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Sacrifices of Raw, Cooked and Burnt Humans

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Sacrifice is a ritual practice including funerals. Rituals teach people to believe in cultural principles by creating experiences in which they can be apprehended, and therefore rituals produce social order by producing conceptual order. The supreme metaphoric symbol is the human victim. Beyond human sacrifice remains only the sacrificer's own death. The dead humans can be seen as gifts to the gods. There are at least three modes of preparation of the corpse for the gods: it can be sacrificed raw, cooked or burnt. Cremation as a heat-mediated transformation renders possible at least two ways of preparing the corpse. The cremated ones may either be cooked or burnt. The deceased are prepared in various ways to become edible meals for the deities. The humans are as a banqueting sacrifice returned to their land of origin. Social control is defined by hierarchically ordered powers determining who can be sacrificed and in what manner the sacrifice can be made. In this sacrificial practice the whole cosmological world is incorporated in the resurrection of the society, legitimated by the gods through their consumption of a holy meal.

INTRODUCTION

Sacrifice is a ritual practice that includes funerals. The deceased can be seen as gifts to the gods that are prepared in various ways to become edible meals for the deities. Implied in this approach is a notion that the difference between inhumation and cremation may not be sufficient if we are to analyse the burial custom from a ritual point of view. We can distinguish between at least two different types of cremation burials: cooking and burning. The dead are prepared as meals for the gods in various ways, with different degrees of heat.

Burial analyses have focused on methods of *body-disposal* from a functional or technological point of view. By focusing on different modes of preparation of the dead for the gods as sacrifices rather than as means of disposal, we are able to gain new insights into rituals and their function and meaning in societies. There are at least three modes of preparation of the corpse for the gods: it can be sacrificed raw, cooked or burnt. The tripartition classification of different modes of preparation covers many body-disposal methods: raw humans can be offered to the gods as inhumations in the earth, drowned in water or given to the sky through air-burials. A cremation, on the other hand, is a heat-mediated change in the corpse by means of fire, and thus, by this body-disposal method it is possible either to cook or to burn the dead body.

Cremation is a transformation and a medium through which change and transmutation take place. Cremation burials can be

analysed as three different but interdependent processes: as technological transformations, as social transformations and as ritual transformations (Oestigaard 1999). I will here focus only on the ritual transformations of the deceased. In what way can we trace these three modes of preparation of the corpses in the archaeological material of the Iron Age in Norway? Why do the preparations differ? Why are humans sacrificed to gods? Can we find evidence of these practices in written sources and iconography?

HUMAN SACRIFICES

Through the performance of rituals people learn to believe in cultural principles by creating experiences in which they can be apprehended (Valeri 1985:x), and therefore rituals produce social order by producing conceptual order (ibid.:xi). Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss defined 'sacrifice' as 'a religious act which, through the consecration of a victim, modifies the condition of the moral person who accomplishes it or that of certain objects of which he is concerned' (Hubert & Mauss 1964:13). The term 'sacrifice' designates a complex ritual action, which is a function of the following features (Valeri 1985:38):

— its ends and the occasion on which it is made;
— the deity or deities to whom it is addressed;
— the content of the offering and its symbolic value;
— the way the offering is treated and apportioned in the rite.

There are different types of sacrificial rites. Expiation is an important dimension in many sacrifices (Valeri 1985:41), but I will focus on the propitiatory dimensions of sacrifices. Propitiatory sacrifices are meant to avert potential disorder or to favour the realization of a project or a desired state (ibid.:41). The sacrificial dimension in funerals is the mourners' project of incorporating the deceased in the resurrection of the society. To achieve this desired state, the mourners or the participants need divine legitimacy from the gods.

A sacrifice involves a divinatory component, since the participants believe they are observing the outcome of the sacrifice (Valeri 1985:42). Thus power is generated through the reproduction of structures of domination (Giddens 1984:158). The supreme metaphoric symbol is the human victim.

> Closer to the sacrifier than all other offerings, the human offering is endowed with the greatest value and efficacy. Beyond human sacrifice remains only the sacrifier's own death. In fact, this death is in the logical limit of the sacrificial system and gives it full meaning. For it is precisely the sacrifier's death that the sacrifice aims to avoid by representing it. (Valeri 1985:49)

The offering must evoke not only the deity, but also the results sought by the sacrifier (ibid.:50).Human sacrifice in funerals is one of the most efficacious means of legitimating the current social order.

Theories of sacrifice have mostly been based on one of the following theses or on some combination of them (Valeri 1985:62):

— Sacrifice is a gift to the gods and is part of a process of exchange between gods and humans.
— Sacrifice is a communion between man and god through a meal.
— Sacrifice is an efficacious representation.
— Sacrifice is a cathartic act.

Valeri focuses on another thesis that (ibid.:70–71):

— Sacrifice is a symbolic action that effects transformations of the relationships of sacrifier, god, and group by representing them in public.

This is important in funeral rites when the society is threatened and recreated.

There is an implicit belief that the results of sacrifice, whatever they are, depend on the previous

effect, conventionally produced or not, on the sacrifier's understanding. In other words, the understanding and consequent interjection of what god stands for is assumed recognized in every collective judgement as to the efficacy of the rite with regard to its stated aims. (ibid.:74)

Humans have been sacrificed as grave-gifts in funerals. Especially from the Viking period, there are both archaeological and written sources indicating this practice. Ibn Fadlan's manuscript from the Volga (e.g. McKeithen 1979) elaborates how various animals were sacrificed while the chieftain's men raped a slave girl before she was killed and placed by her master's side on the ship. Thereafter, the ship was ignited and everything blew up in a blazing storm of fire. Human sacrifice was an institutionalized practice in funeral rites. Living humans were sacrificed along with the dead. The sacrificed slaves were the means to the ends defined by eschatological concepts determining the master's destiny. The question is therefore: Was it possible to accomplish this aim without the master as a part of the sacrifice? Is it the dead or the gods who receive the sacrificed slave as a gift?

