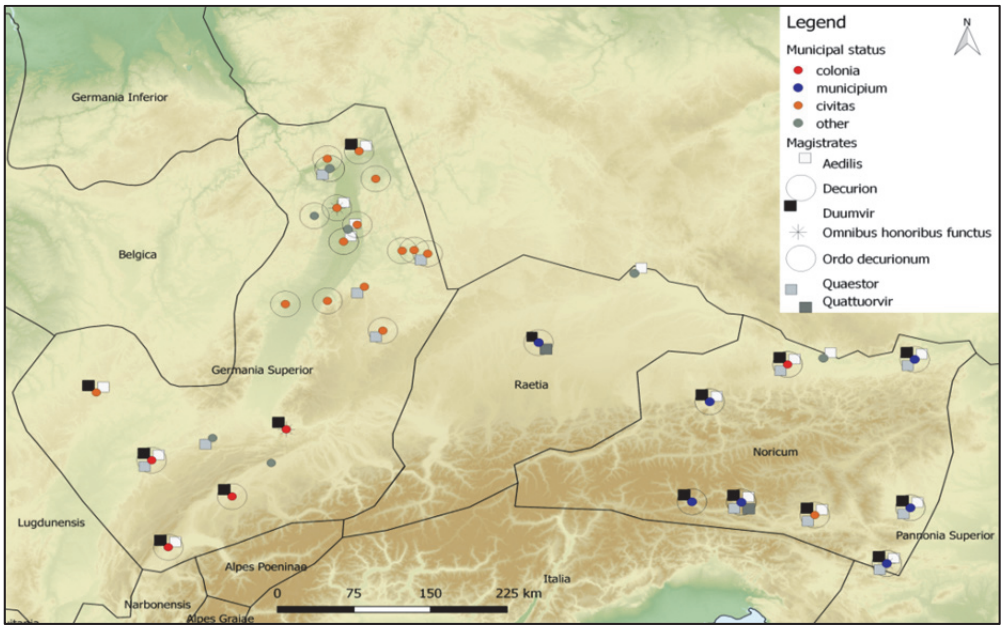

Figure 5.10 Distribution of magistrates in the northern Alpine regions

Similar observations can be made about the northern Alpine regions (Figure 5.10).[53] In these areas evidence of magistrates comes from a limited number of agglomerations. A

[53] Pazmany (forthcoming). The map of the northern alpine regions is courtesy of Karolien Pazmany.

slightly better representation of the main offices can be found only in several towns in Noricum and Germania Superior. Since Noricum has a relatively high epigraphic density, the low number of epigraphically attested magistrates could suggest that local elites were disinclined to promote themselves by putting up inscriptions, again suggesting a low level of peer competition.

These ideas can also be applied to the Iberian Peninsula. As Figure 5.11 shows, epigraphic attestations of magistrates are widely distributed throughout the Spanish provinces and the representation of the *cursus honorum* is more complete than in the north-western provinces. Nevertheless, it also appears that most of the evidence is concentrated in Baetica, whereas in central, northern and western Spain there are many towns in which inscriptions mentioning magistrates have not been found. Generally speaking, higher numbers of attestations of magistrates in Spain could be interpreted as a reflection of a deeper penetration of Roman models of political, civic and cultural behaviour, with the Roman-type being pursued as the ideal vehicle by which to express power and identity. The internal differences between the Spanish provinces could suggest different levels of local competition.

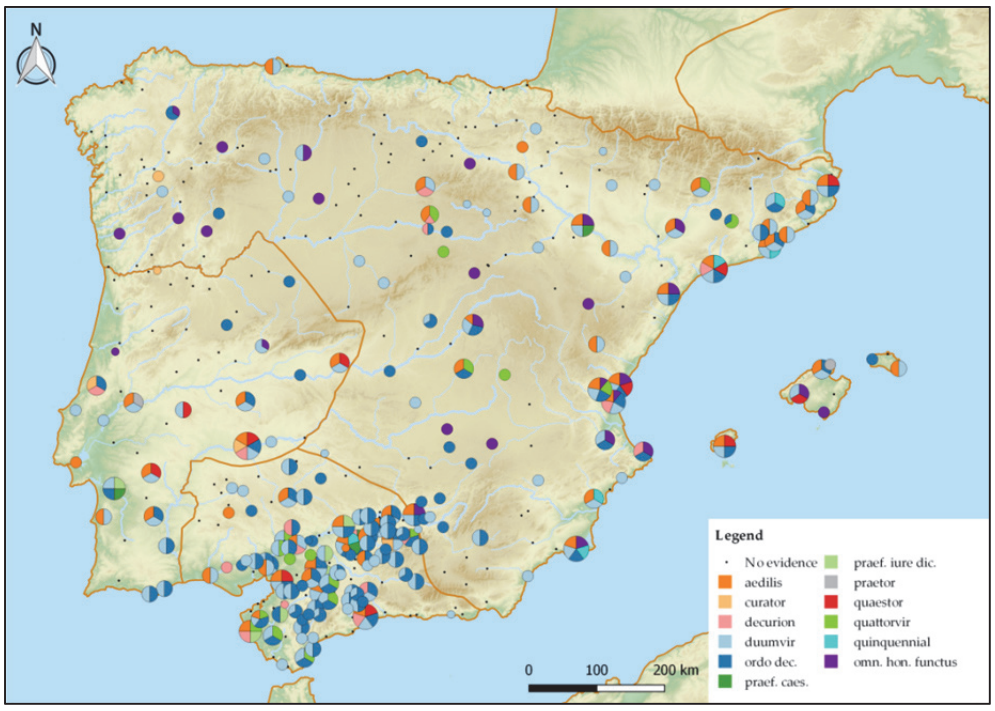

Figure 5.11 Distribution of magistrates in Spain[54]

