

Animal sacrifice in Brazilian folk religion

August 25 2009

Candomblé, a religion practiced primarily in South America and inspired by older African beliefs, makes much use of animal sacrifice. Researchers writing in BioMed Central's open access *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* carried out interviews with priests, priestesses and adherents of the religion, documenting the role sacrifice plays in their beliefs.

Nivaldo Léo Neto, from the Universidade Estadual da Paraíba, Brazil, worked with a team of researchers to carry out the structured and semi-structured interviews. He said, "A total of 29 animal species were used during sacrificial rituals, according to the priests and priestesses. Animals are sacrificed and offered to their deities, known as orishas, for the prosperity of all life".

The practice of sacrifice is present in several cultures, and is fundamental to many religions including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In Candomblé, it is believed that some essence of the sacrificed animal 'feeds' one of several supernatural deities known as orishas, who will in turn attend to the believers' requests and desires, healing diseases and solving financial or personal problems.

According to Léo Neto, "Domestic animals are mostly preferred for sacrificial purposes as wild animals are often considered sacred by adherents of the religion or are protected by environmental laws. Of the wild species used, only the yellow-footed tortoise (*Chelonoidis denticulata*) is threatened with extinction. In general, these practices, compared to many other human uses of wildlife, are not of serious

conservation concern".

More information: From Eshu to Obatala: animals used in sacrificial rituals at Candomble "terreiros" in Brazil; Nivaldo A Leo Neto, Sharon E. Brooks and Romulo R.N. Alves; *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* (in press); www.ethnobiomed.com/

Source: BioMed Central ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Animal sacrifice in Brazilian folk religion (2009, August 25) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-08-animal-sacrifice-brazilian-folk-religion.html>

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