It is generally perceived that the slave is the master's companion on the way to the Great Beyond (e.g. Christensen 1992:81, Roesdahl 1993:178). If we assume that it is the gods who receive the slave as a gift, in a sacrificial practice, this gives meaning if the slave is a means to an end; the slaves cannot be sacrificed unless they are a part of a greater sacrifice. In this regard, the original deceased is the main person being sacrificed and prepared for the gods. As a part of these preparations, sacrifices of other humans and animals are part of various means to the end. The fulfilment of the master's funeral as a sacrifice to the gods is the ultimate aim. Thus sacrifices of slaves have to be seen in light of the main sacrifice; the gods will digest their master.

The humans as a banqueting sacrifice are returned to their land of origin. Thus there are no contradictions between sacrifices to the gods and the reunion with the ancestors. The gift has an immediate effect upon the minds of the spirits of both the gods and the deceased. It makes the spirits benevolent because they are carried off to the land of the dead. The gods who give and return gifts are there to bestow a considerable favour in place of a small one (Mauss 1990 [1925]:14–17). When the participants sacrifice humans to the gods, it is the most valuable gift they can possibly give. In return, they expect legitimacy of the social order.

The dead are united with their ancestors by the god(s)' acceptance of the sacrifice. 'Material and moral life, and exchange, function within it in a form that is both disinterested and obligatory. Moreover, this obligation is expressed in a mythical way and an imaginary way or, one might say, a symbolic and collective one' (Mauss 1990:33). In this way the ritual meal has its function, and the sacrifice of 'voluntary' slaves is obligatory as a part of the collective sacrifice.

THE EATERS OF FLESH AND BONES

The soft parts of the corpse are often treated as impure as opposed to the presumed pure bones. The flesh is therefore often destroyed and left to decompose. But there are other possibilities as well. Robert Hertz referred to a more complex representation of the flesh; the practice known as endocannibalism, which consists of the ritual consumption of the flesh of the deceased by his relatives. It secures the flesh the most honourable sepultures. Endocannibalism takes its place among the various practices that are observed in order to lay bare the bones in the intermediary period between death and the final funeral rites (Hertz 1960:44). I argue that there existed yet one more honourable sepulture for the flesh, a special kind of endocannibalism, namely consumption by the gods.

Based on this distinction between choices of funeral practices, those who were cre-

mated were prepared for the gods and ancestors in a different way from those who were buried raw. The cremated bodies could either be cooked or burnt. They were prepared as *meals* for the gods. When the deceased is prepared as a meal and given to the god(s), this bears witness to a sacrificial practice where the whole cosmological world is incorporated in the resurrection of the society, legitimated by the gods through their consumption of a holy meal. This also involves, as Miller argues, a move from a primary emphasis on producing things to a concern with consuming things. A simpler Marxist ontology insists a priori that social systems and structures are constituted in the act of production, whereas a shift from production to consumption highlights that consumption both expresses and resolves identity. People construct themselves or are constructed by others through relations with cultural forms in the arena of consumption (Miller 1998).

The practice of burying humans raw is normally a type of sacrifice of the dead to the gods and the ancestors, without any special domestic or household preparation. Nevertheless, in some cases the body of the deceased had been ritually cut up into parts before the various body parts were buried raw (Lund Hansen 1995:256, Skre 1998:47).

Cremation as a heat-mediated transformation allows the corpse to be prepared in at least two ways. Most likely there are specific eschatological ideas connected to the mode of preparation selected. The god(s) can eat different types of prepared humans. The way in which the dead humans are offered to the god(s) influences either the destiny of the deceased or that of the descendants. What is given to the god is not the god's wish, but the devotee's own deep motivation (Obeyesekere 1990:4). Whether the deceased is offered raw, cooked or burnt is determined by what the descendants believe to be the god's wishes. The gods, on the other hand, must establish their superiority by giving more than they receive from the sacrifice. The gods have to give more than the humans, and in this way reciprocity can coexist with a hierarchy where the sacrificial exchange may represent the god's superiority over man. However, sacrifices are more than gifts, they are representations of what the sacrifier wants to obtain and the conditions for this realization (Valeri 1985:66, with reference to Loisy 1920, Hocart 1927). The offering is incorporated into the structure of the society. The performance of the death rituals may enable the transition from life to death and the re-establishment of the ideal totality of the living community (Barrett 1994:50), where participants look forward to the remaking of the community (ibid.:51). Thus sacrifices of dead humans are made on behalf of the whole community, but social control is defined by hierarchically ordered powers that determine who can be sacrificed and in what manner the sacrifice can be made.

Different gods may be associated not only with different kinds of food (man–woman, old–young, war captives, slaves, thieves, and so on), but also different modes of preparation. Thus social identities may determine the quality and value of the sacrifice. To digest is to concentrate within oneself the active powers carried by food. Like food nourishes like; the vitality of the flesh of flesheaters is increased by meat to a greater extent than any other tissues of the body. Foodstuffs possess identical qualities in abundance. They make identity (Zimmerman 1982:165–196). From the deceased's point of view, it is an honour to be digested by the gods. The deceased enters the sphere of the divinities and achieves divine qualities. Thus, those performing the ritual recreate the social structure in a society by ranking the values of human sacrifices. Certain statuses or events in the lifetime may determine which god the deceased must be offered to, and thereby the way in which the deceased has to be given and the mode of preparation. Cooking, in particular, as a mode of preparation of the corpse is a cru-

cial point of departure for understanding sacrifices of the deceased. How is it possible to trace this in the archaeological material?

