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Sacrifice in Primitive Religions: Main Features and Peculiarities

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In this article we examine the issue of sacrifice in early religions, also called archaic sacrifice, not thoroughly studied in the Russian study of religion. A special stress is put on how specific sacrifice in early religions is and how unproductive it is to study it through the tradition of sacrifice in the Abrahamic religions. The following peculiarities of the primitive sacrifice are shown and analyzed in this article: vague character of the idea of redemption, tendency to have a complicated structure, which manifests itself in a large number of acts, flexibility of dates and venues, and the attitude towards the surrogate victim.

Keywords. Study of religion, sacrifice, archaic sacrifice, surrogate victim, ritual, early religions.

Sacrifice was of much interest for philosophy for a long time starting with Antiquity. Nevertheless, only in Modern Times a real interest to sacrifice appeared, which happened after the Age of Discovery. The researchers studied it in the light of Christianity, Old Testament and their atheist criticism. As a consequence, the specific character of sacrifice in primitive religions was often lost. We can say that from the 50s of the 20th century there was a new interest in studying sacrifice in primitive and archaic religions. This interest still exists. The interpretation of events through the Abrahamic religions is disappearing. Reductive schemes are rejected and the evolution paradigm is simplified.

This article is devoted to the peculiarities of sacrifice in primitive religions, which we will call archaic sacrifice from now on. Early religions are tribal religions as they are called in the Russian

literature, and primitive and archaic religions, as they are called in the western literature, from their emergence until our times.

The first peculiarity is **the vague character of the idea of redemption**. Although M. Moss claimed that no sacrifice could exist without redemption and self-denial, we can say that this idea is either not characteristic of early religions or it is not the main one. That is why ethnographic works are of much interest along with J. Lineham's work (Lineham, 1905), who wrote about the relationship between sacrifice and sin in religious beliefs of the Hebrew. Lineham's work is important for us because sacrifice in early Judaism (before the Temple's destruction), as we believe, still has many archaic traits. He shows that the idea of sin, as alienation from God, redemption and repentance, first appeared in Judaism (the times of Amos, the prophet).

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Still this idea is not as pronounced as it is in Christianity, besides the events of the Babylonian Captivity turned Judaism to the traditions of the early history. But if on one hand there is no concept of sin and redemption in primitive sacrifice as in Christianity, and on the other hand we discover the perception of atonement, what is the aim of the sacrificial offering in primitive religions? As far as we can judge, the aim here is the liberation from the existing or imminent evil, which is often connected with failures, mistakes, misdeeds and guilt. Based on this E. Evans-Pritchard assumes that “the idea of destruction, banishment, protection, cleansing, reconciliation and atonement cannot be easily distinguished in such sacrifices. We can talk about a single sacrifice, that one or another idea is more obvious” (Evans-Pritchard, 1954). According to E. Evans-Pritchard “the victim is not responsible for the evil..., there is no affirmation of *poena vicaria*” (Evans-Pritchard, 1954, p. 28). Examining these cases we do not try to prove that self-sacrifice is extraneous to primitive sacrifice. Some researchers noted that it was often necessary or sometimes even preferable to have a “victim’s consent” in the act of sacrifice. It doesn’t only concern human sacrifices, but animal sacrifices as well. There are several well known myths, for instance a myth from Papua New Guinea, where one brother makes his own brother sacrifice and teaches him how to do the sacrificial ritual. In particular the Nuer people see the moral side of the relationship between the man and God. We just want to point that archaic sacrifice obviously has the idea of atonement, or material compensation for compromising moral principles.

Thus, it can be noted that the concept of sin as alienation from God does not exist in primitive religions. It was more likely perceived as an idea of a moral misdeed. As for atonement, we do not have to talk about the original sin or man’s inherent sinfulness, but about rectifying the

misdeeds committed by a person or a group of people in relation to some sacred powers.

