

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE LUPERCALIA FROM AUGUSTUS TO CONSTANTINE PORPHYROGENITUS

#### *LUPERCALIA AFTER AUGUSTUS*

Like many other festivals of the city of Rome, the Lupercalia became almost invisible during the first three centuries of the Imperial epoch. Only because of their special social cachet did the Luperci and their rites not entirely become invisible during the imperial centuries. Theirs was the only priestly *sodalitas* that Augustus reserved for the knights, whereas all other *sodalitates* became the privilege of the senatorial aristocracy. To be made a *lupercus* turned into a highly-coveted status symbol of “near-aristocracy” that was publicly marked with the statue of the new *lupercus* already in Julio-Claudian times – a new habit of this age, as the Elder Pliny tells us, himself of an equestrian background<sup>1</sup>.

Inscriptions from both Rome and the provinces show how to be adlected a *lupercus* in Rome was viewed as an important early step of an equestrian *cursus honorum*; *sacris*

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<sup>1</sup>Plin. *Nat.* 34.18: Among the Roman innovations in the iconography of statues *Lupercorum habitu tam noviciae sunt quam quae nuper prodire paenulis indutae*; see Veyne (1960), 105. – On the transformation of the Lupercalia between Caesar and Augustus see Ferriès (2009).

*lupercalibus functo*, “to have performed one’s duty as a *lupercus*” remained a major career step through most of the imperial age<sup>2</sup>. The last *lupercus* whom we meet in inscriptions is L. Crepereius Rogatus, *vir clarissimus*, a member of the senatorial elite of the earlier fourth century, a young man when Diocletian came to power<sup>3</sup>. Throughout most of the Imperial age, the *luperci* were young knights: Valerius Maximus defined the Lupercalia as an event in which the *equestris ordinis iuventus* becomes visible (*spectaculum*) for the city, and Paul Veyne characterized their participation in the Lupercalia ritual and in the *transvectio equitum* as the initiation ritual of the young *equites* of the Empire<sup>4</sup>. The pride and self-consciousness of these equestrian *luperci* allow us some glimpses upon their ritual. In a grave inscription from mid-imperial Rome, the deceased, M. Ulpus Maximus, is described by his wife as *equus Romanus, qui et lupercus cucurrit*: the race round the Palatine was still the most memorable detail<sup>5</sup>. Not even the dress-code changed much since Ovid’s characterization (and saucy explanation) of *nudi luperci*<sup>6</sup>. An image on the second-century grave altar of Ti. Claudius Liberalis, a young knight from Tibur who died at the age of sixteen, depicted him with a naked upper-body and a tight-fitting piece of fabric wrapped around his lower belly and upper thighs, starting well below the navel and folded in the shape of bermuda-shorts that allow the thighs to move freely. Compared even to the *trabea equestris*, the knee-long equestrian tunic that the same young man is wearing on the image of the *transvectio*, such an artful draping of one’s lower body must have felt rather nude, even precarious – like publicly wearing boxer shorts only instead of the usual shirt, sweater and jeans<sup>7</sup>. It looks only a

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<sup>2</sup>For the attested *Luperci* see Rüpke (2005); a revised English edition (2008); see also Scheid and Granino Cecere (1999), 79-189. – *Sacris lupercalibus functo* in two contemporary inscriptions from third cent. Mauretania, Rüpke (2008) nos. 2206 and 2257; on the interpretation *ibid.* p. 771 on no.2257.

<sup>3</sup>For the last *luperci* Scheid (1999), 85; for the slow eclipse of the knights during the Constantinian dynasty see Lepelley (1999).

<sup>4</sup>Valerius Maximus 2.2.9. – Veyne (1960), 100–112; North and McLynn (2008), 178.

<sup>5</sup>*CIL* 6.2160 = *ILS* 4947; see Rüpke (2008), no. 3321.

<sup>6</sup>Ov. *Fasti* 2.267, the myth 2.283-358. – *nudi luperci* already in Varro, *l.L.*6.34.

<sup>7</sup>See Veyne (1960) 104, with fig. 9 (“presque nu, vêtu d’un simple pagne”); a second monument 105 with fig.8:3; see also North and McLynn (2008), 178, with tab. III whose “kilt” is quite misleading, since a kilt starts rather higher

bit more dressed than the loincloth cut from the hide of a sacrificial goat that Aelius Tubero in the thirties BCE attributes to Euander's young men when they were celebrating their archaic, pre-foundation Lupercalia. But still must qualify as *nudus*: *nudus* not always means “stark naked” but only “having one's main garment removed”, and both Ovid and the Christian writers stress this nudity, although for different reasons<sup>8</sup>. The festival remained popular and is noted in the Menologia and the calendars of Philocalus, in 354 CE, and of Polemius Silvius; but we lack details, and the entry of the otherwise antiquarian-minded Polemius is curiously short, almost abrasive.

The Christian polemics of the same century equally demonstrate not much more than that the festival was still performed. Again the texts do not give many details; and even if there are some, one might distrust their reliability. A text such as Prudentius' *Against Symmachus* that lists the *luperci* among the performers of traditional Roman festivals and describes “the whips and the running of the naked young men at the Lupercalia” might owe more to learned literature, such as Ovid's *Fasti*, than to the observation of the custom in his own century<sup>9</sup>. Still, it presents the pagan elite of the late fourth century as eager sponsors of the ritual. And at least the nudity remains well attested, and Donatus (Servius Danielis) ascribes it to his own epoch, the mid-fourth-century, and so does the letter of pope Gelasius at the end of the fifth<sup>10</sup>.

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up on the body.

<sup>8</sup>On *nudus* see OLD; on the “loincloth” see Tubero frg. 3 Peter (= D.H. *Ant.* 1.80.1), describing Euander's men celebrating the Lupercalia γυμνοὺς ὑπεζωσμένους τὴν αἰδῶ ταῖς δοραῖς τῶν νεοθύτων “naked but their genitals clothed in the hides of the newly sacrificed goats”; both Ov. *Fast.* 5.101 (*cinctuti Luperci*, “L. in athletic shorts” – in contrast to the *nudi Luperci* of *Fast.* 2 passim; see also Val. Max. 2.2.9 *cincti*) and Plut. Rom.21.5 (περιζώματα) echo ὑπεζωσμένους but do not necessarily imply the most skimpy dress; Wiseman (1995), 82 overstates Augustus' concern for modesty.

<sup>9</sup> Prud. *Adv. Symm.* 816-817 *iamque lupercales ferulae, nudique petuntur | discursus iuvenum ; nudorum lupercal* also in Rufin. *Apologia* 2. – McLynn (2008) 168f. refers to two fourth century images, one from Africa and the other from Rome, that show modestly attired Luperci who whip a rather immodest women.

<sup>10</sup>Serv. Dan. *ad Aen.* 8.343: *hodieque nudi currunt*; see Murgia (2003), 53; Pellizani (2003), 129. – Gelasius, *Ep.* (PL 59.113D) : *ipsi cum amiculo nudi discurrete*, what the addressees refuse to do. Murgia, l.c. argues from the past tenses in Serv. *ad Aen.* 8.663 (*consuetudo permansit ut nudi Lupercalia celebrarent*), that in Servius' own time (early fifth cent.), the rite was abolished; but given Gelasius's letter, this must have been temporary at best, and the perfect can also be understood as resultative, see Pellizani (2003), 129.

Thus, the festival survived the Christianization of the empire and the prohibition of pagan sacrifices. The sacrifices of a dog and of a billy-goat (*caper*), both attested only through Plutarch's love for weird learning, seem to have been a less visible part of the ritual that preceded the course of the luperci: these quaint rites could obviously be given up without an essential feeling of loss (except presumably among some conservatives and antiquarians), since it was the visible public performance, the nude running on a predetermined route along the old core of Rome with the whip, and the sexually flavored excitement that mattered more than ritual conservatism<sup>11</sup>.

More than a century after Symmachus, the Lupercalia famously provoked the ire of pope Gelasius (492-496 CE) who addressed an angry pamphlet to its aristocratic Christian defenders in Rome<sup>12</sup>. We don't know whether he succeeded to abolish it, whether he was serious at all or whether he just tested the waters, or if such a prohibition would have outlasted his papacy. Modern scholars have usually expressed their surprise at the long survival and final transformation of the Lupercalia: until recently it was accepted without any doubt that it finally turned into the festival of *Purificatio Mariae*, Germany's *Mariae Lichtmess*, on february 2<sup>13</sup>. None of these moderns however has equalled the eloquence of the first scholar who expressed his surprise, the learned and somewhat garrulous cardinal Cesare Baroni (1538–1607) in his *Annales Ecclesiastici*<sup>14</sup>:

Who would believe that after the many edicts that Christian emperors so often directed against idolatry, and after the zeal with which the Holy Popes wanted to eradicate it, the

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<sup>11</sup> On the sacrifices Plut. *QRom.* 68 and 111 (dog); *Ov. Fast.* 2.445 (its hide is made into the whips; the same in Plut. *Rom.* 21.6, 32c where the sacrifice of αἴγες is part of the initiation of the Luperci), Val. Max. 2.2.9, Serv. *Aen.* 8.343 (*caper*).

<sup>12</sup> See below, note @.

<sup>13</sup> Rejected by Schäublin 1995; still in Mazza 1994, 351.

<sup>14</sup> Edited in 12 vols., 1588–1609. I cite the edition of Augustin Theiner, ed., *Caesaris Cardinalis Baronii Annales Ecclesiastici, denuo excusi et ad nostra usque tempora perducta* (Paris: Victor Palme, 1867), vol. 8 p. 569: *Quis credere possit, post tot Christianorum imperatorum edicta adversus idololatriam saepissime lata, postque sanctorum Pontificum ad eandem extirpandam adhibita studia, viguisse tamen adhuc Roma ad Gelasii tempora, quae fuere ante exordium Urbis allata in Italiam Lupercalia? Et quis satis digne admirari queat, eadem quoque recepta ab hominibus Christianis?*

Lupercalia, brought to Italy before Rome's foundation, still survived in the City in the times of pope Gelasius? And who would not be astonished that it was adopted by Christians?

