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THE SACRIFICE OF PREGNANT ANIMALS

by

JAN N. BREMMER

There has recently been renewed interest in Olympian sacrifice and its chthonian counterparts,¹ but much less attention has been paid to its more unusual variants.² One of these is the sacrifice of pregnant victims. In his *Geschichte* Martin Nilsson collected most of the then available evidence and interpreted it symbolically as a sacrifice associated with fertility goddesses.³ It would be about forty years before such sacrifices again received attention. In his study of Northern Ionian cults, Fritz Graf mentions them in passing and judges them to be negative; Van Straten leaves the question open in his iconographical analysis of Greek sacrifice, and Stella Georgoudi, who is the only scholar to dedicate a special article to the phenomenon, albeit considering only a small selection of the goddesses who receive such sacrifices, returns to the fertility interpretation, but now combines the fertility of nature and people.⁴ Given these differences in opinion, the only partial presentation of the material, and the absence of any comparative evidence, there is room for a new investigation. I will therefore attempt to collect, order and analyse the individual pieces of evidence in order to determine where, when, what type of and to whom pregnant victims were sacrificed. Given the dearth of proper analyses, this attempt can only be a preliminary one, the more so since we have to leave out of account the Roman, Umbrian and Indian parallels, which I hope to

¹ I use the following abbreviations:

LSAM = F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure* (Paris, 1955).

LSS = idem, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques. Supplément* (Paris, 1962).

LSCG = idem, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques* (Paris, 1969).

² Olympian: F.T. van Straten, *Hierà kalá* (Leiden, 1995); Bremmer, 'Modi di comunicazione con il divino: la preghiera, la divinizzazione e il sacrificio nella civiltà greca', in S. Settis (ed.), *I Greci I* (Turin, 1996) 239-83. Chthonic: S. Scullion, 'Olympian and Chthonian', *Class. Ant.* 13 (1994) 75-119; R. Schlesier, *Kulte, Mythen und Gelehrte* (Frankfurt/M, 1994) 21-32. Note also various studies in R. Hägg (ed.), *Ancient Greek cult practice from the archaeological evidence* (Athens, 1999).

³ M.P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion I* (München, 1967³) 151-2; similarly, R. Parker, 'Sacrifice, Greek', in S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford, 1996³) 1344-5: '...fertile Earth a pregnant sow'; Scullion, 'Olympian and Chthonian', 86.

⁴ F. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte* (Rome, 1985) 27; Van Straten, *Hierà kalá*, 26, 77; S. Georgoudi, 'Divinità greche e vittime animali: Demetra, Kore, Hera e il sacrificio di femmine gravide', in S. Castagnone and G. Lanata (eds.), *Filosofi e animali nel mondo antico* (Genova, 1994) 171-86.

discuss at a future occasion.

Sacrifices of pregnant animals are not that uncommon in our sources. They are attested for the Greek continent, several islands, and Miletus. There seems to be a clear cluster in Athens, but this is due to the Athenian dominance in our sources, rather than being an indication for the phenomenon's origin. In fact, the oldest testimony comes from Miletus and predates 500 BC, whereas the latest examples are attested by Pausanias – barely a millennium later.

Although the rule that goddesses receive female victims and gods male ones is only a late antique construct, as the archaeological evidence has demonstrated,⁵ it certainly fits this case in which the victims are always ewes and sows, with the special case of a cow for Marathonian Ge, and the recipients always goddesses.⁶ The recipients are the Eumenides, Ge, Rhea, Demeter, Daeira, Theban Pelarge, Hera Antheia, Artemis, Athena Skiras and Athena Polias, and, finally, unknown recipients in the months Pyanopsion (*LSS* 20 A 28) and Gamelion (*LSS* 20 A 43) at Marathon.⁷ This is not a homogeneous group of divinities. Some could reasonably be called chthonic, such as the Eumenides, but this is hardly the case with Hera or Athena. Does this perhaps mean that we have here a sacrifice with varying meanings, depending on the context?

It seems methodologically best to begin with those cults for which we have more mythical or ritual data, and from there proceed to cults for which we have less information. We will start, therefore, with the Eumenides. Pausanias relates that every year the Sicyonians celebrate a one-day festival in which they sacrifice a 'pregnant ewe, bring libations of honey and water or milk and use flowers instead of wreaths'. He adds, very usefully, that they carry out similar sacrifices to the Moirai, but that these take place outside of the temple 'in the open air' (Paus. 2.11.4). The similarity in sacrifice is not surprising, since Eumenides and Moirai are genealogically, conceptually and ritually connected: both have connections with the

⁵ Bremmer, 'Modi di comunicazione', 253.

