

## Bones in Greek sanctuaries: answers and questions

### Abstract\*

The paper begins by surveying some old problems in the study of Greek ritual to which the zooarchaeological evidence has brought answers, or at any rate illuminating new perspectives (sacrifice to Herakles on Thasos, and Herakles' identity there; sacrifice at Kalapodi/Hyampolis). The focus then shifts to the attestation by the bones of the eating of "non-sacrificable" species of animal in sanctuaries, suggesting that we ought at least to reckon with the possibility that such consumption was common, that sacrificable animals too were not uncommonly eaten without being sacrificed, and that in general the Greeks may have been less scrupulous about sacrificial feasting, and about meat-eating in general, than modern scholars have tended to suppose. It may be that in this sphere, as (I have argued elsewhere) in others, the sacrality of the central ritual "tapered off" quite sharply, and that the banqueting, like festival events such as parades, markets, athletics, and dramatic and musical performances, was in practice felt to be essentially "secular".

The evidence of the animal bone deposits in Greek sanctuaries, so long neglected (in the most literal sense), is at last coming into its own, and promises to make a central contribution to our understanding of Greek sacrificial practice. All of us who work on Greek sacrifice owe a great debt to the archaeologists and osteologists for their patient and painstaking work on particular deposits, and to Gunnel Ekroth and others for beginning to bring the evidence of the bones into synoptic focus. I should like here to point to some answers to old quandaries that the bones have already given us, and to discuss a central question about Greek sacrifice and Greek cult which the bones raise.

The first and I think most important observation to be made is that these are still early days in the interpretation of zooarchaeological evidence. Scientifically sound work has now been done on a wide range of sites and on bones deposited over the full span of prehistory and history, but we can hope that careful zooarchaeological study will become an

indispensable component of exploration of all sites with animal bones, and that a great deal of further evidence is therefore still to come. Many scholars of Greek religion are only just beginning to appreciate the fundamental importance of zooarchaeological evidence to the study of Greek sacrifice. Scholars are, after all, inured to the kind of evidence with which we have normally dealt: ancient depictions of sacrifice, which bring things vividly to life while also prompting as many questions as they answer; ancient literary testimonia to sacrifices which are spotty, laconic and of very various—and often enough unclear—chronological provenance; and a modest and ever-modestly growing body of epigraphic evidence which is as various in provenance and chronology as the literary testimonia and often even more bafflingly laconic. The zooarchaeological evidence almost always compares very favourably to our other evidence in its splendid abundance, the specificity of what it attests, and its clear location in space and generally also in time, and I expect that it will be seen before long as our most reliable and illuminating evidence for what Greeks actually got up to at sacrifices and in sanctuaries. Our verbal evidence for these matters is so limited that a single new text can change our view radically—I have argued that the recently-published bottom half of a decree of the Attic deme Aixone, for example, should alter our view of how the Greeks performed a holocaust sacrifice<sup>1</sup>—and so limited too that the whole body of our evidence can leave us in genuine doubt about quite basic questions, such as the business of the Olympian/chthonian distinction, which we might be said to debate so vigorously because none of us is in a position to do more than argue for the relative plausibility of our own interpretation of an obviously inadequate body of evidence. The zooarchaeological evidence will not of course answer all our questions, many of which it simply cannot answer, but as our richest source of new and concrete information, it will

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\* I am grateful to Robert Parker for very helpful comments on a draft, and to Gunnel Ekroth for much helpful discussion and correction and for the kind loan of her photocopy of Stanzel 1991.

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<sup>1</sup> Scullion 2009.

predictably prompt both radical new suggestions and rejection of received views, becoming at once the most reliable catalyst of change and the most indispensable “reality check” in the study of Greek animal sacrifice.

## Answers

I begin with examples of some old questions to which the animal bones have brought a firm or plausible answer or which they have at any rate helpfully clarified. Gunnel Ekroth has drawn attention to the widespread lack of pig bones in altar deposits and suggested that the thighbones and tails of pigs were not, as in the case of other standard victims (cattle, sheep, goats), removed and burnt at the altar.<sup>2</sup> As Robert Parker has reminded us in a different connection, Karl Meuli long ago speculated (on the basis of Eumaios’ sacrifice at *Od.* 19.419–36) that sacrifice of pigs worked differently than that of the other standard victims.<sup>3</sup> More zooarchaeological data and prolonged discussion will be required before we can define and interpret this distinct practice with any confidence, but it is pleasing that Meuli’s old and neglected suggestion has been given a new lease on life by the accumulation of fresh evidence. It is both encouraging and consoling to think that in time the evidence may catch up with some of our own instinctive suggestions, or “shots in the dark.”<sup>4</sup>

My second example is of bone evidence answering a question which we had not quite asked, and in the process raising a wider question that ought to have occurred to us. In their publication of the bones found at the Herakleion in Thasos, des Courtils, Gardeisen and Pariente observe that in the deposits both goat and pig bones are notably absent<sup>5</sup> and re-

fer this to a well-known inscription of the mid-5th century BC prohibiting precisely goat and pig offerings to Herakles Thasios.<sup>6</sup> There has been, and will doubtless continue to be, a good deal of discussion of the cults of Herakles on Thasos, and in particular of whether there was a distinctly “heroic” cult there involving holocausts.<sup>7</sup> I cannot resume the debate here, but share the views of des Courtils, Gardeisen and Pariente that the Herakles Thasios inscription requires holocaust sacrifices; that the heroon of Herakles on Thasos will have been near the findspot of the inscription in the agora in central Thasos town; and that the sanctuary from which the bones come (and where sacrificial banquets clearly took place, as the bones indicate), in the eastern part of Thasos town, is a distinct sanctuary for the “divine” Herakles.<sup>8</sup> If this is right, we are faced with the interesting fact that the prohibition on goat and pig offerings prescribed for the heroic cult in the agora of Thasos was also observed at the “divine” sanctuary. So far as I am aware, it had not occurred to anyone, before the animal bones at the Herakleion were analysed, to wonder whether the prohibition in the inscription found in the agora might have applied also to “divine” sacrifices to Herakles elsewhere in Thasos. The beginning of the inscription—“To Herakles Thasios it is not *themis* [to sacrifice] a goat, nor a pig...”—sounds like a general prohibition applying to all cult of this god, but the apparent requirement of total holocaust (contested by some scholars) in the sequel cannot have applied to all cult of “divine” Herakles, and those of us who have assumed two distinct cult-places and sets of sacrificial practices have taken the inscription to apply to Herakles the Thasian hero. The animal bones now demonstrate beyond doubt that there were standard “Olympian” sacrifices for Herakles on Thasos, and therefore that the inscription must indeed have looked primarily to the heroic cult.

The wider question that the Thasian bones raise has to do with the interpretation of this evidence in the context of the relationship between rituals and recipients in general. Why, when the sacrificial procedures were so distinct at heroon and Herakleion, should the prohibition on goat and pig have applied at both? We have to think, it would seem, not of dis-

<sup>2</sup> Ekroth 2009, 143–144 with n. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Parker 2010, 142, n. 15; Meuli 1946, 214, n. 1 = reprint 937–938, n. 3.

<sup>4</sup> A neglected suggestion of Paul Stengel that holocaust victims were regularly cut open before being burnt (Stengel 1910, 90, n. 2) is similarly vindicated if my interpretation in Scullion 2009 of the evidence of the new inscription from Aixone is right.

