



FESTUS AND RITUAL FOODSTUFFS

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Résumé

Cet article examine certaines entrées de Festus et de Paul Diacre qui se rapportent aux gâteaux sacrés. Il souligne l'importance de la préparation de ces gâteaux, en termes d'ingrédients et de variété de formes données. Il s'arrête également sur les lacunes des sources lorsque nous essayons de comprendre comment ces aliments étaient utilisés dans le rituel romain.

Abstract

This article examines some of the entries in Festus and Paul the Deacon which relate to sacred cakes. It emphasises the importance of the preparation of these cakes, in terms of ingredients and the various ways in which they were shaped. It also considers some of the failings of the sources when we try to understand the ways in which these foodstuffs were employed in Roman ritual.

Festus' text, an epitome of the *De Verborum Significatu* of Verrius Flaccus put together around the 2nd century AD, is for many aspects of ancient Rome – especially the topography of the city and its religious and institutional history – a key, sometimes unique, source. Verrius' lexical and antiquarian work drew on many late Republican writers, now lost, who had collected and debated information concerning the Roman past. Festus' abridgement – which survives only in a damaged 11th century manuscript and must be supplemented by the Carolingian-period epitome of Paul the Deacon – represents a crucial link to this scholarly tradition.

The lexicon of Festus covers a huge range of topics, but its primary interest focus, of course, is words. Most discussions can be traced back to Verrius' interest in archaic words or word forms, typically supported by quotations from earlier authors. Many of the lemmas concern the terminology of religion and ritual. In what follows, we will examine some entries relating to an ancient form of offering, ritual foodstuffs.

A god's diet could be broad: in one entry (298.26L), Festus lists as foods suitable for the gods emmer, barley-meal, wine, bread made with yeast, dried figs, pork, beef, lamb, sheep's-cheeses, groats, sesame and olive oil, and most scaly fish, and goes on to observe that Hercules – a god with a big appetite – could be offered 'anything that can be eaten or drunk'¹ Here, we will examine one particular category of sacrificial offering: sacred cakes.

The Latin term for a sacred cake, *libum* (more rarely *libus*), is attested in literature as far back as Ennius. Varro proposed an etymological connection with *libo*, 'to pour a libation or make an offering', although by the late Republic, the period from which the majority of our evidence survives, *libum* is the standard descriptor for any kind of cake.²

Nevertheless *libum* also remains the usual term for a range of different ritual cake-types, and our sources state that *liba* were offered to various deities, such as Liber Pater (Ov., *Fast.* 3.734-736). Ennius (114Sk) mentions *liba* at the festival of the Argei, which involved a number of different gods. Sometimes, as we know from the lexicon, the name of the cake is derived from that of the god. The *Iannual* was a kind of cake sacred to Janus: *Iannual libi genus, quod Iano tantummodo delibatur* (Paul 93.4L).³ Janus is of course worshipped in many contexts, and elsewhere Cato calls by the name *strues* the cakes offered to him in a rural context

¹ Cf. VARR., *LL* 6.5.

² *LL* 7.44: *Liba, quod libandi causa fiunt* ('*liba* are so called because they are offered (*libare*) to the gods'). DE VAAN 2008, p. 339.

³ HOLLAND 1961, p. 271 thinks that 'Iannual' was the name of the ritual in which the cakes were offered to Janus, not the cake itself; 'Iannual' was also the name of the gates of Janus which were closed only in time of peace (Varr., *LL* 5.165).

(in a ritual also involving Ceres, Jupiter and Juno: *Agr.* 134). It is therefore likely that the *Iannual* was offered to Janus only at a specific rite, or in a specific shrine.⁴ One possible place and time would be the sacrifice made to Janus in the Regia at the Agonalia of 9th January by the *rex sacrorum* (*Ov., Fast.* 1.317-336).

1. Making and Shaping

It was clearly important to prepare the correct cake for a given ritual or deity, and Festus and Paul preserve the names of various types and shapes. As well as the *Iannual*, mentioned above, we hear for example of the *glomus*, *strues*, *ferctum*, *arculata*, *spira*, and *pastillum*.

