

From snout to tail

Exploring the Greek sacrificial animal
from the literary, epigraphical,
iconographical, archaeological,
and zooarchaeological evidence

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& Gunnel Ekroth

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ABSTRACT

Animal sacrifice fundamentally informed how the ancient Greeks defined themselves, their relation to the divine, and the structure of their society. Adopting an explicitly cross-disciplinary perspective, the present volume explores the practical execution and complex meaning of animal sacrifice within ancient Greek religion (c. 1000 BC–AD 200).

The objective is twofold. First, to clarify in detail the use and meaning of body parts of the animal within sacrificial ritual. This involves a comprehensive study of ancient Greek terminology in texts and inscriptions, representations on pottery and reliefs, and animal bones found in sanctuaries. Second, to encourage the use and integration of the full spectrum of ancient evidence in the exploration of Greek sacrificial rituals, which is a prerequisite for understanding the complex use and meaning of Greek animal sacrifice.

Twelve contributions by experts on the literary, epigraphical, iconographical, archaeological and zooarchaeological evidence for Greek animal sacrifice explore the treatment of legs, including feet and hoofs, tails, horns; heads, including tongues, brains, ears and snouts; internal organs; blood; as well as the handling of the entire body by burning it whole. Three further contributions address Hittite, Israelite and Etruscan animal sacrifice respectively, providing important contextualization for Greek ritual practices.

Keywords: Greek animal sacrifice, anatomy, division, butchery, body part, multi-disciplinary approaches, zooarchaeology, iconography, epigraphy, texts, cross-cultural comparisons

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10. The viscera (*splanchna*) and the “Greek way” of sacrificing

Abstract

The discovery of a remarkable cult regulation at Marmarini in Thessaly has recently brought to light an exceptional mention in our epigraphic documentation: the statement that a sacrifice could be performed “according to the Greek norm”. As this sacrifice highlights the *splanchna* (“viscera”) of the animal and the parts placed in the fire (on the altar), the present study offers a thorough analysis of the role of the viscera in the sacrificial process attested in Greek narratives as well as in ritual norms, in order to test the hypothesis that the combustion of a part for the gods and the specific manipulation of the viscera constitute, beyond local variations, the essential characteristics of the “Greek way of sacrificing”.*

Keywords: Greek animal sacrifice, Greek literature, Greek inscriptions/epigraphy, Marmarini inscription, Greek ritual norm (*Hellenikos nomos*, *ritus Graecus*), sacred parts (*hiera*), viscera (*splanchna*), heart, lung, liver, spleen, kidneys, roasting, altar, table

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As Robert Parker recently pointed out, standard accounts of Greek sacrifice in scholarship regularly emphasize the fact that *splanchna* “were distributed for immediate eating among the inner circle of participants at a sacrifice, the group known

as the σπλαγχνεύοντες or συσπλαγχνεύοντες”.¹ Such verbs are quite uncommon in our evidence, as we shall see, but the act to which they refer is well known to the readers of Homer and Aristophanes: it is notably the fact of eating. But edibility is not the only quality of the viscera taken from a sacrificial animal, just as burning the divine part at the altar is not simply “destruction”. The complex progression of the ritual gives these elements a specific dimension that goes beyond the superficial observation of gestures and actions around the altar: the fact that textual evidence is likely to call them *hiera*, “sacred things”, must be seriously taken into account. However, in the context of ancient Greek religion, no generalizing statement can be made without testing it against the fragmented evidence from several hundred cities. The present study aims to address the place of the *splanchna* in a certain “Greek manner” of sacrificing to the gods, in view of the variety of local practices. This question has been unexpectedly legitimated through the recent discovery in Thessaly of a ritual norm that explicitly evokes a sacrificial *Hellenikos nomos* referring in detail to *splanchna*. But before addressing this inscription, it is first necessary to deal more generally with the *splanchna* in our evidence.

Homeric preliminaries

SACRIFICING AT AN ALTAR

In the more extended epic descriptions of sacrifice, after the skinning of the carcass, the bones of the thighs are extracted and covered with fat, to which tiny pieces of raw meat are add-

* I warmly thank Gunnell Ekroth and Jan-Mathieu Carbon for inviting me to the inspiring *From snout to tail* conference. The latter is entitled to my full gratitude for decisive discussions on the topic of *splanchna* in inscriptions and for making my English much better. The former asked me pertinent questions which helped to clarify some parts of the argument. I also warmly thank Robert Parker for fruitful discussions and for adding some final polish to this paper, written in a language which is not my own. An abridged version of the analysis of the *splanchna* in the Marmarini inscription was published in French in Pirenne-Delforge 2020, 145–153.

¹ Parker 2018, 79.

ed, in order to form the divine part burnt on the altar.² Meanwhile a share of *splanchna* is detached, skewered and roasted in the fire of the altar, probably once the surge of flame around the divine part has diminished.³ In this context, tasting the *splanchna* is the first occasion for the human consumption of animal parts, and seems to be an important step in the whole process.⁴ The case of the sacrifice offered by the Pylians in the *Odyssey* gives evidence for this: when Telemachus and Mentor arrive in Pylos, they are welcomed by their hosts, who have already started the sacrificial performance; the latter involve the newcomers in the operation by asking them to pour a libation, to recite a prayer, and to eat a share of the *splanchna*, although the Pylians had already done so.⁵ Finally, the remains of the animal (τ' ἄρα τᾶλλα) are cut apart, roasted,⁶ and shared equally between the participants who, the epic tells us, rejoice in this feast glorifying the gods, who rejoice in turn.⁷

In epic, the consumption of the *splanchna* has two concomitant effects: first, it closely associates the performers with the combustion of the divine share, which is the moment in the sacrificial operation that involves the gods; secondly, it creates a sense of community, as well as of privilege, between those who taste these delicate pieces of food that do not last long once removed from a slaughtered animal.⁸ Accordingly, even if three major parts of the animal can be identified in epic sacrifice performed publicly by a group (the divine part, the *splanchna*, the meat subsequently prepared for the festive banquet⁹), the ritual process, seen from the perspective of animal

division, is structured in two main sequences, first at the altar, secondly at the banquet.

SACRIFICING AT HOME

In Book 14 of the *Odyssey*, Eumaios kills a boar in honour of Odysseus who still remains unknown to him.¹⁰ This ritual killing next to the hearth (420: ἐπ' ἐσχάρῃ) illustrates that welcoming a host with a meal of meat after killing and cutting an animal does not imply the same sequence of gestures as a sacrifice at an altar. Two differences deserve to be emphasized: there is no reference to the thighbones burnt for the gods¹¹ or to the *splanchna* tasted by the people involved in the operation. However, the gods are not forgotten by the swine-herd: some pieces of hair are thrown into the fire before the killing “for the Immortals”; a prayer is made “to all the gods”. After the killing, pieces of raw meat from all parts of the body deposited on the rich fat and sprinkled with flour are also put into the fire of the domestic hearth. All these manipulations are like a “household” enactment of the phase “burning the divine share” of the Iliadic sacrifices, even with an indirect reference to barley. As Jan-Mathieu Carbon rightly writes: “the ritual process performed by Eumaios distinctly aims to convey through consumption by fire a measure of all the parts of the animal to the gods.”¹² One part of cooked meat from the seven prepared by the pig-herder (probably including the *splanchna*) is “deposited with a prayer” for Hermes and the Nymphs. This parallels the *trapezomata* attested later in our evidence, as we shall see below, or even some aspects of *theoxenia*.¹³ It is as if this meal, as with others in epic, modified the expectations attested in sacrifices at an altar: the latter are centred on the divine recipient with whom a communication is initiated and the banquet is like a side effect of the operation for the benefit of the human community; a domestic meal focuses on the human guests, even if the burnt offering to the Immortals, eventually complemented by an unburnt deposition, is still the first step in the chronological process of commensality. The absence of the *splanchna* in this process perhaps suggests that a community of *splanchneuontes* does not need to be defined in the same way around a domestic hearth as it is around an altar.¹⁴

² E.g. Hom. *Il.* 1.451–474, 2.402–433; *Od.* 3.5–10, 3.418–472, 12.343–365, 14.413–456. Zooarchaeological evidence attests that the burning of thighbones is a ritual practice dating back to the Early Iron Age or even inherited from the Bronze Age, see Ekroth 2011, 18.

³ On this surge of flame, see Morton 2015, 72, and his paper in the present volume, *Chapter 2*.

⁴ Hom. *Il.* 1.464, 2.427; *Od.* 3.461. Cf. *Od.* 3.9.

