

Human and Animal Sacrifice in Religion

By

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Abstract

The primary practice of ancient Mediterranean religion was animal sacrifice, which included killing one or more animals and giving them to the gods. Animals and people well-being were believed to be promoted via ancient blood sacrifices as component of a living cycle. Christians and pagans both condemned such sacrifices throughout the Empire. The pagan and Christian criticisms of Greco-Roman blood sacrifices are discussed in this article. In the ancient sacrificial discourse, authority was based on the cultic slaughter of animals and the distribution and consumption of their flesh. Heavenly excellence and salvation were the goals of the new sacramental theology discourse. Power was founded on a cultural value of emotional and physical cleanliness as well as cognitive discoveries. Animal sacrifice was still practiced by certain religions participating in this new discussion while Christianity banned it. Direct examination of the human body for medication and future research, as well as computerized health records, are both beneficial in reducing animal sacrifice in biomedical research. These research methods and tactics may be more cost-effective and more applicable to a variety of human health problems.

Keywords: Animal Sacrifice, Christian, Human Sacrifice, Religion, Victim.

Introduction

Animal sacrifice was the main practice of old Mediterranean religion, which included the slaughter of one or more animals and offering them to the divine. In The Greek rhetorician Libanius wrote a letter to Theodosius defending pagan temples against Christian monks, referring to them as places where peasants have placed their dreams for the future of their families, their spouses and kids, their livestock, and the soil they have sown and cultivated.

There was a living cycle involved in medieval human sacrifices that was meant to benefit both the animals and those who performed them. Throughout the Romans, Christians and pagans alike expressed their opposition to animal sacrifices. This article discusses the main pagan as well as Christian criticisms of Romano blood sacrifices (Carter, 2012).

Many early human cultures across the globe practiced human sacrifice. In China and Egypt, kings' graves were flanked by trenches holding hundreds of dead corpses, whose spirits were thought to offer afterlife aid. Ritualistically killed bodies have been found hidden in peatlands throughout Europe as well as the British Empire, complete with crucible bands, metal cooking pots, and made of wood idols. Human sacrifice played a significant role in Austronesian cultures, and European explorers and preachers, some of whom became public executions, documented this. The ancient Mayans and Aztecs of Central America used high temple altars to remove the beating hearts of victims. It's no wonder, therefore, that human sacrifice is mentioned in many of the world's earliest holy books, including the Quran, Bible, Torah and many more (Fredengren & Löfqvist, 2019).

Human sacrifice may have had a purpose in early human civilizations, according to a general hypothesis. According to the Social Control Hypothesis, social elites utilized human sacrifice to terrify underclasses, punish disobedience, and demonstrate power. As a result, class structures within civilizations were built and maintained. People of Austronesian ancestry, who migrated from Taiwan to Madagascar, Christmas Island, and New Zealand are renowned marine explorers. Longitude in this area accounts for almost half of the total. Hawaiians flourished in complex nations featuring ruling houses, slaves and dozens of scores of fans, whereas the Isneg lived in tiny, democratic, relative's communities, were all part of these civilizations. Human sacrifice was practiced in 43% of the civilizations we investigated.

The death of leaders, the building of homes and boats, the planning for battles, disease breakouts, and the breaking of important social taboos were all events that required human sacrifice. Some instances of physical sacrifice include being strangled or decapitated or drowned or crushed under a freshly constructed boat or even rolled off a rooftop and afterwards decapitated by a hammer. While human sacrifice was not unusual in democratic civilizations, it was more prevalent in Austronesian communities with strict class systems. The link between human sacrifice and social class systems is interesting, but it leaves us in the dark about whether or if socioeconomic status systems were utilized to induce human sacrifice (Fredengren & Löfqvist, 2019).

1.1 Animal and Human Sacrifice:

Many Roman rituals included sacrifice because the Romans thought that if the gods were pleased, they would have good fortune. Several sacrifices were performed in ancient Rome to appease the Roman gods, and each sacrifice was highly ritualized. Figure 1 depicts religious practices in Ancient Rome.



