

SOCIAL RULES: SACRIFICE AND FEASTING

Some Examples

As soon as we come to look more closely at ritual practice, we encounter the institution of sacrifice. In its different forms, animal-sacrifice symbolizes a 'piety' that underwrites all the traditional values of Roman society, a connotation that fades only in Late Antiquity. The synecdochic value of the main actions just before and after the dispatch of the animal tends to distract attention from the obvious point that that they are only 'stills' from a much longer sequence of events.¹ I would like to offer a slightly different point of view, and start by citing a couple of the tiny number of prescriptive texts that set out how a Roman sacrifice is to be performed (by comparison with Greek sacrifice, we have almost no high-quality source-material for Rome). A special value of these examples, which are taken from the Elder Cato's *De agri cultura*, is that they refer to private cult, which most other sources ignore. Their disadvantage, however, is that they say nothing about shifts of scene, about the procession, essential to every larger public sacrifice, which takes the participants to the fixed site where the sacrifice proper is performed, be it the *area* in front of a temple, an open cult-site, or a sacred grove.²

As I have already pointed out, Cato does not devote a separate section of his work to religious prescriptions: he inserts them here and there without more ado into the guidance on farming. The first text refers to the *daps*, the offering of food and wine to a god, in this case on behalf of the plough-teams (*pro bubus*):

The offering is to be made in the following manner: offer to Jupiter Dapalis a cup of wine of any size you wish, observing the day as a

holiday for the oxen, the ox-masters, and those who make the offering. In making the (food-)offering use the following formula: 'Jupiter Dapalis, it is fitting that a cup of wine be offered to you in my house, among my family and dependants, as part of your sacred feast (*daps*). Therefore do us the honour (*macte esto*) of accepting this meal (*daps*) here.' Wash your hands, then take the (cup of) wine, and say: 'Jupiter Dapalis, do us the honour of accepting this feast (*daps*): do us the honour (of accepting this) wine that we offer you here.' You may (also) make an offering to Vesta if you wish. The food (*daps*) offered to Jupiter consists of roasted beef or mutton and an 'urn' of wine. Make the offering (*profanato*) in a state of ritual purity, in the fitting form (*sua contagione*). Once the ceremony has been performed, you may plant millet, panic grass, garlic, and lentils.

Cato, *De agr.* 132 (tr. Hooper/Ash, adapted)

In practice, *profanare* means to sacrifice, to make an offering. The etymology of the word however indicates that something is actually being brought from inside a sacred place (*fanum*) to the area in front (*pro*) of it – into the 'profane' world. In our case here, something is being 'profaned' within a ritual context, which means it is being rendered available for human use. The 13.13 litres of wine the 'urn' (half-amphora) contains will be drunk by the human participants, while Jupiter has to be content with the small cup of wine poured out for him onto the earth.³

My second example comes from the following section but one. §131 dealt with the spring ploughing, followed by the planting of millet and so on (in the last sentence of §132); §133 deals with layering and pruning fruit-trees and vines; and now we approach the harvest in autumn:

Before harvest the sacrifice of the *porca praecidaneae* should be offered in the following manner: offer a sow as *porca praecidaneae* to Ceres before harvesting spelt, wheat, barley, beans, and rape seed; before offering the sow, address a prayer, with incense and wine, to Janus, Jupiter and Juno. Make an offering of finger-cakes (*strues*) to Janus, with these words: 'Father Janus, in offering these cakes, I humbly beg you to be gracious and merciful to me and my children, my house and my household.' Then make an offering of cake (*fertum*) to Jupiter in these words: 'In offering this cake, Jupiter, I humbly beg that, pleased by this offering, you may be gracious and merciful to me and my children, my house and my household.' Then offer the wine to Janus saying: 'Father Janus, just as I prayed humbly in offering the cakes, so likewise do me the honour of accepting this wine offered to you.' And then pray to Jupiter thus: 'Jupiter, do me the honour of accepting the cake; do me the honour (likewise) of accepting the wine offered you.'

Then offer up the *porca praecidaneae*. When the entrails (*exta*) have been removed, make an (other) offering of cakes (*strues*) to Janus, with a prayer as before; and an (other) offering of a cake (*fertum*) to Jupiter, with a prayer as before. In the same way, again offer wine to Janus and to Jupiter, as was previously directed for the offering of the cakes (*ob struem obmovendam*), and the consecration of the cake (*ob fertum libandum*). Afterwards offer the entrails, and wine, to Ceres.

Cato, *De agr.* 134 (tr. Hooper/Ash, adapted)

This is a relatively complex ritual, in which various subsidiary offerings are made not to Ceres, the main nominal object of the sacrifice, but to other gods. Janus is the god of auspicious beginnings (Varro, *LL* 6.34); Cicero's Stoic spokesman Balbus mentions that at sacrifices he was invoked first because 'beginnings (and endings) are of the greatest importance' (*De nat. deor.* 2.67). Then comes Jupiter, the highest god in a political context (and then Juno, at any rate in the pre-ambles). Similarly an offering is made to Janus and Jupiter in Cato's description a few chapters later of the *lustratio agri*, the 'muster of the land' (*De agr.* 141 = Beard, North, Price 1998: 2, 152f.), which is directed primarily to Mars. In this case, where the sacrifice consists of three male animals: suckling-boar, tup-lamb and bull-calf, all still at teat and correspondingly cheap, I want to stress the rules laid down for the event that the *litatio* might fail. For if a sacrifice is to be deemed acceptable to the deity, the 'noble' entrails of the freshly-slaughtered animal must on inspection be in best condition, flawless. Cato offers two possibilities in the event of the god 'not being satisfied' (*si minus litabit*): if there is doubt in one or two cases, another of the same type of animal, say a piglet, can be offered (*'te hoc porco piaculo'*); if no positive response (*litatio*) at all is obtained, the entire ritual has to be repeated (*'te hisce suovitautilibus piaculo'*). Here we find ritual dramatization by appeal to the possibility of 'external' disturbance: this is the function of divination, which always accompanies sacrifice.

