

Sacrifice of Humans and Animals in Religious Practices

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ABSTRACT: The main practice of the ancient Mediterranean religion was the sacrifice of animals, including the slaughter and the gifting of one or more animals. Traditional blood offerings were part of a life and death cycle that should thrive both animals and humans. Throughout the Empire Christians and pagans alike rejected such sacrifices. This article discusses the pagan and Christian critiques of Greco-Roman blood sacrifices. Authority was founded on the cultural killing of animals and the distribution and eating of their flesh in an old sacrificial discourse. In the new soteriological discourse, power was founded on a symbolic capital of moral and physical pureness and intellectual insights, and the goals of spiritual perfection and redemption. Some of the religions that participated in the new conversation, although Christianity banned it, continued to practice animal sacrifice. Direct human body screening for medicine and future study, as well as electronic medical data, are both useful in minimizing biomedical research sacrifice for animals. These techniques and strategies of research may be more economical and applied to a range of human health issues.

KEYWORDS: Animal Sacrifice, Bones, Civilization, Human Sacrifice, Religion.

I. INTRODUCTION

The sacrifice of animals was the primary practice of the ancient Mediterranean religion which involved slaughtering and giving to the gods one or more animals. In a letter to Theodoses, The Greek rhetorician Libanius, defending the pagan temples against Christian monks, called them "farmers placed their hopes on themselves, on their spouses, on their children, on their animals and the ground they cultivated and seeded." Traditional blood offerings were part of a life and death cycle that should thrive both animals and humans. Christians and pagans alike wrote across the Empire against such sacrifices. This article discusses the main themes of pagan and Christian critique of Greco-Roman blood sacrifice [1].

Many early human civilizations across the world have performed human sacrifice. King's tombs were bordered in China and Egypt by ditches with hundreds of dead bodies whose ghosts were believed to provide afterlife help.

Ritually murdered bodies, buried with rings of crushes, metal chocolates and wooden idols have been found in the peat bogs of Europe and the British Isles. The meaning of human sacrifice in Austronesian cultures was documented by early explorers and missionaries, and some of them became human sacrifice. High temple altars were utilized by ancient Mayans and Aztecs in Central America to extract pulsating hearts. It is thus no surprise that in many of the oldest sacred writings of the world, including the Qur'an, the Bible, the Torah and many others, human sacrifice is referenced [2].

Human sacrifice may have had a function according to a widespread theory among early human cultures. In the hypothesis of social control, societal elites used human sacrifice to frighten underclasses, punish disobedience and show authority. As a consequence, class hierarchies were created and maintained within civilizations. The Austronesian ancestors originated in Taiwan and were tremendous explorers of the oceans, going west to Madagascar, east to Eastern Island, and south to New Zealand. This area covers more than half the longitude of the globe. These civilizations included the Isnegs living in small, egalitarian and family-based societies, Hawaiians who lived in complex countries with royal families, slaves and hundreds of thousands of people. In 43% of the civilizations we researched, human sacrifice was performed. Events that needed human sacrifice included the death of leaders, the creation of houses and boats, the preparation of wars, break-outs and the breakdown of major social taboos. Strangulation, bludgeoning, brutalization, burial, drowning, crushed under a freshly constructed boat, and even rolled off a roof and decapitated were all physical sacrifices. In Austronesian civilizations with strict class systems, human sacrifice was prevalent but in egalitarian cultures it was not widespread. While this is an interesting link, it does not tell us whether human sacrifice is used to build social class systems, or if social class systems are utilized for human sacrifice [3].

A. Animal Sacrifice

Many Roman rites included sacrifice, since the Romans believed they would have good fortune if the gods were satisfied. In ancient Rome many sacrifices were made to please the Roman gods, and every sacrifice was highly ritualized. The gender of the animal must be identical to

that of the deity. The gods of the upper world give white creatures, while black animals are presented to the god of the underworld. The innards of any killed animal were removed to ensure the purity of the sacrifice. At the Second Punic War, Jupiter was promised that any animal born during that period would defend him and his allies for another five years. Suovetaurilia or solitaurilia were the most common sacrifices in which a pig, sheep or ox had been slain [4].