DEGREES OF HEATING AND BURNING THE DEAD

Most of the documentation from excavations during the last century mention only whether the bones where burnt or unburnt, and whether they were cleaned or not cleaned. Per Holck has carried out a study on burnt bones from eastern and southern Norway at Universitetets Oldsaksamling. In *Cremated Bones* (1987) Holck classified the burnt material in five different groups or grades of cremation or burning (ibid.:131–132):

— Grade 0: Apparently unburnt. Although the bones came from a pyre, they are so slightly affected by heat that they show no signs of being burnt. The bone substance has not undergone any visible change and there are no signs of deformation of the bones' original shape.
— Grade 1: Smoothing. Very slight, imperfect cremation owing to lack of oxygen.
— Grade 2: Slight burning. The bones are clearly burnt but have retained a pale colour.
— Grade 3: Moderate burning. Appearance about the same as that in the previous group or somewhat paler in colour.
— Grade 4: The bones are almost white and have a porous, chalk-like consistency.

Some bones bear almost no evidence of being burnt, but it is possible to determine whether the bones have in fact been burnt or not by examining the content of collagen. Collagen is a protein which is found in connective tissue and bones and which yields gelatine on boiling. By putting bone pieces in, for instance, nitric acid, the inorganic bone substances will be completely decomposed and, if the bones have not been burnt at all, only a uniform, brownish lump of collagen will be left. On the other hand, if the bones have been burnt, combustion will have taken place, and nothing will remain, since collagen is destroyed even at temperatures of 130–150°C. Fortunately, experiments have shown that collagen in unburnt human material decomposes very slowly, so the volume of collagen content in bones from the 10th century is 70% and that from the Roman Age 35% of today's content of collagen (ibid.:134). Per Holck's selected study material, i.e. material of cremation grade 0 tested with acid, proves that the bones from this group really had been burnt, whereas their other physical properties tended more toward unburnt material. The temperature probably reached no more than 200°C (Holck 1987:136–139).

Sometimes the bones have actually been heated, but they are seemingly undamaged by the cremation fire. These bones are often categorized in the catalogues as unburnt and thus interpreted as inhumations. Similarly, cremated bones of grade 1 (smoothing) are comparatively common. Smoothing is more dependent on oxygen than on temperature, but it is reasonable to assume that temperatures hardly exceeded 400°C, since changes in bone substances actually occur at these temperatures (Holck 1987:139). Cremations at grade 2 would have reached a maximum temperature of approximately 700–800°C. The most common grade of burning, however, is degree 3, the 'moderate' burning. These bones have been exposed to temperatures of 1000–1100°C, whereas bones of grade 4 have been exposed to temperatures probably between 1200 and 1300°C (ibid.:46, 142–146). Of the 1042 finds examined, the percentages give an idea of the number of different modes of preparation: 6.5% of the bone material is burnt at degree 0, 11.9% at degree 1, 28.0% at degree 2, 73.5% at degree 3 and 37.5% at degree 4 (ibid.:146–149). There is one problem with the statistics concerning the burnt bones. Several of these grades of burning can be in evidence simultaneously in one single find, making the total percentage points over 100.

