

Hinnells set out to write an accessible handbook with a clear structure, and succeeded very well in the task. All the chapters follow a similar basic structure while each author has the opportunity to highlight topics or case-studies they find illustrative and important. Sources and the history of scholarship receive plentiful attention, which is a pleasant surprise not always found in handbooks (although in the Indus section there is an awkwardly emphatic criticism of Parpola (p. 464)). Some chapters also have a section on legacy and *Nachleben*, although early Israelite religion interestingly lacks this – perhaps it was deemed either too obvious or too broad a topic. On average, the authors are admirably explicit about their chosen approaches and interpretations.

The chapters draw on multiple classes of evidence, but the emphasis varies. Perhaps the most methodologically explicit and interesting is the combination of ethnography and neurophysiology utilized by Jean Clottes and David Lewis-Williams for Palaeolithic religion.

As for the substance itself, the non-specialist reviewer can say little. The specialists will be unlikely to find much new in the volume, and will doubtlessly come up with points they wish had been made or emphasized. The chapters on Greece and Rome are no exception, although Susan Guettel Cole brings up a refreshing point about women and slaves practising religion differently from free males, and J. A. North provides an interesting discussion of the rise of Christianity and its possible connection to an emerging need for local communities and the importance of personal religious conviction.

One must admit that the handbook seems to inhabit a slightly awkward niche: it is too general for anyone with more than a very cursory interest, but too specific for someone looking for an encyclopaedia-length overview. Even so, the clearly-written chapters rich with illustrations and examples of both textual and archaeological evidence make it pleasant reading that is accessible without smoothing over scholarly debates and problematic evidence.

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Greek and Roman Animal Sacrifice. Ancient Victims, Modern Observers. Edited by CHRISTOPHER A. FARAONE – F. S. NAIDEN. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2012. ISBN 978-1-10-701112-0. XIII, 209 pp. EUR 55, USD 95.

This somewhat concise book is based on a seminar held in Chicago in 2009, and the list of contributors (ten in all) includes many well-known names in the field. The book is divided into four sections with two papers in each: Modern Historiography, Greek and Roman Practice, Visual Representation and Literary Representation. The emphasis of the book as a whole – as was stated in the heading of the Chicago Conference and in the concluding "Afterword" by Clifford Ando (pp. 195–200) – is that animal sacrifice was not as central a ritual in the Graeco-Roman world as many textbooks still argue. However, if this overemphasizing is true as regards Roman studies, as Jas Elsner shows in a footnote in his "Sacrifice in late Roman art" (pp. 120–63), whether it is true also in Greek Studies is another question. In fact, Albert Henrichs in his treatment of animal sacrifice in tragedies treats it as a central phenomenon in that context ("Animal sacrifice in Greek tragedy: ritual, metaphor, problematizations", pp. 167–79). Furthermore, the art historian Richard Need ("Sacrificing stones: on some culture, mostly Athenian", pp. 99–119) points out that if animal sacrifice was not a central ritual, this does not mean

that it was an unimportant ritual (p. 104).

In his "Afterword", Ando points out three factors, the absence of which, according to him, proves that animal sacrifice was not a central ritual in the Graeco-Roman world: it had no metaphorical elaboration, it was not a component of other rites and it was not conceived as archetypal or iconic. This seems a totalizing conception of "centrality", particularly if it is meant to resist some "great stories" of the significance of Greco-Roman animal sacrifice created by, for instance, Walter Burkert. What is the centrality of a given rite other than its importance? For example, the Last Supper is, of course, the most important and thus central ritual for Christians, but is it a component of all other rituals? The metaphorical elaboration of animal sacrifice is quite obvious at least in tragedy, which offers us several basic literary representations of blood sacrifice. Furthermore, sacrifice as such, as John Scheid suggests in his "Roman animal sacrifice and the system of being" (pp. 84–98) was not at the margin of Roman religious life. He also points out the continuing importance of animal sacrifice even during the third century CE; if the well-known Christian campaign against un-Christian practices in general, and blood sacrifice in particular, put animal sacrifice in the front row, blood sacrifice was still commonly practised.

Animal sacrifice was quite central also in comedy, as James Redfield shows in "Animal sacrifice in comedy: an alternative point of view" (pp. 167–79). He reminds us of the well-known fact that post-kill was the focus of comedy. Or as Redfield comments: "Once again, consumption is revealed as the true meaning of the sacrifice [in comedy]" (p. 175) speaking also about "the joy we take in eating meat" (p. 179). However, how can "we" be sure what is the 'true meaning' of any human rituals, institutions, or practices – even in comedies, which naturally emphasized corporality? The meaning depends on whose point of view we are taking as there is no universal position to take. Therefore, one may ask whether the characters in comedy are speaking more about the joy of feasting together than the joy of eating (sacrificial) meat.