Figure 1: The painting religious practices in Ancient Rome. Several sacrifices were performed in ancient Rome to appease the Roman gods, and each sacrifice was highly ritualized [Ancient History Lists].

1.2 Animal Sacrifice:

- The animal's sex must be same as that of the god's; white animals were offered to the god of the upper world, while black animals were offered to the god of the underworld.
- The innards of any animal slaughtered were removed to guarantee the sacrifice's purity.
- To ensure victory against Carthage and his supporters, Jupiter made a five-year vow to every creature hatched during the Punic Wars.
- The most frequent type of sacrifice was suovetaurilia or solitaurilia, in which a pig, sheep, or ox was sacrificed.

1.3 Human Sacrifice:

As little more than a propitiatory offering, human sacrifice is the death of one or even more people in order to satisfy or placate the deities or a human ruler, an influential or priestly person or the demons of dead ancestors. Cannibalism and headhunting are closely linked behaviour seen in certain primitive cultures (Løvschal et al., 2019).

Human sacrifice had become less frequent across the Old World by the Iron Age, and had come to be seen as barbarous throughout classical antiquity, as a result of the accompanying religious changes. Human sacrifice, on the other hand, continued to be practiced throughout the New World to various degrees until the arrival of Europeans (McLeod, 2018). Figure 2 depicts hawaiian sacrifice, from the accounts of Freycinet from 1817 to 1820.

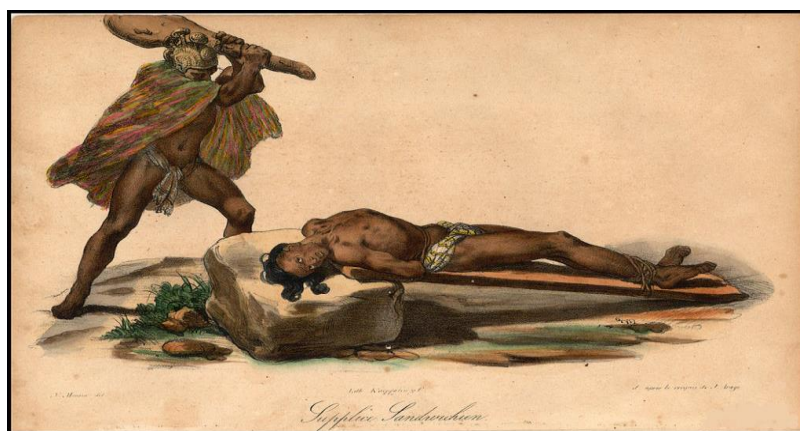


Figure 2: Hawaiian sacrifice, from the accounts of Freycinet from 1817 to 1820, by Jacques Arago. Human sacrifice had become less frequent across the Old World by the Iron Age, and had come to be seen as barbarous throughout classical antiquity [Wikipedia].

Human sacrifice was an uncommon occurrence. Gladiatorial battles were first held in Rome in 264 BC to commemorate the deceased. The competitors were initially volunteers who played out legendary battles, and death was not frequent. Later, slaves and criminals were employed in the competitions and sacrificed on behalf of the deceased to the "manes", or dead spirits.

The pontifices and the Flamen Martialis, or high priest, sacrificed two rebel troops who tried an insurgency in Rome to Mars on the Campus Martius. Their heads were exhibited at Rome's Regia.

1.4 Roman Sacrifice:

Although there were variations because of the Roman world's immensity in time and space, Roman animal offerings usually remained steady to Greek rituals. Etruscan traditional Greek ritual manifestations, as well as alien cults like Isis, Magna Mater, which all had their own pagan cults rituals that were either preserved or changed to Roman tastes, were ultimately incorporated into Roman religion. Nevertheless, Rome seems to have a particular place in Roman mythology, and it is probable that some public sacrifices were performed only in Rome. The Roman social system was more complicated, and the number of people participating in certain sacrifices much surpassed that of Greek sacrifices (Schultz, 2016).