In order to make his point, Baronius added the text of Gelasius' letter after a manuscript in the Vatican, with a few necessary corrections and some short and pertinent comments. This edition, triggered by his surprised indignation (or so his says), remains the one great and lasting service Baronius did to our knowledge of the late antique Lupercalia. Later scholars, however, did not pay him back well: instead of recognizing his merit, they insistently preferred to credit him with the idea that Gelasius abolished the Lupercalia and replaced them with the Christian festival of *Purgatio Mariae*. This is doubly wrong. Neither did Gelasius (or anybody else) replace the Lupercalia with a festival of Mary, as, after a few earlier skeptical scholars, Christoph Schäublin has finally demonstrated<sup>15</sup>. Nor does this wrongheaded idea go back to the learned Baronius, as already the abbé Migne saw in one of his learned footnotes that nobody seems to read. Although I am unable to tell where it originated, I reiterate Migné's observation that it is not to be found anywhere in Baronius' ample writings<sup>16</sup>. And as to unjustly overlooked earlier scholars: none other than the splendidly learned Benedictine scholar, Hugo Menardus (Nicolas-Hugues Ménard) rejected the same connection in his 1642 notes on Gregory the Great's *Liber Sacramentorum*, reprinted by the Abbé Migné, and derived the Christian ritual instead from pagan rituals during the month of February<sup>17</sup>. Again this has remained without any resonance in XIX<sup>th</sup> and XX<sup>th</sup> century scholarship.

Whatever happened in the Roman West, in the Greek East the festival survived even longer. It is attested in a long description in the *Book of Ceremonies* by the emperor Constantinus

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<sup>15</sup>Schäublin (1995); among the sceptics, he cites Dölger, and he could also have cited Usener (1911/1969), 311-312.

<sup>16</sup>Baronius looms somewhat large in Green (1931) who must echo W. Warde Fowler (1899), 321; Migne's rejection in *PL* 85.691, without a source other than *alii* (but not Baronius).

<sup>17</sup>*Quare hujus solemnitatis celebrandae viam non aperuit Gelasius papa, cum Lupercalia sustulit*, *PL* 78.299A; his own theory is based upon Ildephonsus of Toledo (died 667 CE) who in his *Sermo X* in Purificatione Sanctae Mariae claims that the Christian candle light processions on this holiday were transformed from the pagan purifications rituals for the god Februus, without however mentioning the Lupercalia (*PL* 96.277AB).

VII Porphyrogenitus (born in 905, ruled 913-959) among the rites that demand the emperor's attention<sup>18</sup>. But neither here nor in Gelasius's description, the festival looks very much like its namesake in Caesar's or Ovid's time.

***POPE GELASIUS AND THE LUPERCALIA  
IN LATE FIFTH CENTURY ROME***

Gelasius's small pamphlet with the long title "Against the Senator Andromachus and the Other Romans Who Decided to Perform the Lupercalia According to the Ancient Custom" (*Gelasius Papa I adversus Andromachum senatorem ceterosque Romanos qui Lupercalia secundum morem pristinum colenda constituebant*) is an interesting mixture of polemics and defensiveness<sup>19</sup>. It is unclear whether the title, present already in the oldest manuscript, an XI<sup>th</sup> century Vaticanus, goes back to Gelasius's time, or was added later<sup>20</sup>. If a later addition, the title still must contain contemporary information: the name of Andromachus does not appear in the text itself, but it perfectly fits the time. One Andromachus was a leading Roman aristocrat of the late fifth century, in 489 *magister officiorum* of king Odoacer, and his ambassador to Byzantium, for which mission he received additional instructions from Gelasius; at the time of the letter, he was perhaps urban prefect, which would explain why Gelasius addressed his pamphlet mainly to him<sup>21</sup>.

The structure and many details of the short treatise remain somewhat opaque. As a text with an immediate political aim, it reflects a specific situation and alludes to specific arguments

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<sup>18</sup> See below, note @.

<sup>19</sup>The most recent edition is Pomarès (1959) whom I cite, with his page numbers. – See also *PL* 59.110-116 (after the edition by Philippe Labé, Paris 1671); *Gelasius, Tractatus* 6, in: Thiel (1868), 598-607; *Collectio Avellana* 100, in: Günther (1898), 453-464.

<sup>20</sup>On the manuscripts of the *collectio Avellana* see Pomarès (1959), 150-153.

<sup>21</sup> *PLRE* 2.89 (the *magister officiorum*, "perhaps identical" with Gelasius' addressee); the instructions from Gelasius in his *Ep.* 10 (= Thiel, *Ep. pont.* 1.346).

that were perfectly clear to contemporary readers, but are somewhat lost on us. In a paper published in 2008, Neil McLynn has given the entire text a very close reading in order to reconstruct why it was published; this has considerably helped its historical understanding<sup>22</sup>.

The papal pamphlet begins with an attack on people who “sit at home knowing nothing” but publicly accuse others without checking their facts, just to slander others, *studio cacologiae*; the somewhat precious Greek word, more at home in classical Greek text of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE than in Christian writers, and almost unknown in Latin texts, might well be a calculated jibe at the Roman aristocrats with their pride of their Eastern connections: the pope too knew his Greek<sup>23</sup>. However this may be, the tension between the pope and the aristocrats are obvious, and they are not exactly unusual at the times<sup>24</sup>. They accused him, Gelasius says, of doing nothing against bad behavior inside the church. But these people do not realize that there not is only corporeal adultery that needs punishment, but also spiritual adultery which is much worse since it opens the mind to the devil. This spiritual adultery consists in the fact that, although Christians, these people “do not abhor, do not reject, do not fear to claim” that not to have worshiped the god Februarius has led to disease. The rhetoric shows what made the writer angry.

The strangely isolated god Februarius calls for a short *excursus*, even a conjecture on the text. Roman antiquarians since Varro and Festus derive the name of the month from *februare* “to

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<sup>22</sup>Neil McLynn, “Crying Wolf: The Pope and the Lupercalia,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 98 (2008), 161-175 who succeeds to set right several assumptions in what was for some time the leading monograph on the text, A. W. J. Holleman, *Pope Gelasius I and the Lupercalia* (Amsterdam : Hakkert, 1974) (although the short sketch in Brown 1988, 430 is remarkably accurate ; see also Barbara Valli. “Lupercis nudis lustratur antiquum oppidum Palatinum’: Alcune reflessioni sui Lupercalia,” *Florentia* 2 (2007), 101-154.

<sup>23</sup> The classical *κακολογία* (since Hdt.7.237) is rare in Greek Christian writers and in Latin attested only in Jerome’s commentary *In epist. ad Rom.* (PL 30.649C) (and the immensely learned XIIth cent. French theologian Petrus Comestor who in a sermon to his students plays with *paralogia, scenologia, physiologia, theologia, cacologia*, PL 198.1732A); it is as unusual and preciously learned as the *deus Februarius* whom Gelasius invokes later.

<sup>24</sup>See Sessa 209-212 (“mistrusting the bishop”); the Lupercalia affair 211

purify” and *februa*, “means or rites of purification”. The last to do so was Augustine who defined the *februa* as *sacra Lupercorum*: he knew his Varro inside-out<sup>25</sup>. Not many years later, exaggerated theism took over. Macrobius derived the month from a god Februus *lustrationum potens*; mediated through Isidor’s *Origines* and Bede’s *De temporum liber* (who cites Macrobius verbatim), this became the standard derivation of the month name in the Latin West<sup>26</sup>. However, Macrobius usually does not invent things like this. The inventor of the god Februus might be an otherwise unknown Anysios who, in his work *On Months* cited by John Lydus, derived the month name from the Etruscan god Φεβροδος ὁ καταχθόνιος<sup>27</sup>. It is not easy to date Anysios, but the personal name is not attested before the Antonines<sup>28</sup>, and his etruscological interests recall the work of Cornelius Labeo who belongs to the late third century CE, and whom John Lydus cites several times<sup>29</sup>. Likely, Anysios arrived in Lydus through Labeo; but one cannot be certain, and Anysios could be later. But whatever the answer to this is, for Gelasius’s text it matters only that a god Februarius is unattested, a god Februus well known to Latin Christians after Macrobius: this argues strongly for reading Februus and not Februarius in Gelasius. A distracted (or speculative) scribe might easily slip up on Februus and replace it with the month name Februarius; and in a tradition based on one single manuscript of which all other manuscripts are either direct or indirect copies, such a slip leaves no trace. (It is worthwhile noticing how gods seem to proliferate speculatively once polytheism had run its course.)

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<sup>25</sup> On *februare*, *februa*, Lupercalia and February see Varro, *De ling. Lat.* 6.13, 34; Festus s.v. Februarius, p. 75 L.; Ov. *Fast.* 2.19 etc.

<sup>26</sup> Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.13.3 (another argument for the late date of Macrobius); Isidorus, *Orig.* 5.33.4; Bede, *De temporum liber* 12 (PL 90.351C).

<sup>27</sup> In Lydus, *Mens.* 4.25.

<sup>28</sup> *PLRE* contains several Anysii; most of them are Easterners, and none looks like a writer (1.79f.: 3 names, the most promising Anysius 2, presumably a jurist known from Libanius’ letters; 2.108 has 4, the only Westerner being Anysius Marcellus Maximus “ex tribunis”, *CIL* 5.1652); the earliest seems an Anysios in Thyateira, *SEG* 26 (2006), 1353.

<sup>29</sup> On Labeo see Mastandrea (1979) and Briquel (1997), 119-137; on Anysios: Mass (1992), 62 (who mistakenly calls him Anysias).