Tendency to have a compound structure of sacrifice. Another typical feature of primitive religions is its tendency to have a compound structure, which manifests itself in a large number of acts. In researcher’s perception sacrifice often exists as separate independent rituals or, on the contrary, it is reduced to one central event. In both cases the problem of multiplicity is pushed to the background as something insignificant in their perception. Formally, sacrifice is a singular act, which is admitted by the representatives of the communities studied here. At least it is known that they have classifications of sacrifices. Apart from it all, sacrifices are rarely made as a singular act no matter what the reason for them is. On the contrary, they are grouped in accordance with the event and inside each group they depend on each other. To put it more precisely in spite of their multiplicity, sacrifice is a single integrated event.

The tendency of primitive sacrifice to have a complex character is especially obvious in the structure of a feast. The interconnections of sacrifice can be found in Polynesian religions in the sacrifice of morai, among Koryaks during the “Koyanaytatyk” celebrations (see detailed descriptions in the book by Gorbachyeva (Gorbachyeva, 2004)) etc. There are three intertwined sacrifices at the pasola feast on the island Sumba. The first one is about telling fortunes and it defines the beginning of the following parts, the second one is about the mythical sacrifice to the goddess of sea, which opens the feast, and the third one is the battle identified with the sacrifice and it is the end of the feast.

Still, while we speak about the feast as a part of different types of sacrifice, it can still be insignificant to understand the specific character of primitive sacrifice. However, such multiplicity can characterize not only the feast, but a separate

rite as well. It is clear when we study the sacrificial rituals of soma. V. Das pointed to the following: the sacrifice of soma is not just a moment of consuming a sacred drink. The sacrifice of soma juice is preceded by the animal sacrifice. And only after this the sacrifice of soma to gods takes place. Whereas M. Moss and A. Hubert thought that the animal sacrifice was the peak of the ritual, the names given to the sacrificial animals point to the direct connection with the soma juice extraction (Das, 1983, p. 459). K. McClaymond specifies that the Vedic sacrificial system – *śrauta* – can be presented as a complex hierarchy, where the most elaborated rituals include the rites which are situated in the more inferior place of the hierarchy. And those can be independent sacrifices (McClaymond, 2008, p.67).

It is significant that this feature is typical not only for the Vedic sacrifice. We often see in primitive sacrifice the cases where the sacrificial act to the same figures has several ways of being carried out – in the strict sequence or simultaneously. Thus, when we refer to reality, where sacrifice exists, we are not only convinced how widespread sacrifice is and how many aims it is used for. We find features that point to the ambiguity of sacrifice in the religions we consider herewith.

First of all, all the sacrifices mentioned above are independent. Each one of them has its own aim, but at the same time they are all interconnected (and they acquire their meaning in such interconnection). They create a common ritual act and reach that aim rooted in mythology. Such ritual act is directed towards this aim. Surely, we could argue that in almost all of these cases there is one key culmination sacrifice that defines the event. That is, the “koyanayatyk” celebration is dedicated to “gyichgyi”, that’s why they feed them deer on the second day, which is the main culmination event. Nevertheless, it is not true: the ritual could not have taken place

from the point of view of its participants without other sacrifices before or after that culmination event, because all these accompanying sacrificial offerings are necessary conditions for the right sacrificial process and they have important aims and functions that can seem random to an observer. That is why we can claim that there are no contradictions between different sacrifices, but they agree and complement each other.

Second of all, there can be several key points, several meanings for different people in the same sacrificial feast. Anthropologist James V. Fernandez asked individually each participant of the ritual dance in one African tribe about the aims and meaning of different ritual elements. All the participants “strongly agreed about the effectiveness of the ritual...however, their explanations about its aims differed significantly” (Jay, 1992, p. 10). At the same time this multitude of meanings and sacrifices, the diversity of their forms are subordinated to one thing: the ritual, the feast that is supposed to be carried out in a specific way.

