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“Bulls cut down bellowing”: Ritual leitmotifs and poetic pressures in Iliad XXIII

Abstract: Using Rappaport’s notion of liturgical orders, the essay argues that the fixity of features in some ritual scenes in the Iliad may denote a high communicational register and level of sanctity. The features of commensal and oath-sacrificing scenes are compared and contrasted – death is highlighted in oath-sacrifice, muffled in commensal sacrifice. There is a relative paucity of figurative language in ritual scenes, except in the case of the “pitiless bronze” which takes the life of the lambs and boar in the oath-sacrifices of Books III and XIX. This figurative paucity is to be contrasted to the plenum of such language in scenes which depict battlefield killings. Finally the features of the cremation sacrifices of Iliad XXIII are examined against those of commensal and oath-sacrifices. The focalization on the “bulls cut down bellowing” in the precremation feast is startling because it jars with typical commensal sacrifices, but may be explained by the broken nature of the narrative and its punctuation by an oath-making ritual leitmotif. In contrast, the actual cremation sacrifices are situated within a strongly formalized liturgical order which does not permit focalization on dying victims, despite the references to *poinë* which introduce and conclude the funeral sacrifices.

Résumé : « *Des bœufs mugissants égorgés* ». *Leitmotif rituels et pressions poétiques au chant XXIII de l’Iliade.* En utilisant la notion d’ordres liturgiques de Rappaport, l’étude affirme que la fixité des traits de certaines scènes rituelles de l’*Iliade* pourrait refléter un registre communicationnel élevé, ainsi qu’un niveau de sacralité. Les traits des scènes de sacrifice alimentaire et de sacrifice juratoire sont comparés et mis en contraste – la mort est soulignée dans le sacrifice juratoire, dissimulée dans le sacrifice alimentaire. La rareté relative de langage figuré caractérise les scènes rituelles, à l’exception du « bronze sans pitié » qui prend la vie des agneaux et de l’ours dans les sacrifices juratoires des chants III et XIX. Une telle rareté s’oppose au foisonnement de ce type de langage dans les scènes qui décrivent les tueries sur le champ de bataille. Enfin, les traits des sacrifices de crémation du chant XXIII sont examinés en regard de ceux des sacrifices alimentaires et juratoires. La mise en perspective des « bœufs mugissants égorgés » dans la célébration qui précède la crémation est frappante, dans la mesure où elle détonne par rapport aux sacrifices alimentaires typiques, mais peut s’expliquer par la nature décousue de la narration et l’insertion ponctuelle du leitmotiv d’un rituel juratoire. Par contraste, les véritables sacrifices de crémation s’insèrent dans un ordre liturgique fortement formalisé qui ne permet pas la mise en perspective des victimes mourantes, en dépit des références à la *poinë* qui introduit et referme les sacrifices funèbres.

Different moods, behaviors, and also vocabularies characterize commensal sacrifices and oath-sacrifices in Homer's *Iliad*. The first is presented as an elaborate feast that soothes spirits and sates appetites, while the second is rendered as a somber killing ritual that elicits dread in anticipation of oath-violation.¹ It is against these two clearly demarcated ritual paradigms that I will examine the phrase, "bulls cut down bellowing," which occurs twice in Book XXIII of the *Iliad*. The first occurrence is during a seemingly commensal event, the feast which precedes the cremation sacrifices for Patroklos; the second is later, when Ajax Oileus slips in the dung of the sacrificed bulls during the funeral games. Although the killing and bellowing of the bulls is referenced in two different ways (*ὀρέχθεον... σφαζόμενοι* [XXIII, 30-31] and *ἀποκταμένων ἐριμύων* [XXIII, 775]), the reference is to the same event, the sacrifices which precede the feast before the cremation sacrifice for Patroklos. My purpose here is to try to understand where in the wide scheme between Homeric commensal and oath-sacrifices, and against the lone scene of funeral sacrifice in Book XXIII, we are to locate this focalization on the bulls' bellowing, given the silence of victims in commensal sacrifice, the silence of victims in the cremation sacrifice, but the close focus on the victims' gasping and dying during oath-sacrifice. This quest hinges upon the pressures these different sacrificial type scenes, reflective of "liturgical orders,"² exerted on the poetic composition of the funeral feast. It also hinges on the compositional pressures of "ritual leitmotifs." I shall argue that the funeral feast is a weakly instantiated commensal liturgical order penetrated by an oath-making ritual leitmotif. I shall also argue that the cremation sacrifices, in contrast, represent a strongly instantiated liturgical order which suppresses all but a whisper of *poine*, another ritual leitmotif which happens to introduce the sacrifice of Trojan boys. The tension between ritual pressures and narrative pressures is front and center in this essay.

Commensal and oath-sacrificing typical scenes

To appreciate the pressures that liturgical orders and ritual leitmotifs may exert on poetic composition, one first must appreciate the relatively fixed configuration of verses which comprise commensal and oath-sacrificing typical scenes in the *Iliad*. As Leonard Muellner pointed out decades ago, ritual scenes in the *Iliad* constitute a special epic genre characterized by precise detail, ritually significant vocabulary, and a series of finite action verbs signifying a series of

¹ A contrast I have argued in *Sanctified Violence in Homeric Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, and in "Sacrificial Violence in the *Iliad*," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 16:1 (January 2002), p. 19-39.

² An item discussed by Roy A. RAPPAPORT, most exhaustively in *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, with slight variation in his "The Obvious Aspects of Ritual," from *Ecology, Meaning and Religion*, Berkeley, CA, North Atlantic, 1979, p. 175-180, reprinted in Ronald GRIMES (ed.), *Readings in Ritual Studies*, Upper Saddle River, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1996, p. 427-440.

finite acts. This series of finite action verbs and details represents a series of behavioral microadjustments, a ritual feature whose significance Muellner draws from Levi-Strauss.³ Both the commensal sacrifices of Iliad Books I, II, VII, IX and XXIV and the oath-sacrifices of Books III and XIX may be characterized in this way.

First let us consider commensal sacrifices. It should be noted immediately that there are feasting scenes in the Iliad which make no mention whatsoever of the sacrificial killing and butchering of animals (for instance, the feast of divinities at I, 597-604, and also of humans at VIII, 502-549 and XIX, 345) and there is also at least one rather abbreviated sacrifice which makes no mention of feasting, funerals, or oaths (VIII, 250-252).⁴ Of the commensal scenes which do combine sacrificing and feasting, the death of the victim is entirely ignored, apparently eclipsed by the formulaic phrases and microadjusting finite action verbs which describe the throat-slitting (*sphadzō* – usually a culinary verb in Homer), flaying, butchering, skewering, roasting and finally dining on the animal (i.e., I, 446-474; II, 410-432). There is a dearth of figurative language, and a plenum of ritual details and whole line formulae. The most complete sequence of steps is given in Book I and will stand as a paradigm. Identical comparisons from other scenes are given in parentheses; slight differences are given in notes.

(1) I, 447-8	τοὶ δ' ὦκα θεῶ ἱερὴν ἑκατόμβην ἔζειης ἔστησαν ἑδμήτην περὶ βωμόν,	They swiftly set in order the sacred hecatomb for the god around the well-built altar.
(2) I, 449	χερνίψαντο δ' ἔπειτα καὶ οὐλοχύτας ἀνέλοντο.	They washed their hands and took up barley
(3) I, 450 ⁵	τοῖσιν δὲ Χρύσης μεγάλ' εὐχετο χεῖρας ἀνασχών...	On their behalf, Chryses held up his hands and prayed.
(4) I, 458	αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ' εὐξάντο καὶ οὐλοχύτας προβάλλοντο, (ditto II, 422)	But after they prayed and threw barley,
(5) I, 459	ἀέρουσαν μὲν πρῶτα καὶ ἔσφαζαν καὶ ἔδειραν, (ditto at II, 422; cf. XXIV, 622) ⁶	They held up the [victims'] heads first, and then cut the throats and flayed them,

³ Leonard MUELLNER, *The Meaning of Homeric εὐχομαι Through Its Formulas*, Innsbruck, Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck, 1976, p. 32-33.

⁴ Compare and contrast Marcel DETIENNE on “the absolute coincidence of meat-eating and sacrificial practice,” in “Culinary Practices and the Spirit of Sacrifice,” Marcel DETIENNE and Jean-Pierre VERNANT, *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks*, transl. Paul Wissing, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 3.

⁵ Compare Agamemnon's prayer for Priam's total destruction, which initiates the commensal sacrifice at II, 410-418. The response of the deity is noted in both prayers (a positive response in Book I, a negative in Book II).

⁶ There is slight variation in Achilles' sacrifice at XXIV, 622: σφάζει· ἔταροι δ' ἔδερόν τε καὶ ἄμφεπον εἰς κατὰ κόσμον.

