

From snout to tail

Exploring the Greek sacrificial animal from the literary, epigraphical, iconographical, archaeological, and zooarchaeological evidence

Edited by Jan-Mathieu Carbon & Gunnel Ekroth

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ABSTRACT

Animal sacrifice fundamentally informed how the ancient Greeks defined themselves, their relation to the divine, and the structure of their society. Adopting an explicitly cross-disciplinary perspective, the present volume explores the practical execution and complex meaning of animal sacrifice within ancient Greek religion (c. 1000 BC–AD 200).

The objective is twofold. First, to clarify in detail the use and meaning of body parts of the animal within sacrificial ritual. This involves a comprehensive study of ancient Greek terminology in texts and inscriptions, representations on pottery and reliefs, and animal bones found in sanctuaries. Second, to encourage the use and integration of the full spectrum of ancient evidence in the exploration of Greek sacrificial rituals, which is a prerequisite for understanding the complex use and meaning of Greek animal sacrifice.

Twelve contributions by experts on the literary, epigraphical, iconographical, archaeological and zooarchaeological evidence for Greek animal sacrifice explore the treatment of legs, including feet and hoofs, tails, horns; heads, including tongues, brains, ears and snouts; internal organs; blood; as well as the handling of the entire body by burning it whole. Three further contributions address Hittite, Israelite and Etruscan animal sacrifice respectively, providing important contextualization for Greek ritual practices.

Keywords: Greek animal sacrifice, anatomy, division, butchery, body part, multi-disciplinary approaches, zooarchaeology, iconography, epigraphy, texts, cross-cultural comparisons

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Preface

This book has been long in the making. We would like to thank all the contributors for enthusiastically taking on various parts of the animal body and for delivering stellar manuscripts, but also for their patience and good spirit.

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We dedicate this volume to the memory of our colleague and friend François Lissarrague, a great scholar, whose work will continue to make images speak.

Gunnel Ekroth and Jan-Mathieu Carbon
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