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## BOOK REVIEWS

M-Z. Petropoulou, *Animal sacrifice in ancient Greek religion, Judaism, and Christianity, 100 BC to AD 200* (Oxford Classical monographs), Oxford 2008. xii + 336 p. ISBN 978-0-19-921854-7.

The study of animal sacrifice in antiquity has to a great extent focused on the practices of the Archaic and Classical periods in Greece, though scholars have often made use of later sources to flesh out the picture. Maria-Zoe Petropoulou's study attempts to offer a new perspective, focussing on the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods, and looking at how sacrifice functioned and was perceived among the Greeks, Jews and Christians. The main issue concerns the lack of animal sacrifice within the Christian religion, in relation to the fact that Christianity arose in an environment where animal sacrifice was practiced. The study begins with a time when Greek and Jewish animal sacrifice were still practiced, that is, 100 BC, but when Christianity had still not appeared.

Chapter 1 consists of an outline of the major scholarly theories on sacrifice, divided into anthropological theories and historical approaches: Tylor, Robertson Smith, Frazer, Hubert and Mauss and Evans-Pritchard for sacrifice in general, Meuli, Burkert, Girard, the "Vernant school" and *ThesCRA* for Greek sacrifice, and Douglas, Schmidt and Klawans for Jewish sacrifice. Stengel and Nilsson are not included in the Greek sacrifice section, but accounted for under the heading "historical approaches". It is a bit surprising that the "Vernant school" is criticized for focussing on one ritual alone, the Bouphonia (p. 14), when Vernant's work takes as its starting point the Prometheus myth as accounted by Hesiod, while Detienne argues from the Orphic theogony and the death of the young Dionysos.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, this overview leaves the reader with a superficial and somewhat condescending account of the various theories and approaches. Petropoulou's own "theoretical approach" (pp. 26–31) consists of viewing animal sacrifice within a vertical and a horizontal line, respectively, the former representing the relation between the offerer and the recipient, while the latter represents the link between the offerer and objective reality.<sup>2</sup> Of principal interest is the horizontal line, explored from a structuralist approach, though the main method is said to be a traditional hermeneutic one (p. 31).

Chapter 2 deals with Greek animal sacrifice from 100 BC to AD 200 and offers, on the one hand, an overview of animal sacrifice in this period and, on the other, a ritual backdrop for the understanding of the Christian position regarding animal sacrifice. Rituals included under the heading of animal sacrifice are *thysiai* followed by a meal, military contexts, propitiation, purification and oaths. Acts involving other kinds of material are not considered: for example, libations and vegetable offerings are left aside. Petropoulou briefly touches upon the Olympian-Chthonian model, subscribing to the standard definition found in the handbooks, though without regard to the recent critique concerning its validity.<sup>3</sup> She starts by refuting Nilsson's argument, particularly as expressed in an article from 1945, that Greek animal sacrifice declined in the Hellenistic period, somewhat exaggerating both his argument for a decline and its impact on later

<sup>1</sup> See J.-P. Vernant, 'At man's table: Hesiod's foundation myth of sacrifice', and M. Detienne, 'Culinary practices and the spirit of sacrifice', in *The cuisine of sacrifice among the Greeks*, eds. M. Detienne & J.-P. Vernant, Chicago & London 1989.

<sup>2</sup> She here applies the approach used by Robert Daly in his work on the notion of sacrifice within Christianity: see 'The power of sacrifice in ancient Judaism and Christianity', *Journal of ritual studies* 4, 1990, 181–198.

<sup>3</sup> See R. Schiesler, 'Olympian versus chthonian religion', *Scripta classica israelica* 11, 1991–1992, 38–51; F.T. van Straten, *Hierà kalá. Images of animal sacrifice in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman world, 127), Leiden 1995, 165–167; A. Verbanck-Piérard, 'Les héros guérisseurs: des dieux comme les autres!', in *Héros et héroïnes dans les mythes et les cultes grecs. Actes du Colloque organisé à l'Université de Valladolid du 26 au 29 mai 1999* (Kernos, suppl. 10), eds. V. Pirenne-Delforge & E. Suárez de la Torre, Liège 2000, 283–284; G. Ekroth, *The sacrificial rituals of Greek hero-cults in the Archaic to the early Hellenistic periods* (Kernos, suppl. 12), Liège 2002, 310–330. Petropoulou unfortunately misrepresents my interpretation of the meaning of *enagizein* (35, n. 11; 69), a term which all instances seem to refer to as a ritual *not* followed by a meal, in contrast to a *thysia* (see Ekroth 2002, 127–128).