The strange idea of spiritual adultery hides the very real misbehavior not punished by the pope but censured by some among Rome's aristocrats, adultery by a member of the clergy. To be called morally idle and lax in a matter of sexual ethics close at home obviously needles a pope who, as much as any of his predecessors, claimed moral authority in private sexual behavior, and must have provoked his counterattack against the defenders of "pagan behavior": why would a professed and baptized Christian want to worship the god Februus in order to gain protection<sup>30</sup>? (Which shows that the Lupercalia were not just defended by a "pagan faction" of the senate, as earlier scholars argued, relying on the rather problematical concept of entrenched religious partisanship in Rome<sup>31</sup>.)

But Gelasius does not spend much time with this question: it is rather well-worn by now, although it still can raise anti-pagan instincts – which was what he wanted. What had always mattered much more than the divinity presiding over the Lupercalia was the ritual race and the flogging of female bystanders<sup>32</sup>. Gelasius concentrates most of his energies to refute the accusation that by abolishing the rite the pope removed an instrument of supernatural protection from the city. This argument obviously loomed large in a recent debate where it was used by Andromachus and other Roman aristocrats – by now presumably all members of the Catholic Church – to defend the ritual<sup>33</sup>. It is probable that at some point in the recent past, the ritual had been suspended, but it was revived recently. It must have been when defending this resumption that Andromachus argued that its suspension had caused disease.

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<sup>30</sup> 3 (p.164) *Quomodo autem non <in> hanc partem recidit qui cum se Christianum videri velit et profiteatur et dicat, palam tamen publiceque praedicare non horreat, non refugiat, non pavescat, ideo morbos gigni quia daemonia non colantur, et deo Februario non litetur?*

<sup>31</sup> Markus (1990), 131-5, esp. 133 ("the end of partnership between the papacy and the Christian aristocracy").

<sup>32</sup>In all Republican and early Augustan texts, the god of the Lupercalia, if he is mentioned, is usually Pan/Faunus, see Wiseman (1995) who puts too much emphasis on the question to which divinity the Lupercalia was dedicated. Fest. s.v. Februarius, p. 75 Lindsay is alone to mention Iuno Sospita, and Lyd. *Mens.* 4.25 cites one Anysios who connected the Luperci with an agricultural ritual for the Etruscan underworld god Februus, see below.

<sup>33</sup> Gelasius, *Ep.* 10.7 (Thiel) .

The arguments on both sides need some thought. Relying on Livy, the pope singles out *sterilitas feminarum*, and rejects the arguments of the senators who had argued (as Gelasius reports), that the omission of the Lupercalia caused pandemics (*morbos* 111B and often). When he then tells them that the omission of the Lupercalia cannot have been responsible for the present calamities, he presents a longer list, *pestis, sterilitas (terrarum), bellorum tempestas* (113A,B); and when he argues *e contrario* against them, he claims that the obvious and aggravating prosperity of the East was possible without Lupercalia (115A: *Oriens omnium rerum copiis exuberat et abundat*). The senators thus must have argued that the Lupercalia guaranteed prosperity and protected against illness, bad harvests and war; they never mentioned female fertility. This was too closely associated with the embarrassing sexuality of naked young men beating young women: the senators curtailed and desexualized the earlier interpretations that go as far back as Varro and that claimed that the rite of the Luperci was a purification ritual that guaranteed human fertility<sup>34</sup>. There is an interesting parallel to this change in a notice in John Lydus's *On the Months*: in his entry on February, he tells that the Etruscan underworld god Februus “was worshipped by the Luperci so that he might produce the harvest” (θεραπεύεσθαι δὲ πρὸς τῶν Λουπερκῶν ὑπὲρ ἐπιδόσεως καρπῶν), and he gives as his source the already mentioned treatise of Anysius *On the Months*<sup>35</sup>. The god Februus echoes *deus tuus Februarius* (or, in my reading, Februus) in Gelasius, as does one of the reasons that Gelasius rejects, *sterilitas terrarum* (113B)<sup>36</sup>. One wonders whether Gelasius' opponents still were reading Anysios, or at least Cornelius Labeo: in what feels like a battle of antiquarians, the pope cites instead Livy's lost

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<sup>34</sup> See Varro, *ling.* 6.3.13, 6.4.34, ant. F 76 Cardauns; Festus s.v. Februarius, p. 75 Lindsay; Ovid, F. 2.425-452 and 5.101f. (*luperci... lustrant*); Plut. Rom. 21.4 (καθάρσιος, see 21.10), 21.7 (female fertility). Purification alone D.H.ant. 1.80.1 (= Tubero F 3 Peter) and Censor. *De die natali* 22.15; *sterilitas* and *puellae* Serv. Dan. ad Aen. 8.343 (*nonnulli ... dicunt*). The two interpretations, purification and fertility, are not mutually exclusive, see Valli (2007), 123-125.

<sup>35</sup> Lyd. *De mens.* 4.25; the notice escaped the attention of Wiseman (1995).

<sup>36</sup> On *deo tuo Februo* instead of the transmitted (and, for an unattentive scribe, much easier) *Februario* see above, n.@@.

second decade for the reason given in most other sources, *sterilitas mulierum*; Livy's authority must have come in handy<sup>37</sup>.

But the Lupercalia in Andromachus's time were not those of the late Republic, as Gelasius is not slow to point out<sup>38</sup>:

At the epoch of your ancestors, the noblemen themselves were running, and the ladies were beaten, their bodies exposed to the public. Thus, originally you yourselves were involved in the Lupercalia. It would have been enough to do nothing instead of celebrate the rite in a bad way – but you brought the cult that you thought you should perform and that would bring wholesomeness, down to people that are vile and common, abject and of the lowest order.

Gelasius's account does not just reflect the late antique Lupercalia where the noble ladies let themselves be beaten on their naked bodies (Plutarch tells us that they just stretched out their hand, like in school), he also has done his antiquarian homework. From his sources he knows that the Republican and Augustan Luperci were members of the aristocracy (Marc Anthony's infamous performance as a *lupercus* was still remembered in late antiquity), and he is aware of the sexuality of the rite that his opponents tried to obscure<sup>39</sup>. In Gelasius's time, however, the course with the whip must have turned into a general spectacle, performed, as McLynn suggested, by professional actors; their defamation as "vile" and "abject" is standard Christian evaluation that at the same time helps to denigrate the rite, not unlike Cicero's remark on the savage character of the *luperci* of his own time<sup>40</sup>. The reasons for this recent change are obvious. Gelasius somewhat underhandedly suggests that the aristocrats were ashamed to run themselves in a somewhat embarrassing costume, and he might well be right. As the debate on the meaning

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<sup>37</sup> Gelasius, op. cit. 112D: *Lupercalia autem propter quid instituta sunt, quantum ad ipsius superstitionis commenta respectant, Livius in secunda decade loquitur (= Livy, frg. 36 Weissenborn). Nec propter morbos inhibendos instituta commemorat, sed propter sterilitatem, ut ei videtur, mulierum, quae tunc acciderat, exigendam:*

<sup>38</sup> 16 (p.174) *apud illos enim nobiles ipsi currebant, et matronae nudato publice corpore vapulabant. vos ergo primi in Lupercalia commisistis; satius fuerat non agere quam ea cum injuria celebrare; sed deduxistis venerandum vobis cultum, et salutiferum quem putatis, ad viles trivialesque personas, abiectos et infimos.*

<sup>39</sup> E.g. in Cassiodorus's *Chronicle* (PL 69,1226B).

<sup>40</sup> Cicero, *Pro Caelio* 26 *fera quaedam sodalitas*; but since both the accuser Balbus and the defendant Caelius were luperci, Cicero's characterization works as much against Balbus as against Caelius and might well be exaggerated.

of the rite suggests, its defenders were at pains to remove the sexual connotations<sup>41</sup>. In an age, furthermore, whose aristocratic dress codes had become much more elaborate and, at the same time, exclusive, nudity must have been sitting better with actors and entertainers. But despite the social background of the actual performers, the Lupercalia have remained firmly a concern of the Roman aristocrats who act as *Lupercaliorum patroni*.

The second detail comes towards the end. Gelasius calls his aristocratic opponents not just “protectors of the Lupercalia,” but also “defenders of reprehensive songs” (*cantilenarum turpium defensores*). He makes quickly clear what he means – not bawdy or lascivious songs, but songs that make morally problematical behavior, sexual and otherwise (*obscenitates et flagitia*), known to a larger public, “publicizing the misdeeds of each and everybody” (*facinora uniuscuiusque vulgando*). It is the sort of songs that participants in the Basel Fasnacht are deeply familiar with: the “Schnitzelbänke” (lampoons) that makes fun of anyone among the city elite (and sometimes well beyond it) whose behavior did not fit the moral standards expected from a person of his or her standing; the same corrective lampooning already inspired the parabasis of Old Comedy<sup>42</sup>. It was this lampooning to which Gelasius must have obliquely referred already in his introductory remark on the aristocratic penchant for *cacologia*: although the real singers were the performing actors on the street, the inspiration for their texts – and perhaps their very texts, if again the Basel Fasnacht is a model – comes from the aristocratic *patroni* who from the comfort of their houses embarked with relish on the *cacologia* of the lampoons.

This allows a reconstruction of the events in Gelasius’s Rome. Early in his papacy, the Roman aristocrats, with Andromachus as their speaker, wanted to revive the Lupercalia that had been dormant for some time. With the argument that their dormancy had catastrophic consequences, they argued from a recent outbreak of a pandemic, and more generally from the festival’s role as securing prosperity and good harvests. Since the age when successful knights

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<sup>41</sup>On nudity in late 4th cent Antioch see Brown (1988), 315-317. – The use of actors must have affected the date, see below.