(6) I, 460-1	μηρούς τ' ἐξέταμον κατὰ τε κνίσῃ ἐκάλυψαν δίπτυχα ποιήσαντες, (ditto at II, 423-4)	They cut out the thigh pieces and hid them under the fat making two folds
(7) I, 461	... ἐπ' αὐτῶν δ' ὠμοθέτησαν· (ditto at II, 434)	They placed raw strips of flesh over [the thighs];
(8) I, 462-3 ⁷	καῖε δ' ἐπὶ σχίζῃς ὁ γέρον, ἐπὶ δ' αἴθοπα οἶνον λείβε	The old man burned them over split wood, and libated with shining wine;
(9) I, 463	... νέοι δὲ παρ' αὐτὸν ἔχον πεμπώβολα χερσίν.	Young men held forks in their hands.
(10) I, 464	αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μῆρε καὶ σπλάγχνα πάσαντο, (ditto at II, 427)	But when they had burned the thighs and tasted the innards,
(11) I, 465	μίστυλλον τ' ἄρα τᾶλλα καὶ ἄμφ' ὀβελοῖσιν ἔπειραν, (ditto at II, 428; cf. VII, 317, IX, 210, XXIV, 623)	they cut the rest into bits and pierced it with spits,
(12) I, 466	ῶπτησάν τε περιφραδέως, ἐρύσαντό τε πάντα. (ditto II, 429 and XXIV, 624; cf. VII, 318)	They roasted it expertly, and drew it all off [the spits].
(13) I, 467	αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ παύσαντο πόνου τετύκοντό τε δαῖτα, (ditto II, 430, VII, 319)	But when they had ceased their labor and prepared the feast,
(14) I, 468	δαίνυντ', οὐδέ τι θυμὸς ἐδεύετο δαιτὸς ἕψης. (ditto II, 431, VII, 320)	they feasted, and no spirit went lacking the equally divided feast.
(15) I, 469	αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἐξ ἔρον ἔντο, (ditto II, 432, VII, 323, IX, 222, XXIV, 628)	But when they had sated their desire for food and drink,

Note the repeated whole verse formulae, the concrete ritual precision denoted by the series of action verbs, and the paucity of figurative language, with the exception of the last verse, which is well-known to be symbolic of fulfillment. Between steps 13 and 15 may come a few other verses and ritual steps, describing bread being laid out in baskets and meat being served (IX, 216-217; XXIV, 625-626) and/or hands being stretched out to the refreshments (IX, 221; XXIV, 627), each act quite formulaically rendered when rendered at all. Notably, in all five commensal scenes the victim's blood, intrinsic to battle scenes and an emphasized element in several major theories of sacrifice, is never mentioned, nor are the animal's last gasps and collapse. Instead there are detailed actions connoting the bustling preparations for a meal.

The oath-sacrificing rituals of Books III and XIX too feature a fixed cluster of action verbs and precise detail, but their net effect is to highlight, not to suppress, the death of the victim. The ritual sequence begins with the assembling of participants (III, 114-115; XIX, 255-256), the presenting of victims (III, 268-269; XIX, 259-251), and the washing of hands (III, 270). Then we find the following steps in common, which are drawn for illustration from the fuller

⁷ Compare the slight variation in Book II, 425: καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄρ' σχίζῃσιν ἀνύλλουσιν κατέκαιον.

ritual scene in Book III. Slight differences between the two oath-sacrifices are given in notes.

(1) III, 271-72	Ἄτρεϊδης δὲ ἐρυσσάμενος χεῖρεσσι μάχαιραν, ἧ οἱ πᾶρ ξίφος μέγα κουλεὸν αἰὲν ἔωρτο, (ditto XIX, 252-53)	Atreides, drawing with his hands the <i>machaira</i> , which always hung by the great sheath of his sword,
(2) III, 273 ⁸	ἄρῶν ἐκ κεφαλῶν τάμνε τρίχας· αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα κήρυκες Τρώων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν νεῖμαν ἀρίστοις.	he cut hairs from the heads of the lambs, and then the heralds distributed them to the best of the Trojans and Achaians.
(3) III, 275 ⁹	τοῖσιν δ' Ἄτρεϊδης μεγάλ' εὐχετο χεῖρας ἀνασχών·	Before them Atreides prayed, holding up his hands.
(4) III, 276-80 ¹⁰	“Ζεῦ πάτερ, Ἰδηθὲν μεδέων, κύδιστε μέγιστε, Ἥελιός θ', ὃς πάντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούεις, καὶ ποταμοὶ καὶ γαῖα, καὶ οἳ ὑπένερθε καμώντας ἀνθρώπους τίνυσθον, ὅτις κ' ἐπίορκον ὁμόσση, ὅμεις μάρτυροι ἔσθε, φυλάσσετε δ' ὅρκια πιστά· ...”	“Zeus Father, counselor from Ida, best and greatest and Helios, you who see all and hear all, and the rivers and earth, and those who toil underneath and punish men, whosoever swears a false oath, you be witnesses, and protect the trusty oaths...”
(5) III, 292	Ἦ, καὶ ἀπὸ στομάχους ἄρῶν τάμνε νηλεῖ χαλκῷ· (ditto XIX, 266)	So he said, and he cut the neck of the lambs with the pitiless bronze.
(6) III, 293-94 ¹¹	καὶ τοὺς μὲν κατέθηκεν ἐπὶ χθονὸς ἀσπαίροντας, θυμοῦ δευομένους· ἀπὸ γὰρ μένος εἴλετο χαλκός.	And he put them on the ground, gasping, depleted of <i>thumos</i> , for the bronze had taken away their strength.
(7) III, 295-97	ἔκχεον, ἧδ' εὐχοντο θεοῖς αἰγιγενέτησιν· οἶον δ' ἐκ κρητῆρος ἀφυσσόμενοι δεπέεσσιν ᾧδε δέ τις εἶπεσκεν Ἀχαιῶν τε Τρώων τε·	Drawing wine from bowls with cups, they poured it out, and prayed to the gods who always are, and this is how each one of the Achaians and Trojans prayed,

⁸ Cf. XIX, 254, which has simply “cutting hairs from the boar” (κάπρου ἀπὸ τρίχας ἀρξάμενος).

⁹ Cf. XIX, 254-255, which has simply “raising his hands to Zeus | he prayed” (Διὶ χεῖρας ἀνασχών | εὐχετο).

¹⁰ Cf. XIX, 258-260, which has “Let Zeus see first, who is highest and best of the gods, | and then Ge, and Helios and the Erinyes, who from under earth | punish men, whosoever should swear a false oath” (ἴστω νῦν Ζεὺς πρῶτα θεῶν, ὕπατος καὶ ἄριστος, | Γῆ τε καὶ Ἥλιος καὶ Ἑρινύες, αἳ θ' ὑπὸ γαῖαν | ἀνθρώπους τίνυνται, ὅτις κ' ἐπίορκον ὁμόσση).

¹¹ Cf. XIX, 267-268: And Talthybios hurled him, whirling, into the great abyss | of the grey sea, as food for fish (τὸν μὲν Τάλθυβιος πολίης ἄλός ἐς μέγα λαῖτμα | ῥιψ' ἐπιδινήσας βόσιν ἰχθύσιν).

(8) III, 298-301 ¹²	“Ζεῦ κούδιστε μέγιστε καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἅλλοι, ὁππότεροί προτέρου ὑπὲρ ὄρκια πημήνεια, ὧδέ σφ’ ἐγκέφαλος χαμάδις ῥέει ὡς ὕδρ’ οἶνος, αὐτῶν καὶ τεκνέων, ἅλοχοι δ’ ἅλλοισι δαμεῖεν.”	“Zeus best and greatest, and all the other immortal gods who- soever should first violate the oaths, so let their brains run to the ground like this wine, and of their children, and let their wives become the spoil of others.”
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Note the focus on the killing and dying of the victims and the concluding curses stressing the analogy between the perjurer’s brains and the wine (again at IV, 158-162). The theme of Trojan punishment for oath-violation is continued into the next book (at IV, 67; 72; 234-239; 269-271).

Both ritual scenes may be characterized as relatively fixed sequences of verses that feature precise narrative detail and an abundance of verbs representing a series of finite, ritualized steps, as Muellner would see it. In addition, both types of ritual scenes include whole verse formulae, and are notable for a relative dearth of figurative language. The fixity of poetic form and the emphasis on precise detail and ritual acts (denoted by sequences of verbs) mirror, I think, the sacrosanct quality of the ritual performance itself, within and without the text. That is, the fixity does not represent a poet’s memorization of standard verses for ritual scenes, but rather at some point must have represented a constellation of actions associated with a formal performance conducted in a highly sanctified ritual register.

Liturgical orders and ritual leitmotifs

My emphasis on a high performance register as permeating ritual scenes is an attempt to merge ritual studies and oral poetic studies. The argument relies on, for one thing, the anthropological theory of ritual performance as communication.¹³ I have argued elsewhere that oral poetic performances narrating ritual performances produce a kind of intertextuality, based on the notion that the ritual performance communicates a kind of text, and so does the Homeric ritual scene, which communicates a ritual performance via its poetic text.¹⁴ This argument about the intertextuality of the Homeric ritual scene relies in part on Stanley Tambiah’s notion of ritual performances as communicating iconic analogues of primordial events to an audience or to

¹² Cf. XIX, 264-265: “But if I have sworn these things falsely, then let the gods give to me pains | very many, as many as they give to anyone who transgresses in swearing” (εἰ δέ τι τῶνδ’ ἐπιορκὸν ἐμοὶ θεοὶ ἔλγῃσι δοῖεν | πολλὰ μάλ’, ὅσσα διδοῦσιν ὅτις σφ’ ἅλιτται ὁμόσσης).