⁶ The only exception is a third-century Koan inscription (*LSCG* 154.B.37ff), which prescribes remedies in the event that an animal sold for sacrificial use as pregnant turns out not to be and which refers to 'gods and goddesses to whom pregnant victims (are sacrificed)'. As Scullion, 'Olympian and Chthonian', 86, observes, the expression is 'merely a stereotyped legal phrase'.

⁷ S. Scullion, *ZPE* 121 (1998) 121-2, suggests as recipient 'Rhea, Mother of the gods', but this is less likely, cf. S. Lambert, 'The Sacrificial Calendar of the Marathonian Tetrapolis: a revised text', *ZPE* 130 (2000) 43-70 at 54, who also has re-edited the text.

important turning points of life: birth, maturity and death,⁸ and both cults belong typically to the concerns of women, as appears from an often neglected fragment of Euripides' *Melanippe Desmotis*.⁹

The ritual kinship of the Eumenides and Moirai is manifested by the shared negative signs in their sacrifices. Libations of honey, water and/or milk are in clear opposition to the normal libation of wine, as has recently been noted more than once, and so is the use of flowers instead of wreaths.¹⁰ Moreover, the Athenians sacrificed to the Eumenides at night in silence,¹¹ and the Derveni Papyrus (col. VI) stipulates that they should receive wineless libations and sacrificial cakes,¹² another combination pointing to 'abnormality'. These negative signs align well with the fact that the Eumenides are often portrayed in literature and art in lurid colours; on votive reliefs they are invariably pictured with snakes in their hands.¹³ The ritual indications clearly point in the direction of a negatively valued context and hardly into the direction of a positive sacrifice. Unfortunately, Pausanias does not tell us - and nor does anybody else - what happened to the fetus of the sacrificed animal. It is very unlikely that it was eaten, but how it was disposed of we simply do not know. It may well be that this element has significantly contributed to the 'negative' connotation of the ritual.

The same indications, albeit with a different divine character, can be found in the ritual connected with Ge, who with the epithet '*en pagôî*' received a pregnant ewe in Erchia in the month Boedromion (*LSCG* 18 E.16-21), and, with the epithet *eg gyais*, a pregnant cow in the Marathonian Tetrapolis in the month Poseideon (*LSCG* 20 B 9). We have no

⁸ As is stressed by A. Henrichs, 'Namenlosigkeit und Euphemismus: Zur Ambivalenz der chthonischen Mächte im attischen Drama', in H. Hoffman and A. Harder (eds.), *Fragmenta dramatica* (Göttingen, 1991) 161-201 at 175 n. 28; for the complicated relationships between Eumenides, Erinyes and Semnai Theai see most recently S.I. Johnston, *Restless Dead* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1999) 279-87. Moirai: Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 29-30; add now *SEG* 42.535 (Moirai Patrouai).

⁹ Eur. *Mel.Desm.* fr. 494, quoted from the new edition by J. Diggle, *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta selecta* (Oxford, 1998).

¹⁰ Libations: A. Henrichs, 'The "Sobriety" of Oedipus: Sophocles *OC* 100 Misunderstood', *HSCP* 87 (1983) 87-100; Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 26-29; M. Jameson *et al.*, *A lex sacra from Selinous* (Durham NC, 1993) 72. Flowers: Graf, *ibidem*, 27f.

¹¹ Aesch. *Eum.* 108-9; Apollod. *FGrH* 244 F101; Schol. Soph. *OC.* 489.

¹² A. Henrichs, 'The Eumenides and Wineless Libations in the Derveni Papyrus', *Atti del XVII congresso internazionale di papirologia* II (Naples, 1984) 255-68. I quote from the edition by K. Tsantsanoglou, 'The First Columns of the Derveni Papyrus and their Religious Significance', in A. Laks and G. Most (eds.), *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus* (Oxford, 1997) 93-148.

information about the concomitant ritual, but elsewhere Ge's ritual is characterised by 'abnormal' elements, such as bloodless sacrifices or black victims, the prohibition to take the meat away from the spot, exclusion of strangers and chastity of the priestess; not surprisingly, Plato considers her cult typical of barbarians (*Crat.* 397cd). At least since shortly after 500 BC, she is iconographically always depicted as only being half above the ground and thus clearly distinguished from 'normal' anthropomorphic gods.¹⁴ It is this exceptional status, which is also reflected in her genealogical position at the beginning of the divine race, that is in line with her exceptional ritual.