Sacrifices can also however be quite straightforward. One example of such simplicity is the direction a couple of chapters later to the farm-overseer's wife: 'On the Kalends, the Ides and the Nones of each month, and at each religious festival, she is to hang a garland over the hearth, and on the same days she is to pray to the Lar of the family for plenty in the house (*pro copia*)' (*De agr.* 143.2). Religion can be simple too.⁴



12. Decennalia-base of Constantius I (Chlorus), Caesar AD 293–305.

One of a set of five columns with bases erected on the Rostra in AD 303 in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the First Tetrarchy (established 1 March 293) and the twentieth anniversary of Diocletian's accession (20 November, AD 284). The monument as a whole is depicted on a relief on the Arch of Constantine showing the emperor addressing the people from the Rostra: four of the columns, monoliths in Aswan granite 36 Roman feet high, carried statues, of the two Augusti and the two Caesars. Linked to it were statues of Mars, Romulus and Remus dedicated in AD 308 (ILS 8935). The sole surviving base, found in 1547, is decorated on all four faces. This one shows the sacrificial procession of the *suovetaurilia* (bull, ram and boar); the animals are rigged out in their sacrificial finery (esp. the *frontale* on the bull's forehead, and the *dorsuale* over his back). Note the status distinction between the supervising official, in a toga and with a staff of office, and the *victimarii* and *cultrarii*, the public slaves who did the actual killing and butchery, naked to the waist. Almost invisible on this photo is another slave behind the bull's withers, carrying fruits (which were also burned at sacrifices) on a pole-basket. Right lateral face, height: 1 m. Marble. Forum Romanum.

Sacrifice and Feasting

My examples from Cato the Elder serve to illustrate a point I made earlier: nothing works without a prayer, but prayers hardly ever occur in isolation. They are usually accompanied by a gift, which might

perhaps best be described as 'something to arouse the god's attention'. This can be something small, but usually consists, even when the main offering is considerable, of the heavy scent of incense, or flowers – a visual stimulus – or something to eat. The latter would be offered to the god's statue (*obmovere, mactare*), or poured out onto the ground, or burned on an altar. The pragmatics of divine consumption is not important: wine is poured onto the ground for Jupiter, even though he is a god of heaven. Such notions are obviously incoherent. The same point can be made in relation to the 'infrastructure' needed for performing the cult.

The main altar, usually of stone or brick, was used to burn those parts of the sacrifice which were meant for the gods. A small transportable altar (*foculus*) was also required for the preliminary stages of sacrifice, the blood-free offerings of incense and food, which preceded the slaughter of the animal (Servius, *Aen.* 3.134). In addition to these two altars, some sort of kitchen (*culina*) was naturally required for preparing and cooking the meat.⁵

The altar itself need not have any connection with a temple: it might for example be built in a grove. If necessary, an altar could also be improvised from turf-sods (Vergil, *Aen.* 12.118; Horace, *Carm.* 3.8.4; Ovid, *Fasti* 2.645). The altar's central role in the performance of sacrifice is clear from its use as a synecdoche for the entire complex ritual. As a result, altars are a very common form of votive (Schraudolph 1993; Dräger 1994). Indeed, this function of the classical form of the altar was transposed into Christian usage.

Throughout classical antiquity we find a characteristic double sacrificial system, similar to that in the ancient Near East (Gladigow 1994). It was based on a distinction between animal-sacrifice at the altar outside the temple and the offering of food inside the temple. In the latter system, a table was set up in front of the cult-statue and offerings of food and other gifts (say, money) intended for the god were placed on it. In Greek, these offerings are called *trapezōmata*; in Latin, *mensa* or *sacrificia*.⁶ In this context, communication with the deity takes a completely different form from that on the altar outside: the gifts and food-offerings are given in the same way as to a human being – the anthropomorphization of the god is very pronounced. The fate of these gifts is unclear: they were probably not burnt, but removed by the temple personnel, the priests, and eaten, or used for the maintenance of the temple.

The sacrificial ritual at the altar was not directly addressed to a cult-statue. Efforts were indeed made to align the latter with the temple-doors and the external altar, but in principle the altar did not require

either a temple or a cult-image. The offerings destined for the gods were burnt; the humans ate the rest. Only a select portion could be placed on the table inside the temple, thus linking the two systems of sacrifice.⁷

Humans could take their share whenever larger amounts of food were involved (remember Cato's thirteen litres of wine), as also in the case of animal-sacrifice, since the sacrifice was followed by a banquet.⁸ Temple-complexes often have kitchens and dining-halls (*triclinium*; *trichilionum*) attached (Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2000: 272–329). The same is true, though more rarely, of fairly elaborate tombs or tomb-complexes, for example in the Isola Sacra necropolis near Ostia, or the tomb of C. Vibius Saturninus in the necropolis outside the Porta Ercolano at Pompeii: such tombs may be furnished with cooking-hearths and podia arranged like those in the dining-hall of a villa, from which one could eat. In a few cases there is even a brick-built table in the centre (cf. *CIL* VI 4710; 10315; *ILS* 7889).⁹

