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# Two names of white colour of a victim in Roman sacrificial rituals. The case of *cretatus* and *calidus*

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present a new perspective on the religious function of the Latin adjectives *cretatus* (whitened with chalk) and *calidus* (having a white spot on the forehead). The researchers of Roman religion have attributed to the former a specific role. Whitening chalk was used to cover any imperfections in the appearance of the sacrificial animal. According to them, *cretatus* could also have a pejorative meaning. The author of the article, however, disagrees with this view and suggests to examine more closely the context in which the adjective was used and references to the white colour of the victims. He argues for a different, positive interpretation, namely that the adjective *cretatus* was used to indicate the effect of a ceremonial act intended to emphasise Roman piety. In the case of the other adjective, *calidus*, the examination of the context in which the word appeared proves that it most likely did not serve as a technical religious term and animals with a white spot on their foreheads were not considered *pars pro toto* as white victims in Rome.

## Keywords

Roman religion; Roman sacrifice; sacrificial animal; sacrificial ritual; Juvenal; Horace

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In Roman sources – usually from late antiquity (mainly Arnobius and Servius) – one can find clear informations on the requirements for sacrificial victims. In addition to the animal's species, sex, age, external appearance or agricultural purpose, the colour of the animal's coat was also to be taken into account during the *probatio* (the procedure for selecting a suitable sacrificial victim).<sup>1</sup> The general rule was to offer either a *hostia* or a *victima* of black colour to chthonic deities and to deities associated with the world of the dead, such as Dis Pater. The Romans used such adjectives as *ater*, *niger* or *furvus* to refer to those.<sup>2</sup> Animals with dark coat were also offered to storm gods, such as Summanus.<sup>3</sup> White colour (*albus*, *niveus*, *candidus*) was reserved for celestial deities and keepers of calm weather.<sup>4</sup> In certain circumstances, red animals like dogs or boars could also be sacrificed.<sup>5</sup> Servius, in his commentary on the *Georgics*, writes that the colour of the sacrificial victim depended on the nature of the deity in question. He called this principle *similitudo* (Serv. *Georg.* 2.380). These rules, especially concerning the first two colours, are usually well known to researchers of Roman religion, and are frequently mentioned in chapters on the requirements for offering the proper sacrifice.<sup>6</sup> Among the cases of white sacrificial animals described by ancient authors, however, there are two examples that are worth closer examination, as they seem to be extraordinary in their nature. They are deemed to be the peculiar exceptions too. However, the existing research does not seem to describe their meaning accurately. One of the examples in question is the sacrificial adjective *cretatus*, which appears in the writings of two Roman satirists, Lucilius and Juvenal. The other one can be found in the description of sacrifice in the fourth book of Horace's *Odes*, where the animal, *vitulus*, is referred to with the Latin colour *fulvus*. This

1 Arnob. *Nat.* 7.18.2 (*genus, aetas, sexus, color*); 7.19.3–5 (*sexus, color*); 7.20.1–4 (*color*); Serv. *Aen.* 2.202 (*aetas*); 3.118 (*color*); 4.57 (*oves, quibus nihil deesset*); 6.39 (*ne [oves] habeant caudam aculeatam, ne linguam nigram, ne aurem fissam; intactae; bidentes*). Cf. Plin. *Nat.* 8.183. Cicero must be also mentioned here as the earlier author who wrote about pontifical requirements and rules of *haruspices* concerning sacrificial victims, see Cic. *Leg.* 2.29. What is interesting in this passage is the fact he did not mention there the colour of the animal, its sex and age being the sole features. On *probatio* in Roman religion see Krause (1931: col. 271); Goette (1986); Benucci (1999); Prescendi (2007: pp. 32–35, 98–99, 109–110); Scheid (2011: pp. 39–41); ThesCRA 1.199–200.

2 E.g. Lucr. 3.52; Val. Max. 2.4.5; Paul. Fest. 83L, s.v. *Furvum*; 111L, s.v. *Medialem*; Hist. Aug. *Sept. Sev.* 22.6–7; Serv. *Georg.* 2.380; cf. CIL 11.1420 = ILS 139.