When it came to animal sacrifice in ancient Rome, it was done according to one of two rites: the Romanus or even the Graecus, which varied certainly in terms about whether the individual who performs the sacrifice wore a covering on his forehead or was bareheaded and if any pre-killing acts were taken. While there is little evidence to suggest that public sacrifices began at dawn, we do know that victimarii, who either are publicly or privately slaves, carried their victim to the altar while playing flutes.

First, praefatio rites were conducted at the altar by the person performing the sacrifice. A metal circular hearth was usually used to burn incense and wine as a welcoming gesture to the gods before an animal sacrifice. This served as a formal acknowledgement and invitation for them to participate in the next ritual. sacrificial artwork depicts the sacrificer standing close to an altar encircled by worshippers, with the animal prominently displayed, showing how important this aspect of the ritual was (Rives, 2018).

The following stage was Immolatio, which included consecrating the subject to the gods. After being dusted with Mola salsa, the perpetrator's back was poured with wine, and the ritual ended. The ceremonial blade was handed down the animal's backbone from of the top to the tail. After being purified, the animal now belonged to the sacred world and may be killed. During Greek ceremonial sacrifices, the deceased may instead be scattered with grains of wheat, have water poured over its head, and have a lock of its forehead hair burnt in the sacrificial fire.

The victimarii, who may be of many types, carried out the actual killing. The popa used an axe or hammer to paralyze the animal, while the cultrarii used a knife to sever the jugular vein and divide the flesh. The treatment of big and little victims was done in the same way as it did among the Greeks. Livestock were frequently tethered to a rune stone with a rope running from their necks to the floor, a recurrent motif in sacrifice iconography. Similar stone brick rings were also found in monasteries.

Because fear and panic were considered terrible omens in ancient cultures, the animal's binding down likely served that purpose. A haruspex, a spellcaster, inspected the intestines of the dead to make sure the creature was suitable to the gods before it was placed on its side and actually opened. The body organs that needs to be deemed normal in appearance and placed in the correct location in order for the ritual to proceed, were of special significance at all animal sacrifices. When the exta were aberrant, the sacrifice had to be stopped and restarted with a different animal.

The study of the entrails was also used to predict the future during certain sacrifices. On such occasions, the liver was of particular importance, and hepatoscopy, Using this part of the body for divination, which was believed to be an Ancient specialty and adopted into Roman religion, the occult rituals of the gods was practiced (Schultz, 2010).

When all of everything was done, it was time to kill the animal. Throughout a Roman ritual sacrifice, the exta either were boiled or barbecued on spits. Because they belonged exclusively to the god, the sacrificer ended things the exta after they had been cooked and covered with modis salsa plus wine. If the sacrificial deity had ties to the ocean, river, or other water source, his remains might be dumped there. To honor the gods of something like the Underworld, exta may be laid out on the floor or dumped in a ditch, then set ablaze.

However, it appears as if during Greek religious rituals this substance was shared equally by gods and humans alike. It took the sacrificer placing his palm on the body to transform the flesh into something which mankind could eat well before remainder of the deceased could be transferred to the profane world and consumed by the worshippers, who ate the flesh, viscera, as well as the remaining of the victim. After that, the meat may be divided and distributed among the people.

It was common practice to consume the sacrificed meat at the temple's sanctuary, but it could also be transported home in little baskets called sportulae or sold at open meat markets called macella. More than Greek sacrifices, the way the meat was distributed highlighted class divides among the guests, and who bought for the animals was particularly significant. In certain cases, such as when senators ate at the expense of the general population, not everyone in attendance was granted free meat while others had to settle for their shares or even buy them from of the executioner. On sacrifice occasions. In contrast to Greek sacrifices, the connection between sacrifice and meat eating at a feast seems to have been less obvious (Moser, 2019).

For more formal deity feasts, such as lectisternia, where dining sofas or chairs were all on display in sanctuaries or private houses, roasted flesh may be offered to the gods as exta-burned plasma sausages or meatballs. Piglets, piacularis porca, were used for purifications and expiations. Birds, particularly chickens, were fully burned after being beheaded for some gods, such as Isis, as shown by bone fragments from excavated sanctuaries.