<sup>5</sup> des Courtils, Gardeisen & Pariente 1996, 799, 814, with the table of finds on p. 804. Gardeisen expresses due caution about the goats: “en effet, tous les ossements d’ovicaprinés n’ont pas été déterminés spécifiquement et seuls les moutons ont été attestés” (814, detailed discussion at 803). Ekroth 2007, 262 rightly describes all of these finds as predominantly “dinner debris”, so that they are not direct evidence for sacrificial procedure. Bones of goats and pigs—normally among the most frequent of sacrificial victims—are totally absent from Lots 1–3; pig bones are present in very small numbers in the Archaic Lots 4–5, and both goat and pig in greater numbers in the 4th-century BC Lot 6. The conclusion of des Courtils, Gardeisen & Pariente that pig and goat were not sacrificed is thus eminently plausible, and it may be that the presence in the 4th century of bones of pigs and goats that were eaten but not necessarily sacrificed is one example among many others (see further below)

of the consumption in sanctuaries of animals that were not meant to be sacrificed there, which it is possible became more common with time.

<sup>6</sup> des Courtils, Gardeisen & Pariente 1996, 799–800. The inscription is *IG XII Suppl.* 414 = Sokolowski 1962, no. 63. Hdt. 2.44–45, in connection precisely with Herakles Thasios, approves of the practice of those who distinguish a divine from a heroic Herakles and make distinct offerings (θύειν and ἐναγίζειν respectively) to each.

<sup>7</sup> For discussion of the relevant issues with references to earlier contributions to the debate see Stafford 2005; I have discussed the text further at Scullion 2009, 164–165.

<sup>8</sup> des Courtils, Gardeisen & Pariente 1996, 799–800 with 820 n. 6, who at 800 note the evidence of an offering table depicting Herakles’ club and lionskin for a heroon located in the agora.

tinct if homonymic cults of Herakles on Thasos, but rather of a single cult of a goat- and swine-averse Herakles whom the Thasians must have been conscious of worshipping in two different places and sacrificial modes, or in other words under two sharply contrasted aspects (whether or not one wishes to classify these as “Olympian” and “chthonian”). That is a possibility, raised by the animal bones, of some importance for the study of Greek understanding of divine identity.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, in this brief survey of answers brought by the bones, I turn to the zooarchaeological evidence from the sanctuary of Artemis at Kalapodi, ancient Hyampolis in Phokis.<sup>10</sup> In this case, the results of the bone analysis can be brought into sharper relationship with the literary sources and the older scholarly discussion than they seem to have been hitherto.<sup>11</sup> In the period before the analysis of the animal bones, the most extended interpretation of the cult of Artemis at Hyampolis was Martin Nilsson’s in his *Griechische Feste* of 1906.<sup>12</sup> Nilsson rightly notes that the references by Plutarch *De mul. vir.* 244B–E and Pausanias 10.1.6 to the primary Phokian festival of Artemis focus on the aetiological story of the festival to the exclusion of ritual detail. Plutarch narrates the tale as the aition of the festival, which he definitely locates at Hyampolis, but Pausanias tells the story in the introduction to his account of the Phokians as a historical episode rather than an aition. Nilsson assumes, on the basis of the local month-name Laphrios, that the Phokians originally called the festival the Laphria, but Plutarch calls it Elaphebolia and a late inscription uses the double name “great Elaphebolia and Laphria.”<sup>13</sup> On the basis both of the occurrence of the festival name Elaphebolia and of clear resemblances between cults of Artemis the huntress under the epithets Laphria, Elaphebolos, and Potnia Theron, Nilsson brings the goddess and the festival at Hyampolis into close relation-

ship with the Athenian Artemis Elaphebolos and her festival the Elaphebolia. The Laphria festival at Patrai, of which Pausanias, who says that he attended it, gives a full account (7.18.11–13), involves destruction by fire of all manner of chattels and live animals in large numbers, including such wild animals as bear, deer, roe deer, and wild boar. The aition of the Hyampolis festival relates that, before a decisive battle between the Phokians and the Thessalians (which seems to have taken place not long before the Persian invasion under Xerxes), the Phokians gathered together their women and children (and, in Pausanias, also clothing, gold, silver, and images of the gods) ready to be burnt—or, in the case of the women and children in Pausanias, put to the sword and then burnt—if the battle was lost; in the event the Phokians won, and the festival has been held henceforth in celebration of the victory. Nilsson is right that the political aspect of this aition has obscured the ritual process, but surely is also right to detect in the threatened mass destruction a close analogue with the Laphria festival at Patrai. Taking a step further, Nilsson notes that, as at Patrai wild animals including deer are burnt alive, so in our very limited evidence for the Elaphebolia festival at Athens one source tells us that the festival involved sacrifice of deer, another of cakes in the shape of deer.<sup>14</sup> I quote Nilsson’s conclusion:

*Es wurden der Artemis Elaphebolos Hirsche geopfert, die als Kuchen in Form eines Hirsches zu verstehen sind. Der Kuchen ist Ersatz eines wirklichen Opfers, so daß auch in Athen einmal der Artemis ein Hirsch geopfert worden ist. Auch dieses Opfer scheint ein Rest von einem Feste zu sein, das den Laphrien ähnlich gewesen ist. Bezeichnend ist die Opferung von wilden Tieren; daß sie für Hyampolis nicht direkt bezeugt ist, wird aus der Beschaffenheit der Berichte verständlich, denen die Einzelheiten der Opferriten gleichgültig sind.*<sup>15</sup>

The animal bones excavated at Kalapodi show that, among other victims, red deer and small numbers of fallow deer, roe deer, and wild boars—species normally among those the Greeks regarded as not suitable for sacrifice—were slaughtered and eaten. As the sacra and tailbones of these animals are not found in what is a deposit of “dining debris,” it is a safe

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Scullion 1994, where I argued against those who have tended to focus primarily on the “inner logic of the ritual” that we should pay closer attention to (relatively) consistent divine identities that bridge cult in different modalities and/or in different places.

<sup>10</sup> The current excavator of Kalapodi, W.-D. Niemeier, has argued in a public lecture (as Robert Parker kindly informs me) that the sanctuary at Kalapodi may have belonged to Apollo of Abai rather than Artemis. If his view is eventually proven or prevails, my discussion must be set aside, but this seems at the moment to be very much an open question.

<sup>11</sup> In his analysis of the bones from Kalapodi, Stanzel (1991, 11 and 163–165) mentions only very briefly and in disagreement the account of the cult in Nilsson 1906, 221–225, which does not figure in the subsequent discussions of Felsch 2001, Ekroth 2007, 262–263, and Ekroth forthcoming.

<sup>12</sup> Nilsson 1906, 218–225. I cannot deal here with the many and important subsequent discussions of the festivals at Patrai and Hyampolis/Kalapodi; Pirenne-Delforge 2006, esp. 119–121, is a good recent article with full bibliographical references.

<sup>13</sup> *JG* IX, 1, l. 90; see Nilsson 1906, 221–222; cf. Pirenne-Delforge 2006, 120–121.