3 Serv. *Aen.* 3.118 (*item tempestati atras [pecudes]*); arval brethren sacrificed for god Summanus – Acta Arv. 105b.11; 107.II.8. I cite here J. Scheid's edition (Scheid 1998) of *fratres aruales* inscriptions.

4 Liv. 7.37.1; 22.10.7; 25.12.13; 27.37.1; Paul. Fest. 4L, s.v. *Albiona*; 9L, s.v. *Albogalerus*; Plin. *Nat.* 22.9; a white cow, often called *honoraria*, is mentioned frequently as the sacrifice for Dea Dia offered by *fratres aruales*, see e.g. Acta Arv. 53.I.5; 64.II.10; 65.5.

5 Paul. Fest. 39L, s.v. *Porta catularia*; Fest. 358L, s.v. *Rutilae canes*; Gell. 4.6.2; Iuv. 8.155; Arnob. *Nat.* 2.68.1; CIL 6.826 = CIL 6.30837 = ILS 4914.

6 On the importance of a colour see Wissowa (1912<sup>2</sup>: p. 413); Krause (1931: col. 244–246); Latte (1960: pp. 19, 68, 131, 210, 385); Scheid (2003: p. 80); Prescendi (2007: p. 32); Beard et al. (2009: p. 36); ThesCRA 1.199. A proper sacrifice for a deity was referred to with the adjective *proprius* in Latin. It most likely described an animal which had passed the *probatio* process, so the appearance of a victim and their other above-mentioned traits would satisfy a deity, see Acta lud. saec. Aug. 93, 98, 103, 119, 134, 137 (Schneegg); Acta lud. saec. Sev. 138, 141, 226 (Schneegg); Wissowa (1912<sup>2</sup>: p. 414); Krause (1931: col. 267). Cf. Scheid & Veyne (2009).

young bull is characterised by a white spot on its forehead. Such appearance is described by the rare Latin adjective *calidus*.

The issues associated with both terms describing animal sacrifice will be presented in this order; I will also suggest new approaches and interpretations. What both words have in common is that they rarely appear in the source materials. One of them, *cretatus*, describes an authentic Roman religious act and indicates distinctive feature of ritual in Roman religion. It focuses on the need to strictly fulfil certain ritualistic requirements (orthopraxy), in order to show one's reverence and piety. The interpretation of the term *calidus*, on the other hand, is more problematic. Its meaning is based on sources that do not definitively confirm the ritualistic nature of the word and, therefore, the supposed type of animal sacrifice in Roman religion.

### *Cretatus*

The meaning of the adjective seems undisputed. The word was formed with the Indo-European suffix *-tō-*, which suggests a part of speech denoting the effect of some action. The suffix forms participles, which can sometimes be turned into adjectives (Lindsay 1894: pp. 334–335, 541–542; Palmer 1988: pp. 280–281, 327). Hence, in this case, the analysed word has the meaning 'whitened with chalk', built on the basis of the stem *creta-*.<sup>7</sup> K. Krause in *RE* proposes a different interpretation of the meaning, reducing the term to the colour itself, i.e. 'white as chalk' (Krause 1931: col. 245).<sup>8</sup> However, given the word-forming component of the word *cretatus*, the approach of the German scholar cannot be considered correct, as will be discussed further in this paper, even though for Romans it indeed denoted a very light shade of white, obtained by using substance in antiquity called chalk.<sup>9</sup> The meaning of the adjective 'whitened with chalk' is confirmed by Isidore of Seville. In his *Etymologies*, he writes about the whitening with chalk of candidates' togas and states the aims of such procedure (Isid. *Orig.* 19.24.6.): *Toga candida eademque cretata in qua candidati, id est magistratum petentes, ambiebant, addita creta quo candidior insigniorque esset. Cicero in oratione quam habuit contra competitores 'In toga candida' scripsit.* This phenomenon in Roman political life is called by Persius *cretata ambitio* (Pers. 15.177).<sup>10</sup> The passage from Isidore's work also indicates that *candidus* and *cretatus*

7 De Vaan (2008: p. 144, s.v. *creta*); Ernout & Meillet (2001: p. 150, s.v. *creta*); TLL 4.1187, s.v. *cretatus*.

8 Although it should be noted that he wrote something different earlier, mainly that animals were actually whitened with chalk, see Krause (1894: p. 5).