Ge's divine status is more or less shared by Rhea, who received a 'pregnant ewe and *hierà*', in Kos, where she had a public cult and a priesthood.¹⁵ Her ritual is virtually unknown, but her sacrifice was 'not to be removed from the spot' (*ouk apophorá*), also a sign of an 'abnormal' ritual.¹⁶ Like Ge, Rhea was not very important in Greek cultic life, but she shared an altar with her husband Kronos in Olympia and a temple in Athens.¹⁷ Given that Kronos is a kind of *deus otiosus* and receives 'abnormal' sacrifices, such as human sacrifice,¹⁸ Rhea may well have shared his position. Like Ge, then, her sacrifice also seems to be a sign of an 'abnormal' position within the divine hierarchy.¹⁹ This shared marginality explains why the names of Ge and Rhea are not reflected in Greek onomastics.

We now move to a much more important goddess, Demeter, and in particular to the cult of Demeter Chloe. In the Tetrapolis she received a 'pregnant sow' in the month Anthesterion (*LSCG* 20 B 49). Demeter also received a pregnant, *chloian* ewe in Thorikos in the month Elaphebolion and in the next month, Munichion, a pregnant *antheian* ewe (*SEG* 33.147.38, 44: the text is not totally clear, however). In the Athenian deme of Paiania the

¹³ H. Sarian, 'Erinyes', *LIMC* IV.1 (1986) 825-43 at 840.

¹⁴ Ritual: Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 360. Iconography: M.B. Moore, 'Ge', *LIMC* IV.1 (1986) 171-7 at 176.

¹⁵ Kos: *LSCG* 151 B 3 = M. Segre, *Iscrizione di Cos* (Rome, 1993) ED 241.3. Priesthood: A. Maiuri, *Nuova Silloge Epigrafici di Rodi e Cos* (Florence, 1925) no's 450, 460. In general: S. Sherwin-White, *Ancient Cos* (Göttingen, 1978) 324-5, 360. For the spelling of Rhea's name see R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary* IV (Cambridge, 1992) 183.

¹⁶ M.S. Goldstein, *The Setting of the Ritual Meal in Greek Sanctuaries* (Diss. Berkeley, 1975) 51-3, 322-55; Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 28, overlooked by Scullion, 'Olympians and Chthonians', 99-112; Jameson, *A lex sacra*, 39.

¹⁷ Herodorus *FGrH* 31 F34a (Olympia); Paus. 1.18.7 (Athens).

¹⁸ See the detailed discussion of Kronos by H.S. Versnel, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion* II (Leiden, 1993) 88-135.

festival of Antheia, at which a pregnant pig had to be sacrificed, seems to come after the Chloia (*IG I³.250.30*), and this order is now confirmed by the *lex sacra* of Thorikos, which also shows that the two festivals came after the Proeresia.

In Athens, Demeter Chloe shared a temple with Ge Kourotrophos near the acropolis,²⁰ an area characterised by the propinquity of rather marginal gods such as Pan, Asclepius and the Nymphs,²¹ but she was also worshipped in Eleusis, where the Chloia is attested (*IG II² 949.7*), and elsewhere in Attica.²² In at least one Attic deme she had a priestess (*LSCG 28.16*) and this may have been the general rule. Robert Parker has put her cult firmly in the context of agricultural practice: the pre-ploughing sacrifice is followed by the festival of green shoots and the flowering of the corn.²³ This interpretation is supported by the Delian Semos' association of Demeter Chloe with the harvest in his *On Paeans* (FGrH 396 F 23) and confirmed by Cornutus, who connects the epithet with *chloadzein* and mentions that the Greeks sacrificed to Demeter Chloe around springtime 'with games and joy' (*ND 28*).