<sup>42</sup>Gelzer (1992).

were very proud of having served as *luperci*, the city elite felt responsible for them; the last *lupercus*, we remember, was a *vir clarissimus* who died perhaps under Constantine, and even if he did not get the details right, Prudentius must have realized who was behind the Lupercalia when he brought them up in his poem against Symmachus. The aristocracy remained *Lupercalium patroni* under Gelasius, although they did no more perform themselves. Their intention to bring it back must have led to some discussion with the pope who could not have been overjoyed at the idea and who must have had theological problems with Andromachus' argument; but behind this argument was the same intention that the emperors had all along, not to touch those festivals that provided entertainment and happiness to the people. But when it was pointed out to him that none of his predecessors had succeeded to make the emperors prohibit the rite, he let it pass; being already embroiled in battles with the emperor and the patriarch of Constantinople on the status of the papacy, Gelasius had bigger fish to fry<sup>43</sup>. So the Lupercalia came back. But then, at a celebration to which the pamphlet reacts and that must have been very recent, someone had the bad idea to lampoon an adulterous priest and, implicitly or explicitly, his protector, the "morally lax" pope Gelasius<sup>44</sup>. Laxity of sexual mores could become a sore point among contemporary popes; pope Symmachus who took the chair of Peter two years after Gelasius' death and the short papacy of Anastasius, was lampooned for his relationship with a courtesan with the speaking name Conditaria, "Spicy"<sup>45</sup>. The lampooning broke the truce between papacy and *urbs*, and the pope made it very clear that in order not to appear morally lax he had to attack the Lupercalia and to excommunicate Andromachus, and that he would not forgive any Christian who would perform the ritual<sup>46</sup>:

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<sup>43</sup>See Ullmann (1962), 15-27, and *passim*.

<sup>44</sup>McLynn (2008), @@@ suggests that the pope had heard of plans to lampoon him which made him react with the pamphlet: but the arguments of the lampoons are usually kept secret before their very performance, and the papal indignation makes much more sense if he was taken by surprise.

<sup>45</sup>Chadwick 1981, 32.

<sup>46</sup> 30 (p. 186) *quod ad me pertinet, nullus baptizatus, nullus Christianus hoc celebret, et soli hoc pagani, quorum ritus est, exsequantur. Me pronuntiare convenit Christianis ista perniciose et funesta indubitanter existere.*

As far as I am concerned, no baptized Christian shall perform this: only the pagans, whose rite it is, shall follow it through. I have decided to pronounce formally that the ceremony is doubtless dangerous and damaging to Christians.

This sounds final, except that the last word in these matters was not the pope's. Given the imperial protection of these rituals and the ties of Andromachus to the new (although-short-lived) Germanic ruler, Gelasius might have succeeded as little as his predecessors to permanently ban the festival<sup>47</sup>.

*CONSTANTINE PORPHYROGENETOS AND THE LUPERCALIA  
IN TENTH CENTURY CONSTANTINOPLE*

In his rejection of a link between Lupercalia and prosperity, Gelasius makes a bold claim: “Why is the East prosperous and plentiful in everything, yet it has never performed the Lupercalia nor does it perform it now?”<sup>48</sup> Given that a form of the festival was celebrated in tenth century Constantinople, the statement surprises: would not the tenth century form most likely derive from an earlier festival celebrated in the city, in the same way as the middle-Byzantine Kalendae and Brumalia continued the respective city festivals introduced by Constantine into his new Rome? It might be that Gelasius never was in Constantinople and so did not know, or that in his eagerness he overlooked the existence of the ritual in Constantinople. Either possibility is more likely if it already had radically changed its ritual form from the one it had in Rome to something attested five centuries later; Gelasius's invective would then be a *terminus ante quem* for such a change.

Our only source for Lupercalia in medieval Constantinople is the *Book of Ceremonies* (*De cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae*), compiled by the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (ruled

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<sup>47</sup> Or did he see Odoacer's demise in 494 as his chance? If so, nothing in the pamphlet points to this.

<sup>48</sup> Ep. col. 115A: *cur nunc Oriens omnium rerum copiis exuberat et abundat, qui nec celebravit unquam Lupercalia, nec celebrat?*

919 to 959), as part of his attempt to preserve the imperial traditions. The Lupercalia appears in the section that describe imperial appearances in the circus, in this case at the “meat-market horse race that is called of the Lupercalion”, *περὶ τοῦ μακελλαρικοῦ ἵπποδρομίου τοῦ λεγομένου Λουπερκαλ(ίου)*<sup>49</sup>. As always in this text, the ceremonies are described in the perspective of those who have to perform: the emperor and his main courtiers – foremost the Head Chamberlain (*πραϊπόσιτος*) and the Master of Ceremonies (*ὁ τῆς καταστάσεως*) – are the main actors and addressees. Other groups and actors appear only marginally, and the city populace becomes important only in their relationship to the emperor, as a source of acclamations.

The textual history of the *Liber Ceremoniarum* is complex, with materials from different sources and learned later additions. This shall not concern us here. Although some of the details for the Lupercalia race mostly come not from the court, but from the city archives, and not all are consistent as to whether the celebration assumes one or two emperors (which changed during Constantine’s rule, from monarchy to dyarchy and back), these inconsistencies do not affect my argument<sup>50</sup>.

The *μακελλαρικόν ἵπποδρόμιον* is the “Carnival’s Race”: it is the last race before the forty days of Lent when meat was prohibited, as were circus games and other spectacles. This ties the date of the race to the date of Easter<sup>51</sup>. Lent began on Sunday Quadragesima, which could be as early as February 8, a week (by now an accepted unit of time) before the traditional date of the Lupercalia: since a circus race could neither happen during Lent nor, incidentally, on a Sunday, the Lupercalia in Constantinople must have lost its immovable date of February 15 in favor of a movable date somewhere in February, on one of the last weekdays before Sunday Quadragesima. It might be that this had happened also in Gelasius’ Rome, as part of the adaptation of the festival

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<sup>49</sup>Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *Liber caerimoniarum* 1,82 ed. Vogt, 2:1, 164-168, and his commentary in 2:2, 172-177. An English translation and short commentary by Moffatt and Tall (2012). – See Duval (1976) and (1977).

<sup>50</sup> In his edition, Albert Vogt argued that Constantine’s research must cover that past two centuries, since Constantine V (ruled 741-775), vol. 2:1, xx.

<sup>51</sup>On the date see Grumel (1936), 428-435.

to a Christian calendar: although in Rome the Lupercalia did not contain circus games, the sort of mass entertain they afforded would neither fit a Sunday nor the period of Lent. Sundays were freed from any spectacle by a decree of Honorius and Theodosius II in 409, the seven days of Quadragesima and Easter already in 405<sup>52</sup>. It is not easily conceivable that any pope would have tolerated the Lupercalia on a Sunday or during Lent, even if he allowed the ritual to take place.

The introductory paragraph of the long description in the *Liber Caerimoniarum* deals with the formal announcement of the race<sup>53</sup>:

One day before the race, the *praepositus* [the Imperial Chamberlain] goes to the emperor and reminds him to order that the race be held, and when he has received the agreement to hold it, he goes, calls the Master of Ceremonies and sends him to the heads of demes and the city administration to tell them that the race will be held.

Being an “ordinary race” (ἵππικὸν παγανόν<sup>54</sup>), it is organized by the city and not by the emperor; given its mobile date, all the people involved – on the court and the city side – have to be informed of its impending performance (even if preparations must have started much earlier).

On the day of the race itself, the emperor is being prepared for his public appearance in the circus. In a complex movement, he first walks from the palace to the dining room in the circus where the patricians and the military greet him by prostration; he then proceeds to the throne lodge (κάθισμα) in the circus. There, he receives the acclamations of his people, greets them, and gives the sign for starting the race. After the first three races, the ceremony that is special to this day commences:

On an order, the *actuarius* gives a sign with his hand, holding a napkin, to the city administration; they move from the *diippion* in two groups. When both groups arrive at

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<sup>52</sup> Sundays *CTh* 2.8.25 (extending an earlier prohibition, *CTh* 2.8.23 of 399 also to imperial birthdays); Quadragesima and Easter *CTh* 2.8.24 (mistakenly dated to 400, the first consulship of Stilicho).

<sup>53</sup> Εἰσέρχεται πρὸ μιᾶς ἡμέρας τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἵπποδρομίου ὁ πραιπόσιτος πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα, ὑπομιμνήσκων αὐτόν, εἰ κελεύει ἀχθῆναι τὸ αὐτὸ ἵπποδρόμιον, καὶ λαβὼν παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως συγκατάθεσιν πρὸς τὸ ἄγεσθαι αὐτό, ἐξέρχεται, καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος τὸν τῆς καταστάσεως, ἀποστέλλει αὐτὸν πρὸς τοὺς δημάρχους καὶ τὸ πολίτευμα, εἰπεῖν πρὸς αὐτούς, ὡς ὅτι ἄγεται ἵπποδρόμιον. – This and all other translations are my own.

<sup>54</sup> On the possible meanings of παγανός see Vogt, @@@ 173.



the tribunals, they begin to pronounce an antiphony, one group saying: “Beautiful Spring returns again,” the other: “Bringing health, joy and prosperity” and all the rest, as is custom. They walk up to the field of the Greens, reunite there and utter three acclamations (*ἀπελλαιτικούς*) towards the Throne Lodge. On an order, the City Prefect descends, joins the city administration at the place called Chalkos, and they walk together to the *stama*; there, they all make a deep reverence. Then, the Young Man at the side of the Prefect utters an acclamation and says: “He Who protects the rulers”, and the people: “God is One”, and the all rest, as is custom. And they walk up to the doors, acclaiming the emperor, and saying: “Verily, Lord, many years for him,” and they exit. The Prefect, after a command and on a nod from the *actuarios*, exits quickly from the *stama* to where he went, and then the fourth race is run.