9 Pliny the Elder writes about a material called *paraetonium* which was a type of clay mixed with a sea foam, see Plin. *Nat.* 35.18. In Rome, it was blended with *creta Cimolia*. This substance had excellent properties in terms of fat density, smoothness, and, what is crucial in this case, white colour. In addition, it was useful as coverage: *e candidis coloribus pinguisimum et tectorii tenacissimum propter levorem*. The aforementioned kind of chalk, *Cimolia creta*, was used for whitening fabrics, especially one of its versions from Umbria called *saxum*, see Plin. *Nat.* 35.195–197. There were also other types of whitening clays – Plin. *Nat.* 35.37, 48. Those two substances, mixed *paraetonium* and *Cimolia creta*, might be good candidates for whitening means of a sacrificial animal.

10 See Harvey (1972: pp. 194–195). He claims *cretatus* was a colloquial term.

describe the same colour.<sup>11</sup> What the Romans called *candidus* probably differed from the common term for the shade of white – *albus*.<sup>12</sup> Isidore's work can be supplemented by other source materials describing the use of chalk, including Cicero's correspondence with Atticus, where he mentions cloth whitening (Cic. *Att.* 2.3.1.). Similar information can be found in Martial, who mentions *cretata mappa* in one of his epigrams (Mart. 12.28.9). The author also uses the adjective *cretatus* to describe a type of light make-up applied by women (Mart. 2.41.11). The term *cretatus* was also used to describe slaves with specially marked feet, as described by Pliny the Elder (Plin. *Nat.* 35.201) and Propertius (Prop. 4.5.52).

In a religious context, the adjective can be found in Juvenal's tenth satire. In the second part of the work (verses 56–113), which contains a lecture on the impact of power (*potentia*) on human life, there is a description of the reaction of the Romans to the fate of Sejanus. The term *cretatus* appears with reference to the death of the praetorian commander during the reign of Tiberius (Iuv. 10.62–67):

*ardet adoratum populo caput et crepat ingens  
Seianus, deinde ex facie toto orbe secunda  
fiunt urceoli, pelues, sartago, matellae.  
pone domi laurus, duc in Capitolia magnum  
cretatumque bouem: Seianus ducitur unco  
spectandus, gaudent omnes.*

From the scholia to Juvenal, one learns that the phrase *duc in Capitolia magnum cretatumque bouem* is a reference to a passage from Lucilius: *cretatumque bovem duc[it] ad Capitolia magnum*.<sup>13</sup> In this case, however, no detailed context is provided (apart from the obvious religious background) in which the verse quoted in the scholium appeared and what intertextual effort of the author from the imperial period might have been about. The scholium only hints that *cretatus* denotes the bright white shade called also *candidus*. This would be in line with the statement in Isidore's *Etymologies*, in which the two colours are identical.<sup>14</sup>

Scholars studying the meaning of the phrase *cretatus bos* do not seem to explain it convincingly. The standard approach is to assume that *creta* was used by the Romans to cover any imperfections in the animal's coat when perfectly white animals were not available.<sup>15</sup> However, such a practice could be deemed an attempt to deceive the deities,

11 Cf. Rothe (2020: pp. 102–103).

12 Also in this case, Isidore's explanation is helpful – he expresses the difference in the shades of white in Isid. *Orig.* 12.1.51.

13 Schol. ad Iuv. 66, p. 166 Wessner; cf. Lucil. inc. 1145 Marx.

14 Capdeville (1971: p. 300) states that *candidus* should be treated as a poetic expression.

15 Murgatroyd (2017: p. 48) sums up the passage (lines 65–66) from Juvenal's satire: "but here too there is sham and hollow show, as chalk is to be used to cover any dark spots". Cf. Lübbert (1859: p. 112); Mayor (1881: p. 90); Wissowa (1912<sup>2</sup>: p. 413, n. 5); Capdeville (1971: pp. 300–301); Courtney (2013: p. 405);