<sup>14</sup> Nilsson 1906, 224, n. 1. *Anecd. Bekk.* 1.249 (from the *Lexeis Rhetorikai* in Paris): Ἐλαφηβολιών· μὴν Ἀθήνησι πέμπτος· ἐκλήθη δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐλάφων, αἱ τινες τῷ μηνὶ τούτῳ ἐθύοντο τῇ ἐλαφηβόλῳ Ἀρτέμιδι [Translation:] “Elaphebolion: fifth month at Athens. It was named after the hinds which were sacrificed in this month to Artemis Elaphebolos (‘the deer-shooter’)”. *Ath.* 14.646c: ΕΛΑΦΟΣ πλακοῦς ὁ τοῖς Ἐλαφηβολίοις ἀναπλασσομένης διὰ σπαιτὸς καὶ μέλιτος καὶ σησάμου [Translation:] “DEER: The cake made at the Elaphebolia festival with spelt-dough, honey, and sesame”.

<sup>15</sup> Nilsson 1906, 224.

inference that, as in the case of standard sacrificial victims, the sacra and tails (and possibly also thighbones) were removed and burnt in the altar fire as the divine portion.<sup>16</sup> The bones therefore cohere with the picture of Artemis cult at Hyampolis and elsewhere restored by Nilsson from the literary and epigraphic evidence, and in general strikingly confirm the essential soundness of his analysis.

It is always of methodological interest to test scholarly conjecture against new evidence, but in this case the result is of wider importance. With the accession of the animal bones, our body of evidence now permits a rare glimpse into the development of a local cult complex over a long period. The festival rites were surely old and in a general way cognate with the Laphria at Patrai, but a new, historically inspired aition anchors the festival at Hyampolis to a crisis in Phokian history. In one respect the bones from Kalapodi are an important corrective to Nilsson's interpretation. To him the human sacrifice he thought was envisaged in Pausanias' story, where the women and children were to be slaughtered by the sword before being burnt, did not seem incredible,<sup>17</sup> but we can now see that as far back as the evidence takes us we encounter banquet-sacrifice of wild animals but not evidence for human sacrifice, which scholars are nowadays chary of assuming.<sup>18</sup> Compared with the aitia of the festivals at Patrai and Hyampolis, actual practice in the sanctuary, even in the earliest period, looks very "routinized".<sup>19</sup> It is of course possible that such a mass destruction as Pausanias describes for the Laphria at Patrai may have taken place also at Hyampolis. When he mentions Hyampolis itself, however, Pausanias says nothing of a festival; he notes that the temple of Artemis was opened only twice a year, and so may be supposed to have missed attending the festival, but he has apparently not gathered from his local informants or written sources that such an usual and spectacular rite as that at Patrai took place there (Paus. 10.35.5–7). We may then cautiously conclude that, in combination, the zooarchaeological evidence, Plutarch's ritually-vague aition, Pausanias' transposition of the aition into Phokian history and silence about any festival at Hyampolis, and Nilsson's comparanda from Athenian cult suggest that at Hyampolis the festival was far less remarkable than at Patrai,

<sup>16</sup> Stanzel 1991, 162; Felsch 2001, 196–197. In a comment on my draft, G. Ekroth notes that "The long bones (including femora) are present though unusually fragmented, but recovered among the burnt bones, which from the Archaic period could include the altar debris". It may well be, therefore, that thighbones were offered alongside the tailbones.

<sup>17</sup> Nilsson 1906, 223.

<sup>18</sup> See above all Henrichs 1981.

<sup>19</sup> Pirenne-Delforge 2006, esp. 125–127, argues that the Laphria festival at Patrai is a Roman foundation, and if this were right we should speak not of routinization of an originally more spectacular rite but of the later creation of a very elaborate rite for a goddess who had earlier received cognate offerings of wild victims.

consisting essentially of sacrificial banquets involving a small minority of unusual, but distinctly Artemisian, wild victims. In a comparable process of routinization, at Athens cakes either replaced the sacrifice of deer or came in alongside it as a more modest offering by those unable to obtain or afford animals.

In terms of the wider questions about the zooarchaeological evidence to which I will now turn, the most important lesson of this case is that the banquet-sacrifices of deer and wild boar which the bones attest for Hyampolis can confidently be classified among the unusual cases of (ordinarily non-sacrificable) wild animals being prescribed as victims in regular sacrificial cult. There is no need, that is, to attempt to account for these bones by such expedients as the supposition that hunters may have brought suitable portions of their spoil for *ad hoc* dedication in the sanctuary.

## Questions

In addressing some fundamental questions about Greek sacrifice that the zooarchaeological evidence seems to me to pose, I begin with the general observation that it is very important that we let the animal bones do any revolutionary work they may be able to do rather than arrest the process by hurrying anxiously to make them conform to the dominant general ideas of the day about Greek religion and sacrifice. If the abundant evidence of the animal bones becomes as centrally important as one expects it will, there is every possibility that it will alter even some of our most general ideas. That is after all how it's meant to happen, the concrete evidence shaping the generalizations rather than the other way round.

As an example, let us take the distinction between "secular" and "sacred"—a hobby-horse of my own, but also, given the new evidence, a natural focus of attention which draws comment in some of the papers in this volume and in other recent work on the zooarchaeological material. The fundamental question of how the distinction between sacred and secular worked, or indeed whether the Greeks really made such a distinction, is raised very urgently by what is perhaps the most striking, not to say startling feature of a majority of the animal bone deposits, the presence of butchered bones of what, from the point of view of our other evidence, are completely unexpected species in a sanctuary: dog, cat, horse, donkey, snake, bear, lion, and so on. The results from Poros discussed in this volume by Dimitra Mylona are a very exciting addition to the already widespread evidence for such "unusual animals".

It is still commonly held that the Greeks made little or no distinction between sacred and secular, and that everything at a sanctuary must in some sense be sacred. There seems to

be something of a tendency at present to jump to the conclusion that the “unusual animals” eaten in sanctuaries—animals that were not among τὰ θύσιμα, “those that are sacrificed” (e.g. Hdt. 1.50), that is not sheep, goats, pigs, or cattle—must nevertheless be classified not as secular or profane but as somehow “differently sacred” (as one might say).<sup>20</sup> We know that horse, dog, and donkey might in defined and exceptional cases be ritually slaughtered, but the evidence of the bones at a variety of sanctuaries shows that these animals were eaten but not sacrificed: there is no evidence that portions of them were given to the gods, and so far as I can see there is no justification whatever for speaking of the killing and eating of victims of which the gods received no portion as “sacrifice”.<sup>21</sup> We know, on the other hand, from a passage of Hippocrates *On Diet* (*Vict.* 2.46) that Greeks ate not only “cattle, goat, pig, and sheep” but also “donkey, horse, dogs, wild boar, deer, hare, and fox”. The natural conclusion from the animal bones therefore is that in many Greek sanctuaries θύσιμα—victims of the acceptable species—were sacrificed at the altar, but that non-sacrificable species were presumably slaughtered and certainly cooked and eaten as part of the banqueting stage of some of these sacrificial events—above all, perhaps, at large events such as festivals. Robert Parker has demonstrated that Greeks certainly ate unsacrificed meat,<sup>22</sup> so the consumption of animals that have not been sacrificed is not in itself surprising and must indeed have been a routine feature of Greek life. What is surprising to most scholars is that such consumption should take place at a sanctuary or during a festival. We must surely come to one of two conclusions about this: either non-sacrificable animals could in some unknown way, involving no gift to the gods, be “sacralized”,<sup>23</sup> or alternatively our notion of the relationship between sacred and profane at Greek sanctuaries and festivals is somewhat faulty and needs correction. To my mind the latter is the prudent and the right conclusion, but we ought at any rate to reckon with the possibility that it is our general concept that

is wrong, that we have assumed falsely either that the Greeks did not distinguish sacred from profane or that, if they did, they firmly and scrupulously banished the profane from the realm of the sacred, or at any rate from sanctuaries.

