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# WOMEN AND SACRIFICE IN CLASSICAL GREECE

There is no doubt that a person's gender could make a difference to their role in Greek sacrifices. But did it normally make a difference in Greece? And why did it make a difference? Two inscriptions from the island of Thasos neatly illustrate the problem. First, one dated to around 440 and found in the sanctuary of Herakles:

[Ἡρα]κλεῖ Θασίωι
[αἶγ]α οὐ θέμις, οὐ-
[δὲ] χοῖρον· οὐδὲ γ-
[υ]ναικὶ θέμις· οὐ-
[δ]ὲ ἐνατεύεται· οὐ-
δὲ γέρα τέμνεται-
ι· οὐδ' ἀθλεῖται.[1]

(To Thasian Herakles. Goat is prohibited, so is pig. Women are prohibited. No ninth is given. No perquisite portions are cut. No contests.)

Second, one dating to thirty or forty years earlier, and found in the sanctuary of Demeter Thesmophoros:

Ἀθηναίηι Πατρ-
οιηι : ἔρδεται τῶ-
τερων ἔτως τέλ-
η : καὶ γυνακες : λα-
[γ]χάνωσιν.[2]

(To Athena Patroia sacrificial rites are performed every other year and women obtain a cut).

The problem is straightforward: in one of these sacred laws women are prohibited from taking part in the sacrificial cult. In the other women are expressly included in the sacrificial cult as partakers in the sacrificial victim. Are we to take prohibition as normal and the practice at the Thesmophorion as abnormal? Or are we to take inclusion of women as normal and their exclusion from the cult of Herakles as peculiar?

Both these approaches have been taken explicitly by scholars. Farnell writes: 'The general exclusion of women is to be noted in the worship of Herakles; a sufficient proof of it is the proverb preserved by the Paroemiographi, "a women does not frequent the shrine of Herakles".' This was explained in reference to his painful reminiscence of Omphale; but the cause lay deeper than in any fanciful myth; it lay

[1] *IG* 12 Suppl. 414, *LSS* 63. See also B. Bergquist, *Herakles on Thasos. The archaeological, literary and epigraphic evidence for his sanctuary, status and cult reconsidered* (Uppsala, 1973) especially Part II pp. 65–90. The most recent discussion, although not interested in the exclusion of women, is J. Des Courtiles and A. Pariente, 'Problèmes topographiques et réligieux à l'Hérakleion de Thasos', in R. Étienne and M. T. Le Dinahet (edd.) *L'Espace Sacrificiel dans les civilisations méditerranéennes de l'antiquité* (Paris, 1991) 67–73.

[2] First published by C. Rolley, *BCH* 89 (1965) 441–83 n. 6 at p. 447 with translation on pp. 462–3. For the commonly agreed translation and interpretation see J. Casabona, *Recherches sur le vocabulaire des sacrifices en Grec* (Aix-en-Provence, 1966) 349–50.

rather in the old religious feeling that the presence of women impairs the warrior's energy, and that it would therefore be detrimental in a hero's shrine which served to consecrate heroic valour; for this reason, as we have noted, they were excluded from the shrine of Agamemnon; and for this reason, as we may believe rather than for any myth, was Herakles called *Μισόγυνος*, 'woman-hater', in Phokis, and his priest was pledged to severe chastity during the tenure of his office.[3] Sokolowski, pursuing a similar line of trying to explain the exclusion of women from certain cults, suggested that they were excluded from those cults where the ritual dining involved men reclining on sofas.[4]

It is this view that is implicit in most works on Greek religion written before 1979. Scholars show no awareness that there is any problem at all about women and sacrifice, and strongly imply that they think women and men partook equally in sacrifice, even if they played different particular roles in the actual sacrificial ritual. The most egalitarian view of all is perhaps that expressed by Martha, who finds it necessary to employ *a priori* arguments in order to establish that the priestess of Athena Polias did not slaughter with her own hand all the victims consumed at the Panathenaia.[5] But this assumption that there is no problem to be explained is also to be found in such twentieth-century experts as Martin Nilsson and Walter Burkert. Nilsson writes 'Greek society was an extremely male society, especially in Athens and the Ionian cities. Women were confined to their houses and seldom went outdoors. But religion did not exclude them. There were priestesses in many cults, and women regularly took part in the festivals and sacrifices. Some festivals were reserved for them. Virgins carried the sacred implements and provisions at the sacrifices. These *kanephoroi*, as they were called, appeared in all processions. Women even had to be allowed to take part in certain nocturnal festivals'.[6] Burkert, in his description of sacrifice in *Greek Religion* states that 'The sacrifice is a festive occasion for the community' and only specifies the gender of the participants in the case of the kanephoros (a blameless maiden at the front of the procession carries on her head the sacrificial basket), the sacrificer[7] (he cuts some hairs from its forehead) and the sacrificial cry ('As the fatal blow falls, the women must cry out in high, shrill tones'). Elsewhere in his description he talks of 'Everyone hopes as a rule that the animal will go to sacrifice complaisantly, or rather voluntarily'; 'Once the procession has arrived at the sacred spot, a circle is marked out which includes the site of sacrifice, the animal, and the participants'; 'All stand round the altar. As a first communal action water is poured from the jug over the hands of each participant in turn'; 'The participants each take a handful of barley groats'; 'To taste the entrails immediately is the privilege and duty of the innermost circle of participants'. Many crucial actions are related in the passive, as if the identity of the agent were of no importance: 'The

[3] L. R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cult and the Idea of Immortality* (Oxford, 1921) 162–3. The exclusion of women from sacrifices to Agamemnon relates to Taras: [Aristotle] *De Mir. Ausc.* 106 840a8–10 'At Taras... they hold a separate sacrifice for the Agamemnonidai on their own on another day at which it is not lawful for women even to taste what is sacrificed to them'.

[4] F. Sokolowski, 'Herakles Thasios', *HTR* 49 (1956) 153–8 at 157.

[5] J. Martha, *Les sacerdoces athéniens* (Paris, 1882) 81.

[6] M. Nilsson, *Greek Popular Religion* (New York, 1940) 96.

