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FRANCISCO MARCO SIMÓN

CELTIC RITUALISM FROM THE (GRAECO)-ROMAN POINT OF VIEW

I

Religion and, more specifically, ritualism appears as one of the defining elements of how the Hellenic world pictured itself in a well-known passage by Herodotus: "Then there is the Greek world, with its racial and linguistic identity, with its community of sanctuaries and sacrifices to the gods, and with similar habits and customs..." (8, 144, 2). But religion is also one of the key components of exogenous identity. Pliny wrote that the Celts that inhabited the *Baeturia*, the Hispanic area between the Rivers Guadiana and Guadalquivir, came from the Celtiberians through Lusitania, as shown by their rituals, language and names of towns.¹

Let us start with two well-known quotes in order to illustrate the ambiguities and difficulties in our documentation. The first is by Caesar: *Natio est omnis Gallorum admodum dedita religionibus* (Caes. Gall. 6, 16, 1). The second, by Pliny: *Druidae... ita suos appellant magos...* (Plin. nat. 16, 249). I feel that these two quotes clearly illustrate the importance of Celtic ritualism in the construction by the Greeks and Romans of an exogenous identity for these "northern barbarians", these "Titans of the West"

¹ PLIN. nat. 3, 13-14: *Celticos a Celtiberis ex Lusitania advenisse manifestum est sacris, lingua oppidorum vocabulis.*

(Call. *Hymn.*4 [Del.], 171-175) characterised by their *feritas* as opposed to Roman *humanitas*.²

This negative stereotyping explains the interpretation of Druidism in terms of magic, as illustrated by the Pliny passage. But the Caesar quote acknowledges that the Gauls were particularly religious. The first problem arises with what Caesar really meant by the term *religiones* which has received a wide range of translations,³ clearly illustrating in my opinion the basic problem when attempting to study the assortment of rituals of Celtic peoples through Graeco-Latin authors: the existence of a two-fold mediation or, if you like, a two-fold *interpretatio*: the ancient, due to the comparative thought of intellectuals who realised that there were different religious systems within the concept of religion as a whole, and a second interpretation that we modern historians have made of Graeco-Latin texts, and that also poses major problems, which can only be solved, in my opinion, by constantly giving priority consideration to the *chronology*, and above all, the *context* in which the information comes to us. To cite an example that is relevant to the theme we are dealing with here, Cicero's perception of the religion of the Celts is far from unequivocal; on the one hand he demonises it as essentially barbarian (a device highly effective for an audience used to the *metus Gallicus*) as borne out by the human sacrifices practised by the Gauls who had accused his client, Fonteius, the governor of Narbonensis,⁴ while on the

² F. MARCO SIMÓN, "Feritas Celtica: Imagen y realidad del bárbaro clásico", in *Modelos ideales y prácticas de vida en la Antigüedad clásica*, E. FALQUÉ, F. GASCÓ, eds. (Sevilla 1993), 141-166; B. KREMER, *Das Bild der Kelten bis in augusteische Zeit. Studien zur Instrumentalisierung eines antiken Feinbildes bei griechischen und römischen Autoren* (Stuttgart 1994).

³ "Kultus", "Religiöse Dinge", "Glaubenvorstellung", "Aberglaubische Scheu", "Religion", "Ritual observances", "Religious superstition", "Pratiques religieuses", "Choses divines"... (See A. HOFENEDER, *Die Religion der Kelten in den antiken literarischen Zeugnissen* I [Wien 2005], 176).

⁴ CIC. *Font.* 31: *Quis enim ignorat eos usque ad hanc diem retinere illam immanem ac barbaram consuetudinem hominum immolandorum?* See now A. HOFENEDER, "Cicero als Quelle für die keltische Religion", in *Auf den Spuren keltischer Götterverehrung*, hrsg. von M. HEINZMANN (Wien 2007), 155-182.

other hand, in one of his books on divination, he acknowledges the wisdom of Diviciacus, the Aeduan Druid, with whom he discussed divine, natural and human matters during his stay in Rome (Cic. *div.* 1, 90).

The information we have at our disposal is fragmentary, unbalanced, and therefore inadequately contextualised, and prompted by criteria of homogenisation (through an idealising or demonising perspective that accentuated the negative features, as a result of the more intimate contact with, and knowledge of, the peoples of the north-western periphery of the Mediterranean) and generalised descriptions that characterized ancient ethnographers. The imperial and colonialist view of the Graeco-Latin writers gave the idea of barbarian peoples “with no history” who made progress thanks to the civilising influence of Rome.

As opposed to this all-inclusive view of a Celtic religion whose key aspects would have been pan-Druidism and human sacrifices, as well as belief in the immortality of souls, I feel that the archaeological texts in fact emphasise a diversity of times and spaces for Celtic religious systems before the Roman conquest. Caesar himself said (*Gall.* 1, 1) that the elements that distinguished the *Aquitani*, *Galli* and *Belgae* were their language, institutions and laws. One cannot help but think that the word *instituta*, referring to traditional customs and habits, also includes the concept of religion, in view of the fact that the Greeks included religious beliefs and rites in the *nomoi* and *nomiaia*, the traditional customs that varied according to the people.

In general, what we know suggests a variable perception of “religious spaces” among the Celts. To talk of the “Celtic religion” is no more than an elusive generalisation, which does not preclude distinguishing in Celtic religious systems a series of unitary elements, without which this paper would have no *raison d'être*. Addressing the key aspects of Celtic ritualism as viewed by Graeco-Latin authors, and seeing to what extent these aspects are confirmed by first-hand documentation through “internal” data provided by archaeology, constitute the aim of this contribution.

II

The Graeco-Roman perspective does not provide information on Celtic ritualism in the same degree as what we know about initiation rituals in the Greek world, for example, or the rituals of the Roman calendar. Indeed, most of the information we have centres on two semantic hubs that, in fact, can be resumed into one: the combative and bellicose ethic, and ideas concerning death as found in beliefs as well as in rituals. These are hubs that express better than anything else the “ritual density” of the Celts, to use a well-known formula of Bell.⁵ They conform a “sub-system” within the wider Celtic ritual system, which had a paramount importance in the daily life: According to Caesar, the prohibition against making sacrifices was the heaviest penalty that the druids could impose.⁶

Let us take a look firstly at two passages of Strabo and Pliny that I feel document the distinct nature of Celtic ritualism in two of its essential components: space and time. According to Strabo (3, 4, 16, p.164), the Gallaecians were atheists, while the Celtiberians and their northern neighbours worshipped a nameless god, in honour of whom they danced all night, when there was a full moon, with all the family outside their houses.

Firstly, we find in this text a clear contrast between the “domestic” (or non-specialized) ritual space of the *Hispani*, in the doorways of their houses, and the specific space of the sanctuaries, defined by a *temenos*, characterising the peoples of the Mediterranean area. The Hispano-Celts do not have sanctuaries. Secondly, these dances took place at night, at full moon, not by day, as was usual.⁷ As for the claim that the *Gallaeci* (who

⁵ C. BELL, *Ritual. Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York-Oxford 1997), 173.

⁶ CAES. *Gall.* 6, 13, 5-6: *Si qui aut privatus aut populus eorum decreto non stetit, sacrificiis interdicunt. Haec poena apud eos est gravissima.*

⁷ I believe we can rely on iconographic evidence in that respect. See for example the scenes of a collective dance under a star on a Celtiberian funerary plaque from Alpanseque (Soria) datable to the third or the second century B.C.: A. JIMENO *et alii*, *La Necrópolis celtibérica de Numancia*, *Memorias Arqueología en Castilla y León* 12 (Soria 2004), 211, fig.149,5.

lived in the northwest of the Iberian peninsula) were atheists and that the god of the Celtiberians and their neighbours did not have a name, this is thoroughly refuted by archaeological sources: in fact, we know of a large number of theonyms from Roman inscriptions in these areas. So what is the explanation for this detail in Strabo's text?

Here it is worth remembering the explanation given by Herodotus regarding the progressive formation of Greek religion (Hdt. 2, 52 sqq.): the Pelasgians worshipped gods, but did not give them any names; they called them "gods" collectively, as the masters of everything that existed; later they learnt their names from Egypt, and the early poets, Homer and Hesiod, helped to give them form and a history and to place in genealogical order those gods who could then be distinguished by name. Analysing the Strabo text from this perspective, we find that he used the atheism of the *Gallaeci* (and the anonymity of the god of the Celtiberians and their northern neighbours) precisely to show the barbarism of these peoples, presented via two aspects (the lack of gods, and nameless gods) in terms of the distance that separated them from the civilised Mediterranean. These were peoples that inhabited a distant mountainous north and northwest, and we know that in the mental landscape of the Greeks, mountain territory (*oros*) was a territory that was essentially not only the antithesis of the plain and the city, but also the domain of bandits.

III

The second text, the Pliny one, begins with the reference to the Druids, as I remarked before. The Druids were the lead players in Celtic ritualism, at least in Gaul and Britannia (as I do not think that pan-Druidism in the Celtic world can be argued for today), and Druidism appears in our sources in two well-defined yet, to a certain extent, contradictory guises: human sacrifice and belief in the immortality of souls.

According to Pliny the Druids have nothing more sacred than mistletoe and the tree that bears it; they only choose oak forests and celebrate no rite without the presence of a branch of this tree, and so it is possible that their name comes from the Greek *drus*, “oak tree”.⁸

The text goes on to refer to the gathering of mistletoe in the moonlight. The forest and the night were the space and the time for this ritual, as against temple buildings and daylight which typified Mediterranean rituals.⁹

⁸ PLIN. *nat.* 16, 249: *Nihil habent druidae — ita suos appellant magos — uisco et arbore, in qua gignatur, si modo sit robor, sacratius. Iam per se roborum eligunt lucos nec ulla sacra sine earum fronde conficiunt, ut inde appellati quoque interpretatione Graeca possint druidae uideri. Enim uero quidquid adgnascatur illis e caelo missum putant signumque esse electae ab ipso deo arboris.*

⁹ Pliny's association of the Druids and the forest seems to be confirmed by a few quotes such as one by Maximus of Tyre (*Dissert.* 2, 8), who said that the oak tree was the visible expression of divinity. However, most scholars prefer to interpret the name of these priests (*dru-uides*) as “very wise” or “highly clairvoyants”. But in Celtic languages there is a link between the root meaning “knowledge” (**wid-*) and the term that means “tree” or “wood” (*vidu-*): See F. LE ROUX, C. GUYONVARCH, *Les druides* (Rennes 1978), 37. If the Druids, “very wise”, were also the “tree men”, their teachings and rituals in the sacred grove in the forest (*nemeton*) would be transparent in their very etymology.