In the perspective of the *Liber*, what counts are not the races but the carefully choreographed movements of groups or individuals, and the acclamations and hymns they offer to the emperor. The main hymn praises Spring: we deal with a Spring Ritual, even if mid-February might feel early for Spring in Constantinople<sup>55</sup>. But one should keep in mind that at least in the ritual Roman calendar, March 1 was equally read as a New Year’s festival, celebrated with the first green leaves<sup>56</sup>.

After the Spring hymn and its antiphonic response that connects the new season with “health, joy, and prosperity”, an enigmatic young man (*νεανίσκος*) appears at the side of the urban prefect and starts an invocation to God as the protector of Kings: in the new season (or new year) that now begins the emperor is in need of divine protection, and of “many years for him.” The text does not explain who the young man is and who moved him to his role; we see him simply standing there, playing his part in the liturgy. Given the text’s perspective that describes the ceremony through the eyes of the emperor, this means that the election of the young man is outside the emperor’s responsibility: it must have been the city administration, not the court, to select him for his role. This also explains why he is paired with the urban prefect, on whose side he (suddenly) stands.

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<sup>55</sup>See Grumel (1936), 431-2. – Modern average temperatures for Istanbul are identical for January and February (5.5° C), somewhat below the March average (7° C).

<sup>56</sup>*Ov. Fast.* 3.139 *frondes sunt in honore novae*; in his interview with Janus, Ovid had been perplexed why the new year would not begin in spring, *Fast.* 1.149-160.

In the afternoon, after the emperor returned to his lodge from his lunch, other races are added:

When three races have been held, in the fourth race the charioteers dismount after the fifth turn in the curve of the Greens: they run, riding each other until the *stama*. And they receive the prizes as in the first afternoon round. This happens every year, i.e. that they run a foot race, in order to close the racing year<sup>57</sup>.

This confirms the character of the Lupercalia Race as marking the end of an annual cycle and the beginning of a new one whose future bliss one hoped to gain through the praise of Spring and the invocation to God in behalf of the emperor. To replace a horse race with a foot race of the charioteers riding each other is a somewhat scurrilous inversion of the normal procedure, in line with the innumerable rites of inversion that mark the New Year in many cultures around the globe. The charioteers, all-powerful and coveted in Byzantine society, are demoted to playing the role of their horses: this recalls the female cross-dressing of the military in many Kalendae festivals in East and West, or the slaves being served by their masters at the Saturnalia in Rome. Given the importance of the circus as a space of social symbolism in Byzantine society, it should not surprise that it was this space and its main actors, the charioteers, that reenacted the inversion, in the same as in the third and fourth century it was the market-place that saw the cross-dressing of the soldiers who were in that era the main expression of power, albeit at the time with more sinister consequences. Armies win thrones, charioteers rarely do.

Where are the traditional Roman Lupercalia in all this? Scholars have pointed to two details as transformed memories of the old ritual: the young man and the running charioteers.

The young man (ὁ νεανίσκος) is part of the city aristocracy, not the court: a young nobleman, acting on behalf of his city. This resonates with what we know about the *luperci* of the imperial age. During these centuries, the *luperci* were always young equestrians, *adulescentes*

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<sup>57</sup> Καὶ ἀχθέντων τῶν τριῶν βαίῶν, ἐν τῷ τετάρτῳ βαίῳ ἀπὸ πέμπτης τάβλας κατέρχονται οἱ δ ἡνίοχοι ἐν τῷ τοῦ Πρασίνου καμπτῷ, καὶ τρέχουσιν ἡνιοχοῦντες ἀλλήλους μέχρι τοῦ στάματος, καὶ λαμβάνουσιν τὰ ἔπαθλα, ὡς ἐπὶ πρώτου βαίου τῆς δειλινῆς. Τοῦτο δὲ τὸ ἐτήσιον γίνεται, ἥγουν τοῦ τρέχειν αὐτοὺς πεζοὺς, διὰ τὸ συγκλεῖσαι τὰ ἵπποδρόμια τοῦ χρόνου.

above the age of sixteen who represented the festival and whose images could be seen in the city of Rome and, after Constantine, perhaps also in Constantinople. When restoring the Lupercalia, Augustus had insisted on age limits: he forbade to select beardless youngsters, *imberbi*, presumably for moral reasons, but he must also have insisted on their status as young men, perhaps in the light of Marc Anthony who still served at age 38, in February 44. Valerius Maximus had described the ritual as the spectacle of the *iuventus equestris ordinis*, and to Prudentius, it was still the *nudi discursus iuvenum*, “the naked races of young men” – even if this description owes more to the author’s learning than to his actual observation<sup>58</sup>. The funerary altar of a young *lupercus*, whose parents must have been proud of his role, give his age as sixteen years<sup>59</sup>. Thus a young man, a νεανίσκος, is an easy transformation for the most visible actor of the Lupercalia throughout the imperial centuries. At the same time, such a young performer is an apt symbol for the new year that was about to come back, and the hopes connected with it.

Although running was emblematic enough of the *luperci* to become the quasi-technical term for participation, from Ovid’s repeated use of the verb *currere* to Prudentius *discursus*, the foot race of the charioteers is less easily derived from this rite<sup>60</sup>. If the final chariot race of the year had to be closed with an inversion, it was almost a given to have the charioteers run instead of their steeds, even without the memory of the running *luperci*. Perhaps it is not the foot race of the charioteers then that is a transformation of the running *luperci*, but the chariot race as such. Unlike any other festivals, the Lupercalia were not marked by horse races in the fourth-century calendar of the city of Rome: neither Philocalus nor Polemius Silvius note them. Thus, it might well have been the later Byzantine transformation of the festival into the last horse race before the fasting season that turned a foot-race around the Palatine into yet another set of races in the circus of Byzantium.

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<sup>58</sup> Valerius Maximus 2.2.9; Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum* 816f.

<sup>59</sup> *Lupercalibus vetuit currere imberbes* Sueton., *Augustus* 31.4; on the young Ti. Claudius Liberalis (*CIL* 6.3512 = 14.3624) see above, note @@.

<sup>60</sup> Ovid, *Fasti* 283-288; Sueton, *Augustus* 31.4; *CIL* 6.2160 = *ILS* 4947; *discursus iuvenum* Prudentius, l.c. (preceding note).

### *TRANSFORMATIONS OF A FESTIVAL*

The scant information on the Lupercalia during the first centuries of the Imperial age does not permit the reconstruction of an unbroken and limpid history of the festival. This is not different in the rest of the festival calendar where it usually is the late Republican and Augustan phase that is best documented. There might not have been many changes anyway. Even under Diocletian, the Luperci still came from the equestrian order, and they were young men; in the calendar of 354, the festival date was still February 15 (here as often, Polemius Silvius cannot qualify as independent evidence), and a race of nude (or rather scantily clad) young men remained the salient characteristic of the festival for Donatus and Prudentius in the later fourth and Servius in the early fifth century; in the age of Justinian, John Lydus still knows of the Luperci, although only indirectly<sup>61</sup>. As far as we can see, the form of the festival remained surprisingly close to its reformulation under Augustus that to us appears as mainly a reform of the organization, the restriction of participation to knights and the introduction of age limits for the participants. As far as we can see, no major change happened in imperial times. The most enigmatic rite that involves “two young men of noble origin” (μειράκια δύο ἀπὸ γένους) is known to us only through Plutarch who must follow a pre-Augustan Roman antiquarian, most likely Varro; one has to assume that here too, knights replaced the aristocrats, if the rite survived at all as the token initiation of the new Luperci<sup>62</sup>. Nor do we have indications that at first the transfer to Constantinople after 324 changed anything. But we have to assume that such a transfer took place; both because it still existed in the tenth century, and because of the general assumption that Constantine’s New Rome also adopted Rome’s festival calendar and especially a festival

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<sup>61</sup> Lyd. *Mens.* 4.25, citing Anysios (see above n.@).

<sup>62</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 21.6. – On the initiatory background (but with a different reading) see Ulf (1982) and Bremmer (1987).

with as strong Romulean connotations as the Lupercalia had. We have no indication as to the time or the authors and motives of such a transfer, but it goes most likely back to the early days of the New Rome with its emulation of the older city<sup>63</sup>.

The major changes happened after Constantine, and there must have been two locally and temporarily separated reformulations, one in Rome in the fifth century, another one at an unknown date in Constantinople. Both tried to adapt a very popular festival to a Christian empire. In Rome, the Luperci and their performance remained at the center of the action, supplemented by lampoons and performed no more by knights or young senators, but by professional actors. The senatorial defenders of the festival also attempted a partial reinterpretation of the festival's meaning that we perceive only in Gelasius' reaction to it. The festival always had two meanings that in the eyes of some ancient authors at least were not incompatible, that of a purification ritual and that of a ritual that served to provoke fertility in young women; Festus, Ovid and Plutarch were able to combine these two aims<sup>64</sup>. Later authors such as Gelasius's source replaced the overall aim of helping female fertility and the concomitant sexualized atmosphere (that must have offended contemporary sensibilities) with healing, prosperity and agrarian fertility, building on the understanding of the festival as a cathartic rite that is attested in late Republican time as well. In Constantinople, the festival as we perceive it in the *Liber Ceremoniarum* lost all these traits, became tied to the Circus and the emperor, and turned into a seasonal ritual that enacted the transition from winter to spring; the shadowy Anysios can show how such a reading might go back to pre-Constantinian Rome<sup>65</sup>. We cannot tell whether outside the courtly world there were also more wordly entertainments: there is no Byzantine text on the Lupercalia outside the *Liber Cerimoniarum*. The humorless bishops who

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<sup>63</sup>Mazza 1994, 351; he suggests that the statue of the she-wolf with the twins in the Hippodrome recalled the *lupercal* just outside the Roman Circus Maximus, 353-354.

<sup>64</sup>Festus s.v. Februarius, p. 76 (*mulieres februantur*); Ov. *Fasti* 2.425-452, 5.101f.; Plut. *Rom.* 21.4 (καθάρσια, cp. 10),7 (young women).

