

humiliation" (162, 164) for the worshipping dignitaries, was a second-best option, but came to represent "an important development in the constitutional definition of what an emperor actually was" (196).

Short chapters deal with emperor worship as taking place in the common households (ch. 8) and on the initiative of private groupings (ch. 9), and the concept of *numen* is explained (ch. 10) as "merely a linguistic synonym for direct, godlike cult" (248). The developments in Rome are said to be mirrored in the Italian small towns (ch. 11). Emperor worship formed a *normal* response to the imperial power structure, and it is its absence on the state cult level that is striking. After his death "there was no reason to maintain the fiction of the emperor as first among equals" (264), and he could be made a *Divus* by 'heavenly honours decreed by the Senate' (ch. 12). Naturally, this is not the same as saying that a man became 'a real god' (which is precisely the distinction on which Seneca is playing in the *Apocolocyntosis*, 325-30).

As regards criticism, Gradel's failure to take into account some important recent literature is a serious defect of an otherwise excellent work. Two further issues need to be raised here. First, by focussing on the conception of the imperial cult by 'the Romans amongst themselves' and leaving out the provincial evidence, Gradel tacitly dismisses the possibility of mutual interaction between centre and periphery. It seems unlikely that, with the development of empire over the course of time, there would have been no influence at all on the abstraction of the Roman state and its religion from the empire's provinces, especially the Eastern half, if only because a number of emperors (and with them the imperial court) spent an increasing amount of time away from the capital. Secondly, Gradel describes state religion as "an integral part of the Roman 'constitution'" (12, cf. 75, 112, 153, 196, 223, 263-4), although he acknowledges (e.g. 109) that there was never a constitutionally defined 'emperorship'. As this position was defined in terms of a combination not only of traditional magistracies, but also of state priesthoods, a reflection on the emperor as major priest of Rome would have thrown some more light on the phenomenon. Serving as high priest and receiving divine worship could not be accomplished simultaneously on the state cult level. Viewed on different levels, however, these alternatives were not perceived as inconsistent with each other.

As one emerges from the book as refreshed as from a warm bath, it is only fair to end on a positive note. Gradel is exhilaratingly uninterested in questions concerning the absolute nature of the divine, and the basis for all his assertions is a thorough reinvestigation of the ancient evidence, familiar and unfamiliar alike. The result is an important book on an important topic, which every student and historian of the Roman empire, whether interested in so-called 'religious' or 'political' aspects, ought to read.

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P. Garnsey, *Cities, Peasants and Food in Classical Antiquity. Essays in Social and Economic History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 336 pp., ISBN 0 521 59147 3 (hereafter = Garnsey 1998); P. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 175 pp. ISBN 0 521 64588 3 (hereafter = Garnsey 1999).

'Famine in Rome' was the title of an article Peter Garnsey (hereafter = G.) published twenty years ago, in which he pronounced that 'The first concern of inhabitants of the ancient world was how to feed themselves and their dependents' (P. Garnsey and C.R. Whittaker [eds.], *Trade and Famine in Classical Antiquity* [Cambridge 1983], 56-64). That this pronouncement describes correctly a basic problem that the majority of the population had to cope with in classical antiquity can hardly be disputed, and yet for a variety of reasons only a relatively small number of ancient historians have shown interest in this subject, at least until recent times. Not so G. who has devoted

much of his research to food, food-supply, hunger, famine and other related topics, vindicating the view that their study is of prime importance for the understanding of the social and economic conditions prevailing in the Graeco-Roman civilization. His major study *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis*, Cambridge 1988 (hereafter = Garnsey 1988), was followed by several papers dealing with specific food topics, five of which, as well as one of 1985, are now reprinted in Garnsey 1998. The latter is a collection of 16 papers on various topics published in the years 1974-1996, five coming under the title *Cities* and five under the title *Peasants*, in addition to those dealing with *Food*. In fact, all of them examine and throw light on various social and economic problems, mostly relating to the lower classes. Garnsey 1999 in contrast is an admirable synthesis, written concisely but widely encompassing in its thoughtful treatment of the subject.