Obviously this model cannot explain everything. For instance, as Géza Alföldy's has demonstrated in a study on the local elites of Tarraco, Barcino and Saguntum, in each of these cities complex power relations existed between local aristocrats and upwardly

[54] The map of the Iberian Peninsula is courtesy of Pieter Houten.

mobile, wealthy newcomers.[55] These are just the circumstances in which evidence of a fairly intense level of competition for magistracies and status could be expected to be found and, if my general line of reasoning is correct, this competition should have been reflected by a fairly high number of epigraphic references to private benefactions. Up to a point Melchor Gil's inventory of (non-religious) buildings erected by private benefactors confirms the correctness of this hypothesis, with published inscriptions from Tarraco, Barcino and Saguntum referring to five privately funded construction projects.[56] However, as has been demonstrated in an earlier section of this chapter, only a few inscriptions from Hispania Tarraconensis refer to privately sponsored public dinners, and none of these inscriptions comes from Tarraco, Barcino or Saguntum. Of course, it would be unwise to rule out the possibility that future excavations will unearth new inscriptions containing information about privately sponsored *epula* in the coastal cities of Tarraconensis, but it remains unlikely that such discoveries will be found in such numbers that they would completely obliterate the contrast between Tarraconensis and Baetica. One possible explanation of this contrast is that Baetica had a higher concentration of Caesarian and Augustan colonies (cf. above). Other factors being equal, this might have favoured the establishment and persistence of 'Italian' practices. During the first centuries of the Principate, emulation of such practices by the non-colonial communities might have generated the emergence of a distinctively 'Baetican' political culture in which members of local elites were expected to organize public meals for their fellow citizens. However, it must be admitted that this is no more than a hypothesis which cannot easily be substantiated with any hard evidence.[57]

5.1.2 City differences: distribution in western towns

The foregoing discussion has focused on regional distribution patterns of inscriptions referring to privately funded food gifts and on some possible explanations of the deviations between these patterns. While the regional patterns are an undeniable reality, it should be borne in mind that food-related benefactions varied not only between regions but also from town to town. In what follows, the geographical distribution patterns revealed by the epigraphic record will be refined by zooming in on the relationship between city size and published evidence for privately sponsored public meals.

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[55] Alföldy (1984), 193-238.

[56] Melchor Gil (1993), 463-464. Two inscriptions referring to the distribution of *sportula* and oil are found in Barcino, see Melchor Gil (1992), 398.

[57] Cf. Melchor Gil (1992), 377: "Creemos que el gran desarrallo de los *epula* en las ciudades de la Bética debe responder a un mayor arraigo de este tipo de celebraciones, por causas que desconoscmos."

Privately sponsored public dinners: large, medium-sized and small towns

Epigraphic evidence of privately sponsored public dinners has been found in 191 cities in Italy and the western provinces. In 138 of these cities only one inscription has been discovered; twenty-nine places have produced two inscriptions and twelve places three inscriptions. Only thirteen towns have yielded more than three epigraphic references to privately funded public meals (Figure 5.12).[58]

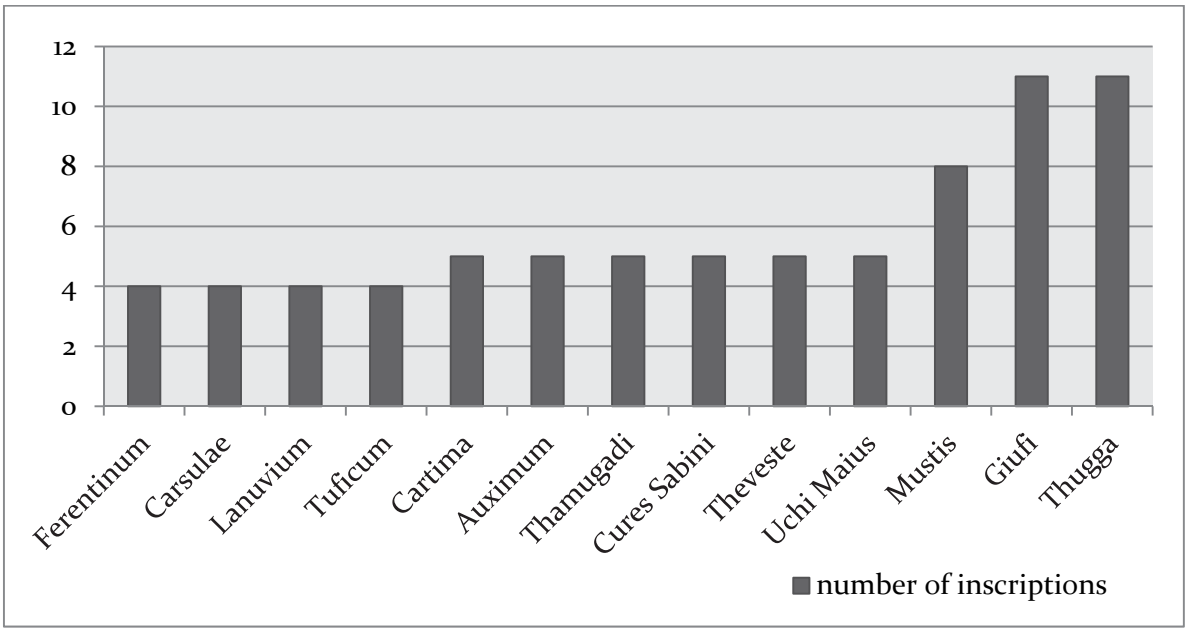

Figure 5.12 Cities yielding more than three (>3) inscriptions concerning privately sponsored public dining

Archaeological data allow us to estimate the size of 147 towns in which privately sponsored public meals are recorded. More than half of these towns (85) appear to have to have occupied areas of less than 20 hectares. [59] Of these eighty-five small towns, forty-seven were situated in the Italian Peninsula, most of them in central or southern Italy.