<sup>65</sup>Anysios ap. Lyd. *De mens.* 4.25.

assembled in the Trullo in 692 offered, in their canon 62, a long list of bad ritual behavior during Kalendae, Vota, Brumalia and other unnamed popular entertainments, but they did not mention the Lupercalia: at the time, the festival was either confined to the imperial court and therefore taboo for the bishops, or it was temporarily suspended.

## **EPILOGUE**

### **THE PERSISTENCE OF FESTIVALS AND THE END OF SACRIFICES**

The trajectory of this book led us from the revival of festival traditions in the Greek cities in the first two centuries of the imperial epoch to the celebration of Lupercalia and Kalendae in Byzantium under Justinian and later. What started as an inquiry into the festival culture of Greece and Asia Minor in the imperial age and the reception of Roman city festivals in the cities of the Mediterranean East increasingly has become an investigation of some aspects of the religious transformation of the Eastern Mediterranean in the first five centuries CE, the way this transformation reflected itself in the urban festival culture and how this culture contributed to the change, and how the will to follow and revive traditions and the radical determination to innovate the world interacted with each other; it also has become clear that the dichotomy of tradition versus innovation does not even roughly correspond to common dichotomies such as pagan versus Christian or emperors versus bishops. Almost inevitably, the focus of these studies was on the city and imperial elite and its normative apex, the emperors and bishops of the later Roman empire. Even when looking at two areas – dream healing and magic – where less exalted individuals, their actions and their desires became better visible than in realm of collective festivals, the reaction of the norm-giving elite, of imperial law-givers or narrating bishops, remained a mirror only that allowed a glance into the world of the individual, and refracted this world in various attempts of norm-giving. It is time to pull the loose threads in and to weave the isolated strands of my narration together. Two questions will serve as a coagulant for the many individual data and observations: why did festivals survive, despite the onslaught of generations

of bishops and their collective outcries? And how does this intersect with the problem recently made prominent in two independent investigations, in Guy Stroumsa's lectures at the Collège de France, and in Maria-Zoe Petropolou's Oxford dissertation, the end of sacrifice?<sup>1</sup>

## THE TENACITY OF FESTIVALS

The surprising resilience of festival traditions was visible from the start of this inquiry, in the way Epaminondas of Akraiphia renewed the local Ptoia, or the Athenians in the age of Hadrian regulated the procession during the Mysteria. Invented traditions and conscious innovations worked together to enhance the visual splendor of the rituals in which the city presented itself to itself and all the foreigners who cared to look and participate or who, like Vibius Salutaris in Ephesos, made their own contribution to the splendor. This revival of urban pride after the troubled period between the Mithridatic Wars and Nero's emancipation of all Greeks offered outstanding members of the civic elite large areas where they could contribute to their city's image and well-being, not the least by lavishly feeding citizens and foreign guests alike with the meat of the sacrifices and whatever else took their fancy. The revival of the old splendor never was a simple restoration: even outside the field of consciously or unconsciously invented traditions, the city festivals helped to define the new world in which these independent Eastern cities operated and where Rome, its emperor and its governor played a crucial role. Beyond the straightforward and well researched imperial cult, this new order expressed itself in more subtle ways, as the program of Salutaris's processions in Ephesos or the donation to celebrate a parallel series of Roman and local birthdays in Cretan Gortyn showed.

The city festivals of Rome that in the second century begin to become visible outside Rome fit this pattern. The Kalendae and Saturnalia in Iudaea-Palaestina or, attested not much

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<sup>1</sup>Stroumsa (2005/2009); Petropolou (2008). – On another issue, the change in time perception and organization, see some of the sketches in Saggiaro (2005), especially di Berardino (2005), 106-109 and Piccaluga (2005).



later, in Tertullian's Carthage were first and foremost festivals celebrated by the Roman garrisons and the *municipia* implanted in foreign soil, to live and affirm their own Roman life regardless of their surroundings<sup>2</sup>. Like the festivals celebrated in the *urbs*, they were moments of lavish sacrifices and extravagant eating, drinking and entertainment; exuberant merrymaking through the city street was sometimes part of it. When a festival gave rise to a fair, such as the Saturnalia fair at Lykopolis/Beth Shean, it was attracting the people of the countryside and of neighboring cities, Romans, Greeks and Jews alike. It remains hidden who on the local level took the initiative to start such a fair; but the Roman governor had to grant it to the whoever on the local level had come up with the idea, thus local elites and Roman administrators had to work together. On these occasions, the borderlines between "idolatry" and permitted social interaction began to wear thin, unlike when people were "sitting down in temples" to dine on the slaughtered animals, with the altar still smoking nearby and the divine image looking out through the open temple doors. When groups of kin or neighbors were celebrating banquets and gift-exchange in the privacy of their houses, often temporarily obliterating the social hierarchies, as happened at the Kalendae or the Matronalia, the Christians in Carthage – or for that matter, I imagine, the Jews in Iudaea-Palaestina – were heavily tempted to join the celebration, to accept the invitation from pagan friends or, more exclusively if they were feeling more strongly about religious borderlines and idolatrous food, to come together for these festivals in a purely Christian or Jewish household. Already Paul in Corinth realized that at social gatherings and banquets diaspora Jews and Christians could not always reject an invitation from a friendly neighbor or non-Christian kinsman, and he provided his addressees with rules of behavior that with regard to meat amounted to a 'don't ask don't tell' compromise. This allowed all possible forms of shared meals except the manifest "sitting down to a meal in a heathen temple" with which only Paul personally had no problems but that irked less self-assured Jews or Christians<sup>3</sup>. The members of the two

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<sup>2</sup>See the overview of Ando (2003) and the reservations of Segeni (2007).

<sup>3</sup>I *Cor.* 8-10. – See Marshal (1987), 290-291.

guilds in Phrygian Hierapolis that in the early third century came together at Passover, Pentecost and the Kalendae to crown the grave of a Jewish couple, on the other hand, would have known exactly what the diaspora Jew Paul was talking about.

Several factors helped this double adaptation and transfer, from the *urbs* to the *polis* and from the “idolaters” to the “just”, be they Jewish or Christian. One was the inherent nature of festivals as spaces of enjoyment and social encounters. In their eagerness to draw sharp boundaries, rabbis and bishops continuously underrated this basic human need – most famously perhaps Augustine and his fellow bishops who tried to impose a period of fasting during the Kalendae. To replace one festival with another proved a better strategy – the Brumalia combined with the Twelve Days of Christmas efficiently eclipsed the Saturnalia, but, interestingly enough, did not remove the Kalendae and Vota, not even in Byzantium where the Court celebrated the Twelve Days with daily dinner invitations while the city people danced on the streets at the Kalendae and Vota. But the replacement strategy was used less often than modern scholars have imagined: the Lupercalia were never replaced by the Christian Purificatio Mariae, nor did Christmas replace an imaginary festival of Sol; Easter and Pentecost found their dates independently from the pagan festival calendar<sup>4</sup>.

Another factor was the capability of festivals to express and create local or translocal identities, and the human need for such identities. The wish to belong to Carthage and to celebrate the common Matronalia in the same way as all the neighbors did could be stronger than the wish to stand out as a Christian, and not all Christians were willing to pay their religious choice with the loss of local identity. And once everybody was Christian, it did not matter anyway, and one could just go on with celebrating what one had celebrated all the time, to the revulsion of some more radical bishops.

A third factor was the fact that some festival names lent themselves better to this sort of globalization than others. Most often, a Greek or Roman festival name contained the name of a

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<sup>4</sup>On Christmas and the cult of Sol see Förster (2007).

divinity – Artemisia and Panathenaia, Cerialia or Neptunalia. A few names, such as Kalendae (Ianuariae) or Matronalia, were neutrally descriptive names: they concern the beginning of January or the honors of the *matronae*. In his poem “On the Festivals of Rome,” *De feriis Romanis*, Ausonius, the Christian aristocrat from Bordeaux, is aware of both of these possibilities: in his somewhat nostalgic and antiquarian verses, he easily juxtaposed *Vulcani dies* and “the rites the *matronae* perform to praise their husbands”, the festivals of Mercurius and Diana, and the one that recalled the expulsion of the tyrants<sup>5</sup>. Emperors or their advisors understood the political possibilities of these descriptive names. In a very conscious decision, Hadrian changed the name Parilia to *Natalis Urbis* and made the festival accessible to an empire outside of the *urbs* where a few learned men at best had ever heard of the Italian goddess Pales but where it seemed a good thing to celebrate the birthday of the Ruling City. But this was an exceptional decision that had to do with a politically important cult that served to ritually express the unity of the empire, as did Kalendae and Vota; and it is no coincidence that the initiative was that of the most Hellenizing emperor with a clear imperial outlook.

A parallel case demonstrates how well such functional names could survive because of their openness for interpretation: it concerns a festival known only from the Latin West, the “Day of Torches,” *dies lampadarum* (or *lampadis*) celebrated on June 24 that does not appear before the mid-fourth century. In the calendar of 354, a torch is depicted among the symbols of June, and the epigram that explains the image describes the torch as a sign for the mature sheaves of wheat of Ceres (*lampas maturas Cereris designat aristas*); Stern had connected it with *dies lampadarum* attested in several late sources for June 24 where the calendar itself only notes the solstice<sup>6</sup>. The festival is attested by Fulgentius who connects it with the torches Ceres used to search for her daughter, with her joy of finding her, and with the torch as a symbol of the Summer Solstice<sup>7</sup>. Christians connected it with John the Baptist whom they celebrated on June

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<sup>5</sup>Ausonius, *Eclogae* (14) 16 Hall.