scholarship.<sup>4</sup> Nilsson's article was very brief and his main concern was to draw attention to similarities between pagan and Christian divine services as to the use of lamps, incense and hymns, rather than to argue for the regression of animal sacrifice. She also criticizes Nilsson for treating the Hellenistic and Roman periods as one period, but makes no attempt herself to distinguish chronological variations in the Greek evidence, probably for the same reason as Nilsson, namely, that the evidence is too dispersed and scanty.

The Greek evidence used is primarily second century AD texts, such as Plutarch and Pausanias, as well as inscriptions from various times dealing directly with animal sacrifice, the main sources being given in Greek as well as English translation in two appendices.<sup>5</sup> The material is said to have been chosen for being explicit rather than complete (p. 49). From this evidence it is argued that animal sacrifice was a vital factor of Greek religious life in late Hellenistic and early Imperial times, and did not cease to be practiced until after the second century AD, contrary to what is often claimed by scholars. Furthermore, the sacrificial rituals of this period were characterized by continuity with previous periods, with few detectable changes in cult practice.

Chapter 3 consists of a brief outline of the fundamental differences between Greek and Jewish sacrificial worship, stressing the fact that Jewish cult was confined to the Temple in Jerusalem, that the public sacrifices consisted of holocausts and that there is no explicit evidence for banquets connected to religious occasions. Further, the sources for Jewish animal sacrifice are essentially different from the Greek evidence, as there are no representations or inscriptions to complement the Bible, Josephus, Philo and the Mishnah. The chapter closes with a review of the Temple at Jerusalem.

In Chapter 4, Petropoulou addresses the issue of Jewish animal sacrifice in the period 100 BC–AD 200. The chapter is divided into two sections, the first being an historical representation of Jewish sacrificial institutions, the importance of the Temple in Jerusalem, its relation to Rome, and the view of the Temple and sacrifices after its destruction in AD 70. The second part focusses on the structure of the Jewish sacrificial system, which gives very little evidence of development over time. The main points treated are the high priest and priesthood in general, dietary laws, and the sacrificial regulations. The primary sources explored for both sections are Josephus, Philo and the Mishnah.

Petropoulou argues that Jewish sacrifice was important in the Second Temple period up to the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, and that animal sacrifice was also a significant issue among Diaspora Judaism. She concludes that if there had been a Greek text of similar character to the Mishnah, we would have been able to follow the discussion among the Greeks on the ritual details surrounding sacrifice in a similar manner. The lack of such a text, however, is in itself interesting, as it brings out yet another difference between Greeks

and Jews which could have been explored further, namely the need for the latter to discuss and explain the sacrificial regulations set down in the Old Testament. Petropoulou finds that a common point between the Greek and the Jewish evidence is the insistence on the detailed description of ritual details, while the variety of local Greek cult practices, as compared to the concentration of Jewish ritual to the Temple in Jerusalem, constitutes a major difference. This distinction is by all means important, but also the polytheism of the Greeks and their use of animal sacrifice as means for divination are aspects that could have been taken into consideration here.

The very short Chapter 5 discusses the background of the earliest Christians, who may have been Greek pagans, Gentiles sympathizing with the Jews, and Jews in Jerusalem and the Diaspora. The Christians' relation to animal sacrifice in the period up to AD 200, based primarily on the New Testament and the Church Fathers, is explored in Chapter 6. A gradual detachment from animal sacrifice can be detected among the early Christians, although there is no clear evidence for Jesus rejecting the sacrifices in the Temple, and Jewish Christians seems to have been still attached to the Temple while it existed. There is some evidence for a direct rejection of animal sacrifice already in the first century BC, and in specific, pagan animal sacrifice, but participation in pagan celebrations and eating idol-meat seem to have been the more important issues to address. A significant feature of Christianity is the development of a Christian metaphorical, sacrificial language for Christian cult itself, leading the believers to see an entirely different sacrificial reality, though its relation to the abandonment of animal sacrifice is unclear. In the second century, Christian apologists explicitly condemned pagan animal sacrifice, and Jewish sacrifice to a lesser degree, and rejected the making of offerings to their own God by emphasizing His different character as a divinity in need of nothing. Texts concerning martyrs also make clear that sacrifice was never an option among the Christians.