The occasional author has emphasised the contrast between Caesar's outlook (with no particular hostility towards the Druids, interpreters of an arcane wisdom) and the way Pliny, Mela (3, 2, 18), Suetonius (*Claud.* 25, 5), and Tacitus (*Hist.* 4, 54, 2) dealt with them, stressing that the abolition of human sacrifices marked the advance of Roman *humanitas* as opposed to the Druidic *magia* and *superstitio*.

The existence of a hierarchy among the Druids was clearly demonstrated by Caesar when he noted (6, 13, 10) that they would meet once a year somewhere in the land of the *Carnutes*, which they took to be the centre of Gaul, and anyone who had a complaint would go there to have their case heard by the Druids. Based on information such as this, authors such as J. HARMAND (“Une composante scientifique du Corpus Caesarianum: le portrait de la Gaule dans le De Bello Gallico I-VII”, in *ANRW* I 3 [Berlin–New York 1973], 523–595) or G. ZECCHINI (*Los druidas y la oposición de los celtas a Roma* [Madrid 2002]) have stressed the role of Druidism as a factor in the unification of Gaul or a catalyst for anti-Roman resistance.

The British origin of Druidic doctrines seems to agree with Irish texts, which indicate that many young people — or mythical characters such as Cúchulainn — went to be initiated in Britania, and also with information such as that handed down by Caesar (*Gall.* 5, 6, 3) on the religious scruples (*religionibus*) that prevented Dumnorix from accompanying him to Britania.

The teaching — oral, secret and in hidden locations — and preservation of their tradition, and their judicial authority were Druidic duties, as was sacrifice, as we shall see later. And as masters of time it was also their responsibility to administer and set the calendar. What characterised the Druids above all was their eminently social nature. When the *Aedui* chose Cotus as the supreme magistrate and replacement for the king, Caesar, for political reasons, “obliged Cotus to renounce his power and restore authority to Convictolitavis, who had been named by the priests for the vacant magistracy, according to the customs of the city” (*Gall.* 7, 33, 3-4). This all-embracing nature of Druidism explains the persecution and suppression it was subjected to for clearly political reasons, and contrasts with the functional specialisation of various Roman priestly duties, although ambiguities are posed by some authors splitting the Celtic priesthood into three groups, Druids, Vates and Bards, or by the term *gutwater* in the eighth book (38, 3) of Caesar or in certain Gallo-Roman inscriptions. This splitting into three, noted by Diodorus of Sicily (5, 31, 2-5) and Strabo (4, 4, 4, p.197), was also to be found in Timagenes of Alexandria (in Ammianus Marcellinus, 15, 9, 8), but not in Caesar, who left us a global account in Book VI of his *Commentaries* (but, paradoxically, Druids do not appear in the conquest episodes, as one might expect).

The link between Druids and woods is attested in ancient sources. Lucan, for example (1, 452 sqq.), stated that the Druids lived deep in the woods (*nemora alta*), where they worshipped the gods *without using temples*. He was referring to the open-air sanctuaries, designated by Caesar by the term *locus consecratus* (*Gall.* 6, 13, 10 and 6, 16), and by Dio Cassius as *hiera* (7, 3). Pomponius Mela refers to Druidic teachings in remote woods, lasting for as long as 20 years (*De Chorogr.* 3, 2, 18-19), a detail in which he agrees with Caesar. Tacitus mentions the sacred groves of the island of *Mona* (Anglesey), almost certainly a Druidic sanctuary, and Queen Boudicca made her sacrifices to *Andrasta* in a grove as well. Elsewhere I

have examined one of the essential characteristics of Celtic ritual, in my opinion: the existence of a process of “individualization” of the sacred space, the *nemeton*, which is reflected in theonyms such as *Nemedus* among the Celts of Hispania or *Nemetona* among the Treveri, for example.¹⁰ Within the uncertainties that characterise iconographic language, perhaps this “individualization” of the ritual landscape is partly responsible for scenes such as the human figure with a tree on his head inside a temple-like structure on a beaker from Celtiberia: an image that might be the sacred image of the deity, better than the representation of a priest who, like the Druids, is imparting his wisdom in the forest. Strabo mentions the three Celtic peoples of Galatia whose judicial council met in *Drunemeton* (12, 5, 1, p.567), “the sanctuary of the oak trees”. And as late as the 4th century, Ausonius (*Mosella* 48) stated that the “old sacred groves are the glory of the *pagi*”.¹¹

This importance of the forest as an essential space in which to celebrate rites was not exclusive to the Celts; it was also a feature of the Germani, as admirably expressed by Tacitus (*Germ.* 9). Strabo also, in connection with his description of the sanctuary of Onchestus (9, 2, 33, p.412), notes that the poets called all sanctuaries sacred groves, even if there were no trees. The Greek term *alsos*, like the Latin terms *lucus*, *nemus*, denotes the forest as a typical location for a sanctuary. But the difference is that the Celts still celebrated their rituals in these natural spaces which, while still sacred for the Greeks and Romans, had been replaced by new ritual locations. Pliny — indirectly — was clear about this (*nat.* 12, 3):¹²

¹⁰ F. MARCO SIMÓN, “La individuación del espacio sagrado. Testimonios culturales en el Noroeste hispánico”, in *Religio Deorum. Actas del Coloquio Internacional de Epigrafía “Culto y sociedad en Occidente”, Tarragona 1989*, ed. by M. MAYER, J. GÓMEZ PALLARÉS (Sabadell 1993), 317-324.

¹¹ That Ausonius’ grandfather’s name, *Arborius*, can be a possible reference to the traditional Celtic tree cult has been proposed by ZECCHINI 2002, 137.

¹² *Haec fuere numinum templa, priscoque ritu simplicia rura etiam nunc deo precellentem arborem dicant.*

“Formerly, trees were the temples of the gods, and in line with the primitive ritual in simple rural areas, an unusually tall tree is even now still dedicated to a god”.

These references to “formerly” and “even now” give us a clue to the differences between Celtic and Hellenistic-Roman ritualism as far as the place of worship was concerned. Indeed, the absence of formal buildings for religious purposes was what registered by the classical writers, as well as the siting of the *locus consecratus* outside the city.

The contrast of the Celtic ritual spaces at the time with those of the Mediterranean world came to a head in the famous *ékphrasis* of Lucan describing the forest outside Marseille.¹³ As opposed to the usual description of the *locus amoenus*, we find the elements of a *locus horridus*, provoking a feeling of fear, horror and mystery of the supernatural; negative feelings that systematically overturn the perception of Italian groves so often represented in Augustan poetry.¹⁴ It has been said that in his description of these rites, Lucan was deliberately attempting to subvert the traditional *pietas* and religion practised as a form of state organisation, while at the same stressing — and attacking — the impiety of Caesar (*Lucus erat numquam violato ab aevo*), accentuated by the use of an iron axe: never before had the forest been violated due

¹³ LUCAN. 3, 399-417: *Lucus erat longo numquam uiolatus ab aeuo / obscurum cingens conexis aera ramis / et gelidas alte summotis solibus umbras. / hunc non ruricolae Panes nemorumque potentes / Siluani Nymphaeque tenent, sed barbara ritu / sacra deum; structae diris altaribus arae / omnisque humanis lustrata cruoribus arbor. 405 / siqua fidem meruit superos mirata uetustas, / illis et uolucres metuunt insistere ramis / et lustris recubare ferae; nec uentus in illas / incubuit siluas excusaeque nubibus atris / fulgura: non ulli frondem praebentibus aerae / arboribus suis horror inest. tum plurima nigris / fontibus unda cadit, simulacraque maesta deorum / arte carent caesisque extant informia truncis. / ipse situs putrique facit iam robore pallor / attonitos; non uolgatis sacrata figuris / numina sic metuunt: tantum terroribus addit, / quos timeant, non nosse, deos.*

¹⁴ C.O. TOMMASI MORESCHINI, “Lucan’s Treatment of Celtic Religion: Ethnographic Interests and Ideological Purposes”, in *Dieux des Celtes/Goetter der Kelten/Gods of the Celts*, ed. by Ch.M. TERNES, H. ZINSER (Luxembourg 2002), 193-194.

to its sacred horror. In the *nemeton* at Marseille, no bird flew, nor were there clear streams or nymphs, just strange blood-thirsty rites to mysterious unknown deities, who were offered not garlands but men. The mention of *nemora alta remotis / incolitas lucis*, is in line with what other sources tell us about the nocturnal nature of Celtic rites, and the mention of the *simulacra maesta deorum / arte carent caesisque extant informia truncis* not only faithfully reflects the perception of Celtic art, but is also borne out by the wooden sculptures found in Celtic sanctuaries.

As opposed to the importance of forests, text references to springs, streams or lakes as *foci* of ritual activity are extremely scarce,¹⁵ and also the data about ritual orientation.¹⁶ Perhaps the best known reference is connected with the *aurum Tolosanum* looted by the Romans under Q. Servilius Caepio in 106 BCE which, according to one of the interpretations, contained the gold looted in Delphi by the *Volcae Tectosages* (Cic. *nat.deor.* 3, 74; Iust. 32, 3, 9-11). But there has been no documentation from the periods prior to the conquest for enclosures such as *Fontes Sequanae* in Burgundy, or Chamalières, near Clermont-Ferrand, with its wooden sculptures and extremely interesting texts, which we now know date from the 1st century CE at the earliest.¹⁷

IV

Human sacrifice is a central element in the “underlying discourse (...) about civilization and barbarism”, acting as a

¹⁵ R. BRADLEY, *The Passage of Arms* (Cambridge 1990); C. BOURGEOIS, *Divona. I: Divinités et ex-voto du culte gallo-romain de l'eau* (Paris 1991); ID., *Divona. II: Monuments et sanctuaires de culte gallo-romain de l'eau* (Paris 1992).

¹⁶ Contrasting the information of Posidonius (“to the right”) and Pliny (*nat.* 28, 25: “to the left”). We are ignorant of the direction of Vercingetorix’s circumambulation before Caesar (PLUT. *Caes.* 27).

¹⁷ BOURGEOIS 1991 & 1992; *Catalogue de l'exposition “Dieux guérisseurs en Gaule romaine”*, éd. par Chr. LANDES (Lattes 1992).

“particularly efficient marker”.¹⁸ At the same time, it was human sacrifice that concentrated in a most spectacular manner the violence and the sacredness inherent in ritual killing, as stressed by authors such as Burkert, Girard and Smith.¹⁹

The testimonies of ancient authors as a whole coincide in stressing the practising of human sacrifices as the essential feature characterising the religious alterity of the Celtic peoples.²⁰ While nobody better than the Celt represented the paradigm of a barbarism that threatened the Greeks and the Romans, dramatically augmented in the attack on Rome in 390 or the march on Delphi in 279, there is no doubt that human sacrifice was highlighted as a powerful expression of the *feritas celtica*,²¹ as a distinctive sign of a barbarian otherness conceived above all as an expression of moral degradation and inversion of the Graeco-Roman *ethos*.