<sup>6</sup>Stern (1953), 252-258; Salzman (1990), 91-92

<sup>7</sup>Fulgentius, *Mitologiae* 1.10-11

24, according to a newly found anonymous Latin sermon by lighting torches and celebrating the day with singing, dancing and feasting; the sermon comes from fifth or sixth century Africa<sup>8</sup>. The anonymous preacher has no problems with this – unlike Augustine who rejects the celebration as a relic of paganism and stresses in his detailed description not the joy and light but the smoke of the torches<sup>9</sup>. It is obvious from the other Christian testimonies that Augustine's severe radicalism (who had the law on his side, at least after 407) did not stop the festival whose name with its polysemous symbol let it easily be adapted by the Christians<sup>10</sup>.

Another strategy for neutralizing the festival names was inspired by the success of the *Kalendae*: some festival names simply expressed calendarical or seasonal time. The *dies lampadarum*, as we just saw, had a seasonal and calendarical aspect, combining two emotionally charged moments, the Summer Solstice and the beginning of the annual grain harvest. The substitution of the Saturnalia by the Brumalia – a rearrangement of the calendar, not just a change of name – was such a move. It must have happened after the founding of the New Rome in 330 CE and involved a double change of tradition – to expand the one day household festival of the Bruma to a series of twenty-three festival days, outdoing the lengthy Saturnalia, and to change the unusual name Bruma into the more usual festival name Brumalia. Date and agents of these changes are unclear; one can imagine that the foundation of Constantinople brought with it a rethinking of the festival calendar: in this new situation, the calendar had on the one hand to guarantee and express the traditional Roman identity of the new city, on the other hand to demonstrate the presence of the Christian faith in its ideological fabric as well. We do not know whether this was a one-time decision or a long drawn-out process. The rejection of Saturnus by

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<sup>8</sup>Published with an introduction that presents the evidence for the *dies lampadarum* that goes well beyond Stern (1953) by Dolbeau and Étaix (2003).

<sup>9</sup>Augustine, *Sermo* 293B.5. –

<sup>10</sup>On another case where Augustine refers to *recentissimae leges* (Aug. *Ep.* 91.8), see di Berardino (2005), 98-99; the law in question is Honorius's rescript of Nov. 15 (25), 407, *CTh* 16.10.19.

the Church was still a living memory for John Lydus, which might exclude a late fourth century date for the change and argue for a process that took its time.

The flip side of this strategy is that in the Christian empire, the bishops were at pains to give even to the most neutral festival names a whiff of idolatry by exploiting the regular connection between a festival and a pagan divinity. Pope Gelasius found the shadowy god Februus (or an invented Februarius) in the Lupercalia, in a construction that was as unjustified as it was artificial. In the same way, the Byzantine theologians in Trullo and after connected the Vota with the Arcadian Pan and the Brumalia with ecstatic Dionysus; the pagans now were the Ἕλληνες, so the gods had to be those they know from reading their Greek classics. To assign a festival to a specific divinity is a mental habit deeply familiar to scholars and hard to eradicate, even after the realization how questionable it is. Books on Greek festivals, such as Deubner's *Attische Feste* or Graf's *Nordionische Kulte*, in a handy classification still arrange the festivals according to the divinities, and some modern Byzantin scholars followed the theological ancestors in their attribution of the Vota and Brumalia.

It is less easy to assess how much the imperial protection of Kalendae and Vota helped their survival; an alternative view would be to suspect that Theodosius and his successors backed festivals that had such a deep popular support that they would have survived against whatever opposition. In a way, the same question can be asked with regard to the imperial protection of protective agrarian rites that survived into Christian times: did they survive because of this protection, or did the emperor react to a deeply ingrained urge to make use of ritual protection that assured the survival of such rites? The survival of amulets to protect one's person might help to formulate an answer. These rituals were in a legal limbo: the prohibition of magic did not concern them, nor did the guarantee of agrarian protective rituals help them, or only very indirectly. The church rejected them unanimously, and not just after Constantine. But they survived into the Middle Ages, protected again by the same overarching neediness for superhuman protection in those cases where scientific medicine could not help that also helped the resurgence of incubation that, too, had not been touched by imperial legislation. Thus, at least

with private rituals, imperial protection did not really matter – but if a ritual was performed under the umbrella of an institution, as was the case for the Kalendae, this certainly helped.

The spread of neutral festival names is far from innocent, however. As Mona Ozouf in her classical work on the festivals of the French revolution has shown, the revolutionaries radically and constantly rethought the function of festivals, abolished the traditional Christian ones, and created new ones in order to give expression to the new society that was being invented<sup>11</sup>. These festivals now had descriptive names, such as “Fête de la Jeunesse”, or “Fête des Époux”, or “Agriculture”. At the same time, they were all consciously anchored in the seasonal structure of the year: the Festival of Youth was celebrated in early Spring, on Germinal 10 (i.e. March 29 or 30); the Festival of Married Couples a month later during the flower season, on Floréal 10; Agriculture at the start of the harvest season, Messidor 10 (i.e. Juni 28 or 29). Season and society became metaphors of each other. Imperial Rome and Byzantium did not go as far as this, but it knew about the function of festivals as expression of the season. This helps to understand the career of Bruma and Brumalia as a seasonally anchored festival with a descriptive name: there must have been a similar will to “secularize”, or rather to make the festival palatable in a Christian state; “secularization,” in this context, is a somewhat misleading term because it implies a conscious opposition and even rejection the religion, which certainly was not what motivated whoever introduced the Brumalia to Byzantium. A comparable strategy was at work in the transformation of the Lupercalia ritual: we saw that they were reinterpreted as a Spring festival, with the young man whom I understand as a transformation of the Luperci, expressing the youthful vigor of the season, in a metaphor that comes very close to the French Revolution’s move.

This should remind us that the conscious tying of a festival to the season is far from being a feature of the archaic religion of primeval farmers, whatever James G. Frazer imprinted into the

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<sup>11</sup>Ozouf (1976/1988).

freshly urbanized Western consciousness. It is mostly a recent and secondary intellectual move in order to free the festivals from their religious ballast and to secularize them, not a survival of early agricultural societies. The classification of festivals as Spring festival and Autumn festival in the Hittite cult inventories could another but equally modern logic, as the description of the local festivals that the king had to attend from the perspective of the classifying palace scribes<sup>12</sup>.

There is another insight to gain – or rather a confirmation of what we should have known anyway. Gods can disappear from festivals but the festivals themselves remain or undergo minor changes. If push comes to shove, the gods reveal themselves as less well anchored in the collective hears than the group experience: what counts to the celebrating people is the celebration, the ritual acts, not the divine recipient – despite the fact that many festival names derive from the name of a god, and that the intellectual reflection centers on the gods, as Ovid's *Fasti* show even at a first glance<sup>13</sup>. This is different from what we saw happen in incubation. There, the very ritual acts disappeared, with only the nuclear constant surviving that dreams can be a window to a superhuman, helpful world. Unlike the collective festivals, pagan individual incubation was so closely tied to an institution that the disappearance of the institution had the ritual disappear, only to be recreated in a different form by the underlying driving constant.

### ***Bottom Up and Top Down***

We noticed how in the case of Kalendae and Saturnalia in the first and second centuries, there is a good reason to assume that they spread from garrisons and *coloniae* outwards, without any intervention from the emperors or the provincial governors, whereas at least the name change from Parilia to Natalis Urbis presupposes a central decision; but the adoption of this festival in

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<sup>12</sup>Hazenbos (2003); a summary in Hazenbos (2004).

<sup>13</sup>This reacts to statement such as the one of Frascchetti (2005), 124: “I *ludi* e i *dies festi* a Roma e nel mondo romano non sono semplici festività, ma si intendevano soprattutto come celebrazioni in onore degli dei.”

an individual city again remained the decision of the city, not the pressure center. On the other hand, the introduction of the Brumalia in Constantinople and the re-interpretation of the Lupercalia in court ceremonial can only be a central decision, as was Theodosius' decision to declare Kalendae, Vota and Natalis Urbis as *dies nefasti*, days without legal business, whereas the changes that affected the Lupercalia in Rome before Gelasius's time again could only be caused by local forces and actors, presumably approved or even instigated by the Roman senate, but without any imperial intervention.

There is thus not one bottom up or top down movement, but individual developments according to place and time that defy a unifying description. There remains the question what prompted emperors to intervene as innovators or protectors of such festivals, both in the pre-Christian centuries and even more so after Constantine, against the continuing resistance and objection by single powerful preachers such as John Chrysostome or Augustine, and by the many local councils in East and West that often seem to repeat a predecessor's canon, and what made their interventions successful or not.

The question is easier to answer for the second and third centuries than for Christian late antiquity. The emperors between Nerva and Caracalla – and, in a somewhat idiosyncratic way, already Nero –, were concerned with the unity of the empire and realized the potential of festivals to create such an imperial ideology; besides the festivals of the imperial cult – accession days, anniversaries of persons and signal events – other festivals could fulfill a similar purpose, such as Vota, Kalendae, or Natalis Urbis<sup>14</sup>. Some of them might have also been acutely aware that this mission was better accomplished if it provided the citizens with entertainment and relaxation: this must be the deeper reason why Hadrian backed the Guild of Itinerant Artists of Dionysos against the abolition of games and contests<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup>See e.g. Ando (2007).

<sup>15</sup>Petzl and Schwertheim (2006).



In this respect, my analysis disproves Rüpke's recent claim that "religious practices did not create the empire"<sup>16</sup>. Agreed, the festivals did not create the empire; but they helped to hold it together by suggesting a unity well beyond the administrative structures that always could be debated and rejected. With the exception of the moralists – who might well have a political agenda as well, as did the Palestinian rabbis – nobody argued about festivals.

For Christian late antiquity, Nicole Belayche tried to sketch a tentative answer to the same question<sup>17</sup>. Starting from two pre-Constantinian acclamations from Cyprus, one to Constantius Chlorus, the other to Maximianus that praise them as "origin of public joy and all ceremonies" (*laetitiae publicae caerimoniarumque omnium auctori*), she generalizes this role of the emperors for the fourth and fifth centuries<sup>18</sup>. She finds a confirmation in a rescript of Constantius to the prefect of Rome, written in 342<sup>19</sup>:

Although all superstition has to be totally eradicated, we nevertheless want the temples that are outside the city walls to remain intact and undamaged. Since some of them were the origin of circus games and athletic contests, one should not destroy what offers to the Roman people the celebration of traditional pleasure.