The word holocaustum was used by the Romans to describe completely dedicated sacrifices to the gods, although neither the name nor the deed was widely utilized. When it came to underworld gods like Hades and Sarcophagus, victims could be entirely consumed by fire. But the genocide would include the suffocation of animals, the use of poisonous gases, and sometimes even human sacrifices just on Forum Boarium, where two couples, one Greek and one Gaulish, were burnt alive and buried in their bodies.

Another ritual that included the slaughter of animals was the taurobolium that was used in Roman religion to honour the Great Lady of the Gods from the late in the second century BCE to the fourth century AD. Initially, it seems that the ritual began with a bull pursuit and a sacrifice, but with time, the emphasis shifted to the castration of the animal victim. As shown by the discovery of comparable buildings, the taurobolium's last stage involved the slaughter and hemorrhaging of a cow over a pit. This showered the worshipper with blood. Although Christian authors considered this murder particularly disgusting, it was used by pagans to show their religious characteristics, presumably because it resembled baptism (Aldrete, 2014).

1.5 Greek Sacrifice:

Thysia was perhaps the most frequent kind of Greek animal sacrifice, and it appears to have been practiced all across Greece, using same components, at least from of the ninth centuries to the end of the Roman period. During the Late Bronze Age, human sacrifice was also common, as shown by iconographical and zoo archaeological evidence, although the actual execution differed from that of subsequent periods.

During a thysia sacrifice, the victim was carried to the shrine in a pompe parade. Wool fillet or wreaths might be used to adorn the animal, as well as the horns of calves could be plated, as in Homer's description of a massive cow sacrifice to Minerva at Pylos. The katharchestai altar was the site of the earliest sacrificial rituals. When an animal was sacrificed, grain, pepper, and hairs from its forehead were shaved off and placed in the sacrificial fire. The animal was then committed to the god. Once the victim's head started moving, water was sprayed on it. As an indicator of the animal's vibrancy and suitability as an animal sacrifice sufferer, this movement, formerly considered to indicate the animals willingness to die, has played an important role in the modern interpretation of sacrifice (Ekroth, 2020).

Animals were killed after prayer, with smaller victims, such lambs and goats, being killed by being stabbed multiple times or forehead before being killed this way. The difference between the two methods may be seen in the animal's skeletal structure. Sphageions were used to collect the blood, and only a little quantity was used for ritual purposes, with the rest going into sausages and black desserts. In order to make a proper sacrifice to the gods, the body was first placed on a table or hung from a tree, and then unwrapped and scrutinized.

This procedure required the involvement of the liver. To make knees, thighs were ripped open and coated with belly fat before being burnt in an altar fire. As part of the sacrificial, the gods received the sacral bone and tail, which were referred to as osphys. The curled tail was regarded as a sign of the gods' benevolent reception of the selflessness, hiera kala, caused by the heat contracting the ligaments. Burned bone assemblage from Greek temples frequently include thigh and tail bones, indicating the importance of these parts in the rite.

Contemporary experiments have demonstrated that real cow, goat, and pig tails respond in a similar way to fire when placed in Attic bowl artwork from the 6th and 5th centuries BC. splanchna, which were cooked over an altar fire and distributed to people who were near to the altar, including the heart, stomach, kidneys, brains, and appendix, were threaded onto spits before being eaten immediately. Eaten splanchna delineated the inner circle of those taking part in the rite, and these pieces might be exchanged with the gods by placing them in the monument's hands or legs (Gill, 1974).

Next, a butcher or cook described as a *mageiros* would slaughter the carcass and serve the meal to the people. Many inscriptions document the logistics of a cult at a particular site, including those requiring the priesthood or priestess to accept the hind leg and hide as compensation for their services. This regulation of priestly duties, known as *gera*, may indeed be found there. You may even offer the meat to other dignitaries like religious leaders or judges who come to visit. The bulk of the meat was divided up, *merida*, but it wasn't all of equal quality since some parts had a lot more bones in them than others. Those who were assigned to a share were given their share, but it wasn't all of uniform density.

