

Sacred Killing

The Archaeology of Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East

edited by

Anne M. Porter and Glenn M. Schwartz

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Archaeology and Sacrifice

Glenn M. Schwartz

Although there is much debate about what it is and why people do it, it is clear that sacrifice was and is a central practice of the great majority of world religions. In the ancient Near East, sacrifice is frequently mentioned in textual sources, especially the Hebrew Bible, coloring and shaping Western scholarly attitudes toward the phenomenon (Das 1983). However, the presence and interpretation of sacrifice in the Near Eastern archaeological record has been more elusive and more challenging to deal with than has been the case for the textual record—and, indeed, one might say that the study of sacrifice in Near Eastern archaeology has rarely been accorded systematic consideration. We hope to begin to remedy that situation with the studies in this volume.

In recent years, results from Near Eastern archaeological contexts have provided new and often intriguing data on the practice of animal and human sacrifice in the ancient Near East. Having acquired some of these results from our own field projects, Anne Porter and I organized a two-part session at the American Schools of Oriental Research annual meeting in San Diego, California, November 2007, in order to examine some of these new data, to reconsider old material in new ways, and to see if it might be possible to develop new archaeological thinking on the topic of sacrifice. The papers in this volume build on that session and proceed beyond it, with contributions by Moses; Russell; Baadsgaard, Monge, and Zettler; Pongratz-Leisten; and Campbell solicited in order to broaden the chronological and geographical range covered, discuss relevant textual evidence, and provide commentary from a non-Near Eastern specialist on issues raised by the other contributors.

In this chapter, I explore different ideas on the nature and purpose of sacrifice and how it might be studied archaeologically. My aim is to provide a framework for the papers that follow and the range of issues that might be approached.

Beginning with the problem of definitions, we may remark that sacrifice is generally understood to be a religious activity—indeed, the etymology of the term is understood to derive from the Latin *sacer* ‘sacred’ and *facere* ‘to make’, meaning ‘to make sacred’ or, possibly, ‘to perform a sacred act’. By religious activity, I mean actions involving the recognition of and interaction with supernatural entities (Renfrew 2007: 112–13). Campbell (in this volume, pp. 305–323) opposes the

Author's note: I am grateful to Ron Hendel and Ted Lewis for reading and commenting on a preliminary draft of this chapter and to Yoannis Mylonopoulos, Jason Tatlock, Jill Weber, and Ray Westbrook for discussions on some of the ideas contained within.



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identification of sacrifice as a religious act, arguing that the separation of religious from nonreligious activities is a Western construct of questionable utility in societies in which almost everything is seen to have a connection to and involvement with supernatural forces. Similarly, several of the papers in this volume struggle with the distinction between religious sacrifice and “secular” killing, with some leaning toward the position that any ritualized killing of either animals or humans should be considered sacrifice (Hesse, Wapnish, and Greer in this volume, pp. 217–235). However, religion is not necessarily embedded in all aspects of life (Fogelin 2007: 60; Insoll 2004: 6, 27), and the consideration of all ritualized killing as sacrifice expands the concept so broadly as to be superfluous.¹

Indeed, a workable definition of sacrifice, as with other broad concepts such as ritual, can be difficult to achieve (McClymond 2008: 1–2). Humphrey and Laidlaw (2007), citing Bloch (1992), propose that sacrifice entails the killing of a living thing, the offering of its life or life energy to entities in the supernatural world, and the acquisition of benefit to the sacrificer² through the consumption of some part of the offering. Eliminating the activity of consumption from this definition, Campbell (in this volume) defines sacrifice as ritualized action involving destruction and offering to supernatural forces. This sort of definition distinguishes animal sacrifice from other types of animal slaughter and differentiates human sacrifice from other ritualized killings such as the execution of criminals or ritualized warfare.³ However, if the activity must include an offering to supernatural entities, we would be compelled to discard retainer, symbolic/dramatic, and some types of construction sacrifice (see p. 7 below). In his study of human sacrifice, Tatlock (2006) avoids this problem by defining sacrifice as “a slaying done with the direct intent of affecting the suprahuman realm of immaterial entities,” a definition that leaves out the presentation of offerings.⁴

It may be that we must be content to live with these inconsistencies and dissonances, as Catherine Bell recommends in the case of the definition of ritual: “no field ever moves forward because a good number of people agree on the definition of some central concept that then allows them to get down to work” (Bell 2007: 283; see also Bell 1992). Work on sacrifice can proceed even when disagreement

1. For example, ritual warfare, the execution of criminals, and the ritual slaughter of animals purely for human consumption as in Islam or Judaism have significant differences from the activities commonly referred to as sacrificial. Note also that biblical passages (e.g., Lev 17:3–7, Deut 12:15ff.) condemn the slaughter of animals outside a religious context, which implies that these activities took place. I am grateful to Heath Dewrell for this insight.

2. In Hubert and Mauss’s terminology (1964), the sacrificer is the person for whom the sacrifice is performed. The sacrificer, who performs the physical activity of sacrifice, may be a specialist rather than the person intended to benefit from the action.

3. See, however, discussions of modern capital punishment as a ritual of human sacrifice (Bell 1992: 114 n. 75; Purdum and Paredes 1989). Note also Humphrey and Laidlaw (2007), who maintain that not all sacrifice is necessarily ritualized.

4. McClymond (2008) considers the presentation of vegetal and liquid offerings to supernatural entities as sacrificial activities, which would expand the definition of sacrifice beyond that of killing or destruction—although McClymond notes that the offering of soma vegetal material in Hindu ritual is referred to as “killing the plant.”

exists on how to define it precisely. Keeping retainer, symbolic/dramatic, and construction sacrifice (see below, pp. 6–7) in the group of practices understood as sacrifice will be more useful than expelling them for purposes of definitional precision, given their common identification as sacrifice and their associations with and connections to other types of actions recognized as sacrificial. It will be important, at the same time, to ensure that the term does not become so broad as to lose its utility, as in defining all killing of humans or animals as sacrificial (Russell, pp. 79–95 in this volume; Hesse, Wapnish, and Greer in this volume). The important question is whether it is productive to consider the variety of activities generally understood to be “sacrificial” together, examining the different ways these activities resemble or fail to resemble one another cross-culturally in their meaning, practice, context, and social ramifications. Presumably, the results of the studies presented in this book will assist in determining whether this is the case.

In this volume, we consider both human and animal sacrifice. One might object that animal sacrifice is much more common and human sacrifice a bizarre abnormality. As René Girard (1977: 11) observed, scholars who study sacrifice in general rarely refer to human sacrifice, while those that study human sacrifice tend to focus on it exclusively, “dwelling at length on the ‘sadistic’ or ‘barbarous’ aspects of the custom.”⁵ Girard further comments that the separation of human from animal sacrifice presumes that one category of victim is unsuitable while another is eminently sacrificeable. But it is inappropriate to proceed *a priori* with such a notion, however distasteful the idea of human sacrifice may be. Similarly, recent work on the relationship between humans and animals has questioned the assumption that “nonhuman animals” are a distinct and subordinate category with respect to humans (Argent 2010; Miller 2006; Knight 2005; Latour 1993). Important to consider in this context is whether significant differences exist between human and animal sacrifice apart from the nature of the victims (Hill 1995: 105–6): are the intentions, perceived results, social ramifications, ritualized activities, participants, and types of societies associated with each type of sacrifice distinct, or might there be overlapping and ‘dialogue’ between the two types of sacrifice? The contributors to this volume often note the lack of a strict differentiation between animal and human sacrifice (e.g., Goslinga, pp. 33–56 in this volume; Weber, pp. 159–190 in this volume; Campbell in this volume); retainer sacrifice, for example, can include both human and animal victims, and the Shang offering pits discussed by Campbell include human and animal remains interpreted as offerings to elite ancestors.