There is a text by Pliny that convincingly illustrates the feeling of repugnance that the Romans seemed to feel towards the practice of human sacrifice. There are no words, he said, to laud the merit of the Romans in putting an end, in the time of Tiberius, to monstrous practices whose most religious act was to kill a man and whose most healthy act was to eat him; they were prohibited in Rome by a Senate decree in 97 B.C. (Plin. *nat.* 30, 13).

Around 300 B.C. Sopater of Paphos begins a series of testimonies from the Hellenistic era that made up the stereotype of

¹⁸ J. RIVES, “Human Sacrifice among Pagans and Christians”, in *JRS* 85 (1995), 65-85, 68. See also J.H.M. BEATTIE, “On understanding Sacrifice”, in *Sacrifice*, ed. by M.F.C. BOURDILLON, M. FORTES (London 1980), 29-44.

¹⁹ *Violent Origins. Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*, ed. by R.G. HAMERTON-KELLY (Stanford 1987); W. BURKERT, *Creation of the Sacred. Tracks of Biology in Early Religions* (Cambridge, Mass./London 1996).

²⁰ F. MARCO SIMÓN, “Sacrificios humanos en la Céltica antigua: del estereotipo literario y la evidencia interna”, in *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 1 (1999), 1-15; M.J. Aldhouse GREEN, *Dying for the Gods. Human Sacrifice in Iron Age & Roman Europe* (Stroud 2001).

²¹ F. MARCO SIMÓN, “*Feritas Celtica*” (*supra* n.2); B. KREMER, *Das Bild der Kelten bis in augusteische Zeit* (*supra* n.2).

Celtic *ferocia* with human sacrifice as a key element. Among these testimonies were those of Varro, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Pliny and Lucan, as well as Plutarch and the Christian authors Minucius Felix, Tertullian and Lactantius. And of course, Cicero in his defence of Fonteius.²² However, the bulk of our information comes from Caesar and the authors who disseminated the writings of Posidonius of Apamea, Diodorus and Strabo.

According to Caesar, the Gauls practiced human sacrifice — presided over by the Druids — erecting vast wicker figures filled with human victims which they then set fire to; thieves and bandits were the gods' favourite offerings, and they consecrated them all to Mars, thereby forming vast heaps of remains in consecrated locations.²³

Diodorus of Sicily relates, for his part (5, 31, 2-4), a variant of divinatory sacrifice reserved for important occasions: having consecrated a man, they would stab him in the stomach with a sacrificial knife and divine the future by the way the body fell, the trembling of the body and the flow of the blood, in an ancient ritual that could not be celebrated without the presence of a Druid. The same information is provided by Strabo (4, 4, 5, p.198), or Tacitus (*Ann.* 14, 30 — referring to the Britons).

²² References in MARCO SIMÓN 1999 (*supra* n.20).

²³ CAES. *Gall.* 6, 16-17: *Natio est omnis Gallorum admodum dedita religionibus, atque ob eam causam, qui sunt adfecti gravioribus morbis quique in proeliis periculisque versantur, aut pro victimis homines immolant aut se immolatuos vovent, administrisque ad ea sacrificia druidibus utuntur, quod pro vita hominis nisi hominis vita reddatur, non posse aliter deorum immortalium numen placari arbitrantur, publiceque eiusdem generis habent instituta sacrificia. alii immani magnitudine simulacra habent, quorum contexta viminibus membra vivis hominibus complent; quibus succensis circumventi flamma exanimantur homines. supplicia eorum, qui in furto aut in latrocinio aut aliqua noxia sint comprehensi, gratiora dis immortalibus esse arbitrantur. sed cum eius generis copia deficit, etiam ad innocentium supplicia descendunt. (...). Huic (Mars), cum proelio dimicare constituerunt, ea quae bello ceperint, plerumque devovent; cum superaverint, animalia capta immolant reliquasque res in unum locum conferunt. Multis in civitatibus harum rerum extructos tumulos locis consecratis conspici licet; neque saepe accidit ut neglecta quispiam religione aut capta apud se occultare aut posita tollere auderet, gravissimumque ei rei supplicium cum cruciatu constitutum est.*

Strabo also extends this divinatory sacrifice to the *Lusitani* in Hispania (3, 3, 6, p.154),²⁴ and the *Cimbri* (7, 2, 3, p.294). Diodorus adds (5, 32, 6) that the Gauls imprisoned criminals for five years and later impaled (or crucified) them in honour of the gods.²⁵

Although not in connection with the human sacrifice, Diodorus (5, 29) and Strabo refer (4, 4, 5, p.198) to the Gallic custom of beheading the defeated foe (excellently illustrated on Hispanic brooches showing horsemen and their mounts)²⁶ and Strabo (3, 3, 7, p.155) notes that the mountain-dwellers of the north of the Iberian Peninsula would sacrifice to Ares a goat, prisoners of war and horses,²⁷ and Livy refers to the Lusitanian custom of sealing a pact by sacrificing a man and a horse (*Perioch.* 49). Pomponius Mela, for his part, points out (3, 2, 18) that in other times (*vestigia feritatis jam abolitae*), the Gauls were so savage that they believed man was the best sacrificial victim for the gods, and Tacitus and Cassius Dio mention that the Britons practised human sacrifice in a sacred grove on the

²⁴ M.V. GARCÍA QUINTELA, "El sacrificio lusitano. Estudio comparativo", in *Latomus* 51 (1992), 337-354.

²⁵ It might be worth mentioning here that in the Roman religion, the *lustrum* (five-year period) had a special significance also (F. MARCO SIMÓN, "Ritual participation and collective identity in the Roman Republic: *Census* and *lustrum*", in *Repúblicas y ciudadanos. Modelos de participación cívica en el mundo antiguo*, ed. by F. MARCO SIMÓN, F. PINA POLO, J. REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ [Barcelona 2006], 153-166), and that Herodotus (4, 94) had previously pointed out that every five years the *Getae* would consecrate a human victim to Zalmoxis. One reason to explain the incarceration of the wrongdoers for long periods of time, as recorded by Diodorus for the Gauls, may have been the symbolic accumulation of value invested in these social outcasts as represented by their maintenance — particularly the provision of food —, as in the case of the sacrifice of aged cattle in Gournay or the pampering of the *pharmakos* before his expelling from the city (ALDHOUSE GREEN 2001, 167-68).

²⁶ M. ALMAGRO-GORBEA, M. TORRES, *Las fibulas de jinete y caballito. Aproximación a las elites ecuestres y su expansión en la Hispania céltica* (Zaragoza 1999). See also LIV. 10, 26 (battle of *Clusium*), 23, 24, 11 (decapitation of the Roman general Postumius by the Cisalpine Boii in 216 B.C.), or HDT. 5, 63-66 for Scythian parallels.

²⁷ Also in Scythia is attested the practice of slaughtering war-captives to Ares (HDT. 4, 62).

island of *Mona* and in another consecrated to *Andrasta*, respectively (Tac. *Ann.* 14, 29-30; Dio Cass. 62, 7, 2).

In the last twenty years, archaeological discoveries have revealed data regarding sacrificial rituals that would have been unthinkable until recently, in the Belgian sanctuaries in northern Gaul (characterised by an enclosure with a pit and stakes, and with a wealth of material remains — weapons and animal and human bones —: Gournay-sur-Aronde, Ribemont-sur-Ancre),²⁸ as well as in ritual pits (such as those at Acy-Romance, in the Ardennes)²⁹ or various discoveries connected with foundation rituals and, of course, the famous discovery of “Lindow man”, subjected to a “triple death”³⁰ (strangled with a rope, throat cut, and drowned) which recalls the Berne Commentary on Lucan referring to the various forms of sacrifice to appease *Teutates*, *Esus* and *Taranis*.³¹

²⁸ J.L. BRUNAU, P. MÉNIEL, F. POPLIN, *Gournay. I: Les fouilles sur le sanctuaire et l'oppidum (1975-1984)*, *Revue Archéologique de Picardie* 1985; *Les sanctuaires celtiques et le monde méditerranéen*, éd. par J.L. BRUNAU (Paris 1991); J.L. BRUNAU *et alii*, “Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme), Bilan préliminaire et nouvelles hypothèses”, in *Gallia* 56 (1999), 177-283; J.L. BRUNAU, “Les dieux souterrains des Celtes et leur culte en Gaule du Nord”, in *Dieux des Celtes/Goetter der Kelten/Gods of the Celts (supra n.14)*, 221-264.

²⁹ B. LAMBOT, “Les morts d'Acy-Romance (Ardennes) à la Tène finale. Pratiques funéraires, aspects religieux et hiérarchie sociale”, in *Etudes et Documents Fouilles, 4: Les Celtes. Rites funéraires en Gaule du Nord entre le VI^e et le I^{er} siècle avant Jésus-Christ* (Namur 1998), 75-87; B. LAMBOT, P. MÉNIEL, “Le village gaulois d'Acy-Romance (Ardennes, France). Morts et vivants, rites et sacrifices humains chez les Rèmes”, in *Studien sur Archäologie der Kelten, Römer und Germanen in Mittel- und Westeuropa: Alfred Haffner zum 60. Geburtstag gewidmet*, hrsg. von A. MÜLLER-KARPE *et alii* (Rahden/Westf. 1998), 361-387.

³⁰ ALDHOUSE GREEN 2001 (*op.cit.* n. 20), 124-125, with references; D.J. WARD, “The Threefold Death: An Indo-European Trifunctional Sacrifice?”, in *Myth and Law among the IndoEuropeans*, ed. by J. PUHVEL (University of California Press 1970), 123-142.