Demeter Chloie was also worshipped in Mykonos where, on the twelfth of the month Posideion, she received two sows, of which one was pregnant, in the company of Poseidon Temenites, 'of the Temenos', and Poseidon Phykios, 'of the seaweed'. The sows had to be chosen by the *boule* and to be very beautiful; moreover, the back of the pregnant one had to be broken (*LSCG 96.5-12*). This rare prescription, which we seem to find only at Mykonos, also sets the sacrifice apart from normal practices, although the breaking of bones is well attested in excavations of sacrificial remains.²⁴ Cults of Poseidon do sometimes involve human fertility but virtually never that of nature;²⁵ moreover, in this case the month, the god's epithets and the context of the sacrifice certainly do not point in that direction.

There are other pregnant sacrifices to Demeter as well. During the Thesmophoria on

¹⁹ For Rhea see now F. Gury, 'Rhea', *LIMC* VII.1 (1994) s.v.

²⁰ Eupolis F 196 and K.-A. *ad loc.*; Philochoros *FGrH* 328 F 61; *IG II² 5006* (together with Kore); Paus. 1.22.3; Schol. Soph. *OC*. 1600.

²¹ As is observed by F. Graf, 'Pompai in Greece. Some considerations about space and ritual in the Greek polis', in R. Hägg (ed.), *The Role of Religion in the Early Greek Polis* (Stockholm, 1996) 55-65 at 59.

²² *IG II² 1356.16, 1472.39, 4748, 4750, 4777f, 5129*.

²³ R. Parker, 'Festivals of the Attic Demes', in T. Linders and G. Nordquist (eds), *Gifts to the Gods* (Uppsala, 1987) 137-47 at 141 (with discussion of textual problems).

²⁴ Bremmer, 'Modi di comunicazione', 274.

²⁵ Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 207f.

Delos she received numerous pregnant sows together with Kore and Zeus Eubuleus,²⁶ and this particular group is found on Mykonos as well, where on the tenth of the month Lenaion she received ‘a sow pregnant for the first time’, together with Kore and Zeus Bouleus (*LSCG* 96.15-17). The triad is well known and also is associated closely with the Thesmophoria elsewhere.²⁷ The context of other sacrifices is less clear. In Kos Demeter received ‘a perfect and pregnant ewe’ in the month Batromios during the festival for Zeus Polieus, which was characterised by many prohibitions and special measures; her sacrifice may well have been influenced by those to Zeus Polieus.²⁸ In the mysteries of Andania, after the reconstruction of the cult, she received a ‘pregnant sow’ in the procession (*LSCG* 65.33, 68) and in Gortyn a ‘pregnant ewe’ in an unknown month (*LSCG* 146). Finally, on Rhodes, together with Kore, she received in Kameiros on the fourth of the month Sminthios (end of the winter) a ‘pregnant ewe’ (*LSS* 95) and in Lindos on the seventh of the same month, perhaps again with Kore (but the text is too lacunose to be certain), ‘a ewe and a pregnant sow’ and, in the same place on the twelfth of an unknown month perhaps a ‘pregnant sow’, but the name of the goddess and the animal are no longer legible on the stone.²⁹ The sacrifice of a ‘pregnant ewe’ to Daira in the Tetrapolis in the month Gamelion also belongs in this ‘Demetrian’ context (*LSCG* 20 B 12), since Daira is closely connected with Eleusis and identified by Aeschylus with Persephone (F 277 Radt), as does the sacrifice of a ‘pregnant sow’ in Marathon during the Eleusinia in the month Anthesterion (*LSCG* 20 B 48-9).³⁰

It is clear from these instances that Demeter was a very popular recipient of pregnant victims. This was already observed by Cornutus, who also put forward the explanation that the sacrifice of pregnant victims to the goddess was indicative of producing many offspring

²⁶ See the table in Ph. Bruneau, *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à l'époque Hellénistique et à l'époque impériale* (Paris, 1970) 287.

²⁷ F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Berlin and New York, 1974) 171-4; K. Clinton, *Myth and Cult* (Stockholm, 1992) 56-63.

²⁸ *LSCG* 151 A 60. For her Koan cult see Sherwin-White, *Ancient Kos*, 305-12. For the festival of Zeus Polieus see the interesting analysis by Scullion, ‘Olympian and Chthonian’, 81-9.

²⁹ For the last two inscriptions see C. Blinkenberg, ‘Règlements de sacrifices rhodiens’, in K. Hanell *et al.* (eds.), *Dragma Martino P. Nilsson a.d. IV Iul. anno MCMXXXIX dedicatum* (Lund, 1939) 96-118 at 99-100, nos 2 and 3. Their lacunose status is probably the reason why they have not been incorporated by Sokolowski in his collections of *leges sacrae* - and thus neglected in later investigations.