¹³ An interpretive model proposed by, for instance, Catherine BELL, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, Stanley J. TAMBIAH, “A Performative Approach to Ritual,” *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. 65, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979, Valerio VALERI, *Kingship and Sacrifice*, transl. Paula Wissing, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1985, and RAPPAPORT, *o.c.* (n. 2).

¹⁴ See Chapter 1 of my *Sanctified Violence*, *o.c.* (n. 1).

performers, who recognize the primordial event in its new hypostasis, much the way a viewer might recognize an underlying figure in an abstract work of art.¹⁵ It also relies on Roy Rappaport's analysis of highly formalized ritual performances as liturgical orders, whose formality and compulsion are often attributed to canonical encoding by supernatural or primordial forces. For our purposes here, liturgical orders may be characterized by, first, their punctilious and sacrosanct qualities, and, second, by the way their performances instantiate the conventions the rituals represent.¹⁶ The punctilious and sacrosanct qualities of the Iliad's commensal and oath-sacrificing rituals may be discerned in the attention to minute detail and the relatively fixed sequence of ritual acts represented in the ritual scenes – the fixity, says Rappaport, is a measure of compulsion and formality. As for the conventions these rituals instantiate, those conventions are to some degree obvious: hospitality is instantiated with commensal sacrifice, and new commitments and social relationships are instantiated with oath-sacrifice.

But there are more complex dimensions to liturgical orders, and understanding those dimensions may help to understand the relatively fixed sequences of verses which comprise ritual scenes.. First of all, the fixity of the features which constitute a liturgical order is seen by Rappaport to be proportional to the precariousness of the convention the ritual instantiates.¹⁷ This proportionality is evident in the elaborate commensal sacrifice of Book I, which mends the costly rift between the priest of Apollo and the Achaian troops – recently the victims of Apollo's punishing plague – and in the very formal oath-sacrifice of Book III, which creates a temporary alliance between the Trojans and Achaians after many years of costly war. Clearly, both rituals are responses to precarious situations.

On the same note, Rappaport sees the degree of formality as a measure of the degree of constraint required for the individual entering into the social contract established by the ritual. This means that the more likely people are to violate the institution instantiated by the ritual, the more fixed will be the ritual form. This constraint and the likelihood for violation is evident in the circumstances surrounding the commensal sacrifice in Book I: Agamemnon has just proven himself most inhospitable and ungracious to Achilles, in contrast to which the commensal ritual he leads in Book I is a veritable study in ceremonial form, and seemingly compensatory, given his earlier misdeed also against Apollo's priest, whose daughter Agamemnon had abducted. The priest and the

¹⁵ TAMBIAH, *l.c.* (n. 13).

¹⁶ RAPPAPORT, 1999, *o.c.* (n. 2), p. 24 and 1979, *l.c.* (n. 2), p. 428.

¹⁷ RAPPAPORT, 1999, *o.c.* (n. 2), p. 128: "[I]t may further be suggested that the more highly motivated people are to violate a convention, or the more consequential its violation is deemed to be, the more likely it is to be established in liturgy than in daily practice, or the more closely and strongly will it be associated with the conventional understandings that are so represented."

Achaians (and the audience) all know that Agamemnon's misdeed has precipitated a plague and consequent deaths. In the case of the oath-sacrifice between the Trojans and Achaians in Book III, the likelihood that the convention will be betrayed is made apparent by references to Priam's sons as unreliable in regard to oaths (i.e., at III, 105-110),¹⁸ and by the remembered Trojan trespass against the convention of hospitality perpetrated by Paris against Menelaos, when Paris abducted Menelaos' wife. And of course the audience would know that the Trojans indeed will violate the oath, albeit with divine instigation.

Lastly, Rappaport informs us that violating oaths is the one universal proscription across cultures, whereas proscriptions against murder, rape, and mayhem may vary considerably.¹⁹ This proscription against oath-violation is apparent in the fixed sequence (and hence formality) of the Iliad's oath-sacrifices, and is also visible in a handful of dire predictions for the fate of oath-breakers, such as "Whoever is first to violate the oaths, so may their brains pour onto the ground as does the wine, and the brains of their children, and may their wives be subdued by others" (III, 300-301).

The fixity and formality of ritual scenes must be appreciated as contrasting to scenes describing, say, killings on the battlefield. The latter scenes, as noted by proponents of the composition-in-single-words theory,²⁰ appear to be fluidly composed with an ear for most important words (the semantic nucleus) to be steadfast in the line, and less semantically weighty words and often figurative phrases (peripheral elements) to be built around them, usually at the end of the line. Typically, for instance, battlefield killing scenes go something like this: X killed Y with a (adjectival) spear, say, a shining spear, or a sharp bronze. The spear or figuratively rendered expression for it at the end of the line is semantically redundant, since most killings in the Iliad are by spear, and the semantic nucleus, X killed Y, is set towards the beginning of the verse. Phrases historicizing the identities of X and Y and the way they die are less semantically essential and thus more flexible, enjoying a range of metrically adaptive expressions and figurability. The implication, according to Bakker and Visser, among others, is that the poet composed these verses in single words, with a full array of lexical choices and a storytelling intention. Although there are metrical constraints in Homeric hexameter, they do not constrain creativity beyond the

¹⁸ "And bring the strength (*Bie*) of Priam, so he may cut the oaths (*borkia*) | himself, since his children are overbearing and untrustworthy, | lest someone by overstepping | violence destroy the oath of Zeus. | For the *phrenes* of younger men always flutter. | An old man goes among them, and considers both the past | and the future, whatever may be the best, by far, for both sides" (III, 105-110).

¹⁹ RAPPAPORT, 1999, *o.c.* (n. 2), p. 132.

²⁰ See, for instance, Egbert BAKKER and Florence FABBRICOTTI, "Peripheral and Nuclear Semantics in Homeric Diction," *Mnemosyne* 44 (1991), p. 63-84, and Edzard VISSER, "Formulae or Single Words?" *Warzburger Jahrbuch für die Altertumswissenschaft* 14 (1988), p. 21-37.

forms which constrain other poetic genres, and the oral poet composes with an ear for the semantics of his message first, not primarily for conjoining formulaic word blocks to fit metrical constraints.²¹ The composition process in battlefield killing scenes must be decidedly fluid in order to suit the pace of the rapidly unfolding drama. This means that the compositional process in killing scenes differs significantly from the compositional process in ritual scenes, which reflect primordial paradigms remolded to fit new narrative situations.

One feature of this difference is that for ritual scenes, each element of a verse, no matter where localized, may be a semantically significant component of a primordial ideal, although each scene may represent that ideal in a slightly different hypostasis. This does not mean that the various elements of the sacrificial scenes do not enlist for a Homeric audience a whole tapestry of related conventions and cultural themes, because surely they do, and in a way which enriches the narrative. Rather, it means that on the surface of the text ritual scenes are remarkable for their fixity of features and their relative paucity of figurative expressions, denoting a performance core which must have exerted pressure on the process of composition. The audience would understand this core to be established primordially, or at least to preexist the particular ritual performance. Hence the rituals described above demonstrate a tendency for inclusive semantics and consistent verse localization patterns, which refer ultimately to performance patterns. Further, unlike in battle scenes, in ritual scenes we have whole line formulae which are indispensable to the sense of the oath-making ritual, such as “and he cut the throats of the [lambs, boar] with the pitiless bronze.”

In addition, figurative expressions are rare in ritual scenes – unlike in battlefield scenes, where they are common enough. Let us consider the single figurative expression in oath-sacrificing scenes, “with the pitiless bronze.” The phrase is located at the end of nearly identical killing verses, “and he cut the throat[s] of the boar [lambs] with the pitiless bronze.” Because killing is central to oath-sacrifice, this verse arguably conveys the apex of the whole ritual. Thus, the end of line figuration describing the *machaira* as killing tool is not a semantically weak addendum, in the way of battlefield spears, but rather conveys a deadliness indispensable to the ritual performance. Particularly in Book III, the relatively slow dying of the lambs, represented by a vivid triad of verbs – gasping, being deprived of *thumos*, robbed of *menos* – seems to amplify the killing and certainly highlights the effects of the *machaira*’s work. Notwithstanding its position at the end of the line, then, the figurative expression for the *machaira* – the pitiless bronze – is semantically essential and in fact a veritable flag for the highly somber oath-sacrificing scene. It is further conspicuous

²¹ On this point see Paul KIPARSKY, “Oral Poetry: Some Linguistic and Typological Considerations,” *Oral Literature and the Formula*, Ann Arbor, MI, Center for the Coordination of Ancient and Modern Studies, 1976, p. 73-105.

because of the very *unfigurative* description which surrounds it – concrete detail and a plenum of verbs denoting precise ritual acts. Just by examining this one phrase, we can see that localization patterns and figurative phrases may bear a different significance in ritual scenes than they do in battlefield scenes. This is because ritual scenes are seen to represent liturgical orders established by forces prior to and other than the immediate ritual participants, and because each element of that liturgical order counts toward a primordial ideal.

So, although the different elements of the sacrificial scenes may enlist for a Homeric audience a whole tapestry of related conventions and cultural themes, the actual ritual scenes in the poem are remarkable for their fixity of features and their relative paucity of figurative expressions, denoting, as I said, a ritual formalism and actual performance parameters, albeit of very different natures for commensal *vis a vis* oath-sacrifices. Soon I shall argue that the formalized constraints of oath-sacrifices, in particular, must have exerted pressure on the composition process which eventuated in the funeral feast of Iliad XXIII.