⁵ Hom. *Od.* 3.40–64. See e.g. Rudhardt 1992, 255; Durand 1989, 92; Ekroth 2008a, 93–95.

⁶ On the lack of boiling in Homer, see Berthiaume 1982, 15–16, with further evidence.

⁷ Rudhardt 1992, 254. The butchering of the carcass, as evidenced on Attic vases and in a few texts (for example Eur. *El.* 819–837), did not follow the epic sequence of sacrifice, since the *splanchna* and other innards were probably removed first, see Berthiaume 1982, 46–47; Durand 1989, 92–97; Ekroth 2008b, 260–264; Carbon 2017a, 172.

⁸ Even today, in the age of refrigeration, offal is an easily perishable food. It can only be kept raw for one or two days in the fridge. Once cooked, it should be eaten on the same day. In this volume (*Chapter 9*), Bednarek pushes the argument to the limit by considering that the “essence” of participation in a sacrifice consists precisely in tasting the *splanchna*, thus returning to the “communion model” proposed by Robertson Smith. I do not go that far, either in the search for an essence or to rehabilitate the notion of “communion”, rooted in Christianity.

⁹ Nicely called *taratalla* by van Straten (1995, 144) who refers to the Homeric formula τ' ἄρα τᾶλλα: e.g. Hom. *Il.* 1.465. See also Bednarek in the present volume, *Chapter 9*.

¹⁰ Hom. *Od.* 14.413–429.

¹¹ According to Ekroth (2011, 20–21, n. 30), “the course of the ritual may depend on the fact that the victim is a pig.” Moreover, “the osteological evidence reveals very few instances of pig’s bones being burnt as a part of the god’s share and pigs may therefore have been sacrificed according to a different ritual.” Parker points out to me that this idea goes back to Meuli (1946, 214, n. 1).

¹² Carbon 2017b, 3§6.

¹³ Bruit Zaidman 2005, 33–34. See below *note 34*.

¹⁴ During the dinner of the suitors in Odysseus’ palace, sheep and goats are killed, and the *splanchna* are first sliced and given to his guest (the

CONTENT OF THE GENERIC *SPLANCHNA*

Before examining the post-homeric uses of the *splanchna*, the meaning of the word must be addressed. In epic poetry, *splanchna* remain generic and the various organs roasted and tasted in the first sacrificial phase are not detailed. In tragedy, sacrificial *splanchna* are associated with divination, especially the liver.¹⁵ In parallel to this word in the Archaic and Classical evidence, other lexemes refer to the innards of the body. In the *Iliad*, the expression τὰ ἔγκατα generically identifies the viscera and entrails of an animal or a man, while τὰ ἔντερα is only used for describing a soldier seriously wounded in the belly.¹⁶ In the *Odyssey*, the first of the two occurrences of ἔγκατα, added to σάρκες and ὀστέα, belongs to the impressive image of Odysseus’ companions being entirely devoured by Polyphemus. The second occurrence is exceptional in the epic corpus: it is used as a *variatio* replacing the *splanchna* in the context of the killing of the cows of Helios, a parodic and impious sacrifice.¹⁷ In a different context but in a similar perspective, the Hesiodic passage relating the Promethean crisis and inaugurating the separation of men and gods juxtaposes the part of the division formed by the white bones of the ox, wrapped in the glistening fat, and the one composed by the “meat and innards” (Hes. *Theog.* 538: σάρκας τε καὶ ἔγκατα), covered by the unappetizing stomach.¹⁸ The *splanchna* are not yet identified as a specific sacrificial portion among the bones, fat, and meat, as they are in Homer. Hesiod tells an etiological story, without describing a “first sacrifice”. Sacrificing to the gods will come later as the ritual consequence of the distance between men and divinities.¹⁹ In the *Theogony*, this process is still in the making.

As an observer of sacrificial division, as well as a practitioner of dissection, Aristotle provides precious information concerning what lies behind the generic term *splanchna*. He is our first systematic witness in this regard and his list includes the heart and the lungs above the diaphragm and, below, in

the abdominal cavity, the liver, the spleen, and the kidneys.²⁰ In the abdominal cavity, one finds also the stomach and the intestines, which form the *entera*, the “entrails”. To the list of six organs forming the *splanchna* by Aristotle, the tongue is added in later texts concerned with collecting all the occurrences of “seven elements” in the world: σπλάγχνα ἑπτὰ, γλώσσα, καρδία, πνεύμων, ἥπαρ, σπλήν, νεφροὶ δύο.²¹ The tongue is usually “inside” the body and this explains why it can be included in such a list; by contrast, the organic point of view adopted by Aristotle in his treaty *De partibus animalium* properly entails a reference to the tongue only when describing the head.²² Aristotle also points out the potential faults of the *splanchna*, which make them informative tools in order to ascertain the divine will.²³ In this perspective, we can consider that the *splanchna* refer to the noble “viscera”—the word chosen here to translate the term—and the *entera* to the digestive system, even though there is sometimes an overlap in the use of these words in the literary evidence.²⁴

Post-Homeric variations

In the few descriptions of sacrifices found in Classical texts,²⁵ one identifies, during the ritual now labelled *thysia*, the division of the animal carcass in the three unbalanced parts already attested in epic poetry: divine share to be burnt onto the altar/*splanchna*/rest of the meat.²⁶ The lack of balance be-

disguised Odysseus) by Telemachos. But the background of the scene is a hecatomb for Apollo and this could explain the emphasis on *splanchna* (Hom. *Od.* 20.245–261, 20.276–278).

¹⁵ Aesch. *PV* 493–495; Eur. *El.* 826–829 and 835–839.

¹⁶ Hom. *Il.* 13.507, 14.517, 17.314, 20.418 and 20.420.

¹⁷ Hom. *Od.* 12.362–365: οὐδ’ εἶχον μέθυ λείψαι ἐπ’ αἰθομένοισι’ ἱεροῖσιν, | ἀλλ’ ὕδατι σπένδοντες ἐπόπτων ἔγκατα πάντα. | αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μῆρ’ ἑκάη καὶ σπλάγχνα πάσαντο, | μίστυλλον τ’ ἄρα τᾶλλα καὶ ἄμφ’ ὀβελοῖσιν ἔπειρον, “They had no wine to pour over the blazing sacrifice, but they made libations with water, and roasted all the viscera over the fire. Now when the thighs were wholly burned and they had tasted the viscera, they cut up the rest and spitted it” (transl. A.T. Murray, slightly modified).

¹⁸ Hes. *Theog.* 538–541.

¹⁹ Hes. *Theog.* 538–541, 556–557, with the interpretation by Vernant 1989 and Rudhardt 1981, 217–226. Cf. Ekroth 2008a, 89, n. 9; Parker 2011, 140–141; Carbon 2017b, 1§1. See also Pirenne-Delforge 2018, for an analysis of the “theology” of sacrifice by Vernant.

²⁰ Arist. *Part. an.* 3.5.668b30–3.9.672b12.

²¹ Theon of Smyrna, *De utilitate mathematicae*, p. 104, lines 15–16 (Hiller). See also Iambl. *De communi mathematica scientia*, p. 67, lines 18–20 (Falco). The gall-bladder is not mentioned in any list, but is closely related to the liver. Aristotle emphasizes its divinatory potential (*Part. an.* 4.2.677a1–3).

²² Arist. *Part. an.* 2.17.660a–661a. The association of the tongue with the *splanchna* is later attested by Plutarch (*Mor.* 166a–b) who emphasizes the divinatory potentials of this organ.

²³ Arist. *Part. an.* 3.4.667a31–3.9.667b108.

²⁴ The distinction between *splanchna* and *entera* is clearly made for the preliminary offering of a piglet to be wholly burnt for Zeus Polieus on Kos: *CGRN* 86, A lines 34–35: τοὶ δὲ κάρυκες κάρπῳντι τὸμ μὲγ χοῖ|ρογ καὶ τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐπὶ τοῦ βωμοῦ ἐπισπένδοντες μελικρατον, εἴ|ντ|ε|ρ|α δὲ ἐκπλύναντες παρὰ τὸ|μ βωμῶν κάρπῳντι. See Bednarek in this volume, *Chapter 9*. I do not here address the vexed question of the *endora* to be “wrapped” and burnt on hearths for Zeus Polieus and, on another occasion, for Hera Argeia Eleia Basileia: *CGRN* 86, A lines 47–50; D lines 8–10. According to Stengel (1910, 85–91), these were *splanchna*. See also Paul 2013, 351–354; Pirenne-Delforge & Pironti 2016, 195–198; compare Georgoudi in this volume, *Chapter 8*. In a sanctuary located at Kaphizin on Cyprus, an object called σπλανχνοεντερειφόρον was dedicated to a local nymph: Mitford 1980, no. 285 (224/222 BC). Cf. the pieces of equipment called ἐπισπλαγχνιδιοι in the Hellenistic accounts of Delian festivals: e.g. *CGRN* 199, line 7 (178 BC).