Reasons for Sacrifice

Numerous explanations have been advanced for why people sacrifice, including several global or universal theories (e.g., Tylor 1874; Smith 1894; Hubert and Mauss 1964; Girard 1977; Burkert 1983). Although such general theories are “good to think,” more-recent scholarship has tended to doubt that they can provide fully

5. See, for example, the title of the recent volume ed. Jan Bremmer (2007), *The Strange World of Human Sacrifice*.

satisfying explanations, because they fail to acknowledge the diverse historical and social peculiarities of each case and the great variability in the types and meanings of sacrifice (Bourdillon 1980: 23; Hendel 1989).

Perhaps the most commonly cited purpose for sacrifice is to present a gift to deities or supernatural entities (Tylor 1874; van Baal 1976). Indeed, the word sacrifice as used in modern European languages usually entails the idea of giving something that is valuable to the donor, if not the receiver. Frequently, the sacrificial gift is understood as nourishment for the gods, who are dependent on humans for their food. Mesopotamian myth, for example, explained that humanity was explicitly created to supply food for the gods, freeing them from arduous labor (Pongratz-Leisten, pp. 291–304 in this volume). In ancient Mesoamerica, sacrifices of human blood and human hearts were understood to furnish the divine world with crucial nourishment.

In giving up something of value, the sacrificer also indicates the extent of his or her devotion, in an act of self-denial or abnegation: “in any sacrifice, there is an act of abnegation since the sacrificer deprives himself and gives. The sacrificer gives up something of himself, but not himself proper” (Hubert and Mauss 1964: 100). But the gift, as is often the case, comes with the expectation of a favor returned, as encapsulated in the Latin phrase *do ut des*—‘I give, in order that you may give’. The divine world is expected to provide benefits in return for the receipt of its gift (Pongratz-Leisten in this volume). Such benefits may be conjunctive, allowing humans to attain closer proximity to the supernatural world (e.g., acquiring good fortune or expressing thanksgiving), or they may be disjunctive, terminating unwanted contact with the supernatural (e.g., to avoid the effects of divine anger and resultant misfortune; Beattie 1980).⁶

In their classic essay on sacrifice, Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss (1964) deemphasize gifting and instead focus on sacrifice as an opportunity for communication—and communion—with the divine. In this scenario, the victim is consecrated (made sacred) to serve as a mode of communication between the sacrificer and the deity, between the profane and the sacred (Hubert and Mauss 1964: 97).⁷ William Robertson Smith (1894) also understood sacrifice to be an opportunity for humans to connect with the divine world, particularly through the consumption of the sacred meal that often followed the killing of the sacrificed animal.

Whether the sacrifice involves the presentation of a gift or communion with supernatural forces, we are still faced with the fundamental question: why do such actions require killing? Why not perform a creative act, as opposed to a destructive one? As Burkert notes (1987: 177), this question has been pondered at least since the time of Hesiod—“why must we *kill* the animals in order to turn them over to

6. Beattie (1980: 38–39) proposes four main goals of sacrifice: (1) to obtain or maintain closer contact with the divine or supernatural, (2) to achieve a degree of separation from the divine or supernatural, (3) to obtain for the sacrificer an increase or input of nonpersonalized “power,” and (4) to achieve separation from, or the removal of, this power.

7. In their dichotomy of sacred vs. profane, Hubert and Mauss have been criticized for applying a Judeo-Christian world view to societies where these distinctions are not significant (see Goslinga in this volume).

the gods, the lords of life?" According to René Girard (1977, 1987a, 2005), who holds that violence is "the heart and secret soul of the sacred," the sacrificial victim serves as a focus for the violent inclinations of the society. The ritualized killing of a victim, sanctioned by the supernatural world, protects the rest of the community from its members' incipient tendency toward violence. In this scenario, the victim must be similar enough to the other members of the society to serve as an appropriate target but must be marginal enough that the killing does not engender actions of revenge. While it is unlikely that Girard's approach will explain the great diversity and historical specificities of the different manifestations of sacrifice, Girard provides one avenue to contemplating the centrality of violence in ritual.

Another perspective is offered by Walter Burkert (1983), who posits that the origins of blood sacrifice can be traced back to the Paleolithic era. Perceiving the killing of animals for food to be a crime, the hunters of the era ritualized and thus decriminalized the activity. While this proposition is useful for approaching the problem of sacred violence, the vast majority of documented cases of sacrifice involve domesticated animals, not hunted individuals.

Nevertheless, I would suggest that Burkert's focus on the connection between sacrificial violence and consumption is important. In order to live, humans must eat, which in turn requires killing—whether it be animal or plant food. Killing, therefore, is necessary to sustain life. Since sacrifice is often understood as a way to provide nourishment to the divine world (Trigger 2003: 475–84; Moses, pp. 57–77 in this volume), it would make sense that the gods must also be fed with animate beings that require killing before their consumption. The provision of sacrificed animals can certainly be construed in this way, and sacrificed humans were also offered as food for the supernatural world in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica and the Andes (Read 1998: 128; Carrasco 1999). In Aztec society, it was held that the sun's existence had to be ensured through the sacrifice of war captives, and the Maya also maintained that the blood of sacrificial victims nourished the divine world. For Shang China, Campbell (this volume) proposes that the human remains found together with animal parts in sacrificial pits were intended as food offerings to high-ranking ancestors. Whether human sacrifice as performed in the ancient Near East was intended for divine sustenance remains to be determined.

Obviously, such a global explanation will be subject to the same objections as those raised above, but I would suggest that the connection between violence and nourishment is relevant to sacrificial activity that concerns offerings or presentations to the divine world. The need for violence in other forms of sacrifice such as retainer, symbolic/dramatic, and construction is discussed below.

Only certain victims, whether human or animal, are typically deemed appropriate for sacrifice. It is often proposed that this is because the sacrificer must be associated as closely as possible with the victim (Hubert and Mauss 1964: 52). In this perspective, the victim is a stand-in for the sacrificer, whose own sacrifice would be the most extreme abnegation possible (Beattie 1980). Another human being is the closest one can achieve to a similarity with the sacrificer. In the case of human sacrifice, victims are often individuals of lower social status such as slaves, prisoners of

war, and children, ostensibly because their killing would involve fewer objections from powerful individuals than the killing of persons of higher rank.

If animals are the victims, domesticates are usually offered rather than wild animals (Russell in this volume). Ostensibly, this is because domesticates are associated with and live among the human community, as opposed to animals hunted in the wild (Beattie 1980: 30–31). Bloch (1992) notes that sacrifices of pigs are particularly common in New Guinea because pigs live with humans and are understood to be similar to humans in diverse ways.⁸

While Girard (1977) asserted that animals were domesticated in order to provide victims for sacrifice, Smith (1987) inverts the proposition, suggesting that sacrifice supplied a way to ritualize the killing of domesticated animals for selective breeding. Smith's proposal recalls the ideas advanced by Burkert with regard to ritualizing the killing of animals in the hunt (1983).

Sacrifice without Offering

Although the presentation of a victim in order to communicate with the divine world is probably the most common variety of sacrifice, other types of ritualized killing have been characterized as sacrifice. One such variety is retainer sacrifice, which entails the killing of people and/or animals after the death of a high-ranking person, presumably so that the retainers will serve their superior in the afterlife. One of the best-known examples of this phenomenon was provided by the archaeological excavations in the third-millennium B.C.E. Royal Cemetery of Ur in southern Mesopotamia, where up to 73 individuals were interred together with high-ranking persons upon their death. Sir Leonard Woolley, the excavator of Ur, posited that the retainers had taken their own lives by drinking poison, but the new results reported by Baadsgaard, Monge, and Zettler (pp. 125–158 in this volume) indicate that at least in some cases they were dispatched violently. Another well-known example of retainer sacrifice is supplied by the elite graves of Shang China in the later second millennium B.C.E., as discussed by Campbell (in this volume).⁹ In both the Mesopotamian and Shang cases, animals as well as humans were included in the burial complexes, presumably to serve the elite individuals in the afterlife as the human retainers were expected to do. The third millennium B.C.E. equid burials at Umm el-Marra in northern Syria may provide examples of a similar practice, although Weber (in this volume) advances a different interpretation.