B. Human Sacrifice

Human sacrifice is the killing of one or several people as part of a ritual to please or appease gods, a human ruler, an authoritative, priestly figure, or the souls of deceased predecessors, such as a propitiatory sacrifice or retaining sacrifice, in which a king's servant is killed to keep serving his master. Cannibalism and head hunting in some prehistoric societies are closely related. Human sacrifice began in prehistoric times in many human societies. By the Iron Age, human sacrifice had become less common in the Old World and throughout classical Antiquity was seen as barbaric as a consequence of the associated theological developments. Human sacrifice, on the other hand, was performed in different degrees across the New World until the Europeans came. Human sacrifice was an unusual event. The first gladiatorial fight to honor the dead took place in Rome in 264 BC. Initially the contestants were volunteers who waged legendary fighting and death was not common. Later slaves and criminals were hired and sacrificed to "manes" or dead spirits, on behalf of the departed.

C. Sacrifice of Greece

The most frequent animal sacrifice among the Greeks was known as *Thysia* and it was carried out across the Greek world, with almost the same components, at the very least, as from ninth century to the end of the Roman era. Animal sacrifice, as indicated by iconographic and zoological data, in addition, it was conducted in the latter Bronze Age, but the practical implementation was different from that during later eras. At a sombre procession, the victim was carried to the altar, pumped, during a *thysia* sacrifice. The animal may be adorned with wool fillets or wreaths, and the horns of cattle may be gilded, like the great sacrifice of the heifer made by Homer to Athena at Pylos. At the altar, the first sacrificial rituals were conducted. Grain was spread on the animal, frequently mixed with salt and dedicated to the goddess, by plucking a lock of hair from the top of his head and tossing it into the flames of the altar. The sufferer was then sprayed with water in an attempt to make her move her head. This movement, formerly believed to represent the will of the animal to die but now seen as an indicator of the vitality and suitability of the animal as the victim of sacrifice, has had a significant role in the development of the contemporary notion of sacrifice. After the prayer, the animal was slaughtered; sheep, goats, and piglets were killed by having their throats cut, whilst bigger victims, such as cattle, were first hit in the neck or fronts, with the latter method sometimes apparent in the skeletal structure of the animal. The blood was gathered in a large bowl

known as a *sphageion*, and a little amount was sprinkled on the altar, with the remainder being stored for the preparation of black sausages. The body was then placed on its back or hung on a tree, unwrapped and tested to make sure it was an appropriate sacrifice to the gods. In this process, the liver played a key part. The thighs, known in Greek as *meria* or *meroi*, were sliced and wrapped in fat of the stomach before they subsequently brulated in the sacrificial fire and turned into *knise*, which the gods inhaled through their noses. It was believed that curling of the tail as a result of heat causing ligaments to contract was a symbol of the gods' benevolent acceptance of their sacrifice, known as *hierakala*, which included their sacrum bone and tail. The fact that thighbones and tails are regularly found in Greek temple charred bone assemblages underlines the ritual's significance. From the 6th and 5th century BC, the *osphyes* were frequently shown in Attic pot paintings, and contemporaneous experiments showed that real cows, sheep and pig tails respond in the same way in the fire. The edible intestines, flanges that contain the heart, liver, kidneys, lungs and spleen, are attached to spits and grilled over a fire on the altar, an action often depicted in Attic vases and then distributed to those nearest to the altar and eaten immediately. The inner circle of the ritual participants was defined by eating the *splanchna*, and it is also possible to offer these pieces to the gods, by putting them in the hands or knees of a heavenly statue [5].