²⁵ The main ones are Eur. *El.* 800–830 and 835–839; Ar. *Pax* 941–1062, 1074 and 1106–1126; Men. *Dys.* 394–399, 440–441, 447–453, 473–475, 505–507 and 546–549.

²⁶ Ar. *Pax* 941–1059.

tween the first two components and the third is quantitative, but also, in a ritual perspective, qualitative: in literary texts, as well as in inscriptions, the divine part and the *splanchna* can be called *hiera*, “sacred things”;²⁷ which is not the case for the meat eaten during the banquet on site or taken away by the participants.²⁸ In other words, there is more meat in the third stage of a sacrifice but more sacredness during the first two. As Jean Rudhardt rightly wrote: “In a certain sense, what is ἱερός is located on a path leading from god to man, or from man to the gods.”²⁹

The expression *hierà kalá*, repeatedly found in Xenophon,³⁰ refers to the actions involving these “sacred parts”, at a time when effective and positive communication with the gods is expected. From the Classical period at least, sacrificial divination involves the visual analysis of the *splanchna* cut from the animal, especially the liver and the gall-bladder, as well as the observation of what is happening on the altar.³¹ The tail of the sheep “doing nicely” during the sacrifice staged in Aristophanes’ *Peace* is based on such an expectation: this part of the animal offered to the goddess is a good sign when it curves from the heat of the fire.³² The same comedy also presents the image of a large distribution of *splanchna*, if we consider that the gesture of sharing them (συσπλαγχνεύετε) with the spectators built on shared knowledge of (Attic) sacrificial procedure.³³

²⁷ Eur. *El.* 826–829, for the *splanchna*, and Pl. *Resp.* *3.*394a; *Leg.* *7.*800b; Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.4, and later Plut. *Conjug.* 141e, for the part burnt on the altar. Cf. Casabona 1966, 13–15; Rudhardt 2008, 139–141.

²⁸ In inscriptions, the generic *hiera* can refer to the parts burnt on the altar or to those deposited on a *trapeza*: e.g. *CGRN* 147, line 10 (Kos, first half of the 3rd century BC); *CGRN* 152, lines 183–184 and 189–190 (Thera, end of the 3rd–early 2nd century BC); *CGRN* 163, lines 16–17 (Kos, first half of the 2nd century BC); *CGRN* 208, lines 18–19 (Kos, second half of the 2nd century BC); *IG XII.4* 304, lines 39–40 (Kos, 2nd century BC). For Kos, see Paul 2013, 340–346. However, in the epigraphic evidence, there is no label referring to the rest of the meat, the epic *taratalla*. One finds τὰ κρέα (e.g. *CGRN* 84, line 23, Attic, *genos* of the Salaminiotai, 363/2 BC; *CGRN* 85, B lines 55–56, Kos, mid-4th century BC); μερίδες (*CGRN* 92, line 12, Athens, 335–330 BC); σάρκες for bovine meat (*CGRN* 26, B lines 13–14, Attic, mid-5th century BC).

²⁹ Rudhardt 2008, 153: “*D’une certaine manière, ce qui est ἱερός se trouve sur une voie qui conduit du dieu à l’homme ou de l’homme aux dieux.*”

³⁰ Xen. *An.* 1.8.15 (τὰ ἱερά καλὰ καὶ τὰ σφάγια καλὰ), 4.3.9, 4.3.19, 6.5.2 and 6.5.9. On the esthetic dimension of ritual action, see now Mikalson 2017, 253–264.

³¹ The *locus classicus* is Aesch. *Pers.* 484–499. See also Xen. *An.* 2.1.9, 2.2.3 and 6.4.15, with *hiera* for divination purposes. Concerning the “cut *splanchna*”, see the comparison made by Strabo with Lusitanian divination practices: the barbarians did not cut the *splanchna* out of the sacrificial animals to obtain predictions from them, which is an implicit contrast with the Greek practice (Strabo 3.3.6: Λυσιτανοὶ τὰ τε σπλάγχνα ἐπιβλέπουσιν οὐκ ἐκτέμνοντες).

³² Ar. *Pax* 1053–1055. See van Straten 1995, 118–130; Morton 2015; Carbon 2017b, 2§1. Cf. also Morton in this volume, *Chapter 2*.

³³ Ar. *Pax* 1115–1116. For practical reasons, a selection of the participants “close to the altar” was perhaps made when the attendance was

An additional element complicates the picture of the “three parts” in the Classical corpus of images and the Classical and Hellenistic corpus of texts: the textual evidence can refer to a table next to the altar where some supplementary portions—not to be transformed into smoke—are added to the part consumed by fire in honour of the divine recipient.³⁴ Images on vases also illustrate the presence of tables next to altars.³⁵ In texts, this piece of furniture in the sacrificial scene can be filled with cakes, fruits, parts of meat and also parts of *splanchna*.³⁶ Moreover, a verse of Aristophanes and some Classical inscriptions from Chios attest that *splanchna* were placed “on hands” or “on knees” (sometimes both),³⁷ thus extending to the statue of the divine recipient the notion of *trapezomata*.³⁸ This confirms, if necessary, that the things deposited on

huge, but we cannot be completely sure. Cf. here Bednarek (*Chapter 9*), building on an argument presented by Detienne. In the famous inscription of Erchia, dated to the 4th century BC (*CGRN* 52, col. A lines 36–43), the expression μέχρι σπλάγγων punctuates the sacrificial process; during the festival of Zeus Meilichios in Agrai, the sacrifice of a male sheep was accompanied by a wineless libation “until the viscera”. We do not know if μέχρι here is inclusive (until the *splanchna* have been eaten, according to Daux 1963, 629, even if he confuses “combustion” and “rôtissage”) or exclusive (until the *splanchna* start to be eaten, as Jameson 1965, 164, argued). But this rule confirms that eating the *splanchna* is an important scansion of the sacrificial process.

³⁴ Ar. *Pax* 1032 and 1059; Ar. *Plut.* 678. To quote only some examples from the Classical period referring to a *trapeza* related to a *thysia* (except in the context of a *theoxenia* and in the context of the offering of a *trapeza* to a hero or a heroine, as in some Attic texts): *CGRN* 13, A lines 18–19 (Selinous, first half of the 5th century BC); *CGRN* 56, col. II lines 14–15 (Athens, Marathonian Tetrapolis, mid-4th century BC); *CGRN* 57, *passim* (Athens, Aixone, early 4th century BC); *CGRN* 76, lines 14–15, 19–20 and 24–25 (Erythrai, c. 380–360 BC).

³⁵ Gill 1974; Durand 1986, 116–117; van Straten 1995, 155; Ekroth 2011; Naiden 2013, 56–57.

³⁶ The *trapeza* for offerings close to altar must be distinguished from the table where the animal is cut up, which is not related to the altar in the same way. Cf. the famous Ricci Hydria, with the analysis of Durand 1989, who provides other examples of cutting tables.

³⁷ Ar. *Av.* 518–519; *CGRN* 170, lines 4–8 (5th century BC); *CGRN* 36, lines 4–6 (end of the 5th century BC); *CGRN* 41, lines 11–14 (end of the 5th–first half of the 4th century BC); *CGRN* 49, lines 5–7 (early 4th century BC); *CGRN* 50, lines 3–5 (early 4th century BC); *CGRN* 66, lines 3–4 (first half of the 4th century BC); *CGRN* 88, lines 1–3 (second half the 4th century BC); and probably also *LSS* 130, lines 4–5 (4th century BC). On this corpus, see Graf 1985, 428–432; Le Guen-Pollet 1991, 15–17; Parker 2006, 67–72; Carbon 2017b, 3§1–3.