[7] Sacrificer may be used in several senses, in the sense of 'slaughterer', in the sense of the person officiating, and in the sense of 'one who causes an animal to be sacrificed', but it is the slaughterer who is in question here. Detienne distinguishes between the sacrifier (French 'sacrifiant'), who offers, and the sacrificer (French 'sacrificateur'), who carries out the sacrifice, including the cutting up of the meat, M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant ed. *The cuisine of sacrifice* (trans. P. Wissing, Chicago 1989; French edition Paris, 1979) 11.

animal too is sprinkled with water'; 'A bull is given water to drink'; 'The sacrificial knife in the basket is now uncovered'; 'Smaller animals are raised above the altar and the throat is cut. An ox is felled by a blow with an axe and then the artery in the neck is opened. The blood is collected in a basin and sprayed over the altar and against the sides'; 'The animal is skinned and butchered; the inner organs, especially the heart and the liver (*splanchna*), are roasted on the fire on the altar'.[8] Burkert here takes it for granted that men and women play distinct roles in the sacrificial ritual: only women are kanephoroi, only women raise the *ololuge*, only men are sacrificers cutting the hair and, we may add, wielding the axe. But he equally takes it for granted that all alike share in other ritual actions and partake of the meat in the sacrificial feast. When he discusses 'The creation of solidarity in the playing and interplay of roles' he explicitly notes that the exclusion of women from participation in sacrifice is exceptional and that all participants are involved in the sacrifice in one way or another.[9]

It should be clear that this taking for granted will not do: even if the view is basically right we still need to ask why, when gender did play so large a part in determining roles in politics, war, and so on, gender normally played so little role in this area. But in any case the old consensus has been challenged by Detienne who has championed the view that women were normally excluded, not just from the central sacrificial act of slaughtering the animal, but also from sharing in the meat. Detienne considers that what needs explaining are the cases in which women are explicitly included. He writes: 'Just as women are without the political rights reserved for male citizens, they are kept apart from the altars, meat, and blood... When women have access to meat, the rules of the cult are careful to specify the precise terms and conditions. For these things are not self-evident.' When he goes on to discuss the Thasos law he seeks to minimise its scope: 'this clause seems only to refer to wives (*gunaikes*) and, undoubtedly, first of all the wives of the citizens who are members of those "countries" that take the place of tribes and phratries.'[10]

It is important to stress how radically Detienne's view of Greek religion differs from that presupposed by Farnell and Sokolowski (and indeed most others). For while Farnell and Sokolowski think that total exclusion of women from cult activity is a peculiar feature of just a few cults, Detienne supposes that women were regularly excluded from taking part in sacrificial ritual or partaking in sacrificial meat. And Detienne's view is the more radical because he also believes that the only meat available for human consumption was meat from sacrifice:[11] if women

[8] W. Burkert, *Greek religion Archaic and classical* (Eng. trans. Oxford, 1985) 56–7.

[9] W. Burkert, *Greek religion Archaic and classical* (Eng. trans. Oxford, 1985) 254.

[10] M. Detienne, 'The violence of wellborn ladies: women in the Thesmophoria', in M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant (edd.), *The cuisine of sacrifice* (trans. P. Wissing, Chicago, 1989; French edition Paris, 1979) 129–47 at 131. Detienne's article collects and discusses almost all the material which I discuss here, and is far and away the most thorough and most interesting treatment of the subject to have appeared in print.

[11] M. Detienne, 'Culinary practices and the spirit of sacrifice', in M. Detienne and J. -P. Vernant (edd.), *The cuisine of sacrifice* (trans. P. Wissing, Chicago, 1989; French edition Paris, 1979) 3, who talks of 'the absolute coincidence of meat-eating and sacrificial practice. All consumable meat comes from ritually slaughtered animals'. Although this view is widely shared it crucially blurs the distinction between two different sorts of ritual killing and neglects the evidence for the availability of meat not slaughtered in any ritual way. G. Berthiaume, *Les rôles du mageiros* Mnemosyne Supplement 70 (Leiden, 1982) 62–70 has shown that, although butcher's meat and sacrificial meat do not form two separate categories, and sacrificial meat was sold in butchers' shops, it was possible to kill animals other than at an altar, even if the slaughter was still ritualised and compasssed about with certain offerings to the gods. He acknowledges

did not share in sacrificial meat then they were effectively compelled to be vegetarians.[12]

It is Detienne's view that is coming to be orthodox. Thus Louise Bruit Zaidman begins the second paragraph of 'Pandora's daughters and rituals in Grecian cities' in the first volume of *A History of Women* with the statement 'Women were excluded from blood sacrifice and the subsequent division of the meat of the sacrificial animal. But blood sacrifice was central to Greek religion; because it made visible the accord between gods and men and renewed the bonds of human community, it was the foundation on which political life was based. The fact that women participated in this ritual only through their husbands was perfectly compatible with their exclusion from active civic and political life.'[13]

that in the anecdote told in [Aristotle] *Oikonomika* 1349b12–13 σφάττειν is used without any religious overtones. Berthiaume also acknowledges (pp. 79–93) that there was meat which came from animals which could be sacrificed but which had not been killed in any ritual way although he suggests that (p. 89) 'il faut dire que cette consommation de bêtes "non sacrificables", ainsi que celle d'animaux "non sacrificiés" dont nous parlent Athenée [179b–d] et Sémonide [7.56], pour réelles qu'elles furent, n'en restèrent pas moins essentiellement marginales, et que la manducation de la viande provenant du réseau normal du sacrifice et de l'abattage rituel dans les boutiques des bouchers resta privilégié.' That it was less respectable does not, of course, mean that it was at all times and in all circumstances rare. In addition to the evidence discussed by Berthiaume, I draw attention to the questions arising when sacred laws call for purchase of several animals but only order one to be sacrificed: as with *SIG*[3] 1024.9–10 (quoted below in n. 20) with Dittenberger's note.

Detienne's view that the killing by butchers in their shops was also 'sacrifice', in the full sense, combines with his view that women were excluded from sacrificial meat to require us to believe that women did not eat meat bought in butchers' shops.

This question also affects the interpretation of visual evidence. A black-figure vase in Boston shows a crowned figure cutting up a joint of meat. This has traditionally been taken as a scene of butchery (cf. J. Boardman, *Athenian Black Figure Vases. A handbook*. (London, 1974) fig. 287), and Sparkes used the scene to illustrate the chopping block (ἐπιξηνον) and the butcher's knife (κοπίς), remarking of the presence of a tree that this perhaps indicates an 'open-air barbecue' (B. A. Sparkes, 'Illustrating Aristophanes', *JHS* 95 (1975) 122–35 at 132 and pl.16b). Durand, however, takes the 'chopping block' to be an altar and the scene to be that of cutting up sacrificial meat (so first 'Figurativo e processo rituale', *DdA* n.s. 1 (1979) 16–31 at 17–19 with plate on p. 118, a later version of which appears as 'Ritual as instrumentality' in M. Detienne and J. P. Vernant (edd.), *The cuisine of sacrifice* (trans. P. Wissing, Chicago, 1989; French edition Paris, 1979) 119–28 at 122–3, and see further now J. L. Durand, 'Images pour un autel' in R. Etienne and M. T. Le Dinahet (edd.), *L'Espace Sacrificiel dans les civilisations méditerranéennes de l'antiquité* (Paris, 1991) 45–55). I find it impossible to see any distinguishing features of an altar about the block on which the meat is being cut, which is unlike any other altar on a vase. On other vases the cutting up of joints after sacrifice seems to be shown being done on the *trapeza*, not on the altar. Durand claims that in this image the meat is not being jointed but merely having the thigh-bone removed to be burnt to the gods, but that seems to me to be far from clear. The table behind the block in this image is itself unlike the *trapeza* shown on other vases. I therefore suspect that this is indeed a butchery scene and that the crown indicates the minimal ritual which attended butchery.

[12] One might compare the early Roman prohibition on women grinding or preparing meat, J. Scheid, 'The religious roles of Roman women', in P. Schmitt-Pantel (ed.), *A History of Women. Volume I. From ancient goddesses to Christian saints* (Harvard, 1992) 379. Scheid takes the view that Roman women 'were forbidden to participate in sacrificial rituals' (J. Scheid, 'The religious roles of Roman women', in P. Schmitt-Pantel (ed.), *A history of women. Volume I. From ancient goddesses to Christian saints* (Harvard, 1992) 377–408 at 379), but Valérie Huet has persuaded me that the Roman evidence is actually no more convincing than the Greek for a blanket exclusion.

[13] L. Bruit Zaidman, 'Pandora's daughters and rituals in Grecian cities' in P. Schmitt-Pantel (ed.), *A History of Women. Volume I. From ancient goddesses to Christian saints* (Harvard, 1992) 338–76 at 338–9. Bruit Zaidman begins the third paragraph 'This picture is much too simple,'

In expressing herself in this way, Bruit Zaidman picks up one of the lines, and the most prominent line, laid by Detienne: that there is an homology between women's place in religion and their place in the political order.[14] On this line of argument it is to be expected that if the role of women in sacrifice varies from place to place or cult to cult there will be associated differences in the political order in that place or the political unit behind the particular cult, so that the cult inclusions and exclusions and the political inclusions and exclusions remain compatible.

Another line of argument emerges most clearly at the end of Detienne's paper: that there is also an homology between woman and the sacrificial beast. Detienne draws attention to the way in which Aristotle in the *Historia Animalium* (581a31–b2) compares the menstrual blood of the newly adolescent girl to 'that of an animal that has just been stabbed (*neosphakton*)'.[15] The reason why women do not shed blood, it seems to be suggested, is that they themselves bleed. In myth they shed blood only in response to male transgressions of gender divisions, on occasions when men, by joining the rites of the Thesmophoria or even by simply refusing 'the male privilege to shed blood', have somehow ceased to be proper men:[16] hence the murder of Orpheus, the 'pure man who shuns blood sacrifices and everything that evokes death and bloodshed'. If we put Detienne's observations about women bleeding with Helen King's collection of medical and mythical material on the same subject, with Nicole Loraux's suggestion, in *Tragic ways of killing a woman*, that women in tragedy kill themselves by methods that do not involve bloodshed, and with the fact that the vast majority of those mythical victims offered in sacrifice (using the term technically) to save a community are not just women but virgin daughters who have not yet begun to bleed in their own right,[17] we have a case for thinking that the shedding of blood was central to Greek conceptions of what it was to be a woman. According to this line of argument, therefore, we would expect women to be systematically excluded from

but then immediately goes on: 'It is correct to say that women were generally excluded from blood sacrifice and the handling of meat'; she then again says at the beginning of the fourth paragraph 'Furthermore, while women were generally excluded from blood sacrifice...' The reader is thus told not once but three times in the space of less than one side that women were excluded from blood sacrifice, though never told exactly what that means. Compare also N. Loraux, *Annales ESC* 36 (1981) 614–22 at 617: 'les femmes n'ont généralement accès à la viande qu'indirectement par le mari.'

[14] M. Detienne, 'The violence of wellborn ladies: women in the Thesmophoria', in M. Detienne and J. P. Vernant (edd.), *The cuisine of sacrifice* (trans. P. Wissing, Chicago, 1989; French edition Paris, 1979) p. 131: 'As a general rule, by virtue of the homology between political power and sacrificial practice, the place reserved for women perfectly corresponds to the one they occupy – or rather, do not occupy – in the space of the city', and 132 'At a sacrifice, particularly a blood sacrifice, women cannot function as full adults. It is precluded by the reciprocity established in the city between a meat-eating diet and political practice.'

[15] M. Detienne, 'The violence of wellborn ladies: women in the Thesmophoria', in M. Detienne and J. P. Vernant (edd.), *The cuisine of sacrifice* (trans. P. Wissing, Chicago, 1989; French edition Paris, 1979) 147. For other comparisons between menstrual and lochial flows and blood shed at sacrifice see H. King, 'Bound to bleed: Artemis and Greek women' in A. Cameron, A. Kuhrt (edd.), *Images of women in antiquity* (London, 1983) 121–2, and compare also R. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore, 1977) 33–8.

[16] M. Detienne, 'The violence of wellborn ladies: women in the Thesmophoria', in M. Detienne and J. P. Vernant (edd.), *The cuisine of sacrifice* (trans. P. Wissing, Chicago, 1989; French edition Paris, 1979) 143.

[17] As well as Iphigeneia, consider Makaria, daughter of Herakles, or the daughter of Embaros. See E. Kearns, *The heroes of Attica* BICS Supplement 57 (1989) 56–63 and E. Kearns, 'Saving the city' in O. Murray and S. R. F. Price (edd.), *The Greek city from Homer to Alexander* (Oxford, 1990) 323–44 esp. 337–8 with n. 24.

the bloody bits of sacrifice (that is everything after the *ololuge*), at least from menarche to menopause. It is difficult to see what might count as an exception to a rule based on so fundamental a feature of female physiology.

There is no necessary conflict between Detienne's two lines of argument. Although he does not spell this out, it is quite possible to link the fact that women need to shed (their own) blood with women's political status (and various indirect links as well as direct ones might be argued for). If we do so, however, we opt for a basically physiological explanation for women's political standing and for their exclusion from sacrificial ritual. For, if bleeding, not having political rights, and not shedding blood are causally linked, then, whether we take sacrificial exclusion to be a product of having no political rights, or having no political rights to be a product of sacrificial exclusion, the bleeding at least must be the cause and not the product of either sacrificial or political deprivation.

There is something very elegant about the neatness of privileging female physiology, but to do so raises rather than answers questions. The crucial historical question becomes not 'Why should women be treated differently from men in terms of politics and sacrifice?' but, 'Why should such significance be given to menstruation?' To put it another way, we need to ask what grounds there are for putting the emphasis solely on the loss of vital blood in sacrifice, rather than also emphasising the recuperation of vitality through the consumption of meat?[18] But, before speculating on that score, it is as well to ask how well either the physiological or the political explanations, or the explanations of Sokolowski and Farnell based on cult practice, of women's exclusion from sacrifice stand up to the evidence.[19]

In the corpus of sacred laws, cases of specific exclusion of women are much more numerous than specific inclusions. Thus three sacred laws from Lindos, two of the fourth century B.C. and one of the second century B.C. exclude women from sacrifices to Athena Apotropaia, Zeus Apotropaios and Zeus Amalos.[20] In the Mykonos sacred calendar women are expressly excluded from the sacrifice to Poseidon Phukios, though they are not specifically excluded from the sacrifice to Poseidon Temenites on the same day which is listed immediately before, and are not specifically excluded from any other sacrifices listed later.[21] At Elataia in the fifth century women were not allowed to sacrifice at the Anakeion, and on Paros women, and those uninitiated, were excluded from the cult of (Zeus) Hypatos.[22] Exclusions of women from the cult of Herakles are known from inscriptions from other places as well as Thasos,[23] but

[18] Pertinent remarks on the one-sidedness of many traditional discussions of sacrifice can be found in M. Bloch, *Prey into hunter. The politics of religious experience* (Cambridge, 1992) Chapter 2.