The connection between sacrifice and banquet is standard, but the one need not follow immediately upon the other. After the procession, grand or minimal, up to the altar in a temple-area (in towns this was usual even in the case of private animal-sacrifice), water was sprinkled about to effect a symbolic cleansing. After the bloodless preliminary offerings had been made, the victim was sprinkled, at any rate in public sacrifices, as I have mentioned in my earlier account of the ritual, with *mola salsa*, sacred grain mixed with salt. The sacrificant, normally the person who was paying for the sacrifice, ran the knife along the animal's back. The butcher (*victimarius*, *cultrarius* or *popa*, which has a more general sense, 'assistant at sacrifices') asked: *Agone?* Shall I begin? The answer: *Age!* Begin! was the signal to start the slaughtering.¹⁰ The victim was killed, bled, turned on its back and opened up. The entrails were inspected. Then it had to be jointed, and the different parts assigned to different purposes. In the case of cattle, the 'noble' entrails were boiled; of pigs and sheep, roasted on spits. Hours might thus pass before the participants could sit down and eat their share of the victim, the red meat. On certain festive days, known as *dies intercesi*, profane actions, lawsuits and so on, might take place during the hours that passed between the extraction of the 'noble' entrails (*exta caesa*) and their being burned for the gods.¹¹ After all this, the humans could start to eat.

There are three options here. The first was the so-called *cena recta*, the regular meal. That involved sitting down together, eating, drinking and celebrating. Alternatively some of the sacrificial meat and other food might not be consumed at the sacrifice itself but be put into

small baskets (*sportulae*), which could be of any size, and given to the participants to take home. The third possibility (not incompatible with the first two) was for the sacrificial meat to be sold. In this case parts at least of the sacrifice would be sold off to butchers, so that the broad mass of the population could participate in the 'public sacrifices'.¹² For several reasons, this option was at Rome, as we shall see, the one normally chosen.

Such sales could cause problems. In his *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, a Christian text, the apostle Paul deals with the question of the consumption of sacrificial meat (10.25–30). His recommendation is that everything that is sold on the meat-market may be eaten, without raising any question on the grounds of conscience. If however you are invited to dinner by a non-believer and explicitly told by someone, another Christian, that the meat is sacrificial, then you should decline to eat it. Paul's basic position is stated between these two rules: everything in our world is given us by God. Even though these beasts were unlucky enough to have been subjected to a pagan ritual, they too must be counted a gift of God. Only when you might offend the conscience of another Christian should you decline the consumption of sacrificial meat.

It is noticeable that Roman sources – quite different from the case in Greece – hardly address the connection between sacrifice and the banquet. There are two ways of dealing with this situation. The first is to assume, on the basis of a few scraps of Roman evidence, that the Greek view, namely that the humans invite the gods and the two feast together, also holds true for Rome. Such a view is undoubtedly inherent in the sacrificial practice of the ancient Near East and Mediterranean Europe; and, as John Scheid showed in a brilliant article, it also corresponds to the way in which the meat was divided between gods and men at Rome.¹³ Alternatively, however, we might try comparing the sacrificial banquet with other Roman banquets and once again, as in the case of the 'double sacrificial system', find interesting inconsistencies. I choose this second path (cf. Rüpke 2005b).

Who invites whom? For the Roman aristocracy, banquets are of the essence. The dining-room (*triclinium*) is the centre of the classical Roman house; the basic furnishing of three couches (Greek: *klinai*) arranged around three sides of a square, from which the room takes its name, is designed for 3 × 3 male participants, so not primarily for family-meals. Aristocrats issued mutual invitations, ate together, talked together, sang, and listened to songs in praise of their ancestors, thus strengthening their adherence to shared values (Roller 2006). The public priesthoods became proverbial for their elaborate banquets;

when the cult of the Mater Magna was introduced in 204 BC, the élite had nothing more pressing to do than invent a new kind of banquet, *mutitationes*, 'mutual invitations' (Ovid, *Fast.* 4.353f.; Aulus Gellius, *Att. Noct.* 18.2.11; *Fast. Praenest.* s.v. 4 April). All this encouraged communication and consensus, but by the same token also provided a new area of competition (Rüpke 1998b). High-quality dinner services are very common archaeologically already in the Latial orientaling phase (e.g. the finds in Tomb XV in the necropolis at Ficana, Latium: Cornell 1995: 89–92); in the second century BC sumptuary-laws had to limit the excesses. So why should one not feast with the gods too?

There appears to be no unambiguous answer at Rome to one decisive issue in relation to the sacrificial banquet: who is the host, who the guest? From Plautus to Martial, from 200 BC to AD 100, a divine invitation extended to a human-being meant 'death' (Plautus, *Rudens* 362; Martial 9.91). The expression was ironical. When humans invite gods, the intention is usually that the deity should to come to 'live' in a temple that has been built (e.g. Statius, *Silv.* 3.1.138). The use of the word *lectisternium* fits this, for it is best translated not 'banquet for the gods' but 'couch-arrangement'. The word refers to the preparations for a banquet (*lectus* = couch for eating, corresponding to Gr. *klinē*); the *lectisternium* is *factum*, made or *habitum*, held, or *imperatum*, ordered (Livy 5.13.6; 8.25.1; 22.1.19f.), gods are not 'invited' to it. The banquet is given by the gods themselves (I refer to the representation, not to the actuality, which of course involved human-beings bringing out busts or statues of gods, food and so forth). Are we to suppose that the humans acted as hosts and managed the feast on holy ground with the furniture and fittings they found there? Hardly. Besides, we know that, apart from the food they brought themselves, people ate the meat that had been rendered *sacra* and then 'released' by the sacrificant's gesture of touching it, thus rendering it *profana*, profane.