³¹ *Lucani Commenta Bernensia*, ad 1, 445 ff.: *Sanguine diro Teutates horrensque feris altare: Mercurius lingua Gallorum Teutates dicitur, qui humano apud illos sanguine colebatur. Teutates Mercurius sic apud Gallos placatur: in plenum semicupium homo in caput demittitur, ut ibi suffocetur. Hesus Mars sic placatur: homo in arbore suspenditur, usque donec per cruorem membra digesserit. Taranis Ditis pater hoc modo apud eos placatur: in alveo ligneo aliquod homines cremantur.*

From an analysis of the anthropological remains and their archaeological context, one might conclude that the classical authors have interpreted as sacrificial evidence data whose nature is far from confirmed, but also that the Celts did indeed practice sacrifices.³² But beyond any explanations we might give regarding human sacrifice among the Celts, I believe we must conclude that ceremonies involving the death of human victims constitute an exceptional resource (Diodorus — 5, 31, 3 — spoke of “transcendental matters”). These were situations that called for “high intensity communication” with the supernatural powers, as Platvoet puts it.³³ But it is not as if the Romans did not make use of this ritual, if we remember the burying alive of Gauls and Greeks in the *Forum Boarium*, or the sacrifice of two men in the *Campus Martius* in the presence of the pontiffs and the *flamen Martialis* in 46 B.C. mentioned by Cassius Dio (43, 24, 4).³⁴

³² It has been suggested that the linkage between the primary use of pits for many pits for storing seed-corn and their secondary function as (sacrificial) graves is associated with fertility-rites and the desire to propitiate the chthonic gods, into whose space the pits had penetrated: B. CUNLIFFE, *Fertility, Propitiation and the Gods in the British Iron Age*, Amsterdam, Vijftiende Kroon-Voordracht: Gehouden voor de Stichting Nederlands Museum voor Anthropologie en Praehistorie te Amsterdam Op 26 November 1993, 9-13. See also BRUNAUX 2002 (*supra* n.14), on the cult to the gods of the underworld in the sanctuaries of northern Gaul. The fertility purposes of some human sacrifice are attested by some sources (for example, DIOD. 5, 32-36). Some tools found in graves have been interpreted as sacrificial equipment belonging to Iron Age priests. This is the case of a set of bronze razors and a knife from a rich inhumation grave at Saint-Georges-lès-Baillargeaux (Vienne) found in 1998 and datable to the second century BC (ALDHOUSE GREEN 2001, pl.26). And it has been suggested that the deliberate destruction of wine amphorae — on the base of the resemblance between flowing blood and silt red wine — or the purposely damaged Iron Age swords can be interpreted as mimicry of ritual murder. According to the same principle of substitution or surrogacy, persons considered of a lesser worth were sacrificed in place of the sacrificer (ALDHOUSE GREEN 2001, 139-40).

³³ Cited by J. VAN BAAL, “Offering, sacrifice and gift”, in *Numen* 23 (1976), 168.

³⁴ F. MARCO SIMÓN, “*Romano sacro*. Las ceremonias de septiembre y la apertura del *mundus*”, in *Plutarco y la historia. Actas del V Simposio español sobre Plutarco*, ed. by C. SCHRADER, V. RAMÓN, J. VELA (Zaragoza 1997), 271-281; B.L. TWYMAN, “*Metus gallicus*. The Celts and Roman Human Sacrifice”, in *The*

V

The abandoning of the corpses of dead warriors on the battle-field to be devoured by the birds of prey was an exposure ritual whose otherness shocked the Greeks who witnessed it in Hellas³⁵ and which Silius Italicus³⁶ and Aelianus (*De nat. anim.* 10, 22) said was typical of the Celtiberians. This ritual (actually a heroic death that gave access to Paradise, with birds as psychopomps) was the antithesis of the Roman *funus* and was thus, for the classical authors, a feature of extreme barbarity. However, it is one of the clues leading us to another of the typical elements of Celtic ritualism: the belief in the immortality³⁷ of the soul. Lucan notes that it was the eulogy of the bard that, in a hymn to the feats of the warrior, led his soul to immortality (and he adds an enigmatic *regit idem spiritus artus orbe alio*, in what appears to evoke a parallel cycle of existence³⁸), and Aelianus (*VH* 12, 23) wrote that the Cisalpine Gauls sang the deeds of those who had found in the war a “belle mort”.

Connected with these ideas is the institution of the duel or single combat (Diod. 5, 29, 2-3; Liv. 6, 42, 5; etc.), one of the ideals of the Celtic warrior ethic, which sources attribute to Gauls and Celtiberians alike. This monomachy as a model is in

Ancient History Bulletin 11 (1997), 1-11. Even as late as the third-century, the emperor Aurelianus is alleged to have demanded that a supply of foreign prisoners from different nations be kept in case of sacrificial need according to the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* (VOPISC. *Aurelian.* 20, 7).

³⁵ But see also their surprise when they noticed that the Celts did not make propitiatory sacrifices before the battle of Thermopylae (PAUS. 10, 21, 7).

³⁶ 3, 341-343: *His pugna cecidisse decus, corpusque cremari / tale nefas: caelo credunt superisque referri, / impastus carpat si membra iacentia uultur.*

³⁷ For the *metempsychosis* and relation to Pythagorism, DIOD. 5, 28, 5 sqq. But the concept of *metamorphosis* suits better to Celtic thought.

³⁸ 1, 447-458: *Vos quoque, qui fortes animas belloque peremptas / laudibus in longum uates dimittitis aeuum, / plurima securi fudistis carmina, Bardi. / Et uos barbaricos ritus moremque sinistrum / sacrorum, Dryadae, positis repetistis ab armis. / Solis nosse deos et caeli numina uobis / aut solis nescire datum; nemora alta remotis / incolitis lucis; uobis auctoribus umbrae / non tacitas Erebi sedes Ditisque profundi / pallida regna petunt: regit idem spiritus artus / orbe alio; longae, canitis si cognita, uitae / mors media est.*

clear contrast with the idea of war as a collective exercise involving peasant-citizens, and therefore in line with a cultural situation that had already been superseded in classical times by the application of the hoplite tactic, in other words, regular war subject to rules that contrasted with the guerilla tactics of inferior peoples such as the Celtiberians. But this warrior *ethos* was part of the ideal of a beautiful death in combat, since, as Lucan wrote (1, 457-458), for the Celts, *mors in media vita est*: death was merely the halfway point in a long life. There are very few examples to be found that illustrate better this common ritual claim that death and birth are the same thing.

The Celts went into battle singing, they fought naked, with only their weapons or a torque — the highest expression of a status of heroic excellence — around their necks,³⁹ and this is how the Gauls appeared in Greek sculpture. The Celts' disdain for death was noted as far back as Aristotle (*Pol.* 7, 17, 3, 1336 a 15-21; *Eth. Nicom.* 3, 7, 7, 1115 b 24-29; *Eth. Eudem.* 3, 1, 25, 1229 b 23-30), and later by Posidonius (*Strab.* 7, 2, 1, p.293), Nicolaus Damascenus (*FGrHist* 90 F 109, *ap. Stob.* 3, 7, 39 Hense), or Aelianus (*VH* 12, 22), in the "struggle against the waves", a mytheme that came possibly from Ephorus.

VI

When Strabo noted that the *Vettones* only conceived of man as waging war or resting (3, 4, 16, p.164), he was pointing out two poles that seemed to dominate both extremes of the system of values (*ethos*) of these people: war and feasting, which served to celebrate hospitality and which brings us to another essential nucleus of Celtic ritualism.

Their immoderate taste for wine and drunkenness was one of the essential components defining Celtic barbarity according to ancient sources, from Plato in the 4th century BCE (*Lg.* 1,

³⁹ PLB. 2, 28, 6-10; 3, 114, 4; STR. 4, 4, 5, p.197-198; DIOD. 5, 27.

637d) to Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* 2, 2, 32) and Aristides Quintilianus (*Mus.* 2, 6, p.63 Winnington-Ingram). The “Celtic thirst” for wine was a recurrent theme, the impulse for adventures and invasions, as shown by the myths of Helicon and Arruns of *Clusium* (Dion. Hal. 13, 10-11; Plin. *nat.* 12, 5). This wine, of course, was not mixed with water. The pecking order in the serving of the wine as emphasised by Posidonius is reminiscent of what Herodotus said when he noted that the right of access to the wine bowl was proportional to the number of enemy slain (4, 66).

In my opinion, it is important to stress that, unlike the Greek *symposion*, the banquet and the drunkenness that went with it were related to the *consilium armatum* of Caesar (*Gall.* 5, 56) and the rituals prior to the commencement of war operations, as noted by Trogus Pompeius (*Hist. Philipp. Epit.* 24, 7-8), Tacitus (*Hist.* 4, 29, and also in connection with the Germani in *Germ.* 22, 1) and Dio Cassius (39, 45).

This drunkenness unleashed warlike frenzy in all its mortal amplitude. The refusal to drink wine with water⁴⁰ was not only a sign of resistance against Dionysian civilisation, but also the desire to ingest a “magic potion” and for an invulnerability beverage comparable to the Greek ambrosia, as Dumézil notes, a beverage for which, unlike in the Greek *symposion*, in which each participant had his own drinking vessel, the Celts handed round a common vessel. Both Celtic and Graeco-Roman systems of values appear therefore “inverted” regarding the war and the banquet: while monomachy is the model of Celtic *ethos* vs. the collective fighting of Mediterranean peoples, collective drinking contrasts with the individual vessels of the *symposion*.

This relation of drinking to war can explain why the Numantines took their last meal with *caelia*, a wheat beer.⁴¹ Our sources systematically associated the drinking of wine with madness:

⁴⁰ DIOD. 22, 9, 2; PLUT. *Marius* 19, 4; ATHEN. 10, 436; PAUS. 10, 22; AMM. 15, 12, 4.

⁴¹ FLOR. *epit.* 1, 34, 12; OROS. *hist.* 5, 7, 12-14.

delirium (*mania*), unconsciousness (*alogía, obtunsis sensibus*), voluntary dementia (*furoris species voluntaria*), confusion and rambling (*ataxia, discursibus vagis*), blind violence (*lábros, orgé*), “anti-symposium” and in fact, total lack of *paideia*, as Villard points out.⁴²

This context of alcohol is probably associated with certain ethnonyms, such as that of the Cantabrian *Orgenomesci*, a name seemingly made up of *orgeno*, “to kill”, and *mesco*, “drunkenness”,⁴³ to be found in the Irish tale of “The Intoxication of the Ulaid” (*Mesca Ulad*). The name of the Cantabrian tribe (which would bring together the two extremes of the banquet and war, pointed out earlier) would mean something like “The drunks who kill”.

The relationship between suicide and alcohol is clearly highlighted in the episode of the death of the chieftain Brennus in *Herakleia* and 20,000 of his men “after drinking undiluted wine”,⁴⁴ as well as in the collective suicide of the Cantabrians, which Strabo interpreted, in relation to drunkenness, as a feature common to Celts, Thracians and Scythians (3, 4, 17, p.164-165).

In this warlike frenzy and ritual devotion there was a disdain for death which invoked another element of banquets and drunkenness highlighted by our sources: suicide as a “voluntary sacrifice”, which can be rightly associated with the immortality of the soul. Posidonius (*FGrHist* 87 F 16, *ap.* Athen. 4, 154 a-c) attests the “agonistic” suicide of the Gallic chiefs during ritual banquets when the hero, faced with the impossibility of matching the gifts he received with others of at least equivalent value, paid with his life (*in theatro*, in full view of everyone), thus evading reciprocation and dishonour.⁴⁵

⁴² M.P. VILLARD, “Les barbares et la boisson”, in *Archéologie de la vigne et du vin. Actes du colloque 28-29 mai 1988* (Paris 1990), 247-252.