The primary point I am making is that we must not jump to conclusions, but I should like to make it by canvassing some reasons for favouring the less common conclusion. I have argued elsewhere that we modern scholars police the boundary between sacred and profane much more anxiously, and define the realm of the sacred much more inclusively, than the Greeks did. One way to put it is that we assume that what is obviously sacred—sacrifice and other ritual acts at the centre of a given festival or sacral event—had a much stronger “half-life” than was really the case. My own view is that the force of the central sacrality tapered off much more quickly and completely than is usually supposed, that for example there is no important sense in which the plays performed at festivals were sacred, any more than were the booths at which things were available for sale at festivals;<sup>24</sup> that, as the evidence of contemporary writers overwhelmingly attests, performance of the liturgy of *choregia* was not conceived in religious terms; that whereas the sacral core of a festival procession—the sacrificial victim(s) and officiant(s)—were sacred, the sometimes quite long “tail” of the procession was not;<sup>25</sup> and so on. I suspect that, after the sacrifice was performed and the god had his portion, the transition from the inner sanctuary with its altar to the banqueting area and the banquet corresponded to what in practical terms was a complete tapering off of the sacrality.<sup>26</sup> This is not surprising in a culture that so clearly put “orthopraxy” ahead of “orthodoxy”, in which ritual was primary and “belief” or “faith” rather marginal. On this view, once the sacrifice is over, the god has been given his due, and the appropriate prayers have been said, we proceed to the essentially profane business of the banquet, where, as it might be, the meat of the sacrificial victim(s) is supplemented with some donkey or some dog, meat which has no more to do with “the sacred” than the banquet as such and its attendant socializing and recreation do.

Let me attempt to justify these claims, or at any rate demonstrate their plausibility, by turning to the question of the co-existence of sacrificial and profane dining in the Greek world. Parker’s important paper on ‘Eating unsacrificed meat’ seems to me to have settled most matters relevant to that subject pretty definitively, though I shall here argue for a

<sup>20</sup> Ekroth 2007, esp. 255 and 266–269.

<sup>21</sup> Parker 2010, 142 speaks of burning a portion for the gods as a “minimum requirement” even of an abbreviated sacrificial ritual conducted by a *mageiros*.

<sup>22</sup> Parker 2010.

<sup>23</sup> As G. Ekroth points out to me, deposition of a portion on an offering table or in the manner of *theoxenia* are possible methods of sacralization which would leave no trace by way of burnt altar deposit, but it seems to me so unlikely that either of these will have been standard procedure in the case of otherwise non-sacrificable victims—in part because they seem to me less rather than more likely to “gloss over” the anomaly of the victim’s species, in part because sacrifice with burning of a portion is so much the normal procedure—that to support on such a basis the claim (already paradoxical in itself) that “non-sacrificable” animals that were eaten must in some way have been “sacrificed” seems to me a rearguard action against powerful contrary evidence.

<sup>24</sup> Scullion 2007, esp. 201–203.

<sup>25</sup> *Choregia*, processions: Scullion 2012.

<sup>26</sup> See Scullion 2012, and on the Greek terminology of “sacred” and “secular” Scullion 2005, 112–119. On the distinction between the inner “ritual zone” (as one might call it) and other parts of sanctuaries, see Scullion 2005, 115.

rather different view of one important issue. As Parker shows, there is no doubt that Greeks ate unsacrificed meat: animals hunted were normally eaten without being sacrificed; some animals that died naturally were also eaten, as the Greek terms for such meat, *κενέβρειον* and *θνησείδιον*, indicate; and, as I mentioned above, we know from Hippocrates and other sources that many non-sacrificial species figured in the Greek diet; it is also very likely that those animals of the sacrificable species that were “imperfect” and so could not be offered as sacrificial victims were nevertheless used as food.<sup>27</sup>

The trickier question, on which Parker focuses his attention, is whether satisfactorily “perfect” animals of the sacrificable species were always sacrificed before their meat was consumed. Parker’s circumspect and cautious answer is that the view “can probably be defended” that what he calls “solemn banqueting” or “formal dining” was in principle preceded by sacrifice, but that “unsacrificed meat was also available in the market for more casual consumption.”<sup>28</sup> If this is right—and, despite the caveats I am about to enter, it may be—it would make all the more surprising the consumption of unsacrificed animals of non-sacrificable species at a banquet in a sanctuary, which is “formal dining” if anything is. I should like therefore, by way of approaching the zooarchaeological evidence attesting precisely such consumption in sanctuaries, to suggest that the evidence for formal dining on meat of sacrificable species that had not been sacrificed is rather more reliable than Parker allows.

In a recent monograph, Sarah Hitch makes a good case for the view that we find in Homer both sacrifice of animals with clear reference to the gods and non-sacrificial meat-eating without such reference; the verb used in the latter scenes (as in the former) is normally *ἱερεύειν*, but Hitch argues that it should in such contexts be translated “slaughter” rather than “sacrifice.”<sup>29</sup> Folkert van Straten has observed that both in Homer and on Greek vases there seems to be a clear distinction between sacrificial rites and dining, and that in neither case is there much at the dining stage to bring the sacrificial aspect to mind.<sup>30</sup> Such claims, and one’s reaction to them, are inevitably subjective, but the views of Hitch and van Straten seem to me eminently plausible, and my own inclination is to share them, concluding tentatively that for the Greeks dining can be an autonomous practice, independent of sacrifice. Parker points to the use in the Homeric passages of *ἱερεύειν* and concludes cautiously that “this is not . . . reliable evidence

for non-sacrificial killing”;<sup>31</sup> many scholars would I expect see it, less cautiously, as strong counter-evidence to Hitch’s claim.

It is difficult to avoid *petitio principii* when taking a position on the question whether *ἱερεύειν* and the later standard term for sacrifice, *θύειν*, can mean “slaughter” rather than “sacrifice”, since if one of these is the only potentially sacral term employed in a given passage it becomes a question of whether or not one (subjectively) detects an element of sacrality in the same action of killing of an animal. There is no doubt that “sacrifice” is generally the right translation of these terms, but it would be the most natural sort of development if they could also in some contexts mean simply “slaughter”. The general linguistic process is familiar: “She’s in her sanctum, studying”, “The university has sanctioned the use of calculators in examinations”, and “The barber butchered my hair” are examples of technical terms in uses extended beyond their narrow or original sense. Application of the technical term for an activity to a closely similar but in some sense distinct activity is a natural development,<sup>32</sup> and if *θύειν*, which originally and still in Homer means “turn to smoke” or “burn”, can come to mean “sacrificially kill” a cultic victim, it could just as easily develop the sense “slaughter” an animal. It is easy in the cases of *ἱερεύειν* and *θύειν*—whichever conclusion one reaches—to mistake for an objective criterion what is merely one’s instinct about whether or not a “reduced” sense is possible. Eustathius, at any rate, thought that *ἱερεύειν* had such a reduced sense: on *Od.* 2.56 he comments “Ὅτι ἱερεύειν οὐ μόνον τὸ θύειν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἀπλῶς σφάζειν, “ἱερεύειν” means not only ‘sacrifice’ but also simply ‘slaughter.’”<sup>33</sup>

The evidence most commonly discussed in this connection, which well exemplifies the difficulties involved, is in *Odyssey* XIV. There the suitors’ steady consumption of Odysseus’ animals is scandalous, and beyond the term *ἱερεύειν* there is nothing to mark their procedure as sacrificial or their attitude as pious—as, Parker notes, one would not expect there to be.<sup>34</sup> When Eumaios says that he has sent a pig to the suitors *ὄφρ’ ἱερεύσαντες κρειῶν κορεσαίατο θυμόν* (*Od.* 14.28), “that sacrificing [or slaughtering] it they might satisfy their souls with meat”, Hitch wants to translate *ἱερεύσαντες* as “killing”;<sup>35</sup> and other scholars, both of Homer and of Greek religion, have taken the same view.<sup>36</sup> One can, however, choose to in-

<sup>27</sup> Parker 2010, 139–141, 144 (imperfect animals).