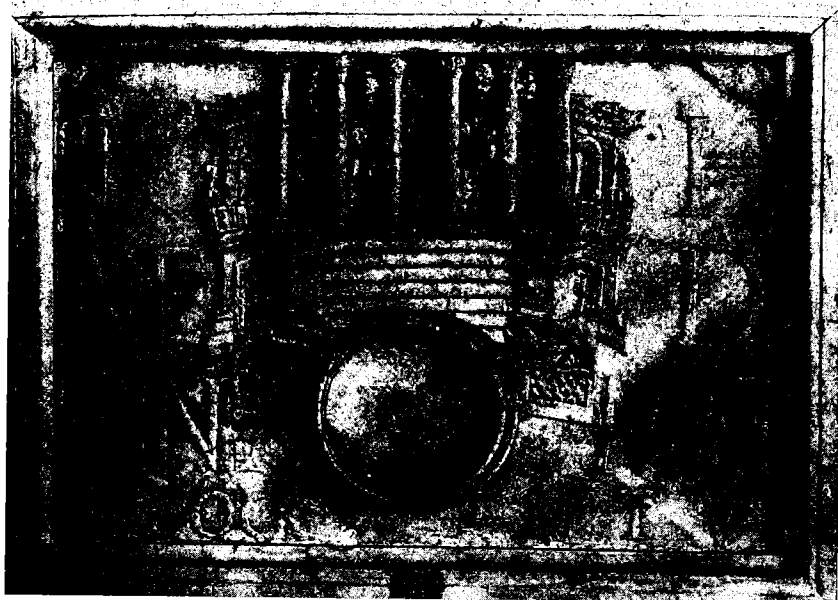
The main difficulty in speaking of mutual invitation certainly lies in the fact that Romans only feasted with their social equals.¹⁴ The equality required – again by contrast to the Greek practice – is not created by the mere possession of citizenship: the true pre-condition is not jural but social equality. That being the case, even the issue of who may eat *ex sacrificio*, of the sacrificial meat, becomes problematic. The right to consume sacrificial meat, provided and paid for by the community, without having to pay for it (*ius publice epulandi*), could not, as in Greece, be extended to all full citizens, but became a carefully protected privilege. It was accordingly confined to magistrates,

ex-magistrates and 'public' priests (Suetonius, *Aug.* 35.2; cf. Wissowa 1912: 419; 500). The Roman 'state-religion' that modern authors talk about, under the influence of nineteenth-century ideas, turns out once again to be in fact the 'private' religion of an élite that correlated its social prestige with its political engagement.

Hierarchies

Institutionalized ideas about Roman sacrifice are thus inconsistent. If we are concerned with the 'functions' of banqueting, historical, social, even individual, differences must move centre-stage. The example of Rome's secret patron divinity has already shown how far interpretations can diverge if they are not controlled by a canonical credo (p. 132–4).

The primary function of sacrifice is to define hierarchies (cf. Bourdillon and Fortes 1986). This may occur at various levels. The first and most obvious is the hierarchical distinction between gods and humans. That is made clear by two circumstances in particular. The deity or deities eat(s) first. After the cooking process (boiling or roasting), the gods receive their share, which is burnt with wine on the main altar, which only now, hours after the killing of the animal, becomes important. The deity eats first: even today, if one thinks of a formal or festive banquet, that is a clear sign of priority. Secondly, the god receives the most important parts of the victim, the *exta* ('noble' entrails). In Roman terminology, these are the *vitalia*, the vital parts: the liver, the gall-bladder, the lungs, and the great omentum; from the third century BC also the heart (Pliny *HN* 11.186). The remainder, in Latin the *viscera*, namely the red meat, the blood and what we call the viscera (the stomach, intestines, kidneys, womb etc), are extras the animal happens to have but does not really need. The truly important parts are these inner organs, and it is they that are given to the deity. Individual cuts or dishes, such as croquettes, called 'increments' (*augmenta*) might be added (Varro, *LL* 5.112); individual shrines might also require 'extras' (*magmenta*).¹⁵ What has been termed the 'topography' of sacrificial animals is admittedly a complex business.¹⁶ For example, every fifth year at Rome the *pontifices* also offered the *caviares*, 'part of the victim right up to the tail', in a special sacrifice on behalf of the college, no doubt a reference to the usual Greek offering of the *sacrum* (Paulus, *Excerpt. Festi* p. 50, 16–18 L.). Nevertheless, although the *vitalia* do have a high cholesterol content, the whole procedure seems strange: already in Archaic Greece, where



13. Cropped shop-sign showing a probably imaginary temple.

This is perhaps the most telling surviving indication of how people actually perceived a Roman podium temple, with extensive resort to 'synoptic views'. You can only reach it by means of the flight of stairs at the front; the pro-style temple, with its Corinthian capitals, is the house (*cella*) of the gods (here, goddesses), who are represented as peeping out of it, as its owners. They are seated on a double throne; on the left is (probably) Roma, dressed as an Amazon, with one breast bare, a helmet on her lap, and a spear in her right hand; on the right is probably Annona, with a cornucopia in her left hand; she is pouring a libation of wine onto the fire alight on the small altar between the two central columns. All these are totally unrealistic details intended to suggest the cult-statues inside a temple, and the continuity of cult-service. The relief has been cropped to left and right (but is probably complete top and bottom; the frame is modern), rendering the inscription difficult to understand. It is generally thought that the key lies in the large 'dish' in front of the steps, which must be a *modius* (a measure of grain) seen schematically from above. Taken with the big storage jars on either side of it, which are otherwise never found in front of temples, the relief must be a shop-sign for a business that leased out such measures. On that basis, the reading would be: [I]n h[is]/[pr]aet[er]/[Sa]bin(ii)

Mat[ern(i)]/[mo]di(i) locantu[r], 'On these premises, belonging to Sabinius Maternus, *modius*-measures are available for hire' (the reading of CIL VI 29816 is to be rejected). This would also explain the joint presence of Roma and Annona (or possibly Fortuna) in a temple; it was once wrongly

the rules of sacrifices allocate slightly different parts of the victim to the gods, the allocation was a source of unease, hence the story of Prometheus' sacrificial 'trick' (Hesiod, *Theog.* 507-616).