In his extensive discussion of retainer sacrifice, Testart (2004) maintains that the practice is a consequence of the bonds of personal loyalty established between leaders and their followers in early complex societies, in contrast to fidelity to a

8. Among the domesticates, certain types of animals may be deemed unsuitable for sacrifice. In the Hebrew Bible, for example, sacrificing "blemished" animals is prohibited, perhaps because the offering must be perfect as God, the recipient, is perfect. Likewise, a well-known second millennium B.C.E. text from Mari in Mesopotamia insists that donkeys are the only acceptable animals for treaty sacrifices (Lewis 2006: 347).

9. For examples reported by eyewitnesses from 19th-century C.E. Africa, see, for example, Wilks 1975, Sagan 1985, and Law 1985.

principle or institution.¹⁰ Testart insists that this type of killing be excluded from consideration as sacrifice, because there is no offering involved. Indeed, it is certainly the case that there is no significant emphasis on communication with the divine world or the presentation of gifts to it. On the other hand, the practice is conducted with the intention of affecting the suprahuman realm, that is, the world of the dead, and so accords with Tatlock's definition of sacrifice.

Another category unconcerned with offerings made to supernatural forces might be called symbolic or dramatic. An example of this type is provided by ritualized killings of animals attending the conclusion of political treaties in the ancient Near East, a practice attested for early second millennium B.C.E. Syro-Mesopotamia (Hesse, Wapnish, and Greer in this volume; Lafont 2001) and occasional later contexts (Lewis 2006: 344). The implication is that the fate of the sacrificed animal is symbolic of the fate of the person who breaks the treaty, a concept made explicit in an 8th century B.C.E. treaty between Aššur-nerari V of Assyria and Matiʾ-ilu of Arpad:

This spring lamb has not been brought out of its fold for sacrifice,¹¹ nor for a banquet, nor for a purchase, nor for (divination concerning) a sick man, nor to be slaughtered for [. . .]; it has been brought to conclude the treaty between Aššur-nerari, king of Assyria, with Matiʾ-ilu. If Matiʾ-ilu [sins] against th[is] sworn treaty, then, just as this spring lamb has been brought from its fold [and not behold] its fold again, (in like manner) may, alas, Matiʾ-ilu, together with his sons, daughters, [magnates], and the people of his land [be ousted] from his country, not return to his country, and not [behold] his country again. This head is not the head of a spring lamb; it is the head of Matiʾ-ilu, it is the head of his sons, his magnates, and the people of [his la]nd. If Matiʾ-ilu [should sin] against this treaty, so may, just as the head of this spring lamb is c[ut] off, and its knuckle placed in its mouth, [. . .] the head of Matiʾ-ilu be cut off, and his sons. (Parpola and Watanabe 1988: 8–9)

Construction or foundation sacrifice consists of the killing of humans or animals for interment in building foundations, attested in East Asia and the Middle East. The rationale for such a practice is often said to be the provision of a solid and stable edifice (Campbell in this volume; Moses in this volume; Drake 1989: 273–74). In some East Asian cases, this type of sacrifice involves the presentation of an offering, as when the killing is intended to appease a supernatural entity displeased by the building project, but other foundation sacrifices are said to animate the building to protect it and provide a connection to the supernatural world (Wessing and Jordaan 1997).

An additional type of sacrifice that does not entail the presentation of an offering might consist of persons or animals killed in order to transport messages to a deity (Law 1985: 57). The Inca “ice mummies” (see p. 14 below) are interpreted in this light, with children understood to be particularly effective carriers of information from the human to the divine world.

10. See Pollock (2007) for an application of this idea to the Ur Royal Cemetery.

11. The term translated “sacrifice” (UDU.SISKUR) here refers to the slaughter of a sheep in a cultic context.

Social Aspects of Sacrifice

Although the religious thought and beliefs behind the practice of sacrifice are of great interest, these are often difficult to investigate archaeologically (Fogelin 2007). More approachable is the role that sacrifice plays in social and political contexts. How is sacrifice used by diverse actors in order to attain their goals?

Like other rituals, sacrifice can provide an opportunity to display and reinforce social identity and social differentiation (Detienne 1989b; Burkert 1983: 37; Smith 1894, 1903). Certain individuals are allowed to sacrifice, while others are excluded, such as strangers, slaves, and often women. Even within the group permitted to perform sacrifice, social differentiation can be effected through assignment of diverse ritual roles. Social differences and identities are also illustrated and perpetuated through the types of individuals chosen as victims, particularly in the case of human sacrifice, where the victims may be people with minimal power or legal rights in the society in question, such as prisoners of war, slaves, women and children. The presumed divine participation in the ritual legitimizes these models of social organization (Isaakidou et al. 2002).

There appears to be a particularly strong association between rituals of sacrifice—especially human sacrifice—and early states (Trigger 2003: 484–85). The period when authority is first established is often accompanied by an amplification of ritual, in order to legitimize and naturalize the new social order (Morris 2007). As Jay (1992: 148) observes, sacrifice is useful for monopolizing communication with the supernatural and acquiring divine legitimation of social inequality. Among the better-known examples of human retainer sacrifice in early states are those from Dynasty I Egypt, Shang China, and Early Dynastic Mesopotamia (Morris 2007; Campbell in this volume; Pollock 1991, 2007).

Among the Classic Maya, where human sacrifice was understood to nourish the divine world, rulers' participation in the practice sanctioned their political power and enhanced their prestige. The leader's ability to provide blood to feed the gods illustrated his efficacy and legitimacy as ruler. In the Aztec period, human sacrifice took on an even larger role and scale, legitimizing not just the individual ruler but the entire state and its expansionistic character (Demarest 1984; see also Graulich 2000). The explicit goal of the state was the acquisition of sacrificial victims from warfare in order to assure the continued functioning of the cosmos.

Human sacrifice may also play a role in intimidating the population, as Bruce Dickson (2006) has recently posited for the Ur Royal Cemetery.¹² In the 19th cen-

12. While Dickson emphasizes the terror-inducing aspects of retainer sacrifice at Ur, he also interprets the Ur evidence as a method of royal legitimation. He argues that the rulers of Ur represented themselves as divine and thus repeatedly had to demonstrate their divine status and connection with the supernatural through sacrifices. With the killing of retainers at the death of a ruler, the ruler was treated in a godlike way, affirming his or her divine status. At the same time, the rulers communicated their power over the bodies and lives ("bare life," in Agamben's words) of their subjects. One problem with Dickson's argument is that Mesopotamian rulers rarely claimed divine status (the first known ruler to be deified, Naram-Sin of Akkad, lived several centuries after the Ur Royal Cemetery rulers), and there is no reason to suppose that the Ur rulers had done so. Further, if the sacrificial rituals at Ur served to legitimate kingship, that is, make it accept-

tury, the king of the African polity of Asante is said to have commented: “If I were to abolish human sacrifices, I should deprive myself of one of the most effectual means of keeping the people in subjection” (Wilks 1975: 594).¹³ However, the use of brute force to terrorize the populace is likely to be less effective in maintaining authority than establishing the ruler’s legitimacy among the population, naturalizing the new political reality (Yoffee 2005: 40). It is not unlikely, therefore, that an extensive use of human sacrifice as a method of intimidation was characteristic of political elites who felt considerable insecurity and instability, as David Carrasco (1999) has suggested for the Aztecs (but see Trigger 2003: 485).