Thirdly, the ritual act consisting of many different sacrifices, involves the man into the ritual. The man’s involvement into long consecutive ritual acts is an important trait of such phenomenon. When the man is involved into ritual sacrifices, he cannot go back before the ritual. Such feeling of involvement, which makes it difficult to get out of it, prevents the ritual’s interruption. E. Leech stresses that such ritual entry into abnormal sacred state should also provide with the right way out of it (return to the normal life). That’s why the ritual cannot be interrupted without any consequences for its participants. Free exit from the ritual is prohibited or not recommended.

Flexibility of dates and venues of sacrifice is another specific trait of primitive sacrifice. When studying primitive sacrifice we encounter strict requirements of following the ritual, its

time and venue. Sometimes the time of sacrifice is connected with some date in the calendar. There is just some period mentioned, for example in the Koryak's tradition, in the above mentioned sacrifice of domestic deer to the masters, such sacrifices were supposed to be carried out in autumn in the period of the growing moon. In the case of sacrificial feast "Pasola" on the Sumba island, the date of such event is chosen by priests randomly every time. Priests can name different dates, but it is usually chosen in agreement and it is not necessarily given by the main priest. If the date of sacrifice is chosen incorrectly, if other priests consider the mistake insignificant they don't postpone the ritual to the indefinite time and start the preparations. And the priest who failed has to compensate it.

In some cases there are rules that make people carry out rituals in strict periods of time. As a consequence, if the ritual is postponed, it has to be finished within such periods. Such example can be found in the Nenets tradition, where the sacrifice needs to be done within the first fifteen days from its beginning. However, if they fail to do so, the sacrifice can be renewed only in the next indicated time period. Shifts in the times of sacrificial acts not connected with negligence of ritual duties can be from several days to half a year and more.

There are several reasons for the time shift in the sacrificial event. In our opinion, R. Firth studied one of these reasons, which was significant to understand primitive sacrifice. Sacrifice can be postponed in case when it is impossible to make the sacrifice complete. Consequently, when the conditions improved, the postponed sacrifice was completed. In other words, R. Firth studied this reason through economic state and connected it mainly with the lack of resources (Firth, 1963).

Another important reason when the sacrifice can be put off is the lack of some cult objects necessary for correct sacrifice. In such

case the substitute sacrifice is impossible or not recommended. In our view, this case should be considered different from the studied above, as the presence of the necessary cult objects is not always directly connected with the economic conditions. Native American sacrifice of a white dog in North America could be postponed until they found a necessary victim for such ritual – a completely white dog. A very common reason to put off the sacrifice is the specific requirements for the victim, facilities or participants.

The dependence on household activities, seasons of the year, weather conditions can be considered as the third reason. For instance, the Nuer tribe prefers to sacrificially castrate bull calves in a dry season, when there is little chance of inflammation in comparison with the season of rains (Evans-Pritchard, 1985, p. 39). Sacrifices to honour the harvest cannot start until the harvest is picked. The feast to honour the driving of deer cannot be organized until the animals are driven. The sacrifice to the sea beast carried out by hunters could be postponed until the storm finished.

In our opinion, when studying the phenomenon of postponing the sacrifice, it is important to consider the following significant rule: even when the sacrifice is put off it cannot be postponed indefinitely. Believers perfectly know the limit that they cannot overstep; otherwise it can cause the wrath of holy powers. If the sacrifice is not completed it is considered a serious mistake. It is the violation of the law, created by gods and mythical ancestors, which can lead to the rupture of relations with the sacred world. This can cause misery and even death. Stories about horrible consequences of incomplete sacrifices are very common in traditional societies. A. Golovlyev exemplifies this with the story of an old Nenets whose brother didn't bring the sacrifice to an end, which according to the narrator, led to his brother's death (Golovlyev, 2004, p. 48).

Still, there is one exception to the general rule, which is exactly characteristic of primitive sacrifice. In some societies, particularly in those with the appropriating economy or mixed hunter stock-breeding economy, there is a practice of punishing some spirits by not offering them any sacrifices.

Changes of sacrificial places (when a sacrifice is strictly held in one specific venue) occur much more seldom in comparison with changes of time. In our view, in human perception spatial side of sacrifice is more defined and tangible than the time of sacrifice.