³⁰ For her Eleusinian context see *IG* I³.250.15f; M.P. Nilsson, *Opuscula selecta* III (Lund, 1960) 95-6; G. Sfameni Gasparro, *Misteri e culti mistici di Demetra* (Rome, 1986) 111-4; E. Kearns, *The*

(to *polygonon*), of easy conception (to *eusyllepton*) and of bringing to fulfilment (to *telesphoron*: ND 28). Yet Cornutus' interpretation immediately follows upon his discussion of Demeter Chloe and seems determined by that particular context. It is therefore hardly acceptable for the whole of our evidence, since fertility of nature is certainly not the only clue to Demeter's cult: as we have seen, even in Athens she was connected with Ge Kourotrophos.

In fact, the sacrifice of pregnant victims occurs in all kinds of Demetrian contexts: the Thesmophoria, the cults of Demeter Chloe and Arcadian Demeter, and in cults where Demeter and Kore, Demeter and Poseidon, and Demeter and Hera are combined. This variety points to an early date for the practice in the history of Demeter's cult. Unfortunately, Demeter's prehistory is not easy to reconstruct, but it is clear that there was a phase in which she was connected with the political community and the initiation of girls before she became associated with mysteries; her close connection with Poseidon, who was also often associated with political federations and male initiation, points in the same direction.³¹

Recurrent features of Demeter's cult everywhere in Greece were reversals such as obscene behaviour and *aischrologia*.³² The negative meaning of a pregnant victim, such as we have 'deciphered' it in the cults of the Eumenides and Ge, is therefore perfectly at home in this context. We may compare the cult of Theban Pelarge, who, according to mythology, had re-established the Kabirian mysteries after they had been, supposedly, removed by the Seven against Thebes, and who was entitled to a 'pregnant victim' (Paus. 9.25.8). Our knowledge of the Kabirian mysteries is still very incomplete, but they were clearly characterised by reversals, as well, such as *aischrologia*.³³ This leaves open, of course, the possibility that much later generations, perhaps after the disappearance of the overly offensive ritual elements, reached a different interpretation. Scholars of ritual should always be prepared to take into account both diachronic and synchronic approaches.

We move in a different direction with the sacrifice of a white, 'pregnant ewe' to Hera

Heroes of Attica (London, 1989) 153.

³¹ Demeter: Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 275-6; Jameson, *A lex sacra*, 115f. Poseidon: Bremmer, *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1999²) 17-8 and *Der neue Pauly*, s.v. 'Poseidon'.

³² A. Brumfield, 'Aporreta: Verbal and Ritual Obscenity in the Cults of Ancient Women', in R. Hägg (ed.), *The Role of Religion in the Early Greek Polis* (Stockholm, 1996) 67-74.

³³ W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1985) 281-2; M. Daumas, *Cabiriaca: recherches sur l'iconographie du culte des Cabires* (Paris, 1998). Pelarge seems to be absent from A. Schachter, *Cults of Boeotia* I-IV (London, 1981-94).

Antheia in Miletus on the thirteenth of an unknown month (*LSAM* 41.6). Nothing is known about this cult, but Hera was indeed associated with flowers (*AP* 9.586) and a Hera Antheia was also worshipped in Argos. In fact, the completely isolated mention of Hera in Miletus strongly suggests an Argive origin, perhaps via the Milesian colony Iasos, which claimed an Argive origin with later Milesian settlers.³⁴ For Argos we are slightly better informed. Here, Hera Antheia's temple was situated not far from the *agora*, quite close to that of Leto, a goddess connected with initiation.³⁵ Can it be that the Flowery Hera also points to initiation? Hers certainly seems to have been a cult typical of women, since according to Hesychius, Peloponnesian women celebrated a festival of picking of flowers for Hera in the spring, the so-called Herosanthia.³⁶ Pollux mentions a special melody which they played on the flute for women who carried flowers in Argos (4.78). Nilsson already connected these notices with the report by Pollux (4.78) of the festival Anthesphoria on Sicily, which he associated with Kore's kidnapping while she was picking flowers. As Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood has shown, these references to the gathering or picking of flowers always occur in a context where a girl leaves her status of 'wildness' behind in order to enter the 'civilised' state of marriage.³⁷ And indeed, Archilochus (or his persona: fr. 196a West²) made love to his girl 'in the flowers';³⁸ Clearchus connects mature girls with the picking of flowers (fr. 25 Wehrli²); Rhodian girls on the brink of marriage were called *anthestrides*;³⁹ young female protagonists in novels are twice called Antheia,⁴⁰ and, last but not least, both the Horae and Knossian Aphrodite, goddesses closely connected with the maturation and weddings of girls, had the

³⁴ N. Ehrhardt, *Miletus und seine Kolonien* (Frankfurt/M, 1983) 115 (Argive influence), 456 note 721 ('[Hera] völlig isoliert innerhalb der milesischen Kultlandschaft').

