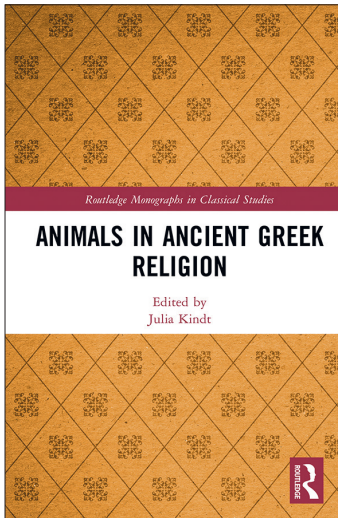


ANIMALS IN ANCIENT GREEK RELIGION



KINDT, JULIA (ed.) (2021).
Animals in Ancient Greek Religion.
London & New York: Routledge,
320 pp., 80 € [ISBN: 978-1-1383-
8888-8].

BRUNO D'ANDREA

UNIVERSIDAD CARLOS III DE MADRID

bruno.dandrea.uni@gmail.com

THIS COLLECTED VOLUME, EDITED BY JULIA KINDT, INVESTIGATES the role played by animals across a variety of areas relating to the ancient Greek religious experience, including myth and ritual, the literary and the material evidence, and the physical world and the imagination. The volume assembles 13 papers, all in English, distributed across three sections: (1) Perspectives, (2) Representations, and (3) Beliefs and Practices. The contributors include both leading scholars and early- and mid-career academics, with the range of perspectives guarantees a high standard of scholarship and an openness to fresh perspectives and approaches. *Animals in Ancient Greek Reli-*

gion opens with a short introduction by the editor, who is also the author of two papers, and closes with a useful general index.

Part 1 contains three papers outlining the *status quaestionis* and future research perspectives. The first, by Jeremy McInerney, proposes the notion of “entanglement” as a useful way of analysing the triad of human, animal, and divine in ancient Greek religion. Using several examples, McInerney shows how this notion enables the exploration of the relationships between and the intermingling of these three groups, connections that are characterized by shifting and changing boundaries. Animals, according to McInerney, are not merely a channel of communication between the human and the divine, and nor do they simply serve as metaphors or means of representing the one or the other. Rather, they are “full members” of the triadic model. The second contribution, by Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, proposes an examination of the sources related to the study of animals in Greek religion (texts, material objects, images, and zooarchaeological material) that explores their limits, potentialities, and cross-uses. Deployment of a number of case-studies allows Gilhus to show that not only the recurrent elements but also – perhaps above all – the gap between the data provided by these sources offers important insights, e.g. on the discrepancy between rules and exceptions, discourses and practices. The final paper in this section, by Emily Kearns, reviews the studies that have been carried out on animals in Greek religion, stressing the absolutely central role played by the topic of sacrifices. Kearns previously highlights the need to consider single animal species rather than the “animal” as a whole and outlines some topics for future research, such as healing cults and philosophical discussions. In fact, it turns out that the future is already here: some of the new approaches suggested by Kearns are pursued in other papers of this volume.

Part 2 is concerned with the way in which animals or animal parts feature in the realm of divine representation. The section opens with a contribution by Hannah Willey, who examines the dual role of animals in myth: while animals can represent bestiality as a negative otherness, their otherness can also be directly associated (and sometimes mixed) with the divine world. Willey argues that animals also help to define the human condition, in particular the distinctiveness of special individuals such as heroes. The next paper, by Jan N. Bremmer, considers the theriomorphism of the major Greek gods. Bremmer retraces the history of scholarship in this area, which has frequently been linked to an evolutionary perspective that considers theriomorphism to be an earlier and more “primitive” stage than anthropomorphism. After a period of relative neglect resulting from the view that this topic was not of direct concern for the study of Greek religion, theriomorphism began to be studied once again in the 2000s. Since this time, it has been analysed from a number of new perspectives, with scholars examining questions such as those related to human reactions to ther-