If we focus on the first region of Roman Italy (Latium and Campania), a slightly different picture emerges (Figure 5.13). Although small towns are well represented, the practice of public dining is particularly well attested in medium-sized towns. Large towns are heavily under-represented.

[58] See Appendix IV.

[59] For the sizes of the urban settlements in Italy, see De Ligt (2012), Appendices I and II; for the sizes of other related settlements in the Roman West, see the forthcoming dissertations of Houten, Hobson, Pazmany, Donev and Pellegrino.

Size[60]	Number of cities in *Regio* I (Proportion)	Number of cities yielding inscriptions referring to privately sponsored public dining in *Regio* I (Proportion)
Large (>40 ha.)	14(17.5%)	2(9.09%)
Medium-sized (20-40 ha.)	19(23.75%)	7(31.82%)
Small (<20 ha.)	47(58.75)	13(59.09)

Figure 5.13 Comparison between the number of cities and the number of cities with attestations of privately sponsored public dining in terms of size in *Regio* I

If we apply the same type of analysis to other regions of central and southern Italy, it appears that in the third region (Bruttium and Lucania), the fourth region (Samnium) and the fifth region (Picenum), public dinners were most likely to have been provided in small towns.[61] In the sixth region (Umbria), this practice is most frequently attested in medium-sized towns. In the seventh region (Etruria), the evidence of privately sponsored public dinners is spread evenly between medium-sized and small towns.[62] Most of this evidence comes from the southern half of the seventh region. In the

[60] For figures, see De Ligt (2012), Appendix II.

[61] The table shows the comparison between the number of cities and the number of cities producing evidence of privately sponsored public dining in terms of size in *Regiones* II, III, IV, V, VI and VII.

	Large (>40 ha.)	Medium-sized (20-40 ha.)	Small (<20 ha.)
***Regio* II**	5	8	60
***Regio* II with evidence**	1	1	2
***Regio* III**	8		24
***Regio* III with evidence**	-	-	6
***Regio* IV**	-	7	30
***Regio* IV with evidence**	-	2	9
***Regio* V**	2	6	16
***Regio* V with evidence**	1	1	3
***Regio* VI**	2	12	34
***Regio* VI with evidence**	1	10	8
***Regio* VII**	1	19	27
***Regio* VII with evidence**	-	4	6

[62] The proportions of small and medium-sized towns in the seventh region are 57.4%(27/47) and 40.4%(19/47); the proportions of small and medium-sized towns with the inscriptions of public dining in the seventh region are 60%(6/10) and 40%(4/10).

second region (Apulia), only four settlements have produced evidence of privately sponsored public meals. Of these settlements Beneventum was large, but Compsa and Rudiae are likely to have been small. The fourth settlement is the *Pagus Veianus* in the territory of Beneventum.[63]

In Cisalpine Gaul, which was composed of *Regiones* VIII, IX, X and XI, no epigraphic evidence of privately funded public meals has been discovered in the eighth region. In the ninth region only Dertona, a medium-sized town, has yielded evidence, while the evidence from *regio* X comes from Patavium, one of the largest cities of Cisalpina, and Concordia, which was medium-sized. In the eleventh region only the medium-sized town of Comum has produced evidence of public dining. The dearth of epigraphic data from the northern regions suggests that this practice was less common in these areas.

In Africa Proconsularis relevant inscriptions have been found in fifty-nine settlements. Apart from twenty-six places whose sizes remain unknown, there are twenty settlements which occupied less than 20 hectares, six towns occupying between 20 and 40 hectares and seven cities occupying more than 40 hectares. In Mauretania Caesariensis, one town in which privately sponsored public meals are attested occupied approximately 30 hectares and the other occupied ca. 20 hectares. In Spain forty-two inscriptions referring to public dining have been found. More than 85 percent of these come from twenty-nine towns in Baetica, including seven small towns, four medium-sized towns and four large ones. In Lusitania public dinners are attested in one large town. Tarraconensis has yielded only five inscriptions, three of which originate from two small settlements.

In the provinces with fewer inscriptions, small towns are represented in Alpes Maritimae and Dalmatia, whereas in Noricum, Lugdunensis and Narbonensis the epigraphic evidence comes from medium-sized and large cities.

In the areas covered by my investigations, thirteen agglomerations have produced more than three inscriptions, and the size of eleven of these agglomerations can be estimated with a reasonable degree of confidence. It appears that they include four small towns and two medium-sized towns in Italy, and two small towns, one medium-sized town and two large towns in Africa Pronconsularis.[64]

City size and private munificence on public dining

My investigations into the relationship between city size and privately sponsored public dinners suggest that such dinners were especially likely to have been sponsored in small and medium-sized towns.

Why are large cities under-represented among those urban centres in which privately funded public meals are recorded? As John Patterson notes in a recent book,

[63] See De Ligt (2012), Appendix II, 327, 330, 331.
[64] See Appendix IV.

in large towns wealth was not concentrated only in the hands of the traditional leading local notables; other non-elites were offered opportunities to become affluent in such towns. These upstarts also stood a chance of being accepted as members of the *Augustales* or even of the local council. In contrast, most small towns offered fewer opportunities for ordinary people to become wealthy.[65] Other things being equal, one would expect to find more evidence of benefactions in those towns in which potential benefactors were more numerous. However, this is not the case as our findings to do with the distribution of food-related benefactions across towns categorized into various size-brackets are not consistent with Patterson's analysis.