The sacrificial place is in some way connected with the aim of sacrifice. In accordance with such aim, the place is situated in the settlement or outside. Thus, the participants know the place of sacrifice in advance. It is traditional, whether it is a scared place or some spot in the house or another building. Usually it takes some extraordinary circumstances to change the place of sacrifice (a shrine), such as resettlement to a new territory, natural disasters, epidemics and epizootics, seizure of the sacred place by the enemy etc. Moving the sacred sacrificial place was also connected with religious persecution. The Buryat settlement in the Barguzin valley shifted the sacrificial holy place from the settlement into the forest during the Soviet antireligious campaigns (B.T. Gomboyev, 2004, p. 4).

As it turns out, we can even consider convenience and comfort as the reasons to change the sacred sacrificial places. For instance, the Mansi people changed their Vit-Yalpyng (“water sacred place”). According to I. N. Gemuyev and A. M. Sagalayev they moved the shrine, which was founded in the mid-20th century, closer to the settlement. However, after the river began to flood the shore, they returned the shrine to its former place (The Mansi mythology, 2001, p. 64).

We shouldn't ignore such factor as the exhaust of sacred powers and change of its

character in the sacred place (as this reason is quite important for the representatives of the traditional societies). Although, sometimes weather changed, epidemics and epizootics can be perceived as a sign of the loss of such powers. In other cases shrines are abandoned without any apparent reason. O. Dickson describes the notions, which explain the rules of interaction with such sacred places. According to him, if after visiting the “place of power” one has some unpleasant or painful feelings, it means that spirits do not want to accept sacrificial offerings for some reason. As a solution it is recommended to look for another more appropriate place (Dickson, 2000, p. 62).

Changes in the time and place of sacrificial acts are usually connected with the group's survival issues. We can ascertain that after early states were founded the codification of rituals (oral or written) reduced the number of changes in the time or place of sacrifice. Apparently, there are three factors: settled way of life, agricultural economy, consolidation and bureaucratization of the priesthood. The amount of food for each ordinary producer does not play any significant role, at least at first. It is known that the nutrition in protostates and primitive states was more scant than that of hunters or nomadic cattle-breeders.

Another specific trait is **the attitude towards the surrogate victim**. The change of dates is not the only and sometimes not sufficient method for solving the problems preventing from fulfilment of the sacrificial act. Besides postponing the date or as an addition to it, a surrogate can be sacrificed. For a long time a surrogate victim was considered a trick or a result of the evolution in the sacrifice system (beginning with E. B. Taylor), or as a degeneration of the event (at least, R. Girard). During the studies of the African Nilotic tribe, R. Firth paid much attention to the fact that the surrogate victim was ambiguous. He noted that in case when a sacrifice could not be completed, the following happened: first

of all, the number of recipients was reduced – the victim was not sacrificed to all gods, but to the most powerful and revered ones; secondly, sacrifice was postponed to a better time, at the same time the surrogate victim was sacrificed as a deposit, for example a wild cucumber instead of a bull or sometimes there was no surrogate victim at all. When things improved, a complete sacrifice was done. In some cases surrogate sacrifice was considered acceptable if a ritual formula “according to the truth” was applied, and the next sacrificial offering was done as it was supposed to be done. Besides, it is significant that one principle can be considered unacceptable in different religious practices. R. Firth claimed that the Nuers’ neighbours – the Dinka tribe who belong to the same Nilotic group and live in a more economically beneficial territory – perceived the ritual formula mentioned above as a trick.

A surrogate victim is first and foremost a victim that substitutes another victim prescribed by the history. It is substantial that the religious tradition prescribes a surrogate victim (objects acceptable for the sacrificial offering) and a list of cases when such victim is acceptable. Such directions can differ in various religions and do not have logical systems. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy for this work that they are common, while they all try to find answers to the following four questions substantial for the problem of the surrogate victim: 1) What do gods receive? 2) What does the giver lose? 3) What substitutes a surrogate victim? 4) Is there some sacrificial “rate”?