iomorphic epiphanies and the symbolic meanings of such appearances. Focusing on bulls and horses, in different ways associated with Poseidon and Dionysus, Bremmer concludes that the theriomorphism of the major Greek deities serves different functions in different contexts and cannot be reduced to a single idea. In the next paper, Kindt, the editor of the volume, deepens the approach to this topic by dealing with the conceptual considerations about Egyptian religion's theriomorphism in Greek thought and literature. Three case-studies (Herodotus, Plutarch, and Philostratus) enable Kindt to highlight two levels – homologation and differentiation – on which the relationship with Egypt and its theriomorphism is played out. As Kindt shows, the ancient debates about anthropomorphism and theriomorphism, their meanings and relations, are largely analogous to the modern discussions analysed by Bremmer. The last contribution to this section, by James Henderson Collins II, deals with the philosophical discussions about animals and their place in Greek religion, and especially in sacrifice. The central role assumed by the latter in the philosophical debates matches the importance it came to take on in ritual practices. Reviewing the considerations of philosophers and philosophical schools from different periods (Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans, Empedocles, Plato, Socrates, and Theophrastus), Collins shows how the chronological dimension has an important role in the issues and considerations proposed.

Part 3 investigates the use and function of animals in the major forms of human/divine contact in the ancient Greek world. Fritz Graf's paper, which opens the section, deals with animal sacrifices. Graf offers an excellent synthesis of this central and much-debated topic, retracing the history of the scholarship and providing a useful *status questionis* that integrates and combines data from a wide variety of the available sources. The author also examines the background of these practices in the Minoan and Mycenaean world as well as philosophical reflections on the subject. The next contribution, again by Kindt, investigates animals in Greek divination. First, Kindt focuses on two of the most common forms of "artificial" animal divination: bird watching (ornithomancy) and reading the entrails of sacrificial victims, in particular the livers of various domestic animals (hepatomancy). She then goes on to examine several examples in which animals and their behaviour are considered to be "signs" available for interpretation by humans, e.g. in omens, oracles, and prophetic dreams. Finally, Kindt analyses the centrality of this system of signs and divinatory practices related to animals in Herodotus' *Histories*. Milette Gaifman's paper analyses animals in dedications made in thanks for and/or in the hope of divine grace, possibly with the intention of some exchange with the gods. Gaifman explores the multiple religious' meanings, points of view, and interpretations to which votive offerings portraying various species can be subjected. The documentary and interpretative limits

of this approach are clearly presented to the reader. Gaifman then goes on to analyse votives that present anthropomorphic figures carrying animals. She shows that the sacrificial interpretation generally proposed for the latter is not necessarily the only one possible. The next contribution, by Florian Steger and Frank Ursin, examines animals in Greco-Roman medicine, and particularly the role of animals at the intersection of myth, healing cults, and miraculous healings connected with Asclepius. Of the 28 different animals affiliated with this deity, the authors focus on the most important, the snake, as well as dogs and chickens. Korshi Dosoo's paper discusses animals in magical practices, starting with an examination of the notion of magic. Drawing on literary sources, especially Homeric, and curse tablets, Dosoo investigates three motifs: human/animal metamorphoses, curses, and magical sacrifice. The data provided allows the elucidation of the role and use in magical practices of asymmetries and symmetries between humans and animals, their bodies, minds, and languages, thus conceptualizing humans and animals as both different and alike. In the second part of the contribution, Dosoo addresses the link between human sacrifices, animal sacrifices, and magical practices. In the paper that closes the third part, Kindt summarises the contributions made by the volume to the proposed theme, analysing with acumen and balance the advances, methodological issues, and future perspectives.