[19] In what follows I will concentrate on epigraphic evidence, although I believe that the literary evidence of e.g. Euripides *Bacchae* 224 or Pausanias 2.35.5–8 on the cult of Demeter Chthonia at Hermione is not irrelevant.

[20] *LSS* 88: a) [*Ἀθάνα*]ι *Ἀποτροπαία*[ι] | ǫ̣ῖς· *θυέτω ἀρχιερο*|*θύτας· τὰ θυθέντα* | *αὐτεῖ καταχρῆσθαι·* | *γυναιξὶ οὐχ ὅσια.* b) *Σμινθίου τρίται ἐπὶ δέκα·* | *Ζηνὶ Ἀποτροπαίωι κριός,* | *Ἀθάναι Ἀποτροπαίαι οἷς·* | *θύει ἀρχιεροθύτας· τα θυ*|*θέντα αὐτεῖ καταχρεῖσθα*(ι)· | *γυναιξὶν οὐκ ὅσια. LSS* 89: *Ὑακιν*[*θίο*]*υ ἐνδε-* |*κάται Διὶ Ἀμαλῶ*[ι] | *κάπρος ἑξάμην*[ος], | *θύει ἰαροθύτας* | *Αἰγήλιος· γυναιξὶ* | *ὀκ ὅσια.* Sokolowski restores such prohibitions in *LSA* 42.A.3 and *LSS* 66 and suggests that they are also involved in *LSS* 68.

[21] *SIG*$^3$ 1024.8–10 (*LSCG* 96): *τῆι αὐτῆι ἡμεραι Ποσει*|*δῶνι Φυκίωι ἀμνὸς λευκὸς ἐνόρχης· γυναικὶ οὐ θέμις· καὶ* | *ἀπὸ τέλους τῶν ἰχθ*[*υ*]*ων βουλὴ πριαμένη ἱερεῖα εἴκο*|*σι διδότω.*

[22] *SIG*$^3$ 979: *ἐν τôι* ϝα|*νακείοι* | *θύοντα* | *σκανêν·* | *γυναῖκα* | *μὲ παρίμε*[*ν*] (Elateia); *IG* 12.5.183: [*ὅ*]*ρος Ὑπάτο· ἀ*[*τε*|*λ*]*έστοι οὐ θέμ*[*ι*]*ς οὐδὲ γυναικί* (Paros, quoted by Dittenberger in commentary on *SIG*$^3$ 979).

[23] *LSA* 42 (fragmentary). Sokolowski restores such a prohibition also in *LSS* 66 and suggests in his commentary that such a prohibition also belonged in *LSS* 68.

there are also regulations for cults of Herakles which make no mention of women.[24] Women are excluded from Egyptian cults on Delos in the Hellenistic period (along with men wearing wool).[25]

It is important to note that women are treated differently from men in a number of ways even in the case of cults from which they are not expressly excluded. In certain cases what they wear is regulated and ornate garments are prohibited, as in the cult of Demeter Thesmophoros in fifth-century Arkadia[26] or that of Demeter in third-century Patras (where they are also prohibited from wearing make-up or playing the aulos).[27] At Lykosoura in the third century entry to the temple of Despoina was forbidden to those wearing jewelry, black, or shoes or having their hair bound, and if anyone did enter the sanctuary wearing anything forbidden the forbidden object was to be dedicated to Despoina.[28] In other places it was the objects that might be dedicated which were closely regulated by prohibitions which seem similarly aimed at finery: at Sparta a sixth-century regulation, thought to relate to a cult of Demeter, appears to limit the types of woven product that they may dedicate to those approved by the 'polianomos'.[29] In all these cases the regulations are cult specific and they seem to be a feature of Demeter or Demeter-related cults.

Such regulations are, I think, to be distinguished from regulations relating to the uncleanness resulting from various bodily functions or dysfunctions. In fourth-century Cyrene, in late second-century Delos, and in third-century A.D. Lindos, a man's sexual contact with a woman, or contact with a woman giving birth, carried impurity; a sacrifice had to be made for newly-wed women at Cyrene.[30] Concern for impurity resulting from contact with other people seems in the Delian case entirely centred on women, with menstruation and miscarriage as the other polluting factors mentioned (along with eating fish and pork), but this is not always the case, for contact with dead relatives of either sex is considered a problem at Lindos and Cyrene.[31] Such regulation may be linked to prohibitions of finery, as at Lykosoura where pregnant and suckling women may not be initiated, but it is notable that most of these regulations are not cult specific – the Cyrene regulation begins:

> [*'A*]*πόλλων ἔχρη*[*σε·*
> *ἐς ἀ*]*εὶ καθαρμοῖς κα*[*ὶ ἁγνήιαις κα*[*ὶ θε*
> *ραπ*]*ήιαις χρειμένος τὰν Λεβύαν οἰκ*[*έν*].

(Apollo pronounced. You should practice the following purificatory practices and solemnities and cult activities and so inhabit Libya for ever)

Here then we have a strong case for sex-specific regulations that are independent of cult or precise political circumstances and where the physiological argument may

[24] *LSA* 83 prohibits burial but makes no mention of women.

[25] *LSS* 56, *ID* 2180.

[26] *LSS* 32.1–2: [*Εἰκαν γυ*]*νὰ ϝέσετοι ζτεραῖον λῶπος*, | [*ἰερὸ*]*ν ἔναι ταῖ Δάματρι ταῖ Θεσμοφόροι·*

[27] *LSS* 33.1–8: [*Δα*]| *ματρίοις τὰς γ*[*υ*]*ν*[*αῖ*]*κες μήτε χρυσίον ἔ*|*χεν πλέον ὀδελου ὀλ*|*κάν, μηδὲ λωπίον ποικί*|*λον, μήτε πορφυρέαν,* | *μήτε ψημυθιοῦσθαι,* | *μήτε αὐλῆν.*

[28] *LSCG* 68 (*IG* V.2.514). The Peloponnesian dominance of this evidence is remarkable. A later example occurs in the Mysteries regulations from Andania (*LSCG* 65) which imposes a cash limit on the price of clothing and prohibits jewelry.