The question of what a deity receives was very topical for many religions, beginning with ancient states, was criticized in ancient Greek philosophy and literature, was examined by the Old Testament prophets and was studied by early Christians. Ancient thought, on one hand, carried out the idea that gods receive pleasant smell from the burning food and honours. On the

other hand, in early Antiquity a critical attitude towards material wellbeing was formed. The benefits that gods received from sacrifices were bones, tendons and guts. According to this point gods received all this. Ancient thinkers such as Varro and Seneca, developed the first idea influenced by the second one and deduced that gods did not need these bloody sacrifices. This idea was developed in post ancient mysticism that approved of divine elements worship but opposed to “magical” sacrifices aimed at manipulations with infernal powers.

In this work it is interesting to see that such questions occur in religions where a human cognitive thought is not as developed as in ancient philosophy, Judaist and Christian theology. The Nenets believe that all the deer in their herds belong to the Master of Deer, who owns and manages them. People just use them temporarily until the Master gets the deer back. So, eventually deer sacrifice is perceived as their return to the real master, according to the Nenets. We encounter the same thing in the Nuer tradition: “The victim already belongs to God before the sacrifice... everything in life belongs to God, they are created by him and come back to him, and when he needs them, he gets them back” (Evans-Pritchard, 1954, p.10). When an animal is struck by a lightning or consumed by the illness, the Nuer think that taking away its life was alike sacrifice. And since a human life also belongs to God, the Nuer think that He took away an animal life instead of its owner’s life. Thus, an animal life is “exchanged” for a human life and it is a human life that is the victim, which eventually is not a surrogate one. However, the Nuer believe that besides all this there is something that distinguishes the real sacrifice from such divine act as “taking away” a human life – a person’s own will that desires to make a sacrifice, in which two things coincide – what a human sacrifices and what god receives (Evans-Pritchard, 1954, p.10).

Still, for the Nuer such questions do not have one satisfactory solution. The Nuer people say that such questions make a man sad if he has them. In this case, another attempt at solving this issue is significant. Such attempt was done a long time before the civilizations we study here appeared – it was done by Sumer-Accadian civilization. Surely the material culture of modern Nilotes or Siberian nomadic hunters, fishers and cattle-breeders is absolutely different from the Sumer one. The level of the thought development is also incomparable because when we talk about Sumer and Accadia we mention “pre-philosophy”. However, we outline that with all the colossal differences Sumer-Accadian sacrifice had in its basis a primitive character or at least it kept the general traits of what we call “primitive sacrifice”.

The religious thought of such Armenoid civilization accepts the idea that everything in this world belongs to gods. It was based on the concept that gods still needed people to use their creation. We shall note that a latent idea of people needing gods and gods needing people is quite common in traditional societies with polytheistic religions. It can also be found in cosmogonical myths quite often. Nevertheless, this topic is too extensive and can be studied independently. Due to this fact, we confine ourselves to speaking about only one case when it is connected with sacrifice. Sumer and Accadian religious thought had this idea at the mythical level already, according to which enraged gods destroyed the humanity but they could not sustain themselves without the man because no one could make sacrifices. In other words, according to this myth, the mechanism of sacrifice let gods receive what they have the right to have and it let the man become a necessary figure that makes such mechanism function. Thus, the contradiction is smoothed.

Still the question of correlation of what according to the ideas the holy powers receive

and what the giver loses if we do not ignore all the details, there is no complete identity. Even if we agree that eventually this is a giver’s life behind the sacrificial offering. We can look differently at what gods receive in the believers’ perception; however, a sacrificial offering is often a substantial loss to a giver. We can judge that the loss is perceived as a serious one by the contradictory attitude towards a future sacrifice. There are some known examples in several societies. The African Nilotes and Siberian and Far East deer breeders, in whose sacrificial practice most of sacrificed offerings are consumed by the givers themselves, have mixed feelings towards sacrifice. But as we find out this contradiction has no apparent connection neither with Z. Freud’s theories, nor with R. Girard, V. Burkert or D. Allyson’s theories. On one hand, sacrifice brings a feeling of joy because of the future feast, but on the other hand – a feeling of regret because the herd has been reduced. In this case, there is a feeling of loss in the perception of sacrifice. As a consequence, the economical component in the phenomenon of the surrogate victim plays an important role. Moreover, R. Firth’s hypothesis that the economical need is the reason why the surrogate victim appeared seems very plausible.