Chapter 7, Conclusion, sets out to analyse whether the meeting of the three religions resulted in any ritual changes, although it mainly outlines the horizontal and vertical lines

<sup>4</sup> M.P. Nilsson, 'Pagan divine service in late antiquity', *HTHR* 38, 1945, 63–69. For the complexity of Greek animal sacrifice in Roman times and its relation to Christianity, see also S.K. Stowers, 'Greeks who sacrifice and those who do not: toward an anthropology of Greek religion', in *The social world of the first Christians. Essays in honour of Wayne A. Meeks*, eds. L.M. White & O.L. Yarbroughs, Minneapolis 1995, 293–333, and S. Bradbury, 'Julian's pagan revival and the decline of blood sacrifice', *Phoenix* 49, 1995, 331–356.

<sup>5</sup> In her discussion of sacred laws, a reference to R. Parker, 'What are sacred laws?', in *The law and the law courts in ancient Greece*, eds. E.M. Harris & L. Rubinstein, London 2004, 57–70, would have been useful. For the sacred law from Andania (pp. 65–67), add the study by N. Deshours, *Les mystères d'Andania. Étude d'épigraphie et d'histoire religieuse* (Scripta antiqua, 16), Bordeaux 2006.

within each of the three religions under study. The chapter ends with an Epilogue addressing the issue of why Christians chose not to offer animal sacrifice (though Petropoulou has previously stated that the question is invalid, pp. vi and 282). The author here suggests that something in the vertical line, i.e., the worshippers' relation to the divine, must have led them to abandon this practice, and she proposes that the "powerful experience" of the person and the presence of Jesus led the believers to a new understanding of God, resulting in an inner change that affected the cultic reality and ended in an rejection of animal sacrifice. The fall of the Second Temple in AD 70 may also have contributed to this development, and may explain why a distancing from animal sacrifice became prominent in the second century AD. However, the Christian view of "sacrifice", as both a pagan ritual to be despised and a metaphorical element within Christianity, took some time to develop and become established, though the Christians gradually appropriated the sacrificial vocabulary of the pagan cults.

The topic chosen for this study is of great interest for anyone working on animal sacrifice in antiquity, but the structure of the book, as well as its handling of the evidence, are sometimes problematic. The book clearly reveals its origins as a doctoral dissertation in its zealous need to present background information in a manner which is hardly suitable for a scholarly monograph. The author outlines at length what she will *not* cover and why, but often fails to explain the reasons why she actually focusses on what she does. There is no proper presentation of the aim of the study, only a suggestion of it in the Preface (p. v).

There are also a number of unnecessarily harsh and dismissive judgements of other scholars' work.<sup>6</sup> For some reason the text has not undergone the necessary re-working before publication, which is surprising considering that it is published by the prestigious Oxford University Press.

Petropoulou's treatment of the evidence and grasp of relevant scholarship is at times a bit inadequate, particularly in dealing with the Greek evidence. She is a strong advocate for Greek cult practice not having undergone any substantial changes from the Classical to the early Roman period, her main argument being her understanding of Plutarch and Pausanias as not indicating any alterations. One of the main texts used here is Plutarch's description of the sacrifice to commemorate the war dead at Plataiai (*Vit. Arist.* 21). This particular cult seems, however, to have been modified and revised throughout the centuries and it is therefore doubtful whether it supports the notion of the rituals having been kept unchanged from the fifth century BC down to the second century AD.<sup>7</sup>

Pausanias' text features prominently in her discussion and Petropoulou states that scholars have failed to use him as a source for the religious activity of his own period, a claim based on her not being familiar with current work on this au-

thor.<sup>8</sup> Her stand on p. 33, that she will "... leave behind the scholarly view of Pausanias as a nostalgic antiquarian, and instead follow his text as a guide to genuine expressions of religious vitality, in his own time", is far from new, rather being fully in accordance with the dominating trend within recent scholarship.<sup>9</sup> She has also an idiosyncratic way of referring to Pausanias' text, using the geographical scope of each book instead of its number (for example, *Elis I*, XXIV.9 instead of V.XXIV.9 or 5.24.9).