In the case of the *pastillum*, there are actually two explanations, one giving the cake's name as neuter, the other as masculine. (Multiple entries like this are quite common in the lexicon, and are attributed to Verrius' process of work; they represent differing late Republican interpretations of the word, which Verrius was incorporating into his discussion.) In the surviving Festus entry (298.5L), the *pastillum* is described as 'a kind of round cake, used in rituals' (*pastillum est in sacris libi genus rutundi*). By contrast in a Paul entry (249.3L), for which no Festus lemma survives, a *pastillus* is described not as a cake, but as a small loaf, with the word explained as a diminutive from *panis* (bread).⁵ (There is of course a certain amount of crossover between the categories of cake and bread, and indeed biscuits, as will be seen below.)

It is clear from the lexicon entries that particular rituals demanded particular types of cake, in terms of ingredients and shape, but it is not always easy to understand the physical form which particular cakes took. An example is the *glomus*. According to Paul (87.14L), *glomus in sacris crustulum, cymbi figura, ex oleo coctum appellatur* ('in rituals *glomus* is the name for a small pastry, in the shape of a *cymbe*, cooked in olive oil').⁶ Since *glomerare* means 'to form or gather into a ball', some think that this cake is identical to the *globus* mentioned by Cato (*Agr.* 79) and Varro (*LL* 5.107), which was in the shape of a ball, and which was also fried (in fat, according to Cato).⁷ However, this may not be the case: Paul 44.26L glosses *cymbium* as a cup in the shape of a ship: *poculi genus a similitudine navis, quae kymbis dicitur, appellatum* ('a kind of cup, so called from

⁴ Perhaps the same is true of the *Summanalia*, offered to Summanus (FEST. 474.17L).

⁵ Cf. ADAMS 2008, p. 212-213.

⁶ *Crustulum* was given along with *mulsum* (honeyed wine) as a largesse (*CIL* 11.3613, 14.3581).

⁷ SAVAGNER 1846, p. 167 says it has 'la forme d'une boule'. Cato's *globus* contained cheese, and after being fried was covered in honey and poppyseeds.

its resemblance to the ship that the Greeks call a *kymbe*'). So we are left wondering if our *glomus* is ball-shaped, cup-shaped, or ship-shaped.

Another puzzle is offered by Festus' description of *strues* at 408.21L as *genera liborum sunt, digitorum coniunctorum non dissimilia, qui superiecta panicula in transversum continentur* ('*strues* are kinds of cakes, not unlike conjoined [or interlaced] fingers, which are held together by a *panicula* thrown on top crosswise'). The form of this cake is quite hard to visualise. The root sense is simply 'a heap or pile or mass of things put together' (cf. Fest. 408.25L), and Festus himself elsewhere (408.31L) explains the verb *struō* as being used by early writers in the sense of 'build up, increase', so there is a definite 'heaping up' thing going on. What we must probably imagine is a heap of multiple longish, finger-like cakes, interwoven or linked by some kind of a transverse element, the *panicula*.⁸ Based on this lemma, the OLD explains *panicula* as 'a strip of dough', but the interpretation 'strip' seems incorrect. Paul elsewhere (246.14L) defines *panicula* as a diminutive of *panus*, meaning a spool wound with thread (which perhaps evokes our idea of criss-crossed fingers), a swelling, or the tuft or panicle of a plant. Again, there is the 'bulging' element, with a lack of neatness implied.

Even more complex moulding of cakes is implied in some instances, such as the 'bulls and boughs' made from flour (*ficta farinacea*) for the Ludi Taurii (compared by Buck to 'animal crackers'),⁹ and the *maniae* or *maniolae* in human form (ugly, deformed, or else sexually explicit) described by Varro's teacher Aelius Stilo.¹⁰

Other cake-shapes are simpler, and easier to understand. For example, *arculata* were ring-shaped, like doughnuts.¹¹ Their shape and name recalls the *arculum*, a circle worn on the head, to support vessels carried at public rituals; a connection with Arculus, the god who looked after moneyboxes (Paul 15.6L), is faintly possible.

⁸ HOLLAND 1961, pp. 271-273 interprets this cake as 'a composite form built up of separate finger-like sticks and held together by a strip of the pastry (*panicula*) laid across them'.

⁹ FEST. 494.29L: *tauri verbenaque in commentario sacrorum significat ficta farinacea* ("bulls and boughs" in the *Commentary on Sacred Rites* means things moulded from flour'); cf. Fest. 494.1L: *Taurium aes appellant, quod in ludos Taurios consumitur* ('they call what is consumed at the Ludi Taurii "Taurian bronze") – surely a foodstuff. BUCK 1904, p. 305.

¹⁰ FEST. 114.15L: *Manias Aelius Stilo dicit ficta quaedam ex farina in hominum figuras, quia turpes fiant, quas alii maniolas appellant* ('Aelius Stilo says that *maniae* are fashioned from flour into the form of men because they are made to be shameful, and that others call these figures *maniolae*'; he goes on to give a different interpretation of the term). Cf. Fest. 128.15L, unfortunately corrupt, but which seems to refer to *mania* as a type of bread made at Aricia (i.e. the sanctuary of Diana at Nemi).

¹¹ PAUL 15.10L: *Arculata dicebantur circuli, qui ex farina in sacrificiis fiebant* ('the rings that were made out of flour in sacrifices were called *arculata*'). However the *arculata* seem to differ from the *circuli* mentioned by VARRO (LL 5.106), which were made of flour, cheese and water poured into a pan.

Another cake whose shape seems fairly easy to imagine is the *spira*, for which Cato gives a recipe (*Agr.* 77; cf. *Ath.*, *Deip.* 14.647d). Festus explains *spira* as the name for a range of things whose common element is coiling – so we can imagine the cake *spira* as looking something like a pain aux raisins.¹² The term is evidently Greek; perhaps we have here a Greek term for a Greek ritual practice, imported into a Roman religious setting.

Although Festus does not mention any ritual context for the *spira*, simply describing it as *genus operis pistori*, ‘a kind of pastry’, most of the entries involving baked goods in the lexicon are specifically associated with the sacred sphere. We may therefore be justified in identifying a ritual aspect to cake-types discussed in lemmas (especially those of Paul) which do not explicitly mention their context. An example is an entry of Paul (106.27L): *lucuntem genus operis pistorii*. This cake is simply described as ‘a kind of baked product’, but in fact it seems to have had a sacred aspect (see e.g. Varr., *Men.* 417); the (presumably related) *lucuntuli* were a feature of the Saturnalia festival.¹³ It is worth noting that the headword in the lexicon is in the accusative; Paul (or Festus before him) has probably cut the word from a quotation, or else butchered a longer discussion of the meaning of the term.

There is a useful parallel for the assumption that cakes named in the lexicon often have a ritual connection, even when this is not made explicit. The term *irceus* survives in two Paul lemmas. In the first (93.10L), we have simply, *irceus genus farciminis* (‘*irceus*: a kind of sausage’). But in the second lemma (101.9L), we find: *ircei genus farciminis in sacrificiis* (‘*ircei*: a kind of sausage used in sacrifices’). The different case ending implies that different quotations are being explained, and it is a good reminder that just because ritual is not mentioned, that does not mean that the food being explained is everyday food. Much of the food discussed in the lexicon, perhaps most of it, belongs to the sphere of ritual – because Verrius was interested in unusual or obscure words, not in everyday ones.

A cake with an undoubtedly ritual context is the *Summanalia*, which not only had a special name, but also a special shape (*Fest.* 474.17L). These are clearly offerings for Summanus, the god responsible for nocturnal lightning. They are described as being in the shape of a wheel (*in modum rotae*), which we might interpret to mean that they were decorated with ‘spokes’ (rather like modern British hot cross buns), rather than simply being circular in shape. (Or perhaps these were segmented cakes, for splitting and sharing.) It’s not at all clear why

¹² FEST. 444.23L (with PAUL 445.1L): *Spira dicitur et basis columnae unius tori aut duorum, et genus operis pistori, et funis nauticus in orbem convolutus, ab eadem omnes similitudine* (‘*spira* is the term both for the base of a column of one or two round mouldings, and a kind of pastry, and ship’s rope wound up into a coil, all from the same resemblance’).

