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What the Literati Knew About Sacrifice

My Epigraphic Database of Greek Animal Sacrifice (www.emma.troy.ny.us/faculty/faculty) invites comparison with other sources for sacrifice; in the present instance, literature. I have searched Greek literature from Homer to the end of antiquity, including as well the *Suda*, Eustathius, and Photios; and have accepted all references likely to reflect Greek practice. The resulting database numbers 321 sacrifices.

Besides the full literary and epigraphic databases, I have also produced partial versions in order to eliminate possible sources of skewing; *viz.*, the epigraphic database less Attic inscriptions, and the literary database less all sacrifices not claimed as real. In the event, the highest degree of congruence between inscriptions and literature was for the full literary database vs. the epigraphical database less Attica: these will be the versions compared below.

First considering relative numbers of sacrifices, I find that literature is consistent with inscriptions in placing Zeus first with Apollo close behind; Poseidon, Dionysos and Aphrodite in the upper mid-range; Kore, Asklepios, Hermes, Helios and Hera in the lower mid-range; and Ge and Kourotrophos unpatronized at the bottom. Although the important divinities Athena, Artemis and Dionysos show significant numerical anomaly in this comparison, the total correlation of the two databases is still a respectable 83% (14% above that for the two unaltered databases)--which is by far the highest correlation found in this study.

Turning next to degree of concentration on the four victim genera, I find a low overall degree of congruence (27%) between literature and inscriptions, with only the following genera showing similar concentration: kaprids *ovids and bovids for Artemis, bovids and *ovids for Apollo, *porcids for Demeter and Asklepios, bovids for Dionysos and Herakles, and *ovids for Ge.

In respect to individual victim types, a wide range of congruence (but averaging only 25%) is observed. Hermes, Zeus and Athena show the most common victims in inscriptions vs. literature (71, 50 and 50%, respectively, of their totals), despite inconsistent rankings in the victim genus comparison above. I also noted a correlation of high congruence with male gender.

Considering lastly the divinities' chief ("favorite") animal victims, I find in common between inscriptions and literature the *aix* of Artemis, the *bous* of Apollo, Athena, Zeus, Asklepios, Herakles and Helios, and the *eriphos*, *choiros*, *krios*, *aren* and *tauros* of Hermes. Total congruence is a low 41%.

Considering that the literary evidence for sacrifice is so varied in origin, it is no surprise that broad congruence with the epigraphic evidence is lacking. The intrusions of private sacrificial ideology, fantasy, and ideas originating at the fringes of the Greek world all serve to vitiate the sacrificial record from literature. Nonetheless, literature does support

the epigraphic dominance of Zeus and Apollo; the animal genera distributions of Artemis, Apollo and Demeter; and the characteristic victim types of Artemis, Apollo, Athena, Zeus and Hermes. Athena's failure to maintain her epigraphic dominance in literature and Artemis's precisely opposite fortune remain questions for investigation.