³⁸ A decree concerning the priestess of Ilithyia on the same island (*NGSL* 20 = *CGRN* 38, c. 400 BC) mentions “a portion, a honorific portion, and the tongue” to be “given from the sacrificial animal, so as to be placed in the *liknon*; these shall be consumed on the spot in the company of the women who performed the rites” (A lines 5–7: διδοσθα ἀπὸ τὸ ἱερ[ὸ], ὥστε ἐς [τὸ] λι[κνον] ἐθεῖ[ν]αι, | [μ]οῖραν καὶ γέρας καὶ γλώσσαν | ταῦτα δὲ ἀναλι[σ]κεσθαι αὐτὸ μ[ε]τὰ τῶν γυναικῶν τῶν π[ο]ι[η]σασ[σ]α[ν] τὰ ἱρά). In this case, the *liknon* could be another way of presenting “divine parts”, as on a *trapeza* or on the hands and the knees of the statue. This may have been related to the profile of the goddess, since a *liknon* could be used as a cradle for babies (see comm. to *NGSL* 20, p. 309).

the table were considered as the property of the recipient deity and belonged to the *hiera*, on the same semantic level as a “divine part” burnt on the altar.

In some cases, the food on the table was explicitly said to be given to the cult personnel.³⁹ In the same manner, in Chios, the *splanchna* placed “on hands” or “on knees” go to the priest. Therefore, the significance of these delicate parts of the animal, considered as *hiera* in some texts, can fluctuate between the determination of a sacrificial group around the altar strongly associated with the burning of the divine part upon it, and the determination of a privileged share of meat for privileged agents. In different ritual norms, the two aspects may seem to converge or diverge, as we will see. But, before addressing ritual norms, a few words about “evolution” and chronology are necessary.

“Deposition on a table” seems to be unattested in the sacrifices of epic poetry—except in the domestic sacrifice performed by Eumaios—and it has been suggested that it might have developed from the ideology of the Archaic banquet as a means for expressing status and hierarchies, perhaps under the influence of Near Eastern practices.⁴⁰ Whatever its origin, such a deposition is closely linked to the distribution of honorific portions to the cult personnel.⁴¹ However, even if epic poetry does not mention priestly shares during sacrifices where a priest is involved, the formulaic expression “he was honoured by the people like a god” is applied to priests in Homer and probably refers to honorary portions given to them, wherever this *geras* is left during the sacrificial process and regardless of its composition.⁴² But priests are not the only recipients of honorary shares: other officials or people honoured at various levels were likely to receive a *geras*, as we see in the case of Ajax honoured by Agamemnon in Book 1 of the *Iliad*.⁴³ The Homeric *taratalla*, the “third element”, comprised of equal parts of meat, points to an ideal vision which, at first glance, does not seem necessarily compatible with a society sensitive to the hierarchy of honours. However, the epic context, even without *trapezomata*, implies honorific portions and thus could be closer than expected to the situation evidenced by some later

inscriptions. Indeed, in documents referring to the distribution of meat, after the mention of honorary portions, the expression *ta alla krea*⁴⁴ points to a hierarchy that prevailed in the concrete life of Greek cities, even democratic ones.⁴⁵

Concerning the divine part itself, fat-wrapped thighbones are a constant, from Homeric poetry at least to the time of Pausanias.⁴⁶ In post-Homeric evidence, however, variations in the composition of the “divine package” are attested and can refer to some increase of the part burnt on the altar (a process for which Scott Scullion coined the term “moirocaust”⁴⁷). The *splanchna* are involved in these variations and some pieces of viscera were perhaps added to the thighbones and fat.⁴⁸ But the chronology of such changes is difficult to assess since the “canonical” description of epic poetry is a narrative construction giving uniformity to rituals which, as early as the Archaic period, may have been more diverse than is suggested by the poetic picture.

SPLANCHNA, TRAPEZOMATA AND PRIESTLY SHARES: “LE CRU ET LE CUIT”

In cities other than Athens, where they do not appear in the epigraphic evidence as priestly shares, *splanchna* are often given to priests, as attested by sales of priesthoods. In Karia and once in Kos a quarter share of viscera was regularly taken by the priest (τεταρτημορίδα σπλάγχων). We can only speculate what happened to the other three quarters: were they partly burnt for the divinity or collectively consumed by “those who share the *splanchna*”, as in Aristophanes, or both? Whatever the answer, they still belong to the more sacred parts of the slaughtered animal. The same question can be asked for a cult of Artemis on the island of Kos. Those who sacrifice place on the table for the goddess a cake and *splanchna* and the fourth part of this food is taken by the priestess.⁴⁹

³⁹ CGRN 163, lines 14–17 (Kos, 1st century BC); CGRN 188, lines 2–5 (Kos, 1st century BC): τῖθέντω δὲ τοῖ θύοντε[s] | ἐπὶ τὰν τράπεζαν τὰ θεῶν πθῶν καὶ σπλάγχνα: λαμ|βανείτω δὲ ἅ ἱέρεια καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπιτιθεμένων ἐπὶ | τὴν τράπεζαν τὰ θεῶν τὰ τέταρτα μέρη.

⁴⁰ Ekroth 2011.

⁴¹ In this perspective, the mirror effect between gods and priests in the sacrificial process is striking: Le Guen-Pollet 1991, 16–17; Pirenne-Delforge 2010, 134–135; Ekroth 2011, 36–38; Carbon 2017a, 176–177.

⁴² Hom. *Il.* 5.78, 16.605. I do not see where, in *Iliad* 1, “Chryses receive[s] the *splanchna*” as claimed by Naiden 2013, 205, without a reference.

⁴³ The distribution of meat which follows the sacrifice performed by the Achaean king after the single combat between Hector and Ajax involves the award (γέρας) of a continuous portion of the back of the animal: Hom. *Il.* 7.321–322.

⁴⁴ CGRN 86, A line 23 (Kos, mid-4th century BC); CGRN 92, line 16 (Athens, c. 335–330 BC). Later: CGRN 147, line 60 (Kos, second half of the 3rd century BC); CGRN 169, line 4 (Kallatis, 2nd century BC).

⁴⁵ On this point, see Ekroth 2008b.

⁴⁶ See Paus. 1.24.2.

⁴⁷ Scullion 2000. See Parker 2011, 144.

⁴⁸ A passage from the fables of Aesop (1 Hausrath & Hunger) is informative on this point: in “The eagle and the fox”, an eagle flies down and grabs a piece of the viscera from the altar (ἀπὸ τοῦ βωμοῦ), which implies the presence of some part of the viscera among the divine part. See also directly below, for a kidney perhaps burnt for the god in Miletos.

⁴⁹ CGRN 42, lines 1–4 (Iasos, end of the 5th–early 4th century BC); CGRN 118, lines 10–14 (Halikarnassos, first half of the 3rd century BC); CGRN 119, lines 6–12 (Theangela, first half of the 3rd century BC); CGRN 104, lines 39–40 (Halikarnassos, first half of the 3rd century BC); CGRN 188, lines 2–5 (Kos, 1st century BC), with the text above note 39.

The case of Miletos is revealed by a general regulation concerning sales of priesthood dating from c. 400 BC,⁵⁰ and then by the particular case of a contract of sale for the priestess of Dionysos more than a century later (275/4 BC). The general lines of the priestly perquisites in both texts are: “viscera, a kidney, the small intestine, the sacred portion, the tongue, and a leg cut at the hip-joint” (σπλάγχνα, νεφ[ρόν], σκολιόν, ἱεράμ μοῖραν, γλωσσάν, σκέλος εἰς κοτυληδόνα [τ]ετυμημένον), with slight variations particularly depending on the species of the animal in the context of the general regulation.⁵¹ The specification of a single kidney, which is normally included in the *splanchna*, suggests that another part of the viscera, with the other kidney, was consumed by the other participants or, perhaps, belonged to the part burnt in honour of the god. Still in Miletos, the famous inscription of the Molpoi (c. 200 BC) marks the distinction between “the roasting of *splanchna* and the boiling/cooking of meat” (ᾄπτῆσις σπλάγχνων, κρεῶν ἔψῆσις) by the Onitadai, probably a gentilicial group.⁵² Such cooking seems to imply direct consumption of the viscera by the participants. On the other hand, the same document stipulates that the herald has the right to obtain “by lot some viscera from each of the sacrificial animals.”⁵³ The regulation may suggest that both aspects of the *splanchna* were involved: the sense of a common sacrificial group and the dimension of privilege for some sacrificial agents.⁵⁴ Another interesting case is offered by the inscription of the familial foundation of Epik-teta on the island of Thera.⁵⁵ The monthly officials (*epimenioi*) in charge of the sacrifices have “to burn the sacred parts of the sacrificial animal which are traditional” (183–184 and 189–

190: καρπωσεῖ τοῖς θεοῖς τὰ τε ἐκ τοῦ ἱερείου νενομισμένα ἱερά) and some other food. Then (194–199) we read:

οἱ δὲ ἐπιμήν[ιοι] οἱ θύον|τες τὰς θυσίας ταύτας ἀποδω-
σο[ῦ]ντι τῶι | κοινῶι τὸς τε ἑλλύτας πάντας κ[α]ὶ τῶν |
σπλάγχνων τὰ ἡμίση· τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ [ἐ]ξοῦντι | αὐτοί·
ὄ(ι) δὲ ἄρτυτῆρ διελεῖ τὰ ἱερά τ[ο]ῖς παροῦσι.