This book is certainly a welcome contribution to the research on the relationship between humans, gods, and animals. These topics have been very popular in recent years but are still in search of a secure theoretical and methodological framework. Overall, the volume achieves the objectives set out by the editor. It constructively reassesses the role of the animal as a third player and point of reference besides gods and humans. It investigates various neglected issues, such as theriomorphism and the use of animals in dedications, divination, and magical practices. It provides a useful *status questionis*. And, finally, it enables the reader to engage with the discourses and reflections of the Greeks themselves concerning animals and animality. As such, it constitutes both a point of arrival and a point of departure. At a fundamental level, this volume seeks to avoid limiting itself to the discussion of animal sacrifices. This topic, which has been widely analysed for several decades now, has attracted renewed interest and seen important advances in recent years through the adoption of inter- and multidisciplinary approaches,¹ and especially through the combination of the

1. See Naiden 2013; Ekroth, 2014; Ekroth & Wallensten, 2013; Bielawski, 2017; Hitch & Rutherford, 2017; Georgoudi & de Polignac, 2018; Lippolis, Parisi & Vannicelli, 2018.

faunal records with the most recent developments in the “archaeology of ritual”.² The central role of animals in Greek sacrificial practices is a fact, as Graf’s excellent contribution demonstrates, and it is no coincidence that this topic appears, in one way or another, in other papers of the volume (e.g. the contributions by Collins, Dosoo, Gaifman, Gilhus, and Kearns).

The use in the title of the plural “animals” is symptomatic of a methodological perspective that underlies much of the work in the volume, namely the need to evaluate the role of each particular species, since the animal is not a single, monolithic category. This premise is taken up in the majority of the papers. On the one hand, a paper will usefully focus on a single species, such as snakes, horses, or chickens. On the other hand, the authors repeatedly emphasise the important differences between domestic and wild or between birds, fish and “land” animals, and so on. However, in most contributions the desire to pluralize the animal category stops at the inter-species level, setting aside the opportunity to also deepen the intraspecies level by assessing differences/variations in status (domestic/wild), breed, sex, size, age and colour within the same species. This is evident in the treatment of sacrificial practices where sex, age and colour of animals are crucial, as highlighted in Graf’s contribution. As Dosoo did for the notion of magic, it might have been useful to establish the meaning and conceptual use of other categories deployed in the volume, starting with “religion” and “sacrifice”. The same can be said of the domestic-wild dichotomy: in the Greek world, the perception of this dichotomy (*agrios/hêmeros*) appears to be slightly different from its use in the contemporary Western world.³ Moreover, there is a zoological problem to consider, namely the presence of animal species on the borderline of these two categories. This is the case for deer, as highlighted in several of papers in the volume. A similar issue arises for hybrid and monstrous creatures, which occupy different positions within the triad of human, animal, and divine (see e.g. the contributions of Gilhus and Willey). The notions of “proximity” – as opposed to “otherness”, which is used so well in certain papers of the book – and “familiarity” with human communities are likely closer to the classifications and perceptions of animals, real or imaginary, used by societies of the past. Animals, as the other two members of the triad analysed in this volume, are cultural constructions, not natural categories. This makes these concepts inherently fluid and dynamic, as highlighted by

2. The field of the “Archaeology of ritual” was marked by the article of John Scheid, “Pour une archéologie du rite”, published in 2000 in the review *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales*. As a result of this programmatic call, several important contributions to this field have been published: e.g. Lepetz & Van Andringa, 2008; Insoll, 2011; Schwartz, 2017.

3. Zucker, 2005, pp. 111-123; Dufour, 2021.

ancient and modern discourses and reflections upon them (see the papers by McInerney and Willey). As McInerney persuasively argues, this constant state of flux leads to a perception of entanglement among these three categories of living beings.

In the volume's Conclusion, Kindt emphasises the need to consider (1) the cross-cultural perspective, and (2) the temporal dimension of the subject at hand. As regards the cross-cultural perspective, while the comparative and intercultural openness of some papers is to be welcomed (see Graf, Kindt, and Steger and Ursin), most contributions remain confined to the Greek world. As regards the chronological framework, some papers successfully use documentation from the 2nd millennium BCE and, especially, from the Roman period, while others highlight continuities and changes across ancient Greek history. Nevertheless, there is sometimes a perception of chronological and spatial flattening that gives the impression of a monolithic, unchanging Greek world. This may be a misperception to which I am prone as someone who is not a specialist in Greek culture. However, it is necessary to broaden our studies and reflections to embrace a more multi-/cross-/intercultural perspective, adapting to (and adopting) the dynamism and connectivity that characterised the ancient Mediterranean. This is evident much more in the research carried out over the last twenty years⁴ than was admitted in the scholarship of earlier times.