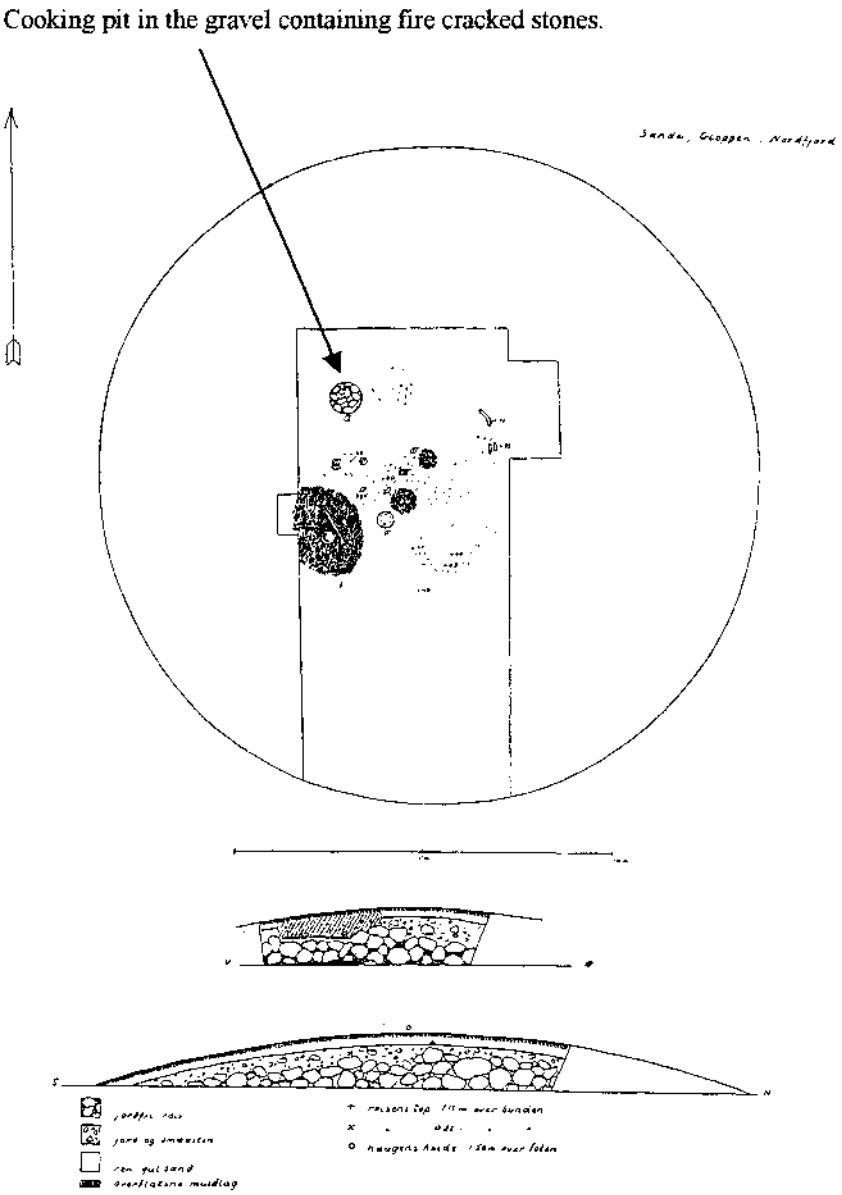

Fig. 1. *Grave mound from Sande in Gloppen.* Source: *Schetelig (1912:48).*

COOKING AND BURNING THE DEAD

Anders Kaliff discusses the problem of cremation burial customs in the Bronze Age in Scandinavia in relation to archaeology of religion. The clue is the importance of religion and how various eschatological concepts influence both the society and the funeral customs, and the aim is to illuminate some of these structural principles. Analyses of the religious concepts of death are a kind of cognitive archaeology (Kaliff 1992a, 1992b, 1995a, 1995b, 1997, 1998). There are several ways of cremating a corpse, and such modes of preparation are probably connected with values and eschatological and

cosmological ideas. These beliefs are expressed in the ways the descendants offer their deceased to the gods, and in the ways the relatives perform rituals according to their tradition and their ancestors.

The majority of the cremations are performed on, presumably, open fires and therefore the bodies and the bones are burnt at high temperatures. But some are probably cooked as well. Evidence of low temperatures and the absence of visible signs of burning are indications of this mode of corpse preparation. The bones have been on the pyre, but not in the fire. If the flesh is intentionally and ritually removed, this may explain why there are several urns in one single funeral (e.g. Schetelig 1912:35). One urn is for the burnt bones, whereas other jars or urns might have been used for the flesh. Another pattern found in the Migration period and later is that the bones were left at the patch, but even so, urns are found in the cremation burials (ibid.: 85). The bones are scattered around in the hearth, on the fire-cracked stones or in the charcoal layer bones. The ceramic jars have been interpreted as gifts given to the deceased, and as long as they did not contain burnt bones, the jars have not been interpreted as urns. The material remains from cremations, 'cremains', are usually seen as ashes (Barley 1995:39), and thus, the focus on cremations has been on the efficient body-disposal method rather than various modes of preparation.

The bones or the ashes are only one part of the cremains, the flesh is another. Thus jars may have functioned as urns even though they do not contain bones or ashes. When the deceased is prepared as a meal, other food gifts belong to a different category of less valued sacrifices, human flesh being the most valued sacrifice. The jars may in some of these burials represent urns in which the flesh is offered or given to the god(s). The meal has been served. From this point of view it does not make sense to interpret the jars as food gifts given to the deceased on his way to the Great Beyond. The deceased is both the food and the gift.

Several graves illuminate the practice of cooking the dead on the pyre. Heat mediated bones without other traces of fire (Holck 1987:137) are one indication of cooking. Another feature is finds of cooking-pits or sunken hearths in which stones were heated for cooking or roasting. These pits in the area of mounds or cairns contain charcoal, fire-cracked stones, and burnt brittle and soil. A huge grave mound was excavated on Sande in Gloppen in 1906. The mound was 17.5 m in diameter and contained several graves from the Migration and Viking period. In the centre of the mound there was a cairn. In the bottom of the grave there was also an undisturbed cremation burial from the Late Roman Age. The bones from this cremation were scattered between and among the stones in the bottom layer of the cairn. Of special interest is a cooking-pit in the gravel, 0.8 m in diameter and 0.35 m deep. The cooking-pit contained nothing but fire-cracked stones (Fig. 1), but there had never been fire in this pit. Thus the fire cracked-stones had probably been transported to the mound and been buried there (Schetelig 1912:48–49).

A grave mound, known as 'Kamperhaugen', was excavated in 1973 on Gåra farm in Bø, Telemark County, in southern Norway (C 34333). The mound, which was 7 m in diameter and 1 m in height, was built of sand and contained a cairn, 3.5 m in diameter, in the middle. The bones, which were slightly to moderately burnt, with clear cut marks, were those of a 20–40-year-old woman (Holck 1987:323) and were found in a cooking-pit, or sunken hearth, in which stones were heated for cooking or roasting. The pit was 1×1.6 m in length and 0.5 m deep and contained charcoal, fire-cracked stones and burnt soil. The grave-goods consisted of 5 fragments of iron as well as 89 sherds of pottery (Universitetes Oldsaksamlingen hovedkatalog – dokumentasjonsprosjektet). The date of the grave is uncertain, but it probably belongs to the Iron Age.

However, it is very unusual to find the cooking-pit on the mound itself.