The role of gender in sacrifice has been explored extensively in the work of Nancy Jay (1985, 1992), who remarked on the frequent exclusion of women from participation in sacrificial rituals—except, perhaps, as victims. She maintained that sacrifice is particularly common in societies with structures of intergenerational continuity and inheritance focused on productive property such as agricultural land and livestock (Jay 1992: xxiv–xxv).¹⁴ In these societies, she argues, sacrifice serves to establish bonds of intergenerational continuity between males in a way that is independent of women and their monopoly on childbearing. As she puts it, sacrifice is a “remedy” to men for having been born of woman, providing an alternative method of male-to-male succession. While Jay’s attention to gender is important, it is doubtful that sacrifice served as a metaphor for male-to-male descent as frequently as she suggests. It is true that most officiants and participants in sacrifice were males, but it does not necessarily follow that intergenerational male continuity was the main point of sacrifice, because public figures in many societies, especially complex ones, were typically male.

Sacrifice and the Archaeological Record

How can sacrifice be studied archaeologically? Our first task—and not an especially easy one—would be the identification of sacrificial ritual in the archaeological record. One of the few elements in our favor is the nature of ritual to be repetitive, so that repeated patterns of behavior that stand out from the usual might be discernible in the archaeological record (Marcus 2007: 68). A useful addition to material culture data, if available, would be apposite textual or iconographic evidence (Bourget 2006). Likewise, the prudent use of ethnographic analogies or ethnohistoric data is valuable when such material exists (Moses in this volume; Porter, pp. 191–215 in this volume; Voigt, pp. 237–290 in this volume; cf. Insoll 2004: 101ff.).

able and uncontroversial in the minds of the people, ostensibly there would have been little need to terrorize them into accepting royal authority.

13. It should be noted, however, that there is some question as to the tendency for European observers to characterize executions of criminals in Asante as human sacrifice (Wilks 1975).

14. In earlier publications (1985), Jay proposed that sacrifice is particularly characteristic of societies where patrilineal lineages are important structuring mechanisms, but she later stated that categories of intergenerational continuity such as patrilineal, matrilineal, and bilateral are too restrictive and oversimplifying (1992: 32).

Table 1. Archaeological Signatures of Sacrificial and Nonsacrificial Activities Involving Animals

<i>Nonsacrificial Activities</i>	<i>Offerings to Supernatural</i>	<i>Retainer Sacrifice</i>	<i>Construction Sacrifice</i>
Human consumption; fragmentary bones in domestic or midden contexts; with butchery marks; wide range of body parts, species or ages represented (while acknowledging the problem that sacrificed animals can be consumed by humans in domestic contexts)	Age-, gender-, and/or species-specific concentration of animals divergent from ages, genders and/or species of slaughtered animals elsewhere in community, preferably in ritual context, with other distinctive and repeating characteristics	Complete skeleton in mortuary context (vs. skeletal fragments with butchery marks in mortuary contexts)	Complete or near-complete articulated skeleton embedded in architectural foundations or walls, or adjacent to foundations
Not for human consumption or sacrificial use; complete or near-complete skeleton of nonfood animal in nonreligious contexts (e.g., midden, street)	Burned bones in religious context not interpretable as remains solely intended for human consumption	Complete skeleton in mortuary context in association with human retainers or in association with draft vehicles	
	Bones in religious context in association with offering feature (altar) with blood residue on feature		
	Certain parts of animal reserved for divine world attested repeatedly or in religious context		
	Complete skeleton in religious context (temple, altar)		

In many if not most cases, the identification of animal sacrifice (table 1) will be dependent on the discovery of remains in contexts understood to be devoted to religious purposes. Determining whether physical space was used for cultic functions can be challenging in and of itself, but criteria for the endeavor can include locational characteristics and architectural or portable features associated with sacred space as discussed by Renfrew (1985, 2007). Ancient textual evidence to help identify characteristics of sacred space will also be important if available.

If one finds animal bones with evidence of butchery in a cultic context, there are at least three interpretive possibilities: the remains of an offering to the gods, the remains of human consumption by people residing in, working in, or visiting the

sacred space, or meat remains intended for both divine and human consumption, as in the case of divine/human communal meals such as the biblical “peace” offering. How do we distinguish among the three possibilities? The specifics of each case will have to be considered carefully and contextual patterns analyzed accordingly. In classical Greece, for example, parts of the animal carcass were burned as an offering to the gods, while humans consumed the meat (Detienne 1989a: 3, 11; Detienne and Vernant 1989; Isaakidou et al. 2002).¹⁵ Gebhard and Reese (2005) were able to distinguish between burned bones derived from a sacrificial burnt offering found near the altar and the unburned or partially burned bones left over from cooking for human consumption in their work at the sanctuary of Poseidon in 1st millennium B.C.E. Isthmia (see also Forstenpointner 2003).

In some cases, only certain parts of a sacrificed animal were reserved for the divine world, as the Biblical and Classical sources stipulate.¹⁶ Therefore, the recovery of repeated examples of a specific part of the animal skeleton would lend itself to hypotheses of animal sacrifice, particularly if they were found in a context interpretable as religious or cultic. Gebhard and Reese (2005) identified such patterns in the faunal remains from 1st millennium B.C.E. Isthmia, as did Hamilakis and Konsolaki (2004) at the Mycenaean sanctuary at Ayios Konstantinos, where the nonmeaty parts were burned. Such selective presence of certain body parts should not be attributable to taphonomic causes (e.g., the differential survival rates of certain bones) or the logistics of carcass-processing (Isaakidou et al. 2002: 88).

Selective age representations in a restricted spatial area may also be useful, as in the case of the Iron II Tel Dan cultic installation discussed by Hesse, Wapnish, and Greer (in this volume). In this locus, the recovered bones originally indicated the presence of animals that were significantly younger than those in the rest of the community (Wapnish and Hesse 1991). Such age-related differentiation argues for different slaughtering activities from those carried out elsewhere in the community, and the cultic context suggests sacrificial practices.¹⁷

The recognition of traces of animal blood on features identified as part of religious contexts would also be grounds for the reconstruction of animal sacrifice.¹⁸ Again, it would be necessary to differentiate between slaughter of an animal as an offering to the divine and slaughter conducted solely for human consumption.

If complete or near-complete animal skeletons without modifications from butchery or consumption are found in a religious context, this might also be understood as evidence of an offering to the gods. The unmodified skeleton would signify that the animal was not used for human consumption, and the religious context would imply the probability of sacrifice. However, instances such as these may not be common, because humans often consume the meat of the sacrificed animal.

15. Classical Greece is an example of a society in which most meat consumed by humans derived from sacrifice (see also Insoll 2010: 239).

16. See Leviticus 1–7; Isaakidou et al. 2002; Gebhard and Reese 2005; Ekroth 2008.

17. Note that this pattern could change as a result of the current analysis of a larger sample from this context.

18. Russell (in this volume). See Verano (2001) on the use of serological analysis to recognize and study blood residues in possible sacrificial contexts.

As the above discussion indicates, animal remains of restricted age, sex, species, and body part, as opposed to generalized animal refuse, will be of particular use for the recognition of animal sacrifice in the archaeological record. In all cases, the more examples, the better: individual instances of sacrifice will be the most difficult, if not impossible, to identify. Archaeologists must also be prepared for negative results: Insoll (2010) records cases in which people remove the remains of sacrificed animals from the locus of sacrifice, leaving little or no material evidence of the sacrificial event.¹⁹

Examples of the sacrifice of animals as “retainers” might be identified through the discovery of complete animal skeletons in human mortuary contexts without signs of butchery. The case would be strengthened if they are found together with draft vehicles, as in the Ur Royal Cemetery or the Shang elite burials, or if they are associated with sacrificed human retainers. One might not expect the remains of dramatic/symbolic sacrifice such as ancient Near Eastern treaty sacrifice to be common in the archaeological record, but these might be identified if specifics of the treaty ritual correspond to recovered remains (Way 2010: 214–15).²⁰ Construction sacrifice will be inferable if a complete or near-complete animal skeleton or skeletons are identified in the foundations of a structure.