The circumstances under which this decree was issued confirms Belayche's insight, and expresses the tensions to which all the emperors saw themselves being subjected, well beyond the fourth century. The decree reacts to the much more radical decree of 341 that harshly ordered the acting Praetorian Prefect to terminate all sacrifices, and with them the traditional festivals: *cesset superstitio, sacrificiorum aboleatur insania*<sup>20</sup>. One senses popular protests in Rome against the attempts of the imperial authorities to take away all the entertainment in the name of

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<sup>16</sup>Rüpke 2012: 243: "Nicht die religiösen Praktiken schufen das Reich, sondern das Reich schuf die 'Religion'".

<sup>17</sup>Belayche (2007).

<sup>18</sup>Pouilloux, Roesch, and Marcillet-Jaubert (1987), nos. 130 and 131; Belayche (2007), 44.

<sup>19</sup>*CTh* 16.10.3 *Quamquam omnis superstitio penitus eruenda sit, tamen volumus, ut aedes templorum, quae extra muros sunt positae, intactae incorruptaeque consistent. Nam cum ex nonnullis vel ludorum vel circensium vel agonum origo fuerit exorta, non convenit ea convelli, ex quibus populo Romano praebeatur priscarum sollemnitas voluptatum.*

<sup>20</sup>*CTh* 16.10.2, to the acting Praetorian Prefect. On these two decrees see Gaudemet (2000), 29-30.

Christianity. The city prefect asked the emperor for help, and Constantius reacted with the insight that he had gone too far: the Roman people – both, narrowly, the people of Rome and, more generally, the subjects of the emperor – needed the pleasures of the traditional festivals, and they expected the emperor to guarantee it. Constantius retracted in a way that saved his face: the law of 342 on the surface dealt not with spectacles and games but with sanctuaries; the *solemnitas voluptatum* entered only in a somewhat circuitous way. But still, the emperor recognized and thus guaranteed the need of his people for joyful moments. Although Theodosius's decision to free the Kalendae and Votae from legal business – a decision made in the city of Rome, forty-five years after Constantius's self-correction – sets itself into a different tradition, of the good emperor who cares for the smooth function of the law courts, Theodosius might well have been aware of this other tradition and could even have profited from Constantius's experience. And even if this was not Theodosius's intention in August 389, the outcome of his legislation was to protect the Kalendae and Vota against the Christian attempts to do away with them and with the widespread *voluptas* the people of the empire gained from them, as John Chrysostom, Augustine and their fellow ascetic bishops were quick to realize. After all, the association of festival with joy and relaxation is constant in Greek and Roman culture, expressed already by Plato and Democritus and repeated by many later authors<sup>21</sup>.

The way magic developed is illustrative of the forces at work, and their respective success. Here too, both emperors and bishops intervened, and again the bishops were more radical than most emperors, with the exception once again of Constantius. But in the *longue durée* it was again the need of the people that dominated. Binding spells almost disappeared in the realities of the Christian world, although they survived in narrative fiction, as had happened, millennia ago, in the world of Mesopotamia. Ritual protection of body and fields however survived much more tenaciously, to the extent that the ritual benediction of cattle and fields at some point was quietly taken over by the Catholic Church, to survive in some parts well into the modern world.

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<sup>21</sup>As collected in Burkert (2012).

## THE END OF SACRIFICE, AND THE CONTINUITY OF FESTIVALS

We saw how urban benefactors in the early empire were praised for their lavish festivals from whose sacrifices entire cities could be fed; this continued strong Hellenistic traditions of *euergesia* as a way of elite self-representation and legitimization through social work. The praise of urban benefaction continues through the centuries, and lavish festivals still play their role, although in the praise of local benefactors their building activities become more important over time. The Christianized elite of the empire, including many bishops, seamlessly continued this tradition. Several inscriptions of fifth century Aphrodisias praise local grandees in the fifth century who restored many public buildings, mostly, it seems, with their own money and not with public funding<sup>22</sup>. In a sign of the times, an epigram on the basis of the marble statue of governor Dulcitus claims that the dedicator would not have hesitated to dedicate a golden image, “if it would have been allowed”, εἰ θέμις ἦν: but in this time and age, gold images were only allowed for emperors<sup>23</sup>. At about the same time, the comes Diogenes son of Archelaos recorded in Megara that he had contributed to the restoration of their city walls, “caring for the cities of Greece as if it were his own house ... and deeming nothing more honorable than to be a benefactor to the Greeks and to renew their cities<sup>24</sup>.”

A praise poem from Hierapolis (Pamukkale) in Phrygia, inscribed around 355 CE, presents an interesting transitional case. The poem praises one Flavius Magnus, most likely the

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<sup>22</sup>See Roueché (1989) [the second edition is electronic only, <http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/ala2004/index.html>], nos. 38, 42-44 (Ampelius); cp. 39-41 (governor Dulcitus); 53-54 (Asklepiodotes); 56, 58 (Pytheas).

<sup>23</sup>*StEGrO* 02/09/10; the respective law CJ 1.24.1 (a. 398) provides only marble, bronze and silver images for officials (*iudices*), and even those only with imperial permission. More in the commentary of Merkelbach and Stauber

<sup>24</sup>*IG* VII 26. On the comes Diogenes see *PLRE* @

vicarius Asianae between 353 and 358 and a well known imperial aristocrat and administrator, for his restoration of the local theatre<sup>25</sup>. This thus places Magnus among the building benefactors of the area. One couplet, however, seems ambivalent:

[καὶ] νυ[μ]φῶ[ν τέ]μενος ῥέξεν [πόλι]ν ἀγλαομήτης |  
καὶ θαλίαις ἐραταῖς θῆκεν ἀγαλλομένην.

θαλία is the usual term for a banquet, but this is impossible here<sup>26</sup>. The preceding line expresses the new-found beauty of the city – a spa city, after all, thanks to the hot springs of what is nowadays the tourist attraction Pamukkale – with an image that exploits the association of the nymphs with any *locus amoenus*. The pentameter, as usual, gives a variation of the same thought: Magnus turned the city in a place that “blossoms with exciting pleasures.” The poet might still feel how what Magnus did resonates with the lush banquets of earlier benefactors, but these new banquets have become more enticing for the eyes than for the stomach.

This late antique transition from banquets to buildings recalls the problems Veditus Pollio incurred with his building program in Ephesus, and the backing he received by an emperor, Antoninus Pius, who encouraged the local rich to invest in construction. But the emperor did not oppose banquets (he did not even mention them), but “shows, distributions and the spectacles of games”: already in the later second century, the time for city-wide banquets was over, and Roman forms of keeping the urban masses happy were taking over. City-wide banquets were the result of lavish animal sacrifices, and it is no coincidence that at about the same time we begin to sense an opposition to them. As we saw above, it is not only intellectuals that articulate it, people such as Porphyry, the Lucian of *On Sacrifices*, or Apollonios of Tyana in Philostratus’s account that might go back to an earlier local writer, Maximus of Aigai. Inscriptions begin to express similar reservations – an oracle of Ammon in Cyzicus of about 130 CE, the Didymaeian oracle that recommends hymns instead of sacrifices and is vaguely dated to the later second or third

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<sup>25</sup>*StEGrO* 02/12/06; see Jones (1997); Ritti (1986). – For Magnus see *PLRE* 1.535, Magnus 9 and Jones (1997), 211-212.

<sup>26</sup>But see Belayche @@

century, a contemporary epigram from Hadrianoi in Mysai that prefers incense burning to meat, or an honorary epigram that praises a local patron for having enjoyed himself among his fellow citizens with libations, ἐν σπονδαῖσι<sup>27</sup>. Thus, for reasons that need more research but that are much more complex than any monocausal theory could explain, ancient cultures moved away from large sacrifices and the concomitant banquets as a way in which polis elites demonstrated their status and earned the mostly justified gratitude of their fellow citizens.

This forced the elites to look for other outlets for their munificence. Building programs were one possibility, and as we saw, it was taken up. But it rarely created the immediate pleasure that splendid banquets had offered, perhaps with the exception of fountain houses and baths; the restoration of theatres and city walls needed the pressure of destruction and damage, to become really satisfactory. This is why games, spectacles and distributions offered such an allure, to the chagrin of Antoninus Pius. Games, spectacles and sparsiones, however, were a mainly Roman thing; they needed vehicles to arrive in the East. Gladiatorial games arrived early and found enthusiastic crowds; but they did not stay. It was the horse races and the sparsiones that made the largest impact, and they came with Roman festivals, not the least with the Kalendae – we saw how in Libanios's Antioch the horse-racing aristocrats threw gold coins to the crowds on their way to and from the temple, and how the final three days after the Vota were defined by the horse-races. Banquets were still there as well, but they were kept to the houses, the great and the smaller ones; only distributions and races were really public. I am inclined to understand already the money distributed to the local guilds by a Jewish couple in early third century Hierapolis as a local form of distribution – it was far from the liberal throwing of coins to the circus crowds, and it implied that the recipients would celebrate the grave crowning instead; but it still is distribution of coins to groups, and is as a form of munificence and of redistribution of wealth. We are far from the times when the emperors had to prohibit the distribution of gold coins by consuls and

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<sup>27</sup>Didyma: *I.Didyma* 217. – Cyzicus: = *StEGO* 08/01/01 (Egyptian cult with a heightened awareness of purity?);  
 @@@ = 08/01/53. – Hadrianoi: = *StEGO* 08/08/03

other elite members: but the foundation of the second Rome with its Roman festivals, the Kalendae, Vota, Brumalia and Lupercalia, marked a major step in that direction.