The *epimenioi* who are celebrating these sacrifices shall deliver to the association all the cakes and half of the viscera, while they shall keep the rest (of the viscera) for themselves; the administrator shall distribute the *hieria* between those who are present.

If the *hieria* mentioned in this passage are the small pieces of viscera distributed to the participants, this is a rare example of such a specification in our evidence.⁵⁶ It is perhaps likelier that *hieria* here includes the viscera as well as the rest of the meat, the “sacred” status of the *splanchna* being exceptionally extended to the parts simply called *krea* or *merides* elsewhere.⁵⁷

Two final questions need to be considered before travelling, as promised, to Thessaly. The first is related to the fact that regulations almost never specify concretely when pieces of meat were left raw or cooked. If the Milesian inscription of the Molpoi exceptionally refers to roasting *splanchna* and boiling meat, this is only to remind the Onitadai of their obligations, in a generic manner. In other places and on other occasions, this was probably self-evident for the sacrificial group, but it also depended on whether a banquet was organized on site or not.⁵⁸ When the sacrifice was officially performed for a group, the *splanchna* may have been roasted and tasted, whether or not the rest of the meat was eaten on the spot. But what about honorific portions of viscera? In the same inscription of the Molpoi, a portion of *splanchna* is drawn by lot and given to the herald: were they already roasted when given? Does this mean that the herald is among the *splanchnoneutes* thanks to his honorific portion? The specific reference to viscera to be roasted in the inscription allows for a positive answer to the

⁵⁰ CGRN 39.

⁵¹ CGRN 138, lines 16–18. See also LSAM 52, A lines 4–7, with Carbon 2017a, 170–171.

⁵² CGRN 201, line 34.

⁵³ CGRN 201, lines 43–44: τῶι κήρῳι ... λάξις σπλάγχνων ἀπὸ θυῶν ἕκασ|τέων.

⁵⁴ At lines 6–8 of the same inscription, the *aisymmetes* of the Molpoi has to do something (the verb is unintelligible) to “the sacred portions or the viscera for those offering libations” (τὰ ἱερά ἢ σπλάγχνα σπείσοσι μολ-
πῶν | αἰσυμνήτης). Then, “the *aisymmetes* and the companion consume (wine), once the libations have been poured from all kraters and they have sung paean.” The text does not refer to the sacrifice that may have preceded the command given to the *aisymmetes* concerning sacrificial parts designated as *hieria* or *splanchna*. The implications of the coordination ἢ (“or”) between *hieria* and *splanchna* remain difficult to understand. What kind of alternative might this have been? These portions are not honorary shares since this part of the text focuses on ritual handling and obligations rather than on prerogatives. Moreover, the reference to libations and the singing of paean coheres with the time of the “two first stages” of sacrifice—burning the divine part and roasting the *splanchna*. In this context, those “who are in charge of the libations” seem to assume duties in the handling of *hieria* and *splanchna* involved in these first phases of the ritual. But the alternative between the two elements—*hieria* or *splanchna*—remains obscure.

⁵⁵ CGRN 152 (225–175 BC).

⁵⁶ A Thasian inscription (CGRN 28, 450–425 BC), which is unfortunately heavily damaged, lists the viscera, in the genitive, among other portions in the accusative (lines 6–8: μοῖραν, κωλῆν, πλευρίον, σπλάγχνων, ἄρτον), probably referring to *trapezomata* as priestly prerogatives. In the middle of an unreadable passage at the end of the stone, one decipherers: “for the third time he libates and distributes sacred (portions)” (lines 11–12: τὸ τρίτον σπένδει καὶ ἱερά ἀ|πονέμει). Could this also have implied the distribution of the *splanchna*? As Lupu rightly remarked (NGSL 21, p. 321 and n. 20), *ta hieria* would have been expected.

⁵⁷ See the commentary on these lines in CGRN 152, with further bibliography.

⁵⁸ From Miletos too comes the famous reference to the ὠμοφάγιον thrown by the priestess in honour of Dionysos, probably a small piece of raw meat: CGRN 138, line 2 (275/4 BC).

question in this case. Was this also the case for the *splanchna* displayed on *trapezai* in Erythrai or in Kos? Even more complicated to imagine is the way of displaying the *splanchna* “on the hands or knees” in Chios. Were they roasted or left raw? An indication could be given by Aristophanes’ *Ploutos* depicting Hermes lamenting the end of sacrifices for the gods and the disappearance of the “warm *splanchna*” that he ate. This could be a comic reference to some *splanchna* included in the divine part, whether on the altar, on the *trapeza* (since the god also refers to the thigh) or on the statue, or perhaps a comic interpretation of the involvement of the god expected among the *splanchnewontes*.⁵⁹

The second question concerns the verbs formed on the word *splanchna* (σπλαγχνεύειν, σπλαγχνίζειν), which are rarely attested in our epigraphic evidence. If the stone had been less damaged, one of the most informative inscriptions referring to viscera might have been a stele which is part of the sacrificial calendar of Kos and contains a passage relating to the sacrifice of a goat to the Charites.⁶⁰ Rudolf Herzog considered that this entry in the calendar referred to an oath sacrifice for the ephebes, but all the elements which support this hypothesis are restored.⁶¹ *Splanchna* are mentioned three times in relation to the altar (of the Charites) and the stone “in the olive-trees”, which are two places where various phases of the ritual are performed. Firstly, after the aspersion of the altar (thrice) and the stone (once) by the priestess (lines 7–8), *thyona* connected in some way with *splanchna* are made, but damage to the stone prevents us from understanding the link between the two. The *thyona* are perhaps portions of meat and viscera, or cakes in the form of meat and viscera; they are deposited on the altar (lines 9–11).⁶² Secondly, at a place related to a mysterious figure called Asia (perhaps at the stone located among the olive-trees), first-fruits from the *splanchna* are to be offered (line 12: [ἀπα]ρξάμενοι καὶ τῶν σπλάγχνω[ν]⁶³). Thirdly, we find the verb σπλαγχνίζεται (line 14), which could refer to the eating of the viscera by the participants—even if the verb σπλαγχνεύειν might have been expected.⁶⁴ In terms of its attention to ritual precision, this

part of the calendar is as exceptional as the sacrifice to Zeus Polieus in the month Batromios found in another part of the calendar; there, the level of detail is probably justified by the necessity of introducing a new ritual after the synoecism of the island or, at least, of re-organising existing rites.⁶⁵ The fact that the sacrifice to the Charites implies two different places could partially explain the necessity of describing in such detail the phase involving the deposition of parts and the treatment of the *splanchna*, regardless of whether this part of the calendar describes an oath-ritual or not. In this case too, it cannot be said if the viscera were cooked before deposition.

“Sacrificing according to the Greek norm” in Thessaly

Now, it is time to go to Thessaly, where a new document has shed light on all these unanswered questions, while opening up others. The so-called “Marmarini inscription”, discovered in 2002 some 15 kilometers north-east of Larisa in Thessaly and published in 2015, provides precious details on sacrifice and purification. Dating to the first half of the 2nd century BC, it regulates rituals in a local sanctuary, probably related to an association, where Greek and non-Greek people had the opportunity of meeting and interacting in the cult of an anonymous goddess of Near Eastern origin.⁶⁶ A number of other deities were involved in the cult of this goddess. Except for the god Men who is attested elsewhere and for another case discussed immediately below, no other non-Greek deity mentioned in the text is known. On the contrary, Artemis, Apollo, Moira (in the singular), Helios, Pan are Greek names, but the latter is identi-

nection with a gymnasium (*IG IV 4*, lines 5–7): someone “sacrificed the first-fruits to Hermes ... and ... tasted the viscera” ([ἀπ]αρχὴν ἐθυσίασεν τῷ Ἑρμῆι - - - καὶ - - ἐσπλάνχνησεν), before organising a banquet (ἐθειήθη). The verb is attested e.g. in *Ar. Av.* 984 (with schol.: σπλάγχνων μεταλαβείν); Theophr. *apud* Porph. *Abst.* 2.51; Strabo 3.3.6. An interesting fragment supposed to come from the so-called “*patria* of the Eupatrids” in Athens refers to a group of σπλαγχνεύοντες in the context of the purification of a suppliant (*FGrH* 356, F 1, quoted by Ath. 9.410a–b). In some cases, as in Strabo (3.3.6 and 7.2.3), σπλαγχνεύειν refers to the observation of the viscera for divinatory purposes.