Animal remains not interpretable as sacrifice might fall into several categories. Most common would be portions of animals slaughtered solely for human consumption. One would generally expect these remains to consist of fragmentary bones from food animals found in domestic or trash contexts. Remains such as these would tend to manifest a larger range of species, ages, sexes, and body elements than those from sacrifice, as noted above. These would also be likely to bear the marks of butchery activities. Also outside the category of animal sacrifice would be remains of nonfood animals such as dogs or equids that died a natural death or were killed for reasons other than food consumption or retainer, symbolic or construction sacrifice. These cases would be manifest as complete or near-complete skeletons without human modification discovered in middens or streets. Animals killed in natural catastrophes, fires, or enemy attacks would constitute an additional nonsacrificial category. In these cases, the skeletons should exhibit demographic patterns of a living herd, rather than ages and sexes selected for food consumption or other specific purposes.

The recognition of varieties of human sacrifice in the archaeological record will likewise be a challenging enterprise dependent on context, repetition, and sample size (table 2). The case of a person killed as an offering to the gods might be hypothesized if a complete or near-complete skeleton is deposited in a context understood as religious, especially if there is evidence for violent death or binding of the limbs

19. Similarly, material remains of sacrifice can be transported to nonreligious locales, for example, to domestic contexts where the meat from sacrificed animals is consumed. In these cases, evidence such as selective age, species, and body part may provide information to allow for a sacrificial interpretation.

20. Unfortunately, details of the material appurtenances and physical context of treaty sacrifices are usually not provided to a useful degree in the textual sources.

Table 2. Archaeological Signatures of Human Sacrifice and Nonsacrificial Behavior

<i>Nonsacrificial Activities</i>	<i>Offerings to Supernatural</i>	<i>Retainer Sacrifice</i>	<i>Construction Sacrifice</i>
Interments similar to others in community, without sacrificial characteristics noted in the second, third, fourth columns	Skeletal material in religious context; evidence for violent death or binding of limbs	Simultaneous primary interment of high and low-ranking individuals; low-ranking individuals with evidence of violence or binding	Complete or near-complete articulated skeleton in or adjacent to structure's foundations
Multiple interments of victims of infectious disease, battle, fire, or natural disaster	Age- and/or gender-specific interments with other distinctive and repeating characteristics		

(Sugiyama 2005). The larger the number of such individuals in a given location, the more vigorous a case for sacrifice could be made. It will be necessary to distinguish the primary deposition of the bones, which might imply sacrifice, from a secondary deposition that is less likely to be interpretable as sacrificial (Verano 2001). Human sacrifice would also be a plausible interpretation if skeletal evidence of persons who died violent deaths is found in association with architectural types otherwise associated with sacrifice, as in the D-shaped structures of the Wari (Cook 2001).

However, a hypothesis of human sacrifice as offering would have to present evidence rejecting the likelihood that the individual was buried in a religious context for other reasons. If religious specialists or other members of a community were routinely buried in a temple or other religious location, then such interments would need to be distinguished from the bodies of sacrificial victims. Violent death due to execution, murder, battle, or natural disaster would also have to be ruled out. Campbell (in this volume) reveals that in Shang China dead humans and animals whose bodies were chopped into small pieces were intended as offerings to the elite dead and were distinguished from retainers killed to serve their masters in the afterlife. Although human sacrifice is sometimes followed by cannibalistic feasting (Pijoan and Lory 1997; Carter, pp. 97–124 in this volume), evidence of cannibalism alone is not enough to confirm human sacrifice, because the persons whose flesh was consumed could have suffered death from other causes.

Evidence of human retainer sacrifice from a mortuary context might consist of the simultaneous primary interment of individuals with prestige goods together with individuals with few if any such goods and thus likely to be of lesser social status (Campbell in this volume). The recognition of simultaneous interment of bodies, as opposed to sequential interment, will be an important problem in and of itself. This evidence should consist of articulated skeletal remains from several individuals in similar states of preservation in the same stratigraphic context. The case

of retainer sacrifice will be all the stronger if the nonelite remains display evidence of violence or if they exhibit evidence of binding.

Construction sacrifice would be attested by the discovery of a complete or near-complete human skeleton interred in the foundations of a structure or adjacent to them. Evidence of the person's violent death would make for a stronger case, because the body of a person who died a natural death might have been interred (Verano 2001). Cases of symbolic/dramatic sacrifice would have to be assessed given the cultural specifics of each society under consideration.

Human mortuary remains that could be distinguished from cases of sacrifice would include interments that resemble others in the community in question, without the sacrificial characteristics noted above. Cases of the simultaneous interment of multiple individuals, while potentially interpretable as sacrificial, could also be attributed to mass death from infectious disease, possibly identifiable through paleopathological analysis, mass killing in battle, or mass killing of prisoners of war (Otterbein 2000). Deposition of nonsacrificial human remains outside mortuary contexts could be the result of death in a conflagration (in which case one would expect a demographic profile representative of the entire living population, perhaps a haphazard distribution of the bodies, with evidence of burning and without differentiation by age or other characteristics), war (the bodies scattered haphazardly, perhaps with evidence of associated weapons; Muscarella 1989: 32–36; Stronach 1991: 305–6), or natural catastrophe (haphazard scatter, no age or other differentiation).

In general, a large sample of interred individuals with salient characteristics that suggest sacrifice will be more convincing than one or two examples. In the case of the Inca "ice mummies," for example, the interred individuals are characterized by specific ages (children or young adolescents), are victims of violence, and are found in individual elaborate tombs in high-altitude locations far from the usual loci of interment (Ceruti 2003). The unusual location and funerary regalia mark these individuals as distinct from "ordinary" buried persons, while the evidence of violent death is unlikely to be attributable to execution for criminal offenses, given their age. Thus, stronger cases for sacrifice inferred from the archaeological record will have a combination of factors in their favor, and the availability of textual, iconographic, or ethnohistoric data strengthen the argument all the more.

Having determined that a case of sacrifice is likely, archaeology can then attempt to reconstruct the particulars of sacrificial ritual—where, when, and how sacrifice took place, and who was involved. The place of sacrifice can be considered: where was the ritual conducted, and where were its remains distributed spatially? Whether the activity took place in a setting that was indoor or outdoor, within a community or outside, public or private, monumental or ordinary, accommodating large numbers of people or restricted to a small group, are all questions that can be addressed (Campbell in this volume). The timing of the activity may also be investigated, with respect to the history of the broader society, the history of the local community, and the time of year (Moses in this volume). The association of sacrificial activity with ceremonies involving life passages (for example, births, weddings,

funerals) or other ceremonies relevant to the life of the community (for example, warfare, agriculture), kin group, or individual is also relevant for study. The nature of the victim and, if possible, other participants will be important to consider.

Having examined these variables, one may consider the sociopolitical context and ramifications of sacrificial behavior. Investigating the victims, participants, and spectators' species, gender, age, and social status, the location of the activity, the historical moment, and other relevant factors will be instrumental in studying the role sacrifice played in sanctioning hierarchy or integrating community. What part did sacrifice play in indexing social groups and their boundaries? Who was excluded, and who included?

Considering sacrificial ritual from a sensory perspective will be difficult given the usually fragmentary nature of archaeological data, but one may consider the possible presence and effect of music, dance, the screams of the victims, and the stench of corpses (Goslinga in this volume; Hesse, Wapnish, and Greer in this volume; Laneri 2010). Most difficult of all to attain will be an understanding of the meaning of the ritual and the beliefs that were associated with sacrifice. Relevant evidence could include iconographic data or repetitive behaviors that can be related to conceptions of the supernatural. For example, the presence of retainer sacrifice implies belief in an afterlife, the persistence of social rank into the afterlife, the propriety of high ranking persons to be served by social inferiors in the afterlife, and the efficacy of sacrifice for this sort of purpose.