Finally, if one is to deal with the details of Greek sacrificial ritual, attention to the terminology is important. Petropoulou states that the great inscription from Oinoanda refers to at least 27 bull sacrifices, but the Greek text does not have the term *tauros*, only the neutral *bous*, which may rather be translated as ox or cow, or the more generic "cattle".<sup>10</sup> Her use of the phrase *hiera thyein* in connection with a ritual honouring the dead (p. 30, Fig. C) is surprising as well, and one would have liked to know if any Archaic or Classical source has this combination. On pp. 40–42, Petropoulou quotes Lucian's account of an animal sacrifice (*On sacrifices* 12–13) as a typical description of Greek animal sacrifice in the period 100 BC–AD 200, and maintains that it does not diverge from the Homeric sacrificial

<sup>6</sup> For example, 24, n. 77: "... the reader would expect the writers to keep their distance from the Nilssonian clichés ..."; 39, n. 27: "... this article is a bad example of the French school of thought."

<sup>7</sup> See R. Étienne & M. Piérart, 'Un décret du Koinon des Hellènes à Platées en l'honneur de Glaucon, fils d'Étéocles, d'Athènes', *BCH* 99, 1975, 66–67 and 74–75; A. Schachter, *Cults of Boiotia* vol. 3. *Potnia to Zeus. Cults of deities unspecified by name* (BICS, suppl. 38:3), London 1994, 129–132 and 137–138. For Pausanias' description of Greek cults as evidence of ritual changes or inventions in the Roman period, see also V. Pirenne-Delforge, 'Ritual dynamics in Pausanias: The Laphria', in *Ritual and communication in the Graeco-Roman world* (Kernos, suppl. 16), ed. E. Stavrianopoulou, Liège 2006, 111–129.

<sup>8</sup> Petropoulou's claim (p. 43, n. 33) that only Arafat has stressed Pausanias' value as a source for his contemporary Greece, is not correct: see G. Ekroth, 'Pausanias and the sacrificial rituals of Greek hero-cults', in *Ancient Greek hero cult. Proceedings of the Fifth International Seminar on ancient Greek cult, organized by the Department of Classical Archaeology and Ancient History, Göteborg University, 21–23 April 1995* (ActaAth-8°, 16), ed. R. Hägg, Stockholm 1999, 145–158, as well as the literature referred to in n. 9, below.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, *Éditer, traduire, commenter Pausanias en l'an 2000, Actes du Colloque de Neuchâtel et de Fribourg (18–22 septembre 1998)* (Recueil des travaux publiés par la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences humaines, 49), eds. D. Knoepfler & M. Piérart, Genève 2001, and in particular the contributions by V. Pirenne-Delforge, 'Les rites sacrificiels dans la *Périégèse* de Pausanias', and Y. Lafond, 'Lire Pausanias à l'époque des Antonins. Réflexions sur la place de la *Périégèse* dans l'histoire culturelle, religieuse et sociale de la Grèce romaine'. See now also V. Pirenne-Delforge, *Retour à la source. Pausanias et la religion grecque* (Kernos, suppl. 20), Liège 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Similarly Petropoulou speaks of bulls often being mentioned in the contexts of civic sacrificial feasts (p. 79, n. 118), though the documents referred to all, with one exception, use the term *bous*.



descriptions. This statement is difficult to accept, as the ritual outlined by Lucian ends with the burning of the victims on the altar, skins as well as meat, i.e., a holocaust, a ritual which was uncommon within Greek religion at large and is never mentioned in Homer.