[29] *LSS* 28.1–3: ]*ά*ṇ*το μεδὲ ϝεμô* | [*ἐνυφ*]*α*ṣ*άσθο, τ*ị *μὲ π*ṛ*ο*[*λι*|*ανόμ*]*ο*ṣ *ἔθεκε·*

[30] *LSS* 115 (*SEG* 9.72) for Cyrene; *LSS* 91 for Lindos. Cf. *LSS* 119 (Ptolemais in Egypt) and the examples quoted by Sokolowski in his commentary on *LSCG* 99.

[31] For sacred laws mentioning death as polluting see R. C. T. Parker, *Miasma. Pollution and purification in early Greek religion* (Oxford, 1983) ch. 2 and esp. p. 37 n. 17.

have some weight.[32] But such sex-specific rules only make it clearer that exclusions from sacrifice are a different type of regulation altogether.

When we turn to specific inclusion of women, there are certainly cases which make it look as if the political emphasis in Detienne's treatment of the inclusion of women in the Thasos sacrifice to Athena Patroie might have some support. Such is the case of the cult of Artemis Pergaia at Halikarnassos.[33] Here the regulations concerning the priestess of the cult also lay down that the priestess and the wives of the prytaneis in the month Herakleion are to have equal shares of the victim. The invocation of the wives of the prytaneis here makes a clear political link. Detienne compares the situation to that at Athens with the wife of the arkhon basileus and fourteen Gerarai playing a prominent role in activities, including sacrifice, at the sanctuary of Dionysos in the Marshes at the Anthesteria. In that case however we know nothing about the distribution of sacrificial meat.

In other cases it is much harder to see what role politics has. Most important here is the sacred calendar from the deme of Erkhia, modern Spata in the Mesogeia, first published in 1963, which is really five parallel calendars listed in separate columns headed by the first five letters of the alphabet. This specifies, in the first column, that the goat sacrificed to Semele on the 16th of Elaphebolion should be handed over to the women and not taken away, the priestess taking the skin, and, in the fourth column, that the goat sacrificed to Dionysos on the 16th of Elaphebolion should be handed over to the women and not taken away, the priestess taking the skin. The only parallel specification that an animal be handed over to a particular group in this document is the handing over to the Pythaistai of the goat sacrificed to Apollo Pythios in Thargelion in the second column, of the goat sacrificed to Apollo Apotropaios in Gamelion in the third column, and of the sheep sacrificed to Apollo Lykeios also in Gamelion (but on a different day) in the fifth column, but notably the prohibition on taking the victim away does not apply to the Pythaistai.[34] Thus who actually eats the meat is not determined in the case of the Pythaistai, but the sacrifices to Dionysos and Semele must be consumed by the women. In other cases no specific instructions about the handing over of the sacrificial victim are made. The calendar

[32] Cf. R. C. T. Parker, *Miasma. Pollution and purification in early Greek religion* (Oxford, 1983) p. 37 n. 18 'Documents like the Cyrene law regulate what conditions pollute and for how long; there is no question of being pure enough to visit one shrine but not another'. He also remarks (p. 37): 'it is most implausible that rules of this kind should have been confined to one cult: all our evidence suggests that all the Olympian gods were equally concerned to keep the natural pollutions at a distance.'

[33] *SIG*[3] 1015 (*LSA* 73): Lines 4–25 read: [ὁ] *πριάμε*|[*νο*]*ς* [*τὴ*]*ν ἱερητείαν τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος τῆς Περγαίας πα*|[*ρέ*]*ξεται ἱέρειαν ἀστὴν ἐξ ἀστῶν ἀμφοτέρων ἐπὶ* | [*τρε*]*ῖς γενεὰς γεγενημένην κ*[*αὶ*] *πρὸς πατρὸς καὶ πρὸς* | [*μη*]*τρός· ἡδὲ πριαμένη ἱεράσεται ἐπὶ ζωῆς τῆς αὑτῆς* | *καὶ θύσει τὰ ἱερὰ τὰ δημό*[*σ*]*ια καὶ τὰ ἰδιωτικά, καὶ λήψε*|*ται τῶν θυομένων δημοσίαι ἀφ' ἑκάστου ἱερείου κω*|*λῆν καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ κωλῆι νεμόμενα καὶ τεταρτημορι*|*δα σπλάγχνων καὶ τὰ δέρματα, τῶν δὲ ἰδιωτι*|*κῶν λήψεται κωλῆν καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ κωλῆ νεμόμενα* | *καὶ τεταρτημορίδα σπλάγχνων. τοὺς δὲ ταμ*|*ίας διδόναι τοῖς πρυτάνεσιν εἰς τὴν θυσίαν* | *τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος ἐντελε*(*ῖ*)*ς δραχμὰς τριάκον*|*τα. παρασκευάζειν δὲ τὴν θυσίαν τὰς γυναῖκας* | *τὰς τῶν πρυτάνεων, λαβούσας τὸ ἐκ τῆς πό*[*λ*]*εως* | *διδόμενον, τῶν πρυτανευόντων τὸμ μῆνα τὸν* | *Ἡράκλειον. τὴν δὲ θυσίαν συντελείτω μηνὸς Ἡρα*|*κλείου δωδεκάτηι. ἔστω δὲ ἡ ἱέρεια ἰσόμοιρος ἐ*[*ν*] | *ταῖς γυναιξὶν τῶν πρυτάνεων τῶν θυομένων* | *δημοσίαι. ποιείσθω δὲ ἡ ἱέρεια καθ' ἑκάστην νου*|*μηνίαν ἐπικουρίαν ὑπὲρ πόλεως, λαμβάνουσα* | *δρακμὴν παρὰ τῆς πόλεως*. Note also *Souda* s.v. *Ἡ Περγαια Ἀρτεμις*.

[34] *SEG* 21.541.144–51: [*Ἐ*]*λαφηβολιῶνο*|*ς ἕκτηι ἐπὶ δέ*|*κα, Σεμέληι, ἐπ*|*ὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ βω*|*μοῦ* (i.e. *ἐν ἄστει ἐν Ἄγρας*), *αἶξ, γυναι*|*ξὶ παραδόσιμ*|*ος, ἱερέας τὸ δ*|*έρμα, οὐ φορά, Δ* and 433–40: *Ἐλαφηβολιῶν*|*ος ἕκτηι ἐπὶ* |*δέκα, Διονύσ*|*ωι, Ἐρχιᾶ, αἶξ*. | *παραδό* : *γυνα*|{*α*}*ιξί, οὐ φορά, ἱερέαι τὸ δέ*|*ρμα, ΔΗΗ*, for women; 245–51, 331–7, 531–8 for the Pythaistai.

includes sacrifices to Apollo Lykeios and Apollo Apotropaios which are not handed over to the Pythaistai, but there are no other sacrifices to Dionysos or Semele. The provision that the victim be not taken away is applied frequently, and not only to the victim handed over to the women. It is as if the women are like a particular cult group, but have even more exclusive claim to the cult of Dionysos and Semele than the Pythaistai have to cults of Apollo other than Apollo Pythios.

