



OEAI LECTURE SERIES ARCHAIC MEDITERRANEAN

THYSIA AND SPHAGIA

ARCHAEOZOOLOGIC EVIDENCE ON PATTERNS OF ARCHAIC GREEK ANIMAL SACRIFICE

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Along with literary sources and iconographic proofs faunal remains provide strong means of evidence for the reconstruction of animal sacrifice in antiquity. *Thysia*, denominating joyful conjoint meals of the Olympian deities and their worshippers, are proven by significant residuals of burnt offering, in particular skeletal elements of ruminant thighs and tails. Traces of *sphagia*, as rituals addressed to chthonic forces and frequently offered at propitiatory aims, are more elusive in all terms of identification but might be attested archaeologically by bone agglomerations of young piglets in the context of Demeter and Kore sanctuaries. Specific skeletal elements of selected animal species like Astragali or horns and antlers from cult sites form a third group of faunal remains in ritual context and should be interpreted as votive offerings rather than as remains of sacrificial victims.