A similar pressure on composition may be understood as due to ritual leitmotifs. The notion of ritual leitmotifs I have embellished from James Fernandez's theory of ritual as promoting metaphorical transformation. The term "ritual leitmotif" is not precisely defined by Fernandez, but I interpret it as a ritual shape impressed upon human events or in this case narrative events which are not on the surface rituals. By a kind of metaphorical transference, ritual leitmotifs effectively thicken and transform narrative events, connecting them to primordial patterns or canonical ideals. As Fernandez sees it, ritual leitmotifs may be penetrated by religious symbols, which are especially "volatile to interpretation" and which "fill out this universe of religious experience giving it resonance, a thick complexity and potency, which the discussion of the paradigm of metaphors – however basic – does not fully capture."²² Audiences familiar with the ritual performances from which the leitmotifs are drawn will appreciate this "thickening" in the narratives on which the leitmotifs are impressed, a thickening which might escape the perception of readers who lack the ritual experiences of audiences in Greek antiquity. On the other hand, the leitmotifs derived from ritual performances with the relatively fixed characteristics of liturgical orders may be easier for us to recognize virtue of their predictability. As I shall show, an important ritual leitmotif may be discerned in Iliad XXIII, where the oath-making liturgical order has exerted compositional pressure on the narrative shape of the funeral feast.

²²James W. FERNANDEZ, "The Performance of Ritual Metaphors," in J. David SAPIR and J. Christopher CROCKER (eds.), *The Social Use of Metaphor*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977, p. 126.

Ritual killing in oath-sacrifices versus commensal sacrifices

To appreciate the pressures of oath-sacrificing ritual leitmotifs versus commensal ones in Book XXIII, we must review now a key difference between oath and commensal sacrifices. Based on the sequences of finite ritual acts, the paradigm of commensal sacrifice consists of between nine and fifteen basic steps, minimally including throat-cutting, flaying, thigh-cutting, fat-wrapping, wine-braising, tasting, then skewering, roasting, and finally dining upon the rest of the sacrificial victim. The scenes conclude with a cheery and telltale formula, either, “and no single spirit was deprived an equal feast” (e.g. VII, 320; XXIII, 56), and/or the verse which bridges the feast and the next point of interest, “but when they had sated their desire for food and drink” (e.g. VII, 333; IX, 222; XXIII, 57). Oath-sacrifice is comprised, all told, of ten basic steps: assembling participants, presenting victims, drawing the *machaira*, cutting and distributing hairs from the victim, praying to Zeus and other deities as witnesses, invoking the Erinyes to punish oath-breakers, giving the terms of the oath, cursing oath-violators, libating with wine, cutting the throats of victims, concluding with the victim’s gasping and conspicuous death or the disposal of its corpse. As our earlier review showed, there is a limited variability in the order of the steps, but the two most lethal verses, those for drawing the *machaira* (a knife never mentioned in commensal sacrifices) and for killing the victim, are identically or nearly identically rendered. Those for praying to gods and invoking the Erinyes, also profound acts, differ only minimally in word order and in one substitution of an eponym for the Erinyes. Unlike in commensal sacrifice, in oath-sacrifice the death of the victim is central, and the animal is never eaten. Hence, rather than conclude with the sating of appetites, the killing ritual and its curses in Book III reverberate ominously into the successive battles, infusing the story with anticipation of divine punishment, because the oaths are indeed violated.

The killing and dying of the victim, then, is key. In commensal sacrifices, the verb for killing is *sphadzō*, ostensibly “to cut the throat” (Liddell & Scott), yet the animal’s throat, collapse, death, and even its blood go completely unmentioned. This is surprising considering the attention to ritual detail in the scene, as well as considering the emphasis on draining the blood in Classical Greek *thysia*. Why should the blood here be left out? In contrast, oath-sacrificing scenes feature the simple but ominous verb *tamnō*, “to cut,” the throat, *stomachon*, “with the pitiless bronze,” *nelei chalkō*, this being the single figurative expression in the entire ritual scene. Although no blood is mentioned during the actual oath-sacrifices either, “the blood of lambs” is one of a few tropes used to represent the power of the oath, as we see in this ominous warning by Agamemnon, “In no way barren is the oath, the blood of lambs, the unmixed libations, and the right hands in which we trusted, for if the Olympian does not fulfill it at once, he will fulfill it later, and with might he will avenge it,

with their heads and their wives and their children” (IV, 158-162). Except for the one use of *sphadzō* in the funeral feast in Book XXIII, the difference between dying scenes with *sphadzō* – the death being ignored – and dying scenes with *tamnō* – the death being conspicuous – is absolute.

The funeral feast

How startling, then, that both the blood and the bellowing of sacrificial victims is mentioned during the funeral feast the night before Patroklos is cremated. Yet this is not a straightforward feasting scene because the feast is broken, interrupted by the summoning of Achilles to Agamemnon’s tent and by Achilles’ oath not to bathe before he buries Patroklos. Let us review the details.

First, the feast begins among the Myrmidons after they have lamented, in full armor, the death of fellow warrior Patroklos. Then the abundance of the feast is described:

... οἳ δ' ἔντε' ἀφοπλίζοντο ἕκαστος
 χάλκεα μαρμαίροντα, λύον δ' ὑψηχέας ἵππους,
 καὶ δ' ἔζον παρὰ νηϊ ποδώκεος Αἰακίδαο
 μυρίοι· αὐτὰρ δὲ τοῖσι τάφρον μενοεικέα δαίνυ.
 πολλοὶ μὲν βόες ἄργοι ὀρέχθεον ἄμφι σιδήρῳ
 σφαζόμενοι, πολλοὶ δ' ὄιες καὶ μηγάδες αἶγες·
 πολλοὶ δ' ἄργιόδοντες ὕες, θαλέθοντες ἀλοιφῇ,
 εὐόμενοι τανύοντο διὰ φλογὸς Ἥφαίστοιο·
 πάντῃ δ' ἄμφι νέκυν κοτυλήρυτον ἔρρεεν αἶμα.

... Then they each removed their armor, bronze and shining, and released the high necked horses, and sat alongside the ship of swift-footed Aiakides, the myriad of them. But then he prepared a spirit soothing funeral feast for them. Many white oxen bellowed, being sacrificed around the iron, and many bleating sheep and goats, and many white-toothed swine, teeming with fat, being singed, were stretched out across the flame of Hephaestus. All around the corpse ran blood that could be caught in cups. (XXIII, 26-34)

It is notable that here in this “spirit-soothing feast” we have the single reference in the *Iliad* to “blood that could be caught in cups,”²³ the single (and odd) reference to blood running around the corpse, and the first of two references to the bellowing commensal victims, the second occurring the next day when Ajax slips in the dung of bulls cut down bellowing. Further, the verb

²³ We have no Greek *comparata* for catching blood in cups during a sacrifice. Aristarchus sees “blood that could be caught in cups” as a reference to the amount of blood. See the comment by Nicholas RICHARDSON, in *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume VI*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993. I have pondered this blood against the procedures of a Hittite funeral ritual in “Funeral sacrifices and ritual leitmotifs,” forthcoming in *Sacrificial Rituals*, a conference volume edited by Eftychia Stavrianopoulou, Lit-Verlag, 2007.

for killing in this graphic sacrifice is none other than *sphadzō*, normally associated with culinary practices and never with a focalization on death. The victims' blood and cries of distress in the preparation for the funeral feast here are particularly odd considering that some 100 lines later a number of different kinds of sacrificial victim will be thrown to burn upon the pyre of Patroklos – a complicated sacrifice indeed – and not one is noted to make a sound. Nor in that sacrifice on the pyre is there any mention of blood, of which there must have been very much. Further complicating matters, despite this reference to the agony of sacrificed victims in the funeral feast, the feast eventually will conclude with both formulaic closing verses, “no *thumos* went lacking for an equal share” and the transitional verse, “But when they had sated their desire for food and drink” (XXIII, 56-57). These verses, I have suggested, are emblematic of fulfillment and the closure of the commensal feast.

So why does this one sacrificial narrative, built around the verb *sphadzō*, convey the distress of the victims? One clue to the answer may be found in the fact that the feasting scene is not a complete and closed event, because right in the middle of it Achilles is called away. Still troubled over the death of Patroklos, he is led by the other Achaian leaders to the tent of Agamemnon to make plans for gathering wood for the cremation the following day. After his discussion with Agamemnon, Achilles then announces that it is time to return to the “hateful feast” (ἀλλ' ἤτοι νῦν μὲν στυγερῇ πειθώμεθα δαίτι [XXIII, 48]). At that point everyone rushingly prepares food, for which “no spirit went lacking for the equal feast,” followed by “once they were sated of their desire for food and drink” (XXIII, 56-57). Then they each go back to their huts to sleep (XXIII, 58). As an aside, we might note that the circle of feasters appears to have broadened from just the Myrmidons before the trip to Agamemnon's tent (inferred from XXIII, 6-16), to include all the Achaians (οἱ μὲν... ἕκαστος [XXIII, 58]), and that any marks differentiating the funeral feast from any other kind of feast have virtually disappeared by the time of the concluding formulae. Thus, what appears to be a unique feasting event at the start, has lost not only its narrative thread but any form which might have distinguished funeral from ordinary commensal feasts.