Researchers observe that there is a certain connection between the aim of sacrifice and its value at the level of religious notions. Besides, the relation between what’s given and what’s received has a complex ambiguous character. Therefore, E. Evans-Pritchard talks about a specific “sacrificial rate”. It should be immediately noted that Evans-Protchard himself found a negative answer to that, having studied the Nuer sacrificial acts. We know that the bigger the crisis is the bigger the sacrifice should be. On the other hand, the man makes sacrifices based on his circumstances, and the sacrifice is not less effective if it is small. According to Buryat shamans’ words “the more you demand from the

spirits, the more responsibilities you have; your cattle will disappear more often. You just need to pray at heart and keep in mind that spirits of the ancestors blacksmiths will keep you safe from misery” (Gombojev, 2004, p. 51). To our mind, we can see here an idea connected with the surrogate victim. An easy handover and receiving of the object, reciprocal relations are pushed behind by the idea that “the believers’ intention” is more important than equivalency, and the desire to voluntarily follow religious rules set by gods.

Therefore, to some extent we can agree with R. Firth that in the type of sacrifice we study it is also supposed to be the act of giving yourself for your part where your personality (self) is presented by material objects, which have material importance for people, including material value. Otherwise, one’s own “self” will be trivial, here we see the extensions of the sacrificial idea. It is impossible and pointless to sacrifice with “somebody else’s things”. As for M. Moss and K. G. Jung’s studies that the giver himself is the victim, we shall note that those practicing sacrificial acts have just rudiments of reflections about primitive sacrifice. It is not identical to the mystical identification of the victim, the priest and the god as someone who doesn’t sacrifice something instead of him but who sacrifices himself in the victim and receives the victim at the same time. For those practicing primitive religions an animal’s life was the pay for their human lives. For a mystic the main sense is in mystical identification.

The surrogate victim really has this element of rational calculation. But it is based on the tradition and has a religious sanction. It is impossible to study the surrogate victim only in the light of the economical substitute. The substitute is usually connected with metaphysical structures, with the human’s spiritual act, his desire to accomplish a religious service. On the contrary to K. Levi-Stross’ opinion expressed in the work about sacrifice and totemism, there is an

intention in sacrifice which is directed at avoiding the randomness of substitute. In other words, there should not be a situation when everything can be substituted with anything; otherwise the sense of sacrifice is lost. The surrogate should be symbolically connected with the object that is being substituted. There are rules of substitution set by religion. It can happen when the whole is replaced by a part, within the class (domestic, wild, processed, male, female, belonging to the man etc.) The inhabitants of Mantsinsaari Island (Lake Ladoga) tell the story about legitimizing the victim substitution. Ilya (or in the Finnish variant Ukko – the god of thunder, the owner of superior sky) wished to always receive a three-year old white deer, which he himself sent in the appointed time. But he decides to see how ready the humans are to serve him and so he delays the arrival of the victim. People decide to sacrifice three-year old gelded bull calf. A deer that appeared all of a sudden approved of the elders’ choice to replace the victim and since those time the tradition stuck (Konka, 1988). We can see two leading lines in this event. Firstly, there is an approval of the reasonable non-destructive choice to use a surrogate. Secondly, we see people’s voluntary desire to serve the god.