⁵⁹ Pirenne-Delforge 1996, 208–213; Paul 2013, 162–163.

⁶⁰ *Editio princeps*: Decourt & Tziaphalias 2015, and then a reedition by Bouchon & Decourt 2017. Important analysis by Parker 2016, Carbon 2016 and Parker & Scullion 2016. See also *BE* 2016, nos. 291–293; 2017, nos. 291–292. The *CGRN* provides an updated edition of the text (no. 225) to which I refer here. Collaboration with Carbon on the online publication of this inscription allowed me to substantially improve the first analysis of the passage about the *Hellenikos nomos* that I presented at the Collège de France in March 2018. Between the editions of 2015 and of 2017, Decourt has changed the way of referring to the two sides of the stele: side A has become side II, and side B, side I. *CGRN* 225 maintains the layout of the first edition.

⁵⁹ *Ar. Plut.* 1130: σπλάγχνων τε θερμῶν, ὧν ἐγὼ κατήσθιον. See also *Ar. Av.* 518–519: ἴν’ ὅταν θύων τις ἔπειτ’ αὐτοῖς εἰς τὴν χεῖρ’, ὡς νόμος ἐστίν, | τὰ σπλάγχνα διδῶ, τοῦ Διὸς αὐτοὶ πρότεροι τὰ σπλάγχνα λάβωσι. In the Delian accounts, we find with some frequency the word ἐσπλαγχνίδιος (in the plural, see *CGRN* 199, line 7), whose meaning remains mostly unclear.

⁶⁰ *CGRN* 86, C.

⁶¹ *CGRN* 86, C, lines 13–15: ... τοῦ λίθου τοῦ ἐν ταῖς ἐλα[ίαις | ἀψάμενοι ἄμυντι ...]. Cf. *IG XII.4 275 ad loc.*

⁶² On this point, see the commentary at *CGRN* 86, C.

⁶³ For this restoration, see Jim 2014, 33–36, with previous bibliography.

⁶⁴ *LSJ*, s.v. σπλαγχνίζω; in the middle voice, the verb means “to feel compassion, pity” in Christian texts. The only epigraphic parallel for this sequence, with σπλαγχνεύω, is a fragmentary text from Aegina, dated to the 1st century AD and referring to acts of euergetism in con-

- ἐὰν δέ τις θύειν βούληται τῆι θεῶι Ἐλ-
 B 35 ληνικῶι νόμῳ, ἔξεστιν ὅ τι ἄμ βούληται πλὴν χοίρου· ἐπὶ δὲ τῆ[ι]
 θυσίαι, φέρειν δεῖ ἐπὶ τὴν τράπεζαν τὰ ἐπιτιθέμενα χοϊνικά λαγάνων,
 ὄμορας χοϊνικά, καὶ τριῶβλον εἰς θησαυρὸν καὶ ἐλαίου ἐπὶ λύχνον κοτύ-
 λην καὶ εἰς κρατῆρα οἴνου χοᾶ· ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱεροῦ, τὸ στήθος ἐφθὸν ἐπὶ τὴν
 B 40 τράπεζαν καὶ τὸ σκέλος ὠμὸν τῆι ἱερείαι· τὰ σπλάγχχνα ἔψειν, ἦπαρ καὶ
 πλεύμονα καὶ φρένας καὶ νεφρὸν ἀριστερὸν καὶ γλώσσαν· τὸν δὲ δεξιὸν
 νεφρὸν καὶ ἀκροκόλιον δεξιὸν καὶ καρδίαν καὶ ἐπίπλουν καὶ τὸ σκέλο[ς]
 τὸ ἀπὸ τοῦ στήθους καὶ τῆς κέρκου τὸ νομιζόμενον εἰς ἱερὰ ἐπὶ τὸ πῦρ.
 ταῦτα ποήσας καὶ ἀποθύσας, φερέτω ἄλλο ἱερεῖον οὐ ἄμ βούλη-
 ται καὶ ἐσθιέτω ὁ βουλόμενος.

The Marmarini inscription.

fied as the god “whom the Syrians call Neirigles (or Neiriglen)”; this statement provides an explicit *interpretatio* and the divine name rendered in Greek appears to be that of Nergal.⁶⁷ The other gods bearing Greek names could also be, at least in some cases, *interpretationes*, which were left implicit as is more usual in inscriptions.⁶⁸ Another exceptional statement in this text is the reference to the possibility of “sacrificing to the goddess according to the Greek norm” (B 34–35: ἐὰν δέ τις θύειν βούληται τῆι θεῶι Ἐλ|ληνικῶι νόμῳ) among many other sacrificial rituals. We will focus on this part of the text since the treatment of the viscera is exceptionally detailed.

HELLENIKOS NOMOS

The relevant passage of the inscription is given above, with translation below:⁶⁹

If anyone wishes to sacrifice to the goddess in the Hellenic custom, it is possible (to sacrifice) whatever one wants except swine (lit. a piglet). For the sacrifice, it is necessary to offer the things to be set on the table: a *choinix* of flat-

breads, a *choinix* of sesame-honey-cake, and a three-obol into the money-box and a *kotyle* of oil for a lamp and for the krater a *chous* of wine; from the sacrificial animal, the breast cooked on the table and the leg raw for the priestess; cook the viscera: the liver, lung, diaphragm, left kidney, and tongue; and as sacred offerings on the fire: the right kidney, a right extremity, the heart, the omentum, the leg removed from the breast (i.e. a foreleg), and the customary part of the tail. Having done these things and completed the sacrifice, if he wants, let him offer another sacrificial animal, whichever he wishes, and eat it.

This “Greek *nomos*” seems to be implicitly contrasted with another norm, to which various other sacrifices present on the same side of the stele must be related. For instance, the generic *thyein* and its cognates, without any precision, probably implies a non-Greek ritual,⁷⁰ as do the references to the completion of a “full table” (for which a full-grown sheep is cooked whole),⁷¹ the performance of an “all-day rite” for the goddess,⁷² and various holocaust sacrifices.⁷³ The sense of

⁶⁷ For the identification of the god as Nergal, proposed during presentations at a conference at the Collège de France in January 2022, see now Zerhoch 2022.

⁶⁸ Decourt & Tziaphalias 2015, 26–32; Parker 2016; Parker & Scullion 2016, 217–218.

⁶⁹ *CGRN* 225, B lines 35–44 (with the translation from the *CGRN*). Among other modifications, two major changes of punctuation are made in the text of *CGRN* 225 compared to both editions by Decourt *et al.* The first is in line 36 where the ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱεροῦ is here considered as referring to the sacrificial animal from which the following parts are cut (even if one finds the more expected ἱερεῖον in B 43 and 61), and not to the sanctuary which the wine just mentioned would come from. The second is in line 37, where all interpreters until now have taken the dative τῆι ἱερείαι as the indirect object of the phrase τὰ σπλάγχχνα ἔψειν. It makes better sense if τῆι ἱερείαι is the recipient of the raw leg mentioned just before. This coheres with the place of τῆι ἱερείαι in the other statements of priestly shares on the side A of the document (lines 34 and 35). The translation of words like *lagana* and *omora* is justified in the commentary on *CGRN* 225.

⁷⁰ On side B, some sacrifices indicated by the verb μεταθύειν or ἐπιθύειν follow a purification with the offering of another animal: lines 3–4, μεταθύειν ἄλλον ἀλέκτορα τέλεον; lines 14–15, μεταθύειν | δὲ σκέλος; lines 30–31: ἐπιθυσάτω ἐπὶ τοῦ τῆς Φυλακῆς βωμοῦ ὄρνιθα θή | λειαν ἢ ἀποπυρίδα, μῶν κρεῶν ... Other sacrifices on the same side are simply denoted with the verb θύειν and the name of the animal: lines 23–25: θύειν ἀλέκτορας λευκοῦς ... καὶ ἐὰν ἄρ | νία θ<έ>λη, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον; line 53: ἐὰν δὲ ὄρνιθά τις θύη ἢ χῆνα ...; lines 75–76: ἔταν τις τῆι θεῶι ἀλεκτορίδα θύη, ἐπὶ τὸν τῆς Μοίρας | βωμόν. The exact manipulation of these various animals remains unknown and *thyein* need not systematically imply the combustion of some part of the animal.