¹³ *Lucuntuli* are found in Afranius, *Fratriae* 161-2 (ap. NON. 131.25) and STATIUS, *Silvae* 1.6.17; in Chrysippus of Tyana (ap. ATHENAEUS, *Deip.* 14.647d) the form is *lucuntli*, and it appears in a list of cakes made with cheese.

these cakes should be wheel-shaped, but one possibility is that the shape was connected to the location of the god's temple, by the Circus Maximus. Perhaps the cakes were offered on the *dies natalis* of the temple, 20th June, close to the summer solstice.

Next we can turn to the *secivum*, a cake that gets its name 'because it is cut with a *secespita*' in obligatory rituals.¹⁴ There is a good argument for regarding this entry as the tail of 472.19L (*secescriptam*), in which Antistius Labeo is cited on a type of knife used by the *flamines*, *flaminicae*, Vestal Virgins and *pontifices*.¹⁵ Paul (453.16L) provides a second entry for *secespita*, showing that the meaning of this term was disputed, some believing it to be an axe, others a bronze pick-axe, others a knife; at any rate, it was an implement for cutting, and used in a sacrificial context. As for the cake, it is not entirely clear if *secivum* is a particular type of offering in a specific context, or a term applied to any or all sacred cakes cut by the *secespita*. What does seem clear, given Labeo's explanation, is that it is to be placed in an archaic ritual context (as is the case with many of the cakes which appear in the lexicon).

2. Ingredients

Sacred cakes had specific ingredients, among which *far* played a particularly significant role. This is not spelt, as it is often translated, but emmer, an ancient grain that grows reliably and stores well. It was so important to the Romans that the Fornacalia festival (celebrated by the people in their *curiae*) was, Paul tells us, founded for the purpose of parching *far* (a process which removed the husk), and sacrifice was performed at the oven in bakeries.¹⁶

There is a strong tradition that it was, from earliest times, the primary grain of the Romans, as well as the chief means of worshipping the gods.¹⁷ Hence when Virgil's Aeneas arrives in Italy, his ritual feast comprises cakes of *adorea* heaped

¹⁴ FEST. 472.31L: [*Secivum id*] est, quod sece<s>pita secatur: [*libum scilicet quod sanc*]te soleat necessaris sa[*cris secari*]. Cf. PAUL 472.19L.

¹⁵ From FEST. 472.15L *struppi*, and including *secespitam*, *secivum*, *suffimenta*, *suffibulum*, *silentio surgere*, *Summanalia liba*, *scribturn lapidem*, *sublucare*, *spurcum vinum*, *septimontio*, *sistere fana*, and *subigere arietem* at 476.18, there is a long run of ritual-related entries which all seem drawn from Labeo.

¹⁶ PAUL 73.19L, 82.30L; cf. PLIN., *Nat.* 18.8, who ascribes the festival to Numa.

¹⁷ OV., *Fast.* 1.337-338: *ante, deos homini quod conciliare valeret, far erat et puri lucida mica salis* ('of old, the means to win the goodwill of the gods were far and sparkling grains of pure salt'). PAUL (91.6L) reports that the early name for a storehouse was not *horreum* but *farreum*, from far. See also PLIN., *Nat.* 18.62 (derived from Verrius), and 18.82-83: [*far*] *primus antiquis Latii cibus* ('emmer was the first food of the ancient inhabitants of Latium'); he adds that it was eaten in the form of porridge, rather than bread.

with fruits (*ador* being a form of *far*).¹⁸ Paul preserves an etymology that *ador* ‘used to be called *edor* either from eating (*edere*), or because it is heated strongly (*adurere*) until parched’.¹⁹ Manuscripts of Paul make the next sentence, beginning *adoriam*, a separate lemma, but it makes no sense at all without the explanation in the first lemma. Comparison with a discussion in Pliny the Elder (which probably derives from Verrius and ultimately from Varro) shows that the two Paul entries belong together: Pliny notes that the old name of *far* was *adoreum*, because *far* used to be held in *adoria* (glory).²⁰ The reason for its glory is that, along with salt, it was a constituent part of the *mola salsa* prepared by the Vestal Virgins, such a key ingredient in Roman rituals that *immolare* came to be the usual verb for ‘to sacrifice’.