All but four of the 16 papers included in Garnsey 1998 are equipped with *addenda*, prepared by Walter Scheidel who is also responsible for the editing of the volume and for the consolidated bibliography. These *addenda* greatly enhance the usefulness of this collection in as much as they trace the development of research on the subjects treated, draw attention to controversial points or refer to new studies. For example, in 'Aspects of the Decline of the Urban Aristocracy in the Empire', a paper originally published in 1974, G. accepts that the broad outlines of the process of the decline are known, but maintains that there is need of a comprehensive analysis of the stages by which the cost of curial liturgies grew, the willingness to hold offices and perform liturgies waned and the curial class became largely hereditary. G. holds that all three developments had been completed by the fourth if not the late third century, and concentrates on conditions in the second century and the Severan period. The evidence suggests, according to his interpretation, a division of the curial class into the few affluent *primores viri*, ruined *inferiores* and a majority of councilors with modest resources in the Antonine age. Despite the rising costs of the decurionate, the curial office was still coveted by some status-seekers in the Severan age, although by that time the hereditary principle had been established. In the *addendum* Scheidel refers to some forty studies bearing on the subject that have appeared since the original publication of the paper, some general and comprehensive, in which an attempt has been made to collect all the relevant evidence, some concentrating on a specific city or province(s), and some others that deal with a particular topic (e.g., the typical size of the *ordo decurionum*) or piece of evidence (e.g., the *album* of Canusium, *CLL* 9.338). He points out where G.'s suggestions and interpretations have been accepted and expanded or criticized and rejected. Altogether the article and the *addendum* provide very useful guidance on a central phenomenon that is instructive for the understanding of the social life and changing economic conditions of the leading order in the cities of the Roman Empire.

In 'Independent Freedmen and the Economy of Roman Italy' (1981), G. argues that due to the interest of landowners in non-agricultural enterprises there came into existence a class of freedmen who engaged in business on their own and succeeded in establishing an independent financial position. This conclusion runs counter to the generally held view that freedmen were commonly employed as business agents of their patrons and thus always remained dependent on them. As the *addendum* shows, opinions on the extent and nature of the dependence of freedmen on their ex-masters vary. As well as in the three remaining papers of Part I (two case-studies, Mediolanum [1975] and Sardis [1985], and one on investment in urban property [1976]) G. examines here the extent of the economic and financial activities performed in the city. Without contesting the view that agriculture was at the base of the ancient economy and that generally cities depended economically on their rural hinterland, G. argues that it is 'necessary to recognize that there were income-generating transactions taking place in the "internal" urban economy' (p. 71). In other words, there existed in the cities a significant number of labourers, producers, manufacturers, retailers and property-owners who were providing employment and living for one another. Such a view has perforce consequences for our perception of the social profile of the city population, the more so as G. has challenged the application of the concept of the 'agro-city' to Italy in an article

published in 1979, and included in Part II of this collection ('Where Did Italian Peasants Live?'); there he argues, against the view of other scholars, that most peasants lived in the countryside. While Scheidel in his valuable *addenda* refers to various studies related to these problems, it is surprising that neither he nor G. draws attention to the obvious connection with the controversy over the model of the 'consumer city'. For two recent studies see H.M. Parkins (ed.), *Roman Urbanism: Beyond the Consumer City*, London and New York 1997; P.P.M. Erdkamp, 'Beyond the "Consumer City": A Model of the Urban and Rural Economy in the Roman World', *Historia* 50 (2001), 332-56.

Part II deals with peasants, a term that includes, according to G., small freeholders, tenant farmers and agricultural labourers. In 'Peasants in Ancient Roman Society' (1976) he argues that, although the Roman ruling class used slavery to underpin its political dominance, there coexisted, with various regional and other differences and changes during the period, both peasant and slave modes of agricultural production. The same holds true for Athens, and hence the prevailing view about Rome and Athens as slave states should be modified. The overlapping between the three categories of peasants is stressed in 'Non-Slave Labour in the Roman World' (1980), where G. suggests that 'the alternative for a landowner lay between two different ways of *managing* estates (through slave bailiffs and free tenants) rather than between two systems of labour, slave and free labour, as it is commonly represented'. This view has been endorsed and developed by Scheidel, but its universal validity in the Roman empire may be doubted. Interestingly G. supposes that the free rural wage-labourers, one category of the peasants, included unemployed and under-employed residents of towns; if so, the concept of 'agro-town' is not after all entirely baseless. On the other hand, he stresses that the industrial work-force in cities included *ingenui* and freedmen, and not only slaves. In 'Prolegomenon to a Study of the Land in the Later Roman Empire' (1996), G. examines and criticizes, on methodological grounds and literary and archaeological evidence, theories of general economic and particularly agricultural decline and depopulation in the later Roman empire. The subject is discussed in more detail by G. and C.R. Whitaker in 'Rural Life in the Later Roman Empire', *CAH XIII* (2nd ed. 1988), 277-311. I notice, regrettably, that the short account of Palestine is less than adequate and apparently based on the out-dated studies of Y. Kedar (1957) and M. Avi-Yonah (1958). As every new volume of the on-going series *Archaeological Survey of Israel* attests, not to mention numerous archaeological and other studies that have appeared in recent years, the number and extent of the rural and urban settlements of Palestine, which serve as an index of demographic and economic growth, reached their zenith in the later Roman empire. This prosperity should not be attributed merely to the lavish endowments made by the imperial authorities and aristocracy and to Christian pilgrimage, as G. seems to suggest; his assertion that the Arab invaders found an economically depressed region needs some reservations. I may add that the recent study of Z. Safrai (*The Economy of Roman Palestine* [London 1994], 436-53) rightly highlights this growth, but his inferences and interpretations suffer from serious deficiencies and contain pitfalls (*SCI* 14 [1995], 186-90). In the final paper of Part II ('Mountain Economy in Southern Europe' [1988]), G. criticizes the view that Italian and, more generally, Mediterranean pastoral industry was exclusively based on long-distance transhumance; due to political and historical, rather than geographical and climatic conditions, several different types of pastoralism were practised.