⁷¹ B lines 44–48. See just below.

⁷² B lines 48–50: ἐὰν τις πανημερί|σαι βούληται τῆι θεῶι, ἄριστον φερόμενος ὅτι ἂν βούληται, πλὴν | χοιρέων κρεῶν, καὶ ἐπὶ λύχνον ἐλ[αί]ου ἡμικοτύλιον. Bringing meat to the sanctuary for a ritual is also attested in Delos in the 2nd century BC in the Near Eastern cult of Zeus Ourios and Astarte Palaistine Aphrodite Ourania: *CGRN* 171, line 7.

⁷³ ὄλοκαυτήσαι: B lines 65–69 (a full-grown ram or a male lamb), B lines 70–73 (a goose), B lines 73–74 (a *trubba* or a quail). Holocausts are attested in Greek procedures, but their rarity and the particular identity of the animals burnt here suggest that this performance belongs to

thyein is more open for debate in the case of the sacrifice of a bovine mentioned five paragraphs after the “Greek *nomos*”, sandwiched between the sacrifice of a fowl or a goose and sacrifices in the context of Near Eastern festivals, but an in-depth analysis of this passage would exceed the limits of the present discussion.⁷⁴

The most interesting observation for our discussion is the association of the *Hellenikos nomos* with the mention of *splanchna* and of specific parts of the sacrificial animal burned in the fire. Both are unique in the inscription, although many ritual processes are evoked using *thyein* and its compounds. But in the non-Greek rituals labelled as *thyein*, deposition on a table is the main trend and does not necessarily imply combustion (except, of course, in the case of holocaustic sacrifices). Before addressing these “Greek” peculiarities, the prerequisites for the priestess must be briefly considered.

PRIESTLY SHARES

In the *Hellenikos nomos*, the priestess receives a raw leg. The only point of internal comparison is on side A, where the regulation stipulates what kind of sacrifice has to be done for the ritual of “lifting the offering tray” (lines 30–31: σκάφην ἐάν | τις αἴρηι). A mature sheep, male or female, has to be sacrificed, “close to Moira” (αἴρειν παρὰ Μοίραι καὶ θύειν πρόβατον τέλειον). Supplementary offerings are to be brought, as usual (lines 32–33). Then, some parts are to be extracted “as for the table-filling ritual” (lines 33–34: τὰ δὲ ἐξαίρουμένα κάθαπερ τῆι τραπέζοι πλησίαι), “but the leg is removed raw along with the fleece for the priestess” (line 34: τὸ δὲ σκέλος ὠμὸν ἀφαιρεῖν καὶ τὸ κοῖδιον τῆι ἱερείαι). The meat must be eaten on the spot and non-initiates cannot taste it. Finally comes a reminder that “the fleeces (are) for the priestess” (line 35: τὰ κοῖδια τῆι ἱερείαι). For the second “lifting of the offering tray”, it is stipulated that one has to “remove the sacred parts as for the first” (lines 37–38: τὰ ἱερά ἐξαίρειν ὡσαύτως ὡς | περ τῆς πρώτης).

non-Greek practice as well. On all these Near Eastern aspects of the offerings, see Parker & Scullion 2016, 220–228; Ekroth 2018. For holocausts, see also Ekroth in this volume, *Chapter 12*.

⁷⁴ According to Parker & Scullion 2016, 242–247, the *Hellenikos nomos* “distinguishes between victims seen as typical of Greek sacrifice and those of a different culture, or at any rate of smaller size” (243) and so “the distinction between birds (and lambs) and larger animals is probably all there is to the “Greekness” of the Greek rite (245). In my view, the size of the animal has no bearing on the “Greekness” of the ritual, but the way of handling it is what matters. For example, a full-grown sheep can be the object of a ritual which is clearly non-Greek (cf. the “table-filling” ritual on lines B lines 45–49, or the full-grown sheep “sacrificed” for the ritual of “lifting the offering tray”, on lines A lines 30–31). For more discussion on this debate, see the commentary on these lines (B lines 57–60) in *CGRN 225*.

The reference to “the extracted parts”, for the first “lifting”, and to “the sacred parts” is puzzling here since the point of comparison given by the text is the ritual of “the table-filling”, for which the mature sheep, male or female, has to be “cooked whole” (line 46: ἔψειν δὲ ὅλον). The parallel seems to be based on a confusion, since the only sacrifice where *hiera* are explicitly extracted is the “Greek” ritual, described just before the *trapezoplesia* on side B, with the priestly share also made up of the raw leg.⁷⁵ Be that as it may, the verb ἔψειν brings us back to the *splanchna*.

COOKING THE SPLANCHNA AND BURNING THE DIVINE PART: A “GREEK” SPECIFICITY

The verb generally understood as “to boil” is mentioned only twice in this long regulation: concerning the sheep of the *trapezoplesia*, just mentioned, and the *splanchna* manipulated in the “Greek” sacrifice. The adjective ἐφθός can be added, qualifying in the same context the breast to be placed on the table. As explicitly described in the Molpoi inscription, as well as in various literary texts seen above, the viscera are generally roasted and not boiled. In the same manner, the “boiling” of the entire carcass of the animal for the *trapezoplesia* is difficult to imagine.⁷⁶ A kind of “*méchoui*”, or roasting an animal on a spit without cutting it up, is more expected, since this is the easiest way of cooking it “whole” in the strictest sense of the adjective. Accordingly, the two occurrences of ἔψειν must be translated by “cooking” in general, and refer to roasting.⁷⁷ This is also probably the case for the στήθος ἐφθόν, the “cooked” breast.

The “Greek way” of sacrificing described in the text from Marmarini therefore includes the “three elements” identified in the ritual process called *thysia*: (1) the divine share, burned in the fire of the altar and complemented by a deposition of meat on a table, which for once is explicitly characterized as cooked; (2) the *splanchna* to be cooked; and (3) the rest of the meat, which is mostly implicit here, but we are told that the leg to be taken away by the priestess is raw. The mention of the priestly share also gives to this part of the sacrificial rules a “Greek” flavour, well attested in epigraphic evidence about sacrifice. For the first time in our evidence, we are explicitly told: (1) what must be put into the fire as *hiera* and (2) what

⁷⁵ Perhaps this last ritual can be considered as a supplement to the sacrifice “à la grecque”, when one brings “another animal” to be eaten, just before the mention of the *trapezoplesia*.

⁷⁶ In the case of the ram offered to Aleximachos in Amorgos, the animal is clearly cut up into anatomical portions which are boiled or cooked “whole” and placed before his statue: *IG XII.7 515 = LSS 61*, lines 77–78 (Aigiale, end of the 2nd century BC).

⁷⁷ Chantraine, *DELG*, 394, s.v. ἔψειν: “*Ces termes se sont substitués à la famille de πέσσειν pour exprimer l'idée de « cuire ».*”

the *splanchna* to be roasted are. Other occurrences of the word, in the ritual norms mentioned above, are always generic and never include a description of the *splanchna*.

There is a good reason for this. Contrary to hundreds of epigraphic ritual norms issued by Greek people in which the Greek way of performing rituals can be postulated as a shared background against which local specificities are more or less detailed, the shared background of the Marmarini inscription is non-Greek, which explains why the verb *thyein* can be used with no other specification and the “Greek” way of sacrificing becomes a peculiarity which needs to be detailed. However, matters are not so simple, because the so-called “Greek” perspective in the region of Larisa could be a “Thessalian” way of sacrificing or even one specific to the city in which the sanctuary of the Near Eastern goddess was located. Unfortunately, Thessaly is a “virtual desert”⁷⁸ as far as ritual norms are concerned and points of comparison are lacking. In all likelihood, the *nomos* is said to be “Greek”, and not just “Thessalian”, precisely because the Greek reference offers the most comprehensive contrast with rituals coming from abroad. Whether a Thessalian custom is present in this norm or not, the Marmarini inscription magnificently confirms that a “Greek” sacrificial framework is not merely the ideal vision of historians of Greek religion, in spite of the local variations attested by the epigraphic evidence.⁷⁹ As we saw above, the division of the animal in three parts and their respective, specific handling is a recurring trend in Greek *thysia* everywhere. This is exactly what is described in the prescriptions of the “mixed” community involved in the cult of a Levantine goddess when a “Greek” ritual is performed. Even in the case of the divine portion, which at first sight seems to be larger than expected,⁸⁰ one finds trends known elsewhere: leg and omentum, perhaps referring to the “package” made of fat-wrapped bones; the tail; a piece from the extremities (like the small pieces of raw meat in Homer?). The right kidney is a part of the *splanchna* which is burned, perhaps paralleling what may have been practiced in Miletos.⁸¹ The heart is rarely mentioned in our ritual norms, but in documents regulating sacrifices in Ephesos and in Smyrna in the 2nd century AD, it appears to be burned on the altar.⁸² In parallel to the burning of these ani-

mal parts, consuming the “cooked” *splanchna* tends to build a group of *splanchnuontes* “à la grecque”, in the sanctuary of this Syrian goddess.