as put by K. Krause, who rejects the idea of whitening the sacrificial animal at all.<sup>16</sup> For this reason, the passage from Juvenal's satire in which the poet mentions *cretatus bos* was regarded as an expression of mockery,<sup>17</sup> or as Courtney puts it: "This passage may have the satiric point that a pure white victim would be more expensive, and it would be an insult to the emperor to offer any less".<sup>18</sup> Aforementioned Krause's approach says more about the ideas about religion formulated in his times than about the intentions of the ancient sacrificants and participants in ceremonies. Going back to the interpretation of the term *cretatus* related to covering imperfections, this explanation seems implausible for a reason. Roman Italy was prosperous and abundant in agricultural land. It is doubtful that a white ox could not be found in the vicinity of Rome, as mentioned by two Latin authors of agronomic texts. Varro observes that the Italic cattle were particularly suitable for sacrificial purposes due to their physical features and shade of coat, and adds that oxen with a white coat are not abundant in the Apennine Peninsula. This is why they could probably have been chosen earlier as potential future *victima*: *Tametsi quidam de Italicis, quos propter amplitudinem praestare dicunt, victimas faciunt atque ad deorum servant supplicia, qui sine dubio ad res divinas propter dignitatem amplitudinis et coloris praeponendi. Quod eo magis fit, quod albi in Italia non tam frequentes quam in Thracia...* (Varro *Rust.* 2.5.10). Columella, in turn, writes (Colum. 6.1.1-2) that Campania and Umbria were famous for their white oxen (*albi boves*).<sup>19</sup>

A different approach was presented by Ch. Schmitz. The scholar claims that a whitened ox is not a proper sacrificial victim, as it does not fulfil the strict ritual conditions and only the gilding of the horns (epithet *auratus* or *aurus*) was an acceptable mean of changing the appearance of the offered animal.<sup>20</sup> This is an unconvincing interpretation. Another adjective formed in a similar way to *cretatus* and *auratus* is the term *infulatus*, which appears in the sources and means adorning the animal, in this case with special woollen bands.<sup>21</sup> There are two other similar adjectives describing the way the victim was adorned. The arval brethren archive also contains the expression *boves feminae auro iunctae*.<sup>22</sup> The author of *Historia Augusta* mentions *boves cornuis auro iugatis* (*Hist. Aug.*

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Mantzilas (2016: pp. 22-23). It should be noted that Latte (1960: p. 210) shows neutral approach: "Entsprechend ist die Farbe geregelt. (...) bezeichnenderweise darf man mit weißer Kreide nachhelfen".

- 16 He criticised the idea of whitening darker spots on an animal and proposed his own solution in Krause (1931: col. 245); cf. n. 8. Capdeville (1971: p. 301) responded to Krause's interpretation and rightly refuted it.
- 17 See for example the opinion in old commentary Mayor (1881: p. 90).
- 18 Courtney (2013: p. 405). Cf. Schmitz (2000: p. 73).
- 19 Oxen bred in Umbria are called by him *vasti*, a trait which was sought in this species of animals intended for sacrifice, as Varro observes (he underlines feature called *amplitudo* in above quoted passage from *De re rustica*).
- 20 Schmitz (2000: p. 73); TLL 5.1521 (s.v. *auro*).
- 21 The adjective is used by Varro *Ling.* 7.24: *infulatas hostias, quod velamenta his e lana quae adduntur, infulae*. The word also appears in the inscription from Pisa describing rules of sacrifice for *di manes* of Lucius Caesar (CIL 11.1420 = ILS 139). One of the passages determines how sacrificial animals should have been decorated: *bosque et ovis atri infulis caerulis infulati di{i}s Manibus ei(us) / mactentur*.
- 22 Acta fr. arv. 105b.8; 114.1.12-13 Scheid.

*Gall.* 8.2). These two probably describe a type of decoration of sacrificed cattle (placed on the head behind the horns) sometimes depicted on Roman reliefs. It is referred to as *frontalia*, although the term *lamina*, which Servius mentioned, is more likely to be accurate.<sup>23</sup> The juxtaposition suggested by Ch. Schmitz seems artificial and excessively radical. She believes that the term *cretatus* was created by the satirists themselves for the purpose of the works in which the adjective was used. Even if the word in question is not taken directly from pontifical law, it should be remembered that Roman poets used technical religious terms in their writings, sometimes in poetic forms,<sup>24</sup> as exemplified by Book III of Macrobius' *Saturnalia*. The participants of the dialogue demonstrate that Virgil knew and used ritual expressions correctly.<sup>25</sup> The approach of Ch. Schmitz reflects hypercriticism supported by Krause's claim.<sup>26</sup>