A second equally pertinent piece of Athenian evidence is a decree of some orgeones found in the Athenian Agora and first published in 1942; it dates to the third century.[35] The orgeones are identified as *πρὸς τοῖς Καλλιφάνους* and of the hero Ekhelos. After laying down some financial regulations the decree specifies the duties of the hestiator to carry out the sacrifice on the seventeenth and eighteenth of Hekatombaion, sacrificing a pig to the heroines and a full-grown victim and a table to the hero on the first day and a perfect victim to the hero on the second day. He is to distribute the meat to the orgeones present with half shares for their sons, full shares for free womenfolk and half shares for daughters and for a single slave. The wife's share is to be given to the husband (it is not clear whether the wife is thought to be present at or absent from the sacrifice).

When Detienne discusses these two piece of Athenian evidence he pleads that the handing over of the victim to the women at Erkhia 'can be justified ... by Dionysianism alone, by the pre-eminence of its feminine values that serve, here as elsewhere, a subversive intent', and makes much of the fact that the portion meant for the wives is entrusted to the man: 'a woman's equality with respect to meat is subject to two conditions that determine the limits of the hidden citizenship of free women who are lawfully wedded wives. They come third in the hierarchy, after the men, fathers and sons; and their husbands play the role of mediator between them and the shared pieces of the victim. Just as women require a representative in court for any legal proceeding ... they are admitted into the larger circle of commensals only by the intermediary of someone having the right to obtain for them this favored treatment.'[36] He concludes discussion of these examples and of two literary testimonia from Pausanias[37] with the statement: 'These are all just so many exceptions that prove the male monopoly in matters of blood sacrifice and everything connected with meat-eating.'

Detienne talks of participation within the sacrificial sphere occurring on (at least) three levels – killing the victim, eating the roasted viscera, and sharing in the meat. Not only does singling out these roles obscure other senses of 'sacrifice' (pay for the victim, praying over the victim) where women's participation is well attested,[38] but to talk of these as 'levels' of participation is to imply that there is some gradation, some ideal progress from 'merely' sharing the meat through eating the viscera to actually killing the victim. That indeed is how Detienne organises his discussion, beginning

[35] *LSS* 20 17–23 (*Hesperia* 11 (1942) 282–7 n. 55): [ν|έμειν] δὲ τὰ κρέα τοῖς ⟨οις⟩ ὀργεῶσι τοῖς παροῦσι καὶ τοῖ[ς] | [παισὶ τὴν] εἰς ἡμίσεαν καὶ ταῖς γυναιξὶ ταῖς τῶν ὀργέω[ν|ων ...]ους ταῖς ἐλευθέραις τὴν ἰσαίαν καὶ ταῖς θυγ[α|τράσι τὴν εἰς ἡμί]σεαν καὶ ἀκολούθωι μιᾶι τὴν εἰς ἡμ[ί|σεαν· παραδοῦναι δὲ τ]ωῖ ἀνδρὶ τῆς γυναικὸς τὴν με|[ρίδα]. This inscription was subject to full discussion by W. S. Ferguson, 'The Attic orgeones', *HTR* 37 (1944) 61–140, and A. D. Nock, 'The cult of heroes', *HTR* 37 (1944) 141–74 reprinted in A. D. Nock, *Essays on religion and the ancient world*, Z. Stewart (ed.) (Oxford, 1972) 575–602.

[36] M. Detienne, 'The violence of wellborn ladies: women in the Thesmophoria', in M. Detienne and J. P. Vernant (edd.), *The cuisine of sacrifice* (trans. P. Wissing, Chicago, 1989; French edition Paris, 1979) 133 and 132.

[37] Pausanias 5.16.2–4, 8.48.4–5.

[38] See Herond. 4.13 for a woman paying; [Demosthenes] 59.116 for a case where only the priestess is allowed to pray.

with the cases in which women share the meat, proceeding to women in sacerdotal functions and ending with women slaughterers. The case for women being excluded from the role of slaughterer is a strong one, and by setting that up as the central activity Detienne is able to imply that women's exclusion from this activity strengthens the case for their normal exclusion from the other 'levels'. Detienne's talk of levels is no doubt appealing from a Christianising perspective, particularly an Orthodox Christian one, where all can partake of the blessed bread (*antidoron*), only baptised Orthodox can partake of the body and blood of Christ, and only the (male) priest can make the sacrifice, but it is surely entirely inappropriate in the Greek setting.

That the act of slaughtering is not separable or special is indicated by the way in which the verb θύω, which few would hesitate to translate as 'sacrifice', is used. This verb covers the whole ceremony, not simply the slaughter but including the slaughter.[39] The slaughtering implicit in θύω comes out nicely from the words which Euripides puts in the mouth of Orestes (*Orestes* 562):

τοῦτον κατέκτειν', ἐπὶ δ' ἔθυσα μητέρα

This is part of a long passage where, as Casabona points out, θύω, κτείνω and φονεύω are alternatively employed depending on the viewpoint of the speaker.[40] To sacrifice is 'to put to death ... for a higher cause';[41] but who wields the knife is not of material interest.

So, for all that Porphyry's famous aetiological myth for the Bouphonia implies a certain anxiety about the act of killing a domestic animal, the role of slaughterer seems not to have been a special or a sacred one,[42] and the cutting up of the meat was the work of butchers not of sacred officials.[43] That butchers were predominantly, even invariably, male is no doubt a fact of interest about the society as a whole, as well as reflecting the physical strength which that job required, but it should not be made into a fact of significance about religion, except in as far as the very unusualness of the female butcher made the image of such an individual a particularly horrific one to imagine (as in the stories of the women at the Thesmophoria at Cyrene castrating Battos and of women at the sanctuary of Demeter at Aigila attacking the Messenians with knives, discussed by Detienne) and hence a powerful one to think with, in religious as in other discourses.

Eating the viscera was, undoubtedly, a privilege, but it was one attendant upon having some official role in the ritual, and where there was a priestess, as there will have been in a very large number of cases, the priestess will have shared in the roast viscera.[44] The clearest indication that women might share even the most special parts

[39] J. Casabona, *Recherches sur le vocabulaire des sacrifices en Grec* (Aix-en-Provence, 1966) 77 and compare 86.

[40] J. Casabona, *Recherches sur le vocabulaire des sacrifices en Grec* (Aix-en-Provence, 1966) 78–9.

[41] J. Casabona, *Recherches sur le vocabulaire des sacrifices en Grec* (Aix-en-Provence, 1966) 79.

[42] Cf. *LSCG* 151. A.40–44 (Cos, fourth century) 'Let the heralds choose among themselves one to slaughter the ox'. Sokolowski restores the reward of a sausage to the slaughterer in *IG* i$^3$ 244, but this restoration is quite uncertain.

[43] G. Berthiaume, *Les rôles du mageiros* (Leiden, 1982).