Some Examples (and Frustrations)

I shall now try to illustrate briefly some of these points—and associated challenges—with examples from my excavations at Umm el-Marra in Syria, some of which are discussed in further detail in the chapters by Jill Weber and Anne Porter. Umm el-Marra is a site of some 20–25 hectares between Aleppo and the Euphrates in the Jabbul plain of northern Syria, occupied ca. 2800–1300 B.C.E., that is, throughout most of the Bronze Age (Curvers and Schwartz 1997; Schwartz et al. 2000, 2003, 2006, 2012). During the mid-to-late third millennium B.C.E., the acropolis in the site center was used as a burial place for elite persons. In one of the latest tombs, Tomb 1, dating to ca. 2300 B.C.E., two distinct episodes of interment were discerned, distributed in three layers. The earlier interment episode was manifested by the incomplete remains of an adult (probable female) associated with some pottery and silver fragments. Sometime afterward, two adult men were interred side by side, with an infant (age at death estimated at 3–5 months) at some distance from them near the tomb entrance, and then two young women, each with a baby (ages at death estimated at 1–2 and 1–3 months), were placed above them.²¹ The women

21. According to analysis conducted by Ernest K. Batey, University of Arkansas (personal communication; Batey 2011), the ages of the two young women are estimated as follows: skeleton A, young adult (20–35 years), likely 20–25 years; skeleton D, adolescent (10–15 years), likely 13–15 years. The ages of the two men below are both estimated as young adult (20–35 years), with skeleton B likely 25–30 years and skeleton C likely 30–35 years. I am very grateful to Batey for supplying these data.



Fig. 1. Tomb 1, top level, from southwest.

were accompanied by personal ornaments of gold, silver, and lapis lazuli, while the men were much more modestly outfitted (figs. 1, 2).

It is likely that the men, women, and babies in the top two layers were interred at approximately the same time. The men's skeletons were well-preserved, which would be improbable had the young women's bodies been put in after the men's bodies had become defleshed. In that case, the men's bones would have been disturbed and in disarray, as was the individual in the lowest level. Thus, the women must have been interred at some point prior to the defleshing of the men's bodies.²² Further, the symmetry and side-by-side arrangement of the adults in both levels also implies a simultaneity of interment.

Why were two men, two women and two babies interred simultaneously in pairs—along with an additional baby—and why were the women outfitted much more sumptuously than the men? There is no evidence for burning, which rules out death in fire, and death in battle is improbable given the diverse ages and sexes. Since there is no trace of severe physical trauma, there is little reason to infer death in a natural disaster. Intradynastic conflict might be a possibility, with members of an elite family or group dispatched by rivals in a fashion undetectable by present-

22. Given the relatively dry climate and burial conditions, it is likely that the bodies in the Umm el-Marra tombs were skeletonized by at least two years after death if not sooner (Schwartz forthcoming).



Fig. 2. Tomb 1, middle level, from east.

day skeletal analysis. Another explanation for the simultaneous interments would be the death of the interred individuals during an epidemic. Thus far, paleopathological analysis by Ernest Batey (2011) neither supports nor rejects this sort of interpretation; it is not unlikely that death from an infectious disease would have been too quick to leave any trace on the bones (Ortner and Putschar 1981: 104–5).

In the absence of a definitive conclusion on the above interpretations, we may consider the possibility of sacrifice. One scenario is retainer sacrifice (table 2). Two women of high rank were buried with wealthy accoutrements and their babies, both of whom died soon after childbirth, and were accompanied in death by male retainers, outfitted much more modestly.²³ Although there is no evidence of violence or of binding, the killings may not have left archaeological traces. If this interpretation is correct, then Tomb 1 offers evidence of the use of sacrifice to reinforce and legitimize social hierarchy in a period when complex and urban polities were just emerging. The killing of men to serve high-ranking women in the afterlife raises issues of gender and power relations: was the status of elite women especially in need of legitimation, as opposed to men? At the same time, the uniqueness of the observed patterns in Tomb 1 signals the rarity of the inferred practice and the probable special nature of the individuals or associated events.

23. Interment with lavish grave goods need not be associated with high social status (Parker Pearson 1999), but it often is.

Despite the attractions of retainer sacrifice as an interpretation for Tomb 1, we may question this interpretation on several grounds. The remains found in the two layers of Tomb 4, another well-preserved tomb in the complex, indicate that elite women may have typically been buried with more wealth than elite men, because the three women in that tomb of six individuals are more lavishly outfitted with costly personal ornaments than the men.²⁴ Likewise, it may be improbable that lower-ranking sacrificed victims would be buried in such close proximity to elite individuals; at Arslantepe and Ur, the sacrificed bodies were distinctly separated from the bodies of high-ranking persons (Frangipane et al. 2001; Baadsgaard, Monge, and Zettler in this volume). Finally, the simultaneous deaths of two elite women and their babies would have to be accounted for.

Alternatively, one might suggest that the two *women* (and babies?) were victims of sacrifice, given the unusual patterns of symmetry and grave wealth. For example, one could suggest that the women were priestesses ritually sacrificed in their cultic finery, as has been proposed for the graves of the Ur Royal Cemetery (Moorey 1977). The interred men would require explanation in this sort of scenario—were they also sacrificed, and if not, why did they both die simultaneously? Unfortunately, both the unique and fragmentary nature of our data precludes the possibility of a definitive decision as to the credibility of this interpretation, as was the case with the retainer sacrifice hypothesis. As with the Ur Royal Cemetery, a clear-cut explanation of the patterns evident in Umm el-Marra Tomb 1 is not likely to be attained quickly. Interpretations involving sacrifice must clearly play a part, but continuing analysis and discussion are necessary to achieve further progress.²⁵

Considering the where, when, and how questions enumerated above, several observations can be made. If the upper two levels of Tomb 1 represent the remains of sacrificial activities, we are not aware of where the killings took place, who the perpetrators may have been, or the different steps of the ceremony; we only know the presumed victims' final resting place.²⁶ Still, we can infer that a large audience for the interments was unlikely, given the congested nature of the tomb complex, with little open space available (Schwartz et al. 2012: fig. 2). Although we are not apprised of many of the ceremonial particulars of the interments and thus the sensory aspects of the rituals involved, we must certainly consider the olfactory ramifications of a mausoleum containing decomposing bodies in the center of a living community.

Reconstruction of the beliefs associated with the ritual activities taking place in or around Tomb 1 will depend on which interpretation of those rituals we prefer, whether it be retainer or other kinds of sacrifice or an unusual interment due to an extraordinary death. Clearly, if retainer sacrifice is an effective interpretation, the

24. Note that analysis of the skeletal material by E. Batey has determined skeleton E in the lower level of Tomb 4, preliminarily designated as an adult male (Schwartz et al. 2006: 611), to be a probable adult female. Found near skeleton E were two small rectangular gold ornaments, an ivory "comb," and a miniature basalt table.