There are also some generalizing statements that reveal a lack of awareness of the complexity of Greek sacrificial ritual: for example, on p. 30: "For instance, if a group of worshippers believe that their recipient has human needs, this will result in a succession of sacrificial acts involving the offering of a portion of meat to the particular god." If applied to Greek religion, this would imply that offerings of food to the gods were performed since the Greeks perceived their divinities as having human needs. Though a notion of hungry gods is found in some comedies, animal sacrifice was never seen by the Greeks as a way of feeding the gods. Considering the intricate use of *theoxenia* and *trapezomata* rituals within the larger context of *thysia* sacrifice, such simplified interpretations do not shed light on the use of meat offerings within Greek cult.

To conclude, Petropoulou's book clearly illustrates the methodological difficulties involved in comparing three religious systems as distinct as ancient Greek religion, Judaism and Christianity. Even among the Greeks and the Jews, who both practiced animal sacrifice, the aims of this ritual were fundamentally different, as the animal victim did not play the major role within Jewish ritual that it did for the Greeks. Further complications in this comparative approach are the nature of the extant sources and the difficulties in using, for example, a Greek sacred law, the legal opinions of the Rabbis collected in the Mishnah and the sayings of Paul, to address one and the same issue. One may ponder on the extent if any that Pausanias' description of animal sacrifices in obscure, local Greek cults will help us understand why the Christians found animal sacrifice incompatible with the worship of their God.

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S.I. Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination* (Blackwell Ancient Religions), Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell 2008. 193 p. ISBN: 978-1-4051-1573-5.

Sarah Iles Johnston's book treats the seminal topic of Greek divination. Most aspects of the matter are introduced in five substantial chapters. The study is broadly divided into two blocks: institutional oracles, i.e., the major oracular sites of antiquity (Chapters 2 and 3), and independent diviners, i.e.,

the status and role(s) of the *mantis* and related divinatory practitioners in Greek society (Chapters 4 and 5).

Chapter 1 is as expected an introduction to the book at hand. Pointing to the popularity of contemporary divination (horoscopes, tarot reading etc.), Johnston shows the pervasiveness of such practice. This is readily understandable in the light of her definition of the purpose of divination: "... to gain knowledge of what humans would otherwise not know" (p. 3). The chapter then proceeds with an easy to follow presentation of the ancient discussions of divination. In contrast to other pivotal religious acts, e.g., sacrifice and prayer, the ancient Greeks (and Romans) apparently spilt a lot of ink on divination: whether it worked and why. Johnston suggests that the reason behind this preoccupation was the understanding that divination was an immediate dialogue with the divine, where you were almost certain to get a rapid answer. In this way the existence of the gods and their constant attention to men were proved. This communication between gods and humans is stressed throughout the book: divination as an experience of the divine is a recurring theme.

The presentation of ancient discussions furthermore introduces the (ancient) concepts of artificial versus natural divinatory methods, that is, divination depending on human competence (reading of signs through birds, fire, entrails, etc.), versus divination through the close presence of a deity (oracles through the mouth of the enthusiastic Pythia, or dreams). The section also gives a good introduction to the Stoics' explanation for how divination worked: artificial divination through *sympathia*, a force permeating the world and connecting everything within it, and natural divination through each soul's inherent capacity for oracles. This is followed by a brief history of scholarship of ancient divination. Its few pages give a succinct account of the field as well as a closer look at scholarship that treated divination in relationship to magic.

After a note on the importance of location for the prestige and functioning of an oracular site, Chapter 2 gives a good overview of the oracles of Delphi and Dodona. The account of Delphi is interesting and up-to-date: it includes a discussion of the relatively recent suggestion that hallucinatory ethylene rose from fissures under the temple to intoxicate the Pythia, and addresses Delphic oracles other than the priestess, e.g., lot divination providing simple yes-or-no answers. The presentation of Dodona is especially welcome, as introductions to divination tend to focus on Delphi alone. Equally salutary is Chapter 3, which presents the oracles of Claros and Didyma, followed by sections on incubation oracles, Trophonios' cave and necromancy, and finally an overview on methods such as divination by mirrors, water, dice, etc. The chapter will be of value to students new to the topic of divination, before consulting specialized studies. Johnston's skepticism as regards the frequency or even existence of necromantic oracles—consultations of the dead—should be noted.

Focus then shifts to practitioners of "freelance divination":