FLESH, BLOOD AND BONES

Traces of cuts on the bones indicate the removal of flesh from the bones. Some of the corpses have even been cut up prior to the cremation (Holck 1987:301). A noteworthy feature in this regard is the fact that cutting tools are often found as part of the grave-goods, which may indicate ideas of ritual pollution. Knives made of iron are quite common. Fleshing knives or bone scrapers are often found in Norwegian cremation burials. One of these scrapers also has the magic runic inscription 'linalaukaRa', which is interpreted as referring to phallic and fertility cult activities (Olsen & Schetelig 1909). The scrapers are interpreted as tools used for removal of animal skin from the flesh in a daily or ritual context, but it is likely that they were used for cutting up corpses prior to, or as a part of the cremation rituals. The bone scrapers are burnt on the fire, either along with the corpse or in rituals afterwards. This is probably connected with notions of pollution and purification, since the fire is an extremely common apotropaic instrument that may have warded off evil spirits (Barber 1990:385), or with taboo concepts connected with the removal of flesh; finally, the scrapers may have been given as a part of the grave-goods in the urn.

Few contexts in Norway are good enough to illuminate such practices. John Barrett, however, discusses a cremation found at Winterslow in Britain, covered by an inverted urn and accompanied by a small pile of human eyebrow hairs from more than one individual, along with a bronze razor. The funeral has required some kind of mutilation of the human body (Barrett 1994:123). Whether the eyebrow hairs are from the deceased or not, at least one or several of the mourners have mutilated some part of their bodies as a part of the death ritual. Sacrifices of teeth, hair, blood or eyes, or tattoos can be considered equivalent to self-sacrifice (Valeri 1985:355). Furthermore, after this sacrifice at Winterslow, it seems that the participants carried notions of pollution that prescribed the razor to be deposited.

Debris from flint tools found *in situ* in cremation burials is also of special interest. This may be explained as redepositions of earlier Stone-Age sites, but another hypothesis can be put forward: flint tools have been used in the funeral rites to remove the flesh of the deceased in the Iron Age. From the Hippodrome in Jerash in Jordan, Ina Kehrberg (1992) has shown that lithic technology has a continuity on flaked glass and pottery sherd tools in the Late Roman and Byzantine Periods (early 2nd century to mid 7th century). As long as flint debris is found in the graves, and knowledge of lithic technology is available in other parts of the world, one may assume a lithic continuity also in Norway.

Another aspect, pointed out by Lars Erik Narmo, is that charcoal miles are often located close to cemeteries. There is a cooking-pit field in the vicinity of the largest cemetery in Møre and Romsdal County (Narmo 1996:95). The pits Narmo excavated were fairly large, with diameters varying between 0.9 and 2.8 m (ibid.:88), big enough for cooking corpses, and most of them date back to the Early Iron Age. In one of the cooking-pits a knife was also found, indicating the removal of flesh (ibid.:90).

From a ritual point of view, cooking-pits are not necessarily used solely for cooking of corpses. There are several ways of separating the flesh from the bones. From the ethnographic record it is, for instance, reported of corpses that are 'scorched', 'toasted', 'broiled', 'baked' (Valeri 1985:388) or 'smoked' (Yarrow 1881:167). These differences are, however, more difficult to trace in the archaeological record, and I have referred to the domestic treatments in general as 'cooking'. The ritual use of blood in various ways is also a part of the domestic preparation of the corpses, which may be reflected in the fact that urns and cauldrons

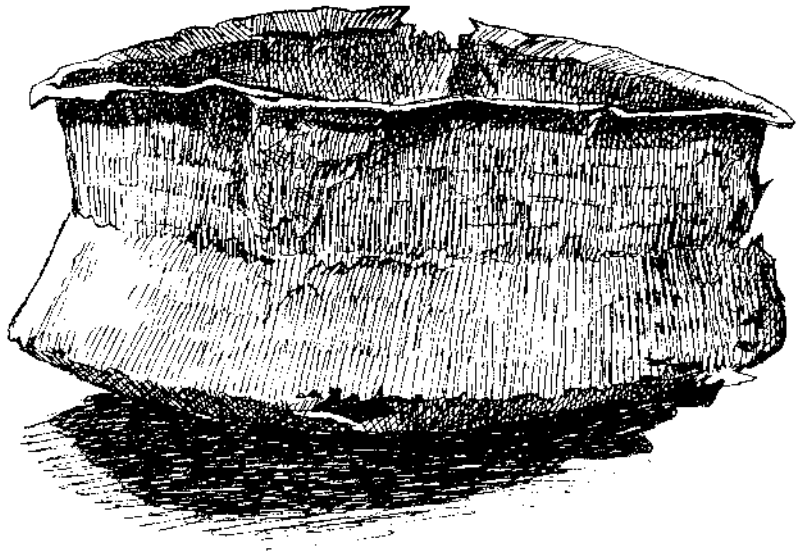

Fig. 2. *The 'Vestland-cauldron' from Eik in Søgne.* Source: *Drawing by Oda Fidjestøl in Stylegar (1997a:45).*

may have functioned as containers for liquid substances.

There are some variables that often occur in cremation burials. Birch bark, felt or furs of different animals have frequently been found during excavations of cremation burials (Schetelig 1912). I have argued that birch bark may have been used as urns for transportation of the burnt bones (Oestigaard 1998:121), which seems plausible in some cases. But in other cremation burials, it seems that the corpse was intentionally wrapped before it was put on the fire; it has been cooked (or 'toasted' or 'baked') instead of burnt. Comparative ethnographical studies indicate the importance of wrapping as well as some of the eschatological concepts connected to the practice. As it sometimes happens, the bones are not completely bare, there is still some flesh clinging to them. The wrapping thus purifies the body, gives the deceased a new attire, the living mark the end of one period in the ritual and the beginning of another or they abolish a sinister past by giving the deceased a new glorified body before entering the company of his ancestors (Hertz 1960:55).