It would have been useful to include abstracts of the collected papers and to place the complete bibliography at the end of the volume rather than localised bibliographies at the end of each contribution. Such an approach would have both mirrored the unity of the book's topic and avoided the repetition of bibliographical titles in different papers. A stronger contribution from archaeologists and archaeozoologists would also have likely allowed for a deeper analysis of practices and exceptions alongside discourses and norms. These minor issues aside, this volume provides great insight and a range of stimulating papers focused around a topic of great interest. The diversity of approaches and materials and the interesting nature of the case studies analysed considerably enrich our knowledge of and reflections on animals across the full spectrum of ancient Greek religious beliefs and practices. The appropriate theoretical and methodological framework, the *status quaestionis* provided for the topics discussed, the attempt to propose new ideas and outline perspectives all make this volume a very useful working tool and an essential reference for future work on the subject.

4. Horden & Purcell, 2000; Malkin, 2011; Broodbank, 2013; Hodos, 2020.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bielawski, Krzysztof (ed.) (2017). *Animal Sacrifice in Ancient Greece. Proceedings of the First International Workshops in Kraków (12-14.11.2015)*. Warsaw: Global Scientific Platform.
- Broodbank, Cyprian (2013). *The Making of the Middle Sea. A History of the Mediterranean from the Beginning to the Emergence of the Classical World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Campbell, Gordon Lindsay (ed.) (2014). *The Oxford Handbook of Animals in Classical Thought and Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dufour, Benjamin (2021). Désigner l'animal en latin et en grec ancien. Étude lexicologique et sémantique. In Guisard, Laizé & Contensou, 2021, pp. 25-56.
- Ekroth, Gunnel (2014). *Animal Sacrifice in Antiquity*. In Campbell, 2014, pp. 324-354.
- Ekroth, Gunnel & Wallensten, Jenny (eds.) (2013). *Bones, Behaviour and Belief. The Zooarchaeological Evidence as a Source for Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece and Beyond*. Skrifter utgivna av Svenska institutet i Athen (Series prima in 4), 55. Stockholm: Svenska Institutet i Athen.
- Georgoudi, Stella & de Polignac, François (eds.) (2018). *Relire Vernant*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Guisard, Philippe, Laizé, Christelle & Contensou, Antoine (eds.) (2021). *L'homme et l'animal*. Paris: Ellipses.
- Hitch, Sarah & Rutherford, Ian (eds.) (2017). *Animal Sacrifice in the Ancient Greek World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hodos, Tamar (2020). *The Archaeology of the Mediterranean Iron Age. A Globalising World c. 1100-600 BCE*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Horden, Peregrine & Purcell, Nicholas (2000). *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Insoll, Timoty (ed.) (2011). *Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Ritual and Religion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lepetz, Sébastien & van Andringa, William (eds.) (2008). *Archéologie du sacrifice animal en Gaule romaine : rituels et pratiques alimentaires*. Archéologie des plantes et des animaux, 2. Montagnac: Mergoil.
- Lippolis, Enzo, Parisi, Valeria & Vannicelli, Pietro (eds.) (2018). *Il sacrificio. Forme rituali, linguaggi e strutture sociali. Atti dei seminari di storia e archeologia greca, II (Sapienza Università di Roma, 27-29 maggio 2015)*. Scienze dell'Antichità, 23.3. Roma: Quasar.
- Malkin, Irad (2011). *A Small Greek World. Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Naiden, Fred S. (2013). *Smoke Signals for the Gods. Ancient Greek Sacrifice from the Archaic through Roman Periods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schwartz, Glenn M. (2017). The Archaeological Study of Sacrifice. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 46, pp. 223-240.
- Zucker, Arnaud (2005). *Les classes zoologiques en Grèce ancienne d'Homère à Élien (VIII^e av.-III^e ap. J.-C.)*. Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence.