

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in Religion and Violence

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## HUMAN SACRIFICE

*Archaeological Perspectives from Around the World*

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**ABSTRACT:** Sacrifice is not simply an expression of religious beliefs. Its highly symbolic nature lends itself to various kinds of manipulation by those carrying it out, who may use the ritual in maintaining and negotiating power and identity in carefully staged ‘performances’. This Element will examine some of the many different types of sacrifice and ritual killing of human beings through history, from Bronze Age China and the Near East through Mesoamerica to Northern Europe. The focus is on the archaeology of human sacrifice, but where available, textual and iconographic sources provide valuable complements to the interpretation of the material.

**KEYWORDS:** sacrifice, Ancient Near East, China, Egypt, Mesoamerica

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# Contents

1 Introduction	1
2 The Near East	7
3 Egypt	26
4 China	43
5 Northern Europe	59
6 Mesoamerica	77
7 Conclusion	106
Appendix: Possible Cases of Human Sacrifice from Other Periods and Areas Around the World	113
Bibliography	117