The importance of *far* in early Rome is also demonstrated by its role in formalising marriage by *confarreatio*, obligatory to certain archaic priests (the chief *flamines* and the *rex sacrorum*). The rite took its name from the food-offering used in it, known as the *farreum*. Pliny describes how brides used to offer the cake; Gaius adds the detail that the sacrifice was made to Jupiter Farreus.²¹ Gaius describes the offering as *panis* (bread), but the word Paul uses (78.19L) is *libum*, something he is unlikely to have added himself.²²

The *farreum* also played a part in what seems to have been the ritual of divorce of *confarreate* marriages - or perhaps rather a kind of annulment, as these priests were not permitted to divorce (Paul 79.23L). Paul says that this ritual was

¹⁸ VIRG., *Aen.* 7.109, with Servius’ commentary, which gives the recipe for *adore* as *far*, honey and oil.

¹⁹ PAUL 3.19L: *Ador farris genus, edor quondam appellatum ab edendo, vel quod aduratur, ut fiat tostum, unde in sacrificio mola salsa efficitur.* (The next entry must be related, and reads: *Adoriam laudem sive gloriam dicebant quia gloriosum eum putabant esse qui farris copia abundaret. <.. Adoriosus gloriosus..>* ‘*Ador*: a kind of emmer, formerly called *edor* from eating (*edere*), or because it is heated strongly (*adurere*) until parched, whence *mola salsa* (spelt mixed with salt) is obtained for use in sacrifice.’ ISID., *Etym.* 17.3.6 has the even less convincing explanation that it was called *ador* because it was offered ‘at altars’, *ad aras*.)

²⁰ PLIN., *Nat.* 18.81; cf. VARR. frags. 191, 199 Fun.

²¹ PLIN., *Nat.* 18.10: *quin et in sacris nihil religiosius confarreationis vinculo erat, novaeque nuptiae farreum praeferebant* (‘and among the sacred rituals, nothing was held more holy than marriage by *confarreatio*, and the bride used to offer a *farreum*’). Pliny’s reference to the marriage ceremony comes in a discussion of Roman *cognomina* derived from agriculture, etymologising which is very likely to come from Verrius Flaccus, whom we know Pliny used. The discussion in Festus may have been located in the lemma *farreum*, which now survives only in a brief Paul entry (78.19L).

²² GAIUS, *Inst.* 1.112: *farreo in manum conveniunt per quoddam genus sacrificii quod Iovi Farreo fit; in quo farreus panis adhibetur, unde etiam confarreatio dicitur* (‘[women] enter into *manus* through a certain kind of sacrifice made to Jupiter Farreus, in which *far*-bread is employed, hence it is also called *confarreatio*’). Cf. SERV., *Georg.* 1.31: *farre [nuptiae fiebant] cum per pontificem maximum et Dilem flaminem per fruges et molam salsam coniungebantur, unde confarreatio appellabatur.* However see NORTH 2008 on the importance of not making assumptions when using Paul.

called *diffarreatio*, *quia fiebat farreo libo adhibito* (65.17L). What exactly is going on here is uncertain: was it perhaps broken in half to symbolise the separation of the married pair? The nature of the ritual remains obscure, but clearly the cake holds great prominence in it.

Although the use of *far* in cakes is often noted, the lexicon rarely names other ingredients. An exception is the *suffimenta* which Festus says were offered to the gods when the trampled grapes were placed in the wine press.²³ *Suffimenta* are described as being made from ground bean and millet flours, bound together with a sprinkling of a wine and honey mixture. This would have made the cake unsuitable for use by the *flamen Dialis*, who was not allowed to touch, or even name, beans (Aulus Gellius, *NA* 10.15.12). Yet this priest played a key part in the August wine festival, the *Vinalia*, so the use of a ‘forbidden’ flour in this context is perhaps surprising, unless he played no part in offering them.