[44] Priestesses certainly might be given part of the innards to take away, and that would seem to be incompatible with their exclusion from tasting the innards on the spot. Exactly what the priest(ess) got in the way of innards seems to have varied from cult to cult and may be specified when the conditions of a priesthood are laid down: see *SIG*$^3$ 1013.3, 8 (Chios, fourth century), 1015.11 (Halikarnassos, priestess, quoted above n. 32), 1016.3 (Iasos, fourth century). Cf.

of the sacrifice comes in a recently published inscription from Chios, dating to around 400 B.C., which specifies that the priestess of Eileithuia is to consume her perquisites on the spot 'along with the women who made the sacrifice'.[45]

Detienne writes that 'Powers such as Aglaurus, Artemis, Athena or Demeter require priestesses'.[46] This is hardly an exhaustive list – where has Hera gone? – and the wife of the arkhon basileus was effectively priestess of Dionysos. But it is not the length of the list which is important but the nature of the cults involved. Many of the cults are cults of polis deities (Athena at Athens, Sparta, Tegea, etc., Hera at Argos and Samos and so on) and so it is not merely that any cult involved in the political structure of a city may involve its priest(esse)s in quasi-magisterial duties, but that these priesthoods are in at the foundation of the city, part of the way in which the city identifies itself as a city. Capacity to hold a priesthood is not homologous with political capacity even in cases where the priesthood stands for the polis. The privilege of eating, and of being seen publicly to eat, the viscera ignores political limitations. Detienne constructs his account in such a way that the wife of the arkhon basileus at Athens and the wives of the prytaneis at Halikarnassos are made to seem typical, and so he can write that 'in the temple of Artemis the women of Pergea exercise authority in sacrificial matters only when the political rights held by the prytaneis husbands are temporarily delegated to them';[47] but the priestesses of Athena Polias or other poliad deities cannot be seen as mere 'delegates'. It can hardly be right to argue that priestesses drawn from a particular family stand in for (male members of) that family when newly created priesthoods are equally happy to choose a priestess at random from the whole body of women citizens (as with the priesthood of Athena Nike in fifth-century Athens[48]). There is a strong contrast here to the situation at Rome where 'Public sacerdotal responsibilities were always exercised by men' but there are occasions when sacrifices may be made by the wives of priests.[49]

If it is wrong to see slaughterer, priest, and partaker as on different levels, they clearly do not move in entirely independent worlds. Given the presence of priestesses in major 'political' cults (both their acceptance in old cults and their invention in new

explicit shares of meat for the priestess among other perquisites in *IG* ii² 1356. See now, B. Guen-Pollet, 'Espace sacrificiel et corps des bêtes immolées. Remarques sur le vocabulaire désignant la part du prêtre dans la Grèce antique de l'époque classique à l'époque impériale' in R. Étienne and M. T. Le Dinahet (edd.), *L'Espace Sacrificiel dans les civilisations méditerranéennes de l'antiquité* (Paris, 1991) 13–23.

[45] *SEG* 35 (1985) 923 A. [*Πρυτάνεων γν*]*ώμη· ἰ*[*ε*]*ρέ*[*αι Ἐλει*|*θίη*]*ς· ἐ*[*π*]*ὴν ἡ πόλις ποιῆ, γι*[*ν*]*εσθ*[[*αι*]] *παρὰ τὸ ἀγωγ*[*ὸ*] *ἀλφίτων ἡμυσ*|*υκτέως* [*σ*]*ι*[*τ*]*ō ἡμίεκτον· ἢν δὲ ἰδ*|*ιώτης ποι*[*ῇ*], *δίδοσθαι ἀπὸ τὸ ἰε*|*ρ*[*ὸ*], *ὥστε ἐς* [*τὸ*] *λ*[*ί*]*κνον ἐνθει*[*ν*]*αι* | [*μ*]*οῖραν καὶ γέρας καὶ γλῶσσαν* | [*καὶ τᾶδε ἀναλ*[*ί*]*σκεσθαι αὐτὸ μ*|[*ε*]*τα τῶν γυναικῶν τῶν π*[*ο*]*ι*[*η*]*σασ*|*ἐ*[*ων*] *τὰ ἱρά· εἶνᾳι* [*δὲ*] *ταὐτὰ τᾳ̂ὐτ*|*ᾳ, κᾳὶ ὅταν ἱρὸν καθαιρέωσιν κ*|*ᾳὶ σπ*[*ον*]*δ*[*ὴν*] *πρ*[*ιέωσιν*] I am grateful to Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood for drawing my attention to this inscription, and to George Forrest and Robert Parker for help in interpreting it. For the sense of *ἀναλίσκεσθαι* compare *LSS* 94.13–14 *κρὴ αὐτῆι ἀναλοῦται* (Kamiros, third century B.C.). There seems to be no parallel for a priest(ess) being required to consume her perquisites on the spot. That the sacrifices involved here are to Eileithuia might suggest that the physiological argument is not entirely without force.

[46] M. Detienne, 'The violence of wellborn ladies: women in the Thesmophoria', in M. Detienne and J. P. Vernant (edd.), *The cuisine of sacrifice* (trans. P. Wissing, Chicago, 1989; French edition Paris, 1979) 135.

[47] M. Detienne, 'The violence of wellborn ladies: women in the Thesmophoria', in M. Detienne and J. P. Vernant (edd.), *The cuisine of sacrifice* (trans. P. Wissing, Chicago, 1989; French edition Paris, 1979) 136.

[48] *ML* 44. That this priesthood was a highly exceptional doctrinaire democratic innovation does not affect the issue discussed here.

[49] J. Scheid, 'The religious roles of Roman women', in P. Schmitt-Pantel (ed.), *A History of Women. Volume I. From ancient goddesses to Christian saints* (Harvard, 1992) 378, 384.

ones), which seems to establish that there is a perceived divide between serving in a magisterial office and serving in a priestly office (a divide also recognised in (e.g.) the failure at Athens to change inherited life priesthoods into annually elected ones), it seems hard to sustain the view, unless supported by strong positive evidence, that women's exclusion from sharing in the sacrificial meat correlated closely with their political incapacity.[50]

If we look back at the evidence, the political case seems very weak. Far from being highly 'political', the cults from which women are expressly excluded seem more often to be marginal to the city (the cults of Athena Apotropaia and Zeus Apotropaios and Zeus Amalos on Lindos, the cult of Poseidon Phukios on Mykonos, of Zeus Hypatos on Paros, cults of Herakles, of the Anakoin, Egyptian cults). But if in these cases, where the situation is explicit, the exclusion of women can hardly be a product of the cult being limited to those possessing political rights, the extension on political grounds of the prohibition to all cases where women are not expressly included can carry little conviction. Just as it is recognised that prohibitions on finery are cult specific, being particularly linked to Demeter cults, so we should recognise also that prohibitions on women are cult specific. The cult of Herakles on Thasos, with which we began, forbids sacrifice of goats and pigs, forbids ninths and forbids perquisites. In all these respects it is odd and marked out from general Greek practice. It should also be seen as marking itself out when it prohibits women.