At Eik in Søgne, Vest-Agder County, a double burial was found in 1923 (C 23256) dating to the Late Roman period (Stylegar 1997a). The bones, burnt at various temperatures and with cut marks (Holck 1987:277), were first wrapped in felt and thereafter in bear skin, and then placed in a 'Vestland-cauldron' (Fig. 2) (Gjessing 1925:44).

Per Holck notes that there is a general tendency indicating a connection between grade of cremation, cut marks and grave-finds in the Iron Age. Most of the graves with cut marks (6.7% of the graves, totalling 72 graves) are burnt at a low temperature, and the deceased persons are left with 'poor' grave-goods (Holck 1987:178–180). This by no means implies that the deceased was of low status, but that other rituals were prescribed for certain people; the rituals are more important than the grave-goods (Gansum & Oestigaard 1999). A noteworthy feature in this regard is that cut marks on the bones seem to be connected to double burials (Holck 1987:180). If one of the deceased is sacrificed as part of the funeral, regardless of sex, there seems to be emphasis on the ritual setting where the corpses

are prepared for the god(s), rather than on the deposition of valuable objects. This raises the question of how, and which of the deceased's social statuses are expressed in the funerals. Ifhumans are sacrificed as grave-gifts (Hjørungdal 1999:89), these mortuary rituals probably had an important structuring function in the resurrection and re-creation of the society.

THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF URNS

Preparation of the dead as meals indicates the human sacrifice of the deceased, although in some cases it is difficult to determine whether the dead have been cooked or burnt. In particular, when the bones have been placed on bronze dishes or plates, the dead may be interpreted as offerings to the gods as gifts. The meal has been prepared and served.

Fundamental for interpretations of cremation burials is an understanding of the meaning and the function of the urn as a container for the burnt bones in a social and religious context. An urn as an object used for cremation remains is an ideological and intentionally transformed multivocal container with several functions, characteristics and properties: functionally, the urn is transportable and thus represents alliances, relationships and circles of acquaintances. Socially, it is an object signalling economic status, which may reflect social differentiation and hierarchies. Ritually and religiously, the urn is a charnel house for the burnt bones, where cosmological and religious ideas are expressed. Roman bronze jars used as urns are ideologically transformed containers, or containers used secondarily as urns, i.e. they were originally pots whose primary function and uses were not the same as those of urns. These containers may have been exchanged over great distances before they were transformed into urns (Oestigaard 1999), but they may also have represented the place where the deceased died (ibid.).

The problem is: What does the ideological transformation of jars into urns represent? The containers are transformed from a profane sphere into a sacred one. But there might just be a minor change in the meaning, if there is a change at all. The original function of the Roman jars and dishes was as containers or plates for serving food or prepared domestic products such as wine. This original meaning may have a continuity in one way, whereas local eschatological and cosmological concepts are incorporated in another way. These jars and dishes are urns as well as being used for the purpose of serving food; they contain prepared humans or blood for the gods. Robert Hertz argued that there might be a close tie between the soul and the container of the bones as the spiritual substance of the charnel house (Hertz 1960:60). Thus the flesh and bones of humans are served to the gods in some of the finest food containers that existed.

Based on the early vernacular texts in Wales and Ireland, Miranda Green focuses on associations of the life/death-giving aspects of cauldrons. They are associated with liquids such as blood or other substances, relating death and regeneration to each other (Green 1998). They are deliberately placed in aquatic contexts, next to water or on marshy grounds (ibid.:70), and it is natural to ask what kind of perishable materials the cauldrons once may have held, and to look for burials of cauldrons in funerary contexts (ibid.:72). In Norway, more than one hundred 'Vestland-cauldrons' have been found in a funerary context in the Late Roman and Migration periods (Hauken 1984). Thus, the ritual use of these cauldrons emphasizes the sacrificial aspect, where humans are the most valuable sacrifice to gods.

ICONOGRAPHY AND WRITTEN SOURCES OF HUMAN SACRIFICES AND COOKING OF CORPSES

Human sacrifice was a common occurrence in the late pagan period in North-Western

Fig. 3. *Sacrificial scene from the Gundestrup cauldron. Drawing by the author.*

Europe (Davidson 1992). Similarly, the cooking of corpses was a common practice, even in the Christian area. Different qualities have been connected with the various disposal or preparation methods in time and space. The few scriptures and the iconography I give emphasis to may highlight the fact that the sacrifice of humans, either dead or alive, was an integral part of the ritual scenario.

Miranda Green (1998) refers to human sacrifice among the Germanic tribe of the Cimbri, documented in Strabo's *Geographica*. This text is probably derived from a lost text during the later second and earlier first centuries BC. Green writes that, according to Strabo, the ceremony is 'carried out by holy women, one of whom cuts the throats of prisoners of war, catching the blood in a large bronze cauldron, and her companions cut open the bodies to inspect the entrails, in an act of divination' (1998:66–67).

This kind of sacrificial practice may have been depicted on the Gundestrup cauldron (Fig. 3). Although this depiction probably refers to a myth, it is metaphorically expressed as an icon. Metaphors have ontological significance in language, culture and thought (Tilley 1999:11). In Christopher Tilley's discussion of Fredrik Barth's study of the Baktaman (Barth 1975), Tilley writes that

> . . . the material metaphors at work in culture are not entirely arbitrary. In the process of making metaphorical connections there is always likely to be an inherent connection between form and meaning (. . .) the concrete symbol's objective qualities and apparent suitability to its actual meaning are vital. (Tilley 1999:28)

Based on the Gundestrup cauldron, it seems plausible that humans have been sacrificed, either by catching the blood in cauldrons or by preparing them in other ways. Without an essence of practice, such depictions will not make sense to others as cultural or public symbols (Obeyesekere 1981, 1990). This might be designated as the 'metaphors of the grave'; structuring principles in cosmos and society are incorporated into the death sphere (Goldhahn 1999:164).