Butcher or chef known as a *mageiros* would next slaughter and distribute the corpse's flesh. According to the realities of a specific area's religious cult, the hind leg or skin of a sacrificed animal was often given to the priesthood or the priestesses for their contributions, and the management of such priestly demands can be seen in several inscribed texts. Meat from a larger piece of the animal may be given to other religious leaders, judges, or noteworthy visitors. All individuals who had a right to share in the feast were given the same amount of meat, but not of the same quality, since some portions had more bones than others. In many houses of worship, there were kitchens and restaurants where people could consume meat, but most worshippers had to have cooked and devoted their meat under or under the trees that grew within the *temenos* or the holy area. The meat may also be taken home to a private eating chamber, the *andron*, a practice which in recent Classical and Hellenistic times became increasingly common. Some monasteries even made profit from selling the skins of their victims as a kind of sacrificial meat. Most meat appears boiled and probably distributed after it was cooked in Greek sanctuaries based on bone material although epigraphic evidence suggests that chosen parts, such as the priests' behind legs, had been tender and high-grade. Sometimes the skull of a victim of animal sacrifice was exhibited at sanctuaries, and even in private environments to commemorate the sacrifice. Attic vases commonly depict scenes of sacrifice including cows, rams, and even deer skulls adorning marble altars and other holy buildings. The altar's charred remains may be piled near the place of the sacrifice or collected and cast somewhere in the temple, similar to the disposal of the residues from the feasts. When cults concluded during first quarter of such 3rd century BC,

at least forty de-fleshed cattle's bones were scattered around an altar and covered with soil, possibly as a penance service to Jupiter, who owned the altar. This may have occurred after the cults concluded during first quarter of such 3rd century BC [6].

In addition to *thysia* sacrifices, sacrificial flesh was also employed in some deity rites. *Trapezomata* is the practice of inscribing inscriptions on bits of raw meat put on a table close to an altar, such as the back, forelimbs, intestines, or tongues. This flesh was placed and shown as an additional method of honoring and bonding to the god, and usually was removed during the ritual by the priest. The magnificent guest was welcomed and given a table full of food, including meat, wine, bread, cheese, and fruit, as well as a variety of beverages, as well as a couch to lie on during a ritual called *theoxenia*, when the goddess had prepared meat. The deity was seen as a prestigious guest, but there is no Greek precedent of gods dining or sharing meat with adorers. At the end of the ritual, this lunch was most likely also served to the religious personnel [7].

This kind of animal sacrifice was less common and may have been related to certain settings as well as to specific deities. Receiving gifts would plunge their fingers or spear into the animal's blood, grip its guts or protect themselves from harm during rituals. Athens' most famous Agora sermon was delivered from a large stone that had been constructed on top of a cut-up carcasses of bulls, rams and hogs. During their lifetime, the archons of Athens should travel on the body as well as stone parts, swearing to uphold the rules of Athens and refusing to take bribes. Archaeological excavations on the Greek island of Thasos have yielded the remains of a *Trittoia* that were cut in half and dumped in two piles. Pigs were cut in the necks and bled, or by spraying blood and over area to be cleansed, and then burned to remove contaminants from sanctuaries and public areas like the Athenian Monitor. There are several ways to deal with considerable contamination in the sanctuary the use of an bull, a ram, a hog, three fully mature and uncastrated offenders, who presumably cut their own necks and took their blood before the corpses were burned. The killing and bleeding of an animal, usually a ram, was the main element of the *sphagia* rituals in the warfare, that occurred while the two armed forces were in sight to divine the outcome of the fight. The dead body was abandoned or dumped. Holocaust in Greek religion, in which the whole animal was burnt, was quite uncommon. The bulk of instances may be found in rituals like as Zeus and Heracles, which use inexpensive animals such as piglets or lambs. In many cases, the killing of the smaller victims was followed by a larger animal's *thysia*, which was subsequently consumed. In some rituals part of the animal, such the entire leg, bone and flesh, or a tenth of the meat, would be burnt. These partial holocaust, known as "*merocausts*," were carried out by a contemporary investigator in a moment of crisis or for deities with a specific relationship to death and the Underworld [8].