⁴³ X. DELAMARRE, *Dictionnaire de la langue gauloise. Une approche linguistique du vieux celtique continental* (Paris 2001), 244.

⁴⁴ DIOD. 22, 9, 1-3; PAUS. 10, 23, 12.

⁴⁵ B. BOULOUMIÉ, “Le vin et la mort chez les Princes celtes”, in *L'imaginaire du vin. Actes du colloque pluridisciplinaire, 15-17 octobre 1981*, ed. by M. CHATELAIN (Marseille 1983), 15-25.

Other information serves to complete the association of wine with ritual in the religion of the Celts. For example, two passages by Pliny mention the sacrifice of bulls and the ritual feasts prior to the mistletoe harvest under the very tree that hosted it by the Druids,⁴⁶ and the harvest of the plant called *selago* by the Gauls, with ablutions and libations of wine beforehand (*nat.* 24, 103-104). One particularly significant piece of information, noted by Livy (23, 24, 6-13), was the use of the skull of the Roman consul Aulus Postumius, defeated by the Cisalpine *Boii* in the *Litana* forest in 216, to make a beaker which, covered in gold, was used to offer libations in traditional feasts (the *Boii* used the stratagem of cutting down the trees so that they fell on the Roman army, an episode that some authors interpreted as a Celtic myth of the “fighting trees”, which was to persist up to modern times, including in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*).

One of the essential functions of the banquets was to consolidate the links between the main group of men-at-arms, as well as to constitute a genuine redistribution of war trophies and agricultural products. The information supplied by Phylarchus of Samos (*FGrHist* 81 F 2 & 9), a 3rd-century BCE Greek writer, or Posidonius (*FGrHist* 87 F 18), noted by Athenaeus (4, 150 d-f; 4, 152 d-f), concerning the distribution of the meat of sacrificed animals and large quantities of wine in special enclosures, by the Galatian Ariamnes, as well as Lovernius, is in line with the stories of great banquets (*bruidne*) of Irish epic poetry in the context of assemblies (*oenach*) which were held at regular intervals as a means of redistributing wealth.

⁴⁶ PLIN. *nat.* 16, 250-251: *Est autem id rarum admodum inuentu et repertum magna religione petitur et ante omnia sexta luna, quae principia mensum annorumque his facit et saeculi post tricesimum annum, quia iam uirium abunde habeat nec sit sui dimidia. Omnia sanantem appellant suo uocabulo. Sacrificio epulisque rite sub arbore comparatis duos admouent candidi coloris tauros, quorum cornua tum primum uinciantur. Sacerdos candida ueste cultus arborem scandit, falce aurea demetit, candido id excipitur sago. Tum deinde uictimas immolant precantes, suum donum deus prosperum faciat iis quibus dederit. Fecunditatem eo potu dari cuicumque animalium sterili arbitrantur, contra uenena esse omnia remedio. Tanta gentium in rebus frivolis plerumque religio est.*

In the last few decades, archaeology has been unearthing a series of structures that seem to document the sacred nature of these feasts and their place in an ethical-religious context. For example, the quadrangular enclosures (*Viereckschanzen*), initially considered to be sanctuaries, seem to have been temporary constructions that were used in the feasts described by Posidonius, as no traces of occupation have been found, according to authors such as Berger or Buchsenschutz.⁴⁷ In various places, trenches have been excavated revealing amphorae that have been systematically found next to metal tableware and animal bones, on the occasion of meetings of the “people in arms” (*corios, oikos*) in meeting places, and linked to bonding rites,⁴⁸ and also in *Baeturia*, in Celtic Hispania, the remains of Castrejón de Capote have revealed evidence of feasts with sacrificial victims in time of war,⁴⁹ apparently, in ceremonies documented by the iconography of bronzes, such as the one from Costa Figueira (Vilela, Portugal).⁵⁰

In short, collective banquets and warrior rites achieved in Celtic societies what Durkheim called “effervescence” and Turner *comunitas*, in other words, a mental and social state generated by ritual, very different to the organisation and thought dominated by reason that prevailed in day-to-day life, with a very different tempo and rhythm.⁵¹ A wine amphora appears as a typical iconographic feature on the coins of the

⁴⁷ L. BERGER, “Poseidonios Fragment 18. Ein Beitrag zur Deutung der spät-keltischen Viereckschanzen?“, in *Ur-Schweiz* 27 (1963), 26-28; O. BUCHSENSCHUTZ, “Viereckschanzen“, in *Les sanctuaires celtiques et leurs rapports avec le monde méditerranéen*, éd. par J.L. BRUNAUX (Paris 1991), 106-111.

⁴⁸ M. POUX, “Festins sacrés, ivresse collective et cultes guerriers en Gaule celtique“, in *Rites et espaces en pays celte et méditerranéen. Étude comparée à partir du sanctuaire d'Acy-Romanche (Ardennes, France)*, éd. par S. VERGER (Rome 2000), 305-333, 330-332; ID., “Espaces votifs — espaces festifs. Banquets et libations en contexte de sanctuaires d'enclos“, in *Revue archéologique de la Picardie*, mai 2000, 1/2, 217-231.

⁴⁹ L. BERROCAL RANGEL, *El altar preromano de Capote* (Madrid 1994).

⁵⁰ X. LOIS ARMADA & O. GARCÍA-VUELTA, “Symbolic Forms from the Iron Age in the North-West of the Iberian Peninsula“, in *Anthropology of the Indo-European World and Material Culture*, ed. by M.V. GARCÍA QUINTELA et al. (Budapest 2006), 163-178.

⁵¹ See also B. ARNOLD, “‘Drinking the Feast’: Alcohol and Legitimation of Power in Celtic Europe“, in *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 9 (1999), 71-93.

Gaulish *Arverni* precisely beneath a horse,⁵² thereby reiterating this duality of the banquet and war that we have seen as a characteristic of Celtic anthropology. Thus, as in the *potlatch* of the Tlingit, the banquet appears in the Celtic world as an institutionalised form of social regulation.

VII

Dangerous excess was one of the essential features of the Celts as portrayed by Graeco-Latin sources, expressed not just in a series of psychological features (ranging from rashness to passion and belligerence) but also in the excessive size of the Gauls and, above all, in the vast bulk that they comprised. The huge mass of Celts moving in battle, the hundreds of thousands of combatants who had to face the tough Roman legionaries, was comparable to the vast mass of Celtic migrations: these tribes were in perpetual movement which seemed to be a definition of confusion, disorder and inefficiency as opposed to life in the city. Also the Celts' clothes, the characteristic *bracae*, were scorned by the toga-wearers. Cicero referred to the provincial witnesses against his client Fonteius as "giants with breeches" (*Font.* 33; also, *Pis.* 53).

Livy explained (5, 34) the installation of the Celts in Cisalpine Gaul through a migration saga which he situated in the time of Tarquin the Elder.⁵³ Because of overpopulation in his prosperous kingdom, Ambigatus, the king of the *Bituriges*, who at that time held sway over all the Celts, sent his nephews Belovesus and Segovesus to lead the detachments they deemed fit to settle in the places that the gods indicated with their auguries. Fortune decreed that Segovesus went to the forests of *Hercynia*, while the gods showed Belovesus the way to Italy. Having helped the

⁵² POUX, "Festins sacrés" (*art.cit. supra* n. 48), 327, fig.3.

⁵³ F. MARCO SIMÓN, "La *iuventus* céltica y la mística del centro", in *Las edades de la dependencia en la Antigüedad*, ed. by M.M. MYRO *et al.* (Madrid 2000), 349-362.

recently installed Phocaeans of Massalia against the Salians, they crossed the Alps, defeated the Etruscans at the River Ticino and founded *Mediolanum*.⁵⁴ For his part, Pompeius Trogus (in Justinus' *Epitome*) compared the Gaulish migration to a "sacred spring", in which one part of the expedition penetrated Italy and the other, guided by birds, went to Pannonia.⁵⁵

Livy's account expresses what F. Le Roux called a "central" conception of the origins.⁵⁶ The *Bitu-riges* were, etymologically speaking, the "Kings of the World" according to Zeuss (or "The People of the King of the World", as Pokorny would rather have it), but also the "Perpetual Kings", as interpreted by d'Arbois de Jubainville, and in their territory was to be found the toponym that best expressed the "mystique du centre" in ancient Celtica:

⁵⁴ LIV. 5, 34: *De transitu in Italiam Gallorum haec accepimus: Prisco Tarquinio Romae regnante Celtarum, quae pars Galliae tertia est, penes Bituriges summa imperii fuit; ii regem Celtico dabant. Ambigatus is fuit, uirtute fortunaque cum sua tum publica praepollens, quod in imperio eius Gallia adeo frugum hominumque fertilis fuit, ut abundans multitudo uix regi uideretur posse. hic magno natu ipse iam exonerare praegravante turba regnum cupiens Bellouesum ac Segouesum, sororis filios, inpigros iuuenes, missurum se esse in quas dii dedissent auguriis sedes ostendit; quantum ipsi uellent numerum hominum excirent, ne qua gens arcere aduenientes posset. tum Segoueso sortibus dati Hercynii saltus; Belloueso haud paulo laetiolem in Italiam uiam di dabant. is, quod eius ex populis abundabant, Bituriges, Aruernos, Senones, Haeduos, Ambarros, Carnutes, Aulercos, exciuit. profectus ingentibus peditum equitumque copiis in Tricastinos uenit. Alpes inde opposite erant; quas inexsuperabiles uisus haud equidem miror nulladum uia, quod quidem continens memoria sit, nisi de Hercule fabulis credere libet, superatas. ibi cum uelut saeptos montium altitudo teneret Gallos circumspectarentque, quam per iuncta caelo iuga in alium orbem terrarum transirent, religio etiam tenuit, quod adlatum est aduenas quaerentes agrum ab Salluuium gente oppugnari. Massilienses erant ii nauibus a Phocaea profecti. id Galli fortunae suae omen rati adiuuere, ut, quem primum in terram egressi occupauerant locum, patientibus Salluuiis communirent. ipsi per Taurinos saltus <uallem>que Duriae Alpae transcenderunt fuisque acie Tuscis haud procul Ticino flumine, cum in quo consederant agrum Insubrium appellari audissent, cognominem Insubribus, pago Haeduorum, ibi omen sequentes loci condidere urbem; Mediolanium appellarunt.*

⁵⁵ IUST. *Hist. Philipp. Epit.* 24, 4, 1-3: *Namque Galli abundante multitudine, cum eos non caperent terrae, quae genuerant, CCC milia hominum ad sedes nouas quaerendas uelut uer sacrum miserunt, ex his portio in Italia consedit, quae et urbem Romam captam incendit, et portio Illyricos sinus ducibus auibus (nam augurandi studio Galli praeter ceteros callent) per strages barbarorum penetrauit et in Pannonia consedit.*

⁵⁶ F. LE ROUX, "Le Celticum d'Ambigatus et l'omphalos gaulois. La royauté suprême des *Bituriges*", in *Celticum* 1 (1961), 159-184.

the name of *Mediolan(i)um*, containing not only the notion of *mésón*, but also that of *omphalos*, the centre at once real and ideal, capital of the country in which religious completeness was accomplished. As well as *Mediolanum Biturigum* (today Chateaufort) and Cisalpine *Mediolanum*, the ancient toponym was also to be found in other places in Gaul, Britannia, Germania, Moesia and, perhaps, Celtiberia (*Mediolon*: mentioned in Ptolemy, *Geog.* 2, 6, 58), with the variant *Medionemeton* in Scotland. According to Loth's theory,⁵⁷ each of the known *Mediolanums* considered itself a "commemoration of the central national sanctuary", an idea quite close in my opinion to that of Rome herself, whose cosmocentric and perpetual *maiestas* was supposedly recreated whenever a colony was set up in a ritualised space perceived as an extension of the *Urbs*.