³⁵ Paus. 2.22.1; *Et. Magnum* 108.47. Leto: Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 60-1; Bremmer, *Greek Religion*, 13.

³⁶ Hsch. h 822 Latte; Photius h 254 Theod.

³⁷ M.P. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste* (Leipzig, 1906) 357; C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Reading' *Greek Culture* (Oxford, 1991) 151-88 at 175 (Hera and Persephone).

³⁸ See in general J.-M. Bremer, 'The Meadow of Love and Two Passages in Euripides' *Hippolytus*', *Mnemosyne* IV 28 (1975) 268-80, with the additions by S.R. Slings, in J.-M. Bremer *et al.*, *Some Recently Found Greek Poems* (Leiden, 1987) 45; D.L. Cairns, 'The Meadow of Artemis and the Character of the Euripidean *Hippolytus*', *Quad. Urb. Cult. Class.* 57 (1997) 51-75.

³⁹ Blinkenberg, 'Règlements de sacrifices rhodiens', 110, no. 11; see also Hsch. a 5127 Latte; I. Bekker, *Anecdota graeca* I (Berlin, 1814) 215.16.

⁴⁰ In Xenophon's *Ephesiaca* and in the so-called *Antheia* fragment, which has been most recently edited by S. Stephens and J. Winkler, *Ancient Greek Novels: the fragments* (Princeton, 1995) 277-88.

epithet *antheia*.⁴¹ In this respect, then, Persephone comes very close to Hera in Southern Italy, as Sourvinou-Inwood did not fail to notice. **This will have been an older stage of Hera's nature than her later prominent association with marriage, since in Argos she was also connected with boys' initiation.**⁴² In fact, given that flower-gathering maidens already appear on Minoan vase-painting, these cults and festivals probably go back to a pre-Greek stage.⁴³ **However this may be, it seems important to note that her flowery nature hardly points to the same gloomy context as the sacrifice to the Eumenides.**

Initiation perhaps also played a role with pregnant sacrifices to Artemis. Philip dedicates an epigram to a 'heifer with laden belly' for Artemis, who started to give birth at the moment of sacrifice and therefore was released.⁴⁴ In this, surely fictitious, case we learn nothing about the context of the sacrifice, but we are better informed by a lacunose epigram from Patmos, which relates that Artemis herself made 'Vera, the daughter of Glaukies, priestess to bring as *hydrophoros* minor sacrifices (*parabômia*) of quivering goats auspiciously sacrificed with their fetuses'. It cannot be chance that the same epigram also mentions the image of Artemis which Orestes had brought from Scythia. This image is always connected with unusual, often *unheimliche* rituals. The myth fits well with the sacrifice of a pregnant victim.⁴⁵ *Hydrophoroi* are well attested in Didyma and Miletus and it seems clear 'both from consistent lack of reference to husbands, and from the fact that frequently the *hydrophoros*' father held the prophecy (at Didyma) at the same time, that

⁴¹ Horae: Hsch. a 5104 Latte, cf. L. Abad Casal, 'Horae', *LIMC* V.1 (1990) 510-38; T. Heinze, 'Horae', in *Der neue Pauly* 5 (1998) 716f. Aphrodite: Hsch. a 5105 Latte, explained as deriving from the ancient ties between Argos and Knossos by M. Guarducci, *Inscriptiones Creticae*, vol. I (Rome, 1935) 54; in general see now V. Pirenne-Delforge, *L'Aphrodite grecque: contribution à l'étude de ses cultes et de sa personnalité dans le panthéon archaïque et classique* (Athens and Liège, 1994).

⁴² Cf. Burkert, *Homo necans* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1983) 162-8; on Hera's Argive cult and young girls see also C. Calame, *Les chœurs de jeunes filles I* (Rome, 1977) 218-20 ~ *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece* (Lanham, 1997) 119f.