A text as complex as the inscription found in Marmarini will contribute to wider discussion among researchers on Greek and Near Eastern modes of sacrifice. In a study focused on the place and the role of the *splanchna* in the process, this extraordinary ritual norm attests to the need to refer explicitly to these animal parts when a sacrifice is supposed to be Greek, as well as to define the part to be burnt on the altar. What little we know of Near Eastern sacrifices (and “Near East” is certainly too broad a category in this respect) focuses on the cooking of food and deposition in many cases: in the Persian way of “sacrificing” without flaming altars described by Herodotus,⁸³ in the Hittite practice,⁸⁴ or in the Mesopotamian daily service for the gods.⁸⁵ The reference to a “Greek way of sacrificing” finds some support in this sense and the use of *thyein* in the Marmarini text could point, in many cases, to a generic “animal offering to a deity”, without necessarily implying the combustion of a part for the divine recipient when the ritual is not Greek.

As far as comparison is concerned, a brief glance at a Roman ritual practice mentioned by a Greek author will give us the opportunity to add a last consideration to the analysis of the “Greek way of sacrificing” and the *splanchna*.

⁷⁸ Cf. Parker 2018, 75.

⁷⁹ A conclusion also reached by Parker 2018, 80, from a broader perspective.

⁸⁰ This is the interpretation of Parker & Scullion 2016, 246, who consider that we are confronted with a “moirocaust” in this case.

⁸¹ See above with note 51.

⁸² *IEphesos* 10 = *LSS* 121, lines 5–12: ... ἱερέα | προσάγοντα τοῖς θεοῖς νενομισμέναις ἡμέραις τὸν ἀρι<θμ>ὸν τξέ, καρδιου|ρ| γούμενα μὲν καὶ ἐκμηριζόμενα ρφ, κα|τατελισκόμενα δὲ ροέ, ἐξ οἰκείας δυ|νάμεως, περιηγούμενου καὶ διδάσκοντος | αὐτὸν τοῦ δημοτελοῦς ἱεροφάντου καθὸ|τι ἕκατον τοῖς θεοῖς νόμιμόν ἐστιν, “(the *prytanis*) leading the sacrificial animals to the gods on the usual days, numbering 365; 190 whose hearts have been removed and their thighs extracted, 175 offered

without being cut, at his own expense, the public *hierophant* instructing him and teaching him how each custom must be performed for the gods.” *LSAM* 84, lines 12–13: μηδ’ ἐν Βακχείοις ὦν ποτὶ δαῖτα τ[ίθεσθαι.] | καὶ κραδίην καρποῦν ἱεροῖς βωμοῖς [- - -], where Sokolowski considered it was forbidden to burn the heart on the altars but this would imply a negative statement lost in the gap at the end of line 13. In any case, these two texts attest that the heart could be part of the divine portion, at least in Roman Imperial Ionia.

⁸³ Hdt. 1.131.

⁸⁴ Mouton 2017, 242: “The key gesture of Hittite animal sacrifice is clearly the placement of the sacrificial meat cuts on the divine table.” However, this interesting paper shows different cooking techniques depending on the nature of the meat cuts. The liver and heart are roasted and not cooked in a pot, as other parts are. For other variations involving burning in the Hittite material, see Mouton in this volume, *Chapter 13*.

⁸⁵ Abush 2002, 43: “The central act of the daily cult is not sacrifice in the sense of giving the food over to a fire which consumes it, nor is it acts of slaughter and pouring out of blood. Food was placed before the god and consumed by him through that mysterious act that characterizes Babylonian religiosity.”

The *ritus Graecus* by Dionysius of Halikarnassos

According to John Scheid, the Roman sacrifice *Graeco ritu* is “a typically Roman way of honouring the gods.”⁸⁶ I have no intention of contesting the analysis of one of the best scholars in the field of ancient Roman religion. My point here is to identify what elements the Greek author Dionysius of Halikarnassos clearly emphasizes as “Greek” in the sacrifices offered to Hercules at the *Ara Maxima*, which are said to be performed *Graeco ritu*.⁸⁷

According to Dionysius, Hercules was considered a god for the first time in Italy and he asked the inhabitants to offer him an annual sacrifice. To be sure to get what he wanted to receive, he himself taught two distinguished families, the Potitii and the Pinarii, whose descendants had long been in charge of this sacrifice, “to perform the ritual according to Greek customs” (ἀγιστεύοντες δὲ τὴν ἱερουργίαν ἔθεισιν Ἑλληνικοῖς). Initially, the ceremonies had to be performed equally by both families but, at the first sacrifice, the Pinarii arrived too late, “when the *splanchna* had already been eaten” (ἐσπλαγχνευμένων ἤδη τῶν ἱερῶν). Accordingly, the Potitii presided at the sacrifice, “taking the first-fruits of the burnt-offerings” (τῶν ἐμπύρων ἀπαρχομένων), while the Pinarii “were excluded from tasting the viscera” (Πιναρίων δὲ σπλάγχνων τε μετουσίας εἰργομένων).⁸⁸ Whether the *splanchna* were effectively eaten by the participants or burnt for the gods in sacrifices to Hercules, as in the “classical” Roman sacrifice,⁸⁹ the important point for my topic is the emphasis put by Dionysius on this aspect of the “Greek” sacrifice for the hero/god. Partaking of the *splanchna* is clearly considered especially “Greek” in a Roman sacrificial ceremony, which supports our analysis of the “Greek way of sacrificing” in the Marmarini text.⁹⁰

When I first read the expression θύειν ... ἑλληνικῶι νόμοι in the inscription found at Marmarini, I considered this testimony to be the validation of a strong conviction: the notion of “Greek religion”, in the singular, was indeed relevant. Referring to *Religions of the Greeks* in the plural was not mandatory.⁹¹ Despite the political fragmentation of the Greek world, something typically “Greek” could emerge from this religious

system, whether in the names of many gods or in the ritual framework of sacrifice as regulated by dozens of ritual norms.

This consideration does not invalidate the obvious observation of the great variety of local traditions, whether in the structure of divine local “assemblages” and the choice of the gods’ cult-titles, in the establishment of festivals or in the specific elaboration of local calendars. But the Greek themselves considered that an underlying unity did exist in their way of recognising supra-human beings and interacting with them. As Fritz Graf remarked some years ago, there was “a basic linguistic unity of Greekness despite the many local dialects”, and “the dialectic of a common Hellenic language and its multiple dialectal expressions might be a useful model on which to understand the tension between Panhellenic and local religion.”⁹² It is no coincidence that the expression “according to the Greek norm” appears in a document issued by a mixed community of Greeks and non-Greeks. The effect of contrast is obvious and it gives us the rare opportunity to reach an *emic* definition of a *thysia*: it involves burning parts of a slaughtered animal on an altar for the recipient deity and sharing the roasted *splanchna* within the sacrificing group. The point of anchor of the text, Hellenistic Thessaly, attests to the validity of the definition.

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⁸⁶ Scheid 1995 (the quotation is the subtitle of this article: the French version is in 2005, 87–122) and 1998.

⁸⁷ Dion. Hal. 1.30.3–4.

⁸⁸ The *Hellenika ethe* are once more associated to the fact of “sacrificing the burnt first-offerings” in 6.1.4 (τὰς ἐμπύρους ἀπαρχὰς ἔθειον Ἑλληνικοῖς ἔθειον).

⁸⁹ On this question, see Scheid 2005, 105–107.

⁹⁰ See other examples of the fundamental importance of *splanchna* in a Greek sacrificial context provided by Bednarek here, *Chapter 9*.

⁹¹ As Price 1999, for example. See the conclusion of Parker 2018, with which I absolutely agree. Cf. also Pirenne-Delforge 2020, *passim*.

⁹² Graf 2010, 57.

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