The raw, the cooked or the burnt humans, or the tripartition classification of modes of preparation of the corpse, can be seen as a variant of Dumézil's (1958) proto Indo-European classification. In the Germanic or the Celtic tradition there is evidence of a pattern of 'The Threefold Death'. The ancient Gaels made offerings to the three gods Esus, Taranis and Teutates by recourse to hanging, burning and drowning, respectively, a pattern replicated in the Germanic punishment of hanging, stabbing and drowning (Mallory 1989:139). The best evidence is confined to the westernmost Indo-Europeans, but there is some additional support that threefold sacrifices may have been more widespread (ibid.). This strengthens the hypothesis that the mode of preparation or body-disposal methods of the deceased are connected to different qualities associated with personified gods.

Tacitus (AD 69) mentions after a battle

Fig. 4. *The sacrifice of Domalde.* Source: Snorre *(1995:25).*

that 'they searched for the body of the fallen commander, Orfidus, and burnt it with due solemnity. Of the other dead, a few were buried by their relatives, the great mass were left lying on the ground' (Tacitus 2, 45, 84–85). One important feature to be emphasized here is that there are qualitative differences between the various body-disposal methods, and that cremation was the most valued (or connected to a special status in so far as only the commander was cremated).

In *Procopius, History of the Wars, VI. XV,* (23–25), there are references to the sacrificial practice of the inhabitants of the Thule. The most noble sacrifices are humans, preferably the first human they have taken captive in war, sacrificed not only on altars but also by hanging in trees or throwing among thorns. In *Jordanes* it is written that the Goths always placated the god Mars with the most savage rites, for the death of the prisoners became his sacrifice, because they thought that the prince of war should be placated in a suitable fashion with the shedding of human blood (Hagberg 1967: 68). There is an 'immanent materiality' in written sources, which may strengthen our conceptual apparatus and expand our understanding of our process of inferences (Norr 1998:13).

A text which illuminates a divine endocannibalistic practice is *The Lay* of Fafnir in *The Poetic Edda*. Fafnir often appears as a dragon, although he is the son of and brother of men skilled in magic who are able to cast off their slough (Hultkrantz 1992). After Sigurd killed Fafnir, a nuthatch said: 'There sits Sigurd, splattered with blood, roasting Fafnir's heart on a spit; the destroyer of rings would seem wise to me if he were to eat the shining life-muscle' (Larrington 1996:163).

A distinction has to be made between members of the group and non-members of the group. Since the god(s) accepted non-members of the group as sacrifices, I would also expect a similar worship when members within the group die. A sacrifice of the deceased as an internal member of the group is probably valued differently than enemies that are sacrificed raw. Funerals redefine social relationships as a part of intergenera-

Fig. 5. *Hakon sacrifices his sons.* Source: Saxo Grammaticus *(1985:387).*

tional transmissons of rights, duties and powers (Strathern 1981:206), and then the offering must be a symbol of the outcome of the sacrifice.

The importance of the sacrificial practice, where humans were given to the gods, is not that the gods were 'blood-thirsty', but the notion that offerings of humans where of value to the gods. God is a concept, a type or a rule for human action, and therefore, a god cannot be efficacious without human actions and the human recognition of the god's status (Valeri 1985:103). The result of the sacrifice must evoke the sacrifier as well as the deity (ibid.:49). 'Thus it is possible to rank offerings in terms of their value to the sacrifier; this value ultimately depends on the offering's own body. The resulting hierarchy includes the sacrifier's body. And, in fact, if the offering is the symbol of the sacrifier' (ibid.). Human sacrifices cannot be performed on an individual basis, but require a benefit for the collective society (ibid.), and therefore sacrifices are efficacious in the legitimacy and the manifestation of the social order and hierarchy.

This is illuminated in Adam of Bremen's account of the sacrifices in Uppsala of both humans and animals every ninth year. Everyone is obliged to participate or send contributions to the offering; the Christians are no exception (Adam Bremensis 1993: IV, 27). The sacrifices are a collective act. According to Adam of Bremen, if there is hunger or plague, human sacrifices are made to Tor, and offerings are made to Odin if there is a war (ibid.). Snorre (1995) writes that, in Uppsala the king Domalde was sacrificed (Fig. 4) by his chieftains after the harvest failed for the third year (ibid.:25). This is an expiation sacrifice. There are several sources indicating that sons are sacrificed during wars. *Saxo Grammaticus* (1985) refers to a war where the Norwegian king Hakon sacrificed his two sons to win the battle (Fig. 5) (ibid.:387–388), which he did.

Foreign authors observing death rituals did not recognize or pay attention to the internal meaning of and differences among sacrifices. In the Guter saga from Gotland, written down before AD 1285, a striking note has been made which may be interpreted as a continuity of ancient cremation practices. As a part of the very old pagan rituals and gods, people sacrificed their sons, daughters, cattle and food, and the greatest sacrifice was that of humans. Linguistic sources indicate that the Old Norse word for cooking-pit or 'cooking' is *seyðir*, meaning those who sacrificed and by cooking prepared the sacred meals, and thus, the cooking-pits were markers of cult activity where food or meat was prepared and con-

sumed in honour of the gods. Furthermore, according to written sources and inscriptions, the institution associated with the cooking-pit fields has been known as 'the comrades of cooking', which means 'those who make an offering together' (Narmo 1996:92). The interpretations of the saga have focused on holy meals as a part of the ancestor worship in the vicinity of the graveyards. This may be so, but considering the size of some of the cooking-pits, they may represent cremations where the deceased are cooked. In this regard, the institution 'the comrades of cooking' may represent certain kinship units performing obsequies. Moreover, since a specific term has been associated with these participants, this may indicate a long tradition of a funeral practice, something that is in accordance with the archaeological material. Of special interest, too, is the location of the cooking-pit fields close to cemeteries.