From the practical point of view, one way of accounting for the frequent occurrence of privately sponsored food gifts in small and medium-sized towns is by focusing on the cost factor. As Duncan-Jones points out, it would have been more expensive for donors to distribute *sportulae* in a large town.[66] However, this does not tie in with the epigraphic evidence collected by Duncan-Jones which also shows that benefactors in large towns were actually willing to spend large sums of their money on other types of benefactions, such as construction projects, which were far more expensive than the distribution of food gifts.[67] From this it can be inferred that the relative dearth of evidence for food-benefactions in large towns cannot be attributed to the higher costs of organizing public dinners in such towns.

In my view a more convincing explanation of the relative dearth of epigraphic evidence of food-related benefactions in large towns can be found by taking a closer look at the epigraphic evidence of private expenditure on building projects and games and by comparing the patterns revealed by this evidence to those which can be observed in the case of food gifts.

Benefaction	Privately sponsored public dining	Building works and restorations	Games
Large town	6	10	4
Medium-sized town	27	17	4
Small town	47	11	1
Region I	22	13	4
Region II	4	1	1
Region III	6	1	1
Region IV	11	4	-

[65] Patterson (2006), 270-271.
[66] Duncan-Jones (1982), 360.
[67] Duncan-Jones (1982), 157-162, 200-203. According to the costs of erecting buildings and restorations collected by Duncan-Jones, the average cost was about 222,435 sesterces. The average cost on games was about 65,775 sesterces and that on the distributions (feasts, refreshments and oil) was about 16,030 sesterces.

Region V	5	-	-
Region VI	20	4	2
Region VII	10	4	-
Region VIII	-	-	-
Region IX	1	-	-
Region X	2	7	1
Region XI	1	4	-

Figure 5.14 Comparison between the number of different benefactions in attested Italian towns in terms of town size[68]

Benefaction	Privately sponsored public dining	Building works and restorations	Games
Large town	6/41(14.63%)	10/41(24.39%)	4/41(9.76%)
Medium-sized town	27/105(25.71%)	17/105(16.19%)	4/105(3.81%)
Small town	47/270(17.41%)	11/270(4.07%)	1/270(0.37%)

Figure 5.15 Comparison between the number of different benefactions in attested Italin towns in proportion to the total number of towns of different sizes[69]

Figure 5.14 shows the number of privately funded building projects (including restoration projects) and games in Italian towns belonging to various size brackets. The aggregated data (Figure 5.14), particularly from the percentage of different benefactions in different- size towns (Figure 5.15), make it immediately apparent that, while relatively few benefactors erected (or repaired) public buildings in small towns and even fewer of them organized games, food-related benefactions were bestowed on many small Italian communities. In the large towns, the balance between construction projects and food gifts is reversed: whereas privately funded food gifts are recorded in six inscriptions from large towns, there are ten records referring to building and restorations projects being carried out in towns which occupied at least 40 hectares. In terms of the medium-sized towns, it appears that the benefactors also preferred food-related benefactions to buildings. Interestingly, privately sponsored games are also

[68] The evidence here includes only size-identifiable towns. The data on privately sponsored public dining are based on my database; the statistics on the benefactions of building works and games come from the collection of Duncan-Jones (1982), 157-162, 200-201.

[69] For town size figures in Italy, see De Ligt (2012), Appendices I and II. De Ligt groups the large and medium-sized towns in Lucania and Bruttium together (8 towns) and I have included two large and three medium-sized towns as it is difficult to categorize the rest with any accuracy.

more frequently attested in large towns than in smaller communities, despite the fact that small communities were far more numerous. The obvious explanation of this pattern is that large towns were more likely to have had benefactors who were sufficiently wealthy to shoulder the costs of more expensive benefactions.

In this discussion, it should be remembered that at least some members of the elite regarded privately funded public buildings as more valuable than other benefactions. Cicero, for instance, argued that, although hand-outs of money or food could bring instant gratification, expenditure on public constructions would earn the donor the gratitude of posterity.[70] Cicero's viewpoint might help to explain why benefactors from large towns gave priority to public works. Although it does seem likely that benefactors in smaller towns shared the cultural preferences of the elite of the large urban centres, if benefactors operating in small towns were on average less wealthy than those belonging to the local elites of large cities, it would have made perfect sense for them to opt to erect fewer public buildings and to organize more public meals.

Privately sponsored public dinners	North Africa	Spain
Large town	7	5
Medium-sized town	6	4
Small town	20	9

Figure 5.16 Distribution of inscriptions concerning privately sponsored public dining in North African and Spanish towns belonging to various size brackets

In the case of many towns in Roman North Africa and Spain, the archaeological evidence is often not good enough to permit even a rough estimate of their physical size. However, even if the number of towns which can be assigned to broadly defined size brackets is small, it is still possible to examine how many references to public dinners appear in the epigraphic records of large, medium-sized and small towns. As in Italy, the frequency of such public dinners is higher in small and medium-sized towns than in large ones.[71]

In Gallia Narbonensis public dining practice is attested in three towns – two large ones (Nemausus, Aquae Sextiae) and one medium-sized (Arelate) town. In Lugdunensis only the provincial capital of Lugdunum has yielded evidence of a privately sponsored public meal. In Noricum the only evidence comes from the provincial capital of Virunum. In Alpes Maritimae a *pagus* at Ascros was the recipient of a privately funded meal and a city-wide distribution of food hand-outs is known to

[70] Cic. *Off.* 2.17.60.