25. See Porter (in this volume) for further discussion of Tomb 1.

26. For further discussion of these issues with respect to the tomb complex as a whole, see Schwartz forthcoming.

Table 3. Installations with Animal and Human Infant Remains from Umm el-Marra Acropolis Center, Third Millennium B.C.E.^a

<i>Installation</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Animals</i>	<i>Infants</i>	<i>Other Materials</i>
A	I	4 equids	cranial and post-cranial fragments estimated age at death: 1–2 months	incised ceramic stand sherds; decorated goblet
B	II	2 equids 1 equid skull 6 puppies sheep/goat and cattle bones	near-complete skeleton estimated age at death: 30–32 weeks to full term (stillborn) right femur, left tibia estimated age at death: 0–1 month	spouted jar
Outside B			partial skeleton (less than 25% complete) estimated age at death: 1–2 months	
Outside B			partial skeleton (less than 25% complete) estimated age at death: 0–1 month	
C	II	2 equids 1 dog	large jar with 3 infants ^b 2 ca. 50% complete, 1 less than 25% complete) estimated age at death: 1–1.5 months (postnatal)	spouted jar
D	II	6 equids	skull and post-cranial fragments estimated age at death: data not yet available	spouted jar
E	I	4 equids		globular jar 2 copper/bronze objects of unclear function
F	I	4 equids		clay bulla with cylinder seal impression
G	III	4 equids (upper pit) 4 equids (lower pit)		incised ceramic stand sherd (joins with those of Installation A)

a. The osteological results reported here are courtesy of Batey, who conducted the analysis in 2006. Faunal data are provided by Jill Weber, University of Pennsylvania. Only complete or near-complete equids or extra equid skulls are listed in this table; see Weber (in this volume) for further details. Note that Type IV installations comprise three examples of individual equids found outside or adjacent to other installations (against the eastern wall of Tomb 8, against the southern wall of Installation E, and in a pit below Installation G).

b. Two equid skulls, a spouted jar, and a large jar containing infant remains were associated with Installation D in Schwartz et al. 2006: 627, but further excavation of Installation C suggests that these remains are more likely to be associated with the latter feature. The infant remains inside the large jar were identified as a single individual in Schwartz et al. 2006, but subsequent analysis by Batey revealed the presence of three individuals (Schwartz 2007: 42, n. 8).



Fig. 3. Installation E, from east.

beliefs associated with this behavior detailed above could be inferred. The interment of the tomb occupants together with personal ornaments reveals that these ornaments were understood to be necessary in the afterlife, although whether they were personal possessions during life, gifts for the burial, or gifts intended for underworld spirits remains to be deduced. The east-west positioning of the bodies and the eastern doorway, facing the rising sun, may be hypothesized as a reference to death as a form of rebirth (Schwartz forthcoming).

In the vicinity of Tomb 1 and other nearby tombs were Installations A–G containing the skeletons of animals, particularly male equids, and, in several cases, human infants (table 3). Weber (in this volume) has recognized four varieties of installation based on architectural differences and differential ages of the interred animals. It seems likely that at least the younger equids, found in the installations designated as Type I (fig. 3), were sacrificed, although there is no sign of inflicted violence on the bone remains. Retainer sacrifice seems a likely interpretation, with the equids intended to transport the nearby elite humans in (and to?) the afterlife, because the evidence consists of the complete skeletons of nonfood animals in a mortuary context (table 1). In contrast, Weber (in this volume) advances a different interpretation, proposing that the animals were not examples of retainer sacrifice but constituted offerings to the supernatural, because they are represented by complete specimens found repeatedly in a special, “religious” context, with selective age, sex and species represented (table 1).

We may address further details of the rituals through consideration of variables such as place, timing, social implications, and sensory associations as detailed



Fig. 4. Installation B, from east.



Fig. 5. Installation B, south compartment, with human infant (left) and equid (right) remains, from northeast.

above. It is likely that the Type I sacrifices took place in the mortuary complex, with the animals led into the installation and slaughtered there, given the difficulties of installing a dead equid in a standing position.²⁷ While it seems probable that the equids were killed and interred at the same time as the elite humans buried nearby, it is not possible to demonstrate this. With respect to the participants in the ritual, it is likely that only a small group could have been present in the vicinity of the installation, given the absence of substantial open space. As observed above, the olfactory consequences of killing and interring animals or humans in the midst of a living community must have been significant, but the equids were buried in subterranean pits and covered over with soil, reducing unpleasant odors.

Social ramifications of the equid sacrifices are likely to revolve around the elite identity of the animals killed and interred. Because the equids were probably examples of the *kunga* hybrids highly valued in third-millennium Syro-Mesopotamia, their sacrifice would have served to advertise and naturalize the high status and wealth of the humans interred nearby. The older equids, which presumably died natural deaths, also were memorialized as high-status animals and may also have been understood to follow their masters into the next world.²⁸

When considering the question of the potentially artificial dichotomy (Latour 1993) between human and animal, it is worth noting similarities between the equid installations and the human tombs nearby. These include the east-west orientation of both the human and animal bodies, with the heads to the west, as well as the side-by-side placement of animals in the type II installations, resembling that of the humans in Tomb 1. While there are significant differences between the human tombs and the equid installations with regard to contents and architecture, these commonalities suggest some congruence of ritual and belief associated with the elite humans and animals.

Also relevant to the question of the relationship between animal and human inclusions is the presence of human infants in burial features otherwise devoted to animals. Were the infants also sacrificed, with their bodies added to installations primarily intended for animals? Because the near-complete infant skeleton in Installation B has been identified as stillborn, this individual would not have been the victim of sacrifice (figs. 4–5). However, the other infants appear to have been alive for at least several weeks or months before their deaths. Consulting our criteria for identifying sacrifice (table 2), the infants that had not been stillborn could be hypothesized as offerings made to the divine world, given the repeating pattern of age-specific interments in extraordinary and probably religious contexts.²⁹

27. However, it might have been possible to inter a dead animal in a standing posture once rigor mortis set in, or the equids' legs could have been placed in the compartments and then encased in soil (Schwartz forthcoming).

28. See now Way (2010) on equid sacrifices in the Bronze Age Near East.

29. One might consider that the infants were not killed or sacrificed but had died for other reasons and were interred in the animal installations after their deaths, but see Moses (in this volume) on the unsuitability of naturally deceased persons as offerings to supernatural entities. It could also be suggested that infants were the primary interments in the installations, but this is unlikely because the animals were inserted first and the installations were constructed so as to

Unfortunately, the reasons for the propriety of these offerings is by no means obvious. Infants can be favored as sacrificial victims due to their purity or their marginal status in society (Kamp 2001: 22; Clendinnen 1991: 110). Inca children were seen as especially effective communicants with gods (Hastorf 2003: 634), while Moses (in this volume) proposes that infants may have been sacrificed due to their liminal status, close to the beginning of life, or were understood to have close associations with the netherworld. Stavrakopolou (2004: 294) discusses biblical allusions to sacrifices of children offered to royal ancestors, perhaps intended to ensure the continuity of the dynasty. Left unexplained, however, is why infant sacrifice would have been deemed appropriate in contexts primarily devoted to animal inclusions.

As these examples from Umm el-Marra show, there can be many challenges to archaeological recognition and interpretation of sacrifice. Nevertheless, the attempt must be made, given the cultural importance and frequency of the practice.

Organization of the Volume

The chapters in this volume consider data from the Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Hellenistic periods in west Asia. Our focus is therefore both diachronic and crosscultural. The virtues and advantages of a comparative method have been well documented in the history of scholarship (Trigger 2003),³⁰ but crosscultural patterns and similarities should not be allowed to overshadow the unique historical specificities of each case. As Campbell (in this volume) asserts, “sacrificial practices are historically as well as culturally embedded in particular times and places and . . . they can scarcely be understood without their specific historical contexts.”

The reader will note a divergent array of approaches and intellectual styles in the papers presented here. Some participants prefer a fact-filled essay, while others opt for a more free-ranging interpretive approach. The editors deliberately aimed for this catholic presentation in order to represent the different approaches currently at play in the field and to provide a range of possibilities for considering the questions under scrutiny. Sometimes, this arrangement leads to conflicting interpretations, while at other times the different approaches lead to converging results.

