

Example of how to present footnotes and bibliography, Harvard style

This is the paradox of material religion. Once a god is given a body, that body can be adorned, carried, buried, replicated, and potentially divided, consumed, or sacrificed.

This paradox is not confined to Egypt. The Greek *bouphonia* ritual, as discussed by Frazer (1890, pp. 1092–1095), similarly reveals the instability of the sacred animal. In that Athenian rite, the ox was both holy and killable: once it consumed the offerings on the altar, it was slaughtered, and the participants then redistributed blame in a ritual attempt to manage the guilt of having killed something sacralised. The ox was not treated as ordinary meat, but as a charged being whose destruction required legal and symbolic negotiation. This comparison exposes a recurring human tension. People seek closeness to sacred power, yet fear the consequences of violating it. Material embodiment intensifies that tension rather than solving it; in both cases, the sacred animal becomes the point at which reverence, fear, and control meet.

Across societies, bovine strength, fertility, agricultural importance and bodily power have repeatedly made cattle apt vessels for sacred meaning. The Apis cult was centred around a specific bull that was chosen, displayed, buried and renewed under priestly and state authority (Dodson 2005). In India, by contrast, cattle possess religious significance in a far more diffuse and continuous manner. Cows are treated as collectively sacred creatures, seamlessly integrated into everyday life (Harris 1992). The sacred value of cattle became culturally embedded, a distributed belief not dependent upon one singular cult centre or one divinely appointed animal.

This comparison helps explain the different endurance of cultural traditions over time. The Apis cult relied on specific institutions: Memphis, the Serapeum, and the ideological framework and patronage of Egyptian kingship and religion. As these structures were disrupted, for example after Cambyses II's siege of Memphis in 525BCE (Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.13–3.16), the Roman conquest, and the introduction of Christianity and Islam, the cult progressively waned and ultimately disappeared. The centralisation of the Apis cult made its survival contingent on the endurance of its supporting institutions.

Bibliography

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