[71] In the North African towns which produced more than 2 relevant inscriptions, 7 are small and medium-sized communities and 2 are large towns, see Appendix IV.

have taken place in the former provincial capital of Cemenelum (modern Cimiez), a small town.[72] In addition to these, inscriptions referring to food benefactions have been found in six small towns of Dalmatia, most of which were situated on the coast facing the Italian Peninsula. The epigraphic evidence from the remaining western provinces is too sporadic to permit any meaningful conclusions, but it might not be a coincidence that privately sponsored public meals are recorded in three provincial/former provincial capitals.

5.2 The geographical distribution of privately sponsored collegial dining

During the past twenty years dining within *collegia* has received a considerable amount of scholarly attention.[73] The *Augustales* also enjoyed commensality among themselves. Although the *Augustales* differed from the professional and religious *collegia*, it can be observed that private munificence expended on communal meals for them was very similar. This section focuses on the geographical distribution of privately sponsored dinners for the *collegia* and *Augustales* in the Western Empire. As in my discussion of public dining, my aim is to present a general picture of the geographical spread of private munificence on collegial dining and to explain those patterns which can be discerned. From the outset, it is worth noting that the amount of epigraphic evidence of collegial meals is much smaller than that available for public dining. Consequently the basis for an attempt to reconstruct geographical patterns is far from ideal and that any attempt to account for these patterns must be regarded as tentative.

5.2.1 Distribution of collegial dining in western regions and towns

My investigations have revealed only forty-six inscriptions from Italy and the western provinces containing information on privately sponsored collegial dining.[74] As Map 5.3 and Figure 5.17 show, collegial dining is attested in only a few regions. Almost all of the evidence (39 inscriptions) comes from the Italian Peninsula. Within this area northern and central Italy, the first region in particular, are well represented, but very few inscriptions referring to collegial meals have been detected in southern Italy. There are also only a few inscriptions from Alpes Maritimae, Numidia, Dalmatia, Narbonensis and Lugdunensis.

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[72] *AE* 1961, 169; *CIL* V, 7905.
[73] E.g. Ascough (2008); Liu (2009), 248-252; Donahue (2017), 126-139; Smith (2003), 87-131; Van Nijf (1997), 149-188; Dunbabin (2003a), 97-99; Fisher (1988), 1199-1225.
[74] The figures are derived from epigraphic references to communal dinners/food distributions among members and to cash endowments for such food gifts.

Map 5.3 The communities of Italy and the western provinces which produced inscriptions referring to privately sponsored collegial dining