<sup>28</sup> Parker 2010, 139 (‘Abstract’), 144, 145.

<sup>29</sup> Hitch 2009, esp. 39–59.

<sup>30</sup> Van Straten 2005, 25–26.

<sup>31</sup> Parker 2010, 141.

<sup>32</sup> For good Homeric comparanda, see Hitch 2009, 54 n. 184.

<sup>33</sup> Eust. *Od.* 1434.16–17 ad 2.56 (Stallbaum, vol. 1, 82, lines 19–20), cf. Eust. *Od.* 1671.62. This text has been neglected in recent scholarship.

<sup>34</sup> Parker 2010, 141.

<sup>35</sup> Hitch 2009, 51.

<sup>36</sup> E.g. Heubeck & Hoekstra 1989, 194, where Hoekstra comments *ad loc.* “the meaning of ‘sacrificing’ is as good as lost here”; Stengel 1910, 1 (plausible if overconfident conclusions). Ebeling 1885, 1.585 s.v. distinguishes two senses of the verb: “a) sacra facio ... b) mactō, victimam

sist on the translation “sacrifice”, and, as the only criterion for determining which is the better translation would be a full documentary account of the suitors’ procedure such as Homer does not give us, we cannot advance from educated guess to assertion. Closer attention should be paid to *Od.* 14.94, where Eumaios tells us that day after day the suitors οὐ ποθ’ ἐν ἱερέουσ’ ἱερχίον, οὐδὲ δὺ’ οἴω, “never sacrifice just the one victim, nor only two”, where the redoubling of the term makes it a bit strained to translate “slaughter an animal” *vel sim.*, but even so it remains possible that in line 28 and elsewhere the context will have prompted a Greek to take ἱερεύειν at the “slaughter” end of its scale of meaning.<sup>37</sup>

If it is granted that the terms in themselves cannot resolve the matter, we are thrown back on our interpretation of the scenes in which they are used, where again subjective responses are inevitably central. Attention has focused in *Odyssey* XIV primarily on the dinner that Eumaios cooks for Odysseus at lines 419–438, where there is explicit reference to pre-kill rituals, prayer, burning of a portion, and reservation of a seventh part of the cooked meat for the Nymphs and Hermes. This does not quite fit any of our standard models of sacrificial procedure, but it is clearly a sacrifice.<sup>38</sup> Insufficient attention has however been paid to the lunch that Eumaios prepared for Odysseus earlier in the book (*Od.* 14.74–80), where he hastens to lay a meal—also of pork, a sacrificial species—before the newly-arrived stranger. There we find no mention of the gods, prayer, or ritual procedures, but merely the verb ἱέρευσεν, which may mean simply “slaughtered”. To my mind, the difference between the two meals is telling, and not to be effaced by the assumption that procedures comparable to those described in the case of the dinner must be assumed also for the lunch (and indeed generally).<sup>39</sup> The difference between the two meals as Homer actually describes them is readily comprehensible: Eumaios, a proper Greek host, immediately feeds a guest arriving from a journey, without making a sacrifice; after his talk with the stranger, when the other swineherds return in the evening, our impression of Eumaios’ general worthiness is capped as he evinces his piety by sacralizing the preparation of dinner. It is plainly a plausible view that not all Homeric meals on sacrificable animals involved sacrifice, and it is surely more natural to take at face

value Homer’s descriptions of the two meals prepared by Eumaios and of others like them than to conclude that sacrificial procedures are commonly assumed rather than described, with astonishingly consistent omission in such cases of all cultic elements except the verb ἱερεύειν.<sup>40</sup> In the fullish description of Achilles’ preparation of a meal for Priam at *Iliad* 24.618–628 not only is no ritual element mentioned but the verb used is σφάζειν (623), which as we are about to see commonly means “slaughter” in the Classical period, and ἱερεύειν in several of its Homeric occurrences seems to be equivalent in sense to σφάζειν here.

Turning to the Classical period, we find a little, but very clear evidence for a distinction between “sacrifice” and “slaughter” in the terminology. In a passage from the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Oikonomika* of about 300 BC discussed by Parker, the citizens of Syracuse attempt to evade an imposition of taxes on livestock by the tyrant Dionysios I.<sup>41</sup> First they “slaughter and sell” their animals; when Dionysios then restricts the number of animals that may be killed daily, they “turn them into sacrificial victims”. The Greek phrases are, respectively, σφάζοντες ἐπώλουν and ἱερόθυστα ἐποίουν. The verb σφάζειν (sometimes σφάττειν in Attic) strictly denotes the cutting of an animal’s throat, and though it can of course be used with sacrificial overtones, it is the most natural term for “killing” an animal in a neutral or non-cultic sense, which is what the context shows it must mean here. In Menander’s *Perikeiromene*, which is roughly contemporary with the *Oikonomika*, Polemon is keen to proceed quickly with the killing of a pig, suggesting urgently that the *mageiros* get on with it and then proposing to do it himself. Verbally, he proceeds from τὴν ὑν θ[υέτω (996) to ἀλλὰ ταύτην σφ[αττέτω (998), and with the passage of Pseudo-Aristotle in mind it is tempting to take the verbs as, respectively, “sacrifice” (or perhaps simply “slaughter”) and “kill”. The term ἱερόθυτος and its congeners ἱερόθυτείν and ἱερόθύτης are themselves interesting: strictly tautologous if the θυ- terminology invariably denotes sacrality, they are perfectly comprehensible as specifications of *sacral* killing if it does not.<sup>42</sup>

vescendi causa sed ita ut diis primitiae debitae praestentur”, where the clause “sed ita ut etc.” is pure assumption on Ebeling’s part.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Casabona 1966, 24: “En effet, ἱερεύω n’a pas de correspondant exact dans nos langues modernes: il est à la fois ‘sacrifier’ et ‘abattre pour manger’; suivant les cas, l’accent est mis sur un aspect ou sur l’autre” (his emphasis), though Casabona assumes that ἱερεύειν always implies some ritual procedure (18–26).

<sup>38</sup> See Parker 2010, 141–142 with references to other views.

<sup>39</sup> See also Stengel 1910, 59–65, esp. 62–63; Hitch 2009, 40–43 with brief summary of and references to earlier debate.

<sup>40</sup> One might argue that the lunch procedure is deliberately designed, on literary grounds, not to steal the thunder of Eumaios’ piety at dinner, but the avoidance of *any* cultic element (apart from the moot verb) would make this a rather forced argument.

<sup>41</sup> Arist. [*Oec.*] 1349b7–14; Parker 2010, 143.