It is not only gods and humans that are ranked asymmetrically, however, so are human beings. The sacrificant need not be the butcher. In this case too what we might think the climax of the sacrifice, the moment of death, fails to coincide with the social rank of the actors. The actual killing of larger animals, at least, was carried out by slave specialists, the *victimarii* and *cultrarii*. On reliefs, these men are usually wearing just a butcher's apron (*limus*) and carry either a long-handled axe (*sacena*) or a set of cooking- and skinning-knives (*cultri*). They usually wear wreaths. Other sacrificial servants (*ministri*) are often youths or even children, who are represented for example carrying, or offering to the sacrificant, the box of incense (*acerra*), and may also carry other things, the water-jug, for example, or the towel for drying one's hands; they too are recognizable by their clothing. In the Roman rite, the sacrificant and other principals, if wearing the toga (or, in the case of women, the *stola*), cover their heads.¹⁷

The key role played by status difference in sacrifice is hard to grasp in most other cases. One example however is the *feriae Latinae*, which involved a sacrifice at the temple of Jupiter Latiaris on the Monte Cavo (*mons Albanus*) in the Alban hills south of Rome, an old ritual in which the early Latin federal cities took part each spring, and a major obligation for all Roman consuls and magistrates (Cornell 1995: 71f.). Since membership in the Latin League depended on participation in this festival, great stress was laid on who was allowed to partake of (*particeps*, participant) of the sacrificial meat, and in what order of precedence. The Latin word *princeps*, later used for the emperor, denotes 'one who takes his share first'; the metaphor seems to be derived from this area, of sacrifice and banqueting (Scheid 1988).

An alternative to the order in which one eats is to vary the size of the individual portions. This idea can be found in many of the regulations for *collegia*. The presidents, often termed *Quinquennales*, thus indicating a five-year period of office, might receive a double portion, the lower functionaries, for example the treasurer and

13. Cropped shop-sign showing a probably imaginary temple (*continued*)

thought that the temple was that of Concordia in the Forum (see pl. 24). Marble, h. 0.415m, w. 0.595m. Musei Vaticani, Galleria delle statue, inv. no. 568 = Helbig⁴ 1, p. 105 no.140.



14. Antonine biographical sarcophagus.

The front of this sarcophagus shows three scenes from the career of a military commander. In the centre is a detailed representation of the sacrifice of a bull. High up in the background one can make out a temple-façade. The action however is concentrated upon a *foculus*, a small altar placed at the bottom of the temple steps, which are just visible to the right of the front tripod-leg. Directly behind the altar, a *tibicen* is energetically playing a double-‘flute’ (*tibia*). Left of him stands the sacrificant, whose spear connotes that he holds a military command. With his right hand he is pouring a small quantity of wine into the flames from a libation-dish (*patera*). Still further to the left, directly behind him, is a servant carrying a small water-jug (*gutus*, not confirmed as an ancient technical term); like the *tibicen*, he is wearing a leaf-crown. To the right of the altar, the animal is about to be killed: a muscled *popa* (also called a *victimarius*), wearing a butcher’s apron with an elaborately embroidered hem, is forcing down the animal’s head by holding its nostrils and one horn; you can see the sheath containing several skinning- and cutting-knives (*culter*) on his belt. The other *popa* has raised the stunning-axe (*securis*) ready to strike the atlas-vertebra at the base of the skull. Marble. Sala di Troia, Palazzo Ducale, Mantua, inv. g. 6727.

clerk, a portion and a half, ordinary members only one.¹⁸ This portion could be taken home in *sportulae*, baskets. Such practices could be turned into a regular means of supporting functionaries, as in early Christianity, where priests and deacons might receive a double or at any rate privileged share of each meal.

One final hierarchy that is defined and articulated in various myths connected to sacrifice is that of humans and animals (Sælid Gilhus 2006: 114–37). The human has the privilege of killing; the animal is always the victim. Ovid interprets the ‘first’ sacrifice of a pig as a punishment, as a surrender of the guilty party (*deditio noxae*) to Ceres, the deity whose crops the sow had grubbed up.¹⁹ Ovid’s examples indicate that the difference between humans and animals was

problematized not in ritual itself but in reflection upon it – there is no equivalent at Rome of the Attic *bouphonia*, the ‘ox-killing’ at the festival of Dipolieia, which has been thought to attest to such anxieties in the medium of ritual (but see Parker 2005: 187–91).

Gifts

As a gift, the sacrifice creates obligations. The phrase *do ut des*, I give so that you may give, has often been used in modern analysis as a key to Roman sacrifice. The sacrificant offers something to the deity. This idea receives expression in reliefs depicting the second part of our ‘double system’, albeit at Rome much less commonly than in Egypt, the ancient Near East, or Greece. Human-beings approach a statue of a god holding an offering in their hands, or carrying it on a tray; or they point towards a table on which gifts for the god are laid out, all with the idea: I give the deity something, so that he or she may give me something in return. I do not of course expect to get the very same pig back that I have just slaughtered for the god – that would be absurd; but I do expect in due course as a counter-gift something like a good harvest, as we saw in the example from Cato: a successful seed-casting, a smooth birth, effective purification, consolation after a bereavement, success in business. To that extent, a sacrifice resembles a contract, it acquires a judicial component – my gift commits the god, morally at any rate, to giving me in return something I value.²⁰ The commitment is mutual: of course I will give thanks to the deity who has given me something by sacrificing in my turn again. There is thus a ceaseless cycle of obligation and gratitude, which the usual concentration on individual exchanges expressed by the phrase *do ut des* tends to obscure. There is a chain of actions, a reciprocity of gifts. That is the normal situation.