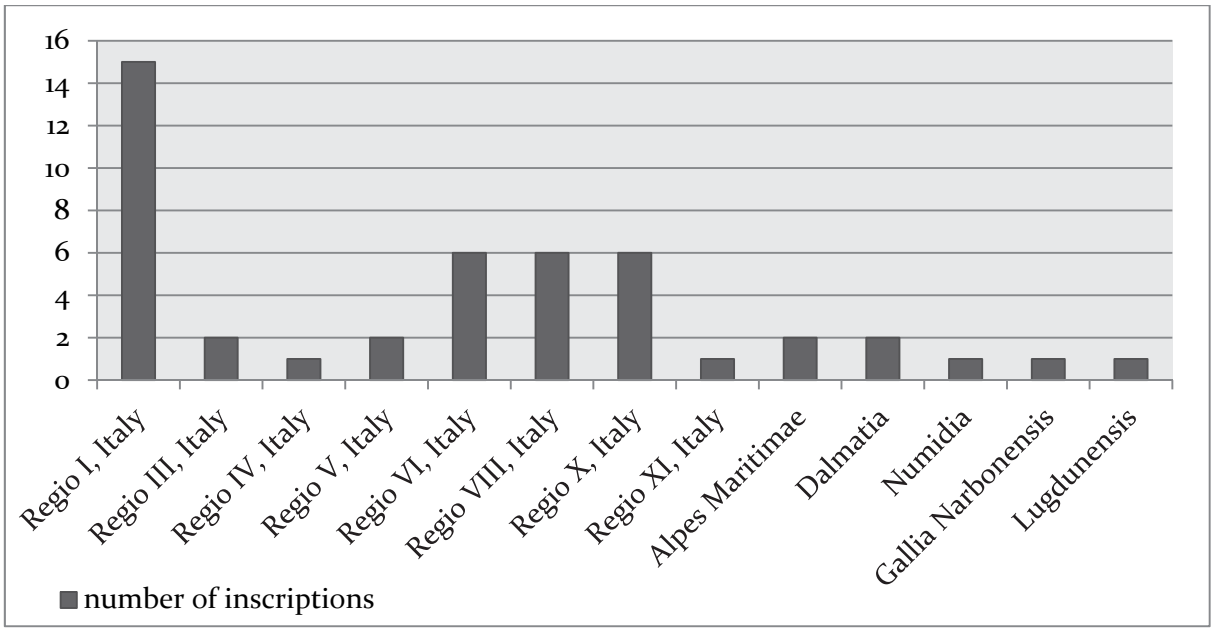


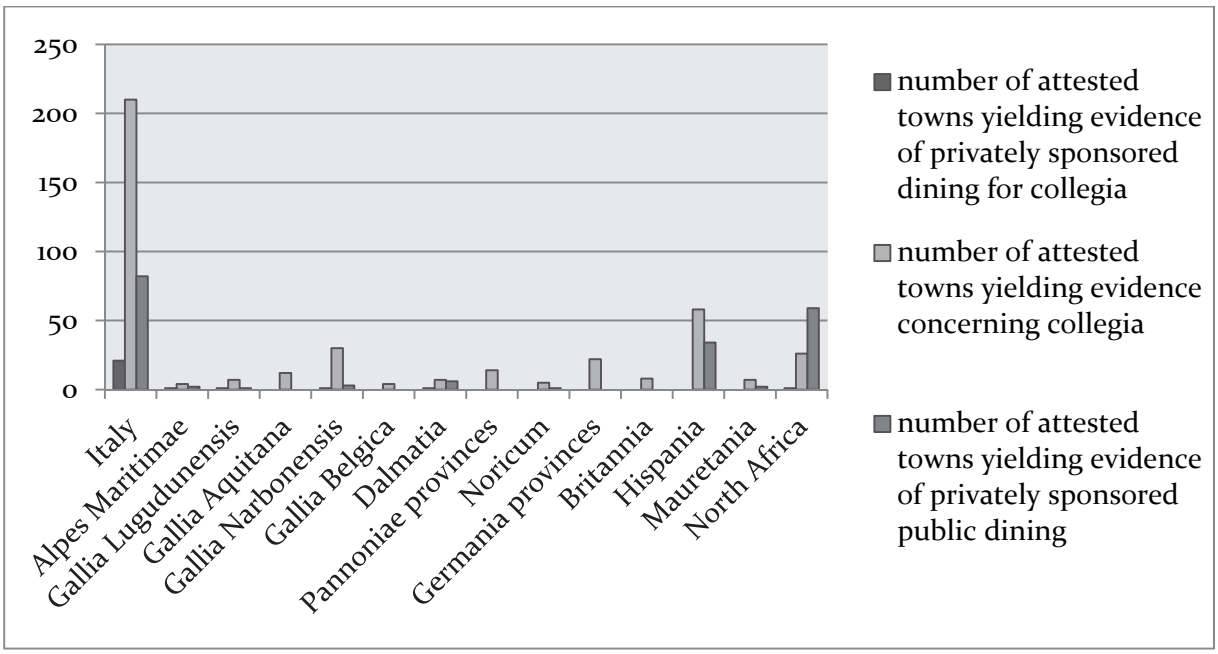
Figure 5.17 Distribution of inscriptions concerning privately sponsored collegial dining in different regions

It is immediately apparent that the practice of collegial dining was less widely distributed than privately sponsored public dining. What is particularly striking is that the Iberian Peninsula, which has yielded many inscriptions referring to public dining, has not produced a single piece of evidence of private benefactors bestowing food gifts on associations. In the case of Roman North Africa, the evidence of privately sponsored collegial dining consists of just one inscription.

In total twenty-nine Italian and provincial towns have yielded evidence of food gifts targeting associations, and eleven of these towns have also produced evidence of privately funded public meals.[75] In twenty towns, the evidence consists of a single inscription. Only Pisaurum, Ameria, Aquileia, Arilica, Salona and Cemenelum have produced two inscriptions each, while three inscriptions recording privately sponsored collegial dinners have been found at Ravenna, five at Ostia and six at Misenum. Of the twenty-five towns whose size can be estimated, ten are small, eight medium-sized and seven large.

5.2.2 Contextualization of geographical distribution

It is a safe assumption that inscriptions referring to privately sponsored collegial dining are more likely to be found in those regions in which the associations were widely distributed. As the investigations of Waltzing and various later scholars have shown, most of the epigraphic evidence relating to *collegia* comes from the towns of Roman Italy (Figure 5.18). Therefore it is not surprising that the bulk of the evidence of privately sponsored collegial dinners also comes from this area.



[75] See Appendix V.

Figure 5.18 Comparison of the number of towns in terms of yielding evidence referring to *collegia*, privately sponsored dining for *collegia* and to privately funded public dining[76]

Thirty per cent of all Italian inscriptions referring to privately sponsored meals exclusively targeting *collegia* come from *Regiones* VIII, X and XI. It cannot be a coincidence that *Regio* X is responsible for the largest amount of epigraphic references to *collegia*.[77] *Regiones* VIII and XI have also produced a fairly large number of inscriptions referring to *collegia*. By contrast, *Regio* IX has yielded little epigraphic evidence of the existence of *collegia* and no evidence of collegial dining.

Thanks to the outstanding work of Jinyu Liu, the *collegia centonariorum* can be used as a case study here. There are seven inscriptions recording benefactors shouldering the cost of privately communal dinners in the *collegia centonariorum*.[78] These inscriptions come from Reg. VI (2 inscriptions), Reg. VIII (2), Reg. X (1), Reg. XI (1) and Alpes Maritimae (1). From Liu's study of distribution of the *collegia centonariorum*, it appears that the *collegia centonariorum* are best attested in Italy, especially in Umbria, Venetia, Transpadana and Aemilia. It is precisely these regions which have also produced most of the evidence of benefactors organizing dinners for the *centonarii*.[79] The only town in the province of Alpes Maritimae in which the *centonarii* were offered a communal meal by a benefactor is Cemelenum, in which the activities of the *collegia centonariorum* are well documented.[80]

On the basis of the evidence contained in the collegial by-laws, particularly the regulations of the *collegium Dianae et Antinoi* from Lanuvium, communal banqueting has been viewed as one of the primary activities of *collegia*.[81] The patterns revealed by my investigations suggest that this conclusion does not necessarily apply to privately sponsored collegial dinners. Of course, there is a theoretical possibility that large numbers of non-Italian benefactors did bestow food-related benefactions on associations but that these benefactions were never recorded. Nevertheless, it seems more likely that Italian benefactors would have been more inclined to target *collegia*, perhaps for the reason that in the towns of mainland Italy associations were more