Many cult sites featured kitchens and eating rooms, but most worshippers must have cooked and eaten their food while sitting on the grass or under trees growing within the *temenos*, which is a Greek term meaning sacred precinct. A more common practice in the late Classical and Hellenistic eras was to take the meat home and consume it in the *andron*, one's own personal dining room. In addition to selling sacrificial meat within the temple or on the open market, sanctuaries often profited financially by purchasing the skins of the sacrificed victims (Parker, 2013).

Bone material discovered in Greece sanctuaries suggests that most flesh was boiled before being distributed, although epigraphic data indicates that some delicate and high-quality parts, like the hind legs handed to the priesthood, might be grilled. Sanctuary or even private settings may exhibit the skulls of a human sacrifice sufferer to honor the sacrifice on rare occasions. Limestone platforms and religious structures were commonly adorned with animal heads, such as cattle, bulls, and even reindeer, and sacrifice scenarios are often shown on Attic vases. In the same way that leftovers from feasts are disposed of, burnt animal remains from the platform may be allowed to pile just at sacrifice site or collected and tossed somewhere else in the sanctuary. Whenever the cult ended in the first quarter of a third century BC, the defleshed skeletons of at least forty cows were scattered together around fifth-century BC sanctuary and the region was covered with soil, maybe as an atonement supplying to Jupiter, to which the altar was devoted, when the cult ended during first quarter (Hitch & Rutherford, 2017).

Sacrificial meat was also utilized in conjunction with *thysia* sacrifices for certain deity rites. *Trapezomata*, the practice of placing raw meat portions on a table next to the altar, is known as the consumption of specific parts of the creature such as the rear or forelimbs, entrails, mouths, or flesh. This flesh was deposited and displayed as an extra way of honoring and connecting with the deity, and it was typically removed by the priest at the conclusion of the ceremony. The deity was regarded as a distinguished visitor, despite the fact that there is no Greek tradition of gods eating the meat or sharing it with the worshipers. When the ceremony was completed, this meal was most likely given to the religious staff as well (Ekroth, 2014).

It was less usual to make sacrifices wherein the animal was completely or partially destroyed, and these sacrifices may have been tied to particular locations or deities. For the duration of the ritual, those making the vow would immerse their fingers or weapons in pig blood or hold their entrails in their palms. A mythical oath-taking took place in the Athens Gora on summit of the Lithos, a massive stone upon which cut-up bodies of a cow, a sheep, and a pig were placed. Once they had stepped on the stone, the Athens archons will vow by the remains of their bodies that they would defend the law and refuse to receive money in exchange for it.

An animal that had been snipped in half and positioned in two piles was discovered recently on Thasos and may be the remains of a pledge or detoxification ceremony where those screaming and shouting the vow or being purified would have disappeared between the survivors. A trittoia had been sliced in half and positioned in two piles. Cleansing rituals included using pigs that had been slashed in the neck and blood was sprinkled on the place to be cleaned before being burnt to eliminate impurities. This practice was also used in public areas like the Athenian assembly. This method may be used to cope with large pollution incidents such as the existence of human remains in a sanctuary by using three fully developed and uncastrated corpses who were likely killed by having the blood extracted before burning the bodies (Naiden, 2006).

Sphagia rituals included the killing and hemorrhaging of an animal, usually a ram, while the 's troops were within sight of one another in order to discern the outcome of the war. The corpse was then left or discarded. In Greek religion, Holocausts, in which the whole animal was burned, were quite rare. In Hercules or Zeus rituals, inexpensive animals like as piglets or lambs are often used. The thysia of such a larger animal was often consumed after the killing of smaller victims. During certain rituals, an animal's organs or a 10% of its body weight would be sacrificed by being burnt. A modern scholar has called these partial holocausts moirocausts, and they took place in moments of crisis or for deities with a particular connection to mortality and the Underworld (Ekroth, 2017).