I suggest a different, more positive interpretation of this sacrificial adjective. It seems unlikely that the Romans, priding themselves on their *pietas* and their need for meticulous ritual observance, would have attempted to deceive the gods or to make mockery of rituals.<sup>27</sup> The method of adorning the victim described in Lucilius and Juvenal should also be regarded as a ritual act performed by the Romans. This would be analogous to the practices of candidates described by Isidore referring to Cicero (cited above *Isid. Orig.* 19.24.6.). They wanted to appear more *insignes*, the brighter shade of whiteness of their togas was to represent their intentions, to make them better contenders for office. The whitening of togas was an acceptable practice during Roman elections and part of the political culture. Livy, in his historical work, recalls an anecdote that the issue of modifying the colour of the candidates' clothes became the subject of a political dispute during the struggle of the orders. Some plebeians wanted to ban this procedure. The author sums it up as follows: *parva nunc res et vix serio agenda videri possit, quae tunc ingenti certamine patres ac plebem accendit*.<sup>28</sup> Referring to the issue as a trivial matter not to be taken seriously reflects the extent to which the practice of whitening candidates' clothes was ingrained in the Roman culture of Livy's time. There is another source that is helpful

23 *Serv. Aen.* 5.366; see Siebert (1999: pp. 143–144, 270–271).

24 An example of such a term is *iniugis*, which denotes that the victim has never been used as a working animal (Paul. Fest. 101 L, s.v. *Iniuges boves*; Macr. *Sat.* 3.5.5; Fulg. *Serm. ant.* 10). Virgil calls this term *intactus* – Verg. *Georg.* 4.531–553 (cf. *Serv. Georg.* 4.539); *Aen.* 6.35–41; likewise, Horace in *Epod.* 9.22 (cf. Porph. *ad loc.*; ps.-Acro *ad loc.*). Ovid in *Fast.* 1.83 uses the expression *rudes operum iuveni*. Another one is the sacrificial adjective *eximius* or *lectus* in Roman epic, see Verg. *Georg.* 4.538; *Aen.* 4.57; 6.39; 8.544; Val. Fl. 3.431; Sil. 13.432; cf. explanations in Paul. Fest. 72 L, s.v. *Eximium*; Macr. *Sat.* 3.5.6 and Don. Ter. *Hec.* 66.

25 A good example is the introduction to the discussion on the meaning of the sacrificial verb *porricere* (Macr. *Sat.* 3.2.1): *Verborum autem proprietas tam poetae huic familiaris est, ut talis observatio in Virgilio laus esse iam desinat: nullis tamen magis proprie usus est quam sacris vel sacrificialibus verbis*. Cf. *Serv. Aen.* 5.238.

26 She cites him in her footnote, see Schmitz (2000: p. 73, n. 33). Capdeville's statement (see n. 16) is ignored by her.

27 One of the most important source in this regard is the Roman letter to Teans, IGRom. 6.1557 = Sylloge<sup>3</sup> 601; however, the interpretations of this document differ, from perceiving the inscription as an evidence for imperial theology in the times of republic and instance of Roman thinking about the gods to proof of diplomatic approach towards Greek states. On this matter see Beard et al. (2020: pp. 349–350) and Driediger-Murphy (2014). Cf. Plb. 6.56.6–8; Cic. *Nat. deor.* 2.8; *har. resp.* 19.