Reporting the results of an ethnographic study of a goat sacrifice in India, Goslinga's chapter allows the reader to contemplate the spiritual, emotional, and sensory experiences the participant in a sacrifice might have had, in keeping with recent archaeological emphases on the experiential and phenomenological (for example, Tilley 1994; Boivin 2004; Laneri 2010). Goslinga also provides a discussion of the preparations, performance, and the meanings attached to sacrifice. In her study, the god Paandi is understood to communicate his desire for sacrifice in portents that

accommodate the animals (e.g., the bipartite Type II installations with a space for each equid, as on fig. 4).

30. In particular, an examination of similar phenomena from a diversity of societies can be of assistance in devising testable hypotheses and can facilitate new ways of looking at data.

require correct interpretation. The sacrificial event is considered to have mutual benefits for both god and human, in that the human gives up his/her “baser” desire for objects while the god acquiesces in his submission to humans by entering the sacrificial context and being revived by the process. Goslinga argues that modern Western hermeneutics are not effective in understanding this case of sacrifice and that the “prosaic hermeneutics” of her informants must be accepted and adopted for a more successful understanding of the phenomenon. Whether (and how) archaeologists might comprehend and adopt such non-Western varieties of hermeneutics in the cases of sacrifice that they study requires further consideration.

In the chapters by Sharon Moses and Nerissa Russell, data from Neolithic Çatalhöyük in central Anatolia are the subject of inquiry. Sharon Moses discusses the bodies of children installed in foundation deposits at the site. In the absence of specific physical evidence, Moses employs ethnoarchaeological, historical, and contextual data to conclude that the children were differentiated from other individuals and that their deaths were the result of ritual killing. She proposes that child foundation sacrifices were conducted to cement family alliances when new houses were constructed, legitimizing the change from a society based on kinship and clan houses to a “house” society characterized by social differentiation. Considering the evidence for animal sacrifice at Çatalhöyük, Nerissa Russell notes that earlier reconstructions of cattle sacrifice are subject to doubt. Her review of the faunal evidence from the recent excavations includes a discussion of the association of sacrifice with feasting and the difficulties of recognizing postsacrificial feasting archaeologically. Considering the role of space in sacrificial rituals, Russell observes the lack of large open areas at Çatalhöyük and doubts that large-scale sacrifice was conducted. In consequence, her chapter provides a case in which interpretations of sacrifice can be rejected through archaeological analysis.

Elizabeth Carter considers evidence from her excavations at Halaf period Domuztepe (sixth millennium B.C.E.) in southeastern Anatolia. Using a contextual approach, Carter interprets a thick deposit of human and animal bone found in a “Death Pit” as the remains of a communal event involving human sacrifice and cannibalistic feasting. She rules out different varieties of sacrificial behavior that would have produced the remains, narrowing down the range of possibilities but still leaving various options open. In her discussion, Carter brings in iconographic data to assist in interpreting and understanding the behavior and belief systems involved.

Baadsgaard, Monge, and Zettler reexamine the most famous case of human sacrifice known from the ancient Near East, the Royal Cemetery of Ur in third-millennium B.C.E. Mesopotamia. Employing Computed Tomography (CT) scans of the skulls of two attendants from the cemetery, they reveal that blunt-force trauma was the likely cause of death, contradicting the traditional view that the retainers took their own lives. Baadsgaard, Monge and Zettler also discuss new evidence on the postmortem treatment of the bodies, providing a fuller picture of the rituals conducted after the deaths of the Ur individuals involving heating of the corpses, costuming, display, and the enactment of a banqueting scene in perpetuity.

Focusing on the same period, Weber discusses the tombs of equids and other animals within the elite mortuary complex at Umm el-Marra in northern Syria. Employing the results of zooarchaeological analysis together with textual information, she proposes that the equids were hybrids of donkeys and onagers known as *kungas* in contemporaneous written records, produced to serve as “royal” steeds and symbols of prestige. She recognizes a typology of interments, with some equids having been interred at a relatively young age, indicating their likely sacrifice, while others were buried at an advanced age implying that they were interred after dying of natural causes. Asserting that distinctions between humans and animals were not as sharp as might be expected, Weber proposes that both the sacrificed and non-sacrificed “royal” equids were interred as substitutes for high-ranking humans in order to provide legitimation for the ruling regime in times of stress.

Third-millennium B.C.E. Syro-Mesopotamia is also the focus of Porter’s chapter, which discusses the evidence for, and interpretation of, human sacrifice. Porter notes that the provision of human retainers in elite tombs should be the most impressive of grave furnishings, but the evidence for such a practice is relatively rare. This rarity is all the more striking because retainer sacrifice is most common crossculturally in periods of the formation of hierarchical societies such as third millennium Syro-Mesopotamia. Porter discusses how human sacrifice might be recognized archaeologically and distinguished from other types of violence, and how the archaeological record, in combination with the many possible material culture manifestations of sacrificial behavior, can be used to advance a multiplicity of interpretations. Referring to ideas of death and the cosmos attested in contemporaneous textual documents, Porter hypothesizes that sacrificial burials were not necessarily products of retainer sacrifice but were the result of rituals enacted to connect the worlds of life and death, utilizing patterns of mirroring.

Hesse, Wapnish, and Greer discuss the problem of distinguishing animal sacrifice from other types of animal killings in societies where most behaviors were freighted with religious significance. They argue that a distinction between animal sacrifice and “secular” slaughter may not be desirable. Several archaeological cases that have been interpreted as evidence of animal sacrifice from the southern Levant are reviewed, and the ways that ritual scripts used for animal killing can be studied through osteological evidence are discussed.

In Voigt’s chapter, textual evidence is conjoined with archaeological data to discuss sacrificial behaviors at 3rd-to-2nd-century B.C.E. Gordion in central Anatolia. Carefully reviewing stratigraphic and other contextual information, Voigt presents evidence of excavated deposits of human and animal bones with evidence of violent death imposed on both. Voigt employs historical evidence to interpret these data in the context of sacrifices practiced by the Celtic-speaking Galatian immigrants from central Europe who occupied Gordion in this period.

Focusing on the textual evidence alone, Pongratz-Leisten offers a review of the different types and contexts of animal sacrifice in ancient Mesopotamia. She distinguishes sacrifice as offering from other, less common ritual killings designed to restore the cosmic order. In her discussion, Pongratz-Leisten notes that sacrifice was

just one component of a complex sequence of rituals performed to establish regular communication with the gods, most often for the purposes of feeding them. Therefore, she argues that the phenomenon must be considered as part of a much larger ritual apparatus.

In the final chapter, Campbell presents comments on the approaches and conclusions of the preceding contributions and offers a discussion of the archaeology of sacrifice in 2nd millennium B.C.E. Shang China, recognizing a typology of human sacrificial behaviors and associated logics. He argues that studies of sacrifice should not be concerned with how well sacrificial practices “fit” with preconceived notions of the phenomenon. Like Pongratz-Leisten, Campbell stresses instead that we must be concerned with how these practices are integrated with other local behaviors, beliefs, and sociopolitical structures—what is the wider context of sacrifice?

Like other efforts produced in the recent upsurge of interest in the archaeology of religion and ritual (e.g., Insoll 2004; Barrowclough and Malone 2007; Kyriakidis 2007; Whitley and Hays-Gilpin 2008), the studies in this volume reveal the elasticity and equivocality of the central concept—in this case, sacrifice—while confirming that sacrifice represents a major aspect of human life and is thus deserving of archaeological examination. The contributors employ a diversity of approaches to study sacrifice through material remains but agree that an understanding of historical specifics, the context of the activity, and crosscultural regularities are all of signal importance. While social ramifications of the practice are particularly accessible to archaeological study, other facets of sacrifice are of equal significance and must be the subject of inquiry as well. In many ways, we stand at the beginning of the journey to understand sacrifice archaeologically, given the difficulties of its recognition in the archaeological record, but further progress can be anticipated through continued systematic investigations and the framing of new questions.

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