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

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Chapter 6

Chronological distribution of privately sponsored communal dining in the Roman West

The earliest evidence showing the existence of private munificence bestowed for the purpose of communal dining can be dated to the republican period. On a broader scale, the first three centuries AD witnessed its rise and decline, but these developments over time can be explored in more detail. This chapter deals with the chronology of the distribution of privately sponsored communal dining in Italy and the western provinces.

The first point which has to be made is that the availability of the inscriptions which lie at the foundation of this research is linked to changing epigraphic habits.[1] However, I hold the view that the chronological distribution of private munificence extended to public and collegial dining, although based on epigraphic evidence, is more than just a reflection of the epigraphic habit; it is also the embodiment of some historical realities. To this end, this chapter will attempt to account for the chronological distribution patterns of the evidence for privately sponsored public and collegial dining in the first three centuries AD. A closer look at the changes in this practice over time provides a window which allows us to observe what economic, social and political changes were taking place in imperial society.

With this aim in mind, the chapter turns first to the literary sources in order to sketch a background to the chronological developments in Rome – which will then serve to provide a context for the developments visible in the epigraphical sources in Italy and the western provinces.

[1] On the 'epigraphic habit' during the imperial period, see MacMullen (1982); Meyer (1990); Woolf (1996); Beltrán Lloris (2014).

6.1 The emergence of privately sponsored public banquets in Republican Rome

In Republican Rome, public banquets or club dinners were not uncommon, as Varro asks: *Quotus quisque enim est annus, quo non videas epulum aut triumphum aut collegia non epulari*?[2] During the Republican period, the organization of public banquets or a distribution of food gifts on a large scale was an event which was usually associated with military victories or funerals.[3] The literary sources mention this munificence as an illustration of a positive character trait of the benefactor in question.

Victories

Feasting was part and parcel of the celebration of a Roman victory. The earliest sources reporting on military victories attest to the fact that food and drinks were prepared for the army. In a fictitious story which is set in the eighth century BC, Dionysius of Halicarnassus relates that, when Romulus and his army returned to Rome in triumph, they were welcomed outside the city by the citizens and their wives and children. Upon entering the city, the army found that tables loaded with wine and food had been placed outside the most distinguished houses.[4] This idea can also be found in Dionysius' no doubt equally fictitious account of the triumph of Valerius Publicola, whose army was served wine and food in 509 BC.[5] Drawing on earlier writers, Livy reports that when Quinctius Cincinnatus and his troops held a triumph after defeating the Aequians in 458 BC, 'there was not a house in Rome which did not have a table spread with food before its door, for the entertainment of the soldiers who regaled themselves as they followed the triumphal chariot [...].'[6] Another story from Livy seems rather more trustworthy: after the troops of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus had defeated a Carthaginian army near Beneventum in 214 BC, the people of Beneventum feasted these troops as they entered the city.[7] In all these stories private citizens offered victorious armies food and drink.

In addition, the victorious leader might provide a banquet for the Senate or for other members of the elite. This occasion usually followed the sacrifice on the Capitoline Hill. According to Dionysius, Valerius Poblicola organized a banquet for

[2] Varro *Rust*. 3.2.16, *Sed propter luxuriam, inquit, quodam modo epulum cotidianum est intra ianuas Romae*.
[3] Purcell (1994), 685-686; D'Arms (1998), 35; Donahue (2017), 59-62.
[4] Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom*. 2.34.2.
[5] *Ibid*. 5.17.2.
[6] Livy 3.29.5.
[7] *Ibid*. 24.16.16-19.

senators after his triumphal parade of 509 BC,[8] and we are told by Appian that, after the triumphal procession of 201 BC, Scipio banqueted his friends at the temple of the Capitol.[9] As Polybius explains, a triumph needed the consent of the Senate and, once approval had been given, a sum of money was handed over to cover the expenses incurred.[10] Hence it is impossible to say with any certainty whether the public banquets which were held after triumphal parades were paid for by the victorious commander or by the state. Nevertheless, these sorts of banquets targeting the Senate or other elite groups can be seen as forerunners of the imperial Senate's banquets on the Capitol and of the public banquets for the municipal *decuriones*.

As far as can be determined, the *populus* was not invited to public banquets held to celebrate triumphs until the Late Republic. In the triumphs of the first century BC, we find a connection between the offerings to Hercules (from the tithe of the booty) and public banquets for the people.[11] Athenaeus reports that Marius sent skins of (unknown) animals to Rome to be dedicated in the temple of Hercules, where commanders banqueted the citizens when celebrating their triumphs.[12] He also refers to the early-first-century BC Greek philosopher Posidonius who said that, when a banquet was held in the precinct of Hercules in Rome, it was provided by a general on the occasion of the celebration of a triumph.[13] Plutarch tells us that Sulla feasted the people with sumptuous provisions for many days after making offerings to Hercules.[14] In his *Life of Crassus*, we read that a sacrifice was made to Hercules and a feast was given to the people,[15] and in his *Life of Lucullus* he reports that Lucullus served up a magnificent feast for the city of Rome and the surrounding *vici* when he celebrated a triumph in 63 BC.[16]

Julius Caesar's public banquets for the people were considered to have been particularly impressive.[17] Following the triumphal parade held to commemorate his victories in Gaul, Egypt, Pontus and Africa, Caesar feasted the people on 22,000 *triclinia* in 46 BC.[18] To celebrate the Spanish triumph in 45 BC, he offered the public

[8] According to Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom*. 5.17.2, Valerius Poblicola offered the Senate a banquet. For a senatorial banquet at the triumph of Aemilius Paullus in 167 BC, see Livy 45.39.13 and Beard (2007), 262.
[9] App. *Pun*. 66.
[10] Polyb. 6.15.
[11] Marzano (2009).
[12] Ath. *Deipn*. 5.221f.
[13] *Ibid*. 4.153c. Kidd (1988), 282-283, suggests such banquets were for elites.
[14] Plut. *Sull*. 35.1.
[15] Plut. *Crass*. 2.2; 12.2. Marzano (2009), 84, mentions that, in this case, the banquet was not given as part of a triumphal celebration, but used to counterbalance Pompey's propaganda on Hercules.
[16] Plut. *Luc*. 37.2-4.
[17] For the impact of Caesar's feasts on municipal elites, see D'Arms (2000a).
[18] Plut. *Caes*. 55.

duo prandia.[19] Caesar's munificence is said to have filled the populace with gratitude.[20] Once again it should be noted that the triumphal feasts for the populace could have been paid for with public funds as the generals footed the bill with the spoils of war – which were, theoretically, public funds. Nevertheless, this tradition of munificence can be taken as a forerunner of privately sponsored public dining.

In the turbulent final decades of the Republic, investment in large-scale feasts by successful military commanders became a way of displaying and accruing yet more personal power. Generosity in the form of arranging public banquets was established not only a feasible but also an acceptable way of displaying benevolence and patronage.[21] Caesar, for example, has been considered as being successful in exploiting public banquets to achieve his political goals.[22] Whereas the generals of earlier generations had organized banquets for members of the elite, the military politicians of the Late Republic began to display themselves as worthwhile patrons of large numbers of ordinary citizens.

Funerals

Funerary banquets staged for the populace were also held in the Republican era. It was customary to give a funeral banquet (e.g. *silicernium* and *novendialis cena*) to honour the dead,[23] but invitations were usually confined to relatives and friends of the deceased. On the occasion of the burial of prominent members of society, funerals could be accompanied by public dining.[24] Initially such public meals took the form of a distribution of the flesh of the sacrificial animals. Livy, for example, refers to a certain Marcus Flavius who distributed *visceratio* to people at his mother's funeral in 328/327 BC.[25] He also mentions that in 183 BC, on the occasion of the funeral of Publius Licinius Crassus, who had been *pontifex maximus*, a large-scale distribution of meat took place.[26]

Later on proper funerary feasts seem to have become a fashion. In the literary sources we read that, upon the death of his uncle Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus in 129 BC, Quintus Fabius Maximus Allobrogicus gave the Roman people a funerary banquet to honor him.[27] Seventy years later, in 59 BC, Quintus Arrius

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[19] Suet. *Iul*. 38. For the venue of the *prandia*, see D'Arms (1998), 40-41, suggesting that they were held in Caesar's *Horti trans Tiberim*.
[20] Plut. *Caes*. 5.5.
[21] D'Arms (1998), 36, quotes Cic. *Mur*. 73 which indicates that the Roman *plebs* counted the public feast as part of its rightful due.
[22] D'Arms (1998); D'Arms (2000a), 196-197.
[23] Varro *Sat. Men*. 53.306.
[24] Kajava (1998), 115.
[25] Livy 8.22. For *visceratio*, see Kajava (1998), 109-131.
[26] Livy 39.46.
[27] Cic. *Mur*. 75; Val. Max. 7.5.1.

organized a funerary festival which included a public dinner in memory of his father.[28] Taking this tradition one step further, Caesar organized gladiatorial games and a feast for the people in commemoration of his daughter.[29]

The appearance of large public banquets organized by powerful generals and politicians is likely to have been associated with a change in political culture. The social tensions between the ordinary citizens and the senatorial elite and the conflicts between the *populares* and *optimates* may underlie the different behavioral patterns which can be observed among generals of the Late Republic. Compared to the commanders of earlier generations, who identified with the interests of the political and social elite and therefore arranged elite banquets on the Capitol, some later military politicians were more interested in the accumulation of personal influence and actively sought the support from the common people.

Commenting on Caesar's munificence, Cicero writes that, 'by shows, buildings, largesses, banquets he had conciliated the ignorant crowd'.[30] Although Zvi Yavetz argues that Caesar's use of public feasts to gain popular support was nothing new,[31] Pliny the Elder states that Caesar was the first to take advantage of public banquets.[32] This point is also driven home by the fact that this privately sponsored public dining for citizens of Italian and provincial communities in the western provinces is attested only after the age of Caesar.[33] This strongly suggests that Caesar set an example which was followed by private benefactors in local communities.

6.2 Emperors and munificence in imperial Rome

During the first centuries of the Empire, the emperors' munificence towards Roman citizens living in Rome took many forms, including providing public dining for the people. Meanwhile, local elites financed public dinners in communities of Italy and the western provinces. Before proceeding with an investigation of privately sponsored public dinners in Italian and western provincial communities, I shall present a brief survey of the imperial household's munificence in the form of public feasts in the city of Rome

Royal feasting was common in the ancient world, for instance, at courts of the Persian, Macedonian and Hellenistic kings.[34] The Roman emperors' public banquets might have been (partly) influenced by this custom. However, a more likely explanation is that they just adopted and continued the customs established by the

[28] Cic. *Vat.* 12.30-13.32.
[29] Suet. *Iul.* 26.2.
[30] Cic. *Phil.* 2.116.
[31] Yavetz (1983), 167.
[32] Plin. *HN* 14.66.
[33] D'Arms (2000a), 197.
[34] See Vössing (2004), 63-91; Briant (1989), 35-44; Wilkins (2013), 163-172.

late Republican politicians and generals.[35] Ancient literature provides the most important information about public banquets held by the Roman emperors.[36] However, the sources which refer to imperial munificence are often short on hard facts and not always credible. Far more than they had done in the Republic, food and food customs served as a *topos* which ancient authors could use to delineate more sharply the character traits of the emperors they portrayed. Nonetheless, leaving their individual prejudices aside, the way authors of the imperial period depict feasting does help to give us an idea about perceptions of the emperors' public feasts and of the public image emperors sought to project by such displays of their munificence.