It may be however that the god’s counter-gift fails to materialize. The reason may be that too little time has lapsed since the vow; alternatively, there may have been some kind of ritual error or fault. Quite apart from the issue of ‘failure’, however, the non-routine character of this divine-human exchange is neatly dramatized in the so-called *litatio*, the examination of the *exta*. This can be characterized as a ritual game that makes clear that there is nothing automatic or mechanical about the deity’s acceptance of the offering, let alone his or her commitment to a return.²¹

The object of this examination is to discover whether the outwardly perfect animal is equally in order inside. Quite generally in

antiquity it was believed that the gods' acceptance or rejection of the sacrifice will be manifest in the animal's entrails. There was therefore no a priori assumption that an outwardly normal animal will be equally healthy inside. At the moment the animal is consecrated and killed, when it passes from the human world to the realm of the gods, the deity makes a statement: I want the animal/I do not want the animal. This reply is figured in deformations of the *exta* due to disease or other causes; sometimes even – and these were really bad signs – the heart, or the 'head' of the liver, might be clean missing.²² The sacrificant had to use his judgement here; occasionally specialist *haruspices*, Etruscan entrail-readers, were consulted, though the principle remained the same. If the outcome was positive, the *exta* were cooked (boiled or grilled, depending on the animal) separately, and later burned for the gods.²³ So the parts of the animal that are closest to divinity are those in which the message is encoded – there was even an ancient etymology that derived the word *exta* from the gods, the 'outstanding ones'.²⁴

The reading of the *exta* dramatizes the issue of the acceptance of the gift. The *litatio*, the proof that the offering has been accepted by the god, does not have to take place at once. If it fails there are two possibilities. One is to call a halt to the entire ritual, on the grounds that the moment or occasion is evidently not opportune: the deity does not want a sacrifice at this time. Alternatively, one might continue slaughtering victims until the deity accepted the sacrifice (*usque ad litationem*). This was, or might be, an expensive business, which could therefore acquire its own expressive value. For example, the sacrificant had the opportunity of conveying how much store he set by the sacrifice, demonstratively, with an audience, or by himself, or in dialogue with participating colleagues, people of his own social level. If a general was determined to go to war, he would just kill another ox, and then another . . . ; but if he were sceptical about how keen the Senate really was to go to war, he was free to say after the first animal: Well, I'm sorry, I would have fought your war/battle, but the gods are against it, so we can pack up for today. How often that happened, we do not know. But it is worth repeating the crucial point, that, in a context where the other world is only apprehensible through signs, *litatio* dramatizes the act of communication with gods. The individuality of these deities acquires sharper contour if we reject the idea that the votive implies an automatically positive response. Above all, they acquire a degree of unpredictability, of freedom, that gives them the right to make surprising choices.

System

The third function of sacrifice is fairly unspecific: it creates system, of different kinds and in different areas. The social and anthropological asymmetries I have already discussed are only special cases of system in this sense. Here I want to pick up the issue of what we might call 'vertical linkages'. Different animals can be associated with particular deities. Putting it the other way round, this means the addressee is determined by the gift. To take an example from everyday life: the better one knows someone, the more personal a gift can be – including even joke-gifts, which force the recipient to assume a role that he or she may not want, or is publicly embarrassing. I have already mentioned the basic principle in my brief account of the way a gift defines a god (p. 110): particular gods are correlated with particular animals. To ward off rust, a fungal disease that could easily ruin an entire harvest, you would sacrifice a red dog.²⁵ A connection is established between the unnamed god (in fact *Robigo*) and the victim by means of the colour (rust-) red. A major rule I have mentioned several times already is that male animals are (in principle) sacrificed to male gods, and female to female. In addition, the character of the deity can be further specified by the size, number and age of the animals. The following text from the Acta of the Arval Brothers of the year 60 AD will clarify the point:

During the same consulship L. Calpurnius Piso, son of L., *magister* of the college, sacrificed in the name of the Arval Brothers on the Capitol, by decree of the Senate, on the Nones of April (7th of April), in the context of the thanksgivings appointed [after the murder of Agrippina] for the well-being of Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus: an ox (*mas bos*) to Jupiter, a cow to Juno, a cow to Minerva, a cow to the Common Well-being (*salus publica*), a cow to Providence, a bull to the emperor's Genius, an ox to the deified Augustus.

Scheid 1998a: no. 28A-C, ll. 10–14 = *CIL* VI 2042 = *ILS* 230
(ignoring restorations)

The list of sacrifices here contains clear correlations: Jupiter receives an ox (i.e. a castrated bull), Juno and Minerva, being goddesses, get cows, the Genius of the living Caesar is offered a bull (i.e. an uncastrated male), the deified Caesar Augustus an ox. Sacrifices of oxen are big news, providing up to 200 kg (440 lbs) of meat. In this text, nothing is said however about the age of the animals. The pre-eminent rank of the Genius of the living Caesar, Nero himself, is emphasized by his being offered a bull. This detail shows that the other 'males'

(*mares boves*) are all oxen, i.e. castrated individuals, which are much easier to handle. We have here a rough hierarchization of the gods through the sex of the victims, which underscores the socio-religious priority of the Genius of the reigning emperor.