28 *Liv.* 4.25.13; cf. Ogilvie (1970: pp. 574–575).

in establishing the actual function of whitening fabrics. During the *ludi*, the magistrate used a specially dyed shawl to signal the start of the chariot race. This is mentioned by Martial (Mart. 12.28.9). The whitening with chalk gave the fabric a white sheen, as can be inferred from the reference in Isidore, making it easier both for the competitors and spectators to see it. Passages from Pliny's *Historia naturalis* indicate that various *cretae* were used to enhance the shade of white fabrics.<sup>29</sup> Naturally, chalk might also have been used to lighten the coat of an ox. The essential purpose of this practice was not to cover up possible imperfections in the appearance of the sacrificial animal, but to enhance its colour (to give it the bright white *color candidus*) and thus accentuate the important status of the ritual. This was probably also due to the fact that the process was expensive<sup>30</sup> and limited to very important public ceremonies. The reason for infrequent references to the use of chalk in sacrificial rituals may have been that this was common practice to the Romans, just like the whitening of togas.<sup>31</sup>

The religious activity described by the poet (bringing a whitened ox to the Capitol) emphasises the joy of the crowd (*turba Remi* in verse 73) at the death of Sejanus.<sup>32</sup> The sentence in verses 65–66 reinforces the imperative mode (*pone, duc*), and may be uttered by the later-mentioned Fortuna governing the fate of the Romans: *sequitur fortunam, ut semper, et odit damnatos* (Iuv. 10.73–74). The scholium, however, suggests that the sentence is uttered by some Roman to a fellow citizen (Schol. ad Iuv. 66). The religious aspect of the passage is highlighted by yet another factor. In the passage of the satire quoted above, Juvenal presents a stark contrast between the fate of the condemned Sejanus, whose death is also described with the verb *ducere*, on the one hand, and the celebration of the citizens and the sacrifice made on this occasion, on the other. The ritual aspect of *cretatus bos* is treated extremely seriously in Juvenal's work. The satirical nature of the mentioned passage does not stem from the attempt to ridicule the whole situation or to belittle the significance of the ritual act described. It has more of a moral dimension. It reflects the perverse nature of fate and the likelihood of unfortunate events, which may happen to anyone, even people with high social status. As the poet observes, the death of an influential individual – as in the case of Sejanus – can become even an occasion for religious celebration. The solemn nature of the sacrifice on the Capitol as a thanks-

29 See n. 9.

30 Cf. Rothe (2020: p. 103) on the costs of preparing *toga candida*. Pliny the Elder (*Nat.* 35.18) writes that *paraetonium* prepared in Rome could cost 50 denarii for 6 pounds (nearly 2kg). For comparison, purple cost 1–30 denarii for a pound (Plin. *Nat.* 35.45–46). In order to brighten the coat of a 500–600kg ox, approximately 10kg of chalk would be required, which would cost about 500 denarii. Of course, it is a rough estimate, as there is no information on the physical characteristics of ancient whitening chalk and its efficiency. Nevertheless, even smaller sums seem to be far too high for a common Roman citizen to afford such a practice.

31 The only source where *cretatus* has a somewhat pejorative meaning is a passage from the aforementioned letter by Cicero to Atticus, where the former expresses his disapproval when describing the appearance of Pompey, who probably exaggerated his association with the legions in his outward appearance (whitened *fasciae* were military clothing): *et Epicratem suspicor, ut scribis, lascivum fuisse. etenim mihi caligae eius et fasciae creatae non placebant* (Cic. *Att.* 2.3.1).

32 The verb (*ad*)*ducere* has a ritual meaning, denoting the act of bringing a victim to an altar. For instance Cic. *Div.* 1.102; Fest. 508 L, s.v. *Victimam*; Liv. 31.17.6; Suet. *Aug.* 59.1.



giving to the gods emphasises this, as it is the place of worship of Jupiter the Best and Greatest. The species of the animal and the fact that it has been castrated (*bos*) confirms that the poet is writing about a sacrifice to this deity. A white ox was a suitable sacrifice to Jupiter.<sup>33</sup> Juvenal's reference to a well-known ritual on the Roman hill and the act of sacrificing a suitably prepared animal offers a vivid enough image (*enargeia*),<sup>34</sup> highlighting the unpredictable nature of an individual's power and influence. For this reason, it is not worth asking the gods to be granted them.<sup>35</sup>