VIII

Like other peoples, the Celts experienced a fundamental duality in their perception of time, based on the alternation of day and night, light and dark. However, the precedence of night over day was a key element in the Celtic idea of time, according to a passage of Caesar, that we might evaluate as the expression of anthropogonic myth among the Celts: the Gauls claimed to have descended from *Dispater* (in other words, the infernal deity of the Celts identified with this Latin god), and said that this had been revealed to them by the Druids, which is why they divided all their seasons not by the number of days but by the number of nights; they observed their anniversaries and the beginnings of the months and years by the night that preceded the day.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ J. LOTH, "L'omphalos chez les Celtes", in *REA* 17 (1915), 193-206.

⁵⁸ CAES. *Gall.* 6, 18, 1-2: *Galli se omnes ab Dite patre prognatos praedicant idque ab druidibus proditum dicunt. ob eam causam spatia omnis temporis non numero dierum, sed noctium finiunt; dies natales et mensum et annorum initia sic observant, ut noctem dies subsequatur.* The Celts could be seen as the sons of the god of the night; night bears the day, as Not-Being bears the Being (LE ROUX

Caesar's information is emphatically clearly confirmed by the Gaulish calendars or the holding of certain key Celtic religious rituals, such as the moonlight dancing by the Celtiberians and their neighbours in the previously-mentioned Strabo passage (3, 4, 16, p.164), or Pliny's description (*nat.* 16, 249-251) of the harvesting of mistletoe. There is no way of knowing by what name the Celts designated the god interpreted as *Dis Pater* by Caesar (if indeed, and this is by no means certain, they used just one theonym). Perhaps it was *Sucellos*, although I do not intend to go into that now.

The Celts were the children of the god of night, and it was night that engendered the day. Counting by nights was also known among other peoples, such as the *Germani* (Tac. *Germ.* 11, 1). This day-night duality, this idea of time as an alternation of opposites, light and dark, hot and cold, life and death, displayed itself in the two halves of the year, marked by the great feasts of November 1st (*Samain*) and May 1st (*Beltaine*) as they appear in Irish texts, and is incomparably documented in the Gaulish calendar of Coligny (Ain), today in the Lyons Museum, the longest Celtic inscription still in existence, documenting the survival of the native language two and a half centuries after the conquest of the Gauls.⁵⁹

and GUYONVARCH 1978 [*supra* n.9], 246). These conceptions remind some modern visions of ritual as a "pure action, bound to produce whatever it represents because it is situated at the very beginning of things, it deals with things in their "state of not yet being"" (J. PODEMANN SORENSEN, "The Rhetoric of Ritual", in *Ritualistics. Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on Ritualistics Held at Abo, Finland, on the July 31-August 2, 2002*, ed. by T. AHLBÄCK (Turku 2003), 149-161, 158.

⁵⁹ P.M. DUVAL and G. PINAULT, *Les Calendriers (Coligny, Villars d'Heria)*. *RIG III* (Paris, 1986); J.M. LE CONTEL, P. VERDIER, *Un calendrier celtique. Le calendrier gaulois de Coligny* (Paris 1997). A large proportion of the abbreviations filling this great bronze inscription cannot be interpreted with complete certainty, but the general structure seems clear enough. This is a calendar covering five years (the five-year period was a significant one in Gaulish society, judging by the literary sources such as Diodorus Siculus writing about human sacrifices of a penal nature every five years: 5, 31). This same dualism of night and day, of the two six-month periods of the year, is to be found again in the distinction between *mat* and *anmat* days (with a meaning probably similar to lat. *fastus* and

The importance of the nocturnal universe in Celtic rituals and the way they counted time may explain the remarkable piece of information provided by Eudoxus of Rhodes, a 3rd-century BCE historian, commented on in the first half of the

nefastus) and in the structure of the months. Each month is divided into two fifteen-day periods, one light and the other dark. The Pliny text that we examined earlier concerning the harvesting of mistletoe (*nat.* 16, 249-251) indicates the fundamentally lunar nature of the Gaulish calendar: the Druids would begin their months with the sixth day of the moon (after the first quarter of the monthly cycle), in other words, in the light part, counting from the new moon. But the notions of *lustrum* and century are solar notions. Pliny's *saeculum*, to which he gives a duration of 30 years (almost certainly related to the original meaning of the term in Latin denoting, like **saitlon* in the Britonic language, a generation), would have indicated a cycle of 6 lustrums enabling, at the end of 30 lunar years, a return to a fixed yearly system on the sixth day of the moon. Between the two fifteen-day periods of the months on the Coligny calendar, the word *atenoux* is inscribed (interpreted as "rebirth" or else "the returning night"): *atenoux* almost certainly indicates the night of the full moon, equivalent to the Roman *idus* (let us remember that English refers to a 'fortnight', a period of fourteen nights, in Welsh, *pythefnos*). The religious importance of the transition from one fortnight to another is clearly shown in an inscription written in Latin found in a locality near Coligny, Guélignieux (Ain). This epigraph prescribes a ritual funeral meal every fourteenth day of a 30-day month, but this is expressed in Gaulish: *petrudekameto* (Lat. *quattuordecimo*) *trikontis*, in an extremely interesting case of bilingualism that helps to explain the survival of the Celtic language in the conservative ceremonial sphere of the calendar as well as in the private context, in the same way as the Coligny calendar does so in the public religious context (*CIL* XIII 2454). The reason I mention these epigraphic texts here is because they throw more light on those nocturnal rites under a full moon mentioned by Strabo (3, 4, 16, p. 164) in connection with the Celts in Hispania.

The second day of the second fortnight of the month of *Samon(ios)* in the first year bears the inscription *trino(x) samoni*, unanimously interpreted as "The three nights of Samonios". This was a feast whose ritual features we know nothing about, although it is reminiscent of the Irish *samain* night, the beginning of the Celtic year in November, when everything supernatural rushed forward, ready to invade the human world (F. LE ROUX, C. GUYONVARCH, *Les fêtes celtiques* [Rennes 1995], 35sq. and 183-186, with references). During this night of chaos, the conditions of the mythical world were recreated and communication was established between the two worlds, similar to when the *mundus*, the pit that led to the subterranean world, was opened in Rome on the three set dates, 24th August, 5th October and 8th November. We might add here that Diodorus gives us the only reliable information in the context of ancient Celtica regarding communication between the inhabitants of this world and the other (5, 28): in the course of their funerals, they would throw letters written to their dead relatives onto the pyre, as if they were able to read them.

2nd century BCE by Apollonius (*Hist. mir.* 24), that one of the tribes of the *Keltiké* could not see by day, but they could at night (*FGrHist* 79 F 2).

Night time is also when the last aspect I would like to mention took place: access (*Durchgang*) to the Beyond, which occurred especially across water. In an aside devoted to *Britia* in his eighth book on wars Procopius of Caesarea notes something (8 [= *Goth.* 4], 20, 47 sqq.) which he claims to have heard first-hand from people living there and which he does not take very seriously: in the ports facing the island of *Britia* there were people that had been liberated from the slavery that had been imposed on them by the Franks for providing a service consisting of transporting the souls of the dead to this island. When summoned and aroused from their beds at the dead of night, these oarsmen would go to the beach and find some skiffs that were different from theirs, and after a surprisingly swift voyage (just under an hour, as opposed to the day and night it took them in their own boats) they would disembark in *Britia*. A voice would say the names of the phantom passengers, as well as those of their parents and the trades they had exercised in their life, and if there were any women, their husbands' names were also mentioned.⁶⁰

The 12th-century Byzantine author Tzetzes was to refer to this same passage in his commentary on Lycophron's *Alexandra* (1204), but referring to the island as *Britannia*. The association of the Britannic environment with death was also noted by other writers, such as Solinus (22, 8) or Claudian (*In Rufin.* 1, 123-128).

Procopius' *Britia* was one of the group of those islands in the north of the world associated with exceptional or wondrous elements that drew the attention of authors such as Caesar (remember the Britannic origin of Druid doctrines, *Gall.* 6, 13, confirmed by Druidism's nordic connections in Irish sources),

⁶⁰ See F. MARCO SIMÓN, "Procopio, *Bell.* 8, 20, 42 ss.: El pasaje de los muertos", in *Chaire. II Reunión de historiadores del mundo griego (Sevilla, 18-21 diciembre de 1995). Homenaje al Profesor Fernando Gascó*, ed. by J. PRESEDO VELO *et alii* (Sevilla 1997), 497-511.

Plutarch and Antonius Diogenes. The *Ora maritima* (108-112) mentions already an *insula sacra* that is identified with Ireland.

One of the most important literary genres in Insular Celtic literature was the accounts of wondrous voyages (*immrama*) to some islands situated in the Ocean to the west, whose characteristics converted them into places in the Other World, the *Sidh*. This set of beliefs was also embodied in the funeral boats which were deposited in tombs and survived until recently in the Irish "building of the boat" funeral ceremonies.⁶¹ The outstanding item in the Broighter Gold Hoard, found on the shore of Lough Foyle, in Northern Ireland, dating from the 1st century, is the well-known golden boat with nine benches equipped with oars, possibly an offering to a sea god.⁶² A vessel as a symbolic element facilitating *Durchgang* to the "Other World", and the sea crossing to the beyond can be found, in my opinion, in the exceptional iconography of the golden diadems from Moñes, in the north of the Iberian Peninsula.⁶³

There apparently belong to this same semantic nucleus various pieces of information transmitted by our sources that reflect realities that were not always understood by Graeco-Latin authors. Strabo (7, 2, 1, p.293) cites the "combat against the waves" using information from Ephorus. And according to Timaeus of Tauromenium (in Diodorus 4, 56, 4), the ocean Celts worshipped above all the *Dioscuri*, who came from the sea, in a passage that, in my opinion, might be related to something Plutarch said in his biography of Sertorius, concerning the belief of the natives of Hispania that there was an island of the blessed in the middle of the sea, which also suggests the western ocean (Plut. *Sert.* 8-9).