⁴³ **W. Schiering, 'Goddesses, Dancing and Flower-Gathering Maidens in Middle Minoan Vase Painting', in Ph. Betancourt et al. (eds), *Meletemata*, 3 vols (Liège and Austin, 1999) III.747-50.**

⁴⁴ *AP* 9.22 = Philip XXXVI Gow-Page.

⁴⁵ **R. Merkelbach and J. Stauber, *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten I* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1998) 169-70G, who offer a much better text than G. Kaibel, *Epigrammata Graeca ex lapidibus conlecta* (Berlin, 1878) no. 872. Orestes and Artemis' image: A. Lesky, *RE* 18.1, 997-1007; F. Graf, 'Das Götterbild aus Taurien', *Antike Welt* 10.4 (1979) 33-41; Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 301-7; Bremmer, 'James George Frazer en *The Golden Bough*', *Hermeneus* 68 (1996) 212-21 (on Orestes and Nemi).**

normally the *hydrophoros* was a young, unmarried girl'.⁴⁶ We may add that a maiden priesthood is typical of the last stage of adolescence, as many parallels abundantly demonstrate.⁴⁷

Coming-of-age may also have played a role in the cult of Athena, the last goddess to be discussed. In Phaleron, Athena Skiras received a 'pregnant ewe' on the twelfth of Maimakterion on the same altar as Skiros (*LSS* 19.92). The cult of Athena Skiras was probably imported from Salamis, where she seems to have been the leading goddess and Skiros a primeval king. Her shrine at Phaleron was the site of the most important rites of the Oschophoria; recently, Robert Parker has even suggested that the Oschophoria conceivably coincided with these sacrifices. However this may be, the goddess was clearly in some ways connected with the life of the community, in particular with the coming-of-age of its youths.⁴⁸

The nature of Athena Skiras must have been closely related to that of Athena Polias, who, like Demeter, received a 'pregnant ewe' on Kos during the same festival for Zeus Polieus (*LSCG* 151 A 55-6). Her sacrifice seems to have been influenced by the general, 'abnormal' atmosphere of the day, as was the case with that to Demeter (above). This is different in two other sacrifices, which have been noted by Van Straten. The first occurs on the neck of a red-figure loutrophoros of the late sixth century, which was found on the Akropolis and may be reasonably interpreted as a votive dedicated to Athena. It displays two men, two women and a youth prodding a pregnant sow. Are we perhaps here in the vicinity of the transition towards adulthood, since the vase carries the inscriptions *Olympio[doros] ka[los]* and *ho pais kalos*? The second is a votive relief from the beginning of the fifth century, which was found on the Akropolis. It displays the goddess herself with parents and three children (two boys and a girl) approaching from the right. Does the relief have anything to do with the coming-of-age of the boys, since they walk in front of a pregnant sow? Unfortunately, at this moment we have no clear indications and the purpose of these sacrifices has to remain obscure due to lack of further parallels.⁴⁹

If we keep the negative nature of the pregnant victim in mind, where does this leave us regarding the cults of Hera, Artemis and Athena? Hera Antheia seems to have been concer-

⁴⁶ R. van Bremen, *The Limits of Participation* (Amsterdam, 1996) 90 n. 31.

⁴⁷ Bremmer, 'Transvestite Dionysos', *The Bucknell Review* 43 (1999) 183-200.

⁴⁸ Athena Skiras: R. Parker, *Athenian Religion: a history* (Oxford, 1996) 316 (the nature of the goddess and her cult at Phaleron). Skiros: Kearns, *Heroes of Attica*, 197f.

⁴⁹ Athens NM Akr. 636, cf. Van Straten, *Hierà kalá*, 26, 205; Athens AkrM 581, *ibidem*, 77, 289

ned with an initiatory cult, as is also the case with Patmian Artemis. Just conceivably, we could add here the examples of Athena's cult. To say that in these cases the rituals reflect the characters of the goddesses does not seem very helpful, since it would imply that the negative sign of the pregnant victim reflects the nature of Athena Polias, who is not a particularly chthonic or negative goddess. We have here to do not so much with the overall character of the goddess as perhaps with one of her functions, namely that of sometime supervisor of youths on the way to adulthood. It has often been seen that during this transitional period divinities are less pleased with their adolescents, who have to pay for their transition into adulthood. A 'negative' sacrifice could arguably fit such a period.