D. Sacrifice of the Romans

However, it is crucial to highlight that there were significant differences between Roman and Greek animal

sacrifices because of their enormous size and expanse. Etruscan and Greek ceremonial expressions, as well as animal sacrifice rites from Isis, Mithras, and Magna Mater, which were either retained or adapted to suit Roman preferences, were all part of the Roman religion. In addition, Rome has always had a special position in Roman religion, and certain public sacrifices may have been performed only in Rome. When it comes to the amount of people who were part in various Roman sacrifices, the Roman social system was much more complicated than the Greek one. Roman Ritual or even the *Graecus Ritus* ('Greece rite') was used for animal sacrifice in the city of Rome, which varied chiefly in how much the person sacrificial having his or her face covered or uncovered, and if preparatory action had been performed before the animal slain. Procession of victims, whether private or public, was taken to the altar with the accompaniment of flute music in the early morning hours. At the altar, the sacrificial person performed the *praefatio* rituals. It is said that perfume and wine were used to welcome the gods towards the next sacrifice by pouring them into a circular moveable furnace made of metal. In sacrifice representations, the victim is represented beside a altar, surrounded by adorers, and the animal is prominently positioned and exhibited. The following stage was immolation or the victim's dedication to the gods. During the Roman ceremony, the victim's back was sprinkled with *mola salsa* (salted flour), and then wine was poured on his head. Passing down the animal's spine, the sacrificial blade was used. As a result of the animal's purification, it was permitted to be slain. As an alternative, a Greek ritual sacrifice may include smearing the victim with grain of wheat, dousing him with water, and then setting part of his brows hair afire on the altar. The real murder was carried out by the *victimari*, who might have been of any kind. Animals were immobilized while the meat was sliced and divided by *Popa*, who was using an axe or hammering to do so. The treatment of the large and little victims was the same as that of the Greeks. Cattle were frequently tethered with a rope from the head to the ground-mounted ring, a recurrent motif in the imaging of sacrifice, and similar rings connected to blocks of stone were also found. The binding of the animal was most likely to suppress any manifestations, regarded as ill omens, of dread or panic by the sufferer. The dead person was put on his back and opened and a diviner, known as the *haruspex*, inspected his intestines so that the animal might be accepted by the gods. Animal sacrifice of particular importance was *exta*, gall bladder, liver, peritoneum, heart and lungs which had to be considered normal in appearance and put in the proper position to perform the rite. When the *exta* was abnormal, it was necessary to halt the sacrifice and resume it with an animal. In some sacrifices, the study of the entrails was also utilized to foretell the future. On these occasions liver was especially important, and *hepatoscopy* was deemed to be an Etruscan specialty integrated in Roman worship, the *Divination of Gods* that uses this region of the body [9].

The animal was then butchered. The *exta* were cooked in a pot (cattle) or spitted during a Roman sacrifice (sheep and pigs). Because it was an offering to the gods alone, the *exta*

was cut in half after being fried with mola salsa as well as wine and placed on the altar. This may happen if the deity of sacrifice was linked to water sources such as the sea, river, or well. The exta may be sacrificed to the underworld deities by burying it in the earth or a ditch. Rather of being split between gods and humanity, during the Greek ritual celebrations, the exta seems to have been shared between gods and mortals. The rest of the victim had to be returned to the profane kingdom before worshippers could devour the flesh, the viscera, and the rest of the victim that the sacrifices had carried out by placing his hand on the body. The meat may then be divided and distributed. Fleece has been frequently consumed at the sanctuary of sacrifice, but may also be brought home in little baskets, sportulae or sold in public meat markets, macella. The distribution of meat highlighted the class distinctions among diners to a greater extent than Greek sacrifices, and it was particularly essential to pay for animals. Important leaders, such senators, may celebrate for the people while not everyone present at particular sacrifice would be given free meat, and others would have to pay their parts or even buy them from the butcher. Cooked flesh may also be presented to gods, in the form or in combination with more formal god's feasting, lectisternia, where the eating couches or chairs have been shown in temples or private houses, or in the shape of sausages or meatballs placed on a table in the temple. Piglets were employed for cleansing and expiation, piacularis porca. After being decapitated for some gods, like as Isis, birds, especially chickens, were completely burnt, as bone pieces in unearthed sanctuaries indicate. The Romans used the term holocaustum to designate entirely devoted sacrifices to the gods, but no name or action has been adopted extensively. The victims could be totally bruised by the gods of the Universe, but the holocaust included not only full extermination by the fire of animals but also victims that have been strangled, who died of poisonous gas inhalation as well as human sacrifices at the Forum Boarium. The taurobolium was a Roman animal-killing ceremony used in honor of the Great Goddess of the Gods from the late 2nd century BC until the end of the third century. The year Domini (AD). The ritual began with a bulls chase as well as a sacrifice, however over time the attention shifted to the animal's victim's castration. On top of a pit, a bull was beheaded and its blood drained as the taurobolium's last act concluded with its conclusion, which showered the devotees in blood, as the excavation of comparable constructions shows. This slaughter was particularly unpleasant for Christian authors, perhaps because of its similarity to baptism, while the pagans used the slaughter of their sacred characteristics [10].