From the Medieval period there is ample evidence of the cooking of corpses. The most noble and honourable practice was *mos teutonicus*. Royal persons were often quartered and cooked in order to be transported either back home or to Jerusalem as the last pilgrimage (Stylegar 1997b:64). Christian ghosts were cooked, and from Greenland there are indications of this practice. Once, some hunters passed by a house where two persons had died of hunger. One of the hunters became completely insane, and another cooked the dead bodies and brought the bones to a Christian cemetery (Nedkvitne 1997:102). In general, those who were cooked belonged to a marginal group, regardless of whether they had high or low status.

Svante Norr (1998:29) argues that, from a theoretical point of view, the principles for using ethnographic and historical analogies in archaeological explanation are fundamentally the same. An analogy is an analogy. Both sources of knowledge are products of translation or of a merging of hermeneutic horizons of understanding. Some general principles can be deduced that do not contradict the archaeological material:

— Sacrifice of both living and dead humans was a common practice.
— Sacrifices were centred on the fire and the hearth, and thus the funeral pyre can be included in these heat-mediated food preparations.
— Food symbolism was connected to the sacrifice of humans.

The internal meaning of the symbolism connected to the body-preparation, as gifts to the gods, is difficult to grasp. But it is possible to illuminate some general features connected to the fire and the household, and these features were emphasized and incorporated into the reproduction of the social order.

FOOD FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

In his book *The Raw and the Cooked*, Claude Lévi-Strauss has elaborated and studied the symbolic dimensions of transformations from raw to cooked. The transformation from raw to cooked cannot be interpreted solely as a transition from 'nature' to 'culture', but through it and by means of it the human state can be defined (Lévi-Strauss 1964:164). Cooking is an act of transformation that involves all parts of society, from production, distribution, and preparation, through cooking to the final phase of disposal (Goody 1982:44–48). The phase of preparation of a meal is often a long and time-consuming process. In this interval different rituals may be interwoven. Furthermore, preparation of food is usually a female activity, but if incorporated in death rituals, the gender roles can be manipulated and challenged, and thereby the social structures in the society (Bloch 1982).

Hearth-centred activities and the symbol of the house are important features in a ritual approach. Hearth-centred activities are usually associated with women (Håland

1995, 1997), but when funeral rituals are connected to the hearth, there might be a discourse where the categories 'man' and 'woman' are manipulated or challenged within the production and the reproduction of notions of personhood and society (Moore 1994:51). The source of the symbolic power of the house does not reside in the house as an isolated unit, but in multiple connections between the house and the people who live there (Carsten & Hugh-Jones 1995:44). The humans' communication with the ancestors and gods is often connected in one way or another to the hearth (e.g. Bloch 1995:76). But when death is incorporated into this sphere, it allows the humans to become a part of the gods, and thus the society will have a godly legitimacy.

Funeral practices revitalize what is culturally conceived to be most essential to the reproduction of the social order (Bloch & Parry 1982:7). The rituals tend to acquire moral connotations, where the moral evil has to be reprobated and combated (Hocart 1954:96). The importance of death as the context of social elaboration and social creation is based on encompassing principles of opposition and exchange (Holmberg 1989:190). The resurrection of the deceased as the final meal offered to the gods is a sacrifice whereby the gods' consumption of it legitimates the establishment of the new social order. Thus the living person's gaining possession of the dead person's property (Goody 1962:311) is legally sanctioned by the gods when they accept the gift in the presence of both the descendants as mourners and the rest of the society.

The hearth symbolism used in death rituals may have a significant role in society. Lévi-Strauss stressed several points about the house; (1) continuity occurs through descent, i.e. downwards through the inheritance of names and property, (2) hierarchical ordering is arranged according to birth and ancestors as basic units in the society, and (3) 'The dialectic of filiation and residence' is a common feature in house-based societies (Carsten 1995:105). Thus death is an incorporated part of the household, but still stigmatized. The hearth is the central image and focal point in the house, namely the inside (Håland 1997:381). This ambiguity is expressed in the cooking-pits used for the cooking of the dead.

Cooking-pits for funeral rites are often located outside the house, though some of the rites may have been performed inside the house. This bears witness to notions of purity and impurity (Douglas 1966, 1975), and an inside–outside dichotomy determining where the obsequies were supposed to be carried out. Cooking-pits in the vicinity of the graveyards may strengthen this hypothesis. Furthermore, the cooking-pit in the mound at Sande in Gloppen is of special interest as it contained only fire-cracked stones, although there had never been fire in this pit. Thus the fire-cracked stones were probably transported to the mound and thereafter buried there. If, for some reason or another, the cooking of the deceased had taken place in the house, the hearth would have become impure, and therefore the stones would have to be moved.

CONCLUSION

A new classification focusing on funerals as sacrifices, where the deceased is prepared for the gods, enables us to illuminate some of the eschatological concepts behind the obsequies and the society in which they are performed. The distinction between those that are sacrificed raw, cooked or burnt is one of the ways that contemporary societies have distinguished their own people. The funeral is probably one of the most important rituals in a society that allows for the expression of various identities. The descendants' mortuary feasts and rituals recreate the elementary structure of the society of the living. Human sacrifice is a part of the funeral; the deceased becomes a means to another end.

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