A further complication is that the term *suffimen* is used by Ovid (*Fast.* 4.731-4) to refer to a purifying substance (comprising dried blood from the October horse and ashes from calves sacrificed at the *Fordicidia*) sprinkled onto bonfires at the *Parilia*.²⁴ It is possible that Festus either accidentally merged the wrong headword with the wrong discussion, or else cut down a discussion by Verrius of debate surrounding the term *suffimenta*. Verrius frequently reports scholarly disagreements over obscure words, and these debates are not always transmitted clearly in the abbreviated versions of Festus and Paul. Another example concerns the *subucula*. It is known to Varro and others as an item of dress, a tunic or undergarment,²⁵ but Festus (402.25L) reports that Aelius Stilo and Cloatius (an Augustan lexicographer) explained *subucula* as a type of food offered to the gods, made from emmer groats (*alica*), olive oil and honey (which makes it sound like a kind of flapjack). In Paul (403.8L), who often eliminates quotations anyway, the debate has simply disappeared.

3. Cult Personnel

The importance of cakes in sacred ritual is underlined by the fact that in a state context there were special cake-makers, attested from the time of Ennius. At 484.32L, Festus quotes from the *Annals* (114Sk): *‘libaque, fectores, Argaeos et*

²³ FEST. 472.33L (supplemented by Paul 473.12L): [*S*]uffimenta sunt quae [fiunt ex faba milio]que molito mulso spar[so. Ea dis dantur eo tempo]re, quo uvae calcatae [prelo premuntur] (‘suffimenta are what they make from ground bean and millet sprinkled with honey-wine. These are offered to the gods at the time when the grapes, after being trampled, are put into the wine press’).

²⁴ On *suffimenta* cf. CIC., *Leg.* 1.40; PLIN., *Nat.* 15.120, 135. SCHEID 2005, pp. 143-144 suggests that *strues* and *ferctum* may also be a form of incense for sacrifice, rather than cakes.

²⁵ VARR., *LL* 5.30, 9.33; HOR., *Epist.* 1.1.95-96; SUET., *Aug.* 82.1.

<*tutulatos*> ('sacrificial cakes, bakers, Argei, and *tutulus*-wearers'). Festus is only interested in the word *tutulatus* (a reference to priestly headgear), but it is typical for him to quote the entire line, which concerns the festival of the Argei in May.²⁶ What interests us is the reference to *fictores*, makers, whose name implies not simply the stirring together of ingredients, but a strong sense of 'shaping' or 'moulding' these cake-offerings.²⁷ As we saw above, the precise form of these offerings, the way they looked, mattered.

Both the pontiffs and the Vestals were aided by *fictores*, and it was a position of such significance that by the 3rd century AD the title had come to be used as an honorific by senators.²⁸ It is likely that they were lesser priests (*pontifices minores*): their duties included secretarial work (Liv. 22.57.3), as well as practical tasks relating to animal sacrifice, such as weaving straw ropes to tie up pigs (Fest. 160.14L, information derived from a *Commentary on Sacred Rites*, possibly identical to Antistius Labeo's Augustan-period *Commentary on Pontifical Law*).²⁹

We can note another context for cult personnel in connection with sacred cakes: their presentation. This is best seen with the *ferctum*, a cake regularly used alongside the *strues* (discussed above), which is attested in literature as far back as 200 BC, and on inscriptions well into the imperial period (the *Acta* of the Arval Brethren). Aulus Gellius (*NA* 10.15.14, following Fabius Pictor) tells us that *strues* and *fercta* were kept in a box at the foot of the bed of the *flamen Dialis*, presumably in readiness for prompt ritual action on behalf of the state. They are also found together in Cato's description of private agrarian rituals to purify farmland and stock, honouring deities such as Janus, Jupiter and Mars Pater (*Agr.* 144). Scholars have noted parallels with the Umbrian *ficla* and *strusla*, which appear several times in the Iguvine Tables, usually asyndetically as *strusla ficla*.³⁰

De Vaan notes that the semantic origin of *ferctum* is unclear, but suggests a connection with *farcio*, 'to stuff'.³¹ But the etymology that several ancient authors emphasise is the derivation from *fero*, 'to carry'.³² Those who carried (*adferebant*)

²⁶ Cf. VARR., *LL* 7.43-45.