The Economics of Sacrifice

This account would be lop-sided if I said nothing about the economic aspects of sacrifice.²⁶ Pigs and sheep were the main private victims. Public sacrifice, however, was dominated by cattle, which were substantially more expensive and of course provided more meat. As for age, the victims in private contexts were usually young animals: they were not too expensive but could still feed a small group. There is a world of difference between having to buy a choice, fat, adult pig for sacrifice, or a small suckling-pig. The *sacra publica* fulfil a parade or ideal role, representing a 'perfect' ritual order, but even there the rules have loopholes.

Sacrifices do not fall from the sky, being performed, on the contrary, so that something else may fall from the sky. Animals have to be bred, bought and transported to the place where the sacrifice is going to take place. This presupposes an entire industry. So far we have only looked at the 'theological' side. In fact however, throughout the history of animal-sacrifice associated with festive eating, the sacrificial system had to be co-ordinated over the *longue durée* with the basics of stock-rearing. If the stock-rearing economy proves unable to provide the animals required for sacrifice, the system will collapse. Conversely, if the sacrificial system has no demand for the animals produced by that branch of the economy, there are going to be an awful lot of useless animals standing about munching. Such a situation cannot be sustained in an economy not much above the level of subsistence, and a culture that enjoined such useless production would be condemned to perish.

I want to draw attention here to just one or two implications.²⁷ Store animals are eaten relatively, but not extremely, young. In the case of pigs and cattle, the ratio weight-gain/feed-costs reached an optimum point somewhere between 12 and 24 months. Except in areas with very adverse conditions, if the animal is kept alive longer, the ratio progressively decreases. The sacrificial rules are therefore likely to call for animals of this optimum age.²⁸ Since it is omnivorous, the pig is a very attractive animal for meat-production alone. The case is more complex with cattle, which in antiquity produced meat, milk,

hides and labour. In general, males were fattened and killed as young steers, unless they were castrated for farm-work; females were only killed once they became too old to carry calves to term. There was thus a very high proportion of suckler-cows to breeding-bulls.²⁹ Both males and females could be used as work animals, the males of course being castrated; they were slaughtered when they became too old to work (9–10 years old). Under these conditions, the ox will be the main parade sacrificial animal, and pregnant cows common.

This type of reckoning can only be confirmed by contemporary evidence to a small extent, since to do so effectively presupposes the existence of a substantial number of inventoried archaeo-zoological finds. The few archaeological facts that we have confirm that in Greece emphasis was laid on the production of (sheeps-) milk and wool, for clothing. That corresponds to the majority of Greek sacrificial rules that we know of, or at least does not contradict them: sheep were the standard sacrificial victim. Overall, the consumption of meat was low; in the case of Greece, it is calculated on the basis of the taphonomic evidence to have been less than 1 kg per person per year. If we divide the amount of meat envisaged by the Athenian calendar of official public sacrifices by the number of persons (theoretically) entitled to partake, we get a consumption of roughly 2 kg per participant per year, which is quite a lot for antiquity. Athens must have been one of the few places where more animals were sacrificed than were bred in the surrounding countryside. Such quantities imply large-scale import of sacrificial animals on the hoof. At Rome, the taphonomic finds in the Area Sacra of Sant'Omobono, by contrast, included a large quantity of pig-bones. The Athenian pattern of increased meat-consumption seems to apply to Rome as it expanded to become a great power. On the other hand, as later Roman sources confirm, the cultural dominance of sheep in Greece gives way in Rome and west-central Italy (i.e. Etruria, Latium and Campania) to that of pig. This is however not the case either in the old Greek areas of Southern Italy, where sheep maintained its dominance, nor in Northern Italy, where the availability of extensive pasture-land meant that both cattle and sheep remained important.³⁰

- amines Diales*: Val. Max. 1.1.4f.; Plutarch, *Marcell.* 5; Livy 26.23.8, with arco Simón 1996: 197f. (the rule that the *flamen Dialis* was required to wear his *galerus* at all times in the open air is stated by Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att.* 10.15.17); Scipio: Polybius 21.13.10–14 with Walbank 1957–79: 3, 107; Livy 37.33.7.
- 26 E.g. Cicero, *De domo sua* 136; *Brutus* 55; *De div.* 2.42; Livy 1.60.4; 4.3.9 with Ogilvie 1965: 535; Pliny *HN* 18.14; Censorinus, *De die nat.* 17.9; Servius, *Aen.* 1.398.
- 27 Rüpke 1993c; Scheid 1994; Scheid 2003: 131; Scheid 1998b goes somewhat farther.
- 28 Cf. Blomart 1997; Gustafsson 1999; also Dumézil 1966: 412–18; Palmer 1974: 55.
- 29 Accepting the identification of this Macrobius with the Theodosius Macrobius who was praetorian prefect in Italy in AD 430. The traditional view fixed the date between 384 and 395.
- 30 Köves-Zulauf 1972; Gladigow 1981: 1206f.
- 31 Servius, *Aen.* 1.277; also Servius auct. *ibid.*, and Servius, *Aen.* 2.351.
- 32 See frg. 2 Courtney = Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 7, 9, citing Varro's *De cultu deorum*. He also wrote an otherwise unknown *Epoptides*, which had a conspectus of contents similar to Pliny's *Natural History*, and is therefore also likely to have been encyclopaedic (*HN* praef. 33). It has been suggested that the title is the equivalent of *Tutelae*, 'Guardian Goddesses': Köves-Zulauf 1970: 322.
- 33 Pliny, *HN* 28.18; Serv. auct., *Aen.* 1.277.
- 34 List in Basanoff 1947: 43–68.