To judge from the information provided by Suetonius and Cassius Dio, during the Julio-Claudian period public banqueting was still associated with triumphal celebrations, but there is some evidence which suggests that Octavian/Augustus and his successors organized banquets on the occasion of important events in their personal lives or in that of family members. In 39 BC Octavian provided a great feast after he had shaved off his beard for the first time.[37] According to Cassius Dio, Octavian was granted the privilege of holding a banquet with his wife and children in the temple of Capitoline Jupiter after his victory over Sextus Pompey in 36 BC.[38] One year later, Octavian is said to have authorized Antony to hold banquets with his wife and children in the temple of Concord.[39] Following the victory at Actium, he made dedications to Apollo of Actium and distributed food during the subsequent quadrennial musical and gymnastic contest.[40]

After assuming the title Augustus, the first emperor continued to organize public banquets to mark special moments in his life. Dio states that, from 12 BC onwards bachelors and spinsters were allowed to watch spectacles and to enjoy banquets with the other citizens on the birthday of Augustus. Their attendance had previously been forbidden.[41] We are also told that Augustus forbade public banquets on his birthday during a grain shortage.[42]

The tradition of celebrating military victories with public dinners seems to have been upheld by Tiberius, and in fact our sources also refer to two occasions on which he did this while Augustus was still emperor. According to Dio, Tiberius feasted the Roman people in 9 BC after defeating the Dalmatians and the Pannonians; Livia and

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[35] Vössing (2004), 277.
[36] For taking food in Roman literature as an approach by which to interpret the Romans' attitudes, see Gowers (1996).
[37] Cass. Dio 48.34.3. The first time of shaving usually took place when a young Roman assumed the *toga virilis*, but Octavian waited until the age of 24.
[38] *Ibid*. 49.15.1.
[39] *Ibid*. 49.18.6.
[40] *Ibid.* 51.1.2.
[41] *Ibid.* 54.30.5.
[42] *Ibid.* 55.26.3.

Julia provided a dinner for the women.[43] Suetonius tells us that Tiberius entertained the Roman people at a thousand tables to celebrate his triumph over Germany in AD 12.[44] Caligula is said to have organized banquets for the senators and their wives and he also did this for the people after he was made consul.[45] Dio depicts Caligula's relationships with the populace as tense,[46] but this did not stop him feasting them to celebrate the birthday of Drusilla.[47] According to Suetonius, Caligula not only gave cash hand-outs to people but twice provided lavish banquets for the senators and equestrians, in which he included their wives and children.[48] He also showered gifts and offered the spectators food when sponsoring stage-plays (*ludi scaenici*).[49] In his account of the life of Claudius, Suetonius mentions that he constantly gave public feasts for 600 people at one time.[50] In Dio we read that, on one occasion, the same emperor banqueted the senators and their wives as well as the equestrians and the tribes in the Circus.[51] In his *Life of Nero*, Suetonius writes that his public dining was limited to food hand-outs (*sportulae*).[52] However, Dio refers to Nero providing a costly public banquet.[53] We are told by Tacitus that Nero often held banquets in public places and treated the whole city as his palace, but this reference is to his private banquets or parties.[54] For the turbulent year 68/69 AD few relevant records survive, but Tacitus reports that Otho once gave the noble men and women a great banquet.[55]

During the first ten years of the Flavian dynasty, public feasts organized by emperors are well-attested. According to Suetonius, Vespasian often held formal and sumptuous feasts.[56] In the *Bellum Judaicum*, Josephus mentions that Vespasian furnished the multitude with public feasts after his arrival in Rome.[57] Domitian seems to have made a change in the custom of public dining. According to Suetonius, he put an end to the public food hand-outs (*sportulae*) which had been introduced by Nero and revived the tradition of formal dinners.[58] Suetonius tends to emphasize Domitian's enthusiasm for providing the populace with various kinds of entertainment and public

[43] *Ibid.* 55.2.4.
[44] Suet. *Tib*. 20.
[45] Cass. Dio 59.7.1.
[46] *Ibid*. 59.13.3-6.
[47] *Ibid*. 59.13.8-9.
[48] Suet. *Calig*. 17.2.
[49] *Ibid*. 18.2.
[50] Suet. *Claud*. 32.
[51] Cass. Dio 60.7.4.
[52] Suet. *Ner*. 16.2; cf. *ibid*. 11.2.
[53] Cass. Dio 62.15.1.
[54] The public surroundings were purely for his own amusement, see Tac. *Ann*. 15.37; Suet. *Ner*. 27.
[55] Tac. *Hist*. 1.81.
[56] Suet. *Vesp*. 19.1.
[57] Joseph. *BJ* 7.73.
[58] Suet. *Dom*. 7.1; Suet. *Ner*. 16.2.

feasts. For example, during the shows organized to celebrate the Festival of the Seven Hills, the emperor organized a lavish banquet and handed large baskets of food out to the senators and the equestrians, and smaller ones to the common people.[59] Dio mentions that Domitian held a banquet at public expense, which was considered to be a funeral banquet for those who had died in Dacia and in Rome by the general public.[60]

For the period from Nerva to Antoninus Pius, the evidence of emperors organizing public dinners is limited to two snippets of dubious reliability contained in the *Historia Augusta*.[61] According to this late source, Hadrian provided banquets for senators (there is no mention of the populace) and Antoninus Pius for his friends.[62] The same source also reports that Pertinax lived simply and set boundaries on the previously unlimited imperial banquets.[63] In his account of the year AD 217, Dio reports that Opellius Macrinus declared his son, Diadumenianus, joint Augustus, seizing upon the occasion to appease the soldiers by dispersing favours among them. Eager to widen his support base, he also provided the people of Apamea with a banquet which cost 600 sesterces per head.[64] Dio records that Elagabalus provided a public banquet for the people of Rome also at a cost of 600 sesterces per head on the occasion of his marriage to Cornelia Paula.[65] He is also said to have been the first Roman emperor to have served fish-pickle mixed with water at a public banquet.[66] In the *Historia Augusta*, we read that Severus Alexander did entertain at state-dinners but in a simple fashion.[67] Information about public feasts held by Gallienus and Carus can also be found in the *Historia Augusta*. We are told that these emperors feasted mainly for their own amusement.[68]

As has been discussed, the narratives about the emperors' public feasting are often light on details. We cannot say for certain that the imperial munificence spent on public feasts was an institutionalized practice. Nevertheless, some cautious conclusions can be drawn. To judge from the surviving evidence, the emperors of the first century AD showed more interest in holding public feasts than those of the second century. The first four emperors of the Julio-Claudian dynasty systematically supported public feasts. Nero's reign seems to have been something of a turning-point as he focused on his personal enjoyment and confined public feasting to food hand-

[59] Suet. *Dom*. 4.5. See also Mart. *Epigr*. 8.50.
[60] Cass. Dio 67.8-9.
[61] For the doubtful reliability of much of the material contained in the *Historia Augusta*, see Benario (1980), Meckler (1994). See also Syme's works on the *Historia Augusta*, Syme (1968), Syme (1971), Syme (1983).
[62] SHA *Hadr*. 22.4-5; SHA *Ant. Pius*. 11.4.
[63] SHA *Pert*. 8.9.
[64] Cass. Dio 79.34.3.
[65] *Ibid*. 80.9.2.
[66] SHA *Heliogab*. 29.5.
[67] SHA *Alex. Sev*. 34.8.
[68] SHA *Gallieni Duo* 9.3-4 and 16; SHA *Carus, Carinus, Numerian* 17.2-3.

outs. Following this change in policy, imperial munificence on communal feasts was greatly reduced, and it was not until Domitian's time that grand banquets were revived. In the second century, the emperors' enthusiasm for funding public banquets appears to have diminished. From the sources it appears that, although a larger number of banquets were provided in the third century, the few sources for this period stress the frugality displayed by the various emperors. Another development can be extrapolated in terms of the occasions on which public feasts were provided: Augustus, Tiberius and Caligula are said to have feasted the people to celebrate victories or imperial birthdays. From Claudius onward, the occasions on which public feasts were provided became more diffuse.

6.3 Chronological distribution of privately sponsored public dining in Italy and the western provinces

When were privately sponsored public dinners first organized outside of the city of Rome? It is almost impossible to give a date which is accurate and correct. One reason for this situation is that the surviving sources tend to focus largely on events and developments in Rome. It is hard to trace changes in political and social practices in the other Italian cities as the sources are simply not there. P. Lucilius Gamala from Ostia has been considered to be the first individual to provide public feasts on the municipal level in the late republican or the early Augustan period.[69] Although the date of the inscription which contains information about the munificence he bestowed on the Ostians is debatable, this is the first documented example of a public dinner being organized outside Rome. Taking this case as a starting point, the central concern of the remainder of this chapter is to find out about the chronological distribution of privately sponsored public dining and how changes in this practice can be accounted for.

6.3.1 Patterns of the chronological distribution

Unquestionably the use of the epigraphical data is often problematic, especially when it involves the issue of dating individual inscriptions.[70] Consular dates and imperial titulatures are helpful in determining a precise date or at least the identity of the reigning emperor. However, more often than not a particular inscription can only be dated to a roughly hundred-year period and some only to a period of two or three

[69] D'Arms (2000a), 192-200. The date of the inscription (*CIL* XIV, 375) is debatable; the commonly accepted date assigns Gamala's activities to the late republican period, cf. Zevi (1973). For other discussions of this inscription see e.g. Meiggs (1973), 493-502 and Salomies (2003), 133-157.

[70] For dating Latin inscriptions of the imperial period and the problems involved, see Cooley (2012), 398-434; Liu (2009), 37 and note 15.

centuries. Despite this problem, those epigraphic sources whether they can be dated precisely or only roughly are still a valuable aid in exploring the chronological distribution of privately sponsored public dining. In what follows, two graphs are established to illustrate long-term distribution trends: one is century based; the other is based on the reigns of the emperor.