Having surveyed the material, the time has come to draw some conclusions. In a polemic article Scott Scullion has recently attacked the modern ritualist school of Walter Burkert and Fritz Graf in that they consider ritual 'as "fact", the primary material, and the gods, as "fluid", secondary and variable'. Or, as Fritz Graf expressed this position regarding libations: 'nicht die Gottheit oder die Toten, denen die Spende gilt, bestimmen ihre Form, sondern die innere Logik des Rituals'. In straight opposition to this statement, Scullion asserts that 'the character of the recipient is a constitutive element of ritual'.⁵⁰ Now there is certainly truth in his observation that in the work of Burkert and Karl Meuli, Burkert's important source of inspiration,⁵¹ ritual has been given a place which it does not quite deserve. The stress on the fixity and unchangeability of ritual is typically a legacy of the end of the nineteenth century, when the term ritual started to assume its modern meaning.⁵² On the other hand, one must be equally careful with the notion of 'the character of a Greek god'. Polytheistic gods are rather fluid and do both tend to assume elements of each other's character and to preserve locally in their cult elements of earlier stages of Greek religion, which may not have been adopted or survived elsewhere.

Even if problems remain, then, I would agree with Scullion that the gods can not be

(note that the description on p. 77 wrongly states that Athena stands and wears a helmet).

⁵⁰ Scullion, 'Olympian and Chthonian', 76-7; F. Graf, 'Milch, Honig und Wein', in *Perennitas: Studi in onore di Angelo Brelich* (Rome, 1980) 209-21 at 220 (quote).

⁵¹ A. Henrichs, 'Gott, Mensch, Tier: Antike Daseinsstruktur und religiöses Verhalten im Denken Karl Meulis', in F. Graf (ed.), *Klassische Antike und neue Wege der Kulturwissenschaften. Symposium Karl Meuli* (Basel, 1992) 129-67.

⁵² Bremmer, 'Religion', 'Ritual' and the Opposition 'Sacred vs. Profane': Notes Towards a Terminological 'Genealogy', in F. Graf (ed.), *Ansichten griechischer Rituale. Festschrift für Walter*

neglected. On the other hand, Graf is certainly right to point to the importance of the 'logic of ritual'. It is clear that Greek sacrifice, just like other Greek rituals, was a system of symbolic signs. For example, sacrificial victims could be white or black, with or without wreaths, to be eaten on the spot or to be taken home, edible or not edible; the sacrifice itself could be on high or low altars, with or without wine, eaten or wholly burnt, with meat or cakes, with or without a paean, by night or day, and so on - not to mention intermediate forms such as partially wineless sacrifices. Sacrificial rituals always consist of varying combinations of these elements. One element from this system may have an intrinsically positive or negative meaning, but its specific meaning in a given ritual always depends on the other ritual elements as well as on the function of the relevant divinity.

Instead of choosing between the approach via the gods or the approach via ritual, it seems more fertile to combine the two views in our case, since it is impossible to find a meaningful common denominator of the recipient goddesses that is sufficiently specific not to be reduced to trivialities. We have seen that the nature of the ritual for the Eumenides and Ge undeniably established the sacrifice of pregnant victims as a 'negative' sacrifice. However, these goddesses are not comparable in nature. Ge is clearly less negative than the Eumenides and this is also reflected in her ritual, which contains fewer negative markers. A 'negative' meaning is also consistent with the ritual of Demeter, who is an 'eccentric' goddess because of the frequent exclusion of men from her rites, but whose ritual need not be very negative. It suffices here to recall the fun and joy of the rites for Demeter Chloë and the beauty of her victim in Mykonos. Finally, 'negative' sacrifices could also be offered to central and 'Olympian' goddesses, but only in certain circumstances. It may well be that the ritual in these cases hardly prescribed other negative markers - at least, we do not hear of them. In such cases, it is less the divinity than the special occasion which we have to take into consideration.

Greek ritual, then, is a symbolic system, which displays a spectrum running from totally negative to wholly positive and which cannot be isolated from the divinities in whose honour the rituals are performed. It would be fruitful as well to think of the distinction between so-called Olympian and chthonian not as a polar opposition but as the two

Burkert (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1998) 9-32.

idealtypische ends of a cultic spectrum that is as rich as Greek civilisation itself.⁵³

⁵³ I am most grateful to Sarah Johnston for her thoughtful correction of my English.