[76] For the geographical distribution of inscriptions referring to *collegia* in the Roman West, see Waltzing (1895-1900), Vol.3. His collecition contains 890 relevant (890), 766 from Rome, 190 from Gaul, 165 from the Balkan and Danube regions, 99 from North Africa, 55 from the Spanish provinces, 40 from Germania and 11 from Britain; cf. Ausbüttel (1982), 32-33. For the supplement of towns in which inscriptions have recently been found, see Mennella and Apicella (2000); Santero Santurino (1978), 150-181; Rodríguez Gutiérrez, Tran and Soler Huertas (2016), 359-367; Liu (2009), Appendix B and Verboven (2012), 34-46.
[77] For the number of *collegia* in various Italian regions, see Waltzing (1895-1900), vol.3, 392-519.
[78] *CIL* XI, 5047; *CIL* XI, 4391; *CIL* V, 7357; *CIL* XI, 1027; *CIL* V, 2176; *CIL* V, 5272; *CIL* V, 7906.
[79] Liu (2009), 30, Chart 1.1.
[80] *Ibid*. 31, Chart 1.2.
[81] *CIL* XIV, 2112 = *ILS* 7212.

highly valued as constituent elements of civic communities than in other parts of the Western Empire.[82]

One way of putting this hypothesis to the test is to compare the spatial distribution of the evidence of privately sponsored collegial dining with that referring to *collegia* as recipients of community-wide meals.[83] The basic idea behind this exercise is that, if *collegia* were regarded as important building blocks of local society in certain areas, they should appear not only as recipients of food-gifts specifically targeting their organizations but also among those sub-groups which benefited from food-gifts bestowed on entire communities.

The epigraphic evidence confirms the theory that benefactors were more likely to spend money on meals for *collegiati* only in those areas in which the *collegia* also appear as one of the groups targeted by benefactors providing public meals for entire communities. Of the ten inscriptions mentioning *collegia* as beneficiaries of food gifts bestowed on communities, five have been found in Italian towns.[84] Two come from Cemenelum, one of the few non-Italian towns in which a private benefactor is known to have spent money on a meal for *collegiati*.[85] The other three come from Arelate, Nemausus and Thamugadi.[86] Although the amount of evidence is not exactly overwhelming, this pattern is strikingly similar to that which emerges from the epigraphic evidence of privately sponsored collegial dinners.

In an article which appeared in 2005, Jinyu Liu discusses some of the epigraphic evidence of *collegia* in the Iberian Peninsula. The basis of her discussion is Chapter 74 of the *lex Irnitana* which stipulates that, no one is to take part in an illegal gathering in that municipium or to hold a meeting of a society or college for that purpose or to conspire that it be held or to act in such a way that any of these things occur. Anyone who acts contrary to these rules is to be condemned to pay 10,000 sesterces to the *municipes* of the *Municipium Flavium Irnitanum* and the right of action, suit and claim of that money and concerning that money is to belong to any *municeps* of that *municipium*.[87] According to Liu this provision reflects concerns about the potentially disruptive nature of meetings organized by *collegia*. In the final part of her

[82] This observation applies particularly to those collegial dinners which were funded by external benefactors, but perceptions of the importance of *collegia* as building blocks of civic society could also have influenced choices made by wealthy members of associations. Three inscriptions from Roman Spain refer to *seviri* bestowing food benefactions. Two of these benefactions targeted *cives et incolae* (*CIL* II, 5489; *CIL* II, 2100), and the third is simply described as an *epulum* (*CIL* II, 1944).

[83] For the participation of *collegia* in public feasting in the Roman West see Donahue (2017), 126-130; in the Roman East see Van Nijf (1997), 156-188.

[84] *CIL* IX, 3842(Antinum); *AE* 2000, 533(Carsulae); *CIL* X, 451(Eburum); *CIL* X, 5796 (Verulae); *CIL* IX, 2553 (Fagifulae).

[85] *CIL* V, 7920; *CIL* V, 7905.

[86] *CIL* XII, 697 (Arelate); *CIL* XII, 5905 (Nemausus); *AE* 1954, 154 (Thamugadi).

[87] For text, see González and Crawford (1986), 193. For discussion see Liu (2005), 285-316.

contribution, she asks whether the relative dearth of Spanish inscriptions referring to *collegia* can be attributed to restrictive municipal policies in regard to associations. She goes on to argue that the existence of such a connection is highly unlikely and that the relative lack of epigraphic references to *collegia* in Roman Spain can be more plausibly attributed either to the absence of 'a strong associative tradition' or to the 'low level of epigraphic culture'.[88]

Since the Iberian Peninsula has yielded approximately 120 epigraphic references to *collegia* (cf. above), the 'dearth' of epigraphic evidence is less dramatic than Liu's arguments might suggest. Nevertheless, it is still very striking that the Iberian Peninsula has failed to produce a single inscription referring to a privately sponsored collegial meal. Bearing in mind my interpretation of the epigraphic evidence from Italy, this striking fact could be interpreted as a reflection of the existence of a region-specific political culture in which *collegia* were not regarded as obvious targets of food-related benefactions.