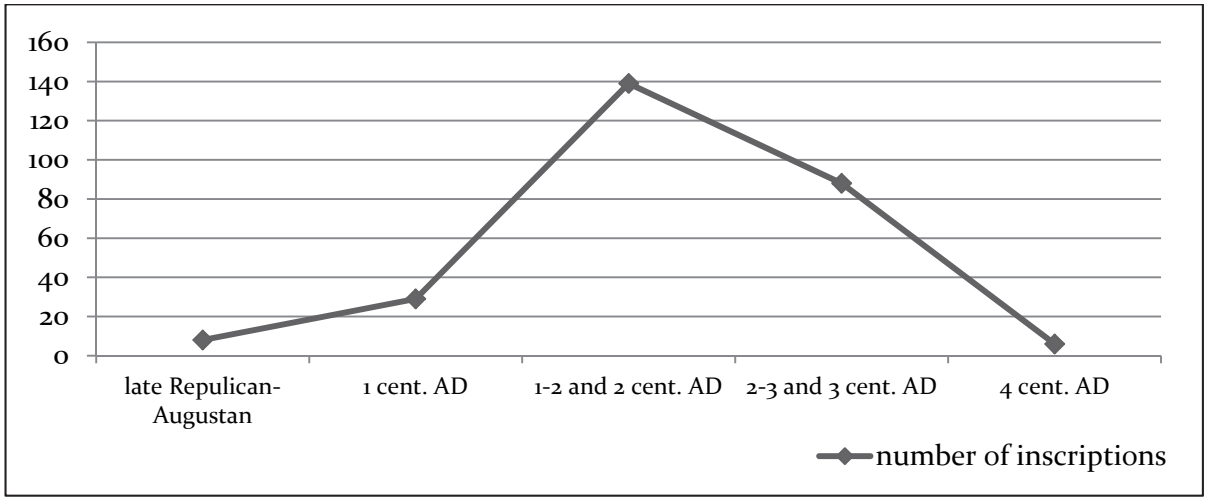

Figure 6.1 Chronological distribution of inscriptions referring to privately sponsored public dining over the centuries

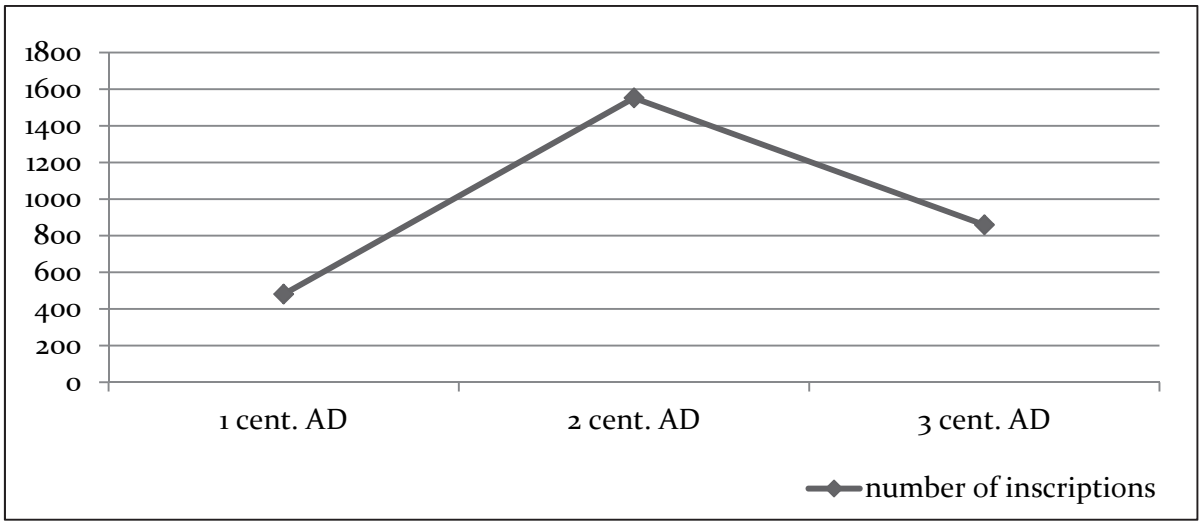

Figure 6.2 Chronological distribution of Latin inscriptions over the centuries[71]

Figure 6.1 shows how the epigraphic evidence of public dining is distributed in the first four centuries AD. The curve shows a slow growth in the number of relevant inscriptions from the early days of the Empire, followed by a sharp increase in the next period. After peaking in the second century, there is a dramatic decline throughout the third century and the graph bottoms out in the fourth century. A similar trend can be observed in the chronological distribution of Latin inscriptions in the first three

[71] The graph is made based on the data from Mrozek (1988), 63; cf. Mrozek (1973), 116.

centuries AD (Figure 6.2). Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that, whereas the number of Latin inscriptions in the second century is about three times larger than that of the first century, epigraphic references to privately sponsored public dining dated to the second century are nearly four times more numerous than attestations in the first century. If we take only those inscriptions that can be precisely dated into consideration, irrespective of the smaller number, a more detailed distribution pattern can be observed, as shown in Figure 6.3.

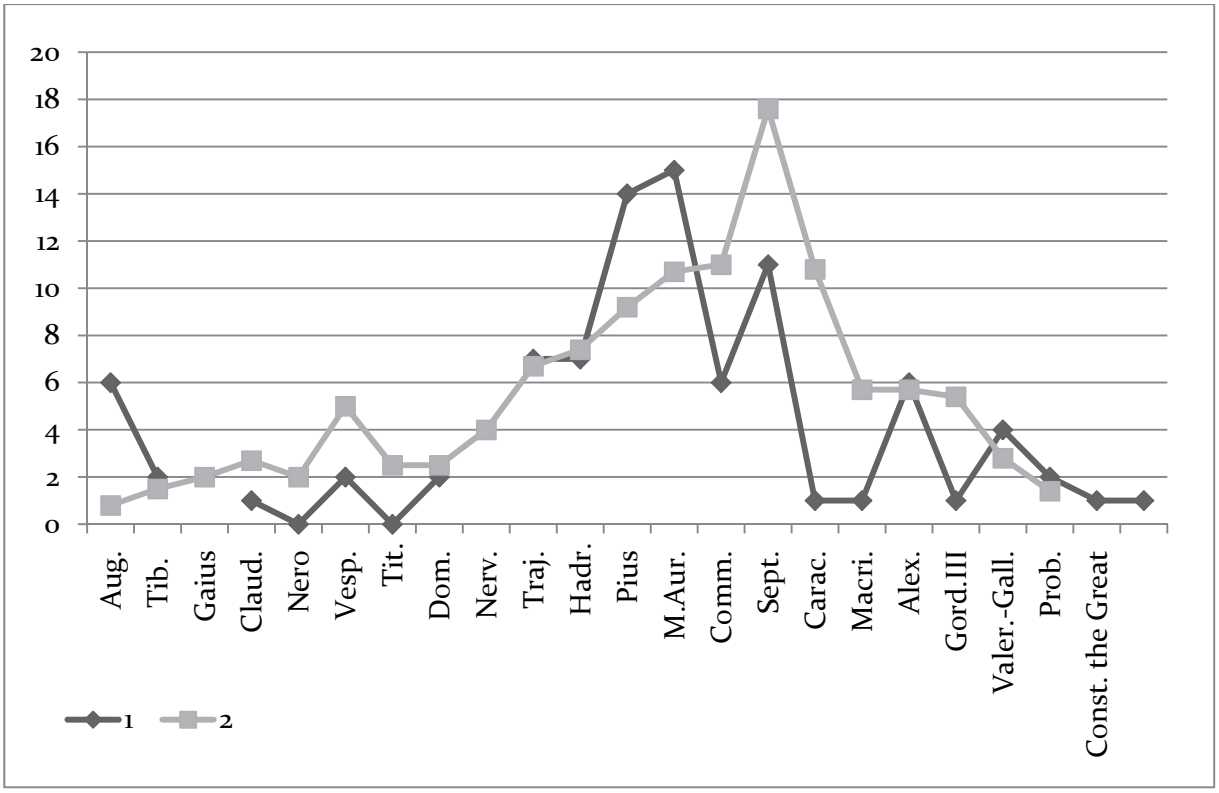

Figure 6.3 Chronological distribution of privately sponsored public dining by emperor's reign and a comparison with the epigraphic habit (1=number of inscriptions of privately sponsored public dining under the reign of the emperor; 2=number of inscriptions per year under the reign of the emperor)[72]

Curve 1 indicates that, during the first century of the Principate, from the Julio-Claudians through the Flavians, the number of relevant inscriptions is small. An increase can be observed from the reign of Trajan and the graph peaks under Marcus Aurelius. After this the number of inscriptions referring to privately sponsored public meals decreases but does show an increase under Septimius Severus and another slight increase under Severus Alexander. Curve 2 is an illustration of the epigraphic habit. It is clear that the distribution pattern of privately sponsored public dining is not perfectly consistent with epigraphic habit. It is not surprising to find that most of the

[72] The trendline of the epigraphic habit is based on the data from Mrozek (1973), 114.

relevant inscriptions stem from the second and early third century AD, when the epigraphic output reached its peak. However, it is striking that, although the reign of Septimius Severus witnessed the highest yield of inscriptions, the number of inscriptions documenting privately sponsored public dining did not peak in this period. The number of inscriptions referring to privately sponsored public meals peaks under Marcus Aurelius, at which time the total number of inscriptions in general had not yet reached its maximum. Do these findings prove that the chronological distribution of privately sponsored public dining is not merely an illustration of the epigraphic habit? Before this question can be answered, the practice of privately sponsored public meals has to be contextualized.

6.3.2 Chronological distribution in Italy and the western provinces: regional differences

Figure 6.4 shows the time distributions of the epigraphic evidence of privately sponsored public dining in various parts of the western half of the Empire. Strikingly each region has its own unique distribution pattern. Nevertheless it is possible to extrapolate a general trend: such dinners did not become popular before the second or third century AD. The evidence from Italy spans the longest period; North Africa and Spain come second and third. A handful of inscriptions from Dalmatia can be dated between the late first century to the third century. The pattern in Spain appears consistent with that of Italy, except that the former is confined to a more limited period. The amount of evidence from North Africa grows in the first two centuries, as it does in Italy. It should be noted that, when the Italian evidence began to decline in the early third century, growth was still maintained in the African provinces. Only in the second half of the third century do we see a downward trend in the number of North African inscriptions referring to privately sponsored public dinners.