6 SOCIAL RULES

- 1 Van Straten 1995; Huet et al. 2004–6a; on the value of sacrifice as symbol, see Gordon 1990.
- 2 For the range of possible sacrificial sites, see Torelli et al. 2004–6.
- 3 The same goes for the meat, of course; in an earlier passage Cato says, with reference to the same offering: *ubi daps profanata comestaque erit*, 'when the *daps* has been offered and eaten . . .': *De agr.* 50.2.
- 4 On domestic cult, see De Marchi 1903; Orr 1978; Bakker 1994; on the Lares and Penates: Dubourdieu 1989.
- 5 Altars often had some protection against excessive heat: Dräger 1994: 24–8. According to Servius, *Aen.* 12.119, it might well consist simply of a piece of turf.
- 6 Greece: Gill 1974, 1991; Scheer 2000: 61–6; Rome: e.g. Varro, *RD* frag. 101* Cardauns; *ILS* 5050 = *AE* 2002: 192 line 115; cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.23.5; Blanc 2004–6.
- 7 On the *sacrificia penetralia*, see also p. 103 above.
- 8 Cf. Scheid 1985b, 1988, 2005; Huet 2004–6b.
- 9 Isola Sacra: Pavolini 1983: 261f.; tomb of Saturninus: de Vos and de Vos 1982: 273.
- 10 Ovid, *Fasti* 1.319–22; Varro, *LL* 6.12; cf. Seneca, *Controv.* 2.3.19.
- 11 Cf. Varro, *LL* 6.31: *medio tempore inter hostiam caesam et exta porrecta*; cf. 6.16 *inter exta caesa et porrecta*.

- 12 The Romans themselves tended to regard this as a later custom.
- 13 Cf. Scheid 1988; Veyne 2000.
- 14 Cf. e.g. D'Arms 1984, 1990; Dunbabin 2003; Roller 2006.
- 15 *Magmenta*: Varro *ibid.*; Servius, *Aen.* 4.57; cf. Latte 1960: 389 n.2; Huet et al. 2004–5a: 1, 231f.
- 16 Cf. for Greece: Durand 1979; at Rome, cf. Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* 7.24 (tr. Huet et al. 2004–6a: 1, 232 no.274).
- 17 Scott Ryberg 1955; Turcan 1988: 2, 16–39; Fless 1995.
- 18 E.g. the regulations (*lex*) of the *collegium cultorum Dianae et Antinoi* in Lanuvium, AD 133: *CIL* XIV 2112 = *ILS* 7212 II, 18–20. The original is in the epigraphy section of the Museo Nazionale delle Terme in Rome.
- 19 Cf. Gladigow 1971 on Ovid, *Fasti* 1.335–456.
- 20 The classic formulation is Pernice 1885; see also Beard, North, Price 1998: 1,34, and p. 102 above.
- 21 Although they agree that the gods were not strictly bound by votives, Beard, North, Price 1998: 1,36 fail to see *litatio* as a ritual dramatization of this truth.
- 22 Cicero, *De div.* 1.28; heart and head of liver missing: *ibid.* 119; Paulus, *Excerpt. Festi* p. 287, 7–8 L, s.v. 'pestifera auspicia'; Suetonius, *Div. Iul.* 77.
- 23 Separately: Livy 41.15.2; cf. Paulus, *Excerpt. Festi* p. 9, 3f. L, s.v. 'antroare'. In the case of naval sacrifices, or to marine deities, the entrails were thrown raw, but chopped up (*cruda exta caesa*) into the sea: Livy 29.27.5; Servius, *Aen.* 5.238.
- 24 Paulus, *Excerpt. Festi* p. 69, 9f. L, s.v. 'exta': *quod ea dis prosecuntur, quae maxime extant eminentque*, because they are cut out for the gods, who are very conspicuous and prominent (the alternative spelling of the word *exto*, I stand out, is *exto*).
- 25 Festus p. 358, 27–30 L; Paulus, *Excerpt. Festi* p. 39, 13–16 L; cf. Latte 1960: 67f.; Beard, North, Price 1998: 1,47. Dog-sacrifices: Smith 1996b.
- 26 On the economics of incense, see p. 267 n. 26 above.
- 27 For Greece, cf. especially Jameson 1988; for Italy, MacKinnon 2004.
- 28 We also need to take feeding-régimes into account: young pigs, for example, cannot gain weight on a pure carbohydrate diet of acorns, but can do so in their second year; an 18-month-old hog can more than double its weight if fed on acorns for three autumn months (MacKinnon 2004: 156f.).
- 29 Varro, *RR* 2.5.12 notes the rule of having two bulls for 70 suckler-cows.
- 30 See Nimtz 1925; more refined figures for Italy in King 1999: 169–73 with Table A, pp. 192f.; MacKinnon 2004: 77–100 (for the pattern in N. Italy, where even so pig represents 38.6% ±11.9 of the finds; see also Alvino 1995).

7 MANAGING LINES OF COMMUNICATION

- 1 The materials can be found in the various volumes of *CStipiVot*; good summaries in Comella 1981; Fridh-Haneson 1987; Bouma 1996; Simon et al. 2004–6: 1, 330–59 (A. Comella); see also de Cazenove 1997.
- 2 For these technical details, see Comella 1981.
- 3 Cf. Gladigow 1995; Baggieri 1999; Simon et al. 2004–6: 1, 359–69 (A. M. Turfa); Schultz 2006: 95–120.
- 4 General background information in van Straten 1981.