## Calidus

The other examined adjective which refers to the white colour is *calidus* (sometimes written *callidus*).<sup>36</sup> Also in this case, there are certain doubts, which is why it is worth re-examining its presumed ritual status in Roman religion. The word means an animal with a white-coloured forehead. This is how *calidus* is defined by Isidore when he writes about the colours of horses: *Qui autem albos tantum pedes habent, petili appellantur; qui frontem albam, calidi* (Isid. Orig. 12.1.52). The author of the specialist treatise *Mulomedicina Chironis* also mentions this type of colour of the draught animals in question (*iumenta*). In the chapter on the dying procedure of the coat, there is a reference on how to make a horse *calidus*, namely to make a white spot on its forehead – *macula alba* (Chiron. 795). These passages seem to describe the analogous appearance of a young bull (*vitulus*) that the lyrical subject intends to offer in the conclusion of the 2nd poem from the fourth book of Horace's *Odes* (Hor. Carm. 4.2.53–60):

*te decem tauri totidemque vaccae,  
me tener solvet vitulus, relicta  
matre qui largis iuvenescit herbis  
in mea vota,*

*fronte curvatos imitatus ignis  
tertium lunae referentis ortum,  
qua notam duxit, niveus videri,  
cetera fulvos.*

According to G. Capdeville and D. Mantzilas, the quoted passage from the work of the Roman poet is supposed to be evidence that only certain body parts of white colour would suffice to consider the victim white (Capdeville 1971: p. 300; Mantzilas 2016: pp. 33–34). However, such an approach to the colours of the *hostiae* is as implausible as

33 Macr. Sat. 3.10.3,7; Serv. Aen. 3.21; cf. Serv. Aen. 9.627.

34 See Murgatroyd (2017: p. 41).

35 These are *supervacua et pernicioosa* according to the poet (Iuv. 10.54).

36 TLL 3.169; De Vaan (2008: p. 83).

the alleged covering up of imperfections in the animal's coat with chalk, as mentioned above. The first reservation is related to the genre of the text, poetry, which concerns not so much public religion, but rather private worship, as the utterance of the lyrical subject may suggest. Another, stronger reservation is related to the intertextuality of the ode. Its final lines imitate a scene from Moschus' second idyll, in which the author describes the appearance of the bull-transformed Zeus abducting Europe: τοῦ δὴ τοι τὸ μὲν ἄλλο δέμας ξανθόχροον ἔσκε, / κύκλος δ' ἀργύφειος μέσσω μάρραιρε μετώπῳ.<sup>37</sup> The ending of this ode is an intellectual reference to the works of Horace's Greek predecessors rather than a reference to the principles of Roman religion. K. Krause is correct here in pointing out the influence of Greek patterns (Krause 1931: p. 246). Moreover, the last lines of the work have to be interpreted in the context of the work's thematic scope *in extenso*. It is the third reservation. The lyrical subject, who can be identified with the poet himself, performs an act of *recusatio* and refuses to write praise poetry in the style of Pindar, claiming that Iullus Antonius will do it better. The subject demonstrates his poetic inferiority in lines 25–34, and repeats it in the case of the description of the *vitulus*, which is a somewhat more modest sacrifice compared to Iullus' excellent *victimae*.<sup>38</sup> Apart from the erudite reference to Moschos, lines 59–60 with their description of the modest victim constitute a kind of metapoetic commentary by the author himself. Their function in the poem is to visualise the declared creative skills of the subject. It is therefore difficult to interpret the content of the work as a convincing confirmation that the type of animal with a white forehead mentioned by the poet was allowed in the official Roman cult. In contrast to the passage in Juvenal's 10th satire, the selected passage from Horace's work is not as strongly embedded in the Roman ritual context, probably as intended by the poet himself. Juvenal writes a Roman satire, Horace refers to the tradition of Pindar's *epinikion*.

It should be mentioned at this point that Porphyrio's and Ps.-Acro's commentaries are not particularly helpful in the interpretation of the ending of the ode.<sup>39</sup> Both of the above-mentioned authors provide only a simple descriptive account of the external appearance of the victim referred to in the work. Both also identify the fawn colour selected by Horace, described as *fulvus* with another, more intense shade of red – *rufus/robeus*. Perhaps this is an attempt to explain why the poet used a colour name that does not appear in source testimonies and religious practice. The authors might have assumed it was probably a poetic reference to the red-coated animals that were actually sacrificed by the Romans,<sup>40</sup> although a more adequate explanation is that they simply missed the Horatian reference to Moschus' work and the attempt to translate the Greek adjective ξανθόχρους as *fulvus*.