<sup>42</sup> Parker 2010, 144 raises the possibility that ἱερόθυτος might mean “killed in a sanctuary” rather than “sacrificially killed”, but the lexicographical tradition’s equation of the term with θεόθυτος (Phrynichus 130 Fischer, cf. Lobeck 1820, 159 ad loc.) and the phrase ὁ ἱερόθυτος θάνατος of self-sacrifice in war at Pind. fr. 78 seem to me to make against this.

A passage in Porphyry's *De Abstinētia* which is probably excerpted from Theophrastos' *De Pietate* provides further, but difficult and contentious evidence.<sup>43</sup> Following the statement that we do not sacrifice donkeys or elephants or other animals that are useful to us but not tasty, Porphyry's text goes on:

καίτοι καὶ χωρὶς γε τοῦ θύειν οὐκ ἀπεχόμεθα τῶν τοιούτων, σφάττοντες διὰ τὰς ἀπολαύσεις, καὶ θύομεν αὐτῶν τῶν θυσίμων οὐ τὰ τοῖς θεοῖς, πολὺ δὲ μᾶλλον τὰ ταῖς ἀνθρώπων ἐπιθυμίαις κεχαρισμένα, καταμαρτυροῦντες ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ὅτι τῆς ἀπολαύσεως χάριν ἐμμένομεν τοῖς τοιούτοις θύμασιν.<sup>44</sup>

“And yet even apart from sacrifice we do not abstain from such animals, slaughtering them because of our enjoyment, and of the sacrificable animals themselves we sacrifice not those which are gratifying to the gods, but far rather those which gratify the desires of men, bearing witness against ourselves that it is for the sake of enjoyment that we persist in such sacrifices.”

It is clear that τῶν τοιούτων in the first clause cannot refer to the donkeys and elephants mentioned in the previous sentence, which we were told are precisely lacking in ἀπόλαυσις. Pötscher argues that the reference is to the sacrificable animals which were the topic of the sentences preceding that about the donkeys and elephants. This seems possible, but as Parker points out the consequence of following Pötscher is that the phrase αὐτῶν τῶν θυσίμων in our sentence, which would naturally be taken to be *shifting* the focus to sacrificable animals, becomes problematic. Porphyry is drawing closely on Theophrastos' work throughout this section of his essay, and perhaps he has produced some inconsistency through hasty or negligent excerption (or later copyists of Porphyry's text have done so). Still, the phrase καὶ χωρὶς γε τοῦ θύειν, “even apart from sacrifice” in the first clause surely must mean that whoever composed it had sacrificable animals in mind, and that these must therefore be the referents of τῶν τοιούτων. The use of the term σφάττοντες coheres with this, a further example of that verb in its sense of non-sacrificial killing of a sacrificable animal, as in the *Oikonomika* and probably in *Perikeiromene*, with both of which Theophrastos' work is contemporary. Thus, if we could be confident that even just the first clause of our sentence came from Theophrastos, it would be good further evidence for non-sacrificial consumption of sacrificable animals, but though it seems very likely that the phrase

<sup>43</sup> Parker 2010, 145–146 devotes an appendix to this sentence, and I accordingly compress my discussion. Pötscher 1964, 81–82 argues that the whole sentence refers to sacrificable animals, a conclusion which Parker allows is possible.

<sup>44</sup> Porph. *Abst.* 2.25 = Theophr. *De pietate*, fr. 12.78–83 Pötscher.

is Theophrastean, it remains possible that it is a misleading product of Porphyrian pastiche.<sup>45</sup> Still, the passage has some value, taken alongside other evidence that points to the same conclusion, in the building of a cumulative case.

If the Archaic and Classical terminology points to the occurrence of non-sacrificial killing of sacrificable animals, so too do some later passages. In the first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul advises Christians on the question of eating meat that has been sacrificed to pagan gods. There is no objection to eating such meat (I Cor. 8:1–4), so “eat everything sold in the market and make no inquiries based on conscientious scruples” (I Cor. 10:25); likewise, if invited to dinner by an unbeliever, “eat everything set in front of you” without inquiry (I Cor. 10:27). On the other hand, one must be conscious of the possible effect on others, especially on “weak” Christians, if one knowingly and openly eats sacrificed meat,<sup>46</sup> and so if someone at the unbeliever's table identifies the meat served as ἱερόθυτον one should refuse to eat it (I Cor. 10:27–29). As Parker notes, an underlying assumption here is that both in the market and when dining it is possible to encounter meat of the same species that has or has not been sacrificed, which again attests non-sacrificial eating of θύσιμα.<sup>47</sup>

It seems highly probable, if not quite certain, that Paul implies that meat on sale in the market was not normally identified as sacrificial or non-sacrificial, since otherwise his objection to eating identified ἱερόθυτον when dining out ought to apply, at least in certain circumstances (for example when shopping with a “weak” Christian), to buying such meat. Hence the host and fellow diners at a meal of meat from the market would be unaware whether it was ἱερόθυτον, as meat bought in the market can hardly have been sacrificed or re-sacrificed in the home. We should therefore expect that any ἱερόθυτον served at the sort of dinner Paul envisages would normally either have been sacrificed at home before dinner or be a portion of meat received raw by the host at a sacrifice elsewhere—which would also explain why he anticipates possible difficulty only when an unbeliever is host. As

<sup>45</sup> I suspect that the original composer of the sentence slightly blurs or extends the sense of the term θύσιμα and meant by the phrase αὐτῶν τῶν θυσίμων what might be represented in English as “of the ones we (actually) sacrifice”, his intention being to make a contrast with καὶ χωρὶς γε τοῦ θύειν. If this is correct, the contrast is between sacrificable animals that are not in fact sacrificed and those that are, in which case the whole sentence would be coherent.

<sup>46</sup> It is irrelevant from our point of view, but there is disagreement among New Testament scholars about the reason a Christian should not eat identified sacrificial meat. Some conclude that on Paul's view the meal becomes an act of pagan cult once the meat is identified as sacrificial; I follow those who think rather that the Christian must avoid appearing tolerant of pagan cult and so leading astray a “weak” Christian (see I Cor. 8:7–13).

<sup>47</sup> Parker 2010, 143.

Paul assumes that the Christian dinner-guest needs to be told that the meat is *ἱερόθυτον*, and as he generates no scenario of such a guest encountering a domestic, pre-meal sacrifice, a takeaway sacrificial portion cooked at home is presumably what he has primarily in mind. All of this suggests strongly that non-sacralized dining on market-bought meat, which is evidently Paul's standard, safe model, must have been fairly routine.

The passage from the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Oikonomika* we discussed above coheres, as Parker notes, with the passage of Paul in suggesting that sacrificable animals might be butchered without sacrifice. This prompts Parker to say that “perhaps the attempt to deny the reality of simple slaughter for the market is misguided”, and he inclines to the view, as we noted above, that solemn banqueting would require preliminary sacrifice but that there will also have been “more casual consumption” of unsacrificed meat from the market.<sup>48</sup> It is here that I should like (perhaps incautiously) to push the argument a bit further, and to a rather different conclusion. Much of course turns on what we mean by “solemn” or “formal” as opposed to “casual”, but we probably ought to be reluctant to classify all the meals Paul has in mind as casual, as we should have to do if it were the case that everyone present on a formal occasion would know that the meat must have been sacrificed (and the Christian's informant would therefore not be revealing anything those present did not already know). There is some risk here that, in a circular confirmation of instinct, we may define solemn dining as dining preceded by sacrifice. I have no doubt that my own line of argument is affected by my instinct that non-sacrificial dining on sacrificable animals was common, but to my mind, however prejudiced, the considerations I have canvassed about Paul's statements and the unnaturalness of having to classify all the dinners he has in mind as informal point in the same direction. Certainty is not possible, but I add a bit of neglected evidence and one or two further arguments by way of suggesting that the case for routine non-sacrificial dining on *θύσιμα* is pretty clear.