²⁷ Note VARR., *LL* 7.44: *fictores dicti a fingendis libis*. VINE 1986, p. 125 points out that 'in archaic Latin, *fingo* was regularly applied to the preparation of sacrificial cakes'.

²⁸ CIC., *Dom.* 139; *CIL* 6.1074, 10247 (*fictores pontificum*); *CIL* 6.786, 2134 (*fictores virginum Vestalium*); see PALMER 1970, p. 95-96 and RÜPKE 2014, pp. 94-95. Whether *fictores* also existed for other colleges is unknown, but it seems likely, at least in the case of other archaic state priesthoods such as the *flamines*.

²⁹ On the pontifical college and their records, see e.g. SCHEID 1994, VAN HAEPEREN 2002, RÜPKE 2008.

³⁰ POULTNEY 1959, p. 249; VINE 1986, p. 122.

³¹ DE VAAN 2008, p. 212.

³² See e.g. Schol. *Pers.* 2.48: *genus panis vel libi, quod diis infertur a pontificibus in sacrificio; dictum autem fertum a ferendo*.

the cakes *ad sacra* were called *struferctarii*, explains Paul in the lemma *ferctum* (75.17L).³³ This composite term appears only in the lexicon, once here (where the corresponding Festus lemma is lost), and once in a Festus entry which is actually devoted to the *strufertarii*, but is unfortunately very fragmentary (376.12L). The second part of Festus' lemma is pretty much lost (though the words *uti mihi* might preserve a trace of criticism of Verrius, or an earlier scholar, by Festus), but the start can be reconstructed from Paul (377.2L): *strufertarii* was the name for those who made expiatory sacrifices in respect of trees struck by lightning; they were named after the *ferctum*.³⁴ It is not stated if the trees struck by lightning were ordinary trees, or trees in a sacred grove; but as it happens, we know from Trajanic-period records that *strues* and *fercta*, coupled with blood sacrifices, were used by the Arval Brethren in expiatory sacrifices when trees in the sacred grove of Dea Dia suffered damage.³⁵

The key point to be drawn from these lemmas, however, is that cakes employed in rituals might have special bearers (priests, or priestly assistants); that in turn may imply that the (public, visible) carrying of these cakes was a key element in ritual.

4. What is missing from the mix

So, cakes in Roman ritual had specific names, and distinctive shapes and ingredients, suitable for particular gods and particular rites. Their making was so important that the task was entrusted to a special *fictor*, and the carrying of them was entrusted to a designated bearer. They were used in state and private rituals over a very long period of time. And yet we really know very little about them:

We do not know from where the ingredients for cakes were obtained. Farmers presumably used their own crops. In a state context, ingredients could have come from the market, but it is also possible that they were grown on land belonging to priestly colleges (the Vestals are known to have owned land: Hyginus, *Agrim.* p. 82). Where the ingredients were stored before use is also

³³ As VINE 1986, p. 113 points out, *strufertarius* is a dvandva compound (cf. *suovetaurilia*). According to ISIDORE (*Etym.* 6.19.24), who often uses material from the lexicon (perhaps indirectly), the 'offertory' was so called 'on account of the fertum' which was sacrificed at the altar by the pontiffs (*fertum enim dicitur oblatio quae altari offertur et sacrificatur a pontificibus, a quo offertorium nominatum, quasi propter fertum*).

³⁴ PAUL 377.2L: *Serufertarios dicebant, qui quaedam sacrificia ad arbores fulguras faciebant, a ferto scilicet quodam sacrificii genere*. Manuscripts of Paul have the orthography *serufertarios*, which must be an early corruption.