In two papers of Part III, 'Grain for Athens' (1985) and 'The Yield of the Land in Ancient Greece' (1992), G. examines the production capacity of cereals in Greece and argues, *inter alia*, that the extent of grain imports into Athens has been overestimated by previous scholars. That beans were a staple food of the poor, a substitute for meat, and constituted a social and cultural marker differentiating the lower orders from the elite are the conclusions G. arrived at in 'The Bean: Substance and Symbol' (1992). 'Mass Diet and Nutrition in the City of Rome' (1991) is an investigation of the nutritional value of the food consumed by the ordinary, poor people of Rome. G. discusses attitudes, social values and cultural practices, including infanticide, wet nursing and

weaning, in 'Child Rearing in Ancient Italy' (1991), a paper which is only partially about food. Finally, 'Famine in History' (1992) is a general discussion of the distinction between famine, hunger and food shortage, the connection between famine and disease, famine and politics, and the causes of famine, a discussion that is based on and develops ideas found in Garnsey 1988.

The various questions posed, interpretations suggested and probed and new directions of investigation outlined in more than two decades of research — and much more — are put together in Garnsey 1999. To grasp the objects and essence of the book one can do no better than cite Garnsey himself: 'This book presents food as a biocultural phenomenon. Food is at once nutrition, needed by the body for its survival, and cultural object, with various non-food uses and associations. Food functions as a sign or means of communication. It governs human relationships at all levels. Food serves to bind together people linked by blood, religion or citizenship; conversely, it is divisive, being distributed and consumed in accordance with existing hierarchies' (xi). G. writes lucidly, presenting plainly and succinctly an enormous amount of ancient evidence, as well as modern scientific findings about food and the human body and anthropological lore and thinking, so that it is easy even for those who are new to the topic to follow the discussion. The introduction and every one of the nine chapters start with Preliminaries, a section that sets the stage for the topic to be discussed, and many end with a short, clear conclusion. The topics treated are: diet, food and the economy, food crisis, malnutrition, otherness, forbidden foods, food and the family, haves and havenots, you are with whom you eat.

Famine differed, and should be distinguished, from food shortage; food shortages were a common occurrence in Graeco-Roman society; Mediterranean peasants and urban communities responded with various strategies to harvest shortfall and food crisis and, by and large, succeeded in preventing famines, that is, real catastrophes; G. has presented these three arguments in a number of his publications, and they are particularly elaborated in Garnsey 1988. Here they are presented with the further argument that undernourishment and chronic malnutrition persisted through classical antiquity. To be sure, the Mediterranean diet, which was mainly based on cereals, vines, olives, and — as G. stresses — legumes, was a relatively healthy one. However, only the rich could afford to purchase foods of superior quality and bulk. Examinations of skeletal remains (a rich source of information, but *pace* G. many archaeologists are aware of the importance and significance of such remains, as well as of food and animal remains), comparative evidence and careful reading of the literary sources indicate that for various reasons malnutrition was common, and it was particularly widespread among children, women and the masses of the urban populations, that is, the poor and the weak. Linked to this was the provable need of the havenots constantly to struggle for the bare minimum of subsistence. The conventions illuminated by G.'s reading of the sources are remarkable, and it is instructive to follow his analysis of the evidence, buttressed by judicious and critical application of comparative materials and anthropological findings and theories, as well as his demonstration that the rich had a taste for *haute cuisine* and took pleasure in banquets and *convivia*; that the Jews, the Christians and certain other groups, for instance the Pythagoreans or the Egyptian priests, avoided certain foods; and that the diet of the civilized differed from that of the uncivilized, that is, urban versus rural populations or those regarded as barbarians in contrast to the Greeks. The Conclusion answers the question that underlies the whole discussion, that is, why people eat what they eat. Four factors, G. holds, are at work: physiology, taste, availability, and culture. Such an answer may seem simple; it is not. It is reached after the reader has been served a savory meal full of insightful observations and plenty of appetizers that call for further investigation of human ideas, religious and other, concerning purity and impurity; of people's beliefs, fanciful and well based, about food properties; and of social conventions, habits and behaviour — past and present.