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⁶¹ A. REES and B. REES, *Celtic Heritage. Ancient Tradition in Ireland and Wales* (London 1961), 318.

⁶² R.B. WARNER, "The Broighter Hoard", in *The Celts*, ed. by S. MOSCATI (Milano 1991), 617.

⁶³ F. MARCO SIMÓN, "Heroización y tránsito acuático", in *Homenaje a J.M. Blázquez*, ed. by J. MANGAS and J. ALVAR (Madrid 1994), 319-348.

As R. Rappaport pointed out, "ritual contains in its interior not simply a symbolic representation of the social contract, but the social contract itself. Thus, the ritual that also establishes, keeps and crosses the limits between public systems and private processes is *the* basic social act".⁶⁴

Through the texts I have chosen, I have attempted to underline what I feel are certain fundamental elements of Celtic ritualism in the view of Graeco-Latin authors. We know that archaeology has proved the genuine ubiquity of ritual in Iron Age life, acknowledging the essentially local context of the cults; perhaps "local variation in a shared tradition"⁶⁵ would be a good way of describing the existing reality. This ubiquity of ritual is also acknowledged by our sources, which we should interpret with care, in an attempt to distinguish between the ethnographic interests and ideological purposes that guided the classico-centric analyses of non-classical rituals. At any event, Celtic ritualism appears as an *essential* element in the construction of the exogenous identity of the Celts by those who had the *power* to represent them. The result, as we have seen, is a view of a religious otherness that differs from the Graeco-Roman systems of values in spaces (natural landscape), times (fundamentally night-time) and types of ritual (with the human sacrifice and the exposure ritual of the corpse as main negative criteria⁶⁶), although also in key beliefs related to some of those rituals, such as immortality reserved at least for the brave warriors, which could explain some key elements of the *ethos*. Unfortunately we lack of one of the basic principles of Luhmann's system-theory: the Celtic "self-reference",⁶⁷ the unity that their ritual system constitutes for themselves as distinct from the unity it constitutes to an outside view such as that Graeco-Roman which has been the topic of this paper.

⁶⁴ *Ritual y religión en la formación de la humanidad* (Madrid 2001), 207-208.

⁶⁵ As G. WOOLF, *Becoming Roman* (Cambridge 1998), 210, has suggested.

⁶⁶ But see also the female protagonism in the prophecy (TAC. *Ann.* 14, 32, 1; *dryades* in the *SHA: Alex.* 60, 6; *Aurelian.* 44, 3-5; *Car.* 14-15).

⁶⁷ N. LUHMANN, *Soziale Systeme. Grundriss einer allgemeinen Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main 1987), 57-60.

DISCUSSION

J. Scheid: Le problème des cultes celtes est un beau sujet d'étude pour une rencontre comme la nôtre. L'analyse que tu nous as présentée met bien en évidence à quel point l'observateur extérieur interprète une religion donnée en fonction de croyances, ici les croyances des Grecs et des Romains. Je n'ai pas pu éviter de penser au débat sur la *feritas* des Gaulois. Il y a vingt-cinq ans, un article de l'historien français M. Rouch, qui avait rappelé ce thème, souleva un tollé, en fonction de nos croyances sur nos ancêtres les Gaulois. Quelques ans plus tard, Brunaux, Lambot et Méniel publièrent la fouille de Gournay, Ribemont était en cours, et des rites étranges apparurent, qui ne sont pas encore entièrement "digérés" par certains celtisants, qui essaient toujours de les décrire en fonction de croyances modernes. À propos des Druides, peut-on les considérer uniquement comme des érudits, qui n'avaient aucun rapport avec les rites?

F. Marco Simón: Our knowledge of Celtic ritualism is faced by a large barrier arising from this two-fold measurement that I have mentioned. As well as the first measurement established by ancient authors who *represented* the Celts in terms of their own parameters because they had the power to do so, there is the second constraint of the modern interpretation of these same ancient texts, that are open to widely diverse interpretations. In the case of the Celts, the ideological constraints ("Nos ancêtres les Gaulois") are revealed in very distinct ideas of identity, underlining rupture or continuity in the process of religious Romanisation (staying with French historians, compare the views of C. Jullian and D'Arbois de Jubainville). As opposed to the romantic historical view of the "imagined

Druid" (A.L. Owen, *The famous Druids. A survey of three centuries of English literature on the druids* [Oxford 1997]) as the central element of Celtic rites and the idea of a timeless and immutable Celtic spirit, modern archaeology has unearthed spectacular finds such as the Picardian sanctuaries that you mention, with strange rites that have not been entirely accepted by certain scholars, but which seem to document, at least in Ribemont-sur-Ancre, the consecration to the gods of the "live booty" mentioned in various sources (Caes. *Gall.* 6, 17; Diod. 5, 32). What is clear is that this is a type of sanctuary, of major historical importance in the identity-building of the *Belgae* tribes, which cannot be extended to include other areas of the vast Celtic world (this is another problem linked to the ancient literary sources), and whose emergence, as Brunaux has pointed out, would have been in the 3rd century BCE at the earliest.

With regard to the Druids, my opinion is that they cannot be considered as mere intellectuals ("philosophers" teaching about the gods or the immortality of the soul and the overcoming of the fear of death, the stars and nature) without a genuine connection to a ritual that might have been performed by other specialists mentioned in the texts (*gutwater*, *antistes*, *vates*). What characterised the Druid was precisely the integral nature of his duties (religious, legal, teaching) and, while it is true that Posidonius (*FGrHist* 87 F 116,31, *ap.* Diod. 5, 31, 2-5, and Strab. 4, 4, 4, p.197) specifically related sacrifices to the *vates*, it is also true that these categories of priest are only documented in the writings of those who depended on Posidonius, and reflect an ancient viewpoint from around 100 BCE. It is possible that the duties of the *vates* or bards were absorbed by the Druids, or else that they were simply internal subdivisions of the Druids. At any event, later sources, from Caesar (*Gall.* 6, 13; 6, 16) and Cicero onwards, did emphasise — Tacitus, Lucan, Suetonius — the Druids' relationship with rituals, whether sacrificial (portraying them as being responsible for heinous human sacrifice) or not (e.g. Plin. *nat.* 16, 249). The

Druid's presence was also an indispensable condition for the extraordinary sacrifices mentioned by Diodorus (5, 31, 2-4).

D. Stökl: Wie wurde man Druiden?

F. Marco Simón: Despite a later passage by Ausonius on the rhetor Attius Patera, with regard to a "family of Druids" (*Commemoratio Professorum Burdigalensium* 5, 7), the recruitment of Druids does not seem to have been a hereditary process, at least at the time of the Roman conquest; instead, entry, which seems to have been restricted to the sons of nobles, was effected by virtue of the skill demonstrated during a long period of learning lasting 20 years, and in contrast to the eminently urban environment of the training of priests in Greece or Rome, took place in isolated locations, in groves or caves. The oral nature of this training was a key element in preventing the spread of their teachings to the common people (although, as Caesar adds — *Gall.* 6, 14, 3 — they used Greek writing in other public and private activities — and indeed, these Greek characters, which document inscriptions in the Gallic language found particularly in Narbonensis, might be considered the "national script", in the same way as the Celtiberians used Iberian as their "national" script, as opposed to Latin script). This pre-eminence of the oral over the written was also to be found in the eloquence, not the physical strength, that characterised *Ogmios*, the Gallic Herakles, according to what Lucianus of Samosata (*Prol. Heracles* 1) learnt from a "philosopher", in other words, a Druid. Caesar himself noted (*Gall.* 6, 13) that on the death of the supreme Druid, he was succeeded by one who was pre-eminent in dignity, and if there was no such figure, an election was held, as in the Roman pontifical college. The grouping of Druids into sodalities or brotherhoods, a feature mentioned by Timagenes of Alexandria (*FGrHist* 88 F 2, *ap.* *Amm.* 15, 9), had been contrasted by S. Reinach with the situation of the priest in the Greek world, in charge of the worship of a

deity in a particular sanctuary without being part of a brotherhood or a hierarchised priestly class.

D. Stökl: Fand Menschenopfer nur in Ausnahmefällen (emergency rites) statt oder war es Teil eines regelmäßigen Festkalenders?

F. Marco Simón: The increasing number of details provided by archaeological excavations and the growing sophistication in analysis techniques in physical anthropology have meant a spectacular growth in the amount of information on sacrificial rituals with human victims, in various contexts (see, for example, M.J. Aldhouse Green, *Dying for the Gods. Human Sacrifice in Iron Age and Roman Europe* [Stroud 2001]). However, a significant proportion of the evidence is elusive and has not been interpreted in the same way by everyone. At any event, the comparison that I myself have made between this new information and the information from Graeco-Latin authors leads to some fairly clear conclusions: the Celts certainly did perform human sacrifices, but not as a general rule, or at least not so systematically as the Graeco-Latin authors would have it. With the exception of Diodorus of Sicily (5, 32, 6), who mentioned the impaling of criminals every five years, and Strabo (4, 4, 6, p.198), who documented the annual ritual of unroofing and roofing “Dionysus” temple on the small island off the mouth of the river Loire (with the woman whose load falls out of her arms rent to pieces), our literary sources do not give clear evidence of the establishment of such sacrifices on a regular basis. In fact, it was Diodorus (5, 31, 2-4) who noted that divinatory human sacrifice was reserved for really important occasions, something which also occurred in the Graeco-Roman world (one only has to recall the burials of a Gallic couple and a Greek couple in the *Forum Boarium*, or the human sacrifice of one of Caesar’s soldiers before the *Flamen Martialis* in 45 BCE). Literary sources say that “regular” victims were prisoners of war and criminals (there has also been a

not very convincing claim for the gradual disappearance of human sacrifices from the 3rd century BCE due to the influence of Druidic doctrines and their replacement as punishments — Brunaux 1996, 132-133), and the inferior rank of the victims has been defended for the archaeological finds of Danebury (Hampshire) or Acy-Romance. This two-fold link can be explained: as power in the ancient world was substantially legitimised through the deity, it is understandable that the two highest manifestations of political power, the law and war, would include the deaths of people as a ritual sanctioned by the gods (A.R.W. Green, *The Role of Human Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East* [Missoula 1975], 202). And although regular ceremonies have been suggested at places like Gournay or Acy, the archaeological documentation throws up data that is mostly characterised by ambiguity, and which in any case needs to be interpreted more as “emergency rituals”.