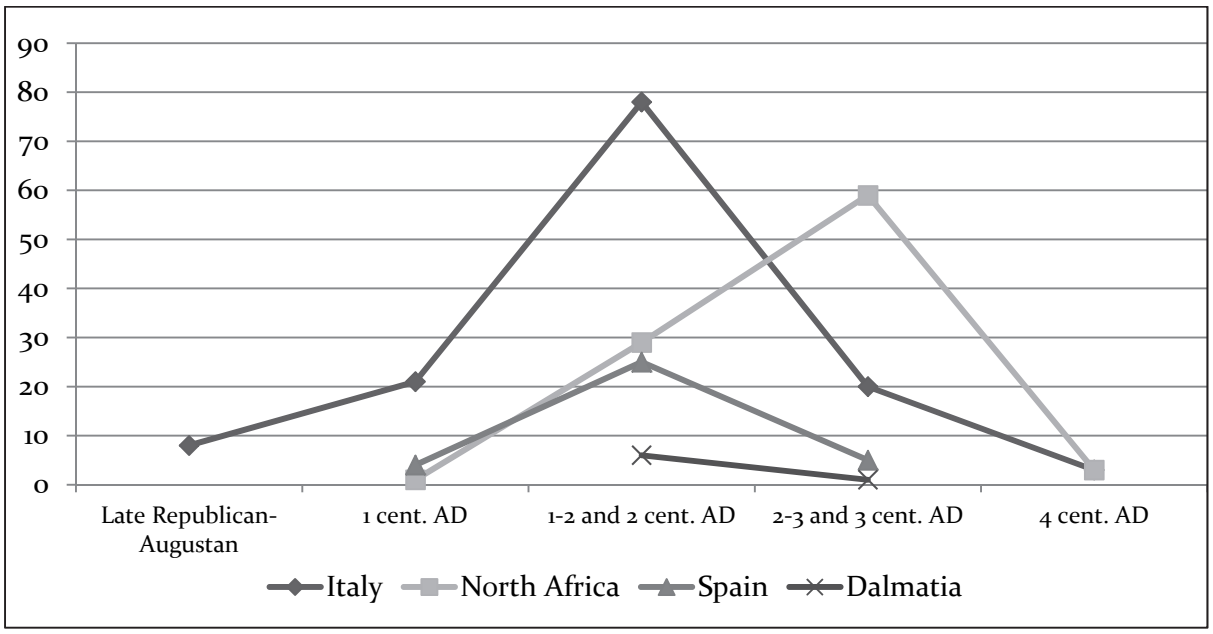

Figure 6.4 Chronological distribution by regions (1)[73]

A bar chart representing the same data shows the same pattern but allows a somewhat more precise analysis (Figure 6.5).

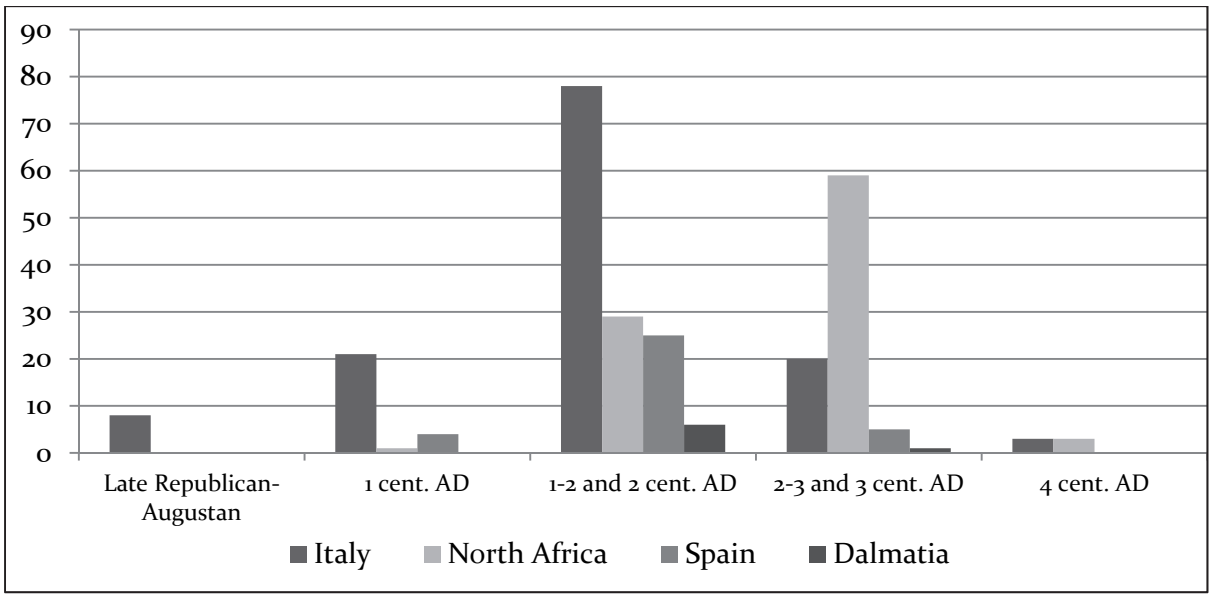

Figure 6.5 Chronological distribution by regions (2)

Both graphs confirm that the practice of privately sponsored communal dining spread first to the Italian Peninsula and only later to the western provinces. As mentioned

[73] This graph shows only the provinces which have yielded relatively ample evidence. Here, North Africa refers to Africa Proconsularis, Numidia and Mauretania Caesariensis; Spain means the whole of Baetica, Lusitania and Tarraconensis. Those provinces with little dated evidence, e.g. Noricum, Sicilia, Gallia Narbonensis and Alpes Maritimae, are not included.

above, P. Lucius Gamala from Ostia is thought to have been the first to have provided public dinners in an Italian city other than Rome.[74] The short distance between Ostia and Rome means that it is unsurprising to find the first municipal inscription recording private munificence in the former city: as Meiggs puts it 'the influence of Rome should be paramount at Ostia'.[75]

From the first century, evidence of privately sponsored public meals begins to appear in various western provinces, and this trend continues in the second and early third century. Throughout the western half of the Empire, the practice appears to have withered in the fourth century with only occasional findings in Italy and North Africa.

6.4 Contextualization of the development and decline of privately sponsored public dining

What historical reality might lie concealed behind the chronological distribution observed above? Why does a great number of inscriptions referring to private munificence expended on public dining come from the second century? Why did the third century see a remarkable decline? Why did the practice appear in Italy earlier than the western provinces and remain popular in Africa for longer than in Italy?

6.4.1 Comparison between different benefactions

Before examining various factors which might be held responsible for long-term trends in the amounts of surviving evidence for privately sponsored public dining, I shall provide a synchronic comparison between *euergetism* in the form of food and the other kinds of benefactions donated by individuals.

The aim of this exercise is to compose a more comprehensive picture of civic munificence in the Western Empire and to show to what extent it is related to epigraphic habit. Moreover, placing the epigraphic evidence of communal dining within the wider context of civic munificence makes it possible to gain some insights into the similarities and differences between the chronological development of a variety of benefactions, thereby helping us to see what was remarkable in the development of food-related benefactions. Two kinds of benefactions have been selected: privately sponsored public buildings and distributions of *sportulae*. The former was a more permanent form of *euergetism* than the provision of public dinners, while the latter is interesting because it is so closely connected to food gifts. A methodological point which should be made beforehand is that the three kinds of benefactions have all been mainly recorded in epigraphic sources and hence could have been affected by the same epigraphic habit. Nevertheless, as will be shown, the

[74] D'Arms (2000a), 197.
[75] Meiggs (1973), 13.

epigraphic evidence of these types of munificence shows somewhat different chronological distribution patterns, which provide some clues for a discussion about historical realities.

A variety of public buildings were paid for by private benefactors.[76] Figure 6.6 shows a comparison of the chronological distribution of privately financed public building on a provincial level (between Africa and other western regions excluding Rome).[77] Although the evidence from non-African areas is not complete, the comparison is sufficient to suggest two different trends: whereas private munificence related to public building in Italy (excluding Rome) and various western provinces experienced a general decline from Trajan onwards, the epigraphic evidence from Africa shows an increase in the period between Trajan and Caracalla.[78] It seems that paying for privately sponsored public buildings remained popular in Africa for longer than it did elsewhere in the West.[79] This observation appears to be consistent with our previous findings: the practice of privately sponsored public dining continued to thrive in Africa during the early third century, whereas it had declined in other regions.

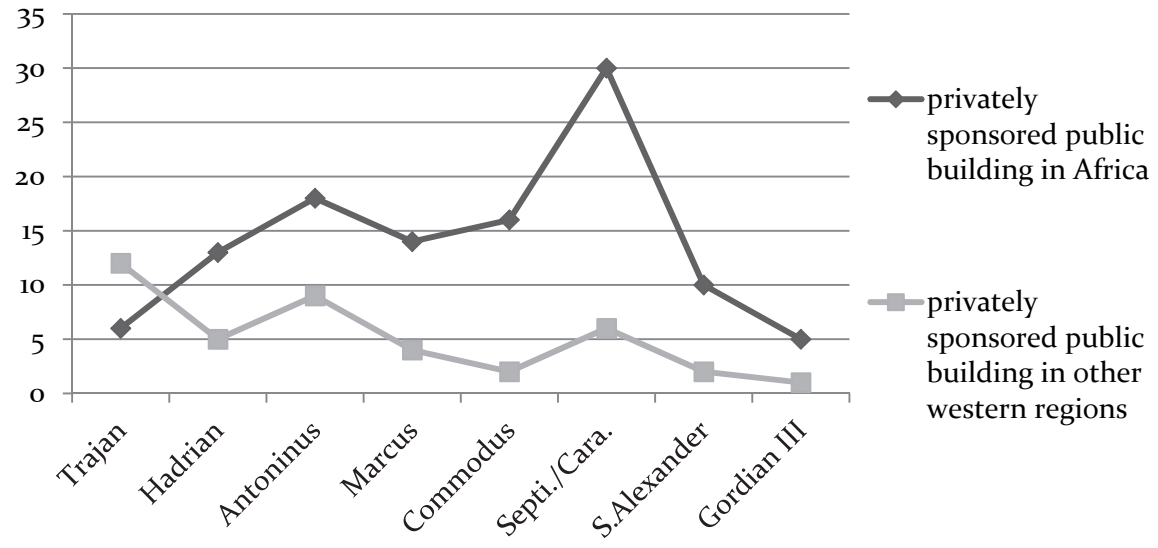

Figure 6.6 Comparison of chronological distribution of privately sponsored public dining between North Africa and other western regions

[76] Lomas (2003), 28-45; Blagg (1990), 13-31; Holleran (2003), 46-60; Horster (2015), 515-536; Jouffroy (1986); Frézouls (1984), 27-54; Duncan-Jones (1982), 90-93, 157-162.
[77] The two sets of data are from Duncan-Jones (1962), 77; cf. Duncan-Jones (1982), 352. Duncan-Jones mentions the collection of evidence in other western provinces is incomplete. Jouffroy (1986) provides a more complete catalogue of public buildings; however, he does not survey buildings paid for by benefactors.
[78] Duncan-Jones (1962), 55.
[79] *Ibid*. 51, indicates that in the later second/early third century civic munificence in Africa continued to flourish, even when we see the beginnings of a decline in other parts of the Empire.

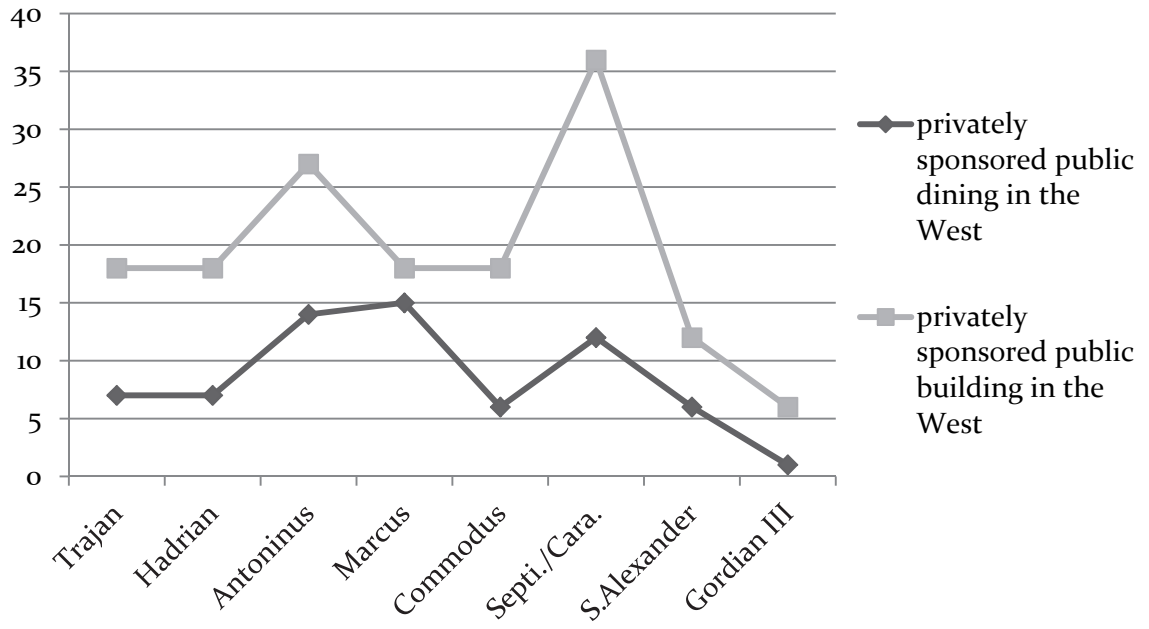

Figure 6.7 Comparison of chronological distribution between privately sponsored public dining and public building in the Roman West

Figure 6.7 shows a comparison between private expenditure on public building and on public dining (as shown above in Figure 6.3). The two curves of the developments through time do display similarities: both of them show an increase in the late first century, a gradual development during the second century and a decline after the early third century. In contrast, the two graphs peak in different periods: while public dining reached its highest level under Marcus Aurelius with a small revival under the Severan emperors, public building did reach a peak under Antoninus Pius but rose even higher under the early Severan emperors. This raises the question of why particular sorts of benefaction were more popular at different times.

Distributions of cash hand-outs (*sportulae*) were similar to privately funded public meals in that both types of benefactions were one-off activities. A comparison (Figure 6.8) between cash hand-outs (of known amounts) and food benefactions in Italy,[80] shows that the most popular period for both kinds of benefactions was the second century (although the sources do indicate that providing food gifts occurred over a longer period of time). Pertinently, the popularity of food-related benefactions peaked under Antoninus Pius whereas *sportulae* under Marcus Aurelius.

[80] The epigraphic evidence of specific sums of money being given as *sportulae* was collected by Duncan-Jones (1982), 188-198 and 353, Table 14. In Duncan-Jones' catalogue of *sportulae* from North Africa, there are only nine items which can be dated to a particular emperor. All these items belong to the period from Antoninus Pius to Gallienus. Because of the smallness of this sample these texts have not been used here.

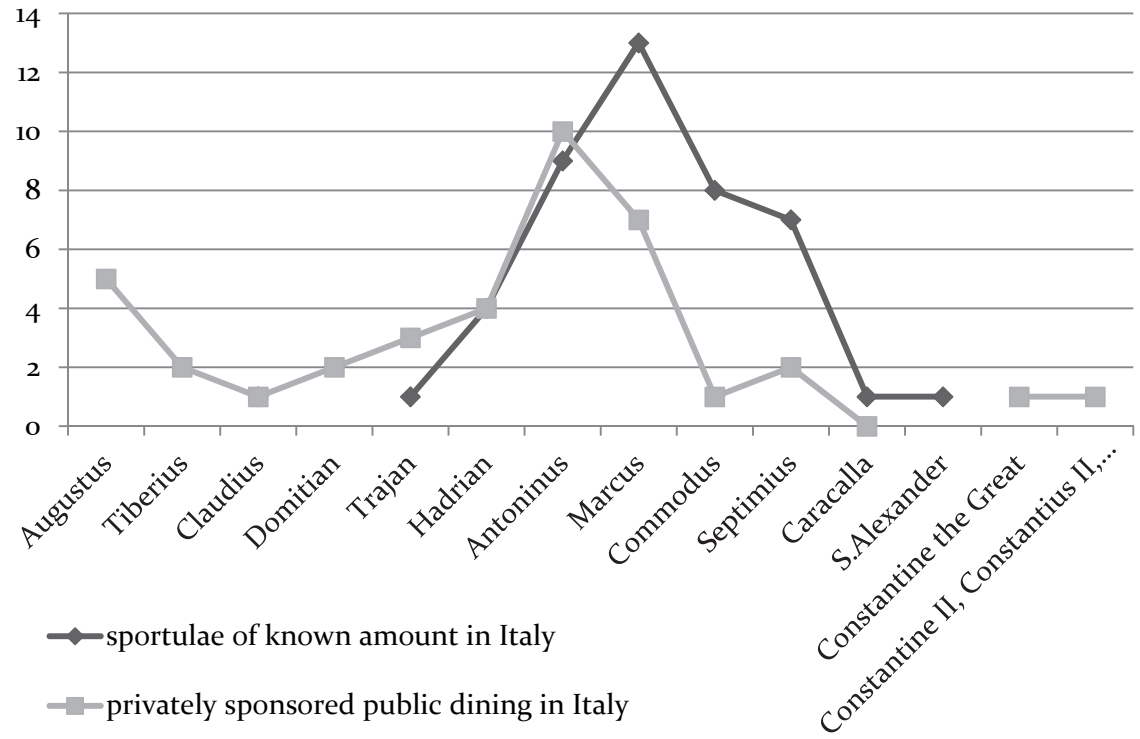

Figure 6.8 Comparison of chronological distribution between distributions of *sportulae* and privately sponsored public dining in Italy

Because the African provinces have yielded few datable inscriptions mentioning *sportulae*, they have been excluded from the graph. However, the datable North African inscriptions also show that *sportulae* were most often distributed between the second and the mid-third century. This once again suggests that private munificence became more popular in Africa in this relatively late period.

A comparison with chronological trends in the Roman East is instructive. In her study of Roman theatre dedications, Sturgeon examines the practice of theatre dedications in the western and eastern halves of the empire. She concludes that most of the theatres were paid for by private donors and should be dated to the second century AD.[81]

In his monograph on *euergetism* in Roman Asia Minor, Zuiderhoek has investigated various types of benefactions. His reconstruction of the chronological developments in civic munificence broadly matches the patterns in the West.[82] His findings indicate that munificence boomed in the second and early third century. Although he recognizes that the amount of surviving evidence must have been influenced by the epigraphic habit, he argues that his findings conform to chronological patterns exhibited by other archaeological findings of the period. As

[81] Sturgeon (2004), 424-425.
[82] Zuiderhoek (2009), 18-19, Figure 1.2 and 1.3; Appendix 3.

erecting inscriptions to record munificence was closely related to the practice of *euergetism* itself, the rise and fall of the number of inscriptions is likely to be indicative of the evolution of this practice.[83]

Although various types of privately sponsored benefactions show a similar general trend during the first three centuries, plenty of interesting features can still be identified: even though the second century saw a number of peaks for different benefactions, these peaks occurred at different points in time for each kind of benefaction and also at different moments in various regions. One-off benefactions – gifts of food and *sportulae* – seem to have reached their peak earlier than privately financed public buildings. Interestingly, the distribution of *sportulae* began later but reached a higher peak than that of public dinners/food hand-outs in Italy. Taking regional differences into account, it appears that the popularity of private munificence was at its highest in Italy at an earlier moment than in Africa. These region-specific patterns suggest that we are looking at historical developments, not just at illusions created by the epigraphic habit.

6.4.2 Economic growth, inequality and munificence

An absolutely essential prerequisite for displaying munificence was the possession of personal wealth. If we accept this truism, we would expect to find a connection between the proliferation of private munificence in the context of public dining (and other kinds of benefaction) and the augmentation of wealth which is known to have occurred among the elite during the High Empire. Numerous studies and debates have been concerned with economic growth and growing economic inequality during imperial times.[84]

There is little doubt that local elites in the communities of the Western Empire grew wealthier. In his study of elite wealth in the Eastern Empire, Zuiderhoek examines the 'big' gifts made during the imperial period and observes that their number peaked in the second century. He also points out a dramatic increase in the number of eastern elite members who could meet the entry requirements for the Roman Senate, the equestrian order and high provincial offices during the second century.[85] All these indicators imply an increase in elite wealth during that period.

[83] Zuiderhoek (2009), 21.

[84] It is generally accepted that the peace restored by Augustus and the subsequent *pax Romana* lay at the basis of economic growth under the Principate, see Garnsey and Saller (2015), 78. Possible causes related to economic growth have been examined: demographic change, urbanization, technology and legal institutions. For a recent overview of the development of Roman economy, see Garnsey and Saller (2015), 88-90. For a good discussion of increasing elite wealth in the first to fourth centuries AD see Hopkins (2002), 207.

[85] Zuiderhoek (2009), 57-59. His data on the senators from the East are based on the collection of Halfmann (1979). For the analysis of recruiting provincials into the Senate, see Hammond (1957), Hopkins (1983), Vol. 2, 184-193 and 200 for the table on origins of known senators.

Similarly, the increase in the number of privately funded public buildings and other 'big' gifts which can be observed in the western half of the Empire in the second century compared to the first and the third century strongly suggests that the elites in the communities of the western half of the Empire also accumulated wealth in this period.

The increase in wealth among the elite would undeniably have enabled benefactions. However, money alone was not enough. There had to be a motivation to generate particular benefactions in practice.[86] As discussed in the previous chapter, differences in regional/local political cultures could account for the different patterns and levels of elite expenditure on public amenities and occasions. However, at least in those parts of the Empire in which local elites were expected to demonstrate their concern for the well-being of their fellow-citizens, the new accumulation of wealth provided new opportunities to engage in benefactions which would be bestowed on local communities. Because benefactors who took good care of their fellow citizens were rewarded with various honours, such munificence helped to affirm the elite's elevated position in local civic community. Public dining in particular was a way to bring the community together and benefit everyone alike. In short, public munificence was an effective way of converting economic capital into social and political capital.

6.4.3 Changes in the political culture

The evolution of private munificence expended on public dining largely depended on developments related to the local elite. Therefore an analysis of developments in the structure of local politics is an aid to understanding the evolutions which took place in public dining.

In his study of the urban aristocracies of the Roman Empire, Peter Garnsey observes that serving in local government was an opportunity 'voluntary and sought-after' during the early empire, but was later made compulsory and widely shunned from the late-third or early fourth century onwards. Writing of the financial pressure related to office-holding in the cities, he points:

> We are faced therefore with something of a paradox. Detailed evidence has been presented which suggests that the expenses of the decurionate were increasing by the first half of the second century AD and that financial distress was not absent from the ranks of decurions. At the same time

[86] Possible ways to dispose of the surplus wealth, as suggested by Duncan-Jones, include wealth accumulation, spending on luxury items, legacies to friends and relations and providing donations for the public and this last choice would pay off. See Duncan-Jones (1963), 161-162.

> inscriptions indicate that voluntary expenditure by local benefactors reached a high point in both quantity and value in the same period.[87]

Garnsey's investigations reveal that the financial burdens attached to the office of local council had increased by the first half of the second century – but this did not cause a decline. In his view, the flourishing of munificent practices in this period can be explained as 'a result of the operation of natural factors such as the growth of wealth and the pressure of competition for office'.[88]

In the long run, however, we do see a decline which can be related to the changing position of local decurions in the administration of the Empire. The strengthening of the centralized imperial power system and the imposition of new financial burdens and heavy responsibilities undermined the power and status of the local councillors.[89] Enticingly, those working in the imperial service were exempt from financial obligations towards the city.[90] In a nutshell, it became less attractive to hold local office and members of the local elite began to seek positions in the imperial administration. This ambition had negative consequences for their role as benefactors, including benefactions related to public dining.

The political context of elite munificence in the second and early third centuries AD

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, the popular election of the magistrates and, directly or indirectly, of the councillors, gradually fell into abeyance in the second century AD. Nevertheless, this did not mean that the ideal of the citizen community lost its importance in this period. Even if local assemblies were reduced to a passive role, ideally the local citizen body continued to be perceived as a source of legitimacy for magistrates and town councillors. This helps to explain why private munificence on public buildings and on public meals peaked in the second and early third century. It does not seem unduly speculative to suggest that the gradual devaluation of popular elections prompted members of the elite to look for alternative ways of reaffirming the significance of the citizen body thereby demonstrating their unwavering concern for the well-being of the community as a whole and for all citizens who constituted that community. While shouldering the costs of public buildings was an effective way of demonstrating concern for the civic community as a whole, organizing a public meal

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[87] Garnsey (1998), 14.
[88] Garnsey (1998), 14; on 15 he also indicates that, 'if their decline, and that of the whole order, was slow, this was because economic conditions were relatively favourable and the political situation stable in the Antonine period.'
[89] Ward-Perkins (1998), 375-376.
[90] Millar (1986), 306-307, argues that local wealth was not taken by the central government, 'but the cities were unable to tap it for their communal needs' because of the immunity rules.

for all people having local citizenship rights was an excellent way of symbolically underlining the enduring importance of membership of the local civic community.

Another important development which took place during the first-to-third century AD was a gradual differentiation within town councils. Of course, there had always been significant distinctions in wealth among members of local town councils. A very good example is the literary and epigraphic references to the 'first ten councillors' (*decemprimi*) in various Italian and Sicilian cities. These references begin to appear as early as the late-republican period. From the second half of the first century AD, we begin to find references to 'the first ten' (*dekaprotoi*) or 'the first twenty' (*eikosaprotoi*) in the eastern half of the empire. It has been plausibly suggested that such groups were the forerunners of 'the first members of the town council' (*principales*) whom we meet as a privileged group in Late Antiquity.[91]

In his book on Late Antiquity, Peter Brown puts forward the suggestion that, in the age of the Antonines, although the elite competed with their peers, they also adhered to a 'model of parity' thereby avoiding unnecessary tensions among themselves.[92] Organizing a public meal for *decuriones* was an effective way of advertising social superiority without jeopardizing elite solidarity.

It appears that strong incentives for munificence could only make sense in 'an age of equipoise'.[93] As long as local citizen communities remained the principal social settings in which honour and legitimacy could be won, local elites continued express social superiority and allegiance to civic values through civic munificence. The decline in municipal munificence was the outcome of a transformation in political cultures, both at the imperial centre and on the local level.

Oligarchization and female benefactors

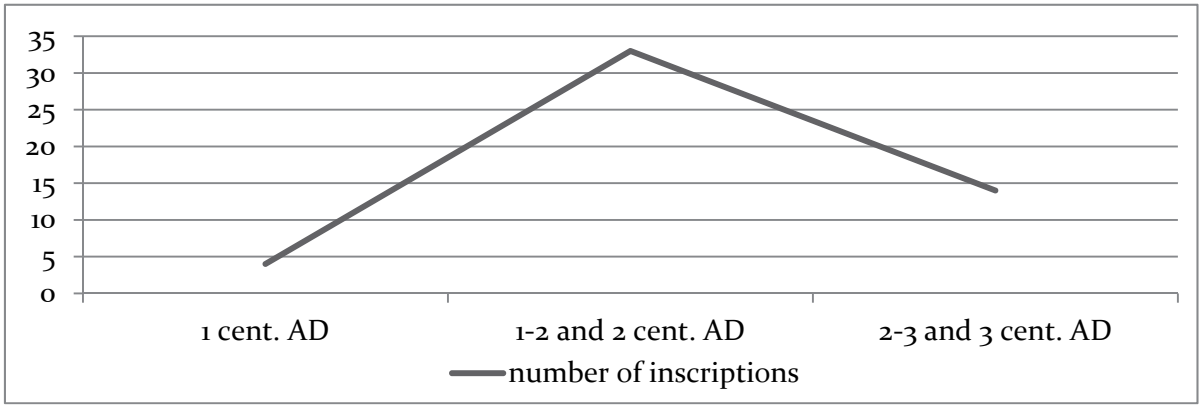

Figure 6.9 Chronological distribution of inscriptions referring to benefactresses of public dining

[91] De Ste Croix (1981), 471.
[92] Brown (1978), 34-38.
[93] *Ibid*. 34.

The epigraphic evidence of female benefactors providing public meals also reached its peak during the second century (Figure 6.9). What is the explanation behind the development of female munificence in the second century? It is possible that elite women aqcuired greater fortunes in this era of economic growth and increasing social inequality. However, wealth alone is not enough to explain the increase in benefactions provided by women.[94]

In her study of women's civic activities in the Greek East, Van Bremen points out that female participation in civic life was an outcome of multiple factors, including 'family tradition, the preservation of status, political ambitions and ideological developments'.[95] She argues that civic ideology played a big role in the Hellenistic period: citizenship and civic duty underlay the behaviour of individual citizens and this included women. From the late Hellenistic period onwards, when local societies became more oligarchical, prominent women began to be presented as members of the elite families, and this trend continued during the first centuries of the Principate.[96] Throughout this period, elite women were allowed, even expected, to spend money on civic *euergetism*. They sometimes did so in conjunction with their husbands or sons, but Van Bremen also gives examples of female benefactors acting independently. Similarly, Hemelrijk observes that female munificence in the cities of Italy and the western provinces was often conducted independently of male relatives.[97]

As society became more oligarchical, we see a rise in both male and female munificence. For both sexes we see a peak in the second century. As did their male counterparts female benefactors were demonstrating elite allegiance to core civic values, but they were also sending out another message: in the increasingly oligarchical communities of the second and early third century AD local politics was becoming a family affair.

Regional differences

General trends aside, private munificence on public dining did not develop at the same pace in each region. The earliest evidence comes from mainland Italy in the late Republican period and the early days of the Principate. The evidence from the western provinces is found in the first three centuries AD. As has been noted, the practice seems to have flourished in North Africa longer than it did in Italy.[98] Duncan-Jones states that African inscriptions which can be dated to the reigns of particular emperors,

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[94] See Van Bremen (1996), 202-236, who questions the extent to which women could dispose of their wealth.

[95] *Ibid*. 299. MacMullen (1980), 209, remarks that election of priestesses was related to economic power, social connections, family background and even personal qualities.

[96] Van Bremen (1996), 300-301.

[97] Hemelrijk (2015), 178-179.

[98] For a chronological distribution of other benefactions in Africa and Italy, see Duncan-Jones (1982), 350-357.

are heavily concentrated in the second and early third century.[99] His statistics also show that North Africa has far more buildings which can be dated by emperor than Italy and that the erection of public buildings in the African provinces peaked under Septimius Severus.[100] Since public dinners were often an integral part of the dedication of buildings, this building boom helps to explain why inscriptions referring to privately sponsored dinners also peak in the early third century. More generally, the combined archaeological and epigraphic evidence suggests that, compared to other parts of the Empire, North Africa had an unusually vibrant civic life under the Severan dynasty.[101]

This hypothesis is corroborated by looking at changes in the composition of the Roman Senate. The first time at which provincials accounted for a larger portion of senators (57 percent) than Italians (43 percent) was during the reign of Septimius Severus. Moreover, commencing in the reign of Antoninus Pius the number of senators from Africa had begun to surpass the number from the other western provinces. From the late second century to the third century, African senators were a dominant factor in the Senate.[102] As does the archaeological and epigraphic evidence from North Africa, this trend suggests wealth and prosperity flourished among the African elites in the second and third centuries.

6.4.4 Social and political changes in the later Empire

From the mid-third century to the fourth century – coping with financial pressure arising from unrest – the imperial authorities exercised more control over the local administration and established a more centralized government supported by an expanded imperial bureaucracy. One outcome of these changes was that there was more imperial intervention in local affairs, a situation which made assuming local office less attractive. The increased burdens and responsibilities imposed on the local councillors produced a growing disinterest in holding local offices among the elites. Their attempts to secure exemption from financial obligations by seeking a position in the imperial bureaucracy, mentioned earlier in this chapter, exacerbated the deterioration of local councils. This whole chain of events had a negative effect on the number of local benefactors, including those who would pay for public dining.

As Peter Brown has noted long ago, it is too simple to see the imperial court, the imperial administration and the army of the third century as 'forces that came to impinge from the outside on the life of the traditional urban classes'. He points out that, 'the style of urban life, the life of the upper classes of the Roman world did not collapse under pressure outside: it exploded'.[103] Instead of collapsing under the weight

[99] *Ibid*. 351.
[100] *Ibid*. 352.
[101] Lassère (1977).
[102] Hammond (1957), 77-81; for a table showing the comparison, see Hopkins (1983), Vol. 2, 200.
[103] Brown (1978), 45.

of external pressures, many prominent members of local elites took advantage of the new career opportunities offered by the expanding imperial administration.[104]

However, even if new career opportunities for municipal aristocrats were an important part of the picture, indisputably the second half of the third century witnessed the breakdown of those mechanisms by which members of the local elites had once channelled their ambitions in their own cities. Part of the reason for this change of heart was that those who managed to obtain lucrative positions in the growing bureaucracy began to identify their status and power with the positions they enjoyed in the imperial government.[105]

This shift in perception meant that the old 'give-and-give-in-return' model of power and benefactions lost much of its attraction. Powerful members of local elites could now be granted official powers by the emperor and derive their prestige from their new positions. The upshot was that both the recognition of local communities and local peer competition were drained of most of their previous importance.

Leaving aside these political and social developments, the rise of Christianity might have contributed to the decline in specific types of munificence, among them the provision of public meals at private expense.[106] It is possible to suggest, for instance, that the use of privately sponsored pubic meals as a way of affirming the continuing importance of membership of local communities lost much its original attraction in an age in which Christians began to feed poor town-dwellers from religiously inspired charitable motives rather than because they were in pursuit of public statues or other rewards so important to the political culture of the first to early third centuries AD.

6.5 Chronological distribution pattern of privately sponsored dining for *collegia* and *Augustales*

Collegial banquets were familiar features of daily life during the Republic, as the first section above and the following remark from Varro demonstrate: *collegiorum cenae, quae nunc innumerabiles excandefaciunt annonam macelli*.[107] A votive inscription set up by the Faliscans who settled in Sardinia also offers evidence of collegial banqueting in the republican period.[108] However, in view of the fact that only a small amount of inscriptional evidence contains information about private munificence expended on

[104] Cf. Melchor Gil (1994), 77-81; Melchor Gil (1994), 212, 'La decadencia y desaparición del evergetismo debe relacionarse con una serie de cambios operados en la estructura del Imperio y en la mentalidad de sus élites.'
[105] Brown (1978), 48.
[106] For a discussion of the decline in civic munificence, see Zuiderhoek (2009), 154-157.
[107] Varro, *Rust*. 3.2.16.
[108] *CIL* XI, 3078 = *CIL* XI, 7483 = *CIL* I, 364 = *ILS* 3083 = *ILLRP* 192. The date of this inscription is suggested to be around the 2nd century BC, see Dyson and Rowland (2007), 139; Bakkum (2009), 499, indicates it 'can be dated to the second half or even the last quarter of the second century'.

collegial dining, any attempt to reconstruct the chronological distribution of this practice can be no more than tentative. This observation is also valid for the period of the Empire. Keeping this in mind, it is possible to make some cautious observations about chronological developments.

The pattern (Figure 6.10) presented by the datable inscriptions closely resembles the chronological pattern of public dining: the number of epigraphic references increases between the first century and the second century and declines from the third century and thereafter. However, when the inscriptions referring to collegial meals are arranged according to the reigns of individual emperors (implying a further reduction in the amount of data), some differences in the chronological distributions of epigraphic references to privately sponsored public dining and privately funded collegial meals can be observed.

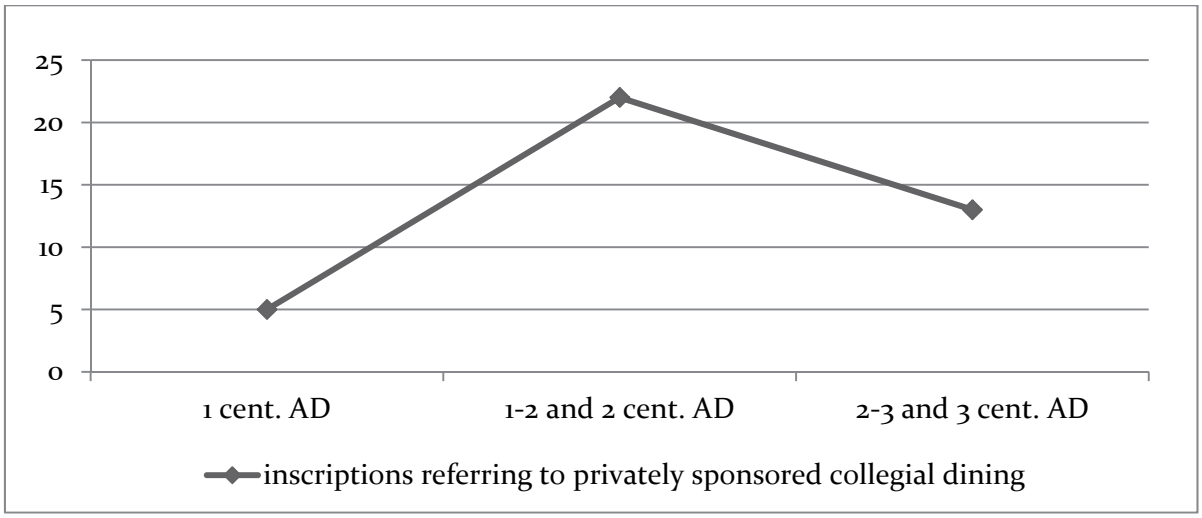

Figure 6.10 Chronological distribution of privately sponsored collegial dining over the centuries

As the sample is so small, it is impossible to argue that the evidence offers a true reflection of the historical evolution of privately sponsored dining for *collegia* and the *Augustales*, but general trends can be extrapolated. As can be seen in Figure 6.11, the small amount of surviving evidence relating to privately sponsored collegial dining is concentrated in a short period, the majority dating to the period between Nerva and Marcus Aurelius.

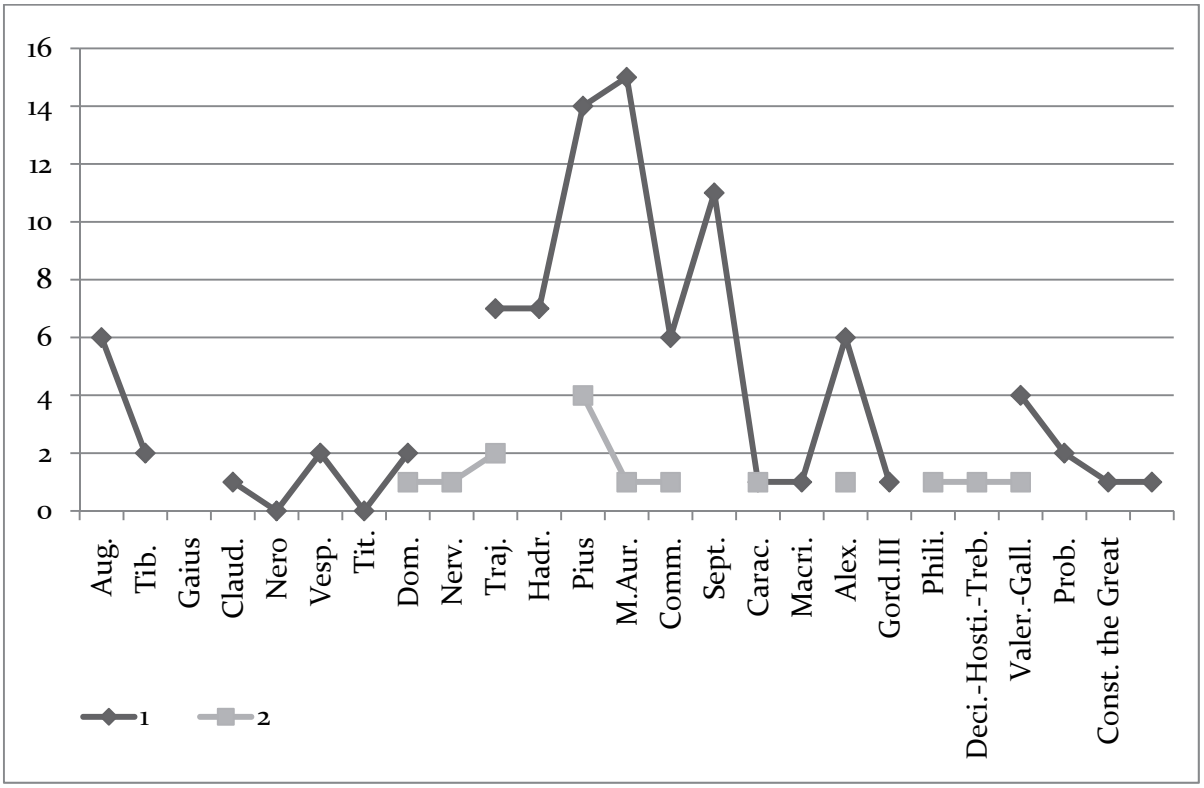

Figure 6.11 Chronological distribution of privately sponsored collegial dining by emperor's reign and a comparison with that of private munificence on public dining[109]

It seems reasonable to assume that the factors which influenced public dining, discussed above, also affected collegial dining, but below I shall focus on a number of aspects specifically related to the *collegia* and *Augustales*.

6.6 Contextualization of privately sponsored collegial dining

The way in which privately sponsored collegial dining developed should be seen as closely related to historical developments regarding these associations. What attitudes did the authorities adopt towards them? Why did *collegia* and the *Augustales* receive food-related benefactions from private munificence in certain periods? To what extent did the practice of privately sponsored public dining influence private munificence towards associations?

6.6.1 Chronological developments

Collegia in the Roman Republic

[109] 1=number of inscriptions concerning private munificence on public dining under the reign of the emperor; 2= number of inscriptions referring to privately sponsored collegial dining under the reign of the emperor.

Although the *collegia* certainly had a long history in Roman society, it is very difficult to obtain a clear picture of their origins. Some classical texts date the origins of some *collegia* to the regal period: their connection with King Numa can be found in the narratives of Plutarch and Pliny the Elder, while Florus proposes another candidate – King Servius Tullius.[110] It is impossible to verify the reliability of these stories and, as Gabba suggests, these stories were created in a period in which steps were being taken to abolish *collegia*, indicating that they should be seen as attempts to bolster the legitimacy of private associations with pseudo-historical arguments.[111] To judge from a provision contained in the Law of the Twelve Tables, *collegia* enjoyed a great deal of autonomy in the early days of the Republic.[112] The Senate's decision to repress the Bacchic clubs in 186 BC indicates that, in this period, the authorities did have certain kinds of *collegia* in their sights, but there is nothing to suggest that all private associations were seen as disruptive.[113] This leniency changed in the final decades of the Republic, a time at which the *collegia* were becoming embroiled in political struggles.[114] This development prompted the government to adopt a more restrictive policy, as exemplified by the *Senatus consultum de collegiis* of 64 BC and the *Lex Iulia de collegiis*.[115] Julius Caesar ordered the dissolution of all *collegia* with the exception of those of ancient origin.[116]

In Italy and the western provinces it has been suggested that the oldest *collegia* were of the 'Campanian-Delian' type which were known to have been flourishing in Campania and on Delos in the late second and early first century BC. A few comparable *collegia* emerged in the Iberian Peninsula and Gallia Narbonensis around the same time.[117]

Collegia under the Principate

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[110] Plut. *Num*. 17.2-3; Pliny the Elder, *HN* 34.1, 35.159; Flor. 1.6.3.
[111] Gabba (1984), 85.
[112] *Dig.* 47.22.4: the members of the same association had the right to make any agreement they had wished provided that they did nothing in violation of the public law and it may have been taken from the enactment of Solon. De Robertis (1971), 41-55. Examining the freedom of *collegia* during the Republic, Linderski compares two different views and supports that the development of the *collegia* was not suppressed until the last century of the Republic, see Linderski (2013), 203.
[113] For the Bacchanalian affair, see North (1979), 85-103; Gruen (1990), 34-78. This action did not seem to have an adverse impact on other *collegia*, see Waltzing (1895-1900), Vol. 1, 97. For the attested republican associations, see Liu (2013), 353.
[114] Taylor (1949), 44; Taylor (1948), 327-330.
[115] For the abolition of *collegia* by the Roman Senate in 64 BC, see Asconius, *Pis*. 8. Linderski (2013), 204-210, discusses the legislation concerning the *collegia* in 64 BC. For the *Lex Iulia*, see *CIL* VI, 2193. For the legislation on *collegia* in the Roman Republic, see Liebenam (1890), 16-29; Waltzing (1895-1900), Vol. 1, 78-113.
[116] Suet. *Iul*. 42.3.
[117] Verboven (2012) 23-24.

Adhering closely to Caesar's policies, Augustus ordered the dissolution of *collegia* with the exception of those which could be classified as '*antiqua et legitima*'.[118] In this period, usefulness to the state (*utilitas civitatis*) seems to have become a criterion for granting approval to *collegia*. Linderski says that this criterion was introduced by the *lex Iulia de collegiis*, but Cotter suggests that the credit should go to Augustus.[119] On the basis of the laws passed against *collegia* in the late Republic and the early days under Augustus, Richardson argues that 'in times of factionalism and strife *collegia* tended to be permitted, but in times when reconstruction and consolidation were important, *collegia* were restricted.'[120]

This observation also seems to apply to the period after Augustus. Whether on imperial, provincial or municipal level, imperial wariness and vigilance of *collegia* can be detected in literary sources, municipal statutes and official correspondence with the emperor. According to Cassius Dio, Claudius dissolved those *collegia* which had been re-introduced by Caligula.[121] Tacitus tells us that, under Nero, the illegal *collegia* of Pompeii were dissolved after violence had broken out at a gladiatorial show.[122] During the reign of Domitian, a municipal charter from Spain, the *Lex Irnitana*, stipulated that illegal gatherings or illicit meetings held by *collegia* were placed under a total ban.[123] Furthermore, the correspondence between Trajan and Pliny the Younger clearly demonstrates the emperor's vigilance against any disturbances which could potentially be caused by *collegia*.[124] In one of his letters, the emperor commented that, 'Whatever title we give them and whatever our object in bestowing it, men who are banded together for a common end will all the same become a political association before long'.[125]

In spite of the rigorous scrutiny imposed on them by the authorities, no absolute and complete ban was imposed on *collegia*. In fact, various groups obtained permission to form *collegia*.[126] In chronological terms, inscriptions referring to c*ollegia* are not well attested in Italy until the late first century; more evidence was generated during the

[118] Suet. *Aug*. 32.1. For an understanding of *antiqua* and *legitima*, see Liu (2009), 100-101; cf. De Ligt (2000), 244: 'The ancient ones that had been exempted by Caesar and those that had been newly established in accordance with the *lex Iulia*.'
[119] See Linderski (2013), 209; Cotter (1996), 78. Liu suggests that, 'it does not necessarily imply that the association had to assume specific duties assigned by the state or the city', see Liu (2013), 354-355.
[120] Richardson (1996), 93.
[121] Cass. Dio 60.6.6.
[122] Tac. *Ann.* 14.17.
[123] *AE* 1986, 333, *rubrica* 74. For translation and commentary of the law, see González and Crawford (1986).
[124] Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae* 10.33, 10.34.
[125] *Ibid*. 10.34.
[126] De Ligt (2000), 246-247; Verboven (2016), 186. For a list of *collegia* which were granted imperial or senatorial authorization, see Liu (2009), 105.

second and early third century.[127] In total there are forty datable inscriptions referring to privately sponsored dining for the *collegia* and *Augustales* together (36 of which were found in Italy).

As conjectured by Verboven, the near-universal absence of *collegia* in the epigraphic record of the Julio-Claudian period might be an indication that the associations were neither very affluent nor very prominent in this period. Alternatively, their awareness of the distrust in which they were held by the elite might have dissuaded associations from advertising their activities too widely. With these ideas in mind, Verboven argues that *collegia* began to acquire prominence in the Roman cities during the Flavian period and peaked in the Antonine period.[128] If this view is accepted, the higher number of epigraphic references to *collegia* in the mid-second century AD is more than just a mirror of the epigraphic habit, it also points to a real trend. In similar vein, Patterson has suggested that *collegia* became 'increasingly respectable' during the second century AD.[129]

References to privately sponsored collegial dining begin to appear in the late first century. In the second century the importance of *collegia* in the civic communities was recognized, prompting non-members to pay the *collegiati* attention. Bearing this assertion out, most of the inscriptions referring to the participation of *collegia* in public dinners also date from the second or third centuries AD.[130] Even if the amount of evidence is limited, it seems unlikely that it is merely a coincidence that the inclusion of *collegia* as participants in privately funded public dinners happened to reach a zenith in the period in which privately sponsored collegial dining became more visible. One possible explanation is that the participation of associations in public dinners inspired *collegiati* to emulate this practice within their own organizations.

The Augustales under the Empire

Evidence of privately sponsored dining targeting *Augustales* only is found exclusively in Italy and is concentrated in the late first century and the second century AD.[131]

Scholars have examined the use of various titles related to the *Augustales* chronologically.[132] Leaving this discussion and that of the (re)organization of the *Augustales* under different reigns aside, we are left with the question of how the chronological distribution of the evidence of privately funded meals to which only *Augustales* were invited can be accounted for. There are only eight datable inscriptions

[127] Patterson (1994), 236; Liu (2008b).
[128] Verboven (2016), 193.
[129] Patterson (1994), 236.
[130] Second or third century: *CIL* IX, 3842; *AE* 2000, 533; *CIL* X, 451; *CIL* V, 7905; second century: *CIL* X, 5796; *CIL* IX, 2553; *AE* 1954, 154; *CIL* XII, 5905; late first century: *CIL* XII, 697; late first to third century: *CIL* V, 7920.
[131] For *Augustales* taking part in public dinners with other civic groups, see Chapter 3.
[132] Taylor (1914); Mouritsen (2006), 247-248.

reporting eleven benefactors providing food gifts for the *Augustales*, and nine of the benefactors mentioned in these inscriptions were actual members of this group.[133] Although this sample is extremely small, the most plausible explanation of this generosity is that these benefactors were following the example of prominent decurions who organized public meals for other members of the town council. If this view is accepted, it is perhaps no coincidence that both types of communal dining peaked in the same period.

6.6.2 Concluding observations

The inscriptional evidence relating to collegial dining is found over a shorter period of time than the epigraphic evidence of privately sponsored public dining. In the interpretation of this pattern, the gradual loosening of legal restrictions on *collegia* and the increasingly important role of associations as widely recognized building blocks of local communities have been important considerations. From the time of Caesar onwards, the government probably never allowed *collegia* to develop without proper supervision. Although this scrutiny will have hampered collegial activities, the epigraphic evidence demonstrates that some (legal) *collegia* did still benefit from private munificence to pay for their commensality, especially in the second century AD.

It is a plausible assumption that the increasing prominence of *collegia* drew the attention of potential external benefactors who not only regarded *collegiati* as deserving recipients of privately funded public dinners but also bestowed exclusive benefactions on these associations. In the case of the *Augustales*, the very limited amount of evidence allows no more than the inference that prominent members of these associations followed the example set by members of the local town council in organizing dinners for *Augustales* only.

Taking of the relatively large number of inscriptions from Italy into consideration, it might be suggested that the practice of privately funded collegial dining was influenced by the specific political culture(s) which existed in Italy. Compared to the situation in other regions, it seems that these associations played a relatively prominent role in the civic communities of this particular part of the empire. The fact that a significant number of Italian benefactors had begun to invite *collegiati* and the *Augustales* to privately sponsored public dinners signals the social recognition of these groups as constituent elements of civic communities. Their enhanced civic and political status implied by this development might have prompted external benefactors to bestow their favour on *collegiati* or *Augustales* as the only recipients of benefactions and also have encouraged the internal members of the associations to emulate the benefactions of civic elites on a smaller scale.

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[133] *AE* 1993, 474; *AE* 193, 472(father and two sons); *AE* 2000, 344 (a couple); *CIL* V, 5809; *AE* 1993, 479; *CIL* X, 1880; *AE* 1993, 477; *CIL* IX, 4691.

6.7 Conclusions

This chapter has investigated the developments and changes in private munificence expended on public and collegial dining over time. The practice of privately sponsored public dining emerged in the republican period and grew in popularity under the Empire. While the emperor monopolized food-related benefactions in the city of Rome, local benefactors played a big role in benefiting the communities in Italy and the western provinces.

The core issue put forward at the very beginning of this chapter is: To what extent did chronological distribution of private munificence on public dining reflect the evolution of this practice? When the evidence is arranged on a century-by-century basis, the chronological distribution of inscriptions referring to privately sponsored public dinners closely mirrors the epigraphic habit but when the dateable inscriptions are grouped by emperors some interesting differences do come to light. More differences are also revealed when a comparison is made between privately funded food benefactions and other types of private munificence. These discrepancies suggest that the chronological distribution of the evidence of privately sponsored public dinners cannot be entirely attributed to the epigraphic habit.

It would seem that the increase in the number of references to privately funded public meals in the first two centuries AD was likely to have been the outcome of socio-political developments. In part because the voting rights of local assemblies were beginning to fall in abeyance, local elites started looking for alternative ways of affirming their allegiance to core civic values, such as the importance of local citizenship rights and the expectation that members of the political and social elite would take care of their less well-off fellow-citizens. There are also indications that local elites were becoming increasingly differentiated in terms of their wealth. This helps to explain the appearance of privately funded public dinners for decurions, which can be seen as an effective way of simultaneously expressing the social superiority of the benefactor and his (or her) allegiance to the principle of elite solidarity.

In the later Empire, although the expansion of the imperial bureaucracy increased financial pressure on local communities, it also created new career opportunities for enterprising (and wealthy) members of local elites. The decay of privately sponsored public dining and other types of munificence can be explained as a reflection of a gradual loosening of ties between the wealthiest members of the municipal aristocracy and the communities from which they originated.

Privately sponsored dining for *collegia* and *Augustales* is sparsely attested. The most of the few surviving sources are concentrated in the second century, with sporadic attestations in the late first and the third centuries. Despite the government's cautious attitude towards *collegia*, the evidence relating to privately sponsored dinners

organized for *collegiati* confirms that private associations acquired greater social prominence in the second century AD, particularly in Italy. This is an indication of the development of a regional political culture in which associations were regarded as important building blocks of local society.