

the relationship between coins and conquest must be re-examined. The author believes the fluctuations in production are to be accounted for in terms of 'adjustments to the financial organization of the province, or in the case of Nero's reforms, several different provinces'. In his view, the imposition of related silver standards would have facilitated assessment and payment of taxes while maintaining provincial currencies. But the argument is in danger of circularity: the only province for which we have more than one kind of evidence available is Egypt, and the tax documents do not always fit well with what we know of the coinage.

B. has provided for the first time a reliable conspectus, with excellent and ample illustrations, of North Syrian coinage, together with the reflections of one who has studied it more deeply than anyone, perhaps ever. The new framework will be fundamental when the appropriate volumes of *Roman Provincial Coinage* come to be written.

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WILLIAM E. METCALF

C. CERCHIAI MANODORI SAGREDO, *CIBI E BANCHETTI NELL'ANTICA ROMA*.

Rome: Libreria dello Stato, Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2004. Pp. 144, 187 figs. ISBN 8-8240-3443-8. €60.00.

This unusually handsome volume is a valuable addition to the recent wave of works on Roman food and ancient gastronomy more generally. On the one hand it could be mistaken for an exhibition catalogue, so lavish and frequent are the apposite illustrations; on the other, it is a scholarly account, rooted in the ancient literature, which is cited throughout.

The structure of the book is not especially clear — it follows food stuffs before ending with anecdotes of Roman dinner parties, but without a table of contents it is hard to discern a pattern. The literary sources are clear; there is little attempt to make the images anything other than a running visual commentary, and there is little attempt to relate image to context. The consequence is a beautifully illustrated but slightly disjointed account, with a lack of theory in relation to text or image, and a slightly timeless feel, despite the possibility of making distinctions between different periods of the Roman world, and indeed different areas. Roman Italy is the obvious focus, with examples taken from Pompeii in particular.

What is striking, though inevitable in a book which returns repeatedly to élite manifestations, is the wealth and variety of food available. Anyone who turns to this book could be forgiven for mistaking it for one of the many modern, glossy productions on food, and the volume acknowledges luxury foods and star chefs. This is a reminder that Rome had the capacity and the inclination to treat food with huge pretension, and to invest its preparation and presentation with the kinds of social meaning which we have learnt both as historians and as consumers. The volume reflects less than it might on this, and by underplaying the significance of the images, does less than it should to use this dense and rich imagery as an index of the complex interplay between food and art. On the front cover is a stunning Pompeian still-life with birds, eggs, cloth and vessels — reproduced again without comment at p. 35. Yet the combination of items cries out for interpretation in terms of the artistic handling of volume and shape, of formality and informality, perhaps even of symbolism. A more careful juxtaposition of the sensuousness of food as described, as depicted, and as experienced remains to be written.

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CHRISTOPHER SMITH

A. MACMAHON and J. PRICE (EDS), *ROMAN WORKING LIVES AND URBAN LIVING*.

Oxford: Oxbow, 2005. Pp. viii + 224, illus. ISBN 1-8421-7186-0. £20.00.

The stated aim of this volume is to draw attention to the daily lives of the many artisans and craftspeople of the towns of the Roman Empire. The editors have indeed succeeded in marshalling papers which present a wide range of material relating to this topic, both archaeological and literary. However, the book is somewhat lacking in coherence, and in innovative approaches to the significance of these 'working lives' beyond mere descriptive elaboration. The absence of a full introductory chapter to highlight connections and themes in the papers is a significant factor in this, and the book is therefore more likely to be referred to for particular contributions than for significantly pushing forward a broad research area. Several of these contributions are individually important and interesting. The volume begins with a single-page introduction which simply outlines its origins, in a conference at Durham in 2001, and lists the papers. The first five of these are collected under the heading 'Urban Living and the Settings for Working Lives', dealing mainly