Another clue is to be found in the oath which disrupts the funeral feast. That is Achilles' oath in response to the urging of the leaders that Achilles bathe in warm water to wash away the bloody battle gore which still clings to him. But he refuses, swearing as follows:

“οὐ μὰ Ζῆν', ὅς τις τε θεῶν ὕπατος καὶ ἄριστος,
οὐ θέμις ἐστὶ λοετρὰ καρχήατος ἄσσον ἰκέσθαι,
πρὶν γ' ἐνὶ Πάτροκλον θέμεναι πυρὶ σῆμά τε χεῦναι
κείρασθαι τε κόμην, ἐπεὶ οὐ μ' ἔτι δεύτερον ὦδε
ἴξετ' ἄχος κραδίην ὄφρα ζωοῖσι μετείω.
ἀλλ' ἤτοι νῦν μὲν στυγερῇ πειθώμεθα δαίτι.”

No, by Zeus who is greatest and best among the gods, It is not the custom for a bath to come near to my head, before I shall put Patroklos in the fire and pour a funeral mound, and cut my hair, since such a grief shall not come upon me a second time, while I go among the living. But now let us be persuaded to the hateful feast. (XXIII, 43-48)

This oath explains both Achilles' mind and a significant theme in this book, as well as in the last five books of the Iliad. Oaths, as noted already, are compelling liturgical orders in the Iliad, and oath-sacrifices involve the most fixed of ritual scenes, the fixity a reflection of the ritual's formality and compulsion for the individuals involved. This abbreviated oath is not a sacrifice, of course, and is not even named as a *borkos*. But these features are lacking also in many other oaths in the Iliad, including the very consequential "greatest pledge" (μέγιστον τέκμωρ, I, 525-526) that Zeus swears in Book I, when he promises Thetis to direct the course of war so as to highlight the absence of Achilles. Achilles' abbreviated oath here has several features of oath-sacrifices, nonetheless: Zeus is invoked as witness, as he is in the bulk of oaths in the Iliad (i.e., at II, 412; III, 276; 298; 320; XIX, 258; and at III, 107; VII, 69; 411 are references to "oaths of Zeus"). Then the terms of the oath are given. Although there is no animal victim to pose as evidence of the self-curse in case of oath-violation, there is instead Achilles' battle filth, still clinging to him as evidence of his vow not to bathe before he cuts his hair and buries Patroklos. Another feature of oath-making rituals is that they impress a distinctly somber mood on a narrative and that mood tends to permeate the narratives which surround the oath. Achilles' vow here is somber enough. In fact, perhaps anticipation of this somber mood is enough to explain the seepage into the feasting scene of expressions of the sacrificial victims' dying anguish just lines before. But there is more to it, as the oath-making theme has penetrated the Iliad since at least Book XIX.

The last overt oath-making scene also involved Achilles; in Book XIX, Agamemnon sacrificed a boar and swore that he had not touched Achilles' girlfriend, in an effort to pacify Achilles and get him to rejoin the war effort. That oath is much diminished from the earlier offer made by Agamemnon to pacify Achilles (IX, 120-161), an offer that Achilles has rejected (IX, 403ff). Achilles in fact would prefer to do without this oath too, claiming to prefer *charmē* (XIX, 147-149) and the hard groaning of men (XIX, 214). He refuses also to partake in the feast which follows the oath and begs the other men to refuse to partake of it too (XIX, 198-214; 304-308; 314-321; cf. XIX, 345-354). In fact, it is in that book that Achilles vows to fast until vengeance is paid (XIX, 203-214).²⁴ Up unto the point of the funeral feast, he has eaten nothing ever since learning of Patroklos' death in Book XVIII. It is perhaps implied that he

²⁴ Possibly a pan-Mediterranean convention, given Saul's promise at 1 Samuel 14.24: "A curse be on the man who eats any food before nightfall, until I have taken vengeance on my enemies."

eats at the funeral feast, because of his statement, “let us now be persuaded to the hateful feast,” but his reluctance is clear. And of course his participation may be implied also in the formulaic lines which will follow the feast, to the effect that “no spirit went without an equal share” (XXIII, 56). It is notable, nonetheless, that the poem gives no explicit evidence of Achilles’ taking of food until Achilles invites Priam to dine with him in the last book, where he reminds Priam that even Niobe in her terrible mother’s grief did take food (XXIV, 601-602). This scene, of course, marks the reconciliation of Achilles to his mortality and humanity, especially when he weeps with Priam over their respective losses (XXIV, 507-513). Their commensal meal is a tremendous symbol of this reconciliation.

It is interesting that between Book XVIII, when he learns of Patroklos’ death, and Book XXIII, when he buries Patroklos, Achilles is reluctant to participate in any compassionate human convention – not oaths, not feasts, not pity for suppliants – with one rather oblique exception. That is his skewed oath-sacrifice of Lykaon in Iliad XXI. I have argued elsewhere that Achilles’ killing of Lykaon borrows a number of features from the oath-sacrifices of Books III and XIX, and impresses on the opening 125 lines of Book XXI an oath-making ritual leitmotif.²⁵ The narrative features which convey this ritual leitmotif consist of the following: (1) Lykaon anticipates his death as a *deirotomia*, a throat-cutting, based on *tamnoō*, to cut, and *deire*, neck; (2) like a defenseless lamb or boar, Lykaon is cast as a pitiable and unarmed victim, clutching the knees of Achilles, begging for compassion based on pity for himself and for his mother and based on his former history as Achilles’ suppliant and hostage, then finally dropping his hands and hanging his head to the side; (3) his actual death occurs when Achilles plunges his sword down into his neck by the collarbone – a *deirotomia* by verisimilitude, surely – and Lykaon falls prone on the ground; (4) the boy’s blood then seeps into earth, often deemed a common feature of chthonic sacrifices²⁶ and a match with the wine libation in Book III; (5) the disposal of Lykaon’s corpse by hurling into the “wide bosom of the sea” is similar to the fate of the boar in Book XIX; it is hurled, whirling, into the “great abyss of the sea.” The two expressions are matches for verse position and meter; (6) the stated fate of both corpses is to become food for fish (XIX, 268; XXI, 126-127); and (7) the conclusion of the killing of Lykaon is a prayer-curse based on *euchomai*, not with the dative of god, as in the Homeric praying formula in oath-sacrifices,²⁷ but with the *ep*-prefix and the dative of Lykaon, surely a perversion. Then Achilles vows that

²⁵ Most recently in Chapter 3 of *Sanctified Violence*, *o.c.* (n. 1).

²⁶ See W.K.C. GUTHRIE, *The Greeks and Their Gods*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1955, and Louise BRUIT ZADMAN and Pauline SCHMITT PANTEL, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, Cambridge, GB, Cambridge University Press, 1989, 1992.

²⁷ See MUELLNER, *o.c.* (n. 3) and KITTS, *o.c.* (n. 1).

Lykaon's mother will not lay him on a bier and weep for him and extends his curse of vengeance to all the other Trojans:

φθείρεσθ', εἰς ὃ κεν ἄστυ κιχέομεν Ἰλίου ἱρῆς,
 ὅμειζ μὲν φεύγοντες, ἐγὼ δ' ὕπιθεν κεραϊζών.
 (...)
 ἀλλὰ καὶ ὧς ὀλέεσθε κακὸν μόρον, εἰς ὃ κε πάντες
 τείσετε Πατρόκλοιο φόνον καὶ λοιγὸν Ἀχαιῶν,
 οὓς ἐπὶ νηυσὶ θοῇσιν ἐπέφνετε νόσφιν ἐμεῖο.

Perish! Until we overtake the city of sacred Ilion, you fleeing, and I destroying you from behind. . . Even so, you shall meet your evil fate, when you all shall pay for the death of Patroklos and the ruin of the Achaians whom you killed while I was away by the swift ships. (XXI, 128-135)

In my view this narrative is stamped by a clear oath-making ritual leitmotif, recognizable in part because the features that mark the oath-sacrificing liturgical order are so predictable: presentation of a defenseless victim (here marked by Lykaon's weaponless suppliance and anticipation of *deirotomia*), announcement of the oath's terms (no one shall escape retribution [XXI, 99-103; 128-135]), cursing oath-violators ("Your mother shall not lay you on a bier and weep for you, but ..." [XXI, 123-125], and "you all shall pay ..." [XXI, 128-135]), libating with wine (the seepage of Lykaon's blood into the earth [XXI, 119]), cutting the throats of victims (plunging the spear into Lykaon's neck by his collar bone [XXI, 116-117]), followed by a vivid account of the victim's death (Lykaon falls prone on the earth, lies there, his blood runs out and wets the earth [XXI, 118-119]) and disposal of its corpse (hurled by his foot into the river [XXI, 120], as the boar is hurled into the ocean in Book XIX), and finally with the prayer, signified by the *ep-euchomai* Achilles makes after disposing Lykaon's body to become food for fish (XXI, 121-125). The imposition of the features of the oath-sacrificing liturgical order serves to impress an oath-sacrificing ritual leitmotif onto the slaughter of an unarmed boy, represented as a pitiable victim of oath-sacrifice. Also, by virtue of Achilles' promise to serve *poine*, or vengeance – denoted by the verb *tinō*, to pay back – on the Trojans, the narrative adds a punishing nuance to battlefield slaughter. All the Trojans shall become victims and shall pay back (τείσετε) for the deaths of Achilles' companions.