II. DISCUSSION

Neither the Greeks nor the Romans were particularly concerned in interpreting the origins and purpose of animal sacrifice and the many histories about the creation and development of rituals are far from being consistent. In the past, one tradition has it that sacrificial practices were easier when vegetarian offerings were given to the gods, before being supplanted by animal sacrifices including flesh

eating. According to the Romans, ancient Rome did not use sophisticated objects, such as incense or wine, but offered local flora and milk instead. Once upon a time, human sacrifice was more common, but ultimately it was replaced by animal sacrifice. In this ideal past, gods and humans were closer and even ate at the same table. The notion that the link between immortals and mortals developed through time was apparent in ancient thinking, as shown by the significance of animal sacrifice. In addition, the story detailing the sacrifice of Greek Thysia, the Mekone stand between the Titan Prometheus and Zeus, had negative undertones. Prometheus killed an ox to deceive the god and dressed the white bones with the shiny fat. The meat was wrapped in the skin and placed into the bowels of the animal. Zeus had the choice to choose whichever box he wanted and he selected the fat-covered package as it looked more attractive and angry when he realized what was inside. However, he was aware of the content and chosen as a god to penalize mankind only in the future, a move that culminated in the final split between mortals and immortals. Men burn the white bones on the altars of the gods in memory of this event. Another example of sacrificial conduct is the Homeric Hymn to Hermes. Here, Hermes infant takes two cows of his brother Apollo, kills them and prepares and distributes the meat in a ritualistic manner to the gods which foreshadows the subsequent sacrifices of Thysia. He longs for food since the cooked meat is so wonderful, but he ultimately refuses to accept his own exalted situation. The sacrifice of animals was not a monolithic activity with a single interpretation in antiquity; According to Greek and Roman writers, such ceremonies were constantly debated by them regarding what they meant. There are many ways to look at the ridiculing of animal sacrifices in comedy, including the disparity in the transfer of the suspect between the gods and the worshipers, the depiction of gods as thirsty, greedy aficionados, and the depiction of the supernatural beings as being eager for food. This is not to say that there is any doubt in the belief in animal sacrifices. Writings such as those by Epicureans and Stoics have long been viewed as being anti-animal hardships, but a new study has shown that there are a variety of views about just the function of sacrifice in justifying their own position rather than on the aim to alleviate sacrifice in its entirety, as was previously thought.

III. CONCLUSION

There are just a few philosophers who have a real critique of animal sacrifice, especially those who believe in soul transmigration for reasons of sacrifice and food. It was a decision for the desirous, the means and the prestige to cope with such an exposed situation to refuse to engage in animal sacrifice and meat consumption. The philosopher Pythagoras from the sixth century AD was supposed to abstain from animal sacrifice and meat, whereas orphans as well as cynics were believed to eschew meat and its related rites. There was a lot of debate as to whether Pythagoras and his disciples, for example, refused all meat or just particular animal species or portions of it, based on the sources that were available to them. Animal sacrifice

became a taboo subject for Christians, despite Jesus, Paul, and other apostles not condemning the practice at the Jerusalem temple. Since the third century, when Jesus' sacrifice was associated with the Eucharist and animals were sacrificed, the Christians attitude toward sacrifice has undergone a lengthy and varied process that reflects their historical context.

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