J. Kellens: La démarcation n'est pas toujours claire entre le sacrifice humain et l'exécution capitale: voir E. Pirart, “Le sacrifice humain dans l'Avesta”, in *Journal Asiatique* 284 (1996), 1-36.

Ph. Borgeaud: Pour le sacrifice humain du côté des Grecs, il convient, comme l'ont fait remarquer, chacun à sa manière, Albert Henrichs et Pierre Bonnechère, de bien considérer la distance qui sépare un discours mythologique et exégétique surabondant, d'un côté, et les très rares allusions “historiques”, qui semblent ne concerner que des situations extrêmes (récit de Plutarque *Them.* 13, 2-5, très discuté, sur le sacrifice de trois frères perses avant la bataille de Salamine). Mais de telles situations ont vraisemblablement existé. Les réflexions critiques et lucides de Stella Georgoudi, qui reprend l'ensemble de la bibliographie, demeurent très utiles: “A propos du sacrifice humain en Grèce ancienne: remarques critiques”, dans le numéro consacré à ce thème sous un angle comparatiste par l'*Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 1 (1999), 61-82.

J. Dillon: I found many aspects of your exposition of Celtic rituals fascinating, but have just two comments to make. One concerns human sacrifice, and in particular, the burying of sacrificed victims in bogs. A number more of these have been discovered in Ireland recently, and I have seen it suggested that they may have been placed where they are in order to mark and consecrate boundaries between tribes. Have you heard anything of such an idea?

The other matter that particularly interested me is this business of suicide in connection with gift-exchange. As I read the passage from Athenaeus that you quote (4, 154 a-c), what is actually going on is rather that the person concerned is 'wagering' his suicide against a substantial gift to his family and friends — which I found quite bizarre, but most interesting.

F. Marco Simón: Some scholars think that the Iron Age bog-bodies may have been deliberately placed in uncultivable locations that were seen as boundary places (half water, half land, what might be envisaged as half earthworld, half spiritworld: see Aldhouse Green 2001, 157) which were also ideal to serve as watery graves to mark and defend the boundaries between different tribes. And, on the other side, some sanctuaries where this type of dramatic sacrifices seems to be attested, are placed near the confines among different peoples (for example, Gournay seems to be in the territory of the Bellovaci, but close to the boundaries of the Viromandui and the Ambiani).

As regards Athenaeus' passage, his information helps to underline the differences between the Celtic and Graeco-Roman *ethos*. Indeed, suicide, which was an act characterised in Rome for its intimacy and individual nature, appeared by contrast in the Celtic world described by Poseidonius (through Athenaeus) as an act performed in full view of all, as if it were a performance in a collective atmosphere (*in theatro*). But at the same time, in the Celts' system of values, it was a supreme example of *belle mort* and what Marcel Mauss called a *fait social total*.

C. Bonnet: L'exemple celte que tu viens de nous exposer se prête remarquablement à une réflexion comparative. Je serais tentée d'évoquer le cas de Carthage qui est très similaire sur le plan méthodologique, avec un fort éclairage classique. Ainsi, les sacrifices d'enfants sont-ils également nocturnes selon certains auteurs gréco-romains. Ils relèvent, en définitive, du même registre de l'altérité. Au sujet des sacrifices humains, estimes-tu que la distinction opérée jadis par Angelo Brelich entre "sacrificio umano" et "uccisione rituale", la première régulière, la seconde exceptionnelle, soit utile pour comprendre les phénomènes que tu as évoqués pour le monde celtique? N'as-tu pas aussi l'impression que les sources classiques, obnubilées par la nécessité de départager identité et altérité, focalisent leur attention sur ce qui semble "exceptionnel" et néglige du coup de nous informer sur le culte "normal"? Faut-il en déduire qu'il était absolument similaire à ce que l'on connaît dans le monde classique?

F. Marco Simón: Certainly. Classical sources, emphasising at all times, albeit unconsciously, the otherness of the rituals and beliefs of the Celts, included as "regular cults" what appeared, as in the case of human sacrifice, through archaeology as "problem-oriented or crisis rituals". And, paradoxically, they did not mention the most typical sacrificial ritual of the Celtic peoples according to information revealed by archaeological digs: the placing of animal offerings in ritual pits and trenches. And it seems clear that the "regular" cases emphasised by the sources correspond more to variants of "ritual killing" than to sacrifices in the strict sense of the word.

N. Belayche: Au-delà du débat entre rite et foi (plus que croyance d'ailleurs) s'étend l'enjeu politique de l'universalisme. Si le ritualisme est un marqueur d'identité, à quelle(s) condition(s) peut-il être porteur d'universalisme?

L'attitude face à la dénomination des dieux apparaît également comme une ligne de frontière identitaire. La tradition

historiographique depuis Usener — et le christianisme antique avant elle (par ex. Minucus Felix, *Octavius* 18, 10-11) — a tendance à considérer que l'anonymat divin (par ex.: “Celui qui est béni dans l'éternité” à Palmyre) ou bien la dépersonnalisation des théonymes (par ex.: *theos hosios*, *theos hypsistos*, *to theion*, etc.) trahit une évolution spiritualiste de la conception du divin. Quels éléments d'appréciation le monde celte peut-il verser à ce dossier?

F. Marco Simón: Your observation is very interesting because it addresses the diverse significance shown by the mention of the anonymous god in terms of various spaces and functions. I believe that while divine anonymity or the depersonalisation of theonyms in the examples you mention generally act as elements of a particular identity (in this respect, the spiritualistic evolution of the idea of the divine is part of autorepresentation), the nameless god of the Hispanic Celts was an element used to build an exogenous identity, *ethic* if you prefer. Quite another matter is the theory proposed by some historians (for example, Benoit, Lambrechts, Thévenot, Le Roux and Guyonvarc'h, with varying nuances) that the Celts had, in the highest level of the priestly class, a universalistic idea of the divinity, which would fit in with Druidic thought that was more “monistic” than “polytheistic” in the strictest sense, with a polyfunctional divinity that would have split into a series of specialist gods on contact with Graeco-Roman ideas, an idea that would have been expressed in the aniconism and abstraction of Celtic art, or episodes such as the mirth that the images of the gods in Delphos caused Brennus (Diod. 22, 17). However, it seems to me that these ideas are not backed up by the epigraphic or even literary data (Caes. *Gall.* 6, 16; Lucan. 1, 440 sqq.).

Ph. Borgeaud: Marco Simón nous fait comprendre que ce que les Romains pensent des Celtes relève en partie au moins d'une rhétorique générale de l'altérité. Pour revenir au passage

de Strabon (3, 4, 16, p.164) qui oppose les Kallaikoi athées aux Celtibères qui sacrifient à un dieu anonyme, les nuits de pleine lune, ne doit-on pas attribuer un sens fort, et une coloration quasi transitive, à "athées"? Les athées, ce ne sont pas d'abord ceux qui seraient dépourvus de dieux, ce sont ceux qui menacent les dieux des autres, qui sont agressifs à leur égard, comme on le rapporte par exemple, du côté de l'Égypte, des Perses (Cambyse) ou des Judéens (Moïse destructeur des temples selon Manéthon). Sous cet angle, le fait d'opposer aux Kallaikoi un peuple pieux qui ne donne pas de nom à son dieu, mais le vénère à ciel ouvert, revient à dessiner un contraste très fort entre une sauvagerie maximale qui consiste à agresser les dieux, et une forme de sagesse primitive qui consiste au contraire à adopter, par rapport au divin, une conception philosophique proche de celle du jeune Aristote (*De la philosophie* fr. 13 Ross), appelant à vénérer le ciel, ou un dieu cosmique. Le regard gréco-romain sur le judaïsme hésite entre ces deux extrêmes. Mais ce peuvent être ailleurs, à l'intérieur d'une même culture, deux pôles synchroniques: ainsi, chez les Thraces, dont la violence est généralement soulignée, on rencontre des exceptions comme Orphée, ou Zalmoxis. Ce contraste, ou cette oscillation, que l'on observe dans le discours ethnologique pourrait faire l'objet d'une recherche comparatiste, dans laquelle les Celtes auraient certainement une place de choix.

F. Marco Simón: I am interested by your point that the ethnologic discourse swings between the use of the concept of "atheism" to denote a threatening system of religious otherness, and "divine anonymity" to denote an "alien wisdom" typified by a quasi-philosophical idea of the divine. Indeed, the two similar views were applied in the Celtic world to the Druids, for example, positively stylised and related to Pythagorism by a pre-Posidonian current that highlighted their "philosophical" speculations, later clearly demonised by other authors with regard to ritual through human sacrifice.

But I do not think that this is the case with the Strabo text mentioned. Here, what is addressed is not the contrast between the extreme barbarism of the godless Gallaeci and a barbaric wisdom of the Celtiberians who worshipped a nameless god, but the contrast between two systems of barbarism in terms of the distance separating them from the Mediterranean. The Gallaeci, in the western *Finisterrae* of the Empire, had no gods (something categorically refuted by Latin inscriptions), while the Celtiberians, who were nearer, did have them, but (as was the case with the Pelasgi, in Herodotus' view of the formation of Greek religion: 2, 52 sqq.) they had not yet learnt to give them names. The third evolutionary stage, not mentioned by Strabo but implicit in his discourse, would have been the Hispanic peoples who, like the Iberians who inhabited the Mediterranean coasts and the south of the Peninsula, had — as a result of colonisation by the Greeks and Romanisation — gods with names (obviously adapted from the names of Graeco-Roman gods). What Strabo did, in my opinion, was to adapt his view, following the procedure of *exokeanismos*, to the schemes of Aristotle, shaded by Stoic pragmatism (finally, on Strabo, see *Strabo's Cultural Geography. The Making of a kolossourgia*, ed. by D. Dueck, H. Hugh Lindsay, S. Pothecary [Cambridge 2005]). Quoting Plato, Strabo marked as factors of civilisation the habitat and distance from the sea (13, 1, 25, p.592), as well as greater or lesser proximity to the Greeks (17, 1, 3, p.786-788: the nomadic life and lack of resources of the Ethiopians was due not only to the climate or lack of water, but also the vast distance separating them from “us Greeks”).

J. Kellens: L'exposition des cadavres, qui est un trait si frappant du mazdéisme, est justifié dans certains commentaires moyen-perses par le fait que l'on accède plus facilement au paradis quand on voit le soleil: voir F. Grenet, *Les pratiques funéraires dans l'Asie Centrale sédentaire* (Paris 1984), 39-40.

F. Marco Simón: Perhaps a similar idea among the Hispanic Celts was the basis for the iconography on a pair of beakers from Numantia, showing warriors' corpses below large images of the sun (G. Sopena Genzor, *Ética y ritual. Aproximación al estudio de la religiosidad de los pueblos celtibéricos* [Zaragoza 1995], 307, figs. 52-54).