But the skewed oath-sacrifice of Book XXI and the actual one of Book XIX are not the only instances of oath-making in those later books. The oath-making theme begins somewhat conspicuously with the oath-sacrifice in Book XIX, but also extends through Achilles' vow to fast until vengeance is paid, also in Book XIX, reappears in the *deirotomia* of Lykaon in Book XXI (itself anticipated by the back-stabbing of Lykaon's brother in Book XX), appears again in Hector's contemplation in Book XXII of an oath before senators to renew the oath of Book III – a plan he discards as unlikely to dissuade Achilles

– appears yet again when he urges Achilles to swear an oath with him by each other's deities that the victor respect the loser's corpse, and continues right into Achilles' vow not to bathe before he has cut his hair and buried Patroklos, the vow which interrupts the funeral feast of Book XXIII. The oath-making theme which permeates these books will resurface in a minor way when Antilochus will deflect Menelaos' challenge to swear an oath he has not cheated during the funeral games, and finally will culminate in the last book when Achilles promises Priam that he will withhold the raid of Troy until Hector can be buried. By these repeated oath-making references we can see that oath-making is an overwhelming theme in Books XVIII through XXIV.

This recurrent theme explains compositional pressure on the poetic construction of the funeral feast in Book XXIII: In the funeral feast the slaughtered bulls bellow conspicuously while dying similarly to the way the lambs gasp conspicuously in oath-sacrifice, because the oath-sacrificing ritual leitmotif has been impressed on the funeral feast, and a marked feature of the oath-sacrificing liturgical order, reflected through the ritual leitmotif, is the victim's painful death. The impressing of this defining feature of oath-sacrifice could occur because the funeral feast, presumably a liturgical order with commensal features, was weakened by a narrative interruption when Achilles departed, and also weakened by the oath Achilles made before the feast's conclusion. As a liturgical order, the funeral feast therefore suffered from a loss of thematic cohesion, a loss of formality, and a disruption of narrative force. By impressing this defining feature of the oath-sacrifice on the funeral feast, the poet has implied, inadvertently or intentionally, a connection to oath-sacrifice. The victims' anguish, usually eclipsed in commensal scenes by the bustling action verbs for preparing a meal, has surfaced to promote an oath-sacrificing ritual "tenor," if I may, right through the funeral feast. That this tenor had resonance with the poet(s) is apparent because the bulls are referred to later not as the silent victims of the culinary verb *sphadzō*, but as noisy victims of the more ominous verb *tamnō*, when Ajax slips in the dung of the bulls *apoktamenōn erimuchōn* (XXIII, 775), "cut down bellowing."

***Poinē* as a ritual leitmotif in Iliad XXIII**

But to fully appreciate a claim about the penetration of the oath-making ritual leitmotif into this feast, we must address also the theme of *poinē*, particularly as *poinē* intertwines with oaths in the context of Achilles' vow to pay back the Trojans for the death of Patroklos and his other dead companions, and, more particularly, as *poinē* permeates his vow to *apodeirotomēō* twelve Trojan youths at the funeral of Patroklos, in Book XVIII. The latter vow and its fulfillment frame all the oaths from Book XIX through the funeral of Patroklos in Book XXIII. The funeral feast is also framed by the unseemly deeds Achilles plans and conducts for Hector. All three vows instantiate the convention of

poine and may be influential in the construction of Achilles' "hateful feast" before the cremation of Patroklos. Yet, unlike the funeral feast, the actual funeral sacrifices appear to constitute a pronounced liturgical order, which explains why *poine* all but disappears during the cremation ritual over the pyre of Patroklos.

The notion of paying back for harm and in fact the epic vocabulary for it (such as *τίνω*, *ἐπιτίνω*, *τίνομαι*, *ἀποτίνομαι*, and *τιμή*) have been demonstrated by Donna Wilson to be linked to *poine*, the verbs being in many cases synonymous with the conventional expression of *poine*.²⁸ In the *Iliad*, the harms which invite *poine* are of several types, most conspicuous being insult to family integrity (III, 288-291) and death of a family member or close friend (implicit at IX, 632-638; XVI, 398; XVIII, 498-502; XXI, 28; XXI, 134-135). Pay-back for such grievances extends from legally sanctioned homicide (an implied option given on the shield of Achilles at XVIII, 498-502) to *apoina*, or reparation in the form of payment. In fact, sometimes *poine* is virtually a synonym for bartering, as when Zeus gives immortal horses to Tros in *poine* for the company of his son Gannymede (V, 265-266).²⁹ Similarly, oath-violation is linked to *poine*, precisely the *poine* which the gods are said to "pay back" or avenge on oath-violators. *Poine* is thus somewhat paradoxical in the *Iliad* in that, as part of its range of expressions, it can invoke an established institution with seemingly religious sanction – exactly as Zeus "avenges" the violation of oaths (i.e. *ἀπέτεσσεν* at IV, 161); yet it can also stand for the most unrestrained of human passions, as it apparently does when Achilles mutilates the corpse of Hector, who shall pay back (*ἀποτελείς*) for the crowds of Achilles' dead companions (XXII, 271-272), when Akamas exacts *poine* on a man who was not his brother's killer (XIV, 483-484), or when Patroklos mows down the first Trojan phalanxes, "paying back *poine* for many" (XVI, 398). As Donna Wilson points out, in the *Iliad* *poine* may be used to justify recompense in the form of material capital or symbolic capital, often pertaining to material gain and lethal vengeance, respectively.

While *poine* may embrace material gain and lethal vengeance as its institutional expressions, from the poetic perspective it also may be viewed as a ritual leitmotif, offering the barest of ritualized configurations to battlefield slaughter,³⁰ as the above-referenced *poine* of Achilles, Akamas, and Patroklos suggest. That is, by investing battlefield slaughters with *poine*, the poet/narrator would appear to stamp ritual form on behavior which doesn't materially need it, behavior which is tantamount to killing in war. The attribution of *poine* to certain indiscriminate killings on the battlefield seems to express the poetic

²⁸ Donna WILSON, *Ransom, Revenge, and Heroic Identity in the Iliad*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

²⁹ See a more complicated example at XVII, 206-208.

³⁰ For a discussion, see Chapter 2 of my *Sanctified Violence*, o.c. (n. 1).

intuition that a ritual leitmotif may distinguish and formalize behavior, cast it within an primordial mold, and thereby elevate or even sanctify it.

Poinē is conspicuously the paradigm invoked when Achilles vows to sacrifice the twelve Trojan boys on the pyre of Patroklos. In this case, *poinē* is apparently a formalized expression of *cholos*, of hot rage, given his declared vow to cut the throats, *apodeirotomēō*, of Trojan youths in rage, *cholōtheis*, for the death of Patroklos (XVIII, 337), and the narrator's apparent equation of these same "evil" intentions – *kaka de phresi mēdeto erga* (XXI, 19) – with *poinē* for Patroklos (XXI, 26-28).³¹ This equation makes Achilles' *poinē* virtually a performance of *cholos*. Any ritualized shape to Achilles' *poinē* is inchoate before the funeral sacrifices, however, especially when Achilles' *poinē* against "you all [who] shall pay [τείσετε] for the death of Patroklos and the ruin of the Achaians" (XXI, 134) culminates in the theomachia-like struggle among Achilles, his Trojan victims, the River Scamandros, and eventually Hephaestus, who puts an end to it. This mini-theomachia as a consequence of unleashed *poinē* is significant because it is similar to the consequence checked by Athene when she stops Ares from exacting payment – *teisasthai* – for the battlefield death of his son (XV, 116):³² Ares' vengeance is anticipated to be so violent as to arouse *mēnis* and *cholos* among the gods (XV, 122). Unlike the institutionalized renderings of *poinē* as legal retaliation or as punishment for oath-violation, then, these wilder instances make *poinē* and its family of *tinō* verbs signify barely constrained expressions of rage. These renderings of *poinē* and the link to *cholos* suggest an underlying codification of anger which embraces even the heaven-shaking rage of Ares.

To understand how the themes of *poinē* and oath-sacrifice might overlap in the sacrifices of Iliad XXIII, we must consider a few facts about oath-sacrifice. First, like *poinē*, oath-sacrifice is one of the few cultural conventions which prescribe ritual killing – the death of the victim is central to the ritual experience, as we have seen. Second, oath-sacrifice imposes a hallowed sanction on killing not just animal victims, but those who violate oaths – the oath-sacrificing ritual performance of Book III is arguably a symbolic enactment of the consequences invited upon perjurers, which explains the graphic description of the lambs' dying. Third, oath-sacrifice's sanction on killing perjurers overlaps with *poinē* in the Iliad, considering that Zeus and the Erinyes are expected precisely to pay-back (i.e., Zeus' ἀπέτεισαν at IV, 161; the Erinyes' τίνυσθον at III, 279) oath-breakers, just as relatives of homicidal and other kinds of victims might pay-back offenders in *poinē* (i.e. Agamemnon's threat to make the Trojans ἀποτινέμεν him for his family's dishonor and to fight for the sake of

³¹ ... ὃ δ' ἐπεὶ κάμε χεῖρας ἐναίρων, | ζωὸς ἐκ ποταμοῖο δυώδεκα λέξατο κούρους | ποινὴν Πατρόκλοιο Μενoitιάδῃο θανόντος (XXI, 26-28).