The further piece of relevant evidence I have noticed is in a fragment of the comic poet Athenion, whose date is uncertain but perhaps as late as the 1st century BC.<sup>49</sup> In our one, lengthy fragment of Athenion, which describes how the *μαγειρική τέχνη*, “the butcher-cook's craft”, has lifted mankind from the depths of cannibalism to haute cuisine, there is this passage:

<sup>48</sup> Parker 2010, 143.

<sup>49</sup> Berthiaume 1982, 35 quotes lines 40–41 of the fragment of Athenion in a different connection, but does not mention our passage, whose relevance to the present question seems to have escaped notice.

ὄθεν ἔτι καὶ νῦν τῶν πρότερον μεμνημένοι  
τὰ σπλάγχνα τοῖς θεοῖσιν ὀπτῶσιν φλογὶ  
ἄλας οὐ προσάγοντες· οὐ γὰρ ἦσαν οὐδέπω  
εἰς τὴν τοιαύτην χρῆσιν ἐξευρημένοι.  
ὡς δ' ἤρεσ' αὐτοῖς ὕστερον, καὶ τοὺς ἄλας  
προσάγουσιν ἤδη τῶν ἱερῶν †γεγραμμένων<sup>50</sup>  
τὰ πάτρια διατηροῦντες.<sup>51</sup>

“Hence even now, mindful of the old ways, they roast the viscera in the flame for the gods without adding salt, for they had not yet discovered that use of it. But as later its use pleased them, they now add salt, observing ancestral custom only in the case of sacral offerings.”

The natural reading of this is that viscera are now salted when they are not sacral offerings, but are left unsalted when they are, and that it refers primarily to animals of the sacrificable species, which might therefore either be sacrificed or cooked and eaten unsacrificed. One cannot be quite certain, but the repetition *ἄλας οὐ προσάγοντες . . . τοὺς ἄλας προσάγουσιν ἤδη* suggests very strongly indeed that the same animals are in mind, not that one now salts the viscera of (say) dog, donkey, or *κενέβριον*. Taken in conjunction with the other passages pointing to the same conclusion, this appears to indicate that non-sacrificial use of sacrificable species was a familiar phenomenon. But an alternative reading of the passage is perhaps possible. It seems likeliest, given the run of the passage, that Athenion is talking about varying treatment of viscera, but it is possible that the contrast is between unsalted

<sup>50</sup> Clearly corrupt, but the general sense is not in doubt and would be given by the conjecture of Kaibel, who comments *ad loc.* in his edition of Athenaios “*velut τῶν ἱερῶν χρεια (s. καιρῶ) μόνον, i.e. in solis sacris faciundis salibus abstinebant*”, or by Gulick's *γε δρωμένων* or Naber's *γεγεννημένων*. There is a full and helpful discussion in Schweighäuser 1801–1807, 7. 670–674 (1805), still the standard commentary on Athenaios.

<sup>51</sup> Athenion fr. 1.17–23 KA *apud* Ath. 14.660e–661d; for his date see Jacoby on *FGrHist* 275 F 86. On the prohibition on salt see Stengel 1910, 13–14. Stengel 1910, 75–77 and Ziehen, *RE* 18.1 (1942), s.v. “Opfer”, 616–617; both assume that the viscera to which Athenion refers are the god's portion. It seems very likely (see Ziehen 617) that a portion of the *σπλάγχνα* was offered to the gods in the sense of being reserved for the priests, and Athenion's phrase *τοῖς θεοῖσιν* might be taken to indicate that only that portion is in question here. As the description *ὀπτῶσιν φλογὶ* indicates, however, we doubtless have to do here with what seems to have been the standard procedure, depicted on many vases, of so-called “splanchnoptis” roasting the edible viscera on spits over the altar flame. The majority of the roasted viscera will have been eaten by participants in the sacrifice, and some reserved for god/priest, but all of it can be said to be “roasted for the god(s)”, for whom we have no indication that a separate spit of (unsalted) viscera was prepared. Thus the *σπλάγχνα* Athenion speaks of first will be combined sacrificers' and gods' portions, roasted and eaten without salt, whereas the latterday salting of *σπλάγχνα* will be profane usage.

viscera and use of salt with the balance of the victim's meat.<sup>52</sup> This would, however, involve the apparent implication that the flesh of a sacrificed victim need not be classified with τὰ ἱερά, “the sacred things”, which seems very surprising—but if that were how the passage should be read it would support our general thesis in a different way by terminologically desacralizing the flesh of and banqueting on sacrificial victims. On that reading of the passage we should conclude that, even if such meat might still for some purposes be termed “sacrally killed” (ἱερόθυτα), it was apparently felt that sacrality tapers off more or less completely, or at any rate that there is a clear and marked disjunction, between the sacrificial killing of the victim and the consumption of its flesh.

Further support can be derived from two passages about the wondrous restraint of the kites of Elis:

εἶναι δὲ φασι παρ' αὐτοῖς καὶ ἰκτίνους, οἱ παρὰ μὲν τῶν διὰ τῆς ἀγορᾶς τὰ κρέα φερόντων ἀρπάζουσι, τῶν δὲ ἱεροθύτων οὐχ ἄπτονται.<sup>53</sup>

“And they say that among them [sc. the Eleans] there are kites which snatch meat from those carrying it through the market, but do not touch the ἱερόθυτα.”

Θεόπομπος δὲ ἐν τοῖς Θανμασίοις ἐν τῷ ἀγῶνι τῶν Ὀλυμπίων πολλῶν ἐπιπολαζόντων ἰκτίνων ἐν τῇ πανηγύρει καὶ διασυριζόντων τὰ διαφερόμενα κρέα <τὰ> τῶν ἱεροθύτων ἀθιγῆ μένειν.<sup>54</sup>

“Theopompos in his Wondrous Things says that at the contest of the Olympia, when at the festival the kites hover round and tear at the meat that is carried about, the meat of the ἱερόθυτα remains untouched.”

In a much later passage, Pausanias 5.14.1 tells us that the kites do not harass people sacrificing at Olympia,<sup>55</sup> but that, if they do take a bit of viscera or meat, the sacrifice is regarded as unpropitious.<sup>56</sup> Theopompos, however—from whom the ac-

counts of Pseudo-Aristotle and Apollonios' *Mirabilia* will both have been taken—speaks according to Apollonios of meat carried round within the sanctuary, some of which is not ἱερόθυτα. Thus, meat of sacrificable species that has not been sacrificed, or of non-sacrificable species, or of both, is carried round in the sanctuary, any of which ought on current views to be surprising (and is important evidence on our central questions about the animal bones). Demosthenes 10.49–50 says that one can judge whether an ἀγορά or a πανήγυρις has been ill or well arranged by the quantity and cheapness of the things on sale, and we could readily reconcile Pseudo-Aristotle's and Apollonios' versions of Theopompos' story by assuming that the “agora” through which the meat is carried in the former account was originally a festival market in the sanctuary. So far as I know, nothing precludes the possibility that alongside free portions of sacrificial meat there may have been other meat for sale at festivals, and if there were it will no doubt have been differentially priced for species, quantity, and quality. In any event, Theopompos' tale, however fanciful, must have been comprehensible to his readers, and it therefore seems safe to conclude that they will have been familiar with the presence at festivals and in sanctuaries of meat from non-sacrificed θύσιμα, or from non-sacrificable animals, or both.