All the contributors refer to recent research into animal sacrifice, while only two of them deal with the historiography of blood sacrifice. Bruce Lincoln shows in "From Bergaigne to Meuli: How animal sacrifice became a hot topic" (pp. 13–31) how the work of the French Indologist Abel Bergaigne (1938–88) was the background to Marcel Mauss's famous study on sacrifice. Important contributions were also made by German scholars, culminating in the work of Karl Meuli (1891–1968). Fritz Graf continues with the subject of historiography by elaborating on the influence of two famous works: *Homo Necans* and *La violence et le sacré* ("One generation after Burkert and Girard: Where are the great theories?", pp. 32–51). Both Lincoln and Graf suggest that there has been a lot of interest in animal sacrifice since the 19th century. However, when the English translation of Detienne and Vernant's *La cuisine du sacrifice en pays grec* (1979) was published, one reviewer wrote that "sacrifice is in many ways a distasteful subject which has attracted scant attention" and that "few have probably delved into Burkert's *Homo Necans*" (*JHS* 101 [1981] 184). Perhaps few had delved then, but many certainly did during the 1980s, and this huge interest in the subject at the end of the 20th century may distort the historiography of this research area.

The authors of this book are naturally right about their criticism of the broad lines offered by the "great" books on Graeco-Roman animal sacrifice. One reason to come to different conclusions or interpretations of the same phenomenon is, of course, the use of different types of evidence. Thus, violence and guilt were important concomitants of animal sacrifice for Burkert, while Vernant emphasized the social aspect of the sacrificial meal. For the latter

view, F. S. Naiden's "Blessed are the parasites" (pp. 55–83) is a quite suggestive contribution, as it ponders on what kind of evidence we have for arguing that sacrificial meals were, in fact, communal. The author concludes that the portions were too small for a proper meal. What kind of further conclusions may one draw from this? At least not any kind of "true meaning" of animal sacrifice. As Ando suggests at the end of the book, it would be useful to view "the (self) interpretive structures of the communities in which they [that is, practices like animal sacrifice] were produced" (p. 198).

However, even if the times of great theories like those of Burkert, Girard and Vernant are over, their books still inspire scholars. In all, *Greek and Roman Animal Sacrifice* would be a good introduction to studies of animal sacrifice in Antiquity had it included an introductory chapter on the theme. Only Scheid and Henrichs clearly refer to the different types of animal sacrifice (pp. 84 and 183). Instead, *La cuisine et l'autel* (2005), edited by Stella Georgoudi, Renée Koch Piettre and Francis Schmidt (Turnhout: Brepolis), which also contains surveys of recent research on animal sacrifice, begins with the question of definitions.

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FRANCESCA PRESCENDI: *Décrire et comprendre le sacrifice. Les réflexions des Romains sur leur propre religion à partir de la littérature antique*. Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 19. Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2007. ISBN 978-3-515-08888-6. 284 S. EUR 59.

In questa dotta e utilissima aggiunta ai già fiorenti studi sul sacrificio nel mondo antico, Francesca Prescendi, nella scia di Scheid e altri, offre un quadro generale di più interpretazioni dell'argomento, prestando particolare attenzione alle concezioni e ricostruzioni ricavabili dalla letteratura antiquario-tecnica nonché alla percezione del sacrificio come uno strumento di comunicazione tra uomini e dei (ma con chi comunicava la gente quando comunicava con i dei? Va ricordato che la natura di molte divinità, greche e romane, era ambigua e soggetta a variazione). Con l'aiuto di fonti di varia natura ed epoca, l'autrice arriva alla descrizione di un sacrificio modello (pp. 31 sgg.) che tuttavia nella sua uniformità stabilita, difficilmente corrisponde alla realtà rituale, dovendo questa frequentemente essere stata piuttosto disordinata e poco fissa. Gli elementi costituenti del sacrificio (riti preliminari, consecrazione, offerte e partizione, il destino degli *exta*, ecc.) sono analizzati con grande professionalità, e lo stesso vale per la molto dibattuta questione del sacrificio umano e dell'omicidio rituale, qui introdotta e discussa con competenza nel capitolo 3.3 (ora si veda anche C. Schultz, "The Romans and Ritual Murder", *JAAR* 78 [2010] 516–41).

Complessivamente, si tratta di un lavoro intelligente e ben documentato, ricco di numerose osservazioni innovative e originali che fanno riflettere il lettore. D'altro canto, sembra che l'autrice sia rimasta alquanto impantanata nella letteratura antiquaria, i cui metodi e punti di partenza meritavano più attenzione.

A proposito quanto comunicato a p. 50 (n. 230), mi sia consentito di concludere che, nonostante alcune critiche (e grazie a consensi), sono tuttora propenso a rimanere nella mia opinione (espressa in *Arctos* 32 [1998] 109–31) che a Roma devono essere stati effettuati abbattimenti di animali anche (!) in maniera del tutto profana.

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