That’s why V. Das’ study about the concept of substitution in ancient Indian sacrifices is of interest to us. Ancient Indian sacrifices are not only characterized by the relations of equivalency but also by a hierarchy. If there was not any material for the necessary sacrifice, another material of the same class could be used. But only if the sacrifice was done by the gods’ wish. A substitution is not possible when the sacrifice was done because people asked for earthly goods. In this case only the objects mentioned in the book led to success. But it would be false to claim that the necessary materials were preferable to substitutes. Thus a man asking for wealth could make “hiranya” sacrifice. A hundred pieces of gold were boiled

and given instead of rice proposed in the texts. The Mimamsa texts, describing the concept of substitution, show that gods, mantra and the giver cannot be replaced; otherwise the sacrifice will have a different character.

There are cases of sacrifices in conditions critical for survival that are incomparable with the resources. There are two factors in the sacrificial act, which make it happen: good will and coercion. In different religions one of these factors can dominate at different stages of transformation. To a certain extent the sacrifice can exist harmoniously with such changes. Nevertheless, if there is a bigger imbalance in the ratio (especially towards coercion) the harmonious existence is violated. In the second case the deity supposedly inflicts misery upon people and coerces them into making a sacrifice. The feeling of god's love is lost and the disharmony of "self" appears. Too many sacrifices eventually lead to destruction, which is the opposite of why the sacrifice is made. As R. Girard correctly notes, the sacrifice incapable of getting rid of critical displays in culture only makes them stronger. The crisis of sacrifice itself begins. The old sacrificial paradigm ceases to work.

Conclusions. A complex character of primitive religions that we have studied here reflects the multiplicity of things in the believer's life. There are two sides in the sacrificial act – the collective and the individual. The whole group is directed at one event of the feast (ontological feeling), as a rule, it is an eponymous event. But every participant of the event feels it differently (personal and social feeling). Depending on the social position, this or that group focuses not only on the main event, but on other sacrificial acts as well. They acquire a special meaning for each group (social feeling). Diversity of sacrificial acts helps unite and disconnect the group during sacrifice. Sacrifice practically becomes a kind of creation and recreation of temporal and spatial

relation between the group and gods. Polytheistic gods have different attributes, properties, functions, which also influences the diversity of sacrifices.

In our opinion, changes of the sacrificial ritual in the time-space continuum are connected with the group's survival. It should be observed that with the codification of rituals starting with the shift to the civilization stage, the sacrificial ritual began to have more strict limits that couldn't be changed as easily.

In primitive religions the phenomenon of the surrogate victim is very common. The experience of coexistence between people and gods is concentrated in the sacrificial ritual. In this case the surrogate with its internal contents is not a trick as it was perceived before. It cannot be considered as a stage in the evolution of sacrifice, according to Taylor, as an ordinary victim and a surrogate one usually coexist in primitive religions. The substitution is self-valuable, because it is impossible to sacrifice someone else's things, and your own things are always valuable. With the original and the surrogate victims the sacrifice is considered complete if when they both satisfy gods, people and sometimes victims. There is harmony between people and their creators. The renewal and maintenance of connection with the sacred world are established. If one party is not satisfied disharmony appears and the connection is lost.

The main idea of primitive sacrifice is maintenance and restoration of the connection with the sacred world, which are initiated in each human act (although they are set by the creatures from the sacred world), not self-denial and redemption. The idea of redemption is not developed in primitive religions. We do not talk about man's inherent sinfulness but about correcting sporadic mistakes that a person or a group committed in respect of certain sacred powers.

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Жертвоприношение в ранних религиях: основные черты и особенности

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В данной работе рассматривается вопрос о жертвоприношении в ранних религиях, или об архаическом жертвоприношении, мало изученный в отечественном религиоведении. Подчеркивается специфичность жертвоприношения в ранних религиях и непродуктивность его исследования через призму традиции жертвоприношения в авраамических религиях. В статье выделяются и анализируются особенности архаического жертвоприношения, такие как: невыраженный характер идеи искупления, тяготение его к сложной структуре, характеризующейся множественностью актов, подвижность сроков и места его проведения, отношение к суррогатной жертве.

Ключевые слова: религиоведение, жертвоприношение, архаическое жертвоприношение, суррогатная жертва, ритуал, ранние религии.
