

Roman sacrifice in the late Republic and under the Empire

Abstract

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Animal sacrifice is said to have been "the heart of most acts of cult worship" in the latter half of the 20th century. In fact, Church Fathers denounce the Romans due to an act of animal killing at sacrificial rituals. However, was animal sacrifice centred in Roman cult worship? Firstly, the Latin word *sacrificare* does not mean animal killing but just "to make it belong to deities." Also another Latin word for sacrificial ritual *immolare* means "to sprinkle meal." Secondly, did distribution of sacrificial meat have a great significance in Roman urban life as described in 1 Corinthians? Recent osteological evidence shows that the quantity of meat produced by sacrificial rituals feeds far less people than the population of a city or a large group. Finally, despite Church Fathers' denunciation, the Romans had gradually come to avoid blood-shedding and animal killing at rituals throughout the imperial period.

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