³² On *tinō* with the direct object, see Alfred HEUBECK, "Erinus in der archaischen Epik," *Glotta* 64 (1986), p. 145-165.

ποινης if they don't [at III, 286-290]). Lastly, *poine* and oath-making share an important feature in that they both articulate profound levels of cultural response to aspects of social existence which are felt to be precarious and difficult to control. In particular, they allow and shape responses to significant feelings of violation, in the one case a violation of life and family integrity, in the other a violation of promises – the latter seen by Rappaport to be virtually the basis for the stability of societies.³³ In oath-sacrificing Lykaon, in vowing to sacrifice the twelve Trojan youths, and in actually sacrificing them, Achilles unites these powerful cultural institutions. *Poine* and oath-making are palpable ritual “tenors” which penetrate Books XVIII through XXIII.

But to fully appreciate the sacrifice of the boys on the pyre of Patroklos, we need to examine also the larger cremation sacrifice. We first should observe that the sacrificial victims, although not bellowing and in fact altogether silent, are of many types:

ἐν δὲ πυρῇ ὑπάτῃ νεκρὸν θέσαν ἀχνύμενοι κῆρ.	Grieving at heart they put the corpse on the top of the pyre.
πολλὰ δὲ ὕφια μῆλα καὶ εἰλίποδας ἔλικας βοῦς	Many fat sheep and curved horned cattle
πρόσθε πυρῆς ἔδερόν τε καὶ ἄμφεπον· ἐν δ' ἄρα [πάντων δημὸν ἔλῶν ἐκάλυψε νέκυν μεγάλθυμος Ἀχιλλεύς	they flayed and prepared in front of the pyre; and from all greathearted Achilles took the fat and hid the corpse
ἐς πόδας ἐκ κεφαλῆς, περὶ δὲ δρατὰ σώματα νήει.	from the head to the toes, and around it he piled up the flayed bodies.
ἐν δ' ἐτίθει μέλιτος καὶ ἀλείφατος ἀμφιφορῆας, πρὸς λέχεα κλίνων·	He put in double handled amphoras of honey and oil leaning them against the bed.
.....πίσυρας δ' ἐριαύχενας ἵππους ἔσσυμένως ἐνέβαλλε πυρῇ μεγάλη στεναχίζων.	Four curved necked horses he rushingly threw on the pyre, groaning greatly.
ἐννέα τῷ γε ἄνακτι τραπεζῆς κύνες ἦσαν, καὶ μὲν τῶν ἐνέβαλλε πυρῇ δύο δειροτομήσας,	Nine table dogs there were to the lord, and he threw two of them on the pyre, cutting their throats,
δώδεκα δὲ Τρώων μεγαθύμων υἱέας ἐσθλοὺς χαλκῷ δηϊόων· κακὰ δὲ φρεσὶ μήδετο ἔργα·	and twelve good sons of the greathearted Trojans, destroying them with the bronze; and evil were the deeds he planned in his mind.
ἐν δὲ πυρὸς μένος ἦκε σιδήρεον, ὅφρα νέμοιτο. ῥῆμαξέν τ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα, φίλον δ' ὀνόμηνεν ἐταῖρον·	into the pyre he hurled the strength of iron, that it might be consumed; he cried out loud then, and named his dear companion,
“χαῖρέ μοι, ὦ Πάτροκλε, καὶ εἰν Ἀἴδαο δόμοισι· πάντα γὰρ ἤδη τοι τελέω τὰ πάροισιν ὑπέστην.	“Greeting from me, oh Patroklos, even in the house of Hades; I have brought to pass everything that I promised to you before.

³³ RAPPAPORT, 1999, *o.c.* (n. 2), p. 132.

δῶδεκα μὲν Τρώων μεγαθύμων υἱέας ἐσθλοὺς τοὺς ἅμα σοὶ πάντας πῦρ ἐσθίει· Ἑκτορα δ' οὐ τι δῶσω Πριαμίδην πυρὶ δαπτέμεν, ἀλλὰ κύνεσσιν.”	twelve good sons of the greathearted Trojans, the fire will eat them all along with you; and I shall not give Hector son of Priam to the fire to devour, but to the dogs.” (XXIII, 165-183)
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Many unresolvable mysteries surround this profuse slaughter, but three conflicting theories demand a cursory glance before we discuss how *poinē* might play into the scene.

One common suggestion is that the offerings of amphoras of honey and oil, sheep, cattle, horses, dogs, and twelve Trojan boys were meant to serve Patroklos in the underworld,³⁴ although we have no comparable Iliadic funeral narratives which list this as a clear end, not the funerals of Book VII, nor the funeral of Hector in the last book. The otherwise baffling amphoras of honey and oil make this explanation appealing, as may Achilles' report to Patroklos that he has given the boys “along with you” to the fire to consume. It is notable that the shades of the Odyssey are attracted to similar fluids, if not bodies, when Odysseus lures the shades halfway out of the underworld by sacrificial blood, honey, oil, and wine libations in Book XI. Yet in the Odyssey the direction of travel for the shades seems to be reversed³⁵ and there is no blood at all in the Iliad's funeral sacrifice, unlike in the funeral feast. This argument ultimately relies on comparative archeological evidence, which goes outside the text.

Another common theory is that these sacrifices belong to the pattern of hero-cult and are therefore similar to offerings to chthonic deities. First, it should be pointed out that the formal distinction between chthonic and olympian gods and also sacrifices has been questioned vigorously by Gunnell Ekroth on the basis of their victims and styles of slaughter, which apparently differ rarely in inscriptions and sacrificial calendars.³⁶ She shows that hero-cults in our surviving evidence tend to treat the heroes as akin to the deathless gods rather than to the ordinary dead in the earth, in any case.³⁷ Further, her

³⁴ For an overview, see Dennis HUGHES, *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece*, London, Routledge, 1991.

³⁵ For one theory on these fluids as representing a kind of dietary ontology, see my “Two Expressions for Human Mortality in the Epics of Homer,” *History of Religion* 34 (1994), p. 132-151.

³⁶ See Gunnell Ekroth, *The Sacrificial Rituals of Greek Hero-Cults in the Archaic to the Early Hellenistic Periods*, Leige, 2002 (*Kernos*, suppl. 12). On the misapplied distinction between Olympian and chthonic deities, see, for instance, her summary at page 325, and for an overall summary see pages 303-341. On the porous line between celestial, chthonic, and heroic cults, see also Arthur Darby NOCK, “The Cult of Heroes,” in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, New York/Oxford, Clarendon Press 1972, 1986, p. 576-601, n.b. 577-578.

³⁷ This contravenes the widely held opinion, such as that offered by Richard Seaford, that hero-cults emerged at the gravesites of important clan members or legendary warriors and eventually became cultic occasions for strengthening civic ties. Seaford sees the socially integrative power of the death rituals and hero-cults as emanating from Homeric recitations at the Panathenaic festivals of the archaic city-state. The hero-cult would have featured an

exhaustive exploration of archaic through Hellenistic hero-cults, based on calendars and inscriptions, reveals for hero-cult generally a varied pattern of *thusia* occasionally punctuated by “powerful acts.”³⁸ Perhaps this would seem descriptive of the funeral feast followed by the cremation ritual here, but on the other hand, the two rituals are separated in Book XXIII by the visit to Agamemnon’s tent, by a night-time visitation by the shade of Patroklos, and by the collection of wood for the pyre the next morning. The cremation ritual itself includes no *thysia*. On top of that, Ekroth has pointed out that we have virtually no bronze age evidence for hero-cult,³⁹ which again elicits all the obvious problems with looking for *realia* in the Homeric poems in the first place: i.e., do all funeral references reflect ritual practices of the same period and were they composed with the same ritual paradigm in mind?⁴⁰ We do have occasional references to Trojan gatherings at the *semata* for eponymous ancestors or heroes (Ilos at X, 415, nimble Myrine at II, 814), and it has been argued that Athenian hero-cult has been impressed onto Nestor’s proposal that the bones of the war dead be brought back to their homeland (VII, 332-335).⁴¹ Yet these tidbits do not in themselves describe a full-blown hero-cult with features similar to the cremation sacrifices of Book XXIII. The hero-cult hypothesis is unprovable because it too goes outside the text.

A third theory is that the whole thing is derived from the Anatolian *therapon/tarpanalli* ritual, whereby not only Patroklos but the boys, animals and even the iron are offered in substitution for king Achilles, who soon is to follow them. Steven Lowenstam has mined the text of the Iliad to support the Anatolian hypothesis, stressing, among other things, the double layers of fat which surround the bones of Patroklos in the funeral urn as reminiscent of the gods’ portion at Mycenae, in Hesiod, and the sacrificial themes which surround the figure of Patroklos throughout the epic.⁴² However, the formality of the

aetiological theme of an unjustly dishonored hero whose anger precipitates a calamity and must be appeased to restore communal stability, which would resonate with the Homeric theme of Achilles’ anger and eventual reconciliation. The argument hinges on similar narrative structures and the appeal of the socially integrative theme in the late 8th, early 7th centuries, not on a direct root of hero-cult in the motif of Achilles’ anger. See, for instance, his Chapter 4, entitled “Collective Death Ritual,” and subchapter 5g, “The Iliad and Hero-Cult,” in *Reciprocity and Ritual*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994, 1999, p. 106-143, 180-190. Both his and Ekroth’s hypotheses bring to mind the odd appellation of *wanax* for dead Patroklos at verse 173.