³⁵ E.g. CIL 6.2075: *in luco deae Diae piaculum factum [ob arbores lau]/rus caedendas quod tempestatibus perusta[e erant] / porcis et agnis struibus fertisque*; on the Arval inscriptions, see SCHEID 1998. VINE 1986, p. 123 notes that *strues* and *fercta* are a feature of expiatory or purificatory ceremonies.

unknown, although it is significant that according to Varro (*LL* 5.162) some temples *in Latio*, such as the temple of Juno at Lanuvium, had areas named like parts of a house, including a *penaria* (pantry or larder).³⁶

We do not know where the cakes were made – but it was probably in the same kitchen area at, or near, a temple where animal victims were roasted or boiled following their sacrificial slaughter; here cakes could be fried, or baked under a crock on a hearth.³⁷

We do not know how the cakes were rendered sacred: whether the ingredients were already sacred, or whether there was a moment at which the prepared cakes were sacralised by some formula or ritual? But it seems that once sacred, they remained sacred: Horace jokingly refers to a priest's slave who runs away because he is so fed up with having to eat *liba*.³⁸ The leftovers evidently had to be consumed in-house, even if stale – they were 'sacred rubbish'.³⁹

Rather more is known about the consumption of sacred cakes than about their preparation. Some of course were reserved for the gods: Ovid (*Fast.* 1.275-276, 3.733-734) mentions burning them on an altar. Others were shared by priests and worshippers at the communal feasts which were such an important part of ancient ritual activity, and which helped hierarchise ancient society.⁴⁰ In this context, it is worth noting that many cakes were not unappetising plain wafers, like Communion bread, but delectable offerings – moistened and enriched by cheese, sweetened with honey, decorated with poppyseeds and so on. Sometimes they were served straight from the pan or oven, like the honey-cakes offered to Liber Pater (*Ov., Fast.* 3.761-762). Some cakes were also edible bases for other offerings, with toppings of first fruits, like the cakes (*mensae*) eaten by Aeneas' men, fulfilling the prophecy given by Anchises that their wanderings would only end when they were forced by hunger to eat their own tables (also *mensae*).⁴¹

³⁶ He also refers to a *cenaculum* (dining room). *Penaria* is clearly quite an old term, being used by Cato to praise Sicily as the larder of the Roman state (ap. *Cic., Verr.* 2.2.5).

³⁷ Cf. *CAT., Agr.* 75; *OV., Fast.* 6.315-16. Some cakes were probably meant to be served hot, like Cato's *globi*.

³⁸ *HOR., Epist.* 1.10.10-11: *utque sacerdotis fugitivus liba recuso, pane egeo iam mellitis potiore placentis* ('like the priest's runaway slave, I reject *liba*; I need bread, sweeter to me now than *placenta* (cakes made with honey)').

³⁹ For a different kind of 'sacred rubbish', see GLINISTER 2000.

⁴⁰ A relief dating to the Claudian period (Museo Nuovo Capitolino inv. 2391) shows the Vestals at banquet, with what appears to be a cake before them: DUNBABIN 2003, fig. 36.

⁴¹ *VIRG., Aen.* 7.107-129. The oath preserved by PAUL 112.6L (*Mensa frugibusque iurato significat per mensam et fruges*) probably relates to this story.

5. Conclusion

Animal sacrifice is often seen as *the* defining form of ancient ritual, and as a result we tend to amplify its importance in comparison to other forms of dedication.⁴² But ritual vocabulary (terms like *libare*, *immolare* or *confarreatio*) clearly demonstrates the significance of other foodstuff offerings, such as sacred cakes. It can be argued that these should not be regarded as dispensible or secondary elements, but as a concomitant parts of animal sacrifice, and as one of the ways in which relationships and lines of communication between gods and human beings were formed and maintained. Studying these offerings reminds us of the incredible detail with which Roman religion was conducted: their names, their ingredients, their shape, the way they were displayed and deployed in ritual – all mattered. It encourages us, too, to think about the realities of ancient religion – how it was lived and experienced – and how rituals involving foods helped to build and reinforce social identities.

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⁴² See the useful essays in FARAONE and NAIDEN 2012 for recent work on animal sacrifice in antiquity.

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