Discussion

Ancient Greece and Rome had no particular interest in interpreting the beginnings and purpose behind animal sacrifice, as shown by all the conflicting accounts of how rituals were established and evolved. Vegetarian gifts were formerly given to the gods as sacrificial sacrifices, according to one myth, before being replaced by animal sacrifice, which included the consumption of flesh. Ancient Rome, according to the Romans, did not utilize complex things such as incense or wine, but instead gave local plants and milk. There was once a time when human sacrifice was more frequent, however it was eventually supplanted by animal sacrifice. Gods and mankind were closer in this idyllic bygone era, and they even ate at the same table. An early understanding of immortality and mortality may be found in ancient philosophy, as evidenced by the significance attached to animal sacrifice.

Animal sacrifice has surprising roots that are frequently associated with ill feelings. An organism's penalty for noncompliance may have been the genesis of sacrifice, particularly if the animal ate something sacred to a god like a plant or perhaps an offering cake. There are conflicting accounts of the origins of the first Ceresio sacrifice, with Ovid seeing it as an act of revenge against the pig for damaging her fields, and Martial relating the storey of a Dionysian billy-goat that was sacrificed because it ate his vines. As a result of an ox eating a Zeus offering, legend has it that the animal's owner kills it out of rage, leading to an unusual type of animal sacrifice.

There are also dark undertones in the Greek thysia ritual myth, which tells of the Mekone showdown among Zeus and the Titan Prometheus on Mount Olympus. When Prometheus killed the ox, he wrapped the white skeletons in the glittering fat and stuffed the meat inside the animal's belly to deceive the gods. Zeus had the choice of any box,

but he picked the one coated in fat because it looked more appetizing. Zeus was enraged to discover what's inside the morbidly obese package. He was fully aware as a god, but he chose the one with the bones solely to punish mankind in the future, which led to the eventual split of humanity and divinities.

As a mark of respect, men sacrifice white skeletons on the altars of the gods. Sacrificial behaviour may also be shown in the Hellenistic Hymn to Mercury, which is found in the Odyssey. Here, Hermes kills and divides the meat of two of his brother Alex's cows in a ritualistic manner that prefigures later thysia sacrifices. The prepared meat tempts him, but he ultimately turns it down as a sign of gratitude for his high status in heaven.

The meaning, purpose, and significance of ancient animal sacrifice rituals were hotly disputed amongst Greek and Roman authors. They were not a set-in-stone procedure with just one interpretation. It is possible to interpret the derision of animal sacrifice throughout humor as a reflective thinking of such a discourse instead of as a sign of incredulity in animal sacrifice, in particular the uneven distribution of the defendant among gods and men, in which the gods did receive a few charred bones while devotees received the rest. A new study shows that Epicurean and Stoic texts are not anti-animal sacrifice as previously believed. Instead, the authors give different viewpoints on the position of sacrifice in a given context to rationalize their own stance, rather than an eagerness to repeal animal sacrifice completely.

Conclusion

A genuine criticism of animal sacrifice can only be found among a few number of philosophers, particularly those who advocate belief in soul transmigration as a justification against sacrifice and meat eating. Refusing to participate in animal sacrifice and meat eating meant putting oneself outside of society's fabric, and it was only a choice for those with the desire, means, and prestige to deal with such an exposed position. Many ancient cultures shunned animal sacrifice and eating, including Pythagoras, the great Greek philosopher who lived in the 6th century BC. Other cultures, such as the Orphics and Cynics, also shunned animal sacrifice as well as meat. It's unclear if Pythagoras but also his disciples forbade all meat or simply certain types of animals or parts of them together in Pythagoras' case since the sources that describe each of these groupings are, on the whole, considerably later.

Christians ultimately developed a negative view of animal sacrifice, although Jesus, Paul, as well as the other disciples all supported Israeli animal sacrifice in the temple in Jerusalem. A Christian attitude forward into animal sacrifice was not formed until the third couple of centuries AD when the resurrection of Jesus and the Holy communion became synonymous with animal sacrifice, as opposed to a short and homogenous process composed of a collection of individual roles mirroring their own historical background.

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