³⁸ *O.c.* (n. 36), p. 303-341.

³⁹ This is despite later hero-cults situated at bronze age tombs.

⁴⁰ This strengthens the appeal of Seaford’s argument. See note 37.

⁴¹ See SEAFORD, *o.c.* (n. 37), p. 183.

⁴² For instance, he notes that the collocation of “white bones” (*ostea leuka*) and “double layer of fat” (*diplaka demon*) and “hidden” (*kaluptein*) in the description of what is to be done with the bones is reminiscent of Hesiod’s description of the prototypical sacrifice of an ox at Mekone, where the white bones (*ostea leuka*) of an ox are hidden in double layers of fat (*diplaka demon ... kalupsan*) to become the gods’ portion (*Tb.*, 540-541). These sacrificial features, plus the intimate bond implied in the common funeral urn for the bones of Patroklos and Achilles, are part of the

ritual performance would appear to suppress the outright expression of this theme, which remains oblique in the Iliad.

A fourth possibility is the one the poet gives three times prior to the funeral sacrifice to explain the sacrifice of the boys. This is Achilles' vow to *apodeirotomeō*, to cut the throats clear through, of twelve Trojans youths as an act of anger – *cholōtheis* – for the death of Patroklos (XVIII, 336-337), mentioned again when Achilles tells the shade of Patroklos that he has the twelve Trojan boys ready to sacrifice before his pyre, in anger – *cholōtheis* – for his death (XXIII, 22-23), and insinuated earlier when he collects the twelve Trojan youths, “stunned like fawns” (XXI, 29) to be living *poine* for Patroklos (XXI, 28). Another possible reference to this motive is when he actually does sacrifice the dogs and presumably, given the order of verses, also the boys with the verb *deirotomeō*: “*deirotomēsas* them [cutting their throats] he threw two [dogs] on the fire/ and twelve good sons of the greathearted Trojans, /destroying them with the bronze” (XXIII, 173-175), which is followed by a statement of his mood: “evil were the deeds he devised in his mind” (XXIII, 176). Lastly, although not explicitly identified as *poine*, the motive of *poine* is imputed in Achilles' last speech to Patroklos, when he reports during the funeral that he has fulfilled his earlier promises to give the twelve good sons of the greathearted Trojans all to the fire to eat, and that Hector should be devoured not by fire but by dogs. It seems clear, then, that the poetic understanding of the reason for the gathering and burning of the boys on the pyre of Patroklos is attributable to *poine*, as is the reserving of Hector's body for dogs.⁴³

But how much actual funeral slaughter does *poine* explain? It has been suggested by Dennis Hughes that the sacrificial victims here, being of different types, may have been killed for different purposes.⁴⁴ Oxen and sheep are the usual victims of sacrifices, including those for food, and are reputed to be the same victims slaughtered at the funeral of Achilles, according to Odyssey book XXIV. In Patroklos' funeral, further, the oxen and sheep are treated differently than the other victims, since they are cut up so that their fat may encase the body of Patroklos, possibly to help in the burning. Similar fat, in fact a double layer of it, will be used by Achilles later to wrap the bones of Patroklos, when he deposits them in an urn to await the addition of Achilles' own bones (XXIII, 243-244).⁴⁵ During the cremation, the bodies, denuded of fat, are apparently stacked to the side of the corpse of Patroklos (XXIII, 169; 240-241).

array of clues he sees as supporting the hypothesis of the funeral of Patroklos as a tarpanalli sacrifice. Steven LOWENSTAM, *The Death of Patroklos, A Study in Typology*, Königstein, Ts: Verlag Anton Hain, 1981.

⁴³ For a digest of some anthropological data for angry funerals, see Richard Seaford, “The Aggressive Funeral: A Comparative Perspective,” in *Reciprocity and Ritual*, *o.c.* (n. 37), p. 86-92.

⁴⁴ HUGHES, *o.c.* (n. 34).

⁴⁵ LOWENSTAM, *o.c.* (n. 42), discusses this theme.

As for the horses and dogs, they are sacrificed only here. Why? It has been suggested that horses and dogs tend to enjoy a closer bond with humans, so their sacrifices may be intended to provide companionship for the dead in the underworld. Yet Achilles' reference to Trojan horses being sacrificed to the river Sperchios (XXI, 132) does not seem to rely on this logic. The dogs and horses of Book XXIII probably belonged to Patroklos, however.⁴⁶ We know he had a close rapport with at least the immortal horses Achilles brought to the war, since, once Patroklos dies, those horses are overcome with grief and longing for their gentle master (XVII, 426-428; XXIII, 280-284). But if the horses and dogs are friendly sacrifices for the underworld journey, then why are the boys, ostensibly living *poine* for Patroklos (XXI, 26-30), killed in sequence with the dogs and by the same deadly verb, *deirotomeō*? Doesn't this suggest that the dogs and boys are on a par? Further, it is not the boys and dogs, but the horses and men which are mentioned in the same breath later, when Achilles reports that the bones of Patroklos are located away from the mix of bones for horses and men (XXIII, 242). Are the horses and men somehow on a par?

In fairly considering what, if anything, the animal and human victims might have in common, it must be pointed out that there are at least three similes in the Iliad where men who die in battle are compared to sacrificial victims, once straightforwardly (XX, 402-406) and twice obliquely (XIII, 567-575; XVII, 520-524). There are also a number of other dying scenes wherein men – pitiable victims each one – die with language similar to that of the lambs who die gasping and panting and deprived of *menos* in the oath-sacrifice of Book III (gasping and panting: Thracians [ἀσπαίζοντας] at X, 521; Asteropaios [ἀσθμαίνοντ'] at XXI, 182; Hippodamas [ἄισθε] at X, 403; Medon [ἀσθμαίνων] at V, 585; the Thracian king [ἀσθμαίνοντα] at X, 496; and Asios' charioteer [ἀσθημαίνων] at XIII, 399; gasping and also deprived of μένος [Adamas at XIII, 567-575]). And of course there are famous similes which compare dying men to dying animal victims (e.g., stunned fawns [XXI, 29], belching bulls [XX, 402-406], fish fleeing a voracious dolphin [XXI, 22-26], a gasping ox [XIII, 568-575]). Yet all of these similes occur in the thick of battle, wherein the poet would have a full array of storytelling devices to enrich the narrative. Remembering that battle narratives are less constrained than ritual narratives, it is perhaps not surprising that analogies between dying animals and dying warriors are plentiful in these scenes.

Not so with ritual scenes. Ritual scenes, as argued already, are constrained by formal parameters and nearly bereft of figurative language. Although we have no Homeric narratives of cremation sacrifice quite comparable to this one, this narrative obviously depicts an elaborate ritual, with a handful of features presumed by the poet to need little explanation – hence none is given –

⁴⁶ HUGHES, *o.c.* (n. 34).

presumably because they were considered standard at some point or to some audience. The fact that the boys, dogs and horses, and for that matter sheep and cattle, are given no voice in these sacrifices suggests that their presences must be symbolic components of a formal cremation ritual, which permits little differentiation between them and little focalization on their plights. Thus, *ritual formalization is simply the most compelling reason for the silent deaths of the horses, dogs, and boys*, and explains the odd coupling of victims which otherwise might die for different ritual reasons. Thus I understand the sacrificial deaths as indexical components of a crematory liturgical order: the ritual is formalized to communicate in a high performance register which overwhelms the place of the funeral in the larger narrative, and suppresses any specificity one might imagine to apply to particular animal victims.

In short, ritualization is determinative on composition here; the larger story is not. Not only is the victims' anguish muted in the cremation ritual, but so is, at least to some degree, the expression of *poinē* – Achilles' stated motive for collecting and killing the boys by *deirōtomeō* in the first place. This is evident because, despite the verse which follows the slaughter of the boys and dogs – "evil were the deeds he devised in his mind" (XXIII, 176) – and despite the intention to give Hector's body to dogs to devour, there is no focalization on the suffering of the victims, human or otherwise, which might bear out the punishing motive. The focalization on the victims has been eclipsed by the formalism of the liturgical order for cremation sacrifice.

So why are we made aware of the bellowing of victims in the funeral feast and not in the cremation sacrifice on the pyre of Patroklos? Remembering that oath-sacrifices are very constraining liturgical orders in the Iliad, we might speculate that the bellowing of the bulls permeated the funeral feast and not the cremation sacrifice because that feast, broken by the departure of Achilles and by his swearing not to bathe before cremating Patroklos, was a weakly instantiated liturgical order, not strong enough to resist the compositional pressure of the surrounding themes of oath-sacrifice and even of *poinē*. The converse applies to the cremation sacrifice, which is too liturgically formalized to permit the emergence of more than a whisper of *poinē*. *Poinē*, so conspicuous a theme in the planning for the human sacrifices, all but disappears from the cremating narrative, suppressed by the formalism of the liturgical order.

In conclusion, I hope to have shown that liturgical orders and ritual leitmotifs are important considerations for understanding poetic pressures in the Iliad, and more particularly for understanding the ritual scenes tied to the funeral in Iliad XXIII.

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