In my view we have to conclude that women were not as a rule excluded from sacrificial meat.[51] When Sostratos' mother goes round the deme sacrificing, in Menander's *Dyskolos*, she will have satisfied her appetite as well as her piety.[52] In as far as this restates what was for a long time believed it is not a very interesting conclusion. But it carries important implications because it negates Detienne's two types of correlation and it distinguishes Greek from Roman practice. To affirm women's sacrificial capacity in Greece is both to deny the homology between women's religious and their political (in)capacity, and also to deny the elegant opposition whereby those who shed the (menstrual and lochial) blood of life are kept from all contact with the blood of death (which is also to deny that the Thesmophoria is quite such a rôle reversal as Detienne claims). Unfashionably, perhaps, I conclude that Greek cult practices must both be seen not to be closely linked to day-to-day politics as carried on in the Assembly,[53] and also not treated as simply a product of the

[50] It is also worth noting that the sons and daughters for whom a share of sacrificial meat is also in some cases explicitly provided would also share women's political incapacity.

[51] It must be admitted that women are, with one famous Dionysiac exception discussed by Detienne, notably rarely important actors in those scenes on painted pots which show episodes close to the moment of slaughter, although they are clearly present in processions leading to sacrifice and are often prominent in votive reliefs. But since it is clear that the scenes of sacrifice which appear on pots are not a random sample of snapshots, but are carefully selected, consciously and unconsciously, discussion of this absence belongs more to considerations of visual ideology than to considerations of actual practice. It needs to be noted that, in addition to the famous Dionysiac scene discussed by Detienne, a fragment showing a woman wielding a knife about to sacrifice a goat has recently been published from German excavations in Athens of what was apparently a brothel. The excavator suggested that the sacrifice shown might be to Aphrodite, on the basis of Lucian *Dialogues of courtesans* 7.1 (U. Knigge, ''*Ὁ ἀστὴρ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης*' *AM* 97 (1982) 153–70 at 153 and 168 n. 17; Pl. 32.1, Inv. no. 5662). I am grateful to James Davidson for drawing my attention to this piece.

[52] Menander, *Dyskolos* 262–4. There is an excellent discussion of the sacrificial meal in the *Dyskolos* in A. K. Dalby, *Unequal feasts. Food in its social context in early Greece* (London, Ph.D. Thesis, 1992).

[53] Detienne himself argues that scholars have traditionally underestimated the political importance of sacrifice, 'Culinary practices and the spirit of sacrifice' in M. Detienne and J. P.

rationalising of natural processes. Religious actions obviously had political effects – the sacrificial ritual itself can be a way of legitimating aggression[54] – but this is by no means incompatible with the independence of religion from political arrangements.

Aristotle, at *Politics* 1280b36–8, remarks that 'thusiai', groups which sacrifice together, are a precondition for the city, along with families, phratries and other works of friendship. Sacrifices manifest the existence of groups which share a cult, and a city without such groups is unthinkable; but such groups are not subordinated to the city. Just as the Pythaistai are a particular cult group at Erkhia, so women might constitute or be included in other cult groups. As a result, there will have been many sacrificial victims in which women had no share, because they had no part in the group which made the sacrifice, but they will not have been excluded from partaking in the sacrificial victim because it was a sacrificial victim. In some sacrifices, where the occasion was more or less explicitly political, the distribution of meat will have followed political lines: such is the case at the Panathenaia where the prytaneis get five shares, the nine arkhons and the strategoi and taxiarkhs three, the treasurer of the goddess and the hieropoioi one, and those Athenians processing and the (female) kanephoroi 'their usual', before the rest is divided between the Athenians.[55] At the Hephaistia the meat reached beyond the political group in that metics were explicitly included among recipients, and at Koressìa in the third century not only metics but also freedmen who paid taxes at Koressia were included in the distribution.[56] Women in general certainly enjoyed no meat at all in their own right from the Koressia sacrifices and almost certainly enjoyed nothing from those at the Hephaistia and Panathenaia. But this is not because sacrifice as such is constrained to observe the limits of the political group, but because these are civic festivals in the strong sense of that term. Civic festivals and festivals of other political groups whose membership was entirely male are what we know about most, of course, but there was another side to life, and when Athenaios affords us a glimpse of it, in his account of the Tithenidia at Sparta, we find (unfree?) nurses enjoying sucking pig and probably goat too.[57] Different religious cults in different cities practised different exclusions, and the exclusion of women, implicit in the composition of the cult group or occasionally explicit, must be seen in the context of the other exclusions.[58]

In rejecting Detienne's construction of gender roles in sacrifice, it is important not to return to taking women's presence sharing in the meat for granted. If, where Detienne finds a homology between politics and theology, we find contrast, we should not underestimate the importance of that finding. Political life, in the narrow sense, dominates our ancient sources as it has dominated modern scholarship, but it did not so dominate life as lived and experienced. The world where one might as often find a priestess as a priest, and where men and women ate the sacrificial meat together, may well have been as homologous to everyday life as it was different from life in army, Council, or symposion. The understanding of the world which is reflected in the theology of sacrifice may be a domestic understanding of the world rather than a political one. Relations between cities and between heads of households, which

Vernant (edd.), *The cuisine of sacrifice* (trans. P. Wissing, Chicago, 1989; French edition Paris, 1979) 1–20 at 3–5. I do not dissent from the proposition that religious cult activity is central to the 'life of the polis' and is 'political' in that sense.

[54] Compare M. Bloch, *Prey into hunter. The politics of religious experience* (Cambridge, 1992) Chapter 2, esp. 43–5.

[55] *IG* ii² 334.8–16.

[56] *IG* i³ 82 (the same is true in the deme of Skambonidai, i³ 244); *SIG*³ 958.

[57] Athenaios *Deipnosophistai* 138f–139b.

[58] See C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Further aspects of Polis religion', *AION* 10 (1988) 259–74 at 267–70.

formed the stuff of politics, could, by means of legal devices and army recruitment, be kept to males, but relations with the gods extended to all humans, and indeed to the whole of nature. Sacrifice of animals and offerings of natural products gave hope of control of the rest of nature, but it was participation in sacrifice, in a capacity other than that of victim, that secured women's place, as it secured man's place, in the cosmic order of things.

The single woman is condemned to a vegetarian life in Detienne's world. Excluded from sacrifices normally because a woman (and too bloody) she does not enjoy anything from the Thesmophoria either because not married (not bloody enough). Detienne thinks she is excluded from sharing the meat sacrificed to Athene Patroie at Thasos and only allows her a half share of the orgeones' sacrifice at Athens if she qualifies as a daughter. Bleeding or not, we need to restate the claims of the single woman (in fact more likely to be widow than spinster) to share the meat from the sacrifices of any group of which she was a part. And as the Erkhia calendar suggests, the social groups which made up normal life included some that were specifically female. Sacrifice reached parts of society which politics did not reach, and in doing so it reached some parts that were the exclusive domain of women.[59]

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