In the African provinces, the epigraphic evidence of privately sponsored collegial meals consists of a single inscription from Numidia. Nevertheless, these provinces provide a fairly large amount of evidence of food benefactions being bestowed on *curiae* or *curiales*.[89] As Duncan-Jones has demonstrated, the African *curiae* appear to have been dining clubs which also took care of the burial of their members, much like *collegia* did in other parts of the Empire. Another similarity between *curiae* and associations is that members had to pay an entry-fee.[90] In other words, the membership of the African *curiae* did not extend to all the plebs.[91]

The epigraphic record of the North African provinces provides abundant evidence of *curiae* participating in community-wide meals organized by wealthy benefactors and also of *curiae* receiving cash endowments whose the income was to be used for annual dinners.[92] Therefore, the almost complete absence of epigraphic evidence of privately sponsored collegial dinners in Roman Africa can be safely attributed to the fact that in this part of the Empire the local *curiae* were regarded as more obvious target groups for such benefactions. As Waltzing and other scholars have demonstrated, there is plenty of evidence of the existence of *collegia* in Africa Proconsularis and other parts of Roman North Africa, but the epigraphic evidence leaves no doubt that these private associations did not play the same role in local political life as did the *collegia* of various towns in mainland Italy.[93] Once again we seem to be dealing with a regional

[88] Liu (2005), 310.
[89] For the African *curiae*, see Kotula (1968), Kotula (1980). The origin of these *curiae* is controversial, see Whittaker (2000), 545 (Roman); Fantar (2011), 456 (Punic).
[90] Duncan-Jones (1982), 278-279.
[91] *Ibid*. 280-282; Mrozek (1993), 117
[92] Duncan-Jones (1982), 102-104.
[93] For the *collegia dendrophorum* of Roman North Africa see Liu (2009), 32.

political culture which displays at least some features which are without parallel in other parts of the Western Empire.

It has to be pointed out that all evidence (8 inscriptions) referring to the commensality of the *Augustales* also comes from Italy, particularly from Misenum (6 items).[94] Since many pieces of evidence of *Augustales* taking part in community-wide meals are concentrated in mainland Italy,[95] we again encounter a situation similar to that found in the case of *collegia*. As the associations of *Augustales* are widely attested in the western half of the Empire, it should not be assumed that it is purely by accident that all the evidence referring to privately sponsored dinners for *Augustales* is only found in Italy. This prompts us to hypothesize that exclusive food benefactions for *Augustales* were probably also a manifestation of the increasing importance of these associations as building blocks in local society. If we look at the identity of these benefactors, all of them had a relationship to the *Augustales* as they were either fellow members or those close to them. In other words, provisions of food gifts could have been considered as an effective way of highlighting the importance of membership of themselves by these 'insiders'.

5.3 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have attempted to reconstruct the geographical distribution of private munificence on public and collegial dining in Italy and the western provinces. The distribution maps show uneven patterns across the western regions. The epigraphic evidence of privately sponsored public dinners is concentrated in Italy, Africa Proconsularis and Baetica. Probably this finding is connected to the relatively high epigraphic densities which characterize these areas and perhaps also to the density of the urban networks of these regions and the presence of numerous Roman colonies. However, the distribution of evidence of public dining is not completely consistent with the distribution of Latin inscriptions. Some other provinces have also produced high epigraphic densities, but these inscriptions have provided little or no evidence of public dining. From this it can be inferred that regional differences in the distribution of political, social and economic power as well as region-specific processes of adaption to the requirements of Roman *humanitas* caused the spread of the custom of private expenditure on public or collegial dining to some areas, but also in the failure of these practices to take root in other parts of the Western Empire.

As a specific act of munificence, privately sponsored public dining seems to be a product of good development of civic munificence. However, the evidence from the western provinces leaves no doubt that private munificence could and did take many

[94] Misenum: *AE* 1993, 473; *AE* 1993, 474; *AE* 1993, 477; *AE* 1993, 479; *AE* 2000, 344; *CIL* X, 1880. Aletrium: *CIL* X, 5809. *Reate*: *CIL* IX, 4691.
[95] See 'Beneficiaries' in Appendix I.

different forms depending on the local or regional distribution of power. Whereas the local elites in the north-western provinces seem to have been firmly entrenched, thereby obviating the need for intra-elite competition through benefactions, the towns of the Mediterranean zone seem to have been characterized by a more dynamic competition for power and status. This distinction helps to explain why Spain and North Africa have produced large numbers of inscriptions referring to privately funded public dinners. However, within these larger regions further discrepancies can be discerned. It seems clear, for instance, that the town elites of Baetica were in the habit of spending some of their money on public dinners, whereas the elites of Tarraconensis preferred to erect public or religious buildings.

A closer look at the distribution on a town level shows that, in those areas which have yielded abundant evidence of privately sponsored public dinners, most of the epigraphic material comes from medium-sized or small towns. The most probable explanation of this pattern is that medium-sized and small towns tended to have fewer wealthy benefactors capable of shouldering the cost of expensive building projects. Therefore, it was more common for benefactors in such towns to spend their money on public meals, which were far less expensive than public construction projects.

In the case of privately sponsored collegial dining, the epigraphic record is concentrated in mainland Italy. One way of accounting for this pattern is to assume that *collegia* and *Augustales* played a more prominent role in the public life of the civic communities of Italy than in those of Spain or North Africa. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the evidence of *collegia* and *Augustales* participating in community-wide meals is also concentrated in mainland Italy. In Roman Africa, many of the activities undertaken by *collegia* in Italian towns, including communal dining, were performed by the *curiae*. Although *collegia* undoubtedly existed in the North African towns, the epigraphic evidence suggests that wealthy citizens who bestowed food-related benefactions on civic communities or sub-divisions of these communities preferred to target *curiales* rather than *collegiati*. Like the various other regional peculiarities which have been discussed in this chapter, these distinctions indicate the existence of region-specific types of munificence which were associated with regional political cultures.