Interestingly, according to certain source such *hostiae calidae* might actually have been sacrificed in Italy. Some identify this adjective with the Umbrian term *kaleřuf/calersu*

37 Mosch. *Idyl.* 2.84–85; cf. description of one of the horses in Hom. *Il.* 23.454.

38 On this issue see classic Horatian monograph Fraenkel (1957: p. 437).

39 Porph. ad *Carm.* 4.2.59; Ps.-Acro ad *Carm.* 4.2.59.

40 See n. 5.

appearing in *Tabulae Iguvinae*.<sup>41</sup> Animals with a white forehead (if this is the correct translation of the Umbrian word), specifically oxen, were sacrificed to a deity from Iguvian triad – Vofionus Grabovius.<sup>42</sup> However, attempting to juxtapose the *Tabulae Iguvinae* with the above verses from Horace's ode is not an appropriate approach. Although the document is a valuable source material depicting public religious life in one of the cities near Rome and plays an important comparative role, proving that the Umbrian religion of Iguvium bears many similarities to Roman worship, ultimately it cannot be concluded that the Romans acted analogously and offered to their deities *boves calidi*.<sup>43</sup> There is no source describing this. There is no convincing evidence in the form of source references that sacrificial animals with white forehead were considered *hostiae propriae* by the Romans.<sup>44</sup> Horace's ode from the fourth book can hardly be considered such a source for the reasons described above. Similarly, the appearance of the term *calidus* in the Latin-language sources mentioned at the beginning of this section (*Mulomedicina*, Isidore) is linked more to a hippic and agronomic context than a ritual one. The adjective was probably a technical term denoting the coat of an animal and was not part of sacrificial Roman terminology. Such animals did not undergo *probatio*. The content and nature of the sources do not allow to conclude that by having only a certain white part of the body the animal could be considered white in its entirety, as argued by G. Capdeville and D. Mantzilas.

## Conclusion

The more nuanced interpretative approach proposed by me to the works in which the adjectives *cretatus* and *calidus* (and the alleged colour of the sacrificial animal they describe) appear allows to assess whether they might have had any ritualistic function. The usage of the first term – appearing in Juvenal's poem – in a religious context seems plausible given our current state of knowledge of the orthopractic nature of Roman religion. The previous interpretation of *duc in Capitolia magnum cretatumque bouem* has been based on an unsubstantiated belief that this passage concerns a sacrificial animal with imperfect coat covered with chalk. It has also emphasised the negative nature of the ritual with the victim prepared in this way. However, quite an opposite interpretation seems more plausible. Proper preparation of the *victima* or *hostia* to make it *cretata* emphasised its uniqueness and perfection. The bright colour, called *candidus* by the Romans, of such an animal was an important signal to the citizens participating in the ritual, but also to

41 Rosenzweig (1937: pp. 30, 93–94, 115); Poultney (1959: pp. 59, 88–89). De Vaan (2008: p. 83) seems to show a more cautious approach. According to the scholar there is a certain similarity between the two words, but it is not certain whether the meaning denoted by *calersu* (translated by him as “a certain colour of cattle”) was the same as *calidus*. Cf. informations in Untermann (2000: p. 365).

42 Tab. Iguv. 1a.20; 6b.19.

43 Cf. Poultney (1959: p. 259).

44 See n. 6.

the worshipped deity. It meant that the victim brought to the altar was definitely one to which, as Servius puts it, *nihil deest* (Serv. *Aen.* 4.57).

The adjective *calidus* did not function as a ritual term. This is not confirmed by the agronomic and etymological sources in which it appears, nor by the ending of Horace's second ode from the fourth book, where the poet, in reference to Moschus, mentions the colour of the sacrificial animal consistent with the meaning of *calidus*. The author of the poem formulates a certain message in an erudite manner, signalling his own poetic skills. The image of the sacrificial young bull with an imperfect appearance is intended to emphasise this message. It is doubtful, however, that Horace was referring to the religious practices of his time. The amount of information in the sources is insufficient and the dubious context makes it impossible to confirm the ritualistic use of such *victimae* described in the poet's ode. Ultimately, what is more convincing is the statement that the Romans paid a great deal of attention to the colour of the sacrificial animals and that exceptions in this regard were rather unlikely.

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