Perhaps we can go a step further. It surely makes the story less effective if we are to understand that the kites merely avoid all meat of sacrificable species—which is much less impressively discriminating than if they can distinguish sacrificed from unsacrificed beef, sheep, goat, and pork—and so snatch only donkey, dog, κενέβρειον, and so on. Of course one can read the passage in this way, but it is perhaps rather strained to have to take recourse again here, as in the case of Athenion, to unsacrificable species and carrion in order to preserve the notion that all or nearly all sacrificable animals must have been sacrificed before being eaten. The bones give evidence of the presence of butchered, non-sacrificable animals in sanctuaries, and we might reflect, first, that if in respect of the menu at sanctuary banquets we must swallow the camel of meat from non-sacrificable animals then we ought not to strain at the gnat of unsacrificed θύσιμα; secondly, that there is enough evidence elsewhere (Paul, the *Oikonomika*, Athenion, Homer) pointing to the eating of unsacrificed θύσιμα that we need not be surprised if some sacrificable ani-

<sup>52</sup> I am grateful to Robert Parker for suggesting this possibility to me.

<sup>53</sup> Arist. [*Mir. ausc.*] 123, 842a34–842b2. For Theopompos as the probable source of this story and the date ca 300 BC see Susemihl 1891–1892, 1. 478 with nn. 94 and 94b.

<sup>54</sup> Theopomp. *FGrHist* 115 F 76 apud Apollonios, *Mir.* 10 (2nd century BC).

<sup>55</sup> The kite was notorious for snatching sacrificed offal and meat, and Aristophanes calls it the “hearth-holding kite”, ἰκτίνος ἐστιούχος (*Av.* 865): see e.g. Dunbar 1995 *ad loc.* and Olson 1998 on Ar. *Pax* 1099–1101, both with further references.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. also Plin. *HN* 10.28; Ael. *NA* 2.47. Parker 2010, 143 says of these stories that “the meat [the kites] snatched may have come from sacrifices to other gods; or it may have been donkey meat, or carrion”. This, however, seems applicable primarily to the specification of the *Olympiae ... ana* by Pliny or ἡ τοῦ Διὸς ἱεουργία by Aelian (who, however, does not mention Olympia) and to the carrying of meat “through the agora” (as-

sumed to be outside the sanctuary) in the accounts of Pseudo-Aristotle and Aelian. (Plutarch speaks merely of “those sacrificing at Olympia.”) The essential agreement of Pseudo-Aristotle and Apollonios, however, who are far the earliest sources, makes it highly probable that Apollonios is reporting Theopompos accurately, down to the phrase τῶν ἱεροθύτων. That Pseudo-Aristotle, who is earlier, does not name Theopompos as source, but Apollonios, who is later, does, suggests that each is drawing independently on Theopompos.

mals at a cultic occasion of any magnitude were eaten without being sacrificed.

I come finally to two subsidiary arguments in favour of the idea that animals were not normally eaten unless they had been, if not sacrificed in a strict sense, then at any rate somehow “sacralized”. As I noted above, it has been suggested that we might distinguish between “sacrificial meat” from the altar and “sacred meat” or the remaining meat consumed in the sanctuary.<sup>57</sup> The case for this seems to me to be based primarily on the long-held general assumptions that the Greeks ate only what they had sacrificed and that anything going forward in a sanctuary, and certainly anything so closely resembling the eating of sacrificial victims, must be somehow sacred; and the case therefore seems to me weak. The evidence of the animal bones is in fact fully consonant with Theopompos’ tale of the Elean kites, which attests the regular presence in a sanctuary of meat other than *ἱερόθυστα*. Neither Theopompos’ kites nor his Greek audience seems to have known a category of “differently sacred” or semi-sacred meat which pious kites could, with a clear conscience, snatch.

In connection with the Greek *mageiros*, it has been similarly argued that meat for sale in the market must have been subject to “abbatage rituel”, butchery accompanied by an abbreviated form of dedication to the gods.<sup>58</sup> I cannot go into detail here, but this view is based largely on the model of the second, sacrificial meal prepared by Eumaios, which I discussed above. There seems to me no reason why this rather than the first, (in my view) non-sacrificial meal prepared by Eumaios should be used as a model; but nor indeed is there any justification for pressing either Homeric passage into service in the absence of any proper evidence for what, if anything, *mageiroi* may have done by way of ritual or prayer when slaughtering animals for the market. In both of these cases, then, it is clear that underlying assumptions about Greek sacrality are driving the argument.

I hope to have shown that the notion that both at home and in sanctuaries Greeks ate unsacrificed meat from both sacrificial and non-sacrificial species is a plausible suggestion, and that the animal bones are new and compelling evidence that we need to rethink the whole matter “from the ground up” as they say. We tend at the moment—primarily, it seems to me, as heirs of fashionable conceptual trends of the last century rather than through inductive study—to approach the question of the sacred and the secular among the Greeks with the

pith helmets of Frazerian anthropology on our heads, that is with the notion that we are seeing, and that it is both intellectually exciting and rather advanced of us to see, that the mind of the Greek Other is much more omni-sacralizing than our minds are. Another factor that can skew our conclusions is the axiom that the Greeks were not Christians, or more specifically not Protestants. This is of course true and important, but it must not become the basis of a crude hermeneutic leading us to believe that whenever we feel it possible to distinguish sharply between pagan and Christian behaviour we must be on to the truth and ought to do so. In any case, good Christians, including Protestants, say grace before every meal; perhaps pagans differed from them by sacralizing only some meals.

My own hunch is that in respect of dining the Greeks sacralized selectively rather than universally, and that they were not nearly as scrupulous as we have tended to imagine, as, by any reckoning, the introduction of meat of non-sacrificial species at sanctuary banquets suggests. Whatever the eventual outcome, it can only be beneficial to let the animal bones prompt us to a really fundamental reconsideration of the matter. We may, for example, conclude in the end not that everything eaten in a sanctuary must in some sense be sacred, but that, whereas at many sanctuaries non-sacrificable animals were routinely consumed in what were basically profane banquets, at some others, for example the site at Mytilene studied in this volume by Deborah Ruscillo, where such animals are markedly less present, a rather different ethos of sacrality or narrower sense of propriety may have been dominant. Such a conclusion might prove attractive partly because it would cohere with one of the most fascinating features of the zooarchaeological evidence so far published, which is that it attests what may be distinctive idiosyncracies of ritual practice in particular sanctuaries or cults—for example the predominance of left hind limbs for the hero Opheltes at Nemea revealed in Michael MacKinnon’s paper in this volume. Such vivid and illuminating revelation of local practice will be as important an aspect of future work on the animal bones as their contribution to the re-evaluation of broad conceptual matters.

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<sup>57</sup> Ekroth 2007, esp. 255 and 266–269; Ekroth’s case for the cultic commonality of all the meat eaten in a sanctuary rests, general assumptions aside, primarily on its having all been boiled, but Ekroth herself has shown that boiling is on other grounds the best method of preparation. See also Ekroth’s contribution to this volume.

<sup>